

OIKOS

AUSTRALIA



Freedom Church

FINDING GRACE in a hard place

FAITH *Risky or Risking?* Bob Roberts

PERSON OF PEACE Dave Lawton

So you want to
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SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS and 3 LEVEL GATHERINGS

Christian communities are commonly referred to as churches. However, the word translated “church” in the Greek language of the New Testament has nothing

to do with sacred buildings and liturgy, preachers, sermons and pews. In fact, most of what we know as “church” developed after new Testament times. The word used was *ekklesia* - which in the 5th century BC in Greece. originally meant a gathering of the citizens to make decisions usually at the city gate such as contracts, treaties, war and peace. The *ekklesia* opened with prayers and sacrifices to the gods of the city. It came to be used for a “called out” or special “assembly” of the citizens. It meant **assembly** or **congregation**.

A second nuance of the word as used in the Bible connected to the Hebrew idea of Gods people as the “called out ones.” And so, in New Testament times *ecclesia* was the gathering of disciples or the called-out ones who assembled together in Christ’s name.

The idea of church as a sacred building came not from the word *ekklesia*, but the Greek word *kyriakon* meaning “belonging to the Lord” and the English word *chirice*. In this way it came to mean “church” as a building. This has change our understanding of the concept used in the New Testament.

As we reflect on *ekklesia* today in the Christian context - it can be a simple gathering of followers of Jesus, but we need to recognise that these assemblies exist on 3 levels.

First there is the 2-4 sized group that is ideally suited for a deeper level of sharing, transparency, accountability and personal growth. I remember meeting with 2 other men regularly over lunchtime. One of the men latter said it was some of the best times he had experienced in his life.

The second assembly size is the house sized gathering of perhaps 6-20. This is seen in the *oikos* (or household) sized group like the assembly that met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:5). It is the place where Christian community gathers usually weekly and grows best. The followers of Christ express spiritual gifts, love each other and fulfil the 58 “one anothers” mentioned in the New Testament. Most of the new testament letters of Paul, John and Peters were writing to



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FINDING GRACE

in a hard place



A Testimony from Freedom Church, a fellowship of prisoners inside one of Queensland's Correctional Centres.

As I looked out of the window from the prison unit that I am housed in, I noticed a new face on the compound. I had seen plenty of new faces over the many years of my imprisonment, but this time it was different.

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS

The moment that I laid eyes upon this man a very strong feeling of compassion and urgency developed in my spirit. I realised that I was experiencing Jesus' love and great concern for this person. The power of it moved me instantly to prayer. "God, give me an opportunity to minister to this man" I prayed.

Within a couple of days, two of my Christian brothers were able to have some conversations with this same man. They found out his name and that he was a refugee from Afghanistan, with an Islamic back-ground.

At the beginning of each day, I would walk up and down in the tennis court, praying over the prison and welcoming God to rule and reign within it. As I did, I would notice Renni (not his real name) noticing me. His eyes located and assessed every inmate within his close proximity, analysing any potential threat. This man had obviously been through a tremendous amount of trauma, I thought to myself. His behaviour displayed a great deal of distrust and nervousness.

NO ORDINARY MEETING

One particular morning I decided to move out of the tennis court and continue my conversation with God around the oval. As I was about to complete my first lap, I noticed Renni standing at the entrance to the oval, about one hundred meters away from me. Without hesitation I said to God, "I'm ready to do Your will Lord, give me the wisdom that I need".

When I came closer to him, I could see that he was looking at me from time to time,

determining my openness and approachability. I quickly gave him a smile and said “G’day mate, how are you going, would you like to come for a lap with me around the oval?” “Sure” he said. We then started off around the track, introducing ourselves to one another and engaging in some general small talk. “I noticed that you walk in the tennis court each morning” he said to me. “Yes, I’m praying for the prison and the inmates within it” I responded. We continued to talk a little bit more and then the Spirit of God moved upon my heart with intensity and said, “Pray for him now”. This was the same feeling that I felt when I first saw Renni, but now there was a greater sense of urgency. “The Holy Spirit wants me to pray for you right now” I said to him. He looked at me and said, “Yes please, I would like that”. I had only known this man for approximately three minutes, but the power of Jesus’ love that was flowing through me, easily overcame any embarrassment or social edict. God’s loving-kindness for this man gave me a lion’s boldness to accomplish His will! I started to pray for Renni, simply declaring God’s goodness and grace over his life. I also prayed for his family and for his time here in the prison. I was mindful of the fact that Renni had an Islamic back-ground and not a Christian one, so it was important for me to remain sensitive and wise towards the situation.

After a short time in prayer he thanked me, and we continued to talk. I felt that the Holy Spirit wanted to minister to him words of truth and life to encourage and edify him. I could discern that Renni was feeling very heavy and hopeless.

GOD’S CONCERN BECOMES CLEAR

Not too long into our conversation, I said to him, “Renni, I have seen God do

amazing things here in people’s lives. I have watched God restore families and bring joy and hope, even to suicidal people”. The very next thing that Renni said to me produced instant clarity as to why I had been sensing Jesus’ compassion for this man. Renni looked at me and said, “I was going to end my life last week”. I now understood the seriousness of the situation. “God does not want you to do that” I said to him with loving—firmness. As we continued to talk, the Spirit of God opened Renni’s heart up to me. We started to discuss the things that were bearing weight upon his life. He explained to me that he had to flee from Afghanistan with his family to Pakistan because they were a religious minority and were coming under persecution from other Muslims. His wife and children settled and remained in Pakistan, while Renni travelled further into Australia in search of a fresh start for himself and his family.

Unfortunately, Renni had only been in Australia for a short period of time when one day, as he was driving his vehicle, he drove through a red light and hit another car. The driver of the other car was seriously injured and Renni was charged with Grievous Bodily Harm and remanded in custody. During his incarceration he was informed of the likelihood of his visa cancellation and probable deportation.

returned to his unit. As he was walking away, the Holy Spirit impressed upon me to gather the Church together to purchase him some groceries, toiletries and confectionary from the prison canteen.

The Christian inmates here put together a beautiful expression of Christ’s love and generosity for Renni. As it worked out, the very day that we planned to give him this cheerful gift happened to be his birthday! During the organising of this blessing, we had no idea when his birthday was. Only the Holy Spirit knew that this gift would end up being delivered to him on the day of his birth. God orchestrated this perfectly. Renni was overwhelmed and speechless as the church here gathered around him and gave him a card on behalf of Jesus and two large bags of canteen supplies that brimmed over with the loving-kindness of our Heavenly Father.

THE ALL-KNOWING GOD, WHO IS NEAR

Renni grew up believing that God was distant and non-personal. However, that day Jesus demonstrated to him that God was indeed very close and intimately involved with every detail of his life. Over the next few weeks, I continued to walk around the oval with Renni and encourage him in the Lord any way that I could. I invited him to come and

fellowship with us. The first Sunday that he came to church, a brother prayed for him and the presence of God touched him and brought him to tears. Jesus was really revealing Himself to Renni in mighty ways!

COMFORT AND CONFIRMATION

Not many days after this, Renni had an appointment with a lawyer who would be handling his immigration matters. During their conversation, Renni explained to his new solicitor that there were Christian inmates within the centre who had been encouraging him and supporting him. His solicitor was listening to him eagerly with joy and amazement. When Renni finished speaking, his

God did not present to Renni a systematic critique of his false views but God presented to Renni His tender-loving-kindness and with it, He overcame him and the error that he was believing.

THE PROVISION OF JESUS THROUGH HIS CHURCH

I continued to pray for him, having more specific things to uphold before the Lord. Before we parted ways, I made Renni aware that he was welcome to come and speak with me whenever he needed to. He thanked me and



solicitor said to him “Renni, I am a Christian also, and I am from Pakistan as well. I want you to know that I am going to fight your immigration matters, not as a solicitor, but as a brother! This was another glorious display of God’s love, provision and confirmation.

LIGHT BEGINS TO PIERCE THE DARKNESS

The heaviness and dark clouds that were engulfing this man when I first met him walking around the prison oval, were being overcome by the God of all hope! Renni started saying “I don’t care what happens to me now because I know that God is with me”. Only Jesus has the ability to take a suicidal man out from under the oppression of darkness and into the liberation of light in the space of six weeks and cause him to proclaim such things — Glory to God!

Later on, during one of our oval walks, I turned to Renni and said, “I can really see the grace of God at work in your life; do you know what grace means?” “No, I don’t” he answered. “Part of it is the undeserved kindness and favour of God” I continued. I then said to him “Have you ever heard about the gospel of Jesus Christ; the message of the cross?” “No, I haven’t” he said. I then said to him “Would it be alright if another brother and I sat down with you and explained to you from the Bible, how to be forgiven of all sin and how to enter into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ?”. “Yes, that would be good” he replied.

The Holy Spirit had now prepared Renni’s heart to meet with God’s “gift of grace” —the Lord Jesus Christ!

A couple of days later, we arranged to sit down with Renni in the prison’s chapel and share with him the simple’ message of the cross and what was required of him in response to it. We showed him from the scriptures the basic truth, that we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory; His standard of perfection. We continued to explain to him that he needed to repent and turn away from his life of sin and rebellion against God and return to Him. We made it clear to Renni that he could only be forgiven if he believed; from his heart, in Jesus, in His redeeming work upon the cross and in His resurrection. Renni was also made aware, that he needed to receive Jesus

to be his Lord and Saviour; as there was no other way or name, in which he was able to be saved.

SURRENDERED, DELIVERED, FILLED

After about forty-five minutes into sharing the gospel with Renni, we asked him if he would like to surrender his life to Jesus Christ. Without a second thought he looked at us and said “Yes, I would like to ask Jesus to come into my life, yes of course”.

Moments after a prayer of repentance and surrender, the Holy Spirit identified; through a word of knowledge, that Renni had invited an unclean spirit into his body. Renni admitted this and told us the name of the demon. We commanded it to leave in the power and authority of Jesus’ Name. He was instantly released from its hold. We then laid hands on him to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As we prayed for him, he started speaking in tongues with the faith of a little child — Glory to God!

Renni was set free from prison about two weeks later. Before he left the centre, we encouraged him to get baptized into water upon his release. We assured him that God would supply him with more Christians for the next step in his walk with Jesus. By faith, we believed that God would complete the good work that He had begun in Renni.

It was an absolute honour and a privilege to be a part of God’s awesome plan for this man’s life. As I reflect on this testimony, I am reminded of the disarming power of Christ’s love. People can debate over true and false religions, people can debate over scripture and biblical interpretation and of course the truth is of utmost importance, however, it is also essential for men and women to be shown love and acceptance in their person, before they are shown the distortion in their beliefs. God did not present to Renni a systematic critique of



his false views but God presented to Renni His tender-loving-kindness and with it, He overcame him, and the error that he was believing. One encounter with the sweetness of God’s love, can potentially change the hardest of hearts forever!

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE THE SAME GRACE

I would like to take this time to encourage the precious reader of this testimony. I would like you to know that you matter to God and that He is aware of you and your struggles, right now in this moment of time. God is able to help you, God is the God of the impossible, there is nothing too hard for Him. God can make a way where there seems to be no way. If God is invited into your life and into your hardships, then there is GREAT hope for you!

God’s grace through Jesus Christ is rich and abundant and can be found in any situation or “place” that you might find yourself in. The nation of Israel found it while being under the brutal slavery of Egypt. The rebellious, ‘prophet on the run’, Jonah found it when he was inside the belly of a great fish. A woman caught in adultery found it on Death Row (John 8:1-11) and Renni found it in the midst of suicidal depression within a maximum-security prison in a foreign land: Be encouraged!



GAVIN helps run Freedom Church, an initiative of a group of inmates in a Queensland Correctional Centre.

PERSON of P



In the New Testament Jesus **disciplined his followers in his missionary methods. Not only did he call them to become 'fishers of men', he provided the example for them. He trained them thoroughly through example and instruction, and after the climactic events of the cross and resurrection, he sent them out with the great commission to continue the process of making disciples.** With this great commission firmly in our minds, we need to examine closely how Jesus trained his disciples. Many people have read through these passages (listed below) on how Jesus trained his disciples and not thought that this teaching is applicable to us today. Two reasons prevent us in applying Jesus teaching practically.

1. We have already been trained in how to do mission through our church experience. The way Jesus trained his disciples seems a world away from our experience... so surely it doesn't apply to us... right?
2. The other problem is that we have traditionally read the Bible, the gospels in particular, as a devotional book. We have been taught to read it asking devotionally what does God want to speak to me? We rarely look at the way Jesus did ministry and see it as paradigmatic to our own ministry.

How did Jesus actually do this?

In missionary writings, much has already been written about Paul's missionary methods, but scant regard has been made about Jesus' missionary methods. It was only once I had sat down and re-read the gospels, asking 'how did Jesus actually do this?' that I went through the paradigm shifts necessary to think of Disciple Making Movements. We need to reset our thinking, sit at the feet of the master and learn afresh what it means to become a fisher of men.

One important principle in which Jesus trained his disciples (and thereby vicariously trained us) was the principle of the person of peace. In Luke 9, & 10, Matt 10, Mark 6 Jesus gathered his disciples, trained them, gave them authority over the evil one and then commissioned them. Amongst a number of instructions he told them to find a house, and stay there until they moved on to the next village. To find a 'worthy person' or a 'man of peace'. Finding this household, or person of peace, was core to his instructions on how to enter into a community with the message of the Kingdom of God.

A person of peace, can be a man or woman, young or old, rich or poor. They are the person prepared by God to provide entrance into their community for the gospel. Jesus modelled this in the way he called his disciples. We first see how the gospel spread along relational lines when he called Peter and his family. Peter's house becomes the first 'house of peace' from which the gospel spread. Read John 1:35-50, Mark 1: 14-20 & Mark 1: 29-34.

We see in a number of stories Jesus reached one, and then through that one person reached whole communities. Think of the story of Levi (Luke 5:27-39), and all the tax collectors that Levi reached; Think of the women at the well of Samaria (John 4:1-42) reaching her village; Of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9) and his household; or the demoniac of Decapolis, Mark 5:1-20, 7:31, 8:1ff. We see communities of sinners being reached by one of their own, an outcast and calling out her whole village, an influential (albeit corrupt) business man testifying to his whole community, and finally a previously demon possessed man reaching a whole region of cities for Jesus. In each of these scenarios Jesus didn't reach the communities, the people of peace did!. The principle is we win the one to win the many.

It seems that Jesus had a 'radar' to identify these people. It was a different connection method each time. Spiritual conversations (woman at the well), challenge to obedience (Levi), power encounter (Demoniac) and acceptance and eating together (Zacchaeus). But the one constant is that he found people of peace that multiplied.

People of peace can also be seen in the early church in the spreading of the gospel amongst the Gentiles. What Jesus started continued on in the ministry of his disciples through the book of Acts.

A few examples are

- Cornelius, Acts 10
- Lydia, Acts 16:13-15
- Philippi jailer, Acts 16:33-34
- Jason, Acts 17:1-9
- Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18, 1 Corinthians 6:17
- "And the church that meets in their house" is a natural fruit of the Person of Peace idea, Romans 6:1-16, 1 Corinthians 1:11, 1 Corinthians 1:16 (Note: Paul did not usually baptise households, that was up to the inside leader ... he shared the good news and others baptised!), Col 4:15, Philemon 1:1-2

The person of peace strategy is the opposite of extraction evangelism

Jesus spoke about making converts in Matthew 23:15 (NIV) 5 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are."

Challenging stuff. He was speaking of the religious extracting converts out of communities and making them just like them, something Jesus didn't think was a good idea.

The person of peace strategy is the opposite of extraction evangelism. Our

traditional evangelism method is to convert one person for the Lord, extract him or her from their community and bring them to our church, or new church plant. In doing so we usually alienate them from their community. We change their language and friendship networks. Extraction evangelism stops movements. Mass evangelism does not find people of peace either. Both mass evangelism and extraction evangelism can become barriers to finding the person of peace. These methods are opposite to the person of peace strategy, where one is discipled and they in turn disciple their whole family or network. We go slow in finding the one, taking the time and care to disciple this new inside leader. Once discipled, the gospel multiplies quickly, churches are planted within communities and within relational networks. We keep them within their communities.

We go slow in finding the one, taking the time and care to disciple this new inside leader.

The person of peace is a pivotal concept within our understanding of Disciple Making Movements. Extraction evangelism usually kills multiplication. It is through the Person of Peace strategy that we can reach whole groups. They understand their culture and language, they have networks in place, they already have deep relationships, they have been prepared by God to be the doorway to communities.

They have usually 'got a story' of God preparing the way. Often they are the 'halfway people' we see so often. People already on the journey.

We identify a person of peace as someone who welcomes you and your message. They are drawn to your spirituality, because they are hungry. They open their house (literally or figuratively) to you. They are hungry for spiritual encounter. They have usually 'got a story' of God preparing the way. Often they are the 'halfway people' we

see so often. People already on the journey. They also are keen to tell others what they are learning. We summarise this as Open, Hungry and Sharing – OH&S.

Finding such 'worthy people' is how Jesus entered and reached whole communities, and what he taught his disciples to do. The big challenge is to find these God-prepared people. We are called to be dependent on Jesus to show us the people that he has prepared. The task ahead is to be prayerful, and Spirit-led to identify People of Peace. It requires patience and perseverance.

When Colleen and I were working in India, we saw this in action time and time again. It was through one person that a whole community was reached. We had the privilege of working with a Nepali Brahmin, who after coming to Christ, planted numerous churches within the Nepali community. A Kashmiri Muslim, who after a powerful encounter with Jesus was able to turn around to his community and bring the gospel to them. Churches were planted that we could never dream of doing ourselves! A man who was living on the edge of a slum after losing both his legs in a train accident, after receiving the good news became a church planter in the gospel resistant slum we were trying to reach. These and many other stories showed us the power of the Person of Peace principle. We didn't set out to do this, we stumbled on this after seeing who the gospel spread like wildfire through these people.

When we live as conspicuously spiritual people then those who are open, hungry and will share will find us.

David Watson comments "There is one final important point to ponder when thinking about finding People of Peace-being conspicuously spiritual! As disciplinarians, we need to be conspicuously spiritual people who live out our faith without apology. It is not about being religious, but rather about being spiritual. When we do this, we will find the People of Peace."

When we live as conspicuously spiritual people then those who are open, hungry and will share will find us. There is less of us finding people of peace but rather the people of peace will find the conspicuously spiritual disciple-maker. This is about faith and living it out in all circumstances, regardless of consequences. It is about loving God and loving people. It is about obedient thinking and living. This kind of life draws in people who are interested in spiritual matters and opens the door to communities for establishing obedient bodies of believers who Head is the Lord

Jesus Christ" (Contagious Disciple Making, 2014).

After trying traditional church planting methods here in Australia, I came to realise we have to go back and rediscover what Jesus taught his disciples was not just for 'back then', or for places like India. But they needed to work here... in Australia and the West. Jesus training of his disciples applies to Western nations as well! As we have applied ourselves to finding people of Peace we see this



becoming reality before our eyes. We see we see stories of hard communities being reached by such people of Peace. Policemen, indigenous women, households, and the list goes on. It is perhaps the biggest paradigm shift we have to make to see movement become a reality in the West. Perhaps it is also the most exciting.

DAVE LAWTON & his wife Colleen head up *Praxeis*, an Australian network of people committed to following Jesus. They are based around Australia and in different nations. They are a missionary band, part of Jesus' church on mission. Follow at www.praxeis.org.au

Some stories out of Praxeis ...

PERSON OF PEACE AMONGST CHALDEAN IRAQI PEOPLE

Andrew and Mindy Pyman and their team are ministering in the Western Suburbs of Sydney with Praxeis. Recently the Pyman family moved into a new neighbourhood where half of the people living in their area are from a Catholic background. Being the largest Catholic community in Australia, the Pymans and the West Sydney team started to pray for these people.

After prayer walking and gaining a better understanding of the suburb and its needs, God showed the team an access ministry of ESL (English as a Second Language) to connect with locals from the area. Meaningful and spiritual conversations started to develop with those from the ESL class at the local library. Soon Andrew found himself connecting further and starting to pray after the class with an Iraqi Catholic called Nabo. Nabo started to invite Andrew to meet and open the Bible with his extended family in different houses across the neighbourhood. It was clear that Nabo was the kind of person the team had been praying for; someone who was open to friendship, spiritually hungry for God and who shared what

they were learning with others in their family and wider community.

Today, twelve months on, Nabo has a heart to see his Catholic community become disciples of Jesus. As Andrew and the team disciple Nabo, he continues to attend his Catholic church on Sundays but only so he can find others who want to join his weekly discovery bible studies in his home. In his words, Nabo prays for and dreams of seeing an 'Injil inteshaar' (Gospel movement) amongst his Chaldean Iraqi people that would multiply through his one thousand odd extended family network and back into Iraq and the nations where this people group have migrated to as refugees.

THE PERSON OF PEACE WILL SHARE!

I met Erzsi in 2014. I discipled her, baptized her and knew she was a Person of Peace (someone who is open, hungry and shares with others) in her family and community. She started to disciple her sister Juli and than baptized her. After a little while, Erzsi had a break from fellowship for various reasons. Despite this, Juli grew stronger and stronger in her faith.

Last year, Juli's niece, Maria, came from London for her Dad's funeral and stayed with Juli for a week. During this time, Maria met the Lord, was baptised and began to be discipled by her Aunt Juli. After the funeral, Maria went back to England and started sharing about Jesus amongst her family and friends. Two months ago, her brother Gabor visited Maria in London and he gave his life to Jesus too. Maria baptised him and started to disciple him.

Fast forward to today and the gospel is spreading amongst their family and communities. Gabor is already doing a Discovery Bible Study (DBS) with two of his friends! Maria has started to disciple her sister too who lives in Hungary as a Buddhist. They read the bible together and discover who God is, looking for their personal truth in which they will commit to obey. They are accountable to each other and to share with others. They support each other and their community in their needs. They love Jesus and their lives are being transformed as they read the Bible and obey His word. Their passion for reaching the lost amongst their community is growing more and more!

Please join Gabi, our Hungarian-based worker reaching the Gypsies, that the gospel will continue to move amongst these Gypsy communities.

ANSWERED PRAYERS - DBS GROUPS

The Discovery Bible Study (DBS) is the Engine Room of Disciple Making Movements (DMM). The discipleship of the many in a movement, happens as groups of people together learn to read the Word of God, respond to the Holy Spirit and grow through obedience-orientated discipleship.

We should never be scared to pray with specifics! Our God is a big vision God but he also knows the details required. Be encouraged by this story from Kelvin and Niro Chang, leaders in the South East Corridor from Clayton to Dandenong and beyond, to pray not only the specifics that you want to see but ask with boldness. Pray to our powerful God



for more than you can imagine! (Eph 3:20).

“We had been praying as a team of young adults for 18 months. Our prayer times were powerful and passionate. Filled with the presence of the Spirit. We were moved for the harvest. Filled with a vision to see God move through our nation. However, on a team retreat in February this year, we reflected that whilst we were having amazing prayer times, we had no DBS groups currently running in the harvest. Hmm.... this was a problem for a bunch of people wanting to see a Disciple-making movement. They are a somewhat essential part of DMM! So, we decided to start praying specifically for DBS groups. Every time we met we prayed for groups to form. Every day we would come before God and ask for groups. “God, give us one DBS group. God, give us five DBS groups”. We were on repeat. We then did the 40 days prayer and fasting alongside the rest of the Praxeis community. Still nothing. Not only did we



see nothing, but we found the time quite hard. We didn't feel particularly encouraged. It was a big of a slog! By the end of the fasting period we really recognised that we were doing our best and it was up to God to do the rest. It was in his hands. We just kept on asking and praying.

Then seemingly out of nowhere, between the end of the prayer and fasting time (April) until now (May), Five DBS groups have started amongst a variety of communities including a Malay Muslim uni student, Sri Lankan Buddhist uni students, the Hindu Indian medical

community, Afghans and Chinese International Uni students. We have experienced increased boldness in sharing and initiating spiritual conversations. We are encouraged. This was not us! We could not have gone from having no groups in the harvest to five. We know this must have been God.”

Discovery Bible Studies (DBS) are a simple way to engage people in exploring the Bible. Go to praxeis.org.au/resources/articles/ for a great PDF on how to create a DBS.

Not Fishing? Not Following!

Jesus said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men”. So it stands to reason then, that if we are not fishing for men we are not fully following the Lord Jesus. In what specific ways should we follow Jesus?

We should follow Jesus in His purpose: Jesus said He came for one purpose, “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10 cf. Luke 4:43; Mark 1:38; John 12:27). This single purpose more than anything else defined Jesus ministry. We who identify with Christ by calling ourselves Christians must be purposeful about soul winning and faith sharing.

We should follow Jesus in His Compassion for the Lost: Every time the bible says that Jesus had compassion, some action followed. Jesus preached, healed the sick and fed the multitudes because He had compassion. He raised the dead, cast out demons, restored sight to the blind and cleansed lepers because He had compassion. He saw a crowd of people leaderless and directionless, “like sheep without a shepherd” and He taught them out of compassion. We too must follow Jesus example and showing compassion and the love of God in practical ways to others.

We should follow Jesus' model of Disciple Making: Is there such a thing as a Biblical model for church planting? YES!!! There is only one model that Jesus actually taught His disciples. God considered this model so important to the success of the church that it is recorded in the bible four times in

Matthew 10:1-15, Mark 6:7-11, Luke 9:1-5 and Luke 10:1-9. Using this model as a basis we can

- Mobilize existing Christians to live out God's calling on their lives
- Teach believers to witness appropriately as a lifestyle
- Disciple believers to grow in a genuine love relationship of obedience to Christ
- Start new groups or churches (usually both)
- Develop maturing leaders quickly
- Cascade into multiple generations of disciples and churches/groups
- Equip missionaries or church planters to appropriately faze out of leading the movement themselves and help the indigenous movement stand on the Spirit of God alone once the discipleship and training process has taken root

We should follow Jesus example of Sacrificial Living: Jesus gave up His time, riches (2 Cor.8:9) and reputation (Phil.2:7), and ultimately His own Life for others. 1 John 3:16 says, “We know what love is because Jesus gave his life for us. That's why we must give our lives for each other.”

It's time to follow Jesus. Let your purpose be to help others come to Christ. Let God's own compassion motivate you to do the works of Jesus. Let good sense cause you to learn and practice Jesus' discipleship method. And may sacrificial living be a hallmark of your faith.



MARTY ROCHFORT is a New Zealander. Follow his ministry at soulwinner.org.nz

AUSTRALIA

OIKOS REGIONAL GATHERING Tallangatta, Victoria

Oikos Regional Report Tallangatta Aug 24-26 - Phil Brown writes

It's hard to capture and describe the experience of the Oikos Regional Gathering at Tallangatta (northern Victoria) in August. So powerful and impactful. About 80 people shared a fantastic weekend of fellowship, story sharing, inspiration, and challenge. Each story was unique and special. People came from as far as Warrnambool, Albion Park, West Sydney, Narrandera, Wagga, Tallangatta etc - so many great stories were shared. The youth and kids also had a great time sharing and learning as well as hitting golf balls and riding motor bikes.

I was challenged by Fraser's affirmation and challenge to the youth to start their own groups. It was exciting and his passionate sharing and challenge to them was to not be afraid of treading on some toes or of conflict because it provided the opportunity for reconciliation. His story of the impact of doing a public baptism that bore witness to the whole local town was amazing.

Also Stan's amazing story of the Yazidis and the way that God connected him to this community, of the tragedy so many have suffered, and the Korbani greeting - "hugs to you" (*I give myself to you, I sacrifice myself to you*). Jesus is the Korbani! His message - "*The Father not only loves you, He actually likes you!*"

Stories of sharing Jesus, hospitality, praying for people, practicing the "Go skills" such as sharing the Gospel with the 3 circles diagram and sharing our personal testimonies and blessing each other - so many highlights and so many people to thank - Bruce in the kitchen, Fraser and Anita and their family for their amazing hospitality and efforts to accommodate and feed us all! Thanks also to Ailsa and Anita for coordinating the weekend.

There are so many other highlights - such as seeing the relationships and partnership in ministry with Neil and Pam and Stan in West Sydney, and the amazing way they first met. So many people were connecting, sharing, talking, learning together. It was a spiritual and fellowship feast, and the momentum and excitement are contagious. With Jesus all things are possible! Missional community at its best. What a family to be part of!

Destiny Matesic writes -

It was beautiful to again come together with likeminded followers of Jesus on the beautiful property in Tallangatta. I loved how the focus was on building relationships and sharing encouraging stories with each other. It was particularly great to see so many children and young adults! In my time on the trampoline with all the young ones, we talked about God's character and his biblical

principles! After hearing about the fact that my family shares our washing machine



with others in our church family, simply to share and step away from being so independent, this really stood out for the kids! They realised that God wants us to share what we have because this brings His people together, even in the simple things in life! Personally, I found the weekend so encouraging by just being able to step out of the business of life and seeing what God is doing on a bigger scale in NSW and beyond. He is doing wonders through His people being missional wherever they are.





stories

what's happening around the nation

OIKOS GATHERING IN CANBERRA

Wayne Crockford



Wayne Crockford writes - I had a delightful weekend with a bunch of house church type followers of Jesus at Tallangatta, Victoria. So many 'ordinary' people doing so much for the Kingdom, no pew sitters present in the about 80 attendees. As I look around, there weren't many academic or poser types in the gathering,

for which I was grateful. In my opinion, we have had enough of such. On the way driving home, I thought of a prophecy given in the Charismatic move in 1970 when big names were aplenty, all nine gifts of the Spirit flying off their fingers, very impressive to many. Yet, most if not all those big names have passed on. It can be asked what did they establish in the long run? I think very little!!

So, the prophecy by Judson Cornwall in Christian Life Centre in Brisbane in 1970: *There is a day coming, saith the Lord, when I will raise up a people who are no people; a people of no repute. And I will invest in them authority, and they will walk with Me in power on the earth. And the church people will look in wonder and askance at these people saying "My, God can even use these folks."*

The day of the Holy Spirit lifting Jesus up in His people is coming upon those who desire His will and His way. It will be the ordinary people like my friends last weekend. There won't be super megachurch pastors or leader types. The authority of Jesus will be restored; the people of God will hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. Even so come Lord Jesus, resurrect your ways and your will, take us by storm, sift the hearts of your people. What is may still remain, however a Great Restoration is coming where the Lordship of our Messiah shall trump the aspirations, ambitions and the 'pedestal' mentality of those who seek to be noted or known as someone 'great'

(Jer 45:5), for this is a move that will have no (man's) name upon it.

CANBERRA GATHERING

Wayne Crockford writes again -

Thank you everyone for your wonderful contributions to making the Canberra Gathering a time of family togetherness, laid back, so special! Overall, it ran smoothly thanks to the many who unobtrusively served, and gave. The Lord assured me, He would accomplish what He desired. I believe that happened.

There were over fifty different people who attended the weekend. I was amazed at so many people from so many places: Brisbane, Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong, Nowra, Bateman's Bay, Marimbula, Wagga Wagga, Eagle Point, Henty NSW, Southern Highlands, and about 20 - 25 from Canberra. There was heaps of interaction and input. Stories were shared. For me, it was special to have Baden and Val Wynn share their godly wisdom and insight; the Sunday morning brunch with the relaxed 'familiness', such a sense of being and belonging together. Then, Sunday lunch a group of about 20 went to Floriade, we walked together, talked and shared, a wonderful time. I so enjoyed the wide spread of ages who attended the gathering.

What I would like to see in the future is the development of intercession and prayer in worship, the gifts of the Holy Spirit operating, ministry gifts being released; in His timing!

Please rejoice with us, especially those in Canberra, as we seek to start a simple, organic, missional community as house churches. This city, Canberra desperately needs a people who have a fierce and abundant love expressed in fellowship and intercessory prayer. Canberra has one of the lowest 'church' attendance rates in Australia, if not, the lowest! High



incomes express themselves in a relaxed easy lifestyle given to pleasure, convenience and comfort, without a need for God. Please pray and partner with us for this city as it is the Capital, very influential.

My opening statement in the Gathering must be restated; "God really is in love with the Church of Jesus Christ, He loves us, that includes all who are His family, alternative, institutional or otherwise. We are brothers and sisters, so let us love one another, ferociously, magnificently and abundantly!!! No criticism of each other, but the system that robs the people of God needs to be pulled down! The Lord's word to me nearly 50 years ago was Jeremiah 1:10 ... clarity, we are responsible for what we do, say and think! Not what others do, say or think. Let us be clear about what He wants to do for His Body, what hinders and what His will is. If we know not the aberrations, we will condemn ourselves to repeating them. The best approach is not to focus on others' failures, frailties, fallacies or faithlessness, but to know what is crucial and the distinctives He has called His people to. Always pray for one another, be there for one another, bear one another's burdens etc. Let's love, be positive, open and inviting to all our brothers and sisters. Remember, the Body is His!

BE and DO CHURCH

One of the easy things about being a member of a traditional church is that someone else takes responsibility for providing programs for your spiritual growth. Your job is to choose the program and show up! This can work for us although, after some time, we may find it stifling and religious rather than life-giving.

But one of the challenges of stepping out of traditional church is that we find ourselves in the uncomfortable position of taking responsibility for our own spiritual growth and spiritual connections. The fact is, both of these are necessary for healthy, vital, Jesus-following living: spiritual growth and spiritual connections. They work together.

So, what does this look like when we are not relying on the programmed church to provide the programs for connection and growth? Indeed, more than likely a house church gathering (unless it has a lot of connectedness going on a daily basis) also does not meet all the needs we have for vital spiritual connection either.

Let's reflect on some Biblical needs we have for sustaining spiritual health and consider the variety of ways we might go about deliberately building connections and gatherings into our life. The point is that there is no one program/gathering that fits every need, thus leaving the challenge to each of us to build in what works for us.

1. Spiritual Food - "Man cannot live by bread alone." This is obviously a need that we can meet ourselves individually as we read and meditate on God's word for ourselves. But others help us in the feeding process:

- A house church gathering where the word is broken open and shared with one another
- A Bible study with friends
- An online study or video or teaching - especially if there is additional interaction involved
- A discipleship group focusing on eating, digesting, and applying the word of God

2. Spiritual Friends and sharing life with one another - "Love one another..." and "Bear one another's burdens..."

- A house church gathering of spiritual friends
- Coffee or a meal with spiritual friends
- An activity (hiking, working out, or anything) shared regularly with spiritual friends
- Prayer groups

3. Healing Community - "Confess your sins to one another that you may be healed."

- A house church community that is safe and open so that vulnerability with one another can be shared
- A 12-step meeting or Celebrate Recovery group
- A very good, spiritual friend with whom we can share openly and be honest with one another
- A close-knit group of spiritual friends who meet regularly for open sharing

4. Worship, Prayer, or Deeper Spiritual Life. This is, again, an area where we are able to pursue this on our own but spiritual connection with others help.

- Small group worship times whether house church or others
- Large celebration worship events
- Prayer meetings
- Spiritual / prayer retreats
- Contemplative prayer groups
- Nature retreats

5. Personal Mentors, Disciplers, and/or Spiritual Directors - "I am a father to you in the Lord..." This is probably one of the most important and least sought-after connection whether people are in or out of traditional churches.

- A discipleship group in which I am being discipled
- An informal or formal relationship with a mentor or spiritual director
- Any 'elder' that you have invited into your life to guide, direct, challenge, or support you

6. Mission - "Go into all the world..."

- A house church that shares a common, spiritual mission
- A house church that encourages us in our own personal mission and missional lifestyle
- Any group of people that we share a common, spiritual mission with
- Involvement in a local mission cause or organization
- Connection/involvement with others who are going on mission
- Going on mission to other places or peoples

Note that some of these connections can be done virtually and thus do not, necessarily, require a face-to-face encounter though the latter is often much more potent.

The point? We were never called to 'go to church' where others program our spiritual life. But, we have been called to an intentional Jesus-following lifestyle which does include regular spiritual connections. We need these to live vital, spiritually growing lives. Without the programming of traditional churches we will need to step into rhythms of connectedness that work for us.

Have you lost intentionality in several of these areas and feeling the dryness as a result? It may be time to ask God for some direction as to how He might refresh you and connect you to others who might support you in one or more of these areas:

1. Spiritual food
2. Spiritual friends
3. Healing community
4. Worship, prayer, and deeper spiritual life
5. Mentors / Disciplers
6. Mission partners or encouragers

ROGER THOMAN

www.simplechurchjournal.com



7 SIGNS in the BOOK of JOHN

A Simple Process for Evangelism and Starting Churches

The Gospel of Jesus is the flame that burns at the grassroots of the apostolic movement. Having a means of igniting that flame in such a way that those who catch it can spread it on the same day is an extremely valuable catalyst. We felt we needed a means of unveiling the true Christ to a person open to it that was simple enough that everyone could do it in any culture, language or generation. That is a tall order to fill. We found our answer in the Bible, specifically the Gospel of John.

The Seven Signs of John is based on the words that the apostle John writes near the end of his gospel. He said, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30-31)

Apparently, while John was with Jesus from the start and saw all the miracles performed, he selected these particular miracles and included them in this specific order^[i] for a purpose - to open the eyes of the unbeliever to have faith in the real Christ and gain eternal life. This is not my opinion; this is what the Scriptures themselves say. Consider it this way: the Holy Spirit is telling you that the miracle stories in the gospel of John are the stories that are best to present the true Christ to an unbelieving heart. It is quite common for American Christian leaders to exaggerate the effectiveness of a method, but in this case it is the Holy Spirit making the claim, not me.

The Seven Signs are as follows:

1. The turning of water into wine (John 2:1-12)
2. The healing of the royal official's son (John 4:46-54)
3. The healing of the paralytic at the Bethesda pool (John 5:1-17)
4. The feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14)
5. The walking on water (John 6:15-25)
6. The healing of the man born blind (John 9:1-41)
7. The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-46)

The way it works is that each week the person or persons you are sharing with is encouraged to read one of the stories once every day. So in the first week, they read the story of Jesus turning water into wine every day. At the end of the week when you get together and read the passage again together, you ask four simple questions and have a discussion about the passage. The questions are:

1. What does this story say to you about people?
2. What does this story say to you about Jesus?
3. What does this story have to say about you?
4. Who needs to hear this story?

This can easily be done meeting once a week over a cup of coffee with anyone who is a spiritual seeker. Every organic church I have ever started began going weekly through these stories and simply asking the questions. I have yet to do so and not have someone commit to follow Christ. I am not



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guaranteeing you the same results, but we can take the Holy Spirit's word for it that these stories will help people believe in Jesus.

This simple and profound ministry tool crosses all cultural barriers because it is simply the Bible speaking for itself (a significant principle!). It reproduces because anyone can ask a few easily remembered questions. This is not a model of church or a human curriculum. It is simply unleashing the power of God's word to do what it does in a life. The only way you could say that this doesn't work cross-culturally is to say that the Bible doesn't work cross-culturally. Even in an oral culture that is not literate this tool will still work because it is basic story telling.

[i] It is clear that while The Gospel of John follows Jesus' life it is not ordered in a strict chronological order. It is put together more topically than the synoptic gospels. The miracles that John writes about are placed in an intentional order. Therefore, following the order as John intended, while not absolutely necessary, has advantages.



Excerpt taken directly from Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church by Neil Cole © 2010



So you want to Join Our House Church?

KEITH GILES

My wife Wendy and I regularly have to meet with new members, or those seeking to join our house church family, to explain to them what we do and why we do it.

This usually involves letting them know that we have no statement of faith, and that we welcome anyone to join us as long as they are seeking to know Jesus better and want to follow Him in their daily life.

This means that, at any gathering of the Body, we potentially have Dispensationalists sitting next to people who accept Fulfillment Theology; and Calvinists sitting next to Arminians; and Cessationists sitting next to Pentecostals; and sometimes even homosexuals sitting next to straight people or Muslims sitting next to Atheists who are sitting next to Jesus Freaks.

For most, this is just too much, and they have to admit that this is not the church they are looking for. But, for those who do find this sort of freedom refreshing and who are only interested in knowing Jesus, and hearing Him, and experiencing Him, and focusing on Him with others who are also interested in the same Jesus, they discover a

community where they are as loved and as welcome as anyone else.

We know we're different, even from other local House Church or Organic Church groups, and that's ok. For those who are looking for something a bit more traditional, there are plenty of others to choose from...and we are happy to help them find their spiritual home if it isn't among us.

Some who hear about our approach are concerned that someone might come into our group and lead us astray.

I understand that, if you've never experienced what I'm talking about, you might think that it's a free-for-all where "anything goes" and therefore it would leave us wide open for false teachers, cultists, or even other religions like Islam or Hinduism, etc.

Well, the truth is, it would be very hard for any person to do this successfully in a room full of people who are hungry

for Jesus. Hindus can't give us more of Jesus. So, they wouldn't find any takers in our group. Plus, we wouldn't allow anyone to advance their own agenda, whether it was Amway, or Dispensationalism, or Hinduism, etc.

When we gather together our singular focus is Jesus. We talk to Him, we pray to Him, we listen to Him, we talk about His teaching, we encourage one another to follow Him, we remind one another of His heart and character and example, etc.

It would be hard for a Hindu to introduce their faith into that conversation. Maybe that's why we've never had any problem with that?

As you might imagine, we are pretty sensitive to this sort of thing. Anyone who tries to advance their own pet doctrines or to sway others to agree with their particular convictions about anything is going to raise eyebrows in our group.

Or, to put it another way: We're not afraid that other people might rub off on us. But we are pretty certain that they should be

Hindus can't give us more of Jesus. So, they wouldn't find any takers in our group.

concerned about how much we are going to rub Jesus onto them.

And also, I am not the leader of our group, Jesus is. For reals.

My personal doctrines and convictions, etc. are not on display or even championed. For example, I've written several books and I have a blog, but most in our group have never read those books or follow my blog. I just finished a series against Dispensationalism, but I have never uttered the word "Dispensationalism" in our house church in over 10 years. Our focus is not doctrine, or anything other than knowing and following and experiencing the person of Jesus.

Some might argue that "just saying that Jesus is your Leader doesn't change anything."

And I would totally agree – if all we are doing is "just saying Jesus is our leader" then we have accomplished nothing. But if we are actually working together to allow Jesus to be our leader whenever we come together – and it does take cooperation from everyone – then we have done something pretty amazing.

Having done this for 10 years now I can tell you that we have only enjoyed more of the presence of the Lord Jesus in our midst and over time our love for Him and for one another has only increased.

Those who are hungry for more of Him find themselves thriving in this community and those who want to find a group that believes everything the way they do finds that they're unsatisfied by our constant focus on Jesus.

Of course, it's very challenging to explain what our gatherings look like in a post. I wish everyone could visit one of our gatherings and notice how I almost never talk and how everyone

else is sharing spontaneously from their heart about what Jesus is teaching them or showing them or how different people spontaneously encourage one another and pray for one another, etc.

As one brother said who visited us a few years ago: "If I didn't know that you had started this church, I would never have guessed it after what the Lord did today."

I've heard people suggest that what our group is experiencing is simply peer pressure at work.

I understand that we are so jaded by our previous experiences in what has been come to be called "Church" in America, but seriously, the regulating mechanism in the Body of Christ is not peer pressure [although, certainly it can be if the Spirit is not present in the

Body].

It's really amazing what happens when everyone in the Body surrenders themselves to the Holy Spirit all at once!

We can probably relate to what it's like in our individual lives when we do so. But now imagine a room full of people who are all submitted to Christ and who are all seeking Him as their leader and Head.

Imagine that they don't speak to be heard, or to show off their wisdom, but only if the Holy Spirit gives them an encouragement for someone else in the Body.

Imagine that they don't speak unless they honestly feel that they are



speaking, as if "the very words of God" [1 Peter 4:11]

Imagine that they don't do anything apart from the direction of Christ within them whispering in His still, small voice.

That is closer to what I'm talking about. And until we started doing this 10 years ago, I never thought it was really possible.

Granted, we are only really beginning to experience this in a greater measure these last 2 years or so, but it has been so worth it to partner together with the family of God to arrive at this place.

So, our house church family might not be what you're looking for. We understand that. But for those who are hungry and thirsty for this sort of group where Jesus is the center and we all work together to keep Him as our focus, it's a wonderful opportunity to experience Jesus as the Head of the Body.

It really is the best thing I've ever done with the word "Church" on it for the last 10 years, now.



KEITH GILES is a former pastor who "left the pulpit over a decade ago to follow Jesus". He's the author of several books, including "Jesus

Untangled: Crucifying Our Politics To Pledge Allegiance To The Lamb. He is co-founder of *Pacifist Fight Club* [www.PacifistFightClub.com] and co-host of the *Heretic Happy Hour* Podcast. He and his family started a house church in Orange County, CA where 100% of the offering goes to help the poor in their community.

It really is the best thing I've ever done with the word "Church" on it for the last 10 years

ANDREW BEEL

An Apostolic Team

Just over 18 months ago my mentor gave me a word which he believed was from God. He told me to form an apostolic team.

To give some context; when I was on my ordination retreat preparing for ordination as a priest in the Anglican Church God gave me Romans 15:20-21. Paul writes, “and thus I make it my ambition to preach the Gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation, but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.” At the time God gave me these two verses, I suspected that he must have made a mistake as I believed that my calling was to work primarily within the context of the church for the sake of the building up of believers. Over the years, however, I have come to realise that I have an apostolic calling with a concomitant desire to take the Gospel to those who have never heard. I sometimes explain to people that God has called me to be an apostle to the gay community. I have a mentor who recognises my call and my understanding of the implications of the call and so in some ways it was not surprising that he would suggest that I call together an apostolic team. As we are told in Ephesians, God provides his people with a five-fold ministry structure for the building up of the body, made up of apostles,

prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. As New Testament scholar Gordon Fee points out, there is two sorts of leadership evident in the New Testament made up of itinerant leaders such as Paul, who would start churches and move on, and then there was the settled leadership of elders, always plural, to provide ongoing oversight to the church. I think many of us are painfully aware that the sort of one-man ministry offered in most churches has no basis in the New Testament and is particularly unhealthy both for minister and congregation. But many of us haven’t recognised the different callings between the more itinerant ministries and the settled ministries

I NEED PEOPLE

Now having followed Jesus since I was seventeen and having served in ministry in one form or another for as long, I am deeply aware of the fact that I cannot survive either as a Christian or as a leader of God’s people by myself. I need others! By God’s grace I have generally had the blessing of a mentor or spiritual director along with the ongoing support, friendship and fellowship of others walking a similar journey. I need people that I can confess my sins and struggles to. I need people to can unburden my heart with and wrestle together regarding Scripture and God’s call. I need people to pray for me and

speak into my life, people whom I can trust with my life. Without such people I am not sure where I would be.

After receiving the word about the apostolic team, I asked God concerning who I should invite to join me. I then approached the four men whose names the Lord put on my heart. I explained to them that my burden was to see God move in our nation and to show us how we might raise up a church that would exhibit profound Christlikeness, real community and yet also be effective in reaching Australian people. (I am convinced the traditional forms of church are going nowhere and the stats about the rapid decline of Christianity certainly bear this out. And yet, having read widely and spoken to many people involved in house churches and other mission movements in this nation, it would seem to me that there is little evidence of any significant growth of any movement in this nation. Whilst it is exciting to read of amazing discipleship and church planting movements in India and many Muslim nations seeing millions respond to the Gospel, the reality remains that such growth and response is just not evident here. This, of course, can be quite discouraging for those of us seeking to wholeheartedly follow our Lord and share his message with an increasingly fracturing society.) They all agreed to join with me.

In our first meeting we all shared our lives with each other, confessing sins and sharing of hopes, dreams, struggles and heart aches. Each person in the group was facing overwhelming difficulties and traumas and some were struggling to overcome addictions. I brought a scripture, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." As we prayed God began to show me the sickness of my own heart and challenged me in a very personal way about how willing I might be to let go of my reputation and potentially lose ministry opportunities by honestly confessing struggles with some of the people I work with. I was cut to the very core of my being.

A NEW FREEDOM

Over the next year we met fortnightly and gained little insight or wisdom regarding the way forward for more successful mission. Instead little by little, the people in our group started finding greater freedom, victory over sin and addictions, wholeness and renewed faith and trust in God. It was evident that God wanted firstly to get us sorted out. In the last few months I have sensed that it might be time to invite others into our group. The initial four members agreed and we invited another three men, one of whom didn't join, and then most recently a lady.

Each time we meet there is always a strong sense of God's presence with us. One of our members has begun to flow in the gift of prophecy very powerfully and all seem to be growing in their ability to hear from God and speak his word into the lives of others. One person has felt called to go overseas to do missionary training, another has a strong sense of calling to start simple churches, another has just started having friends previously opposed to the Gospel seeking her out to find out more. At the same time God has been speaking to us about church. One word that has come through very strongly has been that there are to be no names. We are not to give ourselves a name and anything that God starts must remain unnamed. Of course, scripturally this makes sense.

A VISIT TO JAKARTA

Some months after we started our group I was visiting Jakarta with a small team to spend time with a man I mentor

who works amongst the lady boys in the slums. While we were there a group of young ladies approached us and asked to take me and my prayer partner out for lunch. A couple of years before we had gone with these ladies to a church meeting in a slum attended by some 40 or 50 young people. The Spirit of God was moving powerfully amongst these young people with much repentance, tears and

crying out to God. One of the ladies had started the group and after the meeting I prayed for her and received a strong prophetic word for her. In the word I told her that she had an apostolic call and that she was not to 'come under' someone else. She was to learn to trust God's calling in her own life and she didn't need a pastor or minister to submit herself to. Knowing the culture I had grave doubts as to the likelihood this lady would be able to accept my word. Most women in this culture believe that they need to

have some male authority in their lives to be effective in God. But here we were two years later as a very excited group of young ladies explained that indeed the word had been taken very seriously. Together they had formed a prayer group and now, just like our apostolic team in Perth, they were meeting regularly, confessing their sins, sharing their lives, supporting one another and interceding for their nation. They were now asking us for any guidance we might offer. Of course, we had little guidance to give and simply a lot of encouragement to them all to keep up the good work that God was doing amongst them as they sought to reach out to the children and young people living in Jakarta's slums. I was amazed that quite independently from us in Perth, in another nation, God seemed to be raising up something very similar.

A BRISBANE TEAM

Again, on a recent trip to Brisbane for my mother's 80th birthday my brother invited to me a prayer group he is a part of. The group had been started by a disillusioned former pastor with a strong prophetic gifting. As I shared something of the journey I had been on and spoke about our group and the calling of people together who have been shattered and broken along life's way, people who had been truly humbled by our Lord's loving hand

of discipline, it was as if lights were going off in those present. Here again was another 'apostolic team' made up of sincere Christians, disillusioned by church, deeply aware of their own brokenness and failure and desperate simply to be a part of some sort of move of God. Like others I meet, we could share of how all our best made ideas and plans had failed. We could share of how our egos were being crucified and even of how our hopes and dreams remained unfulfilled, a source of more tears and pain. We could share of prayers that remained unanswered, family members who had gone off the rails, personal failure etc. And yet, they like our team in Perth, whilst knowing that what had been known no longer offered hope, still there was a lack of clarity as to what the new thing might actually look like. I write as I do, because it seems, as if there is some sort of pattern becoming evident. It is still early days, but I do wonder how many others there are around this nation, and even in other countries who are finding themselves in similar groups.

Whilst this mightn't sound too exciting at this point. We still have not seen some major move of God take place or the beginning of some mission movement. The reality is as we continue to pray together, confess our sins, share our hopes and disappointments, there is a growing sense of God at work. We know that God is dealing with us, changing us and preparing us. We all have an increasing sense that we will see something new and exciting taking place in our nation and that the time of waiting will indeed come to an end. Dreams will come to pass, prayers answered and hopes fulfilled. Like Joseph, the time of slavery and imprisonment will eventually give way to God's saving plan being revealed for his people. Those prepared to wait, trust and pray may well be, like Joseph, those who are able to usher in the new thing God is doing. So, don't be discouraged. Seek out brothers and sisters to journey with, people with a similar heart, willing to be transparent and humble enough to admit when they don't have the answers. Together, you may well discover God's new way. More importantly, you may well simply come face to face with Jesus. And surely this is what is most important.

We all have an increasing sense that we will see something new and exciting taking place in our nation and that the time of waiting will indeed come to an end.



ANDREW BEEL comes from Perth, WA where he and his wife Sharon serve in mission to the more marginalised subcultural life of the city.

REVIEW

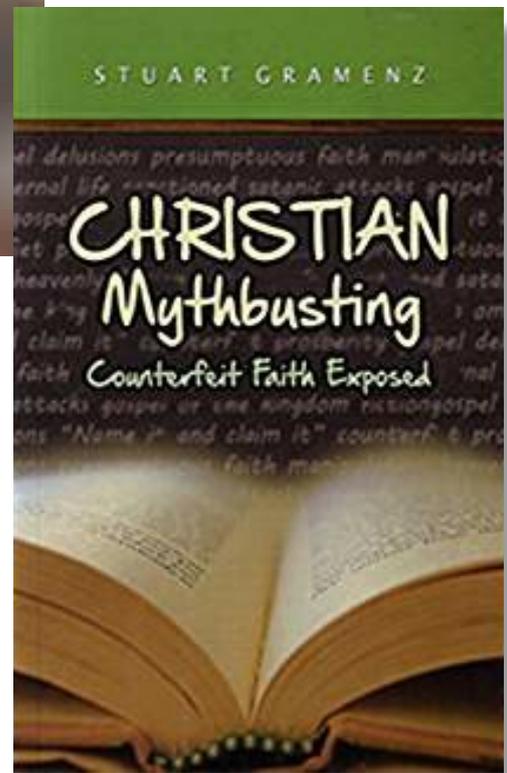
CHRISTIAN MYTHBUSTING

Stuart Gramenz (Amazon)

The apostle Paul warned the early church of possible deceptive counterfeits which would be offered to them. He was concerned that their pure and undivided devotion to Christ would be corrupted by those who preached a different Jesus or gospel to the one originally preached (see 2 Cor. 11:3-4). What keeps us from seeing the fulfillment of Jesus' words in John 14:12, "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works..."? Are there counterfeit

teachings eroding our foundation in Christ and preventing us from walking in the fullness of life that is our rightful inheritance? Instead of imitating Jesus and living in peace and joy, how does a sub-standard gospel limit our effectiveness and bring shame and guilt? What about "name it and claim it," "the prosperity gospel," end-time myths and faith manipulation? Take a refreshing look at teachings that are restricting the church from reaching its destiny.

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SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS

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these ekklesias or "assemblies." I have often encouraged Christian ekklesias to network and have semi-regular larger assemblies.

The third sized is the festival or celebration. The children of Israel enjoyed an annual calendar which celebrated in 7 feasts or festivals (in Acts the King James translates the word as the church or assembly in the wilderness). I have noticed that larger gatherings or assemblies on a semi-regular basis are important to connect people, cast vision and remind us all that we are part of something larger than a smaller ecclesia or group. Recently at Oikos we had a national conference and two regional conferences at Tallangatta and Canberra which were real highlights for those who gathered. It also attracted new participants and connected many people who hadn't previously known each other as well as brought old friends together again. Some reminded me of the joy and special connection that returned soldiers enjoy when they catch up after the war back in the homeland! - probably the original intent of the RSL in Australia.

Some denominational churches used to have annual camp meetings where hundreds came together and camped in tents for a spiritual high time. Even today in Australia many Christians from various church backgrounds attend huge gatherings for worship and teaching, such as Hillsong in Sydney.

The 3 different sized assemblies meet differing needs - intimate accountability and personal spiritual growth, fellowship, love and service together, and festivals that celebrated and remind us of the larger body of Christ and the Kingdom which we are a part of.

As the ancient Celtic Christians remind us, Christian life has rhythms like a tide that comes in and goes out again. There are times to retreat and to go deeper with Christ and his Word and other believers. But we must not stay in "holy huddles" but must go out to engage the multitude again like Jesus. He emerged fresh from nights of pray and solitude with his Father on a mountain or in the wilderness, to reengage with people in



everyday life. Jesus modelled this life of ebb and flow between the mountain and the multitude where he ministered. And as his followers we need similar rhythm's that embody deep spiritual times as well as an oikos to belong to, and festivals to celebrate and enjoy the high seasons and peaks of Christian life.

Our spiritual life is enhanced by deeper intimacy and accountability, loving and serving each other in oikos sized groups and semi-regular larger network gatherings as highpoint in the ebb and flow of life. All have a place and function in the life of followers of Jesus.

bless you, Phil Brown
OIKOS DIRECTOR

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FAITH

Risky or Risking?



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Without faith Hebrews 11 says you can't please God. Faith makes the unseen and not yet seen come into being and be seen. To plant a church, start a ministry, open a business . . . anything . . . has a certain amount of risk. I once heard a guy say that when he looked for church planters, he was looking for guys who would jump out of planes. I think that's good - but I would also say, they need to have a parachute on or they are going to die. Sometimes death itself is a real risk - especially in serving someone in a tough place or reaching out to someone who slaps back.

Faith is risking - but not risky. Faith moves your feet forward to the unknown based on a call with conviction of what must be. Faith is the solid substance others can't see yet, you can't even see it - except in your mind, in your heart, and on your knees. My kids view me as a huge risk taker - yet I often tell them not really. I've thought about all the scenarios before I move forward and I know not just the cost of moving forward, but the higher cost of not moving at all.

The real challenge to moving forward in faith is knowing the first two or three steps after you know where you're going. You see the end; now what steps are you going to take to move it forward. Faith is not blind but very, very deliberate. Faith is not a leap into the dark, but a leap into a call from God. It's moving forward without all the answers, all the resources - but knowing where you are going and that first step that you must take.

When that first step is taken, other things appear as you need them. You should plan, think about the first few steps - but to have a huge master plan before you begin is unrealistic and limiting because you will have to adjust. I have a

friend who has skydived and he once told me his leader said, "OK, we know the plan, but the minute we're out that door - so is the plan - so adjust as we need to." It used to be that long term ten-year planning was the big thing, then 5 year, then 3 year - but regardless of the time frame things change and you have to flex with it.

So, how do you decide if you should risk or not? How do you know if it's risking or risky?

First, has God called you to do it? The bigger the risk the louder I want to hear God's voice. If it's a huge risk and I don't hear clearly I'm going to hold back. If I hear clearly - I'm out of the door. Call isn't trying to duplicate someone else's story. Call isn't a crazy idea you got while driving down the road. Call isn't a person offering you the world. Call is that deep seated confident sense that this is something God has said, and you must move forward even if it's hard, even if it's impossible in the eyes of other.

Second, does who you are and what your life story is match up with what you sense your faith is leading you to do? It should. You are a life and God has a plan for your entire life. He's put values, experiences, knowledge into you that he doesn't want to go to waste. Moving forward in faith isn't about doing something - it's about releasing that unique mix of what God has orchestrated & created in every fiber of your being. You truly are a package - Eph 2:10 says in the Greek - literally - "You are God's masterpiece" - he has created you with purpose. He foreknew you, but also foreordained you.

Third, is this a direction or a dimension of development?

Sometimes we make complete journeys out of something that was merely tooling or preparation for other things down the line. Churchill & Lincoln could have looked at their lives as failures, but all in their lives went towards tooling that led to specific destinies that enabled them to lead like few historically ever have. Destiny is abandonment to the cause. Tooling & development is reflection.

Fourth, have you received good counsel? YES, talk to those that know you and love you - and listen. But also talk to those with no skin in the game as well. Each is going to bring perspective to the table. The majority of my mentors ARE NOT pastors. Some are, but people from business, government, educators, and even an admiral have given me exceptional counsel.

Fifth, are those who go out the door of the plane ready to go with you? For me, the most important person is my wife. I have to talk to her, share with her, get input from her. She's even taken me out of some plane doors before! It's not enough that you are willing to jump - those that are tied to you, must be brought into that process as well.

Finally - does it not go away? Generally, something that starts as a thought and builds over time is a good bet. If it diminishes with time - I don't pay much attention to it. Someone once told me, I have a thousand ideas but only 10 of them are good. They're probably right - the key is sorting those out. Listen to God, pray, then jump!



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The Cleaner by Michael Butler No Broken Reed July 15, 2018 [Community](#), [General](#), [Making Disciples](#) [1 Comment](#)

“If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who died believing in Christ are lost! And, if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world” – Paul, 1 Cor

Some years ago, when we first moved back to Sydney, the Lord clearly challenged us to go out into the harvest to get more workers. That is, as opposed to going to find other believers to join us in the work. To be frank, we didn't really listen, until recently.

Some months ago, he challenged us to take on renting the local Community Centre, even if there was just the 2 of us, and see what he would do. We were slow to respond, again. This time though, the Lord has really prodded us to take him at his word, and finally we have been obedient in both aspects. Sad isn't it, that we take so long to take Jesus at his word. Did he really say that to me?

The Community Centre is right in the centre of where we live, and it is a hub of activity. You can rent a hall, or a room. On a Sunday afternoon, we go out on the streets telling people about Christ, and then run a Discovery Group in the Centre. We have tea and cake and a very interactive Bible study, a Discovery Bible Study. Everyone who comes along is from our meetings on the streets. It is growing, the network seems to be spreading as God keeps putting people across our path. Recently, he has put another couple across our path who share a similar vision to ours, to take Christ to the marketplace and make disciples. Good job, as it takes effort to follow people up.

Today, the Centre cleaner, Nakib, came past and we invited him to come and have some cake. Nakib is from Bangladesh. He sat down, took some cake and we said that we were discussing Jesus. Nakib is a Muslim, it seems quite devout. Within 2 minutes of his sitting with us, he poured out his story – an abusive father who left the family when he was just 2 years old, his father recently lured his brother and he back to Australia after nearly 2 decades of absence. Selling all they had, they have come to study, and looked forward to seeing their father after such a long absence. The horror that unfolded subsequently was painful; he stole from them, abused them, had been living here illegally, and left them penniless, barely able to live.

We quietly listened, and then gently explained the true nature of the Father heart of God. That God loves them, loves

all of us, and at great cost to himself, did not spare his Son to save us from eternal separation. We drew a little diagram, the 3 Circles, to help Nakib more easily understand a simple Gospel message. Then we prayed, took his number and told him to come back next week, or call us during the week if he and his brother needed food. We hope he does both. We shall see.

Whether Nakib does or not, I felt Jesus whisper to me, that this is why he wanted us to act in faith in taking on the Community Centre – because of the opportunities that come in and out the door all the time. He wants us to be there to explain him to others, those who seek answers to the brokenness in their lives.

Here's the thing that we are learning; what we are doing has eternal consequences, never mind the absolute delight we feel in doing the very real work of the Lord. We walk home past gorgeous cars, magnificent homes and spectacular views. But none of that will last my friends, none of it.

At the same time as writing this, I am reading Revelation. If you have forgotten, Jesus promises that he is coming again, only this time when he does the world will not forget. It says there is an eternity beyond this life, when what we perceive of real value will be obliterated never to be raised again.

As believers, we must raise our sights beyond what is in this life, to what is coming. Christ absolutely commands we do so with everything we have. Further, he tells us that we must continually warn others of what is coming, as well as divulging to them the enormity of God's love. We must be active, not passive.

Sadly, we meet many believers whose only concern seems to be the things of this world – that is, despite all the warnings that such things eventually lead to nowhere.

We must reconsider Paul's words above, written to believers. Then we need to adjust and act. Oh, and if you remember, please pray for us.

The reward is out of this world.



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