

AUTHENTIC

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MEN'S MAGAZINE

Barrie Hanson
IS HONOUR LOST?

**Family First with
Bob McCoskrie**

CHARLES PRICE
A Broken World

Major Thomas
Jesus Christ
Our Sufficiency

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- Stephen Whitwell on The Security of 'Father'
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A 'Driving' Passion



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Sending Out The Good News

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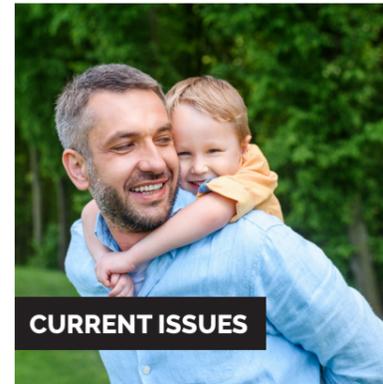
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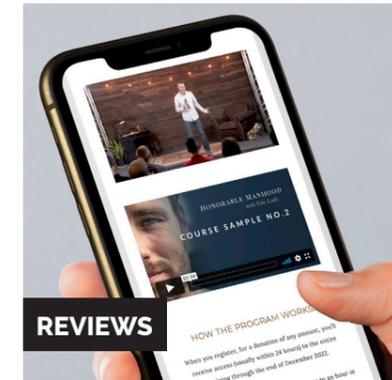
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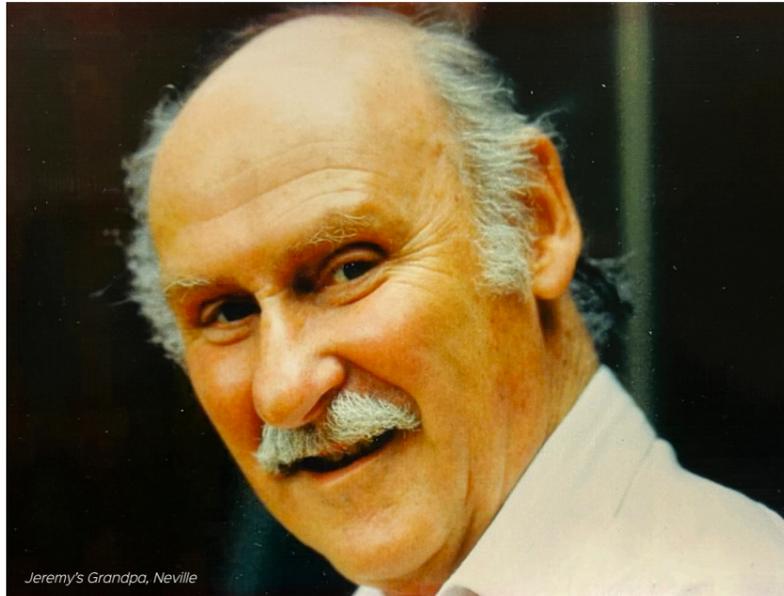
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Cover Photo: Family First New Zealand founder and national director Bob McCoskrie and his team are hard at work preparing for their annual Forum on the Family early this month. Photo: Phil Botha Creative. Other Images: Unless otherwise stated, all images published in this issue which appear outside of the three main feature articles are sourced from either Unsplash or Depositphotos.

WELCOME TO THE NINETEENTH EDITION OF

AUTHENTIC

MEN'S MAGAZINE



Jeremy's Grandpa, Neville

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

In September 2007, as my dad and I sat under a star-lit sky in Mozambique, he received a life-changing phone call. In New Zealand - about 12,000km away - his father, my Grandpa, had gone to be with Jesus.

Though not entirely unexpected, I know hearing that while geographically so far away was hard on Dad. We'd hoped, of course, for a little more time with him once we returned home.

It's interesting. As Father's Day approaches, I've prayed about what to share here. And, Grandpa has been on my mind a lot.

He was definitely a Godly, father-like influence during my early years. Memories of him simply serve as a reminder of how grateful I am to God for his life. Grandpa was a character. He owned music shops, so - as a kid - trips to his house often meant being greeted by him as he played the keyboard. For

years, as his grandchildren grew up, he kept 'special treats' - assorted lollies - in a top drawer of his bedroom dresser. We didn't have free reign of the lolly stash, he'd tell us gullible young ones the drawer needed a special verbal passcode. And that only he had access to it. I'll admit occasions when I tried to circumvent this process and just open the drawer. I wasn't the only one of us grandkids to do so!

For years though, the drawer wouldn't budge. It made me think Grandpa was amazing. Then, stunningly on one occasion, I opened it! I couldn't believe it! Truthfully, I'd eventually find out the heavily-laden wooden drawer didn't need a passcode - it needed to be lifted straight up before being opened. I don't remember Grandpa ever actually telling me that - and it was a long time before I conceded I'd cottoned on to his 'tricks'.

Jokes aside, Grandpa was - at his core - a man of prayer with an unshakeable

faith in Jesus. One of my lasting memories is actually how much prayer - and the centrality of Jesus - were his life's foundation.

So, why share some seemingly small - and perhaps possibly trivial - memories of my Grandpa here? Because, simply put, often in life as we intentionally reflect, it stirs thankfulness in our hearts. And that's been our prayer as a team here at Authentic as we've compiled this issue.

Ultimately, as you read the content which fills these pages, may it point you to Christ. And, may gratefulness be stirred as you reflect, dwell on and - as His Word tells us to - call to mind all He's done for us.

With Father's Day ahead, there's lots of content in this issue which we hope will uplift and encourage the dads amongst us. Of course, the ultimate expression of Fatherly love is found in God sending His Son Jesus. How wonderful is that love - He's indescribably good to us.

Jesus tells us in Luke 19:10, *"...the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* (NIV). And, I find Jesus' explanation of this aspect of the Father-hearted nature of God - in Matthew 18:12-14 - amazing. *"If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in Heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish."* (NIV).

So, yet while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. John later reflects on God's amazing love too. *"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"* - 1 John 3:1 (NIV).

In the next chapter, he adds, *"This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son..."* - 1 John 4:9-10 (NIV). Thank you Jesus.

James 1:17a says, *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father..."* (NIV) and in the psalms, David regularly encourages us to continually call that fact to mind. Psalm 103:2 says, *"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."* (NKJV), while Psalm 143:5, tells us, *"I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that You have done..."* (ESV). What timely reminders.

As you read this issue, may you be encouraged and strengthened as you call to mind the Lord's many blessings.

Thank you for your continued prayers for the work we do at Authentic Media, our marketing and communications agency. We currently have lots on our plate, so we really appreciate your prayers as we navigate it all!

In this issue, I sat down with Family First New Zealand founder and national director Bob McCoskrie. On pages 34-39, I speak with Ebbett Group's executive director Richard van den Engel. As the Lord would have it - in light of Father's day - it's cool to note the strong father-son element of our chat.

I also caught up with Māori Postal Aotearoa national directors Malachi and Char Williams. Thanks guys!

Reflecting at this point of the production process always encourages me - I'm consistently so grateful for the Lord's leading regarding the 'shape' each issue takes.

Finally, for those of us who have been given the gift and the privilege of fatherhood, again let's simply take time to be thankful to our Heavenly Father! His love for us is bigger and deeper than anything we could ever experience from an earthly father.

I'll leave you with a thought Greg Stier shares on pages 68-69 as part of his testimony. I thought it was really powerful. "Whether you have a biological - or earthly - father or not this Father's Day, you can celebrate the reality of a Heavenly Father who loves you so much that He sent His most cherished Son, Jesus, to die in your place for your sin. Through faith in Him, you have eternal life." - Amen.

Until next time!



Jeremy Smith is editor of, and one of the writers for, Authentic Magazine. He is an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his talents to glorify God.

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The Purpose of Bible Study

Over the years, I've come to the Bible for many reasons - for devotions, leisure reading, to prove someone wrong (yes I admit it), for homework and simply to know what it means. But I fear, in the end, I've missed the true purpose of Bible study and saturation.

There is simply one main purpose for getting into the Word of God - knowing Jesus. No, not knowing about Jesus. Actually knowing Him, the Person.

Jesus often encountered the Pharisees regarding a variety of issues. In John 5.39, He makes an interesting statement to them, "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about Me." (NIV). What I find so startling about this passage is that if we ran into anyone like these Pharisees in the church today, we would likely celebrate them, wouldn't we? Here they are searching and looking for eternal life in scripture. Jesus rebukes them.

The Pharisees were getting into the Word looking for life, yet Jesus declared that everything in scripture points to Him. John 14:6 tells us Jesus is life. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (NIV). They were in the right place, but missed it entirely. Yet, everything in scripture points to Jesus - yes, even the Old Testament. He is called the Living Word - the fullness, culmination and lived-out expression of the written Word. And everything throughout the Old and New Testaments points to Him.

There is an interaction between the written and Living Word. Getting into the written Word leads us, by the Holy Spirit, into the Living Word. As you get to know the written Word, you get to know the Living Word.

Think of it like this. If I came up to you and shook your hand, I'd be shaking you. But, if we were to cut off your arm, you are not any less you - you may be armless but you are still fully you.

In a similar manner, though I do realise the illustration breaks down, when you 'shake', or get into, the written Word, you are getting into the Living Word.

We realise that the written Word is not Jesus - Jesus is still fully Jesus even if you cut off the written Word - but there is such an interaction between the two of them that as you get into one, it is as if you are getting into the other.

Do you want a greater level of intimacy with Jesus? You must be in the Word! Do you want to know Him better? Then you better be soaked and saturated within the pages of the scripture - not because you are after eternal life apart from Christ, but because you are after a person who is life itself.

When we come to the Word, Jesus isn't interested in us simply knowing about the Word, He wants us to know Him. He wants intimacy. And the tremendous thing about the Word is that, no matter where we dive into, it will lead us to Jesus.

“Jesus isn't interested in us simply knowing about the Word, He wants us to know Him. He wants intimacy.”

If you come to the Word for any other reason than intimacy and oneness with Jesus, you will soon find yourself fizzled out and disappointed, and - eventually -

you will quit. Sure, we can work ourselves up for an academic study of one more lesson, or a sermon, but unless we see the Word as living, active and sharper than a double-edged sword that wants to do its work in our lives, we will be approaching the Word out of duty and obligation, rather than delight, passion and hunger. See Hebrews 4:12.

Do you see that the Bible is not boring, dull or old? The pages are still wet with ink as if God just spoke them. They are living and active. They are focused on the Person of Jesus. Why don't you spend some time not learning about Him but getting to know Him as you would a good friend?

My final thought is to encourage you to reflect on how seeing scripture as an avenue of intimacy would change the way you approached Bible study. Because it most certainly will. |A

■ Nathan Johnson is program director and an instructor at Ellerslie Mission Society in Windsor, Colorado. Learn and see more at deeperchristian.com. Used by permission.



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*Declare His glory among the nations!
Psalm 96:3*



FAMILY FIRST: the Fabric of a Strong Nation

BY JEREMY SMITH

“Deregistered, but not defeated.” Four words immediately on Bob McCoskrie’s lips as a nearly \$750,000, decade-long, four-court case journey came to an end tell you almost everything you need to know.

The Supreme Court’s recent decision which saw Family First lose its charitable status in New Zealand was, of course, hugely disappointing for Family First’s founder and national director - and not just because of the ramifications for him and his team.

There’s a potential precedent the ruling sets, he says. In chatting with Bob though, you immediately sense a broader picture - it’s foundationally anchored him to this point, and will continue to do so into the future.

It’s likely the grounding from which that rather profound opening statement came. “Ultimately, we’re here because the Lord called us to this work - He’s the one who is in control, we’ll continue to be here for as long as this is where He’d have us be.”

As Family First now prepares for its 14th annual Forum on the Family - to be held on September 6 - I had the chance to sit down with Bob for an insightful chat.

We covered family, faith, some of the key challenges facing New Zealand and what it means to boldly and authentically display the truth of Jesus Christ in a day and age when the ‘cultural flames’ are heating up.

Amongst it all was a key reflection. “When you pull up the anchor of Biblical truth, you’ll simply float around the sea at the whim of every wave.”

Firstly, so much of your work is centred around family. Tell me about yours...

My wife, Tina, is half Niuean and a part-time nurse. She’s been my biggest supporter many times as I crazily stepped out into various ministries. We have three children - Nicole, 24, Stephen, 21, and Katie, 18. They’re all still living at home! We often joke that three young people that age discussing topics with their ‘boomer’ dad can get pretty lively!

Previously, we ran a piece you wrote about the importance - and benefits - of family dinners. What’s the most important thing to you as a husband and father?

That our children haven’t had to go elsewhere looking for love, acceptance, value, or commitment. That they know Tina and I are whole-heartedly committed to them, even when they mess up. We’ve intentionally cultivated that openness between us - when it comes to those communication channels, they are - of course - anchored by our shared faith in Jesus. I decided early on that, in the majority of cases, I’m unavailable for weekend speaking engagements.

Instead, I’m committed to being with my family at my home church as many weekends as possible. It’d be disingenuous if I was out there preaching ‘family first’, yet not actually putting my own family first. Tina’s wonderful, she gently reminds me what it is to genuinely live out messages I’m sharing. I’m hugely passionate about family dinners. They’re not based on having lots of money, making special trips, or having certain skills. It’s simply a consistent commitment to spend time together. Based on the research indicators, I’d go as far as saying that, in many cases, family dinners are one of the defining factors regarding the way in which families navigate tough times.

What's an ideal day spent together as the McCoskrie family?

Something like some exercise, getting coffee together and maybe playing some fun board game. And, we love family holidays - which, by the way, also often involve 'afternoon nap time!' Those key times are really important. As the kids get older, and navigate different seasons of life, there's of course an understanding that - at times - they want to spread their wings a bit and be part of their friend groups. Which is normal. But we often invite their friends along too!

That's the environment I grew up in - knowing that no matter the season of life, family time is precious and to be protected. We remain committed to it, so far the kids seem on board too!

I have to ask, because Dave - our CEO here at Authentic - will be delighted. I heard you're a Liverpool supporter?

Absolutely! Actually, I was playing football up until about two years ago. I didn't want to give up, but my body did! Now, I'm refereeing, and Stephen is playing - so, I go and watch games. For me, Saturday means sport, chauffeur driving and cheering on the sidelines.

Your 'story' is made up of many 'chapters', and God has used them all. How did you come to know Christ?

I was born and raised in Papatoetoe in South Auckland. My parents were Christians, so my two older brothers and I grew up in church. When I was about 14 or 15, I realised the importance of cultivating a personal relationship with Jesus, rather than simply 'relying' on my parents' faith. My upbringing meant I understood the need for God's grace, that Jesus died on the cross and that I needed that personal relationship with Him. Following Him has, of course, been an ongoing journey and decision to submit to Him. I've 'wandered off the track' at times and been reminded of the story of the prodigal son as I've returned and asked for the Lord's forgiveness.

Speaking of those 'chapters', tell me about your involvement with Youth For Christ (YFC)...

As I came to a stage in life when I felt it was time to give back, Youth For Christ (YFC) - a worldwide movement working with young people - was really strong. YFC's heart was to give every young person the opportunity to follow Jesus. I initially got involved with a YFC programme called Campus Life, helping students journey through issues with which they were wrestling. I was involved with youth leadership at church, and that grew into wanting to be involved in discipleship and evangelism opportunities through YFC. It's amazing looking back - the Family First work God has called me to really just grew as He led me step by step, opened doors and has proven Himself faithful.

You also set up the Papatoetoe Adolescent Christian Trust (PACT) didn't you?

Yes. I had a heart for my local community - Papatoetoe - and to expand beyond just youth evangelism into working with at-risk families. PACT started in January 1995, and it's still running more than 25 years later - aiming to transform Papatoetoe by mentoring and investing in rangatahi, or children, and strengthening whānau. It's a journey of supporting rangatahi using preventative and mana-enhancing approaches which encourage and empower them and their whānau.

In the eight years I was there, the work was about simply serving Papatoetoe through things like parenting programmes, camps and after school programmes, chaplaincy in schools and cafe gatherings. I'm still involved on the board.

What was it like being on the breakfast show on Rhema?

Radio was one of my first loves. I think I've always realised the power of communication. From a young age, I'd spin the same 45RPM record and practice being a DJ by 'reading' a few ads. My big break was as Paradise Ice Skating's Friday night DJ in Glen Innes. When I mention that now, so many people still say, "I heard you there!"

I was at Rhema from 2002-2006 - just like all my other experiences up to that point, it was a fantastic training ground. One of our aims was to facilitate a talk back and discussion format with a Christian worldview. Whenever we'd have discussions around issues, we'd intentionally find people representing both sides of the conversation.

People still tell me they'd tune in every Tuesday morning for my weekly

interview with then Prime Minister Helen Clark. To her credit, she did constantly show up. Whatever discussion we were having, both sides of the 'argument' needed to be represented. I've said, even recently, that if your own argument can't stand up to a level of scrutiny, perhaps you need to work on your argument.

One of my key learnings from school came from my time in the debating team as the first speaker. The role was not to simply reiterate the ideology of what I'd already said. I had to listen to the other three speakers on the opposing side, reflect on their argument and process how to respond.

Isn't it cool how - in walking with Jesus - God uses all of our experiences in the outworking of His purposes?

Absolutely! Looking back, I can see there was a lot of groundwork going on even then. His hand was in everything. After I left school, I nearly signed up for a Bachelor of Music. Instead, I studied a Bachelor of Accounting, then a teaching degree. I got my Master's Degree in accounting and lectured

in commercial law and accounting at Manukau Institute of Technology for four years.

When I felt God calling me to YFC, I left that well-paying job, raised my own support and set out, living by faith. I ran YFC South Auckland when Ian Grant was overseeing YFC Auckland. It was a full-on ministry season. All that to say I love encouraging young people now that, no matter what situation you're currently in, wherever the Lord has you, you never know what groundwork He's already doing in your life as He prepares you for the next season. Be faithful with what's at hand, working as unto Him, not man.

Was your time at Rhema - at least in part - where initial thoughts towards Family First began to stir?

That's fair. As we facilitated debates on issues, I never really had trouble finding people representing the more 'liberal' view, if you will. It was a lot harder finding conservative voices though. One of the few groups around was Maxim Institute, and there were a few politicians we'd call on. When the Rhema season closed, I realised that not only was God calling me into that space, but my on-air experience had been great preparation. Family First began in 2006 and it's been an amazing 16-year ride during which I've been humbled by people's support. It seems like Family First has filled a role that was needed. In that time, not only have we felt called, but the Lord has continually equipped us.

What's the heart behind Family First's work?

Initially, it was to be a voice in the media presenting a counter balance to the prevailing narrative. That's still the case today - although we've noticed a trend. As we've entered into a few 'controversial' debates, perhaps especially discussions around the Definition of Marriage Amendment Bill, the Abortion Legislation Act 2020, the cannabis law reform and the End of Life Choice referendum regarding euthanasia, we've been slowly shunned by the media. Our media coverage has slowly declined since around 2012, I'd say. As our ability to speak into the media debate has decreased, our role in and around the area of education has grown.

I love Billy Graham's quote, "...when a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened." That's our heart, essentially - to help people understand the issues, give them the tools required to enter the public debate - be that among friends, community leaders, church leaders, or whoever - and give them the confidence to say, "...this is what I believe and why." Honestly, I know there are times we're a bit nervous to share our views - we don't want to get 'shot down'. Maybe that's, in part, because we don't know the reasoning behind some of those views. When people say to me, "...we should know those reasons...", they make a good point. So, essentially, Family First is trying to do some 'homework' for people as they seek to understand what's happening. We've called ourselves a 'watchdog', other people call us a 'watchman on the wall'. We're simply trying to use Godly wisdom regarding what's really at play in and around some of the issues being discussed in the public domain. One of my encouragements for people is to 'lift their eyes' - be aware of some of the things at play and the



long term agenda, or ramifications. With every decision, there'll always be a flow-on effect.

What's the best, and the hardest, aspect of your role?

It's important I say here we haven't always got everything right - be that even in the tone with which we've attempted to communicate things. Though, the intention has always been to speak truth with both love and grace. I'm very aware that, personally, I'm a sinner saved by grace. Sometimes, Family First has also been a sinner saved by grace. And, there's certainly no finger pointing. Every day, I'm committed to walking with Jesus in His strength, not my own, understanding I need Him just as much as the person next to me.

One thing that's perhaps troubled me is that people - some, not all - have judged Family First based solely on what they've heard about us in the media, or elsewhere. That misrepresentation by 'the other side' tends to label us negatively - and that's fine. That's one of the hardest things though. Honestly, the 'friendly fire' can be tough to take too - from people who you thought were perhaps with us - as they're influenced by some of the 'narrative' they hear in and around Family First.

Most recently, during the process through which we were deregistered, one of the five judges said we weren't respectful. That actually hurt, because it's something we pride ourselves on. We can discuss the issues without being disrespectful to others, or attacking people.

I was encouraged by the fact that, after they heard that in the ruling, so many of our supporters got in touch with us to say they wholeheartedly disagreed with that sentiment. I'm really grateful to them - they're not afraid to keep us accountable. If we were actually disrespectful with things we're doing and saying, our supporters would be among the first to tell us! One of the nicest compliments is people telling us they can trust and rely on the reports, releases and information we put

“It’s important I say here we haven’t always got everything right - be that even in the tone with which we’ve attempted to communicate things. Though, the intention has always been to speak truth with both love and grace.”



out - and that our work is credible. At its core, that’s our aim. When people actually take time to read the reports - even those being slammed by the media or in the public domain - ultimately we hope credibility is what they find.

We live in an incredibly ‘noisy’ culture - so many ‘voices’ and messages vie for our attention purporting to be truth. How would you encourage people to listen to the right influences and hold on to Godly truth?

We go through that process ourselves here at Family First. In terms of our work, as we aim to build that credibility, we’re looking for trustworthy voices. There are plenty of occasions on which I have to pause and ask, “... hang on, is this actually true and credible?”

Foundationally, the answer comes down to this - test everything against God’s Word. Don’t believe everything you hear just because you heard it, it’s in the media, or wherever. Dare I say it too, but just because it’s on our website, doesn’t automatically mean it’s true either! Hopefully our processes mean you won’t find anything false there, but we should all test everything. The Word of God is truth and our benchmark. Be discerning about ideology, or agendas, behind what’s being shared - as you’re prayerful, you’ll soon discover how much something does, or doesn’t, stack up against His Word.

Scripture says David “...strengthened himself in the Lord his God...” At times, it seems you’re under quite intense scrutiny as you do the work you do. How do you go about ‘strengthening yourself in the Lord’ and what sustains you despite that pressure?

It’s a combination of listening to and trusting the Holy Spirit’s voice, and having key people around you. Accountability is key. I’ve tried to surround myself with people I trust who aren’t simply ‘yes men’ - they’re men and women I truly believe are Godly people, who are discerning and whose judgement I trust.

Not only do I give them permission, but I ask them to speak into my life and correct me if and when I need it. Whenever I send out a media release, I also run it past a group of about 15 people for feedback. And, I regularly visit key people who I’ve given permission to speak into my life.

Absolutely anybody in Christian leadership needs accountability of some sort. You obviously can’t give everybody permission to speak into your life, but you have to give it to some people you trust. You’ll quickly know if what they’re saying is coming from a spirit of correction and love, or from a place of negativity and criticism. I absolutely value that and I’ve purposed to never shy away from it.

I’ve observed several leaders who haven’t lasted, and - in part - I’d suggest it’s because maybe they haven’t quite had that structure around them. We should never ignore the internal prompts of the Holy Spirit, or the external prompts of people around us who keep us accountable.

Speaking of cultural ‘noise’ - which very often it seems would like Christian voices to be quiet - what’s the biggest thing walking with Jesus has taught you about authentically and boldly living out our faith?

Can I maybe challenge us, in a good way, that if we’re not getting at least some level of push back for our faith in Christ and speaking His truth in today’s culture, perhaps we’re not actually speaking truth and authentically living our faith. In Matthew 5:14-15, Jesus tells us, simply, we’re not to hide our faith. Truthfully, these days - even if we were trying to hide it - I don’t think we can any longer. That’s simply because to be a Christian, live a Biblically-based life and to make moral decisions based solely on His Word runs counter-culturally to our society and the world.

But, there is a yard-stick - a measuring tool I believe should be central to our approach and focus. It’s the combination of both

grace, or love, and truth. If we just speak love without truth, we’re missing the mark. If we just speak truth without love, we can come across as harsh and judgemental. One without the other is problematic. Speak the truth in love. People need to know we have their best interests at heart, that we love, receive and accept them and that we don’t think we’re ‘better’ than them.

At YFC, I heard the saying, “...people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care...” We should always strive to have respectful relationships with those around us. And yes, even those who disagree with us. You can absolutely be respectful at the same time as hearing and receiving their points of view, holding your ground and speaking the truth. Love and respect are inseparable ingredients when it comes to sharing the truth. And yes, we absolutely need to speak it. At the end of the day, it’s the truth which sets us free, isn’t it? Even if you feel like the truth is becoming unpopular, if you’ve got good news, shouldn’t you share it? I want people to know Jesus and live in the freedom He has made possible for us.

We really need to approach situations and conversations ‘in Christ’, and with His heart don’t we?

Deep down, I actually think many people are seeking truth. They may not like hearing it, but they’re looking for it. So, yes there’s no doubt we need to be bold and speak up. Oftentimes, we lean, and rely on, how God has spoken to another person through scripture, or how they interpret things. And, hear my heart in this, there’s nothing wrong with that. But, we also need to return to the Word of God individually and read it ourselves. Go back to what He says, because from that comes Godly wisdom. Aren’t we oftentimes prone to spending more time reading books about the Bible, or Jesus, than we do actually reading His word, the Bible?

What, in your view, is the biggest challenge facing our nation today? How do we - as Christians - navigate that?

It’s simply the rejection of Judeo-Christian values. This ultimately results in a culture more interested in worshipping ‘causes’ - human rights, the environment, sexuality and many others.

Other ‘gods’ have been put before the one true God. And, we’re absolutely seeing the fruit of that rejection reflected in things like increased stress levels, more instances of family breakdown and increased crime and violence.

One of my concerns is also that we’ve given too much power to the state, whereas we need to be equipping families. A nation with strong families is a strong nation. But, where you have the breakdown of families and marriages occurring, you’ll have resulting societal breakdown. Our kids are growing up in a completely sexualised society in which they’re being confused about their gender and being told marriage doesn’t

■ Jeremy Smith is editor of, and one of the writers for, Authentic Magazine. He is an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his talents to glorify God.

matter. To my mind, it’s little wonder our poor kids are walking around stressed.

Bob, as we begin to wrap up, how would you encourage Christians in New Zealand and what’s the key message you’d like readers to take away?

I heard a statement recently which resonated with me, “... attack is the proof your enemy believes in you...”. That’s quite deep, but of course, the enemy isn’t interested in you unless you’re stepping out. George Orwell said “...the further a society drifts from truth the more it will hate those who speak it”. One of my favourite stories from scripture is Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When instructed to bow down to the culture of their day, they wouldn’t.

“...the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” - Daniel 3:17-18 (NIV).

A message I keep repeating at the moment is that the ‘cultural fire’ is getting hotter, and there’s hostility towards the Christian faith and Biblical truth. Let’s decide now - are we going to be ‘even if’ Christians who stand up for, defend and speak truth ‘even if’?

We might get blasted on social media, lose a few Facebook friends, get negative mainstream media coverage, or people may even confront or challenge the views we hold. But, be bold and be strong, *“...for the Lord your God will be with you...” Joshua 1:9 (NIV).*

Looking ahead, what can we as Christians do to support Family First?

One of my goals is to get me off the ‘front page’ a little bit and start to see other conservative-thinking communicators there. So, you’ll notice other faces fronting our videos. In terms of support, the primary way is through praying for us. We’re blessed to have a wide-ranging prayer support network of people all around New Zealand. They regularly pray not only for Family First, but for our nation - for leaders and politicians and for the policy and decision makers in our land. For those who feel led, financial support is an option, and we’d love to hear from those who have skills and resources they can share. If you believe in Family First’s work, speak well of us and share the resources, fact sheets and reports we put out with others and help us spread the word.

Wow. Thanks so much Bob! | 🙏

- For more on Family First, or to register for its 2022 Forum on the Family on September 6, visit www.familyfirst.org.nz



All You Need is Love?

BY ALAN STANLEY



About 30 years ago on a Sunday morning in church, I remember someone saying to me, "I don't have to like you, I just have to love you." I really don't actually remember what I'd done. It wasn't an argument or anything like that, perhaps it was just a throwaway line. But, I've subsequently heard it used a few times since, and it seems to represent a particular belief - the belief that love doesn't include 'like'.

Truthfully though, the thought that "I don't have to like you, I just have to love you," in no way represents what scripture - God's Word - teaches about love. At least when it comes to the love it says should be on display between God's people.

For a start, consider this. Imagine for a second God felt that way about us - He loves us, but He doesn't really like us. Now, of course, I should say this does not mean that 'love' can be reduced to 'like', but it is not less than 'like'.

In fact, Christian love is at the core of the giving of ourselves to another. Take a look at 1 John 3:16. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters." (NIV).

Being a Christian, Christ's life in us, is fundamentally about being in a relationship with God. But it's also about being in relationship with one another. Jesus made this clear when He, in essence, boiled all of scripture down to those two forms of relationship - relationship with God and relationship with

one another. The way He describes these relationships is with one word - the word 'love'. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'" - Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV).

In other words, loving God is the most important thing, but loving others is incredibly close behind - in fact, you can't have the first and not have the second.

Jeremiah communicates a similar idea. "He defended the cause of the poor and needy... is that not what it means to know Me?" declares the Lord." - Jeremiah 22:16 (NIV). God obviously thinks one cannot love Him without also loving others.

Right from the beginning, the Bible emphasises the importance of relationship with those around us. According to Genesis 1:27, "So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them." (NIV).

This means we were made to look like God. No wonder the New Testament begins with Jesus saying to people, "Follow Me." It's also no wonder, then, that Paul tells us that the way we imitate God is by loving one another. "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children." - Ephesians 5:1 (NIV).

Actually, it's no wonder either that John says in 1 John 4:12, "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God

lives in us and His love is made complete in us." (NIV). In other words, "...while no one can claim to have seen God, apart from Jesus, God's one and only Son, believers who love one another demonstrate that the unseen God lives in them."¹

No matter where you look, the Bible reiterates the same thing - a relationship with God cannot exist without relationship with others. Multiple scriptures remind us of this, including Matthew 5:23-24, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Galatians 5:6 and 1 John 3:14 as some of the more obvious examples.

The thing is though, the Bible doesn't just settle for any kind of relationship. Look what Jesus prays for us - and yes, that includes Christians in 2022 - right before He goes to the cross.

After praying for His disciples, He says, "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me." - John 17:20-21 (NIV).

That's amazing. Jesus is praying that the same oneness that exists between the Father and the Son may exist between us as His people. And this is not just a passing thought.

He also prays it in verses 22-23, "I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one - I in them and You in Me - so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me." (NIV), and then again in verse 26, "I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known in order that the love You have for Me may be in them and that I Myself may be in them." (NIV).

I think John 17:23 is one of the most remarkable statements in scripture, "...the world will know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me." The Father loves

"The powerful, sacrificial and transformational love of God - which is the kind of love Jesus prayed we would have for one another - simply leaves no room for not 'liking' each other."

■ Alan Stanley is a Waikato-based preacher, writer and lecturer at Pathways College of Bible and Mission. He has started a new initiative - Preachit! - aimed at training, equipping and mentoring preachers. See, www.preachit.nz

us, His children, as much as He loves His own Son, not one millimetre - or however you measure love - less. I don't buy the belief that when God sees His children, He sees Jesus. I certainly know that we are "in Christ", but that doesn't mean that God is blind to our real selves, whom He of course knows through and through. See, for example, 1 Corinthians 8:3 and 13:12 and Galatians 4:9.

If it were true that God only loves us because we are 'in Christ' then He would basically be some kind of works-orientated kind of God who is simply interested in our obedience. And that suggests that if He saw the real us, He wouldn't be that impressed. In other words, "God really doesn't like me, but Christ covers me so that's okay."

How demoralising! If this was the case, then how was it Jesus could look at the rich young ruler in Mark 10:21 and love him?

Let's return to Jesus' prayer request, His last request as it were, for believers. It boils down to this, "I want them to love each other in the same way that the Father and the Son love each other." So then, that being true, we simply can't get away with statements like, "I don't need to like you, I just need to love you." That just does not square away with what Jesus is praying for.

Thinking we can love someone without liking them demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of what love is. Imagine if the Holy Spirit ever says to Jesus, "I love you, but that doesn't mean I like you." That is, of course, absurd. The powerful, sacrificial and transformational love of God - which is the kind of love Jesus prayed we would have for one another - simply leaves no room for not 'liking' each other.

Paul got it: "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor (as in 'value') one another above yourselves." - Romans 12:10 (NIV). Thus, love without honour is "hollow and self-defeating."²

The writer of Hebrews got it: "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters." - Hebrews 13:1 (NIV).

James got it: "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right." - James 2:8 (NIV).

Peter got it: "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." - 1 Peter 4:8 (NIV).

And now, we need to get it. | 

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1. Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000)*, 162.
2. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988)*, 753



The Wrong Thing to Get Wrong

BY MURRAY SMITH



The downhill slalom at the Winter Olympics is an exciting event. Skiers hurtle around alternating red and blue 'gates', weaving their way to the finish in the shortest time possible. Missing a gate means disqualification. The official Olympics website states downhill skiers reach speeds of 80mph, although they can travel up to 100mph, depending on the course.

During one Winter Olympics, a contingent of people were 'camera bombing' the vicinity of where the world's best skiers were battling it out in the downhill slalom event. They waved painted placards with the wording 'John 3:16' slapped on them. Their actions drew an international television audience's attention.

Two commentators conducted a live narration as competitors took their turns in an effort to complete the downhill slalom course faster than any of their rivals. The commentators' back-and-forth banter was interesting. Inevitably, their attention was drawn to the John 3:16 placard crowd. Their conversation went something like this...

Commentator A: "So what do you make of these supporters waving John 3:16 signs? Can you offer our viewers insight into what exactly these signs are about?"

Commentator B: "Well I'm not exactly sure, but I believe that 'John...' - then giving the full name of a competitor and the country he represented - has a lot of support among the crowd... he's a popular figure in the sport, as these skiers vie for lowest points. As for the 3:16, I believe fans are reminding John that he holds third place at the moment and he cannot accrue any more penalty points over and above his current '16' in order to retain a podium position."

Commentator B was wider off the mark than any skier could ever get navigating a gate on the course!

You see John 3:16 is actually a reference to a verse in the Bible. Spelled out plainly it is the most famously known sentence in the whole Bible, being found in the third chapter and the sixteenth verse of the Gospel of John.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (NIV).

The placard wavers' intention of inspiring people to open a Bible and read this important verse had validity - irrespective of views regarding their strategy.

I say this since there's inescapable truth in these words that everyone must deal with. Time marches on... death comes to everyone, yet so many will not inherit eternal life...

Defining our eternal state is a choice - either rejecting, or believing, in God's Son, Jesus.

John, a disciple of Jesus, wrote his Gospel as it appears in the New Testament section of the Bible. He states emphatically why he wrote of his experiences during the time he spent with Jesus...

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." - John 20:31 (NIV).

It's my prayer that the urgency in John's appeal will speak loudly to those reading this today. |A



Murray Smith is a husband, a father to six children and the senior leader at Bridges Church Cambridge in the Waikato.



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Worldly Guests

BY RAY COMFORT

Do you remember what it was like to fly before smoking was banned on aeroplanes? It was horrible. Breathing recycled air was bad enough without having to endure second-hand smoke. Of course, the airlines provided a smoking 'section' in which smokers were confined to the back five rows.

Unfortunately, the smoke was not. This concept was about as effective as putting a 747 beside a pulpit during a church service and revving the engines, while a sign advises that the noise should be confined to the front five pews.

With that in mind, my encouragement in this piece is to never be deceived into thinking you can allow the pollution of the world to enter your home and yet not contaminate your family. You won't be able to confine it.

Be in Control

Many Christians, even often unintentionally, allow their families to be polluted in the name of entertainment. Some Christ-

ians, realising how their children are being affected, get rid of television altogether. Others learn the art of self-control, and then control the remote control. Whatever you do, can I say, please be 'in' control. If you have the liberty to watch television, or other media, make sure you watch only that which is governed by Philippians 4:8, *"...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things."* (NIV).

Even then, you may leave your kids watching a wholesome program, but the inserted advertisements may be terrible. So, be extra careful that the world doesn't corrupt them through this means. When the mud flows, shut the door.

The world might suggest that you can't entirely shelter your children from wickedness. It may be true, though you can certainly give it a good try. Think about this - what sort of parents would let their children roam around outside knowing that vicious dogs were loose in the area? It's your responsibility

to protect them. That doesn't mean your children become monks in a monastery. It simply means that, as their parents, you keep them away from those things that you know will harm them. God sees innocence as a virtue, not a vice, so let's endeavour to protect our children's innocence toward that which is evil.

"Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil." - Romans 16:19 (NIV).

Nothing Wicked

God instructs us to set nothing wicked before our eyes, and, to not do anything that would cause anyone - especially a child - to stumble.

■ Ray Comfort, the founder and CEO of Living Waters Publications, is an internationally recognized evangelist and author. Ray is the host of the award-winning Way of the Master television program and radio program. He is also a best-selling author of over 80 books.



"...it is the Christian parents' responsibility to bring up their children in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Remember Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 8:13 - *"Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall."* (NIV). Can I ask, therefore, are you careful to monitor the types of entertainment which come into your home?

As well, of course, as television, it's pertinent to keep close watch on the type of music you allow your children to have - truthfully, most kids spend several hours a day being influenced by television and music. One way to keep your children from spending much time indulging in questionable entertainment is to give them responsibilities around the home. This will also prepare them for the real world that they will have to face.

My daughter and her husband use family devotions as a way to teach their children responsibilities such as how to make guests welcome in the home, how to answer the phone politely, how to always keep a godly attitude - essentially, how to honour the Lord in all of life's circumstances.

An important note too is to be aware of the types of friends your children have. If they are from non-Christian families, make sure your kids are influencing them with the gospel, rather than them influencing your children with the things of the world. Peer pressure can greatly sway kids when it comes to a broad range of things like musical tastes, fashion and even their general attitudes. That's why you need a good, communicative relationship with them. Ask your children what their friends talk about and what they believe. And, pray with them for their friends' salvation.

Remember, it is the Christian parents' responsibility to bring up their children in the training and admonition of the Lord. Be sure you protect your children from all ungodly influences - both inside your home and out.

An excerpt from Ray's book *How to Bring Your Children to Christ... And Keep Them There*. | 

Oh the Security of Father

BY STEPHEN WHITWELL



In light of Father's Day, Stephen Whitwell had it on his heart to write of the revelation of the Father heart of God towards His people and to remind us of our identity as His sons and daughters.

Ponder this verse for a second. *"And suddenly a voice came from Heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17 (NKJV).*

The story from which this verse comes always amazes me. Jesus comes to John the Baptist to be water baptised. When He comes up out of the water, a voice booms from Heaven.

For context, the full account tells us this, "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the Heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from Heaven, saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* - *Matthew 3:13-17 (NKJV).*

Oh, the security of Father! So, as we begin to contemplate Father's Day this year, there are three things about this passage which are simply phenomenal. As the Lord has laid them on my heart in that light, I share them here with a heart to also encourage those reading this.

1. The Revelation of Sonship – Confirmation

Here, we have the Father booming from Heaven some very important things. It was a public, heavenly and authorised declaration of the total love and care the Father had for the Son. The Father just couldn't help Himself but lean over the portals of Heaven, and boom out for all to hear, those immortal words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Again, oh the security of Father. Remember too that at this stage, from a ministry standpoint, Jesus hadn't done anything. He hadn't healed any who were sick, cast out any demons, turned any water into wine or raised anyone from the dead. He was just the Son of His Father.

This is an incredible affirmation of who Jesus was. He was the Son of His Father, and in that place He was already well pleasing to His Father. He knew who He was even before He had done anything He was sent to earth to do. Notice the Father says, "...in whom I am well pleased", and not "...with whom I am well pleased". When someone is pleased with us, it means they are pleased with what we've done. But God says He's pleased "in whom", meaning He was pleased in who Jesus was. In this powerful statement, God is confirming Jesus' identity.

Oh the security of Father. Do you and I feel that same sense of security in our identity? Do we feel loved like that by God our

Heavenly Father? Have we had those words of affirmation and confirmation spoken over us? Too many today, men and women, young and old, have not had the healthy imprint of a father figure. Someone to confirm their identity as a son or daughter. Sometimes I wish I could just hug people and bring the revelation of how much they are loved. Father God loves them, and - in Christ - He makes them who they are called to be.

In Matthew 16:13-15, Jesus asks His disciples, *"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"* So they said, *"Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."* He said to them, *"But who do you say that I am?"* (NKJV). Wow. Talk about an open book test.

That's a great question too - and likely one of the most important we will ever be asked. We must ultimately know who Jesus really is. But, if someone were to ask you, "...who are you?" What would you say? What, or where, is your identity? Think of it this way. Who told you who you are and shaped your identity? Parents, teachers and peers maybe? Some derive their identity from their achievements, others from approval, behaviour, possessions or even from relationships.

Some might even say, "...I'm an alcoholic". But what they're doing in making such statements is giving themselves the identity of an alcoholic. It's not true. They may be recovering from an addiction, but that's not who they really are. So, where are we supposed to get our identity from? We get it from God our Father. Have you heard those incredible words from God your Heavenly Father, "This is my beloved son, this is my beloved daughter, in whom I am well pleased?" Oh the security of Father. What an incredible revelation this is. In walking with the Lord myself, it has changed my life.

2. The Robbery of Sonship – Confiscation

Right after Jesus' baptism, we read that He was led into the wilderness and was tempted by the devil. You can read what happens in Matthew 4:1-11. Notice what the devil says to Him, twice, in Matthew chapter four verses three and six "If You are the Son of God...".

It's interesting isn't it that the very last words God the Father spoke were the very first words the devil challenged in the wilderness. And the very first thing the devil challenged was the identity of Jesus. Who He was. If the devil can attempt to steal the identity of Jesus, then be sure, he will try with us too. The devil is out to steal who you are. The greatest theft ever is the theft, or attempted theft, of sonship and daughtership in the Kingdom today.

Without a proper father figure in our lives, or without the affirmation and confirmation of who we are as a son and daughter of God, we can grow up with an orphan spirit. And someone with an orphan spirit is someone who has been deprived, for whatever reason, of proper parental love and care. They don't have that inner security of who they are. How sad it is when something has been stolen from us, confiscated away that is rightfully ours. Are you, or do you know someone, who has been deprived of proper parental love and care? Has

the revelation of your sonship, or daughtership, been stolen from you? My heart breaks for you in love.

Too many in the church today have no revelation that they are sons and daughters of God the Father. It is my heart's cry that they would know this truth to be real in their lives. Because, oh the security of Father.

3. The Rights of Sonship – Connection

This is great! In Luke 15, we read the story of the lost son, or - as we know him - the prodigal son. He got restless, asked for his inheritance, which you could do in those days, and left his father and his father's estate. He partied hard and soon ran out of money. He comes to himself and returns to his father - where he knows he's much better off. But, his elder brother gets upset at the prodigal son being welcomed back.

There was even a party in the returning son's honour. The father in the story says to the older son something we all need to know and understand. He says, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours." - Luke 15:31 (NKJV).

Here we see the rights of sonship, which are just the same for us. He says, "...son, you are always with me". That's full access to the Father, that's intimacy. Whether we're dirty or clean, good or bad, happy or sad, rich or poor, or educated or not, this is what relationship with Jesus Christ - and life in Him - makes a way for. Full, unhindered access to the Father. This is the right of sonship - intimacy, relationship and closeness with God the Father. A close and personal connection with Him is what the Father desires for us too.

Many people struggle to have an intimate relationship with the Father. But I say that if you're one of those people, you need to know this - when walking in relationship with Jesus, there's nothing you can do to change the fact that your access to Father God is already assured. Through the cross of Jesus and His shed blood, you have full unhindered, uninhibited and legal access to God the Father. You can be in connection with God the Father. You absolutely can. Oh the security of Father.

The next words of the prodigal's father were "...all that I have is yours". This is full access to inheritance - which is also provision. And provision is perhaps an area we struggle with too. In essence, in relationship with Jesus, we have access to all that belongs to the Father. The prodigal son's lack of access to even a goat was not the Father's unwillingness to give it, but the son's lack of asking for it. I once heard the story told of

a boy living in a large city in Europe. He loses both his parents in a car crash. So, at 19, he's living as a prostitute, just to get his next meal.

Through the ministry of some Christians in that city, he comes to Christ and is water baptised. His life is transformed. The leaders of the ministry then take him to the local city council, because years earlier, unbeknownst to the young boy, the Communist rules of that country had been overthrown - new laws were in place, meaning the assets of the teenager's parents were now his. This young man subsequently discovered he was the owner of a multi-million dollar apartment right in the central CBD of the city.

Truthfully, even before he discovered the reality of that ownership - ever since the death of his parents - he always was the apartment's owner. He just didn't know it, and

therefore, lived accordingly. Yet, while living as a prostitute, he still had the full right as a son. What don't we know is ours in Christ Jesus? What revelation do we need about the things God the Father has given us access to?

Let me tell you, getting a revelation of who you really are - as a son or daughter of God the Father - will change your life forever. When we come to God, we come as a son or daughter of God, not as a slave.

“Through the cross of Jesus and His shed blood, you have full unhindered, uninhibited and legal access to God the Father.”

This knowledge changes our prayer life, and our faith, when we understand who we are and where our true identity lies. As you may be reading this, can I ask if you have had confirmation of your identity as a son or a daughter of God?

Or, has that reality been confiscated or stolen by the enemy? Are you living life lost and adrift, not knowing who you really are or who you are called to be? Can I encourage you that if this is you, as we begin to think of Father's Day this year, there is an ultimate connection with God the Father and His Father heart that will restore all and give you the sense of security you've yearned for. What you are looking for is not found anywhere else.

Identity comes before activity. Who we are comes before what we do. And the revelation of our identity is the launching pad into our activity. Oh the security of Father. What an amazing place of peace when we know with certainty that we are a son or a daughter of God the Father.

And to have the Father say of us "This is My beloved Son, or daughter, in whom I am well pleased." | 

■ Stephen Whitwell is a husband, father of two and a grandfather of eight. He loves God, the Bible, his family, life, fine food, writing, living in the Bay of Plenty and helping people discover who they really are in Christ. A retired pastor, he writes and publishes Brief Word - a free e-letter and blog - and also serves as a trustee for Authentic Christian Trust. He can be contacted at: www.goodwords.nz



Knowing your position while flying is crucial to reaching your destination safely. No signs - or traffic signals - are present at 35,000 feet. Those who fly know that without accurate instruments, and air traffic controller communication, you can't establish your position. This makes navigating virtually impossible - particularly in bad weather. Knowing your position is crucial to assessing the situation and taking decisive, correct actions. You can't do this based solely on your senses.

Analogy wise, many Christians find it increasingly difficult to know their position - how they 'fit' into the culture of our day - this includes work culture. More and more, Christian beliefs are viewed as a threat to progress. As society shifts, Christianity faces increased public scrutiny.

Christians feeling more intimidated at work become hesitant to express their faith. Does this mean God's purpose for His people is failing? Or that it doesn't work, or shouldn't be displayed at work? I don't think so - Christianity doesn't need a 'comfortable', agreeable work environment to be influential. God's presence is in us, His people - we're His hands and feet. "For God...made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." - 2 Corinthians 4:6-7 (NIV).

When we know our position before God, we understand we're complete and secure in Christ. However 'conditions' change - for better or worse - we're assured that God, and His Word, don't change. In relationship with Him, we learn how His Word applies to life. Growing in His wisdom helps us make the right

adjustments, and to be on the right course. See James 3:13-18. Christians, we always need to better understand how and when to engage in sharing our beliefs. The world, at times, considers these offensive. Our approach, though, shouldn't be. If we're not careful, frustrations about being treated unjustly may be obvious in our responses. Our genuine concern and care for people may, at times, require us to be cautious.

Jesus gave good instructions about how to engage our faith in a credible, yet careful, manner. Knowing His disciples would be His witnesses in a hostile Roman culture. Jesus said, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." - Matthew 10:16 (NIV).

Snakes are known for avoiding danger - not exerting their energy or venom before the right occasion. We need to be wise, not 'flaunting' our Christian views at times. Some people won't understand them. In that instance, we could create problems and controversy. Doves are known for being gentle, not forceful. In engaging with people, we must be noticeably gentle, not pushy. Boldness isn't measured by how strongly, or enthusiastically, I express my beliefs. Rather, it's how clear and convincing my faith in God is to those around me. My life should be a bold statement, not just loud words. Remember, you're not lost in this world, the world is lost in its ways. Your life represents God's answer.

"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." - John 16:33 (NIV). | 

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The Wonder of Worship

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

“Stop kissing me!” I laughed while pushing Miah away. We’d only been together for a couple of months, but her obsessive kissing was getting out of hand. It warmed my heart and made me laugh, but I still wasn’t keen on puppy slobber. Yet, every time I came through the door, I found her excitedly waiting to greet me with a holy - and wet - kiss. If you’ve ever owned a dog, you know the feeling. Dogs adore their masters. You can walk out of the house, return a few minutes later, and most dogs act as if you’ve been gone for days. Interestingly, this is the picture the New Testament paints of worship.

If you’re like me, the word ‘worship’ brings hymn books, praise concerts and singing to mind. But the concept of worship in scripture goes beyond singing songs - it has more to do with how you live your life than the tune upon your lips. It’s all about lifestyle.

The Heart of Worship

Biblically, there are two key concepts associated with worship - beholding and kissing. We’ve already mentioned kissing. The most common word for ‘worship’ in the New Testament is ‘proskyneō’. It means “...to bow down, pay homage, reverence, and adore”. In ancient days, people would worship their pagan gods by kneeling and placing their forehead on the ground, or by throwing kisses - touching their hand to their lips and ‘tossing’ a kiss toward the idol. A similar picture that many Bible scholars use to describe worship is a dog licking its master’s hand.

Dogs are obsessed and overwhelmed with joy, excitement, enthusiasm and a can’t-get-enough-of-you attitude. Worship is like the love and obsession a dog has for its master. Can I ask, do we have a similar passion for Jesus?

The other concept tied to worship is beholding. When you see an incredible sunset, no one has to twist your arm to utter awe and amazement at the beauty, you can’t help yourself. The vibrant colours capture your attention, and a quiet “wow” escapes your mouth. The same thing is true when you behold God. No one can truly force you to worship. Someone might be able to get you to sing a song and say nice things, but that’s not authentic worship.

If you want to worship, you first need to see God for who He is, and then you won’t be able to help yourself. If you fixed your eyes upon Jesus Christ, worship would naturally, and continually, bubble forth. See, for example, Hebrews 12:2. *“I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth” - Psalm 34:1 (NKJV).* *“My praise shall be continually of You...” - Psalm 71:6b (NKJV).*

“Worship demands all. You cannot be ‘half-in’ with worship. You are either fully given, or you are not truly worshipping.”

A Shift of Locale

Worship in the Old Testament was often associated with a physical location. The Israelites had to go to the tabernacle - or temple - to worship God, and they would gather several times a year in Jerusalem for the festivals so that they could offer sacrifices unto Him. It was about a location. Yet, things changed in the New Testament.

One day while Jesus was sitting near a well in Samaria, a woman came to draw water. During their conversation, Jesus says, *“...the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father... but the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.” - John 4:21,23 (ESV).*

Jesus emphasises a shift in worship. It is no longer based at a specific location, but is now experienced in spirit and truth. The New Testament is full of this idea. Because we have become the temple of the Holy Spirit, worship is no longer a physical activity that we go down to a ‘church building’ to do; instead, it is a lifestyle we continuously live. For reference, see 1 Corinthians 6:19. Paul exhorts us in 1 Corinthians 10:31, *“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (NKJV).* Ultimately, everything in your life is to be worship unto the King.

The Demand of All

In John 12, Jesus was sitting at the table with His 12 disciples and His good friend Lazarus, whom He recently raised from the dead. After dinner, Mary - the sister of Lazarus - came with an expensive bottle of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus. It was extravagant, and the smell of the perfume filled the entire house. The disciples looked on with awe and scorn - this bottle of perfume was expensive and worth a year’s wages.

Why would Mary ‘waste’ perfume valued around \$50,000 in today’s economy merely to anoint the feet of Jesus? Why not sell the perfume and give the money to the poor? The story is all about worship and sacrifice. It’s about taking all that you have and laying it at the feet of Jesus. Worship demands all. You cannot be ‘half-in’ with worship. You are either fully given, or you are not truly worshipping.

Isaac Watts wrote in his hymn When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” You are called to a lifestyle of worship. But this calling is not for the faint of heart, for those interested in merely putting time in on Sundays or for anyone who wants to straddle the fence. The call is for all.

Romans 12:1-2 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (NKJV).

You are to be a living sacrifice. You must yield your life, rights and all you have to offer yourself to Jesus, like Mary pouring

out the spikenard upon His feet. It's extravagant, yes, but just as Mary's act of worship filled the entire house with the smell of the perfume, so your life will radiate the fragrance of Heaven when all - everything you have - is made available to the King of kings. See 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

More Than Music

Growing up in church, the pastor always tied worship and singing together in my mind. "Stand and let's worship the Lord..." he'd say as we stood to sing. I failed to realise that everything in the service was worship - fellowship, singing, preaching, taking the offering, communion, the monthly potluck, everything. The difficulty with defining worship is that it is both an 'attitude' and an 'act',² as one Bible dictionary says.

It's more than your actions - it's centred on the attitude and focus of your heart. In fact, the majority of times that worship appears throughout scripture, it is not in the context of music. Singing and praise are certainly a part of a worshipful life, but Biblical worship comprises more than music. See, for example, Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. The first time worship occurs in scripture is in Genesis 22:5, when Abraham takes his son Isaac up the mountain as a sacrifice unto the Lord.

God tested Abraham on the thing he loved most - to determine whether it was his beloved son Isaac or God Himself. It was a test of worship, not merely of Abraham's actions, but the focus and love of his heart. We always worship the thing we love most. While we may give lip service and say, "I worship God alone," our actions often betray us. Our lives often focus on - and strive after - fame, fortune, fitness, fashion or fun. These, and countless others, have become the idols we worship. We were created as worshipful creatures. We have to worship. The question is not "...will we worship?", but "...what will we worship?"

Alan Stanley's piece referenced the following passage in Matthew - and in Mark 12:30-31, we're also told, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these." (NKJV). That is the greatest command in scripture. See, if you loved God with everything, worshiping Him would be easy. So I ask, do you genuinely love God with all?

Psalm 24:4 answers a question posed in the previous verse, verse three. "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully." - Psalm 24:3-4 (NKJV). If you desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, scripture demands you remove the idols from your life and have clean hands and a pure heart. We must come to God in humility and with a contrite spirit - see Isaiah 66:2.

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"If you fixed your eyes upon Jesus Christ, worship would naturally, and continually, bubble forth."

You can sing songs all day, but as I mentioned, Romans 12:1-2 says living a holy and upright life is a part of your spiritual worship. It includes everything in your life - actions, thoughts, words and motives.

Worship Practice

A lifestyle of worship isn't a theory we dwell upon, rather, it is to be practised and lived. Consider taking this idea deeper in this simple study. Read the following passages and journal your responses to the questions.

As mentioned, 1 Corinthians 10:31 and - additionally - Colossians 3:23 - what does it mean to do all for the glory of God? How can you practically live this out by the grace of God?

Psalm 103:1-2 - what is one way you can bless the Lord today? How can you remind yourself always to remember His benefits?

Psalm 95:6-8, John 10:14-15 and Psalm 23 - how is worship connected to the idea that God is our Shepherd?

Exodus 20:4-5 and, as mentioned above, Psalm 24:3-4 - what 'idols' have you set up in your life to worship - things like fame, fortune, fitness, fashion, fun and so on. Give the Holy Spirit time to reveal any area in which you need to confess, repent and be made clean with a pure heart. Spend time with Jesus and surrender and consecrate your life afresh to Him.

1 Samuel 15:22 - what's an area in which God is asking you to obey Him today?

Psalm 2:11 and Psalm 29:2 - what does it mean to worship God in reverence and rejoice with trembling? How can you ascribe glory to His Name? How can you worship Him today in the majesty of holiness? John 4:24 - how can you practically worship God in spirit and in truth?

Revelation 4:8-11 - does it excite you that God is so infinitely good that He must be worshipped? Why or why not?

Psalm 66:4 - while singing is not the primary focus of worship, it is a part of it. Write a heartfelt poem, song or note to Christ expressing your love toward Him. |  

References:
 1 Isaac Watts, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." Circa 1872.
 2 Andrew E. Hill, Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 837.



Like Arrows

When conflict, rebellion, and resentment overwhelm their family, Charlie and Alice are forced to change their parenting strategy, and are surprised to find that effective, life-long solutions were closer than they thought.

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RICHARD VAN DEN ENGEL'S 'Driving' Passion To See Others SUCCEED

BY JEREMY SMITH

When Richard van den Engel regards Ebbett Automotive's present-day business, two words come to mind - stewardship and responsibility.

Throughout its more than 90-year history in Hamilton, the automotive business with Waikato roots - and now a North Island-wide network - has always had family, and family values, at its core.

As doors have been opened over time, Ebbett Automotive has grown to about 550 staff collectively representing 20 automotive brands across 19 North Island dealerships. From where he sits as Ebbett Automotive's executive director, Richard has no doubts the Lord's hand has been on the company's journey.

Biblical principles of striving for excellence, doing the right thing, treating others as you want to be treated and going the extra mile underpin the company and inform every decision the team makes.

Natural growth aside though, Richard is acutely aware of a 'bigger picture' at play. Amongst expansion and opportunities for growth, his heart's desire is to be a good steward of what he feels they've been entrusted with and let "actions speak louder than simply words".

Now, as Ebbett Automotive prepares to open its first South Island dealership later this year, I sat down with Richard to talk about family, business and how his desire to display Jesus informs all areas of his life - including both his approach to business and his love of seeing others succeed.

Firstly - how did you come to know Jesus?

I grew up in a Christian home. On reflection, there certainly are experiences I've walked through which have deepened my personal faith in Jesus. I was always familiar with Christian values and Bible stories, but I began



to realise my faith needed to become my own. That process has happened 'along the way', rather than in one defining moment. A key experience for me was when - as a teenager - I took part in a course held at church in which we examined proof of the gospels.

At university, I went to several classes to learn about other faiths, my desire being to examine why I believe what I believe. That experience helped me see that Jesus and the gospel story made sense. Then, when my wife Ilda and I lived in London, we attended a small Anglican church. The church was on the border of a wealthy suburb and a housing project - the congregation was a mix of people from all walks of life. The way our vicar led that congregation was so transformative for me. I began to see what practically living in a community as Jesus would have done looks like.

Who has had the biggest influence on your faith?

My dad, Ben - Ebbett Automotive's managing director. He's been a rock-solid guide. When I have to make difficult decisions, I always talk to him. Ebbett Automotive's values are, to a large degree, based on Dad's personal values. Whatever the situation, he asks, "... what's the right thing to do?" He always points me to scripture and is never afraid to challenge me, in a good way.

How important is it to have people like that in our lives?

No man is an island, right? Having someone who takes an interest in seeing you grow, excel, achieve, and who holds you accountable is one of the greatest gifts you could ask for. Sometimes mentors aren't particularly forthright. You have to humbly say, "...I need guidance..." and be open to being held accountable. Seek out Godly people who are willing to invest in you. They might be different people during different seasons of life - but having them is critical.

Before we chat about the business sphere of your life, can you tell me about your family?

My wife Ilda is my high school sweetheart. We married in our very early 20s and we have two girls - Abby (10) and Issy (7). Ilda and I have previously lived in Wellington, Auckland, London and Hong Kong. In 2013, around the time Abby was born, Ilda and I returned to Hamilton - which I initially left when I went to Victoria University at 17.

When we did return to Hamilton, we felt the timing was right for me to join the family business. Importantly too, Ilda and I were blessed to have our grandparents close by when we were growing up, so we wanted our kids to also have that. Both sets of their grandparents live here in Hamilton - it's such an amazing gift.

What's your favourite thing to do to spend quality time together as a family?

We love winter sports and travelling! The kids are starting to really enjoy snow skiing - in terms of family time, you can't get better. There's no devices and we're outside doing exercise in creation in some absolutely beautiful parts of New Zealand. Our favourite spot is Cardrona in the South Island.

It's been amazing to read about Ebbett Automotive's long-standing Waikato history, spanning more than 90 years. Can you tell me about how the company began?

We've been a family business right throughout - we're really proud of our history. Ebbett Motors was started in Hamilton's Hood St in 1928 by Alf Ebbett, later joined by his brother Ron. Richard Ebbett is our current chairman. In 1938, General Motors separated its two product lines - Waikato Motors Limited was formed to operate the Vauxhall and Bedford franchise from the original Hood Street premises. Ebbett Motors - representing Oakland, Pontiac and Chevrolet - moved to a newly-built dealership on the corner of Hood and Anglesea streets.

Dad's been with the company for just over 50 years. He left school in fifth form - year 11 - to get a trade and he liked cars, so he wanted to be a mechanic. He joined Ebbett Automotive as an apprentice in the 1970s. Over time, through opportunities God has given him, Dad was able to buy a 50 percent ownership stake in the business, and was general manager during the 1987 stock market crash. Dad's early days of ownership were a massive faith step - at times quite a challenging season. The business was then consolidated down from a number of branches and hundreds of staff to 30 people in one Anglesea St dealership.

Ebbett Automotive certainly has family values and connections at its core. How many family connections run through the company these days?

Dad's our managing director, my uncle, Walter van den Engel, is a shareholder and company director. I'm the oldest of four boys. My brother Hadleigh is Dealer Principal of Ebbett Taupo, Michael is Dealer Principal of our Hamilton-based Ebbett Škoda dealership and Anthony is a teacher in The Philippines.

What's it like reflecting on Ebbett Automotive's present-day scale?

I have to say growth and expansion has simply happened not by accident, but close to it! Rather than a grand growth strategy, opportunities have presented themselves along the way and made sense at the time. Ebbett Automotive now represents 20 brands across 19 North Island dealerships - from



Richard with his wife Ilda, and two girls Abby and Issy.



Ebbett Motors in the early days.

Pukekohe in the north to Wellington in the south. We have around 550 staff. Whenever I consider that, what comes to mind more than anything is a sense of responsibility for the people who rely on Ebbett Automotive for their livelihood.

The company's core values are excellence, integrity, respect and care. Those are absolutely Biblical - how are those principles being outworked practically on a daily basis?

We're not seeking recognition for the way in which we do things, as such - we just have a foundational conviction regarding striving to do the right thing by the people who come across our path. It's a daily walk of putting one foot in front of the other - going the extra mile for people and treating others the way we'd want to be treated. Our aim is absolutely to display Jesus in the ways we interact with others, but we also know we're not perfect. We're on a journey, over time, of our actions speaking louder than words.

How do you ensure that Jesus - and those core values - remain at the centre of all that Ebbett Automotive does, no matter the size?

When the business was in one location with 30 staff, naturally it was perhaps easier for the values to be part of all elements of the business. Dad could personally be across everything. As you grow, some of the people steering the ship aren't always across everything that happens in person.

Long before we wrote our values down, they were lived and breathed as daily habits. Reaching a certain scale meant that process became necessary. By no means were we implying 'perfection' when it comes to our values, we simply knew what we were aiming towards each day. We were well aware too that writing them down brought with it increased accountability. So, we asked our leadership team what values they felt were important "around here" - incredibly, everyone gave the same

answers in different words. Subsequently, we built our values into all aspects of our company's DNA - making them part of our job descriptions, career growth plans, key performance indicator (kpi) scorecards and the way we reward, uphold and support people.

I get the sense Ebbett Automotive really is a 'company-wide family'...

Hearing that makes me so proud, though I don't think that's anything 'strategic' as such. Certainly, from the outset of the time Dad has led the company, as a Christian, he wholeheartedly believes in serving God and the people around him, and in doing the right thing with integrity. And those of us in the teams around Him want to live out those values too. Our faith is the basis from which we make every decision.

You've been in your current role as Executive Director since 2018, but your history with the company goes back almost a decade. Among other roles, you've been Dealer Principal of both Ebbett Prestige and Ebbett Volkswagen and CEO of Ebbett Toyota. In all of those chapters those dealerships were either Dealer of the Year, or finalists to receive team or leadership awards. How does your faith inform both the way you approach business and how you lead people?

Great question! We don't set out to receive awards or accolades really. We simply aim to intentionally tread a path of integrity every day. As such, our actions should outwardly display our priorities. There are a lot of ideas out there as to what good leadership looks like. I value servant leadership the most because it turns things upside down. Those of us who are in leadership positions - wherever we are - are simply there to serve and equip others to be the best they can be.

After joining our Toyota business three years ago, I communicated it to our team like this. On the frontline, our job

is to serve customers, a manager's job is to remove any road blocks so our frontline staff can do their job well. Then, my job as CEO is to remove any road blocks which are in the way of the managers. If we know we're all here to serve in some sense, results will follow. Look after your people, they'll look after your customers.

I'm passionate about helping people define and quantify what success looks like in their role, so they're well equipped to achieve. At Ebbett Automotive, while we don't necessarily overtly talk about being Christians, we're not hiding anything. We may not sit down as a team and read Bible verses and pray together with our people, but in my mind our core values demonstrate what it's like to live out running a business as a Christian. We often use the word strive around here - recognising that we don't always get things right and we do make mistakes along the way too.

What's the best advice you've heard regarding business and leadership?

I'm a big fan of Jim Collins' books, particularly 'Good to Great.' Collins has an amazing ability to draw comparisons across high performing businesses from a range of industries, pick out the common threads and boil those threads down to simple illustrations like the "20 mile march" or "the flywheel". You'll have to google those concepts, but they have been instrumental in helping me focus our business and keep it simple. Another nugget I remember picking up from a Waikato Chamber of Commerce breakfast event is, "...steal with pride..." Business-wise that means that if you see something done well by another business in another industry, don't be afraid to incorporate aspects you like into your own processes.

You've also worked as both an architect and an accountant. What do you like most about those skill sets and how has what you've learned in your other roles helped equip you for your current position?

At school I was good at maths and I liked art, so that led to me deciding to study architecture. It's a five-year programme, made up of two Bachelor's degrees; a three-year Bachelor of Architectural Studies, followed by a two-year Bachelor of Architecture. After three years, I stepped away from university to get some practical industry experience as a draughtsman. Looking back now, in my current role I've been involved in the process of developing four new dealerships. Had I not had that experience, that job would have been much harder. I love that architecture is essentially a client approaching you with an idea or problem to solve it in a creative way.

Having worked as a draughtsman, I realised that architecture was not for me, and I rang Dad to talk about joining the family business, he joked, "... I don't need any architects, ... but I've always had to rely on accountants and lawyers. While you're young, studying accounting and commercial law would add real value in the long run." So I did a Bachelor of Commerce and Administration (BCA), majoring in accounting and commercial law. Ilda and I had then intended to return to Hamilton, but instead we booked a flight to London intending to do the

classic overseas experience. Global accounting firm Deloitte was recruiting in New Zealand for graduate roles in London. We'd already booked our tickets when I went to the interview, and - ultimately - got a position. Deloitte reimbursed our flights and put us up in accommodation.

Ilda and I wanted to be in London for six months, but Deloitte's opportunity was contractual for at least two years. In the end, I signed on and, in reality, we loved it so much we stayed three! We came back to Auckland, for two-and-a-half-years, before shifting to Hong Kong, where I worked for Deloitte China.

At Deloitte I worked in auditing, which gave me massive opportunities to sit in the boardrooms of many companies and ask some big account-related questions. You get incredible insight into the inner workings of a business, what works and what doesn't.

Can you tell me about Loop Carshare?

The motor trade hasn't changed all that much in decades, but we expect plenty of change in the next decade! Combustion engines will be replaced by electric ones, distribution models are changing to agency models and consumers are moving from showrooms to online.

One of the biggest shifts we are seeing in more urban areas around the world is a shift from owning cars to "buying mobility", or paying by the minute or hour. We set up Loop Carshare as an experiment to learn about selling mobility - and to discover whether Hamiltonians were ready for it.

Carshare is the idea that there are a bunch of shared cars available in public spaces which members can access at any time by simply swiping their app and paying for the hours they use. While we learnt a lot, there came a time when we had to either invest big and go national, or divest. We sold the business to Mevo - a Wellington based carshare scheme - and signed an agreement to supply them vehicles. This meant both Mevo and Ebbett could play to their strengths.

How do you ensure you keep a healthy balance of family and business life and what advice would you have on that front?

At times, aren't we all tempted to do too much at once? Of course, I don't always get that balance right - but what I strive to do is be 100 percent present in the moment and give my full attention to whatever task is at hand.

Another little book plug - The Power of Full Engagement by Jim Loehr expands on this idea. Often I don't have a lot of 'free time', but I aim to be intentional in the moments I do have. At home, I strive to be 100 percent focused on family. I try to be home for dinner with the family every night and I do my best not to take work home on the weekends. Also, put the phone down and don't let social media get in the way!

The Ebbett's team - and yourself and other staff individually - have regularly received awards for

leadership and staff culture. In March, Ebbett Toyota won the Toyota Parts Excellence Cup and the Excellence in Leadership Award at the Toyota New Zealand Limited Business Excellence Awards. In 2020, you were awarded the Bob Field Leadership Excellence Award. What's it like when Ebbett Automotive is recognised for the work it does?

I've had the privileged responsibility of representing the business on some of these occasions - it's a surreal experience. We make sure we celebrate as an entire team too - because being recognised in that way takes every single person not only striving for, but achieving, excellence within their individual roles each day.

The reward for me is stewarding our teams and being able to serve people in a way that helps them achieve excellence in their aspirations too. Much of what gets me out of bed in the morning is helping other people grow and develop. It's an

honour having a part to play in that and, when we succeed together, it makes me proud!

Ebbett supports community groups and charities - including Hospice Waikato, Waikato Westpac Rescue Helicopter and Heart Kids - and once gave a Hamilton mum a new \$40,000 car. Genesis 12:2 comes to mind - 'blessed to be blessing'. How would you express the heart behind Ebbett Automotive's support of those organisations?

We genuinely feel privileged to work within the various communities around New Zealand that we operate in - therefore we want to invest back into them. It's not just an opportunity, but an obligation to do so. We love supporting our communities where we can.

The business world - and particularly the automotive industry - at times has 'highs and lows', uncertainty and

“No man is an island, right? Having someone who takes an interest in seeing you grow, excel, achieve and who holds you accountable is one of the greatest gifts you could ask for.”



challenges. How does your trust in Jesus sustain you through those?

In walking with Jesus, we're never alone - God walks alongside us. In this life, we have an eternal context with which we're called to live. As we walk in relationship with Jesus, prayerfully considering our steps, we're not making decisions in our own strength. I certainly find that takes weight off my shoulders - in light of the sacrifice Jesus made for us, I'm safe in the security of being a child of God. Living as such simply gives us the freedom to use our God-given gifts for His glory.

Ebbett Automotive has navigated and progressed through everything from a depression, war and the subsequent recovery, a public listing, growth, contraction and the global financial crisis. Most recently was Holden's New Zealand departure in 2020 after a nearly 70-year partnership, and then Covid-19.

It's been amazing to look at the progressive approach of growth and expansion Ebbett Automotive has always taken amidst challenges.

How do you go about knowing both when to step out and which paths to take?

While the company itself has navigated through those things historically, I haven't personally had to navigate through a recession or global financial crisis in my time at Ebbett. Though, Covid-19 was a challenge. I remember sitting in the boardroom after the 2020 lockdown was announced. On average, a high-performing car dealership has a bottom line of about three percent profit, with very little room for error. The prospect of closing and shutting up shop for roughly five weeks was, initially, incredibly frightening. But, the first words out of Dad's mouth were, "...how do we ensure our staff can continue to put food on the table?" Again, we went back to our core values, and the convictions we hold, to make decisions about how to proceed.

The years that followed that lock down have actually been robust for the motor industry. Interest rates have been low, house prices have been strong and the borders have been closed. With cheap money, the confidence that comes with strong house prices and nowhere else to spend their money it seems Kiwis flocked to buying cars, spas and kitchens. That's all changed in the last few months though - house prices are falling, interest rates are up and the borders have been flung open. Consumer spending has fallen and, like many big ticket retailers, we will have to navigate carefully through the next season.

What's an example of when you've seen the Lord come through at Ebbett Automotive as you've trusted Him?

Holden's departure from New Zealand in 2020 should have in fact been one of - if not the - biggest negative blow to our business in its history. Right back when Ebbett started in 1928, it was with General Motors - which owns Holden - brands. When Holden announced it was leaving, over half of the new



cars we sold across the Ebbett network were Holden. It might have looked like a potential disaster at the time. In fact, in hindsight, the situation has probably created many more new opportunities than any other event in our 93-year history - amazing doors opened for us to go and build relationships with new brands.

In March it was a year since Ebbett Automotive moved into its 25,000 square metre state-of-the-art flagship Te Rapa site. What does the premises house and how has its first year been?

The new facility has provided several key 'wins' for us. It's a fantastic place in terms of customer experience, and, whereas in the past people like Dad, Walter and myself were all in different buildings, now we're all together in an administration space directly above the showroom floor. That's an intentional decision to be accessible. The facility includes two dealerships - Ebbett Volkswagen across the driveway and below the head office space is what was previously Ebbett Holden Hamilton. At Ebbett Hamilton, we represent GM Specialty Vehicles, SEAT, CUPRA, Isuzu, BYD and Opel - which is returning to New Zealand later this year.

We've looked a little bit at Ebbett Automotive's history. What makes you most excited about the future?

Over the last century, the motor trade hasn't changed too drastically in terms of the way cars are imported and sold at retail dealerships. That could all be about to change within the next decade. There are probably several key questions we'll have to ask going forward - with trends like consumers doing most of their pre-work and transactions online. We rely heavily on building loyalty and good relationships with our customers, so, what will building that loyalty look like when everything

happens online? Currently too, Kiwis own, on average, two-and-a-half cars. As demand for electric, autonomous and self-driving cars increases, will the market broaden and become more about selling 'mobility'?

Some factors we undoubtedly can't control - including product - because we don't build or design the cars, and price, because everyone has the same margins. But, we have customer service. If we can deliver an experience people want to come back for, then whatever the future looks like we can be successful. Facilities and vehicles don't drive success - people do. If we invest in our people, they will look after the customers.

Later this year, we're opening our first dealership in the South Island, in Nelson. After Holden left, we included Kia and MG at our Pukekohe dealership, both Hyundai and Isuzu in Tauranga, Isuzu in Hamilton and GWM at our Taupo dealership. That meant we were then representing more brands in fewer locations, so we went about assessing how we could extend our reach with each brand. Discussions with GWM and Škoda led us to understand they were open to representation at the top of the South Island. We see a future with those brands, so it didn't take us long to decide the timing felt right to take the 'leap of faith' across Cook Strait.

Is the electric vehicle space an exciting one?

Absolutely. I'd say within the next five years we'll see a shift from the majority of the cars we sell being petrol and diesel

vehicles to electric vehicles. We're proud to be part of the journey of moving towards a more sustainable form of mobility. Currently around half our profit comes from after sales channels, service and parts. With an electric vehicle, there's actually very little of that work to be done. So, that's something we'll have to adapt to. I really enjoy solving problems, adapting and growing - so seeing these potential changes on the horizon excites me rather than worries me.

Ebbett Automotive is called to be a light for Jesus in the business sphere, what would you say to someone who similarly wants to live an authentic Christian life wherever they're called to be?

I probably don't feel particularly qualified to give 'advice' as such. But I've asked myself at times too, "...is building a business glorifying God?" My answer is I'm working in a sphere that I'm passionate about, using the gifts God has given me every day. So, from that point of view, it's about living your conviction, walking in step with Him using the gifts He gives us and basing all the decisions we make on His Word. We can all do that no matter where He's placed us.

One of the key words you've used is authenticity - I love that. And it's about not being afraid to apologise when we get things wrong too. If I'm honest, the place where this is likely most apparent for me is at home. I probably apologise to my kids every single day!

Thanks Richard! | 🙏

■ Jeremy Smith is editor of, and one of the writers for, Authentic Magazine. He is an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his talents to glorify God.



First Thoughts

BY RYAN KILFOIL

“This hope is found in the person of Jesus Christ. In putting our trust in Him, and in having an authentic relationship with Him.”

What do you think about as soon as you wake up?

For me, in this busy season, I've more recently found myself waking up at 5am and - straight away - thinking about work. There's clients to get back to, proposals to write, problems to solve. The list goes on.

I've come to the conclusion that that's not healthy. One of the things that's dawned on me - as a consequence of these being my first thoughts each day - is that my regular morning quiet time is under threat.

Sometimes I convince myself that if I can get a head start on work early in the morning, then I'll have my quiet time later during the day, once things have settled down.

The problem is this never happens - there are always more fires to put out and things to do. Can you relate?

And here's the revelation. As organised and productive as I like to think I am, I'm not actually being deliberate with my time. Well, not with the right stuff anyway. I'm not actually choosing how I spend my time. Instead, the 'worries of this world' are dictating my thoughts and focus.

In three of the gospels, Jesus' parable, in which He talks about the sower scattering his seed with four different outcomes, is recorded. Jesus then explains what this parable means, and you can find the passages in Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20 and Luke 8:4-15.

The third scenario is the seed falling to the ground and being choked out by thorns. *“And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.” - Luke 8:14 (ESV).*

That's me right now. Is that you, or do you know someone going through that? Maybe work's not your first thought each day. Maybe it's scrolling through your social media feed, checking

emails, worrying about your finances, a relationship breakdown or health challenges. Whatever it is - it's shaping your day.

So, how are we supposed to spend our first moments each day then? It's a whole other conversation, but here's some pointers. *“In the morning, Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You and wait expectantly.” - Psalm 5:3 (NIV).*

“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” - Colossians 3:2 (ESV). The great news here is that there's hope. Hope that we don't have to live this way. Hope that we can wake each morning filled with real joy because we have a revelation of the gift God has given us! This hope is found in the person of Jesus Christ. In putting our trust in Him, and in having an authentic relationship with Him.

Practically, that means not trying in our own strength to solve everything and work 12-hour days without ever being able to complete that infinite to-do list.

It means spending time with our Father, and purposing to make that a priority above everything else.

“Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His presence continually!” - 1 Chronicles 16:11 (ESV).

If you find yourself in a similar situation, here is an idea of a prayer you can pray. “Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of eternal life we have when we choose to put our faith in your Son, Jesus Christ. Life is busy, yet You have a plan for each of us. Help us to look to You to order our steps each day, so that we have a solid and unshakeable foundation.

If we have unhealthy habits and routines in our lives, Father, I pray You make us aware of these and that You give us the courage and strength to make a change. May we put You first in every area of our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

Ryan writes a blog called Take Courage. You can read more from him on his website, www.takecourage.nz | 

■ Ryan Kilfoil lives on a small lifestyle block in Tauranga with his wife, children and extended family. He has a deep passion for God's Word and loves sharing life and faith with people.



God on the Throne of a Broken World

BY CHARLES PRICE

There's an argument which says that if God were good, He would want to make His creatures happy - and that if He were all powerful, He would be able to do what He wished. But, as this argument reasons, because His creatures by and large are not happy, God is either not good, or not all powerful. Or, both. That's a dilemma presented to the honest-thinking mind when contemplating the idea that God is good, sovereign and loving.

But, what does it mean for God to be sovereign? Does it mean everything is happening according to His plan? That He is strategically moving events around like a brilliant chess player? I received an email from a friend recently talking about a series of woes he's facing. It ended by quoting an old song which went like this,

God is still on the throne
And He will remember His own
His promise is true, He will not forget you
God is still on the throne

That clearly gave my friend some comfort, but what does it mean for God to be 'on the throne'? Are all the events of the world an expression of His will and purpose? Certainly Job, amid his many crises and tragedies, seemed to think so when he wrote, *"I know that You can do all things; no purpose of Yours can be thwarted."* - Job 42:2 (NIV).

But, scripture makes other statements too. For example, *"We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one."* - 1 John 5:19 (NIV).

On three occasions, Jesus called Satan, "...the prince of this world", and Paul spoke of him as "... the god of this age" and the "...ruler of the kingdom of the air...". These are all lofty statements about the devil having power, rule and some control in this world. So then, how do we reconcile this with God being on the throne?

Jeremiah wrote about the throne of God in this way, *"A glorious throne, exalted from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary."* - Jeremiah 17:12 (NIV).

There is a 'throne', he says, that is not so much a place of control, as it is a place to which we can run to find refuge, sanctuary and safety. Jeremiah then explains this by a story he tells in the next chapter. He goes to a potter's house and observes a potter working a piece of clay on his wheel. But, the pot he was shaping was marred in his hands. So, the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it - Jeremiah tells us - as seemed best to him.

The marred clay is a picture of the people of God, and the potter is God. There are three movements in this story which help us understand how the throne of God is a refuge. Firstly, the clay is marred in the potters' hands. Something goes wrong with it and the original intent of the potter is spoiled. The 'marring' is clearly neither the intention, nor the mistake, of the potter. It is self-inflicted. The clay represents the nation

of Judah, God's chosen people, occupying the land for His purpose. But, they are rebelling against Him, resisting His will and they are out of step with His purpose.

Jeremiah had been sent to call the people to repentance and restoration. But, with 40 years of relentless prophesying, there was no understanding and no response. Much less, any change of direction. They were going headlong in their own chosen direction, and before long, the Babylonian army would attack, overwhelm them and reduce them to servitude in exile.

The nation is 'marred' in the potter's hand. That is the message Jeremiah was given when he visited the potter's house.

By extension, it's a picture of us too. Things go wrong in life, sometimes by our own foolish, selfish actions. Sometimes, bad things are not done 'by' us, so much as done 'to' us. We are victims of wrong and evil. We have marring, damage, sins, faults and injuries.

As Jeremiah watches the potter with the marred clay, he asks himself questions like, "...what is the potter going to do with the marred clay?", "...will he take it off the wheel and throw it away?", "...is there no future for this piece of clay?", "...will he look for a fresh lump to start again?", "...what does God do with rebellious and damaged people?", "...does he discard them?".

The second movement answers that - *"...the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him."* - Jeremiah 18:4 (NIV). The clay is re-moulded and reshaped into something different. The reshaping is not of inferior quality, available only as a 'second', for he specifically shaped it, 'as seemed best to him'. It's not junk quality, but good quality.

There is a future beyond marring and spoiling that has the best possibilities for the piece of clay in mind. This is the place of refuge Jeremiah points to, God on His throne, moulding damaged clay into something good.

No damage is final, provided we run to the sanctuary of His throne for refuge. To run away from God in our shame is the very last thing to do. Instead, we are invited to run to Him. Our security is not in being a nice piece of 'pristine' clay, but in bringing Him all the damage, disappointment, tears and dirt that is true of us, so that He can remould us into something good.

This is why Jeremiah tells us that God the Potter is the One who sits on the throne as 'the place of our sanctuary', the place to run to and the place to find security. It would be true for the damaged nation of Judah, and it's true for you and me.

In the New Testament, Romans 8:28 says, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."* (NIV). Bad things happen, some self inflicted, some otherwise, but this is the New Testament version of the potter remoulding the clay. The throne of God is not a place to fear, but to find refuge in, where 'in all things... He works for the good of those who love Him'. Nothing, and no one, is irredeemable - unless, by their own choice, they continue in rebellion and resist the Potter's hand.

For Judah, the severity of their exile in Babylon broke their resistance and, in humility, they came to God again. The prophet Ezekiel was one of the people taken into exile, and he wrote when he was there, *“In my thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the Heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.” - Ezekiel 1:1 (NIV).*

They hadn't been seeing visions of God for decades, and now, broken by Babylon, sitting in exile by the Kebar River, the Heavens open and they have visions of God! They reconnect with God again, and He begins to remake them. Wherever we



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**“Our security is not in being a nice piece of ‘pristine’ clay, but in bringing Him all the damage, disappointment, tears and dirt that is true of us, so that He can remould us into something good.”**

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are, there is always the hope of rescue as we run to Him and find refuge in His throne.

Bring your mess, bring you marred clay, your dirt, your damage and your pain and give it all to Him and He will remould the pieces into something different, which, “...seems best to Him”. Sometimes the damages of our past become the assets of our future, for they are part of our new shape and become a means of enrichment to ourselves and others.

But, there is a third movement in this story. The process of ‘remoulding’ and ‘reshaping’ is conditional on people being responsive. In the next chapter, Jeremiah takes a group of elders and leaders of the people back to the potter’s house. This time, he sees a clay jar that has hardened and become rigid. God tells them they have insisted on replacing Him with foreign gods, they have not responded to pleas to return and that their hearts have become hard. Jeremiah, in front of the leaders of Judah, takes the clay jar and smashes it to smithereens on the ground.

The message was clear, *“This is what the Lord Almighty says: I will smash this nation and this city just as this potter’s jar is smashed and cannot be repaired.” - Jeremiah 19:11 (NIV).*

Their hearts had hardened and could no longer be remoulded. Judgement was inevitable. We are warned hearts can become *“...hardened by sin’s deceitfulness...” - Hebrews 3:13 (NIV)*, and reach a point where we no longer hear the voice of God, or respond to Him. We must take that seriously and be wary of it ever arising in us. But, even then, there continues to remain a glimmer of hope.

Daniel wrote of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, *“But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory.” - Daniel 5:20 (NIV).*

Of all arrogant people, Nebuchadnezzar strutted the most, but when he lost his throne, he found God. His was one of the most dramatic conversions in all of scripture, and Daniel 4 is a chapter given over to an official document, distributed throughout the Babylonian empire telling the story of his conversion. His key testimony was this - *“And those who walk in pride He is able to humble” - Daniel 4.37 (NIV).*

It is much harder to be humbled, than to humble ourselves. But, humility is the path to the throne of God, where we find refuge, where we are re-moulded into something good and where we are restored to purpose.

This can be your story too. |  



■ Charles Price serves as ‘Minister at Large’ with The Peoples Church, Toronto, Canada. He is also an itinerate speaker and preacher and author of several books. For more information please visit: www.livingtruth.ca



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Honour – Is it lost?

BY BARRIE HANSON



With Father's Day on the horizon, I was thinking about the commandment to honour your father and mother. Both my parents died when I was young, and before I became a Christian - so I had no opportunity to honour them in life. I do remember, however, that as children we were taught to honour and respect people in various situations. Grandparents were to be honoured, as were any elders and people in authority too – teachers, ministers, police, doctors and so on.

I believe honour may have been a casualty throughout all of the 1960s. However, God's Word does not change and the commandment still stands - we are to honour our father and our mother.

So - what makes a good father? Firstly, I believe a good father honours the Lord. Take a look at the following verse. *“And it*

came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in Heaven, so in earth.” - Luke 11:1-2 (KJV).

The word 'hallowed' is an old English word meaning "...greatly revered and honoured". As fathers, the example our faith sets for our children as we live out a life spent trusting in Christ cannot be underestimated.

Children copy their parents, and reverence is such a visible component of our faith. The spiritual life of a father is a life of service to almighty God. *“For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable*

“As fathers, the example our faith sets for our children as we live out a life spent trusting in Christ cannot be underestimated.”

■ Barrie Hanson lives in Bluff, Southland. He has been a Christian for over 40 years and in that time he has been a preacher, Pastor and a church helper in both Auckland and Hamilton.



to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” - Romans 14:17-19 (KJV).

A father's lifestyle simply must have an influence on their children. Even as we, our children's parents, also in turn honour our parents - our children's grandparents - it sets a wonderful example for our children.

Look at Ephesians 6:1-4 - *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (KJV).*

Good fathers honour their wives. There is much said about relationships in the Bible, but surely how a husband treats his wife is obvious to his children.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church...” - Ephesians 5:25-29 (KJV).

Before God, fathers have the responsibility of being the best example they can possibly be. It seems unfair that we are constantly on display, but that's the role God has given men - to be both physical and spiritual leaders. The apostle Peter sums up how our lifestyle should look in 1 Peter 3:7-12.

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” (KJV).

If we are good fathers, that will be demonstrated in our actions - in our love for God, in our love for our parents, in our love for our wives and in our love for our children. |



BEST WE DON'T FORGET

BY MURRAY SMITH

War is a terrible thing - loss of life, destruction, misery and the inevitable collateral damage following in the wake of war presents nothing to glorify. Yet, stories of courage and bravery - of those who laid down their freedoms and whose personal hopes and aspirations of a future were put aside - ought to be honoured.

The Gallipoli campaign was a nightmare. On top of atrocious battle casualties, contagious diseases - particularly gastrointestinal ailments - took a toll on New Zealand and Australian troops at Gallipoli.

A fly-borne epidemic of intestinal infection ravaged the troops, compounded by defective sanitation and rubbish disposal. Lack of clean water was an issue and while latrines were built, rubbish was burned and bodies were buried, it was inadequate to arrest the continual spread of disease among troops - especially as their nutritional status waned.

In this woeful, ill-conceived episode engaging some 16,000 Kiwi soldiers, about 60 percent, were to become casualties. Australian allies similarly suffered huge losses with the Turkish defenders at the top of the hilly cliffs suffering horrendously as well.

A while ago, I visited Wellington's Te Papa Museum and was impacted by the WW1 exhibition which highlighted the Gallipoli atrocity. One display made a lasting impression on me.

It was a little prayer book which had been given to a soldier and, curiously, it had a bullet embedded in its pages. The accompanying description explained how it'd saved the life of a young man from Ahipara who was sent off to war with the 28th Maori Battalion.

“Within the Bible’s pages, everyone’s fundamental need of being saved is emphasised.”

Hone Tahitahi and brother Pita landed in Gallipoli on April 25 1915. Hone was ordered up the cliffs to cut through barbed wire - however a bullet from a Turkish defender struck him in the chest above his heart. He was knocked backwards and unconscious. Upon recovery, Hone noticed the bullet had been stopped by his prayer book which he had in his breast pocket. Still embedded, the bullet point rested under Jesus' words in Matthew 14:27.

*“Kia manawanui. Ko ahau teni, ahau e wehi.”
“Be of good cheer. It is I. Be not afraid.” (KJV).*

God's Word had literally stopped a bullet, thus miraculously saving Hone's life. In a spiritual sense too, God's Word still holds power to intercept and save anyone else's life as well. Within the Bible's pages, everyone's fundamental need of being saved is emphasised. Having a personal relationship with Jesus the Saviour is the essence of the Christian faith, and walk. There is an eternal cost to ignoring this. Religiously relying on one's own 'goodness' and trusting self-effort - rather than accepting what Jesus has provided - leaves one perilously exposed.

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” - John 1:12 (KJV). | 



■ Murray Smith is a husband, a father to six children and the senior leader at Bridges Church Cambridge in the Waikato.



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FAMILY Foundations

BY KEN HAM



The family is the first and most fundamental of all human institutions which God ordained in scripture, and it is the educational unit which God uses to transmit His knowledge from one generation to the next. I believe that a lack of a solidly Biblical approach in this whole area of education is doing great harm to an entire generation of Christian children.

Personally, for our children over the years, we chose a combination of homeschooling and Christian schooling. I do understand that for some, their circumstances are such that this is not an option. I just want to say that all of us should be trying to make the principles of scripture foundational to our thinking, as best we can.

Surprisingly, the opposition we get to the educational choice we have made doesn't usually come from non-Christians - actually, the non-Christians in our street are delighted with the outcome. It, in fact, usually comes from Christians.

Some of their main arguments are: "...your kids should be in the public school to witness to the other kids...", and "...you need to throw your kids out there so they know how to survive". When I hear these things, I ask people to show me from the Bible how they can justify this. I believe it's a prime example of how we've taken the world's way of thinking and added it to our thinking, and to the Bible.

The Family in God's Word

The family has its foundation in the book of Genesis, when God took dust and made a man, then took his rib, or side, and made a woman.

One of the most important aspects of marriage is given in Malachi 2:15 - to have Godly offspring. You are to produce Godly offspring, who will themselves produce more godly offspring, to affect the world increasingly for Jesus Christ, generation after generation.

Today, there are a lot of pressures on young couples not to have children, or at least not until they have certain material goods first. Also, there is little emphasis on ensuring the

Godliness of those offspring. This is reflected in the next generation, which drifts still further from the things of God.

Everywhere I go, in the majority of Christian homes it's Mum who mostly prays with the children, and does most of their spiritual training. And that is good. But, according to the Bible, there is a call for Dad - who is to lead his family by example. One of the greatest problems in Christian homes today is that most husbands and fathers do not carry out their God-commanded responsibility to be the spiritual head of their family, and to train their children.

There are, of course, many homes in which mothers are forced to raise their children without a father.

Isaiah 38:19 says, *"The father to the children shall make known thy truth."* (KJV). Psalm 78 is a long one, but every parent should read it. Basically it is saying, over and over, "...fathers, teach your children so they'll not forget to teach their children. So that they might not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."

Interestingly, in the last part of Psalm 78, we read that the Israelites did forget the works of God. Which is why they ended up adopting the pagan religions of the day and so on - because the fathers did not teach the children.

'What mean these stones?'

When Joshua crossed the Jordan River, he told the people to build a memorial from stones, so that when their children asked them what the stones meant, they would not forget to tell them what God had done.

However, after Joshua died, *"...there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim."* - Judges 2:10-11 (KJV).

They lost it - in one generation. How? The fathers didn't teach the children. I think the same has happened all over the world today. It's just assumed "...oh, the kids are going to church, or to Sunday school, they'll be fine." Parents, we should be getting our Bible teaching from home, from studying the Word

"When you build it from the foundation up, starting with the logical foundations of all doctrine in Genesis, not trying to prove the Bible with science, but using the Bible to understand science, it makes a world of difference. It's no longer just your opinion - it is the Creator's instructions."



of God as a family. It is so vital to have a regular time when you get together and pray and read the Word as a family. And to worship together.

There is a very familiar verse which says, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* - Proverbs 22:6 (KJV). Or ‘it will not depart from him’.

The word ‘train’ here is related to the word ‘palate’, or the roof of your mouth. Hebrew mothers used to get their children to eat new foods by mashing them up and putting them into their mouths so they had no option but to swallow. That way, when they were older, they would naturally eat and like those foods.

My wife and I have read to - and prayed with - our children right from when they were born, and some people thought we were crazy. But our children have grown up with a love for reading and an understanding of prayer that will be with them for the rest of their lives.

Teenage rebellion

People often talk about those ‘teenage rebellious years’. I believe that in most instances, though not all, these are nothing more than a lack of teaching to acquire a taste for the things of the Lord in the early years. Once children become teenagers, it’s very difficult to change their behaviour.

Salt

Those trying to justify their belief that children should not be in Christian schools, or homeschooling, often say, “...well, we’re supposed to be the salt of the earth.” Matthew 5:13 KJV, says we are supposed to be the salt of the earth, but if it loses its flavour, it’s contaminated salt - no longer good for anything. Also, Mark 9:50 (KJV) says, *“Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.”*

Have salt in yourselves. You can’t be the salt of the earth until you’ve got salt - uncontaminated salt.

When babies are born, they don’t know about the Word of God. They don’t know about Jesus dying on the cross. They don’t know about creation, about marriage, any of that. It is our job as parents, particularly the father as the spiritual head of the house, to be pouring in the uncontaminated salt.

However, all of us are sinful by nature. That beautiful little baby is biased against God, so it doesn’t, by nature, want the truth. It is as if there are holes at the bottom of our children leaking out the salt we are pouring in at the top. This means we’re going to have to work extra hard - they won’t automatically end up salt-filled.

Another factor

1 Corinthians 15:33 tells us *“Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character”.* (NIV). It’s a scriptural principle that the bad will influence the good more than the good will influence the bad.

Look at Lot in Genesis 18-19. Did Sodom influence Lot, or did Lot influence Sodom? His sons-in-law didn’t even believe him. His wife looked back, presumably with a longing look. Who influenced whom?

Let’s be honest, in a public school situation, do our children bring home swear words or do the others take home the Bible verses? You know the answer.

“When babies are born, they don’t know about the Word of God. They don’t know about Jesus dying on the cross. They don’t know about creation, about marriage, any of that. It is our job as parents, particularly the father as the spiritual head of the house, to be pouring in the uncontaminated salt.”

You see, it’s much easier for our children to be dragged down than for them to drag the others up. Remember also that children are not miniature adults. Look at 1 Corinthians 13:11, *“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.”* (NIV).

In a world of no absolutes, they’ll be tossed to and fro. How do they know which way to go? How do they know what to choose? They don’t until they’ve been trained in truth and can recognise the difference between good and evil.

Seeing The World Through Biblical Glasses

Training children means much more than just having a daily Bible reading with them - it means sharing a Christian viewpoint about everything, all the time, as naturally as breathing.

Deuteronomy 6:7 says, *“Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”* (NIV).

In every interaction we have with our children, we can help teach them a Christian way of thinking.

Sadly, most children from Christian homes are being trained in a worldview, to which ‘God’ is added. But one can’t ‘Christianise’ a secular philosophy. Doing so means our children end up thinking in a secular way, with God and the Bible just ‘add-on extras’, rather than being relevant, ultimately, to everything, and the supreme authority.

Sadly, sometimes someone will tell me, “...my parents forced Christianity on me and I rejected Christianity. I’m not going to force it on my kids.” In every instance where I’ve talked to people like that, Christianity was imposed legalistically from the top down, not built from the foundation up.

When you build it from the foundation up, starting with the logical foundations of all doctrine in Genesis, not trying to prove the Bible with science but using the Bible to understand science, it makes a world of difference. It’s no longer just your opinion - it is the Creator’s instructions.

Martin Luther said, “See to it that you cause your children to be instructed first in spiritual things, that you point them first to God and - after that - to the world.” But, in these days, this order, I’m sad to say, is turned back to front.

How you train your children, and how they train their children, and so on can potentially affect millions of people. Parents, you can’t take your television, or your car, to Heaven with you - but you can take your children. What an awesome responsibility! |  

■ Ken Ham is the founder and president of Answers in Genesis and pioneered the world famous Creation Museum and Ark Encounter attractions in Kentucky, USA. For more information from Answers in Genesis visit www.answersingenesis.org





Allow me to let you in on a 'secret'. One of the most rewarding involvements - and one that is virtually guaranteed to help you on your path of spiritual growth - is a small group Bible study. All of us talk about seeking spiritual growth. But are we really serious? How serious are you? If we're not serious about it, I would suggest it's a great time to re-examine our spiritual goals.

Let's assume you already have - maybe some time ago - made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. What then? Well, you really began to study the Word of God and to aspire to real growth "...in the grace and knowledge" of our Savior. How's it been going?

There are three 'legs', if you will, on the 'stool' of our Christian walk - study of the Word, prayer and the fellowship of believers. While facilities and formalities of the Sunday services have become the norm for many, it was not always so. In the early church, the fellowships were, of course, in the homes of the believers. When you visit Capernaum in Israel, one of the archaeological sites is what is believed to be Peter's home, which ultimately became a church.

While many enjoy participating in the various styles of worship - from the majesty of traditional liturgical services, to the informality of contemporary casualness - (and we should!) there is nothing that can compare to the warmth and intimacy of also facilitating a home study group on a chosen night during the week.

Our Central Focus

One of the key secrets to a successful small group Bible study, in my experience, has been to focus on an expositional study, expounding upon the text. There is a simplicity - and a fruitfulness - to focusing on what God has said in His Word, addressing one specific book of the Bible at a time. This has proven to be one of the most effective means to laying an in-depth foundation that will last a lifetime, and which will ultimately cover - in the words of Acts 20:27 - "...the whole counsel of God."

Where to Start?

One of the most frequent questions I get is, "...which book should I start with?" There are many sound answers. Which book interests you the most? I startle many with the suggestion of starting with Revelation! It is the only book of the Bible that declares a special blessing on the reader and hearer! No other book singles itself out in that respect. One of the reasons it's always such a special blessing is that a proper review will include supporting passages from virtually every other book of the Bible. The 404 verses of Revelation include

over 800 allusions from the Old Testament. It puts God's entire plan of redemption into focus - from Genesis to Revelation.

Another sound suggestion is the Gospel of John. It has been said that it is shallow enough for a child to wade in, and deep enough for an elephant to bathe in! No matter how diverse your group is - from the novice to the sophisticate - all will benefit from going through this book again. It deals with all of the basics. I've taught it many times, and still, each time results in new discoveries.

Other suggestions include the book of beginnings - the Book of Genesis - the prophetic Book of Ruth, or the Book of Acts. You can really start anywhere. Let the Holy Spirit lead you. He always knows best, if you're listening.

My encouragement is to become someone who is more than a casual listener to the Word of God, but, rather, someone who has made a commitment to study the text. Our model scripture is found in the book of Acts - *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."* - Acts 17:11 (KJV).

Look at what is said of the sons of Issachar, as seen in the following passage, *"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment."* - 1 Chronicles 12:32 (KJV).

Our overarching desire should be to be authentic and to become those who not only know their Bibles, but

- more importantly - those who are living what they have learned from their Bibles. Our Biblical mandate is from the Ten Commandments. It is the third commandment which states, *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."* - Exodus 20:7 (KJV).

In summing up, I mention three words - application, application and application - and offer a reminder of the three 'legs' we have spoken of. Those being, study of the Word, prayer and the fellowship of believers.

It is my prayer that in reading this piece, the Holy Spirit has prompted you to take steps towards being more than just a 'casual listener' when it comes to the Word of God. As the psalmist David wrote: *"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!"* - Psalm 34:8 (KJV). | 

“Our overarching desire should be to be authentic and to become those who not only know their Bibles, but - more importantly - those who are living what they have learned from their Bibles.”

■ Chuck Missler was an author, Bible teacher, engineer, and former businessman. He was also the founder of the Koinonia Institute. Chuck went to be with the Lord in May 2018.





RELENTLESS

BY ERIC LUDY

One of the cries of my heart is that we would be a praying and confessing church - not just one or the other, and not just esteeming prayer and not doing it. I also pray that we would not just esteem the confession, but that we'd actually use our mouths to speak forth in this world, in this generation, the truths of Jesus Christ.

We are responsible, as the saints of God, to allow our mouths to be overtaken by the Holy Spirit and let Him speak through us. There is a truth which will not be heard in this generation unless we speak it. We live in a culture in which Christianity is continually being pressed into silence.

It's as though, if you speak, you get into trouble. Have you ever had anyone say things to you like, "...I don't want to hear all your views about Jesus being God, Jesus being the only way or that I'm a sinner and I need to repent."

If you have, then my encouragement, despite all those responses and statements, is that there is still only one means

of salvation - and that means is Jesus Christ. If you don't say it, they don't hear it. Most of us, maybe, are willing to be laughed at. That's hard. But if we were to talk about losing our life, many of us would say, "...let me think a little longer."

We need to get past that and arrive at the decision that, "...yes, this will cost our life". We need to recognise that to stand up and pursue the souls of those around it has always cost true Christianity its life.

God's Word tells us we are not here to just passively make our way through our lives here on earth - somehow just making it to the end of this life to then graduate into Heaven. We have a job to do on this earth, and honestly it's not just simply to get a good job and a good career - nor is it even to simply raise kids so that they can go off and do the same.

No. Our calling is this - to lay down our lives so that this world would see Jesus Christ. Look at Mark 16:15, *"He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.'*" (NIV).

Those words are still a commission which must weigh upon our souls in every situation. Luke 14:23 says, *"...Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full."* (NIV).

What if we put my name in John 20:21?, "Jesus said, *"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you."* (NIV).

"As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you, Eric Ludy." Or, your name? "...so I am sending YOU."

The same way Jesus was sent. How was Jesus sent? He went and He sought out the cause He knew not. He went to seek and save that which was lost. Again, I'll say that the way in which He was sent, so we are sent.

Here is a question - what are we in stride with? We are to be confessors - that means that when the Word of God moves a certain way, we move too. When the Word of God speaks something for us to pass on, what do we do? We speak. As the Church of Jesus Christ, we are to confess, in stride with the Holy Spirit and in stride with the Word of God.

Whatever He does, we do - whatever He speaks, we speak. Unashamedly. The question is, will that lead to our persecution? Guaranteed. Here is what I call the 'return of the Christian Christian' - it's those who won't take no as a valid answer. A valid answer for what though? Sharing the Gospel.

Here is a challenging question to ponder. What if the world was to tell us, "...we don't want Jesus..." Do we, as Christians, then say, "...well then, they don't want Him..." and stop sharing Christ with others?

Or, do we, instead, then say, "...unless you have Him, you don't have life..." Relentless Christianity is pursuing the lost with the pursuit of the Holy Spirit. How is it that the Holy Spirit pursues you? The Holy Spirit is relentless - He pursues us with relentless love, relentless kindness, with relentless truth and with relentless invitation.

Is that the way we function as Christians in this world? You yourself were relentlessly pursued, now you must allow the relentless Saviour to love and pursue others through you. That

is the mission of relentless love. And, how does the sinner respond to this kind of relentless love? Simply put, it melts them. The power of Christ's love is overwhelming, but are we willing to wield it as our chief weapon? My challenge is, are we willing to be the Church of Jesus Christ?

My prayer is that our heart's cry is "...yes Lord, You can send me, even as You were sent." Truthfully, if left to our own strength and our own boldness - which is nothing - we won't succeed. So, don't lean on that - go to Christ's boldness. May we as a people not only ask for His boldness and courage, but also for His heart, His love for others, with which to apply that boldness. It's not that we just want to be bold in the sense of yelling in people's faces, we want to love them with Christ's love so much so that we give them the gospel in the very way in which they need it most in their lives.

“Despite all those responses and statements, there is still only one means of salvation - and that means is Jesus Christ. If you don't say it, they don't hear it.”

Here is a challenge I will leave with you, do you love and care the way God does? Is it possible for us to have this same love? Look at Romans 5:5, "...the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (KJV). Consider this, that's actually a statement of fact in the Word of God.

That this love - the love of God - is shed abroad. We, as His followers, are literally the vehicles through which God pours out and pours through. Christ bled, suffered and died for that lost soul which we are called to reach, and He assigned me to go after that soul.

Isn't that an amazing thought? Have you ever heard it said, "...oh, I hope someone reaches them... I hope someone shares the Gospel with them one day..." We actually need to realise we're the ones who have received the assignment. He picked us!

Again, a reminder of Mark 16:15, *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."* (KJV), *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."* - 2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV).

So now, go Church of Jesus Christ and relentlessly pursue those who are trapped in the enemy's snare. | 

Turn to page 82 to read a piece on Eric's latest Honorable Manhood programme, an eight-week online experience designed for fathers and sons and men of all ages which starts later this month.

■ Eric Ludy is the president of Ellerslie Mission Society and the bestselling author of eighteen books on Christian thought and living. Eric Ludy functions as the director of Ellerslie Discipleship Training in Windsor, Colorado and serves as the teaching pastor at Ellerslie's campus church. For more from Eric visit www.ericludy.com





Good Fathers Are Vital For Optimal Child Development

BY BOB MCCOSKRIE

“When we disregard the importance of fathers, society suffers.”

Family First founder and national director Bob McCoskrie discusses why - and how - fathers matter, not just in family life, but in society as a whole.

As we approach Father's Day, I again refer to a unique and important report Family First released. It provides a diverse and abundant body of leading research conducted over the past 50 years from the worlds of professional child psychology and child-development science. Entitled *Why Fathers Matter*, written by Glenn Stanton, the report argues that no society can thrive without as many fathers as possible being involved in the daily lives of their children.

When writing on the importance of fathers, Glenn states it is important that dads themselves, as well as mums, grandparents, teachers, policy makers, church leaders, pediatricians, government bodies and police know why and how fathers matter - not just in the lives of their families, but in society itself.

“Fathers are important because, simply, they're not mothers. Research shows infants can determine the difference between mum and dad caring and playing with them from the first weeks of life, simply because mum and dad do these tasks differently,” Glenn writes.

“This is the child's first, and perhaps most important, lesson about being human: that there are two types of human beings in the world, male and female, each with wonderful and very distinct qualities. A balance between mum's and dad's ways is vital for healthy child development.”

Other parenting differences include how mum and dad prepare their children for life, the way fathers play and

communicate with their children, how they discipline and how they teach respect for the opposite sex.

The report also notes children have an impact on their father, including interesting and consequential changes to the physicality of the dad, and changes in his brain and hormones, even before the birth of his child.

“No society can have too many dads, but every society can certainly have too few - and suffer irreversible harm because of it,” Glenn states.

“A fatherless family is one that walks up a difficult incline. Single mums know this all too well. The three ‘Ps’ of society know this better than anyone - police, principals and pediatricians. The presence of Dad reduces crime, helps the children achieve and behave better at school and protects them from physical and emotional problems like no one else. When we disregard the importance of fathers, society suffers.”

Glenn's report exhorts communities to honour fathers, encourage them in their parenting tasks and do all it can to make sure every boy and girl, as much as possible, grows up with the irreplaceable benefit of being loved and cared for every day by his or her own father.

“Any public policy or community attitude which moves us away from this must be judged as contrary to the best and most reliable science on human development.” |  

Glenn Stanton is the director of Global Family Formation Studies at Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs. -The link to the full Why Fathers Matter report is at www.familyfirst.org.nz



■ Bob McCoskrie is the director of the New Zealand social group Family First New Zealand. He has a master's degree in Commerce from the University of Auckland and is also a qualified teacher.

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“Overall a terrific experience — thank you! This course provided a structured time to sit down with my son and go through sensitive and highly critical material for the sake of both of our manhood!”

– Todd, CT

“Most books on sexuality seem to put men good and our sexuality isn't a downfall when done in accordance with God's Word — I feel like we could go through this every six months!”

– Tim, MN



THE BIBLE

BY STEPHEN WHITWELL

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV).

The Bible. The most amazing book! It was written over a period of 1500 years and 40 generations by more than 40 different authors from different walks of life. Moses was a political leader, Amos was a shepherd, Solomon was a king, Luke was a physician, Matthew was a tax collector, Peter was a fisherman and, of course, Paul was a Pharisee before his conversion.

The Bible was written on three continents - Asia, Africa and Europe - and in three languages, Hebrew for most of the Old Testament, Aramaic in some parts of Daniel, Ezra, and Jeremiah and in Greek for the entirety of the New Testament.

The writing was carried out in different places too - Moses was in the wilderness, Daniel was in a palace, Jeremiah was in a dungeon, Paul was in a Roman prison and Luke was travelling. David wrote in times of war, Solomon in times of peace - the Biblical texts capture everything from the heights of joy to the depths of sorrow.

We could take 100,000 words rather than about 1000 to look at the origin, writers, formation, language, historical setting, translations, authenticity, power, accuracy, application and transformational ability of the Bible - and we'd still not exhaust the subject!

The world's first printed book was a Bible, Gutenberg's Vulgate. The most expensive book in the world is a Bible, Gutenberg's Latin Vulgate. The longest telegram in history is the Revised Standard Version, or RSV, of the New Testament - sent from New York to Chicago. The largest first edition of any book in history was a Bible, a million copies of the RSV.

I once heard the story of a Chinese lady who was told by the Holy Spirit to go to a place which was a three-day train journey away. There, she met Christians who gave her a copy of the Bible. She went back home and - for three days on the train - the police suspiciously watched her. For three days on that train she never moved from her seat - no toilet and no sleep. In fact, she never left her seat. She was sitting on the Bible.

The Bible is unlike any other book in the world - its history is striking, its message is impeccable, its influence is incomparable, its unity is amazing, its accuracy is remarkable.

It's exciting that God would inspire men to record a timeless message for humanity. It is no collision, or coincidence, that we have the Bible today.

Looking briefly at the verse I started with in this piece - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - we see some interesting things. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (NKJV)*, or 'God-breathed' as the NIV puts it.

The Bible is God's idea, it originated in the mind and heart of God, not man. The Bible was written by men inspired by God. Sometimes He told them exactly what to write, for example, Jeremiah 1:9, but more often He used their minds, vocabularies and experiences to produce His own perfect, infallible, inerrant Word. So identified is God and His Word that when scripture speaks, God speaks! (See Romans 9:17).

Many people struggle with 'God's will' for their lives. Scripture speaks generally to us about so many things in life. Relationships, marriage, work, morals, honesty, church, serving, or money to name just a few. When there's so much guidance already in scripture, we should never seek the leading of the Lord about things He has expressly laid out, instructed and commanded us to do in the Bible. But, we should also never seek the leading of the Lord about things expressly forbidden in the Bible - be that morally, financially, relationally, or in issues of integrity, speech and so on. The will of God is never found in areas outside the Bible's clear directions and prohibitions.

So, back to our main verse in 2 Timothy. Let's reflect on the phrase *“...profitable for doctrine”*. Doctrine shows you the path to walk on. The Bible provides the comprehensive and complete body of Divine truth necessary for life and Godliness.

The Bible is God's guidebook, it shows us how to live and provides us with ready-made decisions about many things in life. In an age of tolerance, acceptance and flexibility, God's Word still holds true as a benchmark of what to do and what not to do. If only we'd really live by its Divine guidance, we'd spare ourselves some heart-ache. Doctrine received, believed and practised determines a person's behaviour, character and destiny!

“...we come to the Bible not to change it, but to be changed by it.”

■ Stephen Whitwell is a husband, father of two and a grandfather of eight. He loves God, the Bible, his family, life, fine food, writing, living in the Bay of Plenty and helping people discover who they really are in Christ. A retired pastor, he writes and publishes *Good Word* - a free e-letter and blog - and also serves as a trustee for Authentic Christian Trust. He can be contacted at: www.goodwords.nz



Secondly is *“...profitable for ... reproof”*. Reproof shows you where you left the path. If we're believing, and or behaving, badly the Bible - God - can tell us in no uncertain terms!

And don't we need that from time to time? Sin needs to be exposed, so that it can be dealt with through confession and repentance. Isn't it better to have the Bible reveal some sin that we need to deal with, rather than some public exposure?

Thirdly is *“...profitable for ... correction”*. Correction shows you how to get back on the path. If something has fallen over, it needs help to be put back upright again. If someone has stumbled, they may need help getting back on their feet. The Bible does that! The Bible not only rebukes wrong behaviour, but it also points the way back to Godly living.

Our passage in 2 Timothy also uses the phrase *“...profitable for ... instruction”*, or - as the NIV puts it - *“...training in righteousness ...”*

Instruction shows you how to stay on the path. The Bible provides positive training in how to live a Godly, God-pleasing life. When a plant is 'trained', it just grows a certain way, because it has been trained to grow that way. Oh how we need Godly training on how to grow and how to behave in a sin-filled world. The Bible is our Life Instruction Manual 101 in this regard.

Have you got a passion for God's Word? Do you have a habit of getting into it, reading it, studying it, learning about it, devouring it and being changed by it regularly? Do you 'feed' on it regularly? I once heard someone say, *“...the Bible is the only book where the Author is always present when it is being read”*.

So, we come to the Bible not to change it, but to be changed by it. But be warned! Reading the Bible will change you. What a privilege it is to be in the process of revelation - receiving a Divine life-giving truth from God's Word. Then, a key aspect is application - whereby we live out our lifestyle and behaviour according to that truth and doctrine. And transformation - something then happens as a miracle of God changing us more and more into His image and likeness, because we looked into His Word and were changed by it.

“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

- James 1:23-25 (NKJV). |



“...They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. - Isaiah 45:20 (KJV).”

Worshipping a ‘God’ That Cannot Save

BY BARRIE HANSON

I was in my local fish and chip shop waiting for my order and noticed an addition to the décor. Behind the counter on a table, a small shrine had been placed and food and flower offerings were before it. Idol worship, and graven images, are not as popular today as they were in Bible times, but they still exist - and perhaps in forms that may not be so obvious.

Most people, when asked, would say that they do not worship idols - but I believe we do. I believe anything we put before God is an idol. There are plenty of warnings about this in scripture. Look, for example, at Deuteronomy 11:16, *“Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them.”* (KJV).

I believe there are three main false gods that people worship and put their trust in today. Firstly, worshipping the god of good works. Let’s take a look at probably the best example of good

works. In the Gospel of Mark, in chapter 10, a man approached Jesus wanting confirmation that he was acceptable to God. He listed all his virtues and said he had been good from his youth. Jesus loved him and acknowledged his good works - and then He asked the man to sell all he had and follow Him.

The man was sad and went away, because he was wealthy and could not give up his possessions. He was relying on his good works to make him right with God, and therefore worshipping a god that could not save. This was my default position before I became a Christian too. I convinced myself that I was generally good enough to be acceptable to God, and certainly so when

compared to the world around me. Secondly is worshipping the god of wealth. In the same passage, Jesus points out that wealth also can be a false god that people worship.

“And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” - Mark 10:23 (KJV).

Notice the disciples’ reaction in the next verse.

“And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God!” - Mark 10:24 (KJV).

This is a fascinating passage of scripture, because it captures the heart of the wealth issue. Wealth is a barrier to God. It is an idol that stands in the way of a true relationship with God - yet there are many who would violently protest at such a notion.

Surely wealth is the benevolence of God - a blessing from above allowed by God for us to enjoy. “I have all that I need and can do what I want.” This attitude was a fundamental part of Judaism at the time of Christ. God richly blessed Abraham, who was an acknowledged man of faith.

Jewish tradition established that, likewise, if you were rich then you were obviously faithful to God - otherwise He would not bless you. In short, wealth equaled ‘godliness’, poverty equaled sin. Christ though clearly refutes this notion. Wealth is a god that cannot save.

Thirdly is worshipping the god of religion. Many trust in their religion to save. I know I did. Before I became a Christian, I was raised very casually in the Methodist faith and whenever I was confronted by a ‘spiritual’ question I hid behind my family’s Methodist background. Truthfully though, I didn’t know anything, really.

This is not an uncommon situation. People genuinely trust in their religious position. But religion cannot save. Only faith in Christ - the son of God - can save. When discussing religion today, I often say I was a Methodist before I became a Christian and my wife was an Anglican before she became a Christian.

The Bible teaches that we must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Read the words of Philippians 2:10-11: *“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (KJV).

I trust today that you are not praying to, or counting on, a god that cannot save. |

■ Barrie Hanson lives in Bluff, Southland. He has been a Christian for over 40 years and in that time he has been a preacher, Pastor and a church helper in both Auckland and Hamilton.



Sending Out The Good News: Māori Postal Aotearoa Shares Jesus

BY JEREMY SMITH



"I just want people to come to know Jesus."

As Malachi Williams and I initially chatted about this interview, those were among his first words.

Though many things may have changed during the more than three quarters of a century - or 77 years - Māori Postal Aotearoa has been following the call of God so far, one thing remains the same.

Its key kaupapa - or principle - is simply reflected in that opening statement - to see people come to know Christ. Based in Whanganui, Malachi and his wife Char have been Māori Postal Aotearoa's national directors since 2017. They and their team want to see the gospel of Jesus Christ spread across Aotearoa, influencing people's lives - and homes - and providing tangata whenua with free Bible-based resources in both Te Reo Māori and English.

Last year, more than 136,000 resources - made up of thousands of monthly Bible lessons, a quarterly full-colour magazine called Tupu Whakarangi - Growing Heavenward - a free bi-monthly children's magazine called Tamariki A Ihowa - God's Children - gospel calendars, Super Bible comics and more - were distributed nationally.

I sat down with Malachi and Char as they shared their hearts to resource whānau, tamariki and all tangata whenua in Aotearoa with the Word of God.

Malachi and Char, thanks so much for making time to chat. Some of those reading this may be unfamiliar with Māori Postal Aotearoa. How would you explain it to them?

Simply put, Māori Postal Aotearoa is a mission to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ throughout our Māori communities and across Aotearoa. We do this by making bilingual Biblical resources available - the majority of which we produce ourselves.

I watched a video about how Māori Postal Aotearoa started. It's an amazing story. Can you tell me a little bit about the history of the ministry, which was known in its early days as the Māori Postal Sunday School (MPSS)?

Sure! Māori Postal Aotearoa began in 1945. Dargaville's Arnot Edwards and Marton's Elsie Severinsen both independently realised that because many children lived in remote areas of the country, they were unable to make it to Sunday School to learn about Jesus. They both had a heart to see the gospel reach these places - so they each began writing children's Bible lessons which could then be delivered to families.

Arnot soon became aware of Elsie's work in the Rangitikei district and they subsequently combined their efforts, deciding to make Whanganui the central



distribution area. The initial name, Māori Postal Sunday School, simply came about because of that collective desire to simply see tamariki, or children, being able to learn about Jesus through Sunday School material.

In time, the work has expanded from Bible lessons to also include a full colour magazine, Tupu Whakarangi - Growing Heavenward - a free bi-monthly children's magazine called Tamariki A Ihowa - God's Children - gospel calendars, tracts, posters and more. What's the most exciting part of seeing the new opportunities God opens doors to?

It's simply amazing really. Beginning with children's Bible lessons, as - over the years - the range of resources we produce and send out has increased, we can now cater for adults too. With our desire to reach all the people of Aotearoa with the gospel of Jesus Christ in mind, our name was altered to Māori Postal Aotearoa.

Last year, we produced and distributed over 136,000 resources. As you mentioned, they include, among others, Bible studies, magazines, bilingual text posters, tracts and a Super Bible comic. When we mail out the Bible studies, we receive up to 400 of them back for marking each month.

What's the most recent addition to Māori Postal Aotearoa's resources?

Our children's magazine Tamariki A Ihowā. Tupu Whakarangi is a family-oriented magazine, though it's really more suited to older teens and adults. Char decided to trial a bilingual children's magazine - so Tamariki A Ihowā is now produced every two months. We distribute up to 5000 copies of each issue and we're currently producing our 30th edition!

"We have to say, we're just a vessel, our heart is to make ourselves available to be used by God to distribute His Word. But, what a privilege to be used like that."

In 2020, we were offered a unique opportunity to partner with Wandering Sheep Productions and Reach Beyond New Zealand to both grow the ministry of Māori Postal Aotearoa and, even more so, significantly impact the lives of tāngata whenua in Aotearoa. Work began towards providing the Super Bible comics in Te Reo Māori. Our desire was to make it available for use through a variety of places and avenues around Aotearoa - including correctional facilities, schools, libraries, homes, churches and others. God provided some very generous supporters and a wonderful translator and it's been amazing being part of the project. The Lord simply brought various people and organisations together in His time and for His glory.

In April, we attended a dawn blessing at Tauwhare to celebrate the first of those 'ready to be released' Super Bible comics - Te Tino Kōrero, translated by Dr Tom Roa. The Te Reo Māori project involves translating over 80 high quality comic book Bible stories with characters from both the Old and New Testaments. As the first in the Super Bible series, Te Tino Kōrero tells the story of the Bible from Genesis through to Revelation - 12 of those stories focus on the life of Christ. The comics are presented with high quality graphics, thanks to some of the world's most experienced animation artists. When printed, they are made available as either a hard copy, or digitally through a branded version of the Super Bible app.

Māori Postal Aotearoa's resources are so professionally and creatively presented. Do you enjoy combining that clear gifting you have with your overarching desire to share Jesus?

Can I just say, I think Char's the creative one!

Is that true Char?

Well, I'm really not that creative to be honest! I truly believe it's just a case of me - and the others in our team of course - continually praying "...okay God, would you lead and guide us and help bring things together in Your strength, timing and



ability?" As we trust Him, I always find it so exciting to look back at how God has ultimately directed the process. It's an honour to be able to use our giftings to serve Him with a heart to see others come to Jesus. Also, given that - in everything - we're trusting Him, I'm always so encouraged when people come back to us and say things like, "...of all the Bible stories you could have picked, that's the one we're learning about right at the moment." Feedback like that makes me think, "...yes, that timing just has to be God..."

Okay, on a similar note, with Māori Postal Aotearoa resources now reaching thousands of people every month, how does it impact you when people tell you how those resources influenced their lives and pointed them to Jesus?

It's just so encouraging and heart-warming to receive that feedback. We have to say, we're just a vessel, our heart is to make ourselves available to be used by God to distribute His Word. But, what a privilege to be used like that. God has, and continues to, supply our every need. And this simply means we can provide the majority of our resources at no cost. God's gift of salvation through His son, Jesus Christ, is the most amazing gift we can ever receive.

All Char and I and our team can say is what an amazing, God-given opportunity we have to play a part in telling people about that gift as we reach out into communities all around Aotearoa New Zealand with the gospel message.

Anything done at that scale takes a massive team effort - you guys must have some amazing volunteers!

We do, and they're wonderful. I think too, that because our resources are free, it helps to open doors for even more people to make use of them and spread the resources even further. People often share with us the key reason they're able to make use of Māori Postal Aotearoa resources is simply because they are free.

Can I ask, given that the work of the ministry is financed by donations - or koha - from various sources, what's it like to reflect on the ways in which the Lord has continually directed, provided for and supplied your various needs over the years?

As we mentioned, the Lord continually provides for our every need. We've recently been revamping and tidying up the building and we've been coming across some of the old resources and material which document our history. It's actually hard to put into words in a way, but we're constantly overwhelmed by the Lord's goodness as we reflect on everything He's brought us through that's led us to today. Reflecting on our history also gives us confidence for the future. God has provided in the past - and proven Himself faithful - so many times, and He'll continue to do so as we keep our eyes, and our focus, on Him. In that sense, provision isn't really a concern of ours, we trust God with that. It's a door only He can open and keep open. Collectively, our heart's desire is simple - we'll just keep making ourselves available by simply saying, "...here we are Lord, use and guide us."

Malachi, during our initial chats you mentioned Char has an amazing - and long standing - whānau connection with Māori Postal Aotearoa. Char, can you tell me about that?

Sure! My mum and dad - Graham and Evelyn Batson - served as superintendents for 35 years from 1982 to 2017. Back then, Dad printed all the resources - and there were volunteers who came in as well. When my sister and I were kids, we were among those who got roped in from time to time to help too. We didn't mind at all though!

Dad was a preacher, so he also travelled around a lot. Looking back, it was an amazing time - and as a family, we got to go to places around New Zealand we probably never would have otherwise. As you get older, you begin to realise what an awesome privilege our upbringing was. It really is an amazing legacy. And I absolutely remember coming back into the Māori Postal Aotearoa building when I was older. I'd moved away and been living elsewhere for a time and I remember God began to speak to me with a sense that I'd be back involved with the ministry. And here we are - Malachi and I have been the national directors since 2017.

Can I ask, how was it that you guys each came to know Christ personally? Char, can you start?

Sure. I think for me, there isn't one particular moment, as such. I obviously grew up in a Christian home - I knew about Jesus and had a relationship with him. Before God brought Malachi into my life - he and I married in 2016 - I was previously married for nearly 23 years. That marriage ended up being quite an unhealthy relationship, and during the last few years of that, I'd say I didn't depend on God like I should have. I think I tried to find 'help' in my own strength to 'escape' the situation I was in. Looking back now, that obviously wasn't good. As I sit here sharing that part

of my story now, I do so because I can see that in submitting every area of my life to God, He's clearly revealed to me not only how He led my family and I through that season, but also how much more He has for us, in Him, now. Trust Him, not our own strength or abilities, because in trusting Him, we can allow God to use our story to reach others.

And that's my heart. Since working at Māori Postal Aotearoa, I've had such a God-given desire for children to come to know Christ. I'd say that was my ultimate aim in starting Tamariki A Ihowā - to let our tamariki know that when things aren't good, or they're not going well - and when you feel like you have nobody in those times - Jesus is there and He loves you. We simply want to tell the children, and of course adults, in Aotearoa that Jesus is our Hope. Even when life is hard, we don't have to do it on our own - come to Christ, submit your life to Him and He will walk alongside you and give you His strength.

And for you Malachi?

Jeremy, I was a bit older when I realised the first person I saw displaying Jesus to me was my great-grandmother, Mihinui. She absolutely loved the Lord. Growing up, there were all sorts of abuses that I witnessed, and I was also fatherless. Yet, I was always reminded by my great-grandmother that God was, and is, ultimately my Father. I've always remembered that. She taught me the Lord's prayer in Te Reo Māori even before I could speak English. When living with my great grandmother, we went to church - it was held in different homes in the community of Rātana Pā, where I lived.

As a teenager, I began to rebel and as I got older I went way off track. I married young, but had no idea how to be a husband, or a father. I left the marriage after a couple of years, although I kept in contact with my children. My wife suffered health problems and sadly passed away a few years before I met Char.

And, God has absolutely given me Char - she's an amazing blessing. Things in my life - sin - were essentially getting worse and worse until, one day, I remembered once again a key part of what my great-grandmother had taught me - that Jesus loved me and died for me. I simply cried out to God in desperation and broken-heartedness, "...Lord, take over..." He brought me back to the cross and as I asked for His forgiveness, it was as though a big weight was lifted off - all my hurt, pain and suffering.

I sensed His love and understood the incredible sacrifice He'd made on my behalf. From that moment, life has never been the same. That was the beginning of my journey. And, that's not to say either that I haven't made mistakes at times since then, and since Char's been in my life. But regardless, in asking for His forgiveness, the Lord has been teaching me that it's simply about keeping our eyes on Jesus, asking for forgiveness when I make mistakes and continuing to walk in relationship with Him. His grace is sufficient.

“ God’s gift of salvation through His son, Jesus Christ, is the most amazing gift we can ever receive. ”

“Just keep looking to Jesus - don't take your eyes off Him. Our walks with the Lord should display authenticity to others and the fact that we genuinely care for them.”



How amazing that the Lord brought you together for such a time as this, to steward the ministry of Māori Postal Aotearoa together! As we've said, the work has such an amazing tāhuhu kōrero, or history. What do you both like most about your roles as national directors at this time?

It really is a privilege. Sometimes, we can get a little bit caught up with what we're doing here and, at times, wonder about the extent of the difference we're making for Jesus. Yet, as we said earlier, even if we hear from one or two people how our resources have helped them, it's worth it. It's a ripple effect really and we may never know the full extent of the influence the resources are having. We often hear too how people are using a number of our resources in different ways as an outreach tool in various parts of Aotearoa. That's amazing.

Can you tell me a bit about your whānau?

We are a blended whānau, with 12 children. The kids are on different journeys when it comes to their walk with the Lord. Many of them know Jesus, are walking in relationship with Him and are well connected to the local church we go to.

For those of our kids who don't yet know the Lord, we are of course continually praying that they will all come to know Him. At this stage, they all know 'about' Him, but our prayer is that they come to know Jesus personally and begin to walk in relationship with Him.

Also, we have 17 grandchildren all up!

Wow. So, you guys have very full plates in terms of various work and family commitments then. What intentional decisions do you make to ensure you steward and balance all that's required of you well?

We're so blessed. When we get overloaded here, we actually call on some of the kids to help us out. One of our daughters works with us here as a part time graphic designer. There's a real desire to reach people. God's grace on our family has kept us in His hand. For us, a key thing is also having them planted

in a local church. There, they're all surrounded by people their own age who also love Jesus. Particularly when your kids are teenagers, their friends and peers play a huge, influential role in their lives. We're blessed to be part of a very community-minded, intentional church family.

I was interested to ask, while the core of the resources you produce are sent out in the mail, in today's day and age, what role does technology like the internet and social media play in complimenting the work already being done to see the gospel spread throughout Aotearoa?

Well, as one example, both the Māori Postal Aotearoa mobile app and the website are currently in development. There will be an area of that site specifically for the online distribution of things like the Super Comics, which we spoke of before, as well as our Bible lessons and studies for both children and adults. This opens up our resources, via online viewing, to anyone who has access to mobile phones, tablets and computers.

We'll obviously continue to mail out our resources, but at the same time, we're also really prayerful about our online presence, because it potentially gives us a whole new God-given audience, which can be world wide. One thing we'd love to see too - as part of that online presence - is something like a live chat component.

Maybe while the lessons are being completed online, our team could then be available live on the website to answer any questions people have. That could be one great way of having a personal interaction with people who utilise our resources. Many years ago, Māori Postal Aotearoa had more than 60 leaders, or representatives, around Aotearoa - they were all responsible for groups in their own communities and went and regularly visited families.

The purpose was to simply build relationships with people who were receiving our resources and do life with them. In some ways, that dynamic has changed over the years - so with the Lord's direction and guidance, an online presence is a way of utilising technology in a positive way for His glory and to

compliment the hard copy work we're doing. At the same time, it's simply another way of connecting with people and letting them know we're here and we care.

You raise an interesting point. Though the world may look different in many ways when compared with 75 years ago, our nation's need for Jesus remains the same. What's the value of our nation's tamariki, and tangata whenua, both knowing - and having access to - the gospel and other Christ-centred resources to help anchor them in Jesus?

It's certainly easy to look around and see how the world is different - and has changed - since the early days when Māori Postal Aotearoa began. And, while many methods in terms of the way in which we communicate and reach people today may be different, the message of Jesus is not. He is the same yesterday, today and forever, and people simply need Him just as much now as they did 75 years ago.

I read the exciting news that as of June - thanks to collective support and generous donations - you reached an \$82,000 fundraising goal for a new printer. Awesome! How will that new addition help improve the work of the ministry?

The ways in which God provides for our every need are just incredible. To give you some context, in the last five years - from 2017 to this year, 2022, demand for resources has been steadily increasing. In fact, the number of resources distributed in 2021 that we mentioned - 136,295 - marked an increase of about 60,000 resources when compared to the 77,786 we distributed in 2017. Not only does the new printer handle that resource increase more efficiently, it also trims and produces a completed end product - meaning we'll be able to produce and distribute resources faster.

Again, it's another example of God's provision, in His timing. We are so grateful to God for that provision and also, of course, for the generous koha - or donations - and financial support from so many. That support simply means we can continue in our mission to see the gospel of Jesus Christ spread across Aotearoa. Our calculations show that, based on the cost savings we'll make, the new printer will have paid for itself within the next five years. As we speak, we're preparing space in our building here in Whanganui for the new printer and it will be installed and in use printing resources by later on in September.

Finally, as you look to the future, what's a simple message of encouragement you'd have for

readers when it comes to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and genuinely and authentically living out our daily walk with Him?

Perhaps one of the most important thoughts comes from words found in Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." (NIV). Just keep looking to Jesus - don't take your eyes off Him. Our walks with the Lord should display authenticity to others and the fact that we genuinely care for them. I think people notice if we're not being authentic. Perhaps if having a genuine heart of love towards others is something you struggle with - or would like the Lord to develop more in your life - pray that God would give you a soft heart. Because He will.

So often, actions speak louder than words - even if you feel like you're maybe not getting anywhere, you may never know the full impact - and extent - of your actions as you are a Christ-like example. Then, when people have questions, maybe you can be a person to whom they come? Honestly, we don't know what people are going through, or what's happening in their lives, yet our role is to trust God and point people to Jesus.

Ultimately, He's the hope they're looking for. Our overarching desire should be to help others take steps towards not only coming to know Jesus, and then also being disciplined in their walk in relationship with Him. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life..." (NIV). Outside of Christ, there's nothing - everything we are looking for is found in Him.

Malachi and Char, thanks so much! | A

Though most Māori Postal Aotearoa resources are provided free, there is a cost associated with producing and distributing them. To find out more about Māori Postal Aotearoa's work - or how you can prayerfully make a donation - or koha - visit www.maoripostal.co.nz



■ Jeremy Smith is editor of, and one of the writers for, Authentic Magazine. He is an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his talents to glorify God.





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The day my son Jack - my 'little buddy' - headed to his first day of school was one of mixed emotions. There he was, hungry to learn and grow. And there I was, his dad, realising this new season required me to 'let go' of some of the 'control'. He'd, of course, been so dependent on me up to that point in the previous five years.

Leaving school, as Jack stayed for the day, I realised the occasion's magnitude. I told Suze, my wife, to talk about anything but him - so I didn't lose it. Sunglasses hide so much!

Amongst my 'feelings' was the big picture. Starting school was, obviously, Jack's next step as he developed into who God's calling him to be.

And, Jack trusted his 'daddy' when told this season was going to be good for him. Maybe these reflections will mean more to parents out there, but may they encourage us all.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, *"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under Heaven."* (NIV).

Some seasons are weird, fun, challenging, unexpected and some are our favourites. One thing's true though - they're always changing - and, likely, one season won't last all your life.

Ultimately, God's in control - He knows we need seasons, and change, just when we need them.

We may not understand, but He does. Just as Jack trusted school was where he should be, trust God, His seasons and timing for your life.

Yes. Life throws us curve balls - yet, as we navigate these unexpected seasons, we have God's promise in scripture that he will never leave us or forsake us.

"For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'" - Isaiah 41:13 (NIV).

In 2 Timothy 4:2, we're similarly told *"...be prepared in season and out of season..."* (NIV).

As we reflect on navigating the unexpected things of life, my key exhortation is, it all starts at the same place - the person of Jesus. In making Him the Rock - your life's immovable foundation - Christ in you in His strength, not your own - is an unshakeable anchor through many seasons.

Hebrews 6:19 tells us that hope is an *"...anchor for our soul..."*

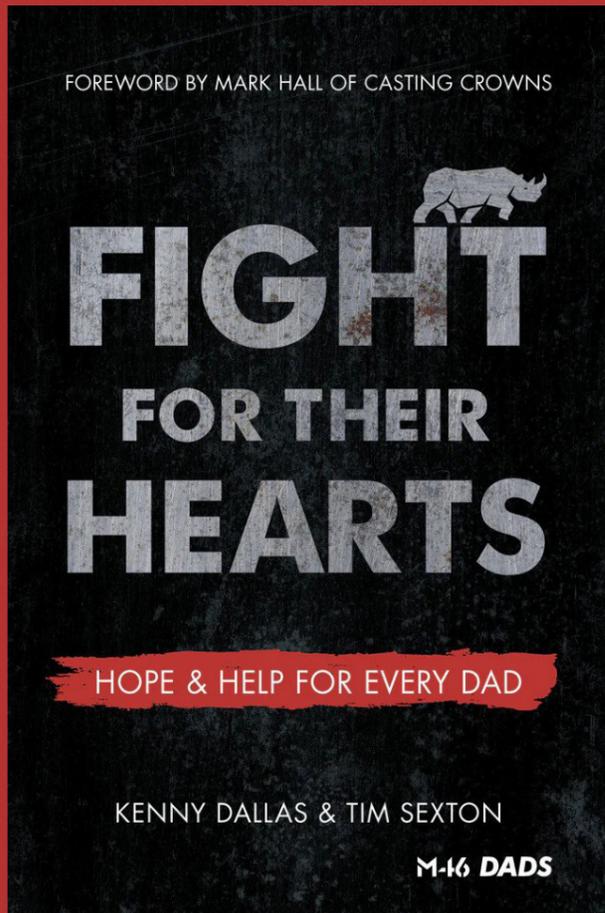
So, build your foundation on Jesus, make Him your Rock, trust His timing and He will, ultimately, anchor you.

Then, no matter the season, *"...He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* - *Philippians 1:6 (NIV).* | 

Locky McNeill is a faith-based entrepreneur living in Taupo, New Zealand. He is a father to two young sons and a husband to one talented wife who can bake up a storm of goodness. He splits his time between being a digital Pastor, event director, MC, performer, writer and host of the Real, Raw & Relevant with Locky McNeill online show.



BOOK



Fight For Their Hearts

KENNY DALLAS AND TIM SEXTON // REVIEW BY JOHN WARD

During my long and rather interesting life, I've been everything from a florist to a soldier, a department store manager, a Pastor, a Christian bookshop manager, a rest home Chaplain and a travelling sales representative.

While all of these positions carried responsibilities, none were so great as those carried by my most important role of all - a father. The eternal consequences of that role are absolutely crucial - and the older I've become, the more I'm convicted that being a father is an utterly important, God-given undertaking

which needs to be taken very seriously. Christian fathers need to be intentional in setting a Godly example - and being an active leader - in their families. Though, it seems, too many opt out! So much so that the authors of Fight For Their Hearts - Kenny Dallas and Tim Sexton - founded an organisation called M46Dads.

It brings together groups of fathers in order to empower them to be all that God's called them to be - and to provide mutual support and encouragement.

M46Dads has Malachi 4:6 at its heart - "He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents..." (NIV).

In this new, very readable and interesting book, Kenny and Tim are revealingly honest when it comes to sharing their own testimonies. It's a title which gives both hope and help to fathers as they seek to negotiate the formative years of their offspring's development, their growth and - subsequently - further ahead into the future.

In the early chapters, Kenny and Tim detail their family backgrounds and the influence their own dads had on their lives. They go on to explain that as they themselves became fathers, they became more acutely aware of those influences - be they for good or for bad.

As they have since discovered flaws in their own lives as dads, they say that - with Christ's help and in His strength - they've intentionally sought healing, and restoration, in those areas.

We're told how they wrestled with different challenges, difficulties and misunderstandings as to the true nature of the Christian life - Christ in us - and how that should ultimately inform and influence everything about their role as fathers.

This book is not an instruction manual, as such, although it does set out some suggestions and examples as to how to relate one's Christian faith - and walk with Jesus - to children and teenagers in a meaningful way.

Several other fathers share their experiences too and there are also vivid, illustrative and instructive scriptural examples given.

The first two chapters lay the foundation for the rest of the book. Chapters three through five then discuss how to best communicate God - and what it means to walk with Jesus, in Christ - to our children.

"The mission of M46 Dads", the authors state, "...is to inspire and equip fathers to prayerfully fight for the hearts of their children..."

Chapters six through eight then focus on our relationships within the family and how best to be the fathers our children need us to be, with Christ as the head. Chapters nine and 10 look further afield as to ways in which to involve our children as we seek to share Jesus with those around us. Readers will

discover why the rhino features in the book, and what a large number of rhinos getting together is called. It's also the name given to M46 Dads groups when they meet together.

There are ten challenges presented in the book - along with ideas for family interaction, activity and some warnings. Ours, and our family's, basic needs are summed up in the acronym LAWS - love, acceptance, worth and security.

The authors write that everyone "...needs to enter adult life being able to walk into any environment with any kind of peer pressure and know that, in Christ, they have the personal tools to help them navigate through any situation."

The famous love chapter in First Corinthians is quoted on page 137. It has been adapted to express a father's commitment.

“Christian fathers need to be intentional in setting a Godly example - and in being an active leader - in their families. Though, it seems, too many opt out!”

“As a dad, I will be patient and kind. I will not show envy, boasting or pride to my kids. I will not dishonour them by being self-seeking. I won't be easily angered by them, and I won't keep a record of their wrongs. As a dad, I won't cooperate with evil, but I will rejoice in the truth. As a dad, I will always protect, always trust, always hope, always persevere for my kids. I vow my love will never fail them. I will be the man my kids need to see and put my own childish ways

behind me. I want my kids to fully know God through me, even as I am fully known. Now these three remain for me as their dad: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” - 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 11-13 (NIV).

It is a very real concern that so many children who were raised in a church-attending family tend to opt out around the time when they leave high school. Christian parents need to be intentional where faith matters are concerned "...because they are the primary disciple makers in their children's lives," the authors say.

I find this book to be a great tool in the fulfilment of this objective - I wish it'd been available when I became a very naive father 62 years ago! |

For more, see www.m46dads.com

This book is available from



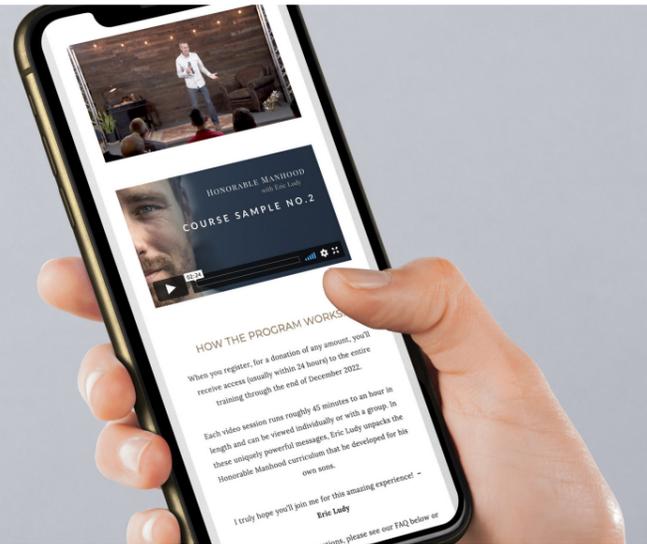
Christchurch-based John Ward facilitated his 'Between the Covers' book review programme on Rhema for 25 years and 1100 reviews. He was in pastoral ministry for 10 years and also managed a Scripture Union bookshop for 10 years, before becoming a South Island-based Scripture Union Bible Ministries staff worker for five years. He still preaches when required.



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HONORABLE MANHOOD // MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT BY JEREMY SMITH

"To all the fathers asking, "...how do we even do this?" I'm right there with you. As I survey our generation, I have a huge burden on my heart because, simply put, there is such great need.

"I believe manhood is under siege today - we've lost the picture of grand masculinity for this generation of men to seek and discover. What really stirs me deeply is the idea of taking the grand Gospel of Jesus Christ - the Biblical picture and vision God has for masculinity - and planting it deep within the hearts of our sons. I have boys myself who are coming to the age where they need an impartation, a vision and a Christ-centred road map in this area too. Let's work together to see that impartation take place."

That's Eric Ludy's overarching desire as he prepares for the latest semester of the Honorable Manhood programme. The eight-week online course introduces men to the calling they've received from God, bringing clarity to right and honourable living. Rather than charging the usual course fee, Eric's heart - as many people face financial uncertainty in these times - is to make this semester's material available on a donation-only basis. Upon registering - whether for just you, or a group of any size - you can input a donation amount as you feel led. Semester registrations opened on September 1, in time for Father's Day. The online content for fathers, sons and men of all ages will remain accessible to those registered until the end of December, wherever you are in the world. Spaces are limited, those wanting to take part should register promptly. Originally compiled as part of Eric's 'boy to man' training for his own sons, his prayer is that Honorable Manhood would be "... far more than an online course", and instead a Christ-centered programme which inspires men to truly grasp God's epic vision and purpose for manhood.

"I pray it's a life-altering journey to help men discover God's epic intention for masculinity and Biblical sexuality - whether you're a father seeking to pass on a healthy pattern for sexuality to your sons, or a man of any age who simply needs a clear vision of the way God created you as a man."

Eric, president of Ellerslie Mission Society and Ellerslie Discipleship Training's lead instructor in Windsor, Colorado, says many men were not actually given that healthy vision for masculinity or sexuality by their own fathers, therefore, they often go through most of their own adult lives feeling confused, ashamed or controlled by those areas.

Honorable Manhood was designed, with that knowledge in mind, for fathers who want to ensure they do pass on a healthy example to their sons, for fathers and sons who want to walk through a life-changing experience together, for men who need a clear pattern for honouring God in their sexuality or who want to catch a God-inspired vision for their masculinity and for men's groups wanting to experience powerful, life-changing truth together. A pre-curriculum "man-to-man pow-wow" will be held before the course starts to initially introduce the fathers and leaders who have registered to the eight training sessions.

Eric and his wife Leslie - authors of *When God Writes Your Love Story* and many other books - have been married for over 25 years. They have six children, four of whom are adopted. |  

To register for Honorable Manhood now, or for more info about the programme, visit www.ericludy.com/honorable-manhood

■ Jeremy Smith is editor of, and one of the writers for, *Authentic Magazine*. He is an experienced, Waikato-based journalist who loves the Lord and enjoys using his talents to glorify God.



GOD created us to be with Him. (Genesis 1-2)

God created the universe (Genesis 1:1) - including the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. Created to be in complete fellowship with Him and each other, God wanted them to care for the earth and the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). He said they shouldn't eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but His plan was disrupted when they evilly did so.

OUR sins separate us from God. (Genesis 3)

When Adam and Eve ate of the tree (Genesis 3:6), they sinned. Becoming aware of their error, there were both immediate and future consequences. Immediately banished from the garden, they'd physically die in the future. Their offspring - everyone including you and I - was born sinful, selfish and subsequently deprived of God's fellowship (Romans 5:12-14).

SINS cannot be removed by good deeds. (Genesis 4 - Malachi 4)

Humanity attempts to remove sin through good deeds, but the 10 Commandments God gave the Israelites (Exodus 20:1-17) showed they couldn't live up to His perfect standards (Galatians 3:23-24). A sacrificial system involving goats without blemishes (Leviticus 4:27-31) foreshadowed the Lamb of God, Jesus, who'd take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

PAYING the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again. (Matthew - Luke)

Jesus came to earth, fulfilling the law (Matthew 5:17). He was the ultimate sacrifice (Luke 24:46) - living the perfect life we couldn't live, dying in our place for our sin. His payment was infinite and complete. He rose from the dead after three days (Mark 16:6), being seen by over 500 witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:6) on at least 12 occasions in 40 days (Acts 1:3).

EVERYONE who trusts in Him alone has eternal life. (John)

Eternal life is a free gift of God through faith, not by our good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9). It's not trying, but trusting. Jesus paid the price - all we must do is receive the gift of forgiveness through faith. When we believe Jesus died for our sins and trust in Him alone, we receive eternal life and we pass from death to life (John 5:24, Romans 10:9).

LIFE with Jesus starts now and lasts forever. (Acts - Revelation)

Because Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, we'll be with Him forever in Heaven. When we trust in Him, we enter into a personal, permanent relationship with God. Eternal life doesn't start after you die, but when you believe (John 10:10). A real relationship with Jesus is through prayer, worship and the strength God gives us through His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

For more resources see www.dare2share.org



AUTHENTIC

MEN'S MAGAZINE

Our purpose is to proclaim the Authentic Christian Life
- the real, genuine life - where Christ is alive in us!

Authentic Magazine is a quarterly printed magazine, designed to encourage kiwi Christian men in their faith. It is a project of Authentic Christian Trust, a registered charity in NZ.

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