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# OIKOS

## AUSTRALIA

# REFLECTIONS

on House Church, Mission and Ministry

Andrew Beel - PERTH

Get **Wrecked** on **Keppel Island** Phil Walters

*ARE WE CALLED OUT ONTO THE STREETS?* Michael Butler

You Might be a **LEGALISTIC** Believer **IF...** John Fenn

Disciple Making | Multiplication | Kingdom | Simple Church | Missional Movements





## Passion and the Kingdom....

**God has been challenging me recently. Let me explain:**

I was driving home a couple of days ago from a prayer meeting with some older men. I was encouraged by their faithfulness but had

been feeling a bit flat spiritually. Near the end of our time we had sang a few songs - with the assistance of YouTube. I decided to put on a Keith Green song on my phone as I drove home (oops that's dating me...) and I began to be stirred by the intensity, longing

and genuineness felt in the song. "My eyes are dry, my faith is old, my heart is cold... - But what can be done for an old heart like mine? Soften it up with oil and wine. The oil is You, Your spirit of love. Please wash me anew with the wine of your blood..."

I began to feel an intensity and passion well up in my heart. When I arrived home, I listened to more songs and then watched the life story of this amazing man. I was struck by his passion for Jesus and unwillingness to compromise anything – even to the point of withdrawing from a contract with Sparrow Records so he could give away his music- He said the "Gospel is free and should be available to everyone without charge." His life ended prematurely in a tragic plane crash. You may or may not like his music, but his influence lives on in his music and the lives of so many that he influenced.

As a somewhat quiet person, the challenge I feel is the need for passion in living for Christ. Many Christians are nice people, but not always very passionate. As I was reflecting on this, I realized how people are often drawn to others with a passionate energy and focus! Of course, passion can be directed toward many different things –some good or even some evil. But what good it can elicit when directed by Christ towards his cause – the Kingdom of God!

### Passion and a Cause.

We were walking along our road a few days ago for a family walk when a car pulling a trailer full of hay came to a stop and out jumped one of our neighbours. With a warm greeting and hug she excitedly told us of how she and her husband will be going out to



the central pacific and going on a sailing boat in the open ocean with another family for several days to see how bad the plastic pollution of our oceans is. "Its really bad", she said, "and when I get back I'm just going to call everyone in the community together – we have to do something!" She along with my wife Kate and others have been involved with a "Boomerang bags" group. It is an initiative that is spreading quickly -

involving people sewing recycled cloth materials into bags to replace the throw away plastic bags we all get by the dozens at the supermarkets – Coles and Woolworths etc. Millions of these end up in the waterways and ultimately the oceans, and kill vast numbers of birds, fish and aquatic

(Continued on page 18)

## OIKOS Australia

*Oikos exists to build the Kingdom of God by multiplying disciple-makers and simple church*

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# BABEL'S TOWER TODAY

plan was so much greater than people being many. The plan was that people would fill the earth so that the whole creation would be filled with his glory.

In Genesis chapter 11 we can read about how people make it quite the opposite. Instead of meeting the call to fill the earth, they collect as many people as they can in one place to build as high a tower as possible. The tower of Babylon is a clear sign of man's rebellion against God, and so often we would rather promote our name than to exalt His name. The story of the tower of Babylon ends with God taking off His gloves, poisoning their language and scattering the people against their will.

Jesus commanded His disciples to go out to the world to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples. Jesus prioritized the few in front of the many because he saw that the potential, in the long run, in a slow multiplication is always greater than a quick addition.

God's plan through Jesus is to complete what he commissioned the first people (Adam and Eve), namely to fill the earth with His glory. The first-time disciple movement was characterized by this. However, it did not last long before the demands of human nature for power and

control began to arise. Instead of sending, they started collecting. Instead of multiplying, you began to add. Instead of allowing the kingdom of God to be a movement from the margins that penetrated every part of society, they began to build breathtaking high cathedrals.

What Tower of Babylon are we building on today? Perhaps it's time to stop building and start going out? Perhaps it's time for a new movement of disciples without control and headquarters?

I think so.

**R**ecently I have thought a lot about multiplication. Maybe because I love mathematics, but I really believe that multiplication is a fundamental principle of how the kingdom of God works. At God's heart there is an ever-increasing multiplication, while human nature is easily caught in a collective addition.

Already in the creation we find this. God says to the people in Genesis chapter 1:28 is "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth!" Most English translations use the word "multiply". God's



My name is **RICKARD CRUZ** and I grew up in a Brazilian-Swedish family in Småland, Sövsjö. I work as team leader and co-founder in a network of house assemblies in Helsingborg, Sweden. I also run the company [Fixanätet.nu](http://Fixanätet.nu) where I help households in the Helsingborg region with their network and internet connection. I am married to Jessica and have two children called Alva and Axel. We live together at Miatorp in Helsingborg where we also meet with the house assembly we are part of. One of my interests is running. I'm also interested in football, but I prefer if I can watch when others play, and follow in particular Helsingborg's IF. My blog, however, is mostly about Jesus, mission, discipleship and organizational life. It is supposed to help myself and others in the townships in Helsingborg, but also more people in other places that share our longing. [www.rickardcruz.se](http://www.rickardcruz.se)





# *Are We Called* *OUT ONTO THE*

***This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life is hidden within. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself by the message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us.***

**M**oses came to visit us on Sunday. Yes, that's right, Moses. A fine young man from Africa, he had recently decided to take God more seriously and wanted to get baptised and learn to share his faith. So, after joining our gathering last Sunday, a group of us went down to a beach on Sydney harbour and prayed. In front of bystanders and curios, in the middle of winter, we walked into the sea and baptised Moses. Moses in the water, marvelous!

After that we went out on the streets, and began to share the Gospel of Jesus with strangers.

Earlier in the week, a dear friend whom I respect enormously suggested to me that not all believers are called out on the streets, that the gift of evangelism is just one of several, and that we are all called to participate in support for those who evangelise in different ways. I

thought long and hard about this; is it correct?

In recent weeks, a group of young people who go out onto the streets to share their faith have led half a dozen others to Christ and baptised 4 of them straight away. A woman we spoke to some weeks back has met us again, and wants to start a discovery Bible study with some of the women in our gathering. As a result of our work on the streets, we have begun to see others, non-believing enquirers joining us in Discovery Groups, wondering what a relationship with Christ might mean.

Around the world, we read stories, just about every week, of ordinary people going out into the marketplace talking to people about the love of God through Christ. I'm not talking about India, Africa or other developing countries, but Western nations like Australia or Britain. In some instances, over weeks and

months, dozens are responding to the Gospel message in different ways. They become disciples.

Is going out on the streets though, even with all this, that important? Is it not really the domain of just a few evangelists, supported in prayer and other works by those presumably who aren't evangelists? I find that difficult to swallow.

Aside from what appears to be a clear command from Christ, and overwhelming support throughout the entire Scriptures of the importance of sharing the incredible grace of God through Christ Jesus with non-believers, why else would we share the Gospel on the streets?

Surely one of the most compelling reasons is to counter the statistic that 98% of church-goers have never shared their faith with another. We see so many,



# THE STREETS?

*new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. He gave the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful life through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" 2 Cor 5: 17-20*

meet so many, whose faith over the years has withered, even died. A lifetime of hearing about a God who is powerful, praying to that God, singing praises to Him, listening to incredible stories – but never actually experiencing it, will cause any believer to doubt. Why share with anyone such a God?

Yet, and we have seen it time and again, encourage such a person to begin to open their mouths with another about the person of Jesus Christ, and suddenly their faith comes alive. Their faith moves from a position of just knowledge, to one of obedience as they begin to encounter the joy of sharing with someone who is desperate for answers in this life.

Over and over we have been out with the shy, the unassuming, the sceptic even those with such little faith, and seen their lives change. From every understanding of the word, there wasn't an evangelist among them, yet they could share with a

total stranger. They became alive in the process.

I could go on. We have found that going out of the streets, sharpens us such that we are able to pray and share constantly with those in our everyday lives. Sharing the Gospel becomes a way of life, only after we move out into the marketplace. Jesus becomes our everyday, for reasons of which we are unsure, other than we obey.

Does it have to be the streets? Perhaps not; the grocery store will do, the shopping mall, the tower block next door, or just the neighbourhood. For those unwilling, the excuse is usually that they are praying and sharing with their family and friends and prefer to keep it at that, after all so they tell me, we must evangelise those first. In our experience though, such people are the hardest to share with, and after a few rebuttals, most give up.

We have come to see Christ's call to make disciples as a labour of love; making disciples seemed to clearly start with non-believers in the Scriptures, moving them to conversion and through to maturity – a big part of which, must surely be to make more disciples. A movement is started.

There would be more stories, even from our own meagre experiences that would fill this blog for evermore. Disciple making is for keeps, and that means going into the harvest to search for them. It would seem nothing is clearer. In the book of Daniel, it says those who lead others to righteousness shall shine like stars for all eternity. Who wants a piece of that?



**MICHAEL & SALLY BUTLER**  
Manley, NSW  
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# GET WRECKED ON

**S**ome years ago, while we were exploring the concept of simple church, one of our members had a vision. In the vision he saw a vine come up out of the ground and head north to a wilderness area north of our town of Yeppoon on the Central Queensland coast. It then turned to the sea and headed over to Great Keppel Island, a popular under-thirties destination at the time. From there it headed back to the mainland and went underground in the salt flats just south of Yeppoon.

At the time we felt that this was not only the church reaching out to the extremities of our coastal region but also confirmation that the destiny of the church (the vine) was to intentionally blend into our culture in much more hidden, even subversive ways and that that was the way we were to go.

Which we did. We left our recently completed and paid-off building and began to explore more simple ways of meeting and expressing Christ in our community. It's been a journey of highs

and lows and, although we have not seen the fullness of our early expectations, we are quite convinced that church of the future will be different from the usual expressions of church that we see around us.

And it was while I was meditating on this recently that I began to see some elements of modern church that perhaps filled out the vision more fully.

## THE WILDERNESS

The history of the church down through the centuries has often been one of death and rebirth. The Church losing its original vision and purpose and the Spirit raising a people who go in search of the ancient paths, the original patterns and expressions of life and community that were birthed as the Spirit blew over God's fledgling people, releasing an expression of Christ that turned the world upside down. The vine going north seemed to me to reflect that search, a search for the overgrown paths.

But then it went out to sea ...

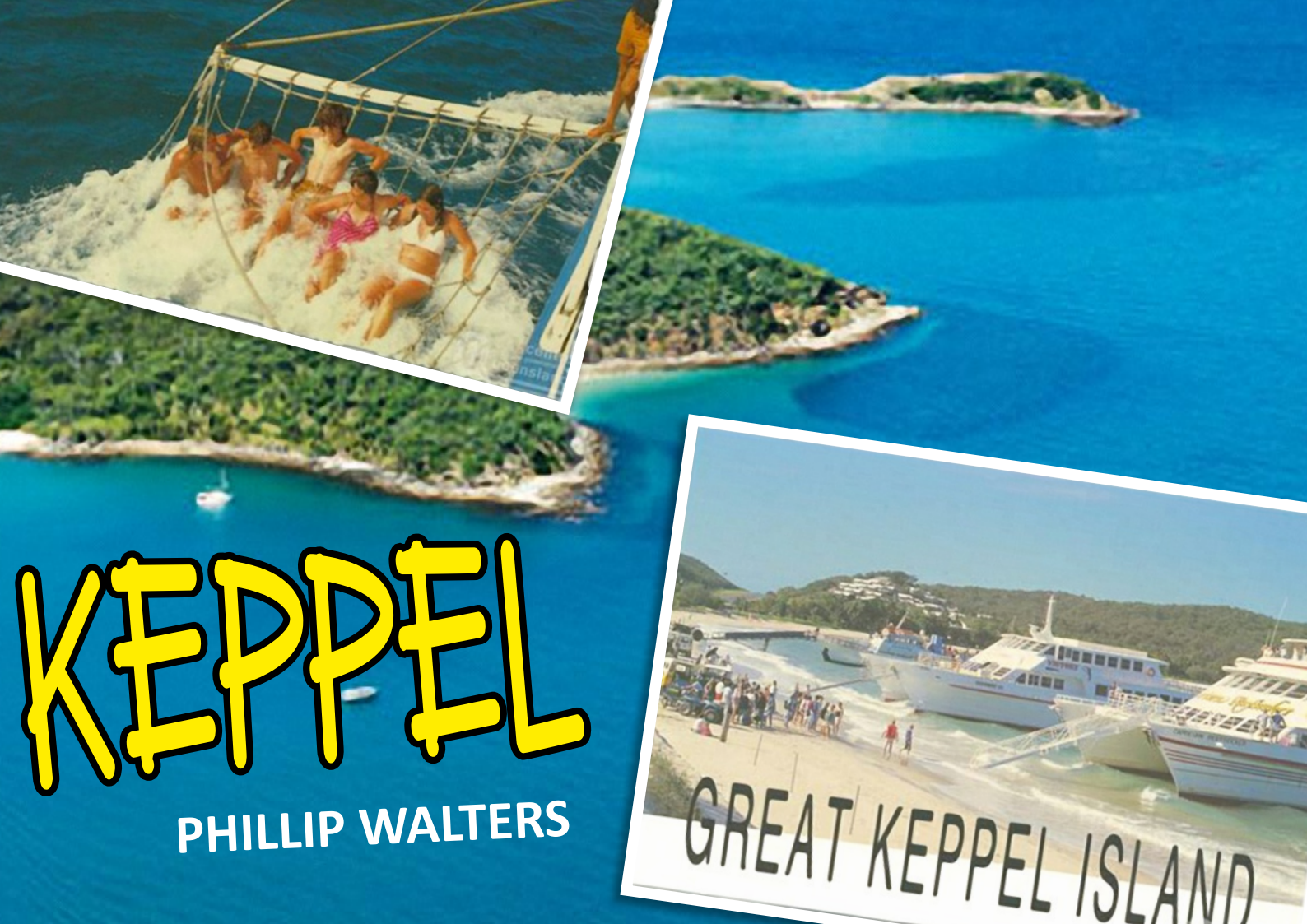
## GREAT KEPPEL ISLAND

Back in the 90s Great Keppel Island was one of *the* destinations for under-thirties who, attracted by the advertising slogan "Get Wrecked on Keppel", flocked to its beaches and bars to indulge their consumerist pleasures and get lost for a while in another world, only to stagger back onto the ferry, hyped up and ready to face their more mundane mainland life for another year.

And although I don't particularly want to indulge in generalisations about so much that goes on in the modern church scene I find myself wondering if much of it has not come out of the same advertising agency that gave us Great Keppel in the 90s. The finely tuned front led event, the carefully constructed atmosphere and user-friendly service. The place to escape from my week, soak up some heavenly sunshine, and get recharged, ready for another week back in the real world. I'm constraining myself here so let the reader fill in the rest of the picture.

Not that that is necessarily the prime motivation of those genuine saints that serve the flock by spending hours





# KEPPEL

PHILLIP WALTERS



organising and perfecting the Sunday event, and not that every front-led church is run this way. However, the outcomes are often much the same – a consumer mentality that relies on the hard work and giftedness of a few, has little expected of them other than to come, enjoy (and maintain), and is often lost and unengaged in the real world.

No wonder the vine, distracted for a moment, went looking for something else.

## UNDERGROUND!

I have for a long time felt that the Lord is not returning for a church whose main expression in the earth is a load of professionally run Sunday services on every street corner. Rather I am convinced that when He returns the church will have become so salted into the fabric of society that the average person will not need to go anywhere near a church building to find Christ. Jesus will be working alongside them. And when they reach out to know the reason for our peace and our joy, right there in that environment where we are both facing the same trials, we will not

take them to “church” to hear the Pastor but will sit down together somewhere in *their* comfort zone, equipped with the Spirit, our story and our Bible, and introduce them to Jesus. Later they will meet my friends and I will meet their friends and a “church” will be born – a church that will naturally spread in the same organic way, person to person, until the office (street, factory, gym, schoolyard – indeed the whole earth) is filled with the glory of Jesus.

## GONE ARE THE DAYS

The days when young people flocked to Great Keppel to get “wrecked” are gone. Trying to satisfy the consumerist demand for a new and more pleasurable experience on every visit became unsustainable and besides, the airfares to Bali (the church up the street), were ever

*The Lord is not returning for a church whose main expression in the earth is a load of professionally run Sunday services on every street corner*

more attractive. I suspect that designer churches will go the same way. Hopefully the generation that needs them will grow weary of their own shallow selfie-life absorption and go looking for some substance, leaving the growing emptiness and turmoil that increasingly epitomises a life lived on the surface, and following the vine underground.

Truth is that the church has always thrived underground. It’s there that we connect with the people that Jesus connected with – the forgotten, the outcast, the wounded, the tired, the disillusioned. It’s there, away from all the Sunday trappings, in the places where the world actually lives out their lives, that the Spirit of God wants to shine forth the light of Jesus. Through the lives of ordinary people, people who have walked away from the mood lighting, adjusted their simple headlamps – and followed Him underground.



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# AUSTRALIA

## MY JOURNEY INTO ORGANIC CHURCH

John Garrot - Gympie, Qld

***The question was .. Where are you at now in your pursuit of the Organic expression of faith?***

I became aware of my salvation somewhere around 1979 in a Christian community in Northern NSW called True Vine. Right from the start I learned to know His voice and from almost the beginning (3 months) I began teaching others through foundational Bible studies and home groups. There were no prepared programs. It was a matter of sitting down with your Bible and note pad, asking God what He wanted you to teach then writing out what came along after that.

I gradually gained knowledge of Scripture but noticed some of the things God showed me did not seem to fit into what those "above" me were saying. They were more knowledgeable than me and I had learned not to question those in authority so I just accepted that perhaps I had got it wrong. That community blew apart in 1985 and I followed a wandering path through several denominations and theological streams which led to a Bachelor of Ministry and 16 years volunteer work as a Prison Chaplain. During all that time I went on many amazing adventures of faith as I had decided to trust in God's provision for my needs and make His calling my priority. I did no "paid ministry" as such but saw every income, whether from work or other sources as His provision.

Around ten years ago I started coming across various books on the Organic expression of faith. The biggest of the early ones was Pagan Christianity where I found listed all the things I had discovered for myself while studying church history plus a lot more beside. From other books I found authors who were freely expressing all those things God had been showing me over the years. I had a burden for those who had been chewed up and spat out of churches and wanted to reach out to them because I was sure they still loved Christ but were no longer able to express that within the system. I announced my

intentions and was shown the door from the church I then attended. There was no sending out or phone calls to see how things were going and even conversations in casual meetings were stiff and uncomfortable.

That is when things really began to happen. Pretty much from the day I stepped out God began to dismantle my theology right back to the foundations. The more I read and studied Scripture, the more the traditions of man crumbled before me. At the same time He was building His revelation in me, showing me so many things in Scripture that were incredibly obvious but I had never seen before, joining the dots in ways I had never learned and using all those things He had shown me over the years. I was also finding my way around Facebook and various discussion groups there. I have learned that this process of restructuring, of unlearning and relearning is called detox and is a common process people leaving an institution go through. The Facebook part is very much following the original burden, to reach those hurt by the institution.

Now today, I see Scripture in a very different light and have come to realize that God is not as obsessed about right doctrine as we are. I got involved in a ministry to the poor in the Philippines through a good friend. We are involved in feeding-evangelism to the children in the poorer parts of the Philippines, which also leads to parents being saved and disciples. After a huge typhoon several years ago, we took in a few orphans and have built a home for them and watched God build them into a family. They are all now serving our Lord through the feeding and evangelism work.

Personally, I initially gathered together a group of local believers who were hungry for God and we began to meet together as described in 1 Corinthians 12, 13 and 14, which is how I understand Organic fellowship should flow (there are many other understandings). This group after a while showed a preference for sitting under



teaching rather than expressing corporately what God was showing them. I moved on and they are still functioning. I found another group of very mature believers who had been meeting together fairly organically about an hour's drive away and joined in with them but after a while age and health problems seemed to bring that to a natural demise. We still gather occasionally as the various members' health permits.

About that time I came across a movement called The Last Reformation, who were evangelising as I believed the Body should. I attended a Kickstart weekend on the Gold Coast and from that yet another fellowship group has emerged in the area where I live. This also functions pretty much along organic lines with an emphasis on healing, evangelism and deliverance as well as open fellowship, usually around a shared meal.

Organic fellowship is messy and complex but I would encourage anyone who is hungry for the things of God to get involved. Be available for God's appointments wherever they happen – shopping, having coffee with friends, work, sport or anywhere else. Look for a person of peace as described in Luke 11 and follow Holy Spirit leading for He will lead you into all truth and relay to you what He hears from Jesus, just as Jesus taught.

**JOHN GARROTT**







# what's happening around the nation stories

## A GATHERING IN ADELAIDE

Ken & Beryl Seeley

**When we took over as the OIKOS South Australia reps from Bruce Bennie, we received a long list of names of people we had never met.**

We felt it would be good to organise a gathering on February 26th at Hahndorf - a popular tourist town in the Adelaide hills.

We emailed everybody on the list inviting them to an informal gathering as a way of getting to know them and talking about what God is doing. We were excited that twelve people responded which meant we would finally be able to put faces to at least some of the names!

We were blessed to have the use of our daughter's large Airbnb house, with barbeque facilities and even a swimming pool - although unfortunately the weather wasn't suited to swimming! We were even able to offer accommodation there to one couple who live in Goolwa and weren't keen on having to do a long drive home late in the evening.

The day was very full with people having so much to share about what is happening in their lives. Within the group, there are some who still attend

traditional church and were seeking to find out what New Testament church is all about.

As we shared together, firstly over a cuppa and biscuits (which led into a bbq tea without much break in between) a common theme began to emerge. That is, most of us had come to realise that our Simple Church journeys are not at all the way we thought they were going to be. We had mostly expected that we would be meeting on a weekly basis with the same small group of people, but that isn't the case! On the whole, people are in some respect 'going it alone' - and in some cases there is a feeling of isolation.

There was almost a sense of relief when people realised that most were feeling the same way and together we began to realise that the way God is doing things here in SA is that we are to have more frequent get-togethers, with people from far and wide, for encouragement, prayer and support. Obviously quite different to what we originally thought Simple church would look like.

We had thought that by finding out where people are located (something



you can't discover from an email address) we would have been able to help connect people living in local areas. We found that people are fairly widespread and for them to meet weekly together would not be easy. Often people around Adelaide seem reluctant to cross the city and prefer to connect within their local area.

To our surprise, we found that during our gathering many folk expressed a desire for us to all meet together regardless of location! One couple immediately offered to open their home for our next get together on April 21st.

For us personally, we are finding that there is absolutely no pattern to how we do church. Simple church for us is just meeting with whomever God brings to us whenever - whether that be one person or many, and it might be daily, weekly or just occasionally !

**Blessings, Ken & Beryl Seeley**

## OIKOS National Conference 27 - 29 April 2018

The OIKOS bi-annual Conference is not to be missed. It's on this month, outside Melbourne. Come and make new friends, connect with old ones and be inspired by seeing what Jesus is doing in the simple church tribe across Australia. Go to [oikos.org.au](http://oikos.org.au) for more info





# Starting Churches That REPRODUCE

## Neil Cole

**H**aving trouble bringing people to church? Let's go and bring the church to the people!

Most churches today are trying to figure out how to get lost people to come to church. The key to starting churches that reproduce spontaneously is to bring the church to the lost people. We're not interested in starting a regional church, but rather in churching a whole region. The house church, more than any other model, is best prepared to do just that because it is informal, relational, mobile, not financially encumbered with overhead costs, and is easily planted in a variety of settings. It also reproduces faster and spreads farther because it can be a decentralized approach to a region, nation or people group and is not dependent upon heavily trained clergy.

We have taken our cues on how to start churches from two almost identical sermons delivered by Jesus. One, when he taught the twelve apostles how to reach the lost (Matt. 10), and the other when He instructed the seventy (Luke 10). When Jesus decides to repeat Himself in more than one of the gospel

accounts, perhaps we should pay close attention to what He is saying. Nowhere else does Jesus get more specific in delineating outreach principles. "We have a saying that goes like this: 'The church is conceived in heaven before it is born on earth. Pray first, pray last, and in between pray hard!'"

We have uncovered five principles to help us in starting churches that reproduce:

### 1. Practice of Prayer

In both sermons Jesus begins with the same familiar words, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest." We believe that church is a spiritual entity before it is a physical reality. We have a saying that goes like this: "The church is conceived in heaven before it is born on earth. Pray first, pray last, and in between pray hard!"

### 2. Pockets of People

Jesus instructs His disciples not to go into the way of the Gentiles or the Samaritans, but specifically to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He sends the disciples out in pairs to various cities and villages looking for a pocket of

people, a community of lost people that are receptive to the message of peace.

When looking for a pocket of people, we have another saying, "Bad people make good soil." Why is it that a majority of churches in America today are all trying to reach middle class suburbs? This has to be one of the most difficult and hardest soils to reach, yet all seem to try. We have come to see the poor as the heirs of the Kingdom of God (James 2:5). We find that it isn't those who are well who need a physician, but the sick. In our experience, coffeehouses have proven to be fertile soil for the gospel. Now, however, we have expanded our vision to other arenas as well. We have churches that reach out to 12-step recovery groups, neighborhood gangs, homosexuals, occult groups, high school, college and university campuses, the homeless, and local bars. Besides homes and apartments, we've had churches that meet in parks, beaches, storefronts, restaurants, faculty lounges, student unions, locker rooms and even church classrooms (aghast!).

### 3. Power of Presence

Jesus told the disciples as He sent them out that they had authority to do the works of God. They were to announce that the Kingdom of God has come near





– whether they were received or not. Where we go, the King goes... and that is POWERFUL! Jesus, in the Great Commission, said these words, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me...I am with you.” We must not forget this. The enemy is hoping that we will not realize this important truth, because he is vulnerable to us when we learn it. Someone once asked Rob Ferris, my partner in the start of Awakening Chapels, what the secret is to our seeing so many people come to Christ. He answered, “Two words: Show up.” Non-Christians aren’t fretting trying to figure out ways to get into church. Church is not something that they feel they need, want or are even curious about. Jesus said to the church, “Go.” To the lost He said, “Come to Me,” not “come to church.”

“All the resources needed for a great harvest are already found in the harvest itself, including finances, facilities and future leaders. All we need is to get out there and reap! There is much power in showing up.”

Jesus also noted that the disciples were not to import resources into the harvest, but to find all the resources they needed in the harvest itself. His instructions were to bring no extra clothes, food or money to sustain the ministry. This is key. All the resources needed for a great harvest are

already found in the harvest itself, including finances, facilities and future leaders. All we need is to get out there and reap! There is much power in showing up.

#### **4. Person of Peace**

This fourth principle is one that we are indebted to our dear friend and mentor, Thom Wolf, for uncovering for us. This simple concept has led to many churches being born around the world. Jesus said to look for and even inquire about someone who would be receptive to our message of peace. When we find such a person we are to stay there and reach their entire household (oikos). We are to

eat what they eat and stay where they stay.

When a person of peace is discovered, the birth of a new church is assumed. When someone comes to Christ in a new pocket of people, we keep digging until we see the person of peace emerge and a new church born. Three things characterize a person of peace:

**a. Receptivity.** They are open to the message of the person and the peace of Christ.

#### **b. Relational**

**connections.** They know many people and are an important part of the community, for better or worse.

**c. Reputation.** They are people of reputation, whether it is a good reputation (like Cornelius or the Ethiopian eunuch) or bad reputation (like the Samaritan woman or the Gergesene

demoniac). The person of peace becomes the conduit for the passing of the message of the Kingdom to an entire community of lost people. This person’s reputation gives credence to the message and becomes a magnet for a new church.

#### **5. People of Purpose**

When the moths are drawn to the light and the person of peace brings several to Christ...a church is born. This is the formation of a people of purpose, born in the harvest, born for the harvest of the nations. Often, though not exclusively, the person of peace has the church meet in their home and may even be the new leader of the emerging church. A church that starts this way is unique in that it is born out of the harvest, found among the harvest, and bent on a mission to continue to reach the lost. This missional element will be the important drive to reach out and reproduce spontaneously.



**NEIL COLE** was born and raised in Los Angeles, CA. His journey in God’s kingdom has brought him to serve in a mega church, a local community church and now small rapidly multiplying organic churches. Neil travels around the world sowing the seeds of God’s kingdom, catalyzing the development of organic church networks and coaching leaders. He has been married for over 30 years to Dana and has three adult children, Heather, Erin and Zach. Catch his blog at [cole-slau.blogspot.com](http://cole-slau.blogspot.com)

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# REFLECTIONS

## on House Church, Mission and Ministry

**I left ministry in the Anglican church in 2005 with my wife and family to explore ways to try and more authentically live out, and work out, what we were reading in the Gospels about Jesus.**

The journey leading to our decision to leave had been difficult enough. It took years for my heart to catch up with where my head was taking me, and the journey was often a very lonely one as few other colleagues in ministry had any appreciation or understanding of what we believed God was pointing us to. Not only did we eventually leave behind house, regular income, a recognised position and a bunch of supportive parishioners; but we had few sign posts pointing us in the right direction.

God has been faithful in many ways and we are still alive, clothed, housed and supported. We have gotten used to rarely having regular income and we no longer stress out when the bank account is empty. Slowly, but surely, with many mistakes and painful lessons we have seen three house church communities form. Our main house church has become a deeply appreciated community

of people who know each other intimately and provide love, prayer and fellowship in a way that was rarely experienced in more traditional church ministry. The fellowship functions whether I am there or not and whilst I have an unquestionable role of leadership amongst the group, it is in a fundamentally different way than as a parish minister. If there are pastoral needs people look to each other for support, rather than to me. Everybody has a voice and God's Word is shared by all, even seekers, as are worship, share meals and prayer.

About a year or so back, one of our co-leaders, inspired by Torben Sondergard's "Last Reformation" material, began a second house church which has come to include a large proportion of young adults keen to share their faith in shopping centres and pray for people wherever and whenever. The emphasis of the second group is significantly different to the first group and has a far stronger evangelistic push. Fairly regularly the two groups meet for combined worship and camps. The interaction is good and often challenging as differing perspectives are brought to the fore and discussed.

Just recently, at the request of a lady struggling with issues of sexuality, I began a third group in the southern suburbs of Perth. (The other two groups meet in the

Northern suburbs.) Fairly quickly a strong core of people has started to form where transparency and honest confession are highlights. All the people so far, apart from one seeker, are believers who are wrestling with addictions, the impact of broken marriages and issues such as loneliness. Some have been so burnt by their church experiences that they are only slowly starting to find hope and faith again. But already a WhatsApp group has been formed with regular prayer and needs being shared and, apart from our regular fortnightly gathering, members are catching up regularly with each other and offering mutual support and pastoral care. It has been encouraging to watch. My part has been necessary but small. All the members thus far are competent, intelligent people. They just needed some encouragement and someone to provide the spark to get the fire started. Once the fire has started the gifts that participants already have are quickly being utilised.

Of particular encouragement to me was the attendance of a lady I have been mentoring for many years. In the last couple of years, due to her struggles with life controlling problems, she had completely gone off the path. She seemed to be getting in to weird new age spiritualities and all the signs were really disappointing. When she started making an effort to re-connect with me I was hesitant as she had previously written some fairly accusatory emails to me and seemed to be looking for an argument. Through her connection with one of the ladies in our group she turned up at a Sunday meeting. At the end of the



Torben Sondergard



gathering she thanked me profoundly and explained that as the meeting progressed she felt as though something had happened to her and that she had come alive again. Now she was asking for any opportunity to participate in in-depth Bible study as she was feeling an overwhelming hunger to really understand God's Word. I have also invited her to join my "apostolic team" (I will explain in another article) as she has very obvious leadership abilities.

#### NOT BY SIGHT

But the reality is, that in general, ministry has been slow. We have not seen significant growth of numbers take place. We have not seen missional movements springing up, as described in some of the exciting books outlining God's work in India and amongst Muslims etc. Outwardly, whilst we have been doing our best to seek God, put into place good discipleship, and walk faithfully according to all that God is showing us, the progress is often very slow. The reality remains that we continue to walk by faith and not by sight and the sign posts are still few in number.

Not only has growth in the house churches been relatively slow, but my wife has finally started a centre of rehabilitation for women seeking to leave the sex industry. It has been years in the making and when it eventually got off the ground, it came to a shuddering halt only two months later. The most significant financial backer pulled out, a significant member of staff had to be asked to leave and a long-term friend, a member of the board also had to be asked to resign with another significant board member also choosing to resign. My wife has never attempted to start such an undertaking previously and was only doing so in response to a strong and persistent sense of calling from God. It is not hard to imagine the soul searching, questioning, tears and overwhelming desire to just give up. Thankfully, just before Christmas last year, the centre re-opened. Even before its re-opening, however, another very significant staff member pulled out over conflict with another staff member and to the present, whilst we have two deeply thankful women in the programme, the viability of the centre remains fragile. In fact, everything God has called us to do is fragile!

On a more sombre note, I would say that this last year has been the most heart-breaking and painful year of our lives and, most devastatingly, I have seen members of my own family lose faith and choose paths that potentially undermine the very ministries that God has most placed on the hearts of my wife and me. It is easy to resonate with the Apostle Paul when he writes, "We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly crushed that we despaired of life itself.

Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead." (2 Cor 1:8-9)

#### SIMILAR JOURNEYS

I share this, because as I travel throughout Australia and overseas, I am aware that many others are on similar journeys. Hopes and dreams have been tested and shattered. Families have been impacted and, at times, rent asunder. Trials and tribulations have been intense. And, for those of us called to find a new path in the wilderness, the cost of leaving the more familiar and well accepted paths takes on an even greater bitterness than might have been imagined. And yet, at the same time, I have been sensing a deeper joy and thankfulness than I have previously known possible. My trust in God and my own givenness to God has grown to a point where, like Job, I so much more readily declare, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21)

I am also convinced that what God is doing in me is what God is seeking to do in his church. The church of God needs to be a truly vulnerable church. We can no longer afford to hide behind the approval of governments, wealth,

large buildings, charismatic personalities and success. Particularly in nations such as Australia, there needs to be a willingness to leave behind our Laodicean basis for boasting and instead cling to the weakness of Christ crucified. As Paul poignantly writes to the Corinthian Christians, "Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong." And Peter further adds, "Beloved, do not be

surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed."

Do I believe I will see a powerful move of God's Spirit in this nation? Absolutely! Do I believe that my prayers and efforts thus far have been in vain? Absolutely not!

And yet, I also believe that things may well get

far more difficult for believers in this nation, particularly those who want to wholeheartedly follow Jesus in the face of a rising and increasingly determined anti-Christian sentiment. Our families will be impacted, our businesses, our finances and potentially even our very lives. So, whilst I continue to cry out "Maranatha!" eagerly looking forward to the day of God's visitation of this nation, I am also aware that there is always a cost that is borne by God's people. As Peter makes clear, "For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God.....Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good." (1 Peter 4:17a & 19)

***The church of God needs to be a truly vulnerable church. Particularly in nations such as Australia, there needs to be a willingness to leave behind our Laodicean basis for boasting and instead cling to the weakness of Christ crucified.***



**ANDREW AND SHARON BEEL** come from Perth, WA, where they serve in mission to the more marginalised subcultural life of the city. Contact Andrew at romans152021@gmail.com



# Kingdom Paradigm

Turning your worldview upside down  
or downside up!

**T**he Kingdom of God is built on the person of Jesus, what he taught the disciples and what he instructed them to do. Building a foundation on anything other than Jesus and the Kingdom will not produce multiplication of disciples and simple churches. Jesus is both Saviour and Lord with power over all things visible and invisible. He is Lord of the harvest and head of the Church worldwide and every local church. He cannot and will not be owned by any denomination, tradition, organisation or “ministry.”

The (inherited) paradigm most Christians have is downside up:

- first, ecclesiology (church, dogma, style and practices);
- secondly, missiology (mission – how to attract people to our church community or building);
- and thirdly, Christology (so we can tell them about our church and Jesus).

The Kingdom paradigm is, however, upside down:

- first, Jesus and the Kingdom (His person, His Kingdom);
- secondly mission (go and make disciples);
- and thirdly, church (which is built by Jesus and the consequence of disciples making disciples).

Working from a Kingdom paradigm means people come to Jesus (or discipled to him), continue in transformational discipleship, and church forms out of who they are and what Jesus is building amongst them – not out of a church system that we impose on them. This means that simple churches and networks vary in form and style even though they have a common foundational Kingdom DNA.

Consequently, the gospel spreads quickly and naturally through households and people groups without the constraints of restrictive traditional, denominational and organisational boundaries with their religious biases, forms and styles. This primary allegiance to Jesus and the common foundational DNA facilitates unity, cooperation and expansion: simple churches may be different, even within the same network as well as from network to network, but all are disciples joined to Jesus and His Body.

A Kingdom mindset not only frees us from all the “-isms” but also from restrictive and niched “movements” like prayer, healing, inner-healing, deliverance, bible-study, community, youth, prophetic and the like which are often founded out of a person’s or group’s giftedness or bias and promoted as the solution to bring about “revival.”

There is only one thing Jesus said he would build: His church! Some of these things may be part of the Kingdom but they are not what Jesus is building. When these things are the primary foundation we build on, they may be effective for a while, but they are not long-lasting and, in some cases, do more harm than good. If churches are not the result of disciple making and gospel planting then we need to question what kind of seed we are planting and whether we are really making disciples.

Those who are effective:

- Recognise it is the King of the Kingdom and Lord of the harvest that has planted them in the field he has chosen for them (where they live, work and play). This develops a “sense of destiny” to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and produce fruit where they are.
- Cultivate a whole Kingdom and

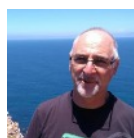
Bible mindset and avoid narrow paradigms that overemphasise one or more Kingdom aspects at the cost of others – they know that this only produces unbalanced and immature disciples.

- Are as clear as the Bible is clear and unclear as the Bible is unclear. They major on the majors and let peripheral things remain on the periphery. They avoid interpreting the scriptures through the spectacles of their own spiritual background (denomination, tradition or organisation). They take the simplest meaning of the text in context and apply it (and compare it to other similar texts elsewhere).

- Build on the foundation of the King according to Kingdom principles and values, in Kingdom ways and in demonstrations of Kingdom power (signs and wonders, deliverances, healings and miracles).

- Build away from themselves (and or their denomination, tradition or organisation) to Jesus. They resist every temptation to draw people to themselves or make people dependent on their “ministry.” To them believers are not “my disciples,” they are disciples of Jesus; the church of gathered disciples is not “my church,” it is “Jesus’ church”; and they do not make territorial claims “this is my territory” but rather have an “our territory” attitude and cooperate with others to bring in the harvest.

This paradigm recognises that the seed of the gospel the Kingdom of God is powerfully at work, and that disciples work together to bring in this huge and ready harvest to King Jesus.



**CHARLES KRIDOTIS** has been serving the simple church movement in Sweden and Europe for many years in a mentoring and equipping role. [www.simplechurch.se](http://www.simplechurch.se)





# JUST A SIMPLE SERVICE

MIKE HICKS

**M**y car was due for a simple service, just an oil and filter change, and a general check up to see that nothing of importance was likely to fall off in the next few months. As it was only going to take an hour or so, I said I would wait whilst the work was done, and I went to settle down in the small lounge at the other end of the service department office.

Already seated, was a lady whose Mazda 3 had some fault that her local Mazda dealer did not have the equipment to fix, so that morning at breakfast her husband suggested she drive the 60 or so kilometres to my dealer, who was in the process of fixing her car. All the available magazines were only one edition after the stone tablets that Moses read from, so I got into conversation with her. I asked what work she did and it transpired she had been a nurse. This led to me telling her how much I owed my life to a wonderful Australian Surgeon, Sir Denis Browne, (given the knighthood for his services to surgery), who was working in Great Ormond Street Hospital in London in 1933.

The discussion grew and she asked me what my work and interests were. Retired from company management, I said I spent time when invited, to speak of Jesus Christ and how our lives had changed since my wife had been healed and saved from a lifetime restricted to a wheelchair. We subsequently walked most of the major mountain walks in the English Lakes District over the years that followed.

These testimonies aroused her interest. She was a "sort of Christian", (her words!), but had stopped being involved years ago, as the Church services seemed so much boring routine and monotonous. "What you have told me makes me wish I could have a similar experience with Jesus", she said. I asked her if she could tell me of the time when she accepted Jesus? "What do you mean? I was confirmed as a girl" she said. How I identified with that! I then told her of the changes in my wife Kathleen and my lives since we surrendered our lives to Jesus, and how we learned the difference

between "Churchianity and real Christianity."

"I want what you have" she said, so there and then, in the showroom/waiting room, we bowed our heads and she surrendered her life to Jesus.

She looked at her watch and went to ask if her Mazda 3 was nearly ready.

The desk clerk said, "It has been ready for over half an hour madam, but you and Mike were in such earnest conversation I did not like to interrupt! So, we parted company.

I asked about my car, but it was not yet completed.

As I walked across, back to the lounge area, a man perhaps in his fifties followed me there as well. I am always genuinely interested in people and love to hear some of their life stories if they are willing to share. So, I asked him "What do you do for a dollar?"

"I am out of work right now but I sometimes get work in the ski fields in the snow season". So, I regaled him with my experiences of being marooned by snow in the English winters, and a sort of bridge began to be built between us.

"Will you go back up to Mount Hotham next season I asked", and I saw a tear roll down his cheek. "What is the matter; can I help in some way?"

"No, I'm afraid not" he replied, "I have gotten cancer and I go into hospital tomorrow." The dread shadow of fear was written on his face.

For some reason, I asked where the cancer had been diagnosed, and got the reply that they were not sure, but the scans tomorrow would show them how far it had progressed. From this, I formed an opinion that without full scans a proper diagnosis had not yet been given.

'What you are telling me, is that you are not yet certain if you even do have cancer', I said.

"No, but it runs in our family, my mother and brother both died from it, so it must be the same for me".

I went off, purposely telling him of my wife's healing, and several other healings I have had the privilege of knowing about, and at the end of these I asked him if I could pray for him?

"I do not believe in that stuff, church is simply a home for the bewildered", he said, "but if you want to it is all right with me".

I placed my hands on his shoulders, prayed for peace in his spirit, for healing in Jesus name, and I rebuked the spirit of infirmity. Then he fell to the floor like a sack of flour! Overcome by the power of God.

"Not here, in the showroom", I thought, and it was not made any better by the service manager coming to tell me that my car was ready!

The manager panicked and asked if he should call an ambulance, so as best as I could I assured him that the customer would recover soon! This was so, and the manager and I lifted him onto a couch. Somewhat dazed and confused, the man asked why he had been on the floor, so I told him this often happens when the power of God touches our spirits. I stayed with him whilst he had a coffee, and went to the desk to pay for my car service.

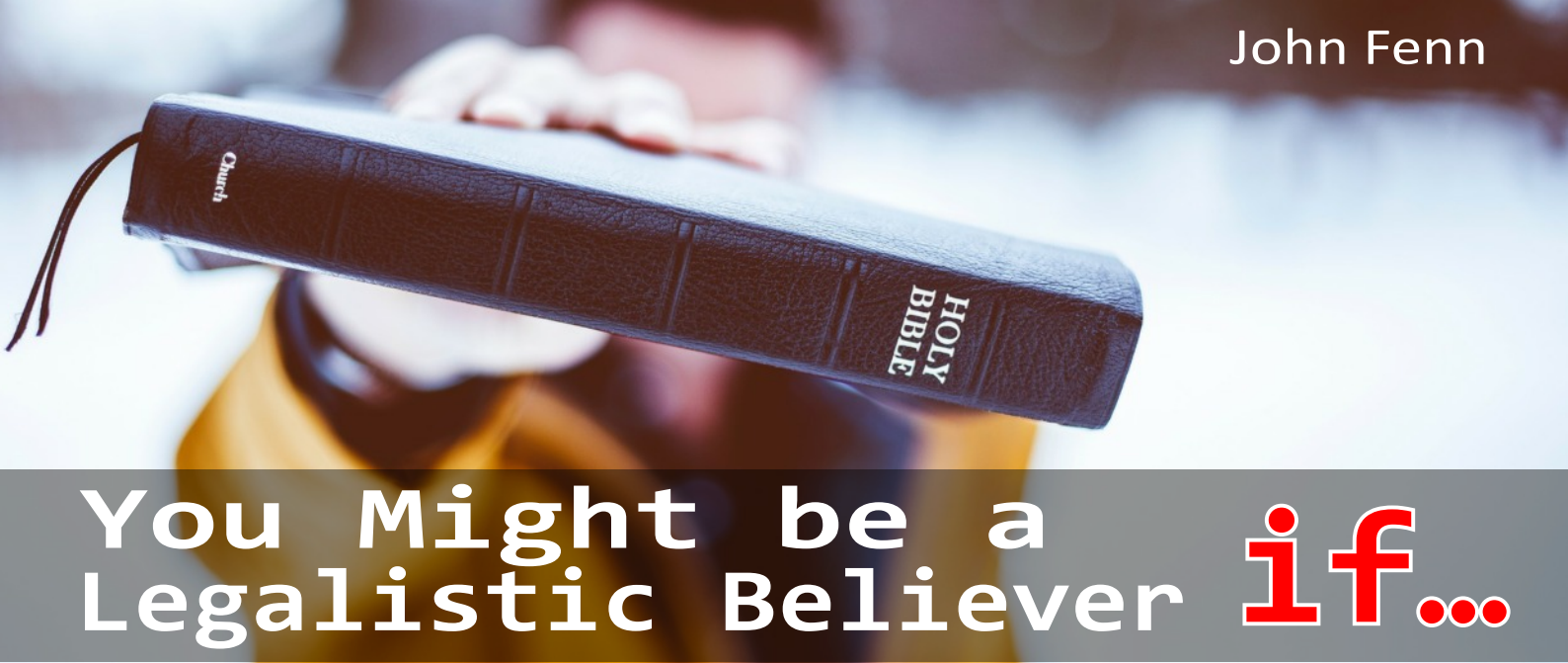
"There was something special happened here in this place this afternoon", the desk clerk said, I could not help but overhear most of what has gone on. "Your car was ready nearly two hours ago!

A few days later, the man who had been overcome by the power of God, telephoned me to say the scans had shown no trace of cancer whatsoever. Thank you, Jesus.

So, my "simple service" took just short of four hours!

**MIKE HICKS** lives in Eastwood, Victoria. Every morning he prays that the Holy Spirit will lead him into similar encounters.





# You Might be a Legalistic Believer **if...**

**I** was talking with a man who had spent the last couple of years as a 'backslidden' Christian - by his own admission. He had been hurt by church leadership and the politics of the day, and had questioned if he even believed in Jesus any more: If Jesus is Lord, then how could He allow such a messed up system to exist, a system political internally with a facade of spirituality, that made it nearly impossible to experience and know Him?

As we talked I had what I'd call a 'mini-vision' that I could see in my spirit while at the same time talking to him. I saw his condition through his eyes, which looked like him on one side of a room and Jesus talking to him from the other side of the room, yet in the middle of the room between them was a mass of pipes and wires and furniture and people looking as if they had all been tossed like a salad and put in the middle of the room.

This young man wanted desperately to know Jesus, to see Jesus, to walk with Jesus, but couldn't hear nor see Him directly because the pile was so large and as Jesus talked someone in the pile restated what He said but with their own additions and edits, so that the man heard not our Lord, but our Lord combined with these twisted and tangled people's ideas.

As I watched this mini-vision a person who was so completely covered in this debris that only their arm and hand

stuck out of it, flung a stinging piece of metal towards the young man, inflicting first one and then more cuts on his body as he and others threw things at the man to the point it seemed the more he tried to experience Jesus the more cuts from the people he received.

Each time he would wince at the cut, for each cut though small, drew blood, and with other people who I couldn't see but whose arms and hands controlled similar pieces of steel, lashed out at him until the cuts were so numerous he realized he had to leave the room or possibly die.

I saw him walk out head down in discouragement, closing the door behind him, muttering to himself "I only wanted to see Jesus". And it ended.

***The sudden realization that a person knows the system more and better than they know the Lord, is devastating***

The compassion of the Lord came on me as we talked, and I realized that his 2 years or so away from church had been healthy for him - and I thought what a sad thing that a person is often healthier emotionally and spiritually away from church than in church. During those 2 years the wounds had healed, but they left enough scars he would not go for his own spiritual health return.

He told me that even though he would tell people he wasn't a believer anymore, and sometimes would tell a person he was

agnostic, in truth he said he never left the Lord, he just didn't know how to know Him without the structure of the church. He just couldn't jump through hoops and over hurdles any more. That day the Lord removed that pile of debris between the two of them, and a great reconciliation and reunion happened, and he began walking with the Lord purely, as two friends might walk through life together, rather than trying to know Him only after first having satisfied requirements he had been told were needed.

**Point #1: You might be a legalistic believer if...**

**You really don't know the Lord on your own, except through the system.** The sudden realization that a person knows the system more and better than they know the Lord, is devastating. To realize the faith you thought you had in the Lord is actually faith in a formula, or faith in the structure or history of the institution, causes one to question their faith. This is what I've seen in a wide range of Christians - from missionaries who spent decades in foreign lands only to be 'burned' by their home organization, or the house wife with journals filled with notes from dozens of teachings - when something happens to a favorite person or church or system - their hurt causes them to question everything.

They realize there is a pile of debris they had placed their faith in, human error and traditions they thought were God, that were actually preventing them from knowing the person of Jesus Christ. They had never thought of themselves as legalistic, but realizing they had built a



framework of man-made structure through which they understood their faith, devastates them.

**The flow goes both ways.** In the way in the mini-vision the Lord kept trying to talk to the man but was hindered, the opposite is also true: A Christian sends their worship and prayers up through a doctrine or fad teaching or movement to the Lord, not realizing the filtering effect of what is in truth, the same debris as the man above. it works both ways - sometimes He tries to reach us but it is filtered through error and traditions, and sometimes the only way a Christian has a relationship with the Lord is 'upward' through that same debris.

- If you identify yourself to others by the particular teaching or place you have latched onto for the moment, you might be a legalistic believer.
- If you get offended when someone challenges your doctrine, you might be a legalistic believer.
- If you have lost the ability to exchange ideas but get defensive and resort to personal attacks when someone questions what you believe, you might be a legalistic believer.
- If you place great emphasis on outward appearance or believe your faith and the outward appearance of yourself and your church are linked and very important, you might be a legalistic believer.
- If you believe what x teacher says rather than the chapter and verse you can read for yourself, you might be a legalistic believer.

**The thing about legalistic believers is they think they are free, but they are actually in the worst kind of bondage.** Let me get to the core of what makes a legalistic Christian. Legalism is the combination of performance, fear, and condemnation in an effort to please God or please church leadership. (A child can also exhibit these traits in order to please a legalistic parent)

A legalistic believer is focused on actions and how they present themselves, tying these things to the belief God is more pleased with them or more inclined to answer their prayers. If you've had an urgent prayer request and attended a service you would not normally attend in

the hope God will see your extra effort or to remind Him a deadline looms, you are in legalism.

Another example would be if you believe financial blessing is a sign of God's personal stamp of approval of your life, you are in legalism. If you've ever tried to buy answered prayer by tying x amount of giving to a healing, the saving of a loved one, and so on... you are in legalism. The Father relates to us through the blood of Jesus and the fact we were both born into and adopted into His family by the blood of Jesus - not by how many spiritual hoops we form of our own doing to jump through.

Legalism causes a person to produce a false identity. They live a facade in public but are often different at home, often trying to make up for the difference between what they believe in their legalism, and the reality of their life. They compensate for the difference by becoming judgmental, condescending, and measuring others by their own standards of what they feel is right or wrong.

#### **Point #2: You might be a legalistic believer if...**

**You feel spiritually safe if you focus on just one spiritual teaching or discipline at a time.** A person who is unable to simply walk with the Father in conversational ease based on Christ in them and cannot read or listen to a variety of teachings and beliefs from different sources because they feel threatened by anyone outside of their current focus, might be legalistic. Legalism is intolerant of those who believe differently than they do, and if they can't be won over to their side - they drop the relationship. (Legalism causes anger and these people are generally angry and/or unhappy down deep inside, but well protected in their heart).

They can't see the whole counsel of God in part out of fear they are missing the latest thing heaven is saying, or they feel they alone have a revelation- they fear 'missing it'. Covered in a facade of spiritual knowledge and growth, they are actually motivated by fear of the unknown - and being legalistic helps them pin down all those unknowns. They can't just walk with the Father and

trust His peace in their spirit - they are driven by fear wrapped in spirituality.

#### **Point #3: You might be a legalistic believer if...**

**You separate your natural life from your spiritual life.** This is a person who only lets their spirituality be seen to those who believe as they do, or to those they think should believe as they - who they try to correct not meekly as scripture says, but as a know-it-all, as one in authority. Often, they have been rejected by others and so keep quiet because they know if they tell what they believe it will be rejected, so like a hawk looking for prey, they hold to themselves until they find a weaker person.

They often feel it is them and God against the world, constantly threatened and they must protect what they believe from others - they have light, they know the higher way and how others may approach God and a holy life.

#### **Point #4: You might be a legalistic believer if...**

**You are all alone because you've shut out everyone due to their imperfections, sins, and doctrinal error.** Often legalistic believers have no best friend, and can't share their beliefs with their spouse. Surrounded by people, they are alone. Think about the Pharisee's and Jesus - their demand for perfection in others' lives while living a double standard and not holding themselves to the same standard (though they argued to Jesus they were in fact holding themselves to those same standards, but they couldn't see their own hypocrisy) - meant they were all alone in their little group.

It is this isolationism that is worst part of legalism I think. People cover their loneliness by being active in their cause, or in social media (or combine the two efforts), but in their heart of hearts, they are lonely and they know it. Cut off social media, church if they attend, and take away their Bible and stacks of notes, and they would have no walk with the Lord. They know Him through the framework of the temple they've built to Him, but don't know He doesn't inhabit their temple - He lives in them yet they are focused on all things 'out there'.



**John Fenn**  
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## PASSION AND THE KINGDOM (Continued from page 2)

creatures who mistakenly ingest them and die. This initiative was started by a lady in Queensland and is spreading all around the country and becoming like a movement with real momentum. The environmental cause and passion are seeing increasing numbers of people involved!

I thought of another time visiting a business man in QLD. Kate and I went to his property where he was raising butterflies – mostly native ones. This was one of his interests and passions. He also opened up his property to the community and invited members to come in and help raise these beautiful butterflies. In the midst of the shed he had a table with a Bible and he unashamedly invited people to study God's word. He also did up a small sheet and printed off his activities – early morning walks, working out in his gym, caring for the butterflies and spiritual and Bible reading times etc. He and His wife just letter boxed this around his community. They combined a hobby/passion with outreach very seamlessly and it was impacting people. My wife Kate began talking to a lady who was holding a beautiful chrysalis (caterpillar) in her hand. As she looked at it she said "I've been an atheist but .... maybe I'm becoming an agnostic!" She was being impacted by direct contact with God's creation.

Recently our family visited a friend and his wife who lives more remotely than we do! They are passionate

gardeners and have created an orchard and garden that people stop to look at. They preserve and dry much of their own food and are semi self-sufficient. Its hard not to be caught up in the beauty and wonder of experiencing this garden and orchard – and tasting the fruit! They are about to have a whole bus load group of people visit their property. It makes it easier to speak to people of their faith. They are also passionate travellers and hikers – so they have plenty to share about!

It has got me thinking – whether its music, removing plastic bags from the environment, butterflies, orchards and gardens or whatever one's interest are – people will be interested and drawn if

***An interesting person is "a person with lots of interests." If our only interest is church stuff, we will find it hard to relate to many people***

you are passionate enough about it especially if they share your interest and passion area. If there is also a Cause behind it, it will draw more people again.

Amazingly our hobbies and interests can create real connecting points for people and the kingdom of God. People are then attracted to what they are interested in as well as to you as Gods ambassador for the Kingdom. Kingdom and passion are an amazing combination!

I heard a speaker once say an interesting person is "a person with lots of interests." If our only interest is church stuff, we will find it hard to relate to many people who don't share that interest! I see a connection between interests/hobbies and the work of the Kingdom. It gives a natural connection to others. In these connections the ultimate cause of Christ can flow into people's awareness and lives.

And one more thing I've been challenged with is that the starting point for being a passionate follower of Christ is intimacy with Him and it grows out of time spent with him each day in prayer. The scriptures tell us that Jesus frequently arose a great while before dawn and went out to pray and seek his Father. I am challenged to spend more time with



Christ each day, and I find that when I do it kindles my passion and strengthens my connection to Christ. I begin to experience his presence and power and hear his voice speaking to me. This increases my desire and passion to know him more deeply.

"Boring, dull, nice but passionless" should not be words that describe Kingdom of God people. I'm drawn deeper to the bigger picture of the mystery of God in Christ who is seeking to bring all things under one head – Christ (Eph 1:10). He desires to live in us through the Spirit, bringing his amazing power, love, healing, peace, strength and amazing joy to his people – it's anything but boring and dead! He unites all his followers into one body with all their diversity, but with a genuine unity in Him.

His Kingdom is radical, subversive and even dangerous. This radical upside-down Kingdom will even threaten the status quo! It may get you into trouble if you are passionate enough as it will change people and everything. An Oikos Coordinator Ian was telling me last night how he has even seen people around him healed. A couple of middle aged guys live next door and one had a rare and potentially life-threatening growth on his forehead. The doctors were talking about a course of chemo. Ian asked if he could pray for him and he placed his hand on the man's head. Just recently the man saw Ian outside in his garden and came rushing excitedly up – "Look", he said, "It's all gone!" "You know who to thank for that", Ian replied, "Not me – but God!" When I see people touched, healed and their lives change for the better I become more and more hungry to see the Kingdom of God break out across this nation. Its not hard to become excited – and passionate!

***bless you, Phil Brown***  
**OIKOS DIRECTOR**



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# MARTIN BRAGGER *SURPRISED BY THE 'CLOUD'*



**I'm sitting on the patio of our house, a place I often use for reading the bible, to pray and to work.** It is very quiet, the only sounds being those of the nearby creek running full after much rain, some chirping Rainbow Lorikeets and the whisper of a gentle breeze stirring the Gum trees surrounding our property.

I find myself surprised, for I am praising God for something I have never done before. What is surprising? Surprising is the fact that it is a 'grey day', no sun but a total overcast, and I normally don't 'do' grey days. This is a hangover from years of living in the tropics when the build up to the Monsoon was characterised by weeks of grey, overcast skies. I used to find this very depressing and this mental reaction to 'grey' days has not left me even after many years.

However, this day I am praising God for the cloud, for I am reading Numbers and have been reminded of the significance of 'Cloud' in the biblical story which so often signifies the presence of, and the action of, God to guide and bless His people. This 'grey day' experience has brought to my mind images of cloud - as the chariot of God (Psalm 104; Isaiah 19:1); the presence of God with Moses on Mount Sinai; the cloud of God's presence in the Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah 4:5); with Jesus at the Transfiguration; Jesus enveloped in cloud at His ascension; and the clouds that bring Jesus return for His people.

The particular 'Cloud' that has inspired my praise today though is the cloud of God's guidance, the cloud that marked God's presence by day with His people in the Wilderness, the cloud

they followed when it moved, and the cloud that caused them to rest when it remained in the one place.

This reminds me that God is our guide through the current spiritual wilderness that characterises western society. It emphasises the fact that, as we seek to develop new (what I call 'Unbounded') forms of church to reach those who are dying in the same wilderness, we must keep our eyes on the 'Cloud' and move when He moves, and follow where He wants to lead. Further, the wilderness cloud images reminds us that there were times that the cloud rested for a while. So, we (and this is not a strength of mine) must sometimes patiently wait for God to move again and lead us on the next stage of the journey, not crash ahead in our own strength, in our own direction, and with our own plan. Rather, we must wait on and discern the movement of the 'Cloud', and move only when we see Him move.

So yes, I find myself surprised by today's 'grey day' experience, driven to praise God for the cloud. Well, no, not exactly for the cloud but for the 'Cloud', the promise of the presence and guidance of the God as we as His people journey through this 21<sup>st</sup> century western barren wilderness, this spiritually desiccated desert. I praise God that I can do so in the knowledge that if I follow the 'Cloud', as the Israelites were charged to do, then the end of the journey is the promised City of God.

Praise God for the 'Cloud'!

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## [WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? - JOHN WHITE - LK10.com](#)

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**As an individual, you are trying to decide what to do in some situation. Just ask WWJD. "What Would Jesus Do?"**

Or, as a small group or house church, you are trying to decide what your purpose or mission is. Or, what to do in this week's meeting. Just ask WWJD. "What Would Jesus Do?"

Sounds good, doesn't it? What could be more spiritual than trying to figure out what Jesus would do if He were in your shoes. Turns out there is a much better alternative. **Ask Jesus Himself.**

You see, there is an (unspoken) underlying assumption with WWJD. It is that Jesus is not presently available. Or, if He is available, He's not communicating with you. Or, if He is communicating, you don't know how to hear Him. So, WWJD is the alternative.

You know a lot of information about Jesus from the Bible and, based on that, you can attempt to figure out what he might do in your situation. Many people do this same kind of thing with other respected historical figures. They base their decision making on the life and teachings of some great person.

What would George Washington do in this situation? "What Would George Do?" (WWGD) Or, what would Gandhi do? (WWGD) Etc. (Hey, we could start a whole new business selling wrist bands with these initials!)

There are at least **three reason** why WWJD is a poor alternative.

### **1. God's ways are not our ways.**

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways ways your ways," declares the Lord." (Is. 55:8)

The life of Peter gives us a good example of why trying to figure out what Jesus would do is a problem. Peter had spent several years hanging out with Jesus every day. Watching how He lived. Listening to His teaching. If anyone would have been able to "figure out" WWJD, it would be Peter. But, when Jesus began to explain that He must go to Jerusalem and be killed (Mt. 16:21), Peter "took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him." Well, we know what happened next! ("Get behind me, Satan!"). The fact is that none of us are smart enough to be able to predict what Jesus would do if He were in our shoes. His thoughts are not our thoughts.

### **2. Jesus didn't live this way.**

Of course, for Him the initials would have been WWFD. "What would Father do?" But, Jesus didn't wear a wrist band with those initials. And, He didn't live His life asking that question. He didn't

presume to think that He could "figure out" what to do based on His past experience with the Father. Rather, in every situation, His guiding principle was to find out what the Father was doing in the present and do that.

"The Son does nothing on His own initiative: He can do only what He sees His Father doing." (Jn 5:19) If Jesus did nothing on His own initiative, if he never tried to figure out WWFD, what does that say for us?

### **3. WWJD ignores the present role of the Spirit.**

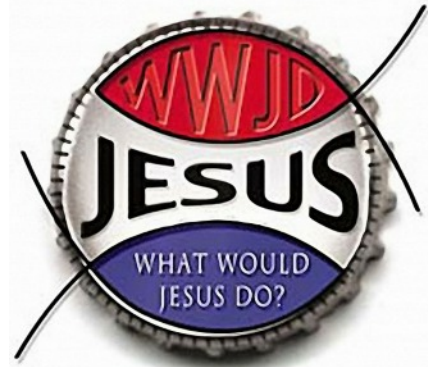
We have something (or Someone!) far better than our own ability to reason things out. **We have present access to a real Person who we can ask for directions.** Here's what Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor (*Paraklete*) to be with you forever... (Jn 14:15) The word "another" here means "another one just like the first one". Jesus was the first *Paraklete*. Clearly, the disciples understood that they were to have the same kind of relationship with the Spirit that they had had with Jesus for the last three years. A relationship in which they could talk everything over with Him.

John and Stasi Eldredge explain this way of "living by listening" in their book on marriage, *Love & War*. "The secret of the Christian life – and the Christian marriage – is that you don't have to figure it out. You don't have to figure life out, you don't have to figure each other out, you don't have to figure parenting out, or money or family. You have a counselor, you have a guide – you have God. What a relief that we don't have to figure it all out! We get to walk with God. That is the beauty of Christian spirituality. This is not about mastering principles; it's about an actual relationship with an actual person who happens to be the wisest, kindest, and ok, wildest person you will every know." (p. 131)

### **"My sheep hear my voice"**

Are you trying to figure out what to do in a particular situation? Is your house church trying to figure out what their purpose or mission is? What a relief that we don't have to figure it out! We don't need to try and figure out WWJD. Because we can ask Jesus Himself!

Filed under: [Jesus](#), [Discipleship](#)



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