



Transforming Sydney & Prayer Strategy for the Spheres of Influence



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

TRANSFORMING
SYDNEY

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

Prayer Calendar 2015

Check our 2015 Prayer Calendar for daily prayer points - www.transformingsydney.org/TSPayerCalendar.html

Note also on pages xx and xx is a **Daily Prayer Calendar for July to pray for the Arts.**

(In the May newsletter is a Daily Prayer Calendar for June to pray for Religion & Philosophy.)

Another Name Change

You may notice that we have changed part of the name of the newsletter again - this reflects the broad issues that we are tackling and the many groups and organisations that we work with in Christ's vineyard, both in Australia and overseas. The 'Spheres of Influence' is a generic term that is acceptable and in use by many Christian movements to describe individual and corporate God-given responsibility for prayer and mission in the world. It also is inclusive of the Transforming Sydney primary focus areas of Family, Church and Marketplace.

A new website to support the Prayer Strategy locally and internationally for the Spheres of Influence will be up sometime in July - www.prayerstrategy.org

In the June edition - focus on Religion & Philosophy

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If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

[1 Peter 4:11 NIV]

Errata

An apology: in the May edition we accidentally put Jane Johnson from the Church Excellence Framework in the Contents table as the author of "21 Paradigms to move towards in Western Churches" instead of Peter Sewell. Jane supplied the article but Peter is the author; the article is correctly identified. If you notice errors in these newsletters please inform us.

Pray for Sydney – Pentecost 2015

Transforming Sydney and Newtown Mission

Dear friends of Christ.

23rd May 2015 at Newtown Mission was an amazing evening of prayer and passion for the church in Sydney. Around 120 leaders came together to pray earnestly for the people of across the region, for breakthrough in families, in the churches, and in the communities.



Newtown Mission opened it's doors and welcomed us with an open heart; we give thanks to them for their generosity and thanks to God for their gifts of service to us:

Ps. Brian on guitar and the worship team led us throughout the evening in vibrant, varied and deep worship of our Lord and God.

Ps. Andy welcomed everyone and opened with a rousing prayer straight from the heart.

Rev. Graeme was our gracious host of the evening, and prayed for the Uniting and Wesleyan communities across Sydney.



We were also welcomed by a local Sydney indigenous leader Bob who prayed for peace and true reconciliation between all our peoples in Australia.



Hon. the Rev. Fred Nile inspired us with a stirring prayer for our NSW and Australian Parliaments and government leaders. Thankyou Fred for coming with Silvana and praying with us through the whole evening.

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Pray for Sydney – Pentecost 2015 (...continued)

The prayers for our city were grouped into three circles of prayer covering family, church and marketplace.

Generations/Family

For Children - Ps. Jonathan, Youth - Rev. Peter, Families - Ps. David, and Seniors - Gordon.



Church Communities

Catholic - Marita*, Anglican - Rev. Daniel*, Baptist - Pete*, Churches of Christ - Ps. Sam*, Salvation Army - Maj. Peter*, Uniting - Ps. Graeme* and Pentecostal - Sandra.

Chinese - Paul, Korean - Ps. John*, Indonesian - Ps. Yosafat*, Middle Eastern - Magdy,



African - Ps. Gerald, and for unity of the whole church – Costandi. (*Our apologies; some photos are unavailable.)

Sydney Regions

Sydney East - Rev. Craig, Sydney - Bjorn, Sydney Inner-West - Rev. Antony, Parramatta - Ps. Louis, Penrith - Ps. Howard, and the Blue Mountains - Ps. David.

Campbelltown - Ps. Dennis, Sydney South-West - Rev. Owen, Sydney North-West - Ps. John, Central Coast - Ps. Martin, Hornsby - Barbara, Northern Beaches - Ps. Ian, Sydney North - Jan, St. George/Sutherland - Ron, and Illawarra - Dr. Paul.



Petitions & Open Prayer

Bjorn presented a number of prayer petitions, and a few local and visiting leaders and intercessors added their own heart-felt prayers for our city.

City Blessings and Closing Prayer

Ps. Brian prayed a blessing for Melbourne to send with our sister Christine to our much loved fellowship of the believers there, and Christine prayed in turn for our city.

Lilian then closed the gathering with words of encouragement and a prayer of blessing for all. (All photos thanks to Fendy Soewarni.)

Where to Now?

In the days following this event we heard nothing but praise to God for the unity we experienced. We've also been asked how soon we can do this again, like "Can we do this every month?" It is our hope that this will happen every year on Pentecost at a different locations across Sydney. It is our prayer that you will all do your own part to build unity across our city and nation.



Philosophy and Religion

By Fr. Yuhanna Azize

“Philosophy is the greatest possession, and the most honourable before God, to whom it leads us, and commends us.”

So spoke St Justin Martyr in his Dialogue with Trypho, §1, written before his martyrdom in 165. The “philosophy” of which Justin treats is the legacy of Plato and Aristotle. Justin saw no irreconcilable contradiction between “religion” and “philosophy”; he saw them as roads which join together as they vanish in arriving at their ultimate destination – God.

For Justin, although the first principle of religion is revelation, while philosophy’s first principle is natural reason, those first principles are differentiated by level not by truth. It is as if the road of religion began in the highlands, and the road of philosophy commenced in the plain, but they joined up before they finally plunged into the sea. From the high road, one can see more clearly and for a greater distance than one can from the low road. The low path exists only to bring people to the King’s highway, but at least it will lead one there if one follows it in all sincerity. Justin’s description of the various philosophic schools of ancient Greece was not exactly flattering: they were more often than not filled with self-satisfied pedants. Contemplating the morasses of Existentialism and Post-Modernism, perhaps one could conclude that not so much has changed today.

Justin’s “philosophy” was practised by people who not only knew the etymology, (“philosophia” is the “love of wisdom”), but who were also devoted to “wisdom” as something more than just an accumulation of knowledge.

What has happened? The problem, as I see it, is that philosophy has essentially become a high level game for people who like arguing. It has become so academic that it has lost its connection with practical life.

This has not happened to religion, or at least not very much. Religion is understood to have to make practical differences in our lives if it is to be real. Conversion is understood to be more than a change of a description.

A priest or pastor who does not practice what he preaches is excoriated as a hypocrite. It would not occur to anyone who knew that someone taught philosophy to actually expect their lives to be any different from the norm, let alone lived to a higher ethical standard, unless perhaps one anticipated that their character would be more reflective than usual. Even then, the popular idea of a philosopher is probably that of someone who forgets his umbrella everywhere he goes, because his head is full of contrarian thoughts utterly removed from practical reality.

With all the best will in the world, I cannot view modern philosophy any more favourably. The fact of the matter is that modern philosophy means modern academic philosophy, and at least since the time of Descartes, it has been fashionable to abstract one’s thought so far from the world that any worldly connection is lost. As one wit remarked, but his remark was justified, it seemed rather remarkable good luck that having refused to admit the existence of anything, Descartes argued the sun and the moon, the earth and the trees back into existence.

David Hume attacked our idea of causality, yet he lived by it – everyone does. Many philosophers deny that epistemological certainty is possible, yet does anyone imagine they take their philosophy into the streets with them when they go to the registry to renew their driver’s licences? They answer questions which, on their philosophy, cannot be known, with merry aplomb. Chesterton noted the example of a solipsist who said that he found the arguments in favour of solipsism so overwhelming that he was astounded it did not have more adherents. Of course, if he was correct in his solipsism, then there was nobody else to be converted. But even if you had pointed that out to

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Philosophy and Religion (...continued)

him, he would have retorted that this did not answer his arguments.

I doubt that is so. The reduction ad absurdum is a sufficient rebuttal. If you argue that you don't exist, you're either playing a silly semantic game, or your argument must be wrong. It might be interesting to work out where it has gone astray, but there is no doubt that it has. The Eleatics of Ancient Greece purported to prove that motion is impossible. But we know that it is not only possible, we never cease moving. So that argument must be wrong. If you wish to work out where and why it faltered, that is your prerogative, but logically, the reduction ad absurdum is enough.

It is a strange fact that very few people are ever converted by philosophical arguments unless to lose their faith in God. Even Anthony Flew, who was aggressively atheist but then changed his mind, specifically rejects the Christian God and the possibility of revelation. His deity is a well-mannered, exceedingly discrete and refined Aristotelian deity who designs and retires from universes except to silently maintain them.

Why is this? Philosophers' arguments today have no reference to anything else except other philosophers' arguments. The most popular of the crowd are those like Peter Singer who work in the field of ethics. But even here, my assessment that his work is lightweight. Its Achilles' Heel is its treatment of first principles. He will write something like: "If we do not accept this we have nothing with which to answer the racists". That is no argument. Maybe there is nothing with which to answer the racists.

As in contemporary religion, the "heretic", the pusher of envelopes, the lone genius who faces the cold stellar winds with nothing but his mind, has a romantic allure ... concern for the truth runs a very poor second

But I think that the real cause of the problematic gulf between philosophy and religion is a very human one, which stems from the Fall. A lot of people like to argue. They identify not only with their own arguments but with their ability to argue: real or imagined. They like to say: Ah! All the world thinks that, but I, on the other hand, ask this!" People like to be the clever one who has noticed what no one else has ever noticed before, and to overthrow accepted canons.

As in contemporary religion, the "heretic", the pusher of envelopes, the lone genius who faces the cold stellar winds with nothing but his mind, has a romantic allure.

The concern for the truth runs a very poor second. Of course it is held out as being the ultimate goal, but in reality it is not. It is answering the other person, with such skilful thrusts that he falls dead on the floor.

It is very strange: the old Christian and Jewish ideas that Moses was a philosopher were quite correct. But a philosopher of the type which numbered Gilgamesh, Solomon, Ahiqar, Lao-Tse and Confucius among their ranks.

Philosophy is a question of contemplating the aim and purpose of existence. This is why revelation is so important. Who can understand these fully but He who embodies them in himself? This is why religion is the high road and philosophy the low, but they run together in the end to God.

We come from God, and to him we return. When fix our gaze on the world, and use natural reason, we have philosophy. It is good to use the faculties he gave us, but there is no need to use them in isolation, and more than a doctor uses no part of his learning but histology, for example. RELIGION is the whole, philosophy is the part. The whole gives meaning to the part, while the part only enlightens one aspect of the whole, and then it must resume its place.

Finally, philosophy is not really very important even in modern culture. A study of advertising, or of film or of social media, will do far more to illuminate the world of today than reading Rorty or Derrida. The emperor may not be wearing no clothes at all, but he has very few, and they don't keep one very warm. Religion, on the other hand, can still be a hearth of fire.

Cry Justice

(by Dr. John Yates, issued 24 May 2015 - for more articles see <http://cross-connect.net.au/author/johnyates/>)

Introduction

As I was preparing this sermon a huge heading appeared on the front of *The West Australian*; NO JUSTICE (13 May 2015 p.1). The average Australian appears to be deeply committed to issues of justice: everyone deserves a “fair go” so “queue jumpers”, whether at shops or in boats cannot be tolerated. Last year’s federal budget was savaged across the nation as “unfair”, we rose up in protest at the gross injustice of the executions of Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran. Anger is an expression of a perceived injustice; take road rage, the slow coach in front of me is obviously a selfish person. Many Indigenous people burn with a chronic hatred because their human rights have been violated. Society is full of people who won’t forgive because they believe they have been treated unfairly.

The human sense of justice, or injustice, is extraordinarily powerful; I remember a young man who was a part of a church I was pastoring who gassed himself and left a suicide note for his parents aimed at hurting them for their many sins. Most memorably, when our family came out of the funeral parlour after laying my father to rest in his after a long illness my mother cried aloud in bitterness, “It’s not fair!” Much of life *is* filled with injustices. Given this is so, why are there so few men and women who can be heard crying out for God to work righteousness. Our lack of fervent prayer witnesses against us that we have lost touch with the Lord as a God of justice (Deut 32:4; Isa 5:16; 30:18).

An Image of Justice

The Bible confidently proclaims God is Just; “the Rock, his work is perfect and all his ways are just.” (Deut 32:4). Unlike all other spiritual or human powers the biblical Creator is essentially Righteous, he cannot be anything other than Just. It is because we are made in the image of God that we all have a profound sense of justice; life is framed in terms of right and wrong. To *know* the difference between good and evil is a great gift, BUT the way we decide what is right and what is wrong has become dreadfully corrupted.

When God commanded Adam, “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen 2:17) the Lord placed himself at the centre of determining good and evil. When Adam and Eve listened to the Satanic lie, ““You will not surely die....you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”” (Gen 3:4-5) they placed themselves rather than God at the centre of all issues concerning good and evil. “Good” became good for their own interests and evil what seemed contrary to their interests. They exchanged the glory of God’s justice for their own self-centred righteousness (Rom 1:21-23). As fallen creatures they feared God’s judgement in the Garden, not because they accepted that they deserved to be punished as an act of justice but only because punishment is painful (Gen 3:8-10).

Nothing has changed, imagine there were no speed rules on the roads or that there were no penalties to using your mobile phone when driving. Though Adam and Eve felt terribly ashamed when they were caught out by God they never cried to him as a just and merciful Father whose heart had been broken by their mistrust (cf. Gen 6:5-6). Despite all contrary appearances in a world permeated by injustices God is always on our side seeking to restore a just world.

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Crying for Justice

God’s chosen people first received a revelation that the Lord is a God who hears their cries for justice at the time of the exodus from Egypt; “the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.” (Ex 2:23). Once God had delivered Israel from oppression he gave them a covenant that commanded acts of mercy and justice.

““You must not mistreat or oppress foreigners...Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of

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Cry Justice (...continued)

Egypt. You must not exploit a widow or an orphan. ²³ If you exploit them...and they cry out to me...I will certainly hear their cry. ²⁴ My anger will blaze against you, and I will kill you with the sword. Then your wives will be widows and your children fatherless.” (Ex 22:21-24).

The severe warnings of the Law against all injustice are matched by the words of the wisdom writers and the prophets. “Don’t cheat your neighbour...don’t take the land of defenceless orphans. ¹¹ For their Redeemer is strong; he himself will plead their cause against you” (Prov 23:10-11). God’s promises are for the weak and powerless who cry out to him for justice; “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.” (Ps 34:6). As God’s primary representative in the nation the king was expected to give justice for the needy as a reflection of the Lord’s own rule of righteousness and justice (Ps 89:14). Josiah is applauded; “He gave justice and help to the poor and needy, and everything went well for him. Isn’t that what it means to *know me*?” (22:16). Josiah however was an exceptional ruler, because most kings in Judah were unrighteous the Lord released the sword of the ruthless Babylonians who slaughtered the population of Jerusalem indiscriminately (Jer 9:16; Ezek 5:17; 14:21). This divine judgement against the unjust nation had a specific outcome in mind; “Then they will *know* that I am the Lord.” (Ezek 28:23).

At the time of 9/11 I felt the Lord spoke to me through this verse; “In the path of your judgements, O LORD, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul. ⁹ My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn justice.” (Isa 26:8-9). “For when your judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn justice.” The prophetic message behind the exile to Babylon was as clear as the one contained in the 9/11 disaster, to trust in money and military power is to court divine judgement. The righteous know that the one great response that pleases the Lord in the face of disaster is to cry out to him for deliverance (Ps 107:28).

Over the centuries this response became rarer and rarer in Israel so the prophets started to speak of a coming King of perfect justice. “Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! ² May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!...May he have dominion...to the ends of the earth.” (Ps 72:1-2; 8 cf. Isa 32:1). “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him;...⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; And in his name will the nations hope.” (Isa 42:1, 4). This King of justice who is the hope of the poor and needy of the world is Jesus.

Jesus the Great Crier

The Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus speak powerfully of the inbreaking of the justice of God; ““My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked on the lowly estate of his servant.... He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.” (Luke 1:46-48, 51-53). Mary *knows* that her son is the fulfilment of all the Old Testament prophetic hopes for justice.

**According to Jesus
because God’s afflicted
people know that he is just
they cry out to him day
and night for justice.**

Jesus himself named “justice” as one of the “weightier matters of the Law” and his promise was that if we “seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness/justice” he will give us all we need (Matt 23:23).

As is so often the case it is the parables of Jesus which most pointedly expose our situation before God. ““In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’ Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. ⁷ Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don’t you think *God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night?* Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?” (Luke 18:6-8).

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Cry Justice (...continued)

According to Jesus because God's afflicted people know that he is just they cry out to him day and night for justice. The word used here for "cry" is not a whisper or a mutter or even a normal volume of speech; it means to call out loudly or to scream. In the Gospels this is the cry of those who are desperate for the relieving justice of God's kingdom and who believe Jesus can bring it; it is the cry of the father of a demonised and fitting boy, it is the cry of blind beggar whose voice rises above the crowd in calling to Jesus to heal him (Luke 9:38; 18:38; cf. Mark 15:34).

The presence of the righteous kingship of God in Christ draws out of suffering human beings prayer-filled cries for God's active justice. But Jesus' parable did not end on this note; according to Christ when he returns he will find few calling out to him for deliverance. As the Australian Church we must confess Christ's prophecy describes us!

Unlike our brothers and sisters in the impoverished Third World and in lands where the people of the cross are persecuted, we are a very prayerless Church.

There are only two possible explanations for our failure to cry out to God. The first is that we have no deep needs that require divine deliverance. This is not true; as a society we have enormous needs; marriage and family breakdowns, a plague of anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses and the scourge of drugs spring to mind. The second explanation for our prayerlessness is that we do not truly believe that God is a God of justice. This is our real problem and there is only one possible remedy for such unbelief, it is the gospel, we must look again at the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Cross's Cry for Justice

In the psalms people who are unashamed to describe themselves as "poor and needy" cry out to God for deliverance; "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." (Pss 34:6; 40:17; 70:5; 86:1; 109:22). Since some of these psalms are prophecies of the Messiah they find their ultimate fulfilment in Jesus own crying out for justice (e.g. Ps 40:7=Heb 10:9; Ps 109:25= Matt 27:39). Hebrews 5:7-8 describes this most clearly; "While...on earth, Jesus offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers..." Jesus was unashamed to cry out deliverance.

Jesus cry to God for justice broke through every barrier of shame, fear or humiliation that has ever held humanity back from calling upon God for justice; and the Father answered his Son's plea by raising him from the dead.

Such crying for justice came to an extraordinary climax on the cross when he "cried out with a loud voice" words that were taken by his opponents as utterly shameful (Heb 12:2) and clear confirmation that he could not possibly be the Saviour of the world. He "cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). Jesus cry to God for justice broke through every barrier of shame, fear or humiliation that has ever held humanity back from calling upon God for justice; and the Father answered his Son's plea by raising him from the dead. The resurrection is the final revelation that God is a just God who ultimately and completely delivers all who cry to him.

Paul proclaims the universal implications of Jesus death and resurrection in this way; "God overlooked people's ignorance...in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. 31 For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved this...by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31 cf. Rom 8:10-11; 1 Tim 3:16). The resurrection of Jesus is the proof to that there is indeed a God of justice who in the End will set everything right in this world. It follows that anyone who has had a deep revelation of God's justice in the gospel of will be a person who cries out to him in prayer (Rom 1:16-17).

A Church that Cries for Justice

Today a new wave of crying out to God for justice is arising across the globe for we live in a day when the truth about the persecution of Christians is inescapable. Everyone has heard of the slaughter of believers in Syria, Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria and so on. The newspapers can tell you what is happening in the material world, but we need to turn to the scriptures to understand the implications of martyrdom in the spiritual world. In Revelation 6 we read "When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of all who had been martyred for the word of God and

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Cry Justice (...continued)

for being faithful in their testimony. ¹⁰ They *cried out with a loud voice* and said, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you judge the people who belong to this world and avenge our blood for what they have done to us?” (vv.9-10).

The martyrs do not hang around in heaven playing harps, possessed by the Spirit of God they cry out in prayer for divine justice on the earth. These are the departed in heaven who the writer to the Hebrews describes as “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:23). Made fully whole by the just judgement of God in Christ they ceaselessly seek the consummation of his justice on the earth. The whole of heaven is galvanised by issues God’s justice; unlike the worship scenes in today’s churches the worship scenes in Revelation have the holy powers of heaven concerning themselves with the Day when God will speedily give justice to his chosen people (Rev 11:18; 19:2). Something is dreadfully wrong with the prayerless Western Church which fails to cry out for God’s justice to be enacted for the poor and needy.

Prayer has been rightly called *The Cry For the Kingdom* (S.Grenz); as Jesus himself taught us to pray; “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matt 6:10). If a revelation of the justice of God moves the hearts of men and women to pray for this justice to come quickly then we should expect those Christians who claim to be champions of righteousness to be warriors in prayer.

Only the Spirit who led Christ to the cross and raised him from the dead can reveal to us that God is truly a God of justice. If Jesus was not ashamed to cry out from the cross for justice why are we?

Over the years I have encountered believers whose passion is to deal with abortion, euthanasia and sexual immorality, or, whose zeal is for the poor, Indigenous, abused and refugees. I am familiar with the political lobbying and protests of such Christians on the political right but I have not encountered amongst them extraordinary prayerfulness. If we deeply believed that all the trauma and terror of slaughtered infants, battered women, desperate displaced persons and starving children was taken into the cries of the Son of God on the cross we would be people of extraordinary prayer. We would be those who join daily in the constant prayers of the slaughtered saints in heaven in their unity with the ongoing intercession of Christ for justice to come speedily upon the earth (Rom 8:34 ff.). Before the Reformation in Scotland John Knox cried out to God,

“Give me Scotland or I die.” Whoever prays in this way has entered into the intercession of Jesus on the cross on behalf of a sinful lost world that refuses to believe in the justice of God (Isa 53:12).

Conclusion

I have been working on this sermon for a while, but all along I sensed there was something missing to give it real edge. Early this morning I was feeling very under-resourced, I guess I was feeling poor and needy and was in touch with the spiritual powerlessness of the Church. Then I saw that it was 3.34 a.m. and the words of Jesus about himself in John 3:34 came to mind; “he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.” Today is Pentecost Sunday and it is time for the people of God to realise that there is a world of difference between operating out of conviction of conscience and the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33; 10:38; Rom 9:1). Only the Spirit who led Christ to the cross and raised him from the dead can reveal to us that God is truly a God of justice (Rom 1:4; Heb 9:14). If Jesus was not ashamed to cry out from the cross for justice why are we? We need to *know* that such prayers are themselves acts of justice. Sometimes the natural holds a message for the spiritual.

100 years ago this month a German U boat sank the British liner Lusitania causing the loss of 1200 lives; an eye witness records that the sea was full of people who could be heard praying out loud (cf. Ps 107:23ff.). Australia as a Christian nation is sinking fast, and the prayers of the people of God need to be heard across our land once again – in bedrooms, board rooms, churches, paddocks, streets, offices, schools...everywhere. It is time to receive the power of the Spirit of God to lift us above our feelings of shame, embarrassment and inadequacy and to cry aloud to God for justice. If we truly want to see a new heavens and earth filled with the justice of God we must obey the exhortation of Peter to “hasten” the coming of the Day of Christ’s return by becoming a people of extraordinary prayer (2 Pet 3:12-13). If we will not cry out to God *now* an incredible wickedness will descend upon our land and our Church will join the ranks of the openly persecuted.

I do not think this will please our Father, but perhaps this is just how it has to be?

Ethics as Apologetics: Rethinking Peter Singer

By Gordon Preece, Director of Ethos: EA Centre for Christianity & Society www.ethos.org.au

Increasingly in postmodern secular societies, ethics is the new frontier for apologetics. Despite the significant rise of the new atheists and their old-fashioned, modernistic scientism, the issues that cause Christians the most trouble in society are those that make us appear discriminatory in a world that has lost the positive power of ethical discrimination or discernment. Christians appear intolerant of choice or preference, of gays to be married, of women (urged on by men) to abort, of the aged to be euthanased or assisted to suicide. And we're scapegoated, because of our high Christian humanism and its implied sexual and bio ethics, but also for society's ecological problems.

The ethics of the world's most infamous philosopher, Australian Peter Singer, is a case in point. Singer is professor of bioethics at Princeton University and Laureate Professor at the University of Melbourne. His books include *Animal Liberation*, *Practical Ethics*, *Rethinking Life and Death*, *The Ethics of What We Eat*, *The Life You Can Save* and *The Most Good you can Do*. Singer, in fact, accuses Christians of speciesism, by analogy with sexism or racism, discriminating in favour of our human species over other animal species. See Singer's review of *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, based partly on the documentary *Project Nim*, on **'The Chimp Who Would be Human'** (www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2011/08/10/3289848.htm) to see the way in which the popular tide is moving. A major court case is now being waged by animal-rights advocates argued on Wednesday in Manhattan Supreme Court that chimpanzees "should have the same legal rights as persons" ("It's a battle for plaintiff of the apes," www.nydailynews.com May 28).

Many conservative Christians identify the above issues with the Greens, but don't realise Singer was a Greens Senate candidate. Catholic journalist Angela Shanahan, wrote recently in *The Australian* (12/6/10) about Singer's influence on the Greens. 'In 1996 Brown and Singer co-wrote a book simply called *The Greens...*The new "green ethic", according to Singer, directly contradicts the old Christian, biblically based ethic of man at the centre of creation'. But ethical themes of the priority of personal preference, are not confined to the Greens – as Singer says, we live in a 'culture of choice'.

This article will introduce an approach to an ethical apologetics of connecting with our createdness and correcting our idolatry borrowed from Paul's sermon in Athens. I'll then use my *Rethinking Peter Singer* as an example. In a society abandoning Christian morality on many fronts, how might we re-connect with certain creation-based intuitions and correct their distortions in the light of the Gospel? Could we even out-green the Greens by re-connecting with God's created order, our natural, sexual and social ecology?

I. Paul's Creation-Connecting Athenian Apologetic

Paul's Areopagus sermon in Acts 17 is regarded by some, like famous biblical commentator William Barclay, as a failed experiment. He thinks Paul had few converts, and changed his more philosophical wisdom based strategy in Corinth to preach the cross alone (1 Cor 2:1-2). But Barclay's view is simplistic.

Paul knows people in a pluralistic world won't swallow a worldview whole like an elephant. It has to be eaten a bite at a time. Paul wasn't trying to instantly convert people, he was seeking a second hearing. He got it and several were converted (Acts 17:34). I see Ethical Apologetics as a way to a first hearing, a foot in the door for some unwilling to listen to Gospel proclamation first up, but who, having connections made to their creaturely and ethical reality, and spiritual seeking, may later hear the gospel and be converted.

II. Peter Singer

How does Paul's creation – connecting apologetics approach at Athens relate to my (and my Ridley College colleagues') approach in *Rethinking Peter Singer*? Evangelical bioethicist Nigel M. de S. Cameron once debated Singer in the US. They agreed there was an unbridgeable gap between a Christian 'image of God' based anthropology and derived Sanctity of Life ethic, and Singer's utilitarian views. Singer also observed the massive difference between John Paul II's Catholic worldview and his own—Sanctity of Life vs. Quality of Life, Ten Old



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Ethics as Apologetics: Rethinking Peter Singer (...continued)

Commandments vs. Singer's Five New Commandments, religious absolutes vs. secular utilitarian reason etc. There is a vast gulf on human life issues between a Christian 'intrinsic value' approach and Singer's 'means to an end' (of pleasure over pain) utilitarian approach. Singer is a consistent, clear thinker who largely follows through his consequentialist presuppositions to their logical conclusion, going to where other atheists are unwilling to go. This is why he is infamous for supporting infanticide, bestiality etc. It is also why Singer's fellow atheists like Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris etc, and the Greens, shy away from him. Singer wants to take us back to the days of the Stoical and Epicurean pagan philosophers Paul debated before a consistent Christian pro or whole of life ethic took hold.

Still, many today will not deny their creation –based intuitions in favour of Singer's inhuman stoical, rationalist philosophy of the abstract equality of all sensate creatures (although he does prioritise rational creatures or persons, including chimps, dolphins and pigs, who allegedly have preferences or choices). Though a maximal Christian ethic presupposes an anthropology based on our being made and remade in God's image, this is not necessarily opposed to a minimalist intuitive and rational ethic based on universally recognizable principles. Compare C.S. Lewis' 'Law of Tao', describing a natural law ethic in common to the world's major religions and philosophies (*The Abolition of Man*, appendix). The two can work in tandem, as in Scripture, given God is Creator as well as Redeemer. But the ideal, ceiling level of a Christian ethic of love for enemies will transform the floor level of a natural ethic of courageous self-defence and self-interest, for example.

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So fortunately, as Francis Schaeffer recognised, many are co-belligerents, fighting in the same cause with us, without our Christian reasons or presuppositions for a consistently pro- or whole-life ethic (Rick Warren). On seeing the high stakes of sacrificing young and old, they intuitively reject them, though not necessarily knowing why. This provides a good opportunity, at the second hearing stage, to explain the Gospel reasons why.

Further, pastorally sensitive Christians should not turn concerns about some Greens policies into a culture war that undermines

our ability to connect with their legitimate concerns about creation, climate change, poverty, animal suffering etc. Singer's personal generosity to these causes is to be applauded. But Singerian ignorance of Christian generosity to the poor and care for animals (founding the RSPCA) needs to be corrected.

Many Singer followers, are in Jesus' terms, like 'sheep without a shepherd'. They are often ignorant of Singer's more extreme pro-infanticide and bestiality views. I met a young man over coffee once who described himself as saved from drugs and suicide by reading Singer. A young waitress overhearing a conversation about Singer said he's my hero, 'love the man'.

It's those people that we need to get a second hearing from, when we can be more specifically scriptural. While I respect a bold biblically direct apologetic, in our secular, pluralistic context it's often a case of premature proclamation, which doesn't lead to an appropriate consummation. Better to connect like Paul, honouring the spiritual seeking by poets and philosophers of the God in whom 'we live and move and have our being'.

But Paul then subtly corrects their idolatrously misplaced seeking. In a similar way we can use a biblical presuppositionalist critique to argue against Singer's (and other secularist atheists') rationalistic exclusion of Christian reasons from secular public debate. Secular is not the same as secularism. Their secularism is in fact sectarian – a kind of atheist fundamentalism. But nothing and no-one is neutral. We either worship the Creator God or worship our own metal or mental images. Postmodernist awareness of our biased, time, space and culture-bound perspectives backs up a biblical critique of Singer (and new atheists) as the last Enlightenment or modern men who believe in 'pure', universal secular rationality as the solution to all problems.

In connecting, like Paul, with secular seekers we can use a Reformed creation-based ontology (view of being) and anthropology (view of humanity) which is accessible partly through the general revelation, common grace, and divine providence. In correcting we can use a Reformed antithesis based epistemology emphasising total depravity (or holistic human sinfulness), non-value neutrality, and the necessity of special revelation and grace.

We can even, like Oxford mathematician John Lennox in his recent debate with Singer, commend Singer's relative consistency to his principles (e.g. his vegetarianism, plastic shoes, simple lifestyle and concern for the poor, animal

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Ethics as Apologetics: Rethinking Peter Singer (...continued)

rights activism), and wish Christians were as committed and consistent. But we argue that his consequentialism reduces humanity and the environment to means towards the end of rational persons' preferences. In fact he is discriminatory, especially towards unborn human children and born ones, the mentally disabled, comatose or relatively non-rational elderly. The rationally vulnerable have no value to Singer.

III. Creation-Based Intuitions or The Yuk Factor

In critiquing Singer I use a range of 'co-belligerent', mainly female non-Christian philosophers' arguments, such as UK scientist philosopher Mary Midgely. I connect creation-based intuitions or Midgely's 'Yuk Factor' which she uses against aspects of cross-species genetic engineering and against Singer's more extreme anti-speciesist views favouring infanticide and bestiality, cloned sets of headless spare parts for rational persons etc. Intuitive reactions, which Singer ridicules as irrational, are certainly not infallible, but not necessarily irrational. They are often pre-rational remnants of God's created order reflecting our creatureliness. We can test them and critique them through Christ, Scripture, tradition and reason, in that order. But we shouldn't indiscriminately throw intuitions out or into permanent doubt ala Singer. C.S. Lewis rightly describes such secularist, emotionally challenged rationalists as 'Men Without Chests'.

In fact, the cool, calm Singer is the nice face of a nasty utilitarian philosophy. He appears in a documentary after an animated lunch with his wife and adult daughters then tells the camera that when babies they were just like little irrational blobs and therefore not persons and so could be destroyed painlessly. He allows this for disability, but the logic of his position is that if parents are rational persons with preferences and children are not, then infanticide is possible if you prefer one sex over another or blue eyes over brown. Singer, showing his sensitive side though, argues for a month's time limit so couples don't get too attached to offspring! This shows Singer's arbitrary, atomistic view of the emergence of personhood that has no sense of integrating story from womb to tomb, like we see in Psalm 139 under the omniscient and omnipresent gaze of God. Christianity, from when we daily pray that God will know our grandchild Phoebe Fetus as we called her mother Madeleine, to when we pray for 'her' nearly 88 year old great grandfather in Stella Maris nursing home in Cronulla. But again, Singer's advocacy of infanticide is simply a more consistent, more logical perspective than those who give an arbitrary, absolute significance to birth, allowing abortion effectively on demand till then.

But even more consistently liveable, through our creational and image of God nature, and more able to account for 'the hopes and fears of all the years', across a lifetime, is the biblical worldview and Gospel of Christ crucified.

Not only are some of Singer's key ideas unthinkable, they are also unliveable. Singer's rarefied rationalistic impartiality is impossible to live out and so fails his basic test of the practicality of ethics. Singer himself could not euthanase his mother Cora who was suffering from Alzheimers and on his criteria of rationality was no longer a person with preferences or choices and thus able to be painlessly killed. Fortunately Singer proved then to be a better person and son than philosopher.

Singer is not without compassion or emotion, just inconsistent in his application of it, more to animals than to human unborns or new-borns. In fact, Singer's successful advocacy of Animal Liberation came less from abstract arguments against speciesism, than from the horrific photos of animal suffering and the intuitive yuk factor they aroused. Compare the massive reaction against animal rights abuses of live cattle exports to Indonesia. It's a shame nothing similar is heard of horrendous human rights abuses by Indonesia in West Papua, once one of the most Christian places on the planet.

In conclusion, I have had a biblical bet both ways, based on Acts 17, both connecting in a way with both creational and cultural intuitions to connect with seekers and critique Singer's more outlandish opposition to human dignity. But I have also corrected Singer's 'secular' rationalism using a more biblical and Reformed critique of any alleged value neutrality and incognito idolatry. I'd encourage you to do the same in your ethical apologetic adventures.

Rev'd Dr Gordon Preece is Director of Ethos: EA Centre for Christianity & Society, (www.ethos.org.au for free monthly online ethics magazine engage email or Zadok and Equip quarterly subscriptions). Some material is adapted and updated from 'Out of Tune' Australian Presbyterian, Sept. 2011, Ridley College CACE Newsletter, Vol 9 No 1 May 2004. Rethinking Peter Singer is available from Ethos for \$10 or from www.amazon.com

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Christian Morality, Renewal of the Church and the Laity

By John Kennedy

Christianity suffers from a lack of credibility today. It has a most attractive message, but beyond the walls of churches, its morality is rarely practised.

The Church has always had a default policy of not meddling in politics and this necessarily means not commenting on the morality of political issues which might offend governments. At various times in its history, it has played a major role in politics as did Jesus in his short time on earth.

Prior to the 1950s, the Church was offside with governments in Australia and was heavily involved in politics. In the 1960s, things changed dramatically. Church schools were granted Government funding and following Vatican II, the Catholic Church was accepted as a part of the establishment joining the other churches.

The Church's involvement in politics dropped to an all-time low and its need to comment on the morality of social issues became less as the Australian Labor Party adopted a form of democratic socialism and the Liberal Country Party adopted modern liberalism. Both ideologies involved a high level of government intervention in the economy and sought to achieve the good of the community. This accorded with the aims of the Church's social doctrine. It was a comfortable situation for the Church.

In the 1980s, the situation again changed dramatically. Throughout the western world, both major political parties adopted Free Market Capitalism ideology. This was the ideology which prevailed in conservative parties prior to the 1950s. The ideology called for less government intervention in the economy leaving business to act largely unhindered in the economy. Over a number of decades the role of government has gradually been reduced. The aim of this ideology was to maximise business profits, rather than the good of the community.

One consequence for the Church was that its social doctrine was now to be completely ignored and the ideology which it was required to support was now contrary to Christian principles. Many of the actions of government and of business were now also contrary to Christian principles. The Church was put into a very uncomfortable position. If it lived up to its moral responsibility, it could lose government funding and tax exemption as its comment on morality could be interpreted as interference in politics. It could also cause a split in the Church membership, as many Catholics were doing very well out of the new ideology. The Church itself was one of the big winners.

The other change was that since Vatican II, many matters of private morality were now social issues with political consequences. For example marriage between homosexuals is now a social issue.

The Church backed down from the challenge confronting it and has avoided comment on almost all moral issues. This policy went right down to parish churches. Priests once would preach three categories of sermons. They would explain the moral code to parishioners. They would admonish parishioners who did not adhere to it and they would call on parishioners to defend Christian principles.

Priests now explain the moral code, but they do not admonish parishioners for non-adherence and they do not call on parishioners to defend Christian principles. This modern version of Christianity is called Easy Christianity and it suits many existing Catholics. However, this does not attract new converts and it does not attract men and women to the religious orders. Why become a religious if you are not able to effectively spread the gospels? The Church has lost its mission and has become a vassal of governments.

There are many examples, but a simple example is the sacrament of Penance. Most Catholics receive communion at Mass, but few go to confession. Priests do not raise the issue in sermons, even though sacrilege is involved and there is a clear problem.

An example where the Church does not defend Christian principles is the Christian concept of Marriage. The Christian concept of Marriage is under attack in the public arena, but priests have not delivered sermons calling on Catholics to defend Christian marriage. The reason is that there is a policy set by the bishops not to do so.

The Moslems have people clambering to join up and to lay down their lives because their Mullahs do cover all of these lines of preaching.

No bishop wants to become the first bishop to lose government funding and priests, with no security of tenure, are loathe to complain.

The Church needs effective moral leadership. Quite clearly this will not come from the bishops or the priests without some prodding and leadership from the laity. The renewal and the survival of Christianity in Australia will rely on members of the laity demanding that the Church get back to the moral basics.

If the Church is not about morality, then what is it about?

12 Signs that your Church has a Culture of Trust

We all realise that western churches need to mature and change, but what are some of the most important areas we need to address? The following list is a collection of biblical principles that must be addressed in order for the western church to move forward. Some of the themes are repeated in slightly different contexts.

1. Everyone feels valued and appreciated

Trust creates an environment where people value each other. People should feel valued no matter how small their contribution is. In a culture of trust, it doesn't matter how long you've been a member, what role you play, what your abilities are, or how old you are, everyone is appreciated and valued. In a culture of trust, people regularly receive praise no matter what contribution they make.

2. Members are empowered to minister spiritual gifts

Trust opens a platform to impart a gift into a person's life. Timothy was able to minister to the Corinthian church because Paul trusted him and highly recommended him. In an environment of trust, everyone is more open to receive from each other. In a culture of distrust, excuses are created to discourage members from ministering their spiritual gifts.

3. People are willing to take greater risks

If people have encouragement and feel trusted, they are more willing to take risks. Most of the missionaries I know, and anyone who has served God outside of their comfort zone, have one thing in common. They may have been apprehensive at stepping out into something new, but they had at least one person who trusted and supported them.

4. There is a high commitment to serve

When people know they are trusted, they are more willing to commit to serving. In an environment of distrust, everything you do is carefully monitored, decision making is limited, and creativity is suppressed. No one enjoys serving in an environment where every decision needs to be approved by five different people, and where someone is watching over your shoulder 24/7.

5. There is a high level of productivity

When there is a high level of trust, people naturally achieve much more. Trust is not the only issue that affects productivity, but I believe it is one of the biggest factors. If people trust each other to do their jobs, whether it involves a safety check, a phone call, or scheduling an appointment, it's much easier for them to focus on their own task instead of worrying about others.

6. Everyone honours one another

The bible instructs us to honour one another. One of the keys to honour is trust. In a culture of distrust, people pull each other down in order to justify their own importance. In a culture of trust, leaders don't need to seek honour, they are given honour because they have supported, cared for, and believed in the people they serve. Honour should always be based on a relationship of trust, and never obligation.

7. Bridges of friendship are created and groups work together

Division within the body of Christ is created from a lack of trust. When groups trust each other, they are happy to share resources and time to assist one another. When groups focus on common goals and have a desire to work together, it is possible to achieve much more than any of them could achieve alone. Everyone benefits from long term trusting relationships.

8. Members actively seek ways to learn from one another

It's much easier to learn from someone that you trust. When people don't trust each other, the levels of conversation are very shallow. When the level of trust grows, people share more freely allowing everyone to learn from each other's personal experiences. In an environment of trust, churches seek ways to bring people together to build

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12 Signs that your Church has a Culture of Trust (...continued)

relationships and facilitate learning.

9. Members are transparent and accountable to each other

Accountability is based on trust. When people trust each other, they can be transparent and share honestly with each other. In an environment of trust, people don't hide their true feelings, they share them. In an environment of trust, people can share their mistakes and weaknesses, and in return they can receive the support and encourage they need to grow in their personal life.

10. Members can share their concerns and issues are addressed

An environment of trust allows everyone to share their concerns. Too often people are afraid to speak up and question the way something is done, or raise contentious issues. In Acts chapter 6, the Apostles responded to a report that Grecian widows were being neglected. In a culture of distrust, issues are swept under the carpet.

11. Members share their ideas freely

In an environment of trust, people are more willing to share their ideas. Even if the idea is not suitable, people know they are appreciated for their input. An environment of trust is always buzzing with excitement as people share ideas and work together. I wonder how many creative ideas have experienced a silent death because members knew that no one would seriously listen to them.

12. Members are equipped and promoted

One of the most distinctive signs of a culture of trust is the promotion of members. The Apostle Paul released Timothy into the role of an overseer, even though Timothy was still considered very young. A culture of trust supports and releases people to serve in order to facilitate multiplication. In a culture of distrust, leaders protect their roles, and withhold opportunities for others to grow.

Can you identify any of the signs in your church? What are some things your church does to enhance trust among members? Are there any other points you would add to this list? The framework has suggested methods to enhance trust which we are confident you will reap tremendous rewards. We cannot live in fear. But building a culture of honour is paramount.

Peter Sewell has over 25 years of ministry experience, training church leadership teams, business and government leaders, and community groups. He is a passionate supporter of the local church and served as an associate pastor for 15 years. During this time he was involved in planting new churches, and coordinating cell groups, pastoral care, and discipleship. He has qualifications in biblical studies, business, counselling, coaching, and adult education, and is currently involved in training future leaders across Europe.

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Love, Actually

By Andre Van Eymeren

The opening scene of the Hugh Grant, smash hit, Love Actually depicts the arrival gate at Heathrow Airport. It could have been any airport in the world as the scene is much the same. Loved ones welcoming home travellers with a huge hug and a kiss. Weary travellers relieved to see family and friends and to be on home soil once again. The long absence over, the heart full once again because of the sweet connection between people.

This kind of love is depicted again and again throughout the Scriptures, Abraham and Sara, Jacob and Rebecca, we see it played out through Solomon's song, Jonathan and David, God to Israel, the Psalmist to God, the waiting Father to the prodigal son, Jesus to the world, the call to love each other, the example of the early church and so on. Love is the cornerstone of our faith and perhaps the greatest gift we can give to the world.

If this is true and we have been called to be bearers of a great love, the ones who are loved in order that we may go and love, then what is the nature of the gift we bear? How are we to express it? How do we so let it embody us that every response we make, every action we consider taking is permeated by love? Whilst this is aspirational I wouldn't blame you if you put your hands up in the air in frustration, saying 'it's too hard, how are we to do this?' The difficulty of this task is overwhelming, and it should be.

How are we to love others when they are fundamentally and vehemently opposed to the things we hold dear? Or when we are frightened by the things we see depicted in the media? What is the nature of the love we are to show? How are we even to love our family, when they interrupt the things we see as so important?

A few years ago Andrew Denton released a documentary called God on My Side he told the story of a conference of American Christian Broadcasters. I remember at the time there was a fair bit of cynicism from the Christian community about the documentary. For those who don't know. Andrew is known for his sharp wit and the put down is never far away. Despite all of this he is very intelligent and very thoughtful. I found the documentary both enlightening and disturbing. It was a very respectful look at the Christian broadcasting culture, however it also depicted the extreme end. At this end of the spectrum producers were making shows that welcomed the clash of cultures, including the loss of life, evidenced by the Gulf War. The belief was that a war of this kind would bring on the return of Christ and so was to be eagerly anticipated, and supported.

The hallmark of our religion which should have been front and centre, in a conference of this sort was notably missed by someone who doesn't share our faith. Ouch!

I was privileged enough to witness a Q&A with Andrew after the screening. One of the things that has stayed with me even years later was a simple comment Andrew made about love. In the credits he put the quote from John, 'they'll know you by the love you have for each other.' Someone asked him about the quote and he stated that as he looked around the displays and heard people's stories, he noticed that it was missing. The hallmark of our religion which should have been front and centre, in a conference of this sort was notably missed by someone who doesn't share our faith. Ouch!

I use to work with Fusion Australia, one of our passions was helping the church in a community work together to put on a festival that moved it beyond the walls and welcomed and embraced that community with free food, family games and entertainment. The whole festival pointed to the invitational nature of our faith. In training churches for this type of outreach, we often quoted Elias Cannetti. He wrote a book about crowds and power, in it he talks about the proof of God. He says that the proof of God's existence is not a logical proof or illogical one, if you know maths, but a social proof. He believed and I think he's right that if there was a crowd that gathered and there was love at the heart of that social system, then the divine would be proven without the use of words. And there are certainly countless stories of how this type of connection with the community drew people closer to Christ.

So how are we to love? What does it look like, particularly in the face of some of the ethical challenges we see today? We could name some of them, same sex marriage, asylum seekers, Muslims, homelessness, poverty in general, drug addiction, secular humanism, forced closures of Indigenous communities and so on. Quite often we mistake love for a staunch utterance of what we believe the gospel is saying about a certain issue. How have we got to a point in our faith that we believe love is embodied by shouting at someone across a barricade, or writing a disrespectful response on social media?

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* The drivers of society borrowed from Dr David Wilson, developed through his work with Sophia Think Tank <http://goo.gl/tNHjjl>

Love, Actually (...continued)

Somehow it appears, we have equated love for the other with a verbal barrage of what we consider to be the truth.

Somehow it appears, we have equated love for the other with a verbal barrage of what we consider to be the truth.

Love is inherently relational, it yearns for deep connection, to understand the other and to speak hope and life, not condemnation. Earlier I pointed out that radical love of the other can seem impossible, that we can raise our hands in frustration and say we can't do it. And that is right, because true love demands death, it demands that we sacrifice our ego, that we sacrifice our personal claim to be right and ultimately with Christ on the cross we put to death anything that would cause us to react out of hate, anger or fear.

Andre is an experienced community development consultant, trainer and practitioner. Over the past 20 years he has been part of building community from the inside. This has seen him and his family live and work in marginalised and hurting communities in South Australia and Victoria. Added to this Andre has been involved in projects across Australia, working extensively with local councils, schools, faith groups and the not for profit sector. He holds an undergraduate in Ministry and an MA focused on faith and community development.

WATCHMEN SCHOOL OF INTERCESSION

The **Australian Prayer Network** has established a Watchmen School of Intercession for the purpose of training up Christians in how to pray for our Nation and the Nations of the world as well as for the Church in Australia and beyond.

The School begins with a Foundational Course spread over 6 sessions which is usually held as a 2 day intensive. This course is suitable for both experienced prayers and/or those wanting to simply know more about the discipline of prayer and how it relates beyond our personal relationship with God, as a tool that God uses to change the world around us.

The topics of the Foundational Course are:

- Session 1 - How prayer works**
- Session 2 - Intercession – a lifestyle that changes your world**
- Session 3 - Understanding the spiritual DNA of your community**
- Session 4 - Spiritual Authority the key to spiritual breakthrough**
- Session 5 - Principals of small group leadership and participation**
- Session 6 - How to hear God's voice**

The course is being made available to Churches, other Christian ministries and established prayer groups/networks across Australia. There is no cost for the Course although we ask that a free will offering towards the ministry of the Australian Prayer Network be allowed to be taken at each School held.

After completion of the Foundational Course participants, should they so choose, will be able to undertake further Intermediate and Advanced courses which will be offered over the following two years. Each of those courses will also be of 6 to 8 sessions duration. Whereas the Foundational Courses will be held locally, the Intermediate and Advanced courses will be centralised to State and National level to enable participants to learn with other praying people from across their State and the nation as a whole.

Local Pastors or other ministry leaders who would like to host a Foundation Level Course should make contact with us to discuss your needs and how we may be able to assist in meeting these needs.

Yours in Christ,

Brian Pickering, National Coordinator, Australian Prayer Network - prayer@bigpond.net.au

CHILD, ARISE!

The Courage to Stand

A Spiritual Handbook for Survivors of Sexual Abuse

JANE N. DOWLING

Foreword by Fr David Ranson

ISBN 9781-86355-153-3

“One of the most important books to have been written in a time of intense scrutiny and dark and disturbing exposure for the church. It is an account of personal courage and gracious spirit, and a story of remarkable faith. It is a book full of invitation, of possibility and of hope.”

Rev Dr David Ranson, Senior Lecturer, Sydney College of Divinity

“My journey from childhood to maturity, through being an altar boy, the shame of sexual abuse, to the seminary, then nursing with disabled children, marriage and fatherhood, to legal practice and finally my present life’s work as an advocate for other survivors would not have been possible without my mentors: people who shared their wisdom distilled from the pain and joy of life and who showed me courage in the face of pain. I share a vision that no one should journey in sorrow without hope. ‘Child Arise!’ offers hope: it lifts the shame of child sexual abuse from ‘victims’ and presents practical encouragement for ways to access light, vitality and insight in the darkest of times, when suffering seems unending.” John Ellis, lawyer and survivor

“As a lawyer and psychotherapist advocating for sufferers of childhood sexual abuse, I was delighted with the reflectivity encouraged by this beautiful book. An emerging capacity for reflection is integral to trauma recovery. ‘Child Arise!’ uses biblical language to anchor reflection and yet its genesis in lived experience renders it potentially useful even to those whose faith has been devastated by abuse by clergy.”

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“This spiritual handbook is welcome, constructive and unique. Here we have a broad range of specifically chosen, biblically based, powerful prayerful reflections enabling the survivor, of any age and circumstance, to tap into their spiritual selves, perhaps long muted.”

Dr Jennifer Herrick, sexual abuse survivor and theological scholar

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Bishop Geoffrey Robinson,

author of For Christ’s Sake: End Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church ... for Good (2013)

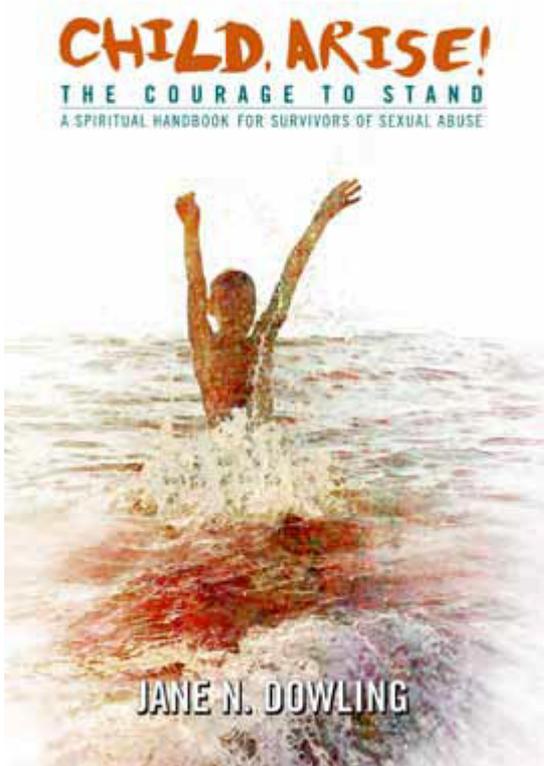
This practical handbook invites the reader to embark on a journey of healing by taking a guided walk through the Scriptures where they will learn to listen to their personal story narrated by a loving God. As this transforming journey unfolds, the reader will be amazed as they discover the presence of an all-loving and compassionate God who walks with them and extends a healing hand. It is a practical handbook that also offers insight to spiritual and pastoral care workers accompanying survivors of sexual abuse, family and friends and other supporters. Interwoven within the scriptural reflections is the story of the author’s own journey from trauma to healing. It is a powerful and moving narrative that serves as a model for other survivors.

The Author

Jane Dowling has spent twenty-two years as a consecrated member of an international Catholic missionary community facilitating retreats and providing guidance on how to pray with the Scriptures. As a survivor of sexual abuse, she experienced the transformative power of God’s word in her own healing journey. Witnessing this transformation in others prompted her to write this book. In late 2012, she appeared before the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. ‘My decision to tell my story to the Royal Commission’, she says, ‘not only initiated a personal journey of deeper healing but also provided the raw material for God to work with and what I needed to begin writing this book.’

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FAITH

When faith dies we stop hoping. We stop trying. We stop having dreams and visions. We stop living. Dying faith says; "I give up".

Faith is not easy to understand and for many not easy to attain BUT Jesus said little children have it. We all have faith, but not all have faith in the God of heaven.

We can have faith in our abilities, money and power to achieve our desired outcome or we can look to God.

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God." (Psalm 20:7)

FAITH LOOKS UP – IT'S NOT ABOUT US BUT HIM

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1 KJV)

"Now faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see." (JB Phillips)

"The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living." (Message Bible)

How can we be certain of the things we hope for?

How can we be certain of the thing we cannot see?

There can be false faith and false hope. Faith and hope (and by the way Love) can be false and selfish. True faith does not start with what I want, but with what God wants and says. When I let go of my wants and ME and start looking to God – a great burden – a great LIE is lifted off my shoulders.

"True faith is simply the recognition of the One in whom we believe. ... True faith is the ability to see eternity, an ability that delivers us from the cares and worries of this world which are passing away." (Rick Joyner)

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Only after we get a better view of God do we get a better faith. People have so little faith because we see so little of God. Get a better picture & get a better faith.

We therefore need a better revelation of God. We need Him to be revealed.

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of

his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." (Ephesians 1:17-19)

We can get a better revelation of God through;

- Hearing (Romans 10:17) - *"faith comes by hearing"*
- Reading (2 Timothy 3:16) - *"All scripture is inspired by God"*
- Seeking (Acts 17:27) - *"He is never far from any one of us"*
- Impartation (Romans 1:11) - *"I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong"*

FAITH = PATIENCE

Remember the "faith movement"? Why was there not a "patience movement"? Faith and patience CANNOT be separated.

"We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.... And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised." (Hebrews 6:12,15) Faith is tenacious – it hangs on – it does not stop – it will not let go

We can become lazy, weary, punch drunk and give up

Many of us have realized that we do not have faith in the systems of the world and hence have no other hope but a greater faith in God. We will focus on this saving God and not the storm. We will hang in there and pray continually. We will be concerned for nothing

Faith sees the Kingdom Come and dares to believe that God is able.

If you want to phone our intercessors you are more than welcome. Please phone +27 82 9309 889 (South Africa).

You can also visit our website at: www.gebednet.com and complete the online form {Guest Book}.

Our daily devotions can also be read at www.deivalentemission.blogspot.com

Please read the devotions and you are more than welcome to leave comments at the bottom of every devotion.

Our now-prayer for you is that the supernatural will take place in your situation and that your request will be met by God's grace - God's ability!

We, together with you, give thanks to our Father for the finished work of Jesus Christ, which includes salvation, deliverance, healing, prosperity and immortal life.

Love, peace and joy

On behalf of the Prayer Net Team

Pastor Johan Lourens.

Change Your Business Mindset

By Peter Irvine

Mindsets - “You can’t do that....!”

In life and in business people will tell you what you can and can’t do.

It seems there are those with limited mindsets all around us and we can easily fall into the trap of going with the flow

‘It’s too hard!’ or

‘It hasn’t been done this way before’

.... Therefore it can’t!

These people are revealing their own limited thinking, or they may be operating from their own comfort zone. Their small mindsets haven’t been stretched or enlarged. So when you decide to do something different or risky, like launch a product, add another retail store, change a service, or establish a larger vision, you’ll find at least ten percent of people will either oppose you or disagree with you. In fact Robert Kennedy said

“One-fifth of the people are against everything all the time.”

Far better to have the type of mind that looks at what can be done.

“We just keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.” Walt Disney

“Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.” Isaiah 54:11

Here are a few examples of negative mindsets I’ve run into over the years, they might trigger some recognition as you read.

COMPETITOR MINDSETS

People with a mindset that focuses on the competition around them end up constantly comparing themselves, worrying about how they will keep up or keep their market share. In retail, in the service industry, even manufacturing and production areas. Constant worry about losing customers or sales to another company instead of moving ahead with focus on what will build business (Churches too can be guilty of this!).

Focus on competitors will cause you to:

- ◆ **Copy each other’s ideas** - watch how quickly retailers copy sales ideas with similar ones of their own.
- ◆ **Copy each other’s advertising strategies** (even the ones that don’t work!)
- ◆ **Lose your point of difference** – the very things that set you apart in the market
- ◆ **Lose direction & move away from your own vision**

Learn to be a leader in your arena and let everyone follow you.

MEDIA MINDSETS

The media always wants to generate stories with attention-grabbing headlines. You can present the facts to reporters and they can still publish or broadcast stories that are totally different. To them, contradiction and controversy are what make great stories, sells magazines and newspapers, and attracts viewers or listeners.

I heard some months ago now, that print & TV media in the UK were in dire economic straits. It seems no-one was buying advertising during the economic downturn! What a surprise! These same media had been publishing economic doom and gloom for months and now were reaping the rewards – people believed their bad news and stopped advertising!

- ◆ **Learn to find and celebrate the good news.** There are some great success stories still being published.
- ◆ **Stop reading or listening to negative media reports.**
- ◆ **Get some positive input.** Meet with positive people, read & listen to encouraging material.
- ◆ **Feed your spirit.** Don’t just rely on external things to keep you motivated, build yourself up on the inside.

Make sure your faith relates to your life and builds you up - giving hope rather than bad news.

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES MINDSETS:

There are so many people close to you who will tell you what you can’t do. They have mindsets about you and your business (or your Church involvement) which often don’t line up with your own vision in life.

“Criticism is the death gargle of non-achievers” Pastor Jensen Franklin

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Change Your Business Mindset (...continued)

When we purchased the international rights and supply for the Gloria Jean's Coffees brand in 2005, some of the comments we received were:

“You can't run that from Australia!”

“What about the different cultures and customs?”

“What about the languages?”

“What about the distance?”

“How are you going to supervise it?”

“How are you going to protect your brand?”

“What about government regulations?”

All these comments and cautions were valid. They were right that the risks were very high. But we went ahead and did it anyway, despite the mindsets. We have been able to open Gloria Jean's Coffees in more than thirty-nine countries at current count. We have a brand that is growing internationally. We have done all the things we were told we couldn't do. Yes, there are issues and there are obstacles. Yes, there are mountains to climb. But it's the same in every business and in every situation. Watch out for any family, friends and business associate mindsets that tell you what cannot be done.

- ◆ **Face the challenges step by step.** There is always an element of truth in these mindsets but they can be overcome.
- ◆ **Don't be impatient.** One of my failings is that I like things to happen 'Now!' I am still learning to take time to get things right.
- ◆ **Don't let these mindsets to steal your dream or destroy your relationships.** These are people who care about you, however haven't done what you are doing. Do your best to bring them on the journey.

“Faced with the choice between changing one's mind and proving that there is no need to do so, almost everybody gets busy on the proof” John Kenneth Galbraith

LEGALISTIC MINDSETS

Mindsets that are inflexible and see only the letter of the law rather than the big picture.

I have often had experience with people on committees who cannot agree - some are solution-minded and don't always obey the letter of the law, the others are upset when things are not done by the book. The former get things done, the latter spend all their time writing emails, criticising and generally getting nowhere (although appearing to be actively involved).

In the legal area itself - some lawyers have the mindset that certain situations can only be dealt with by legal action. Far better to avoid this wherever possible.

In the financial arena - there are accountants who don't think beyond what they have always known.

There is no question we need both accountants and lawyers, they are essential in business today, however we need to:

- ◆ **Be pro-active in your dealings with them** – looking to the best solutions long term for our businesses.
- ◆ **Make sure we get the 'Right' financial or legal advisor** – one who has had real experience in the particular area needed.
- ◆ **Ask for input then make the decision.** Ultimately legal or financial advisors can only advise & point out the pitfalls.

'EVERYONE'S DOING IT' MINDSET

Who is 'everyone'?

Your child will ask you for an expensive toy or game. Why? You ask. Because everyone's got one! Who is everyone? It usually turns out to be one or two at the most.

In business we sometimes introduce products or services because 'everyone's doing it'.

Be careful you are not dragged off course, away from your vision and mission by things that may not be relevant or necessary.

Ask:

- ◆ **Is it relevant for my business?**
- ◆ **Does it fit with our Vision/Mission?**

(continued next page)

Change Your Business Mindset (...continued)

- ◆ Is it actually working for others?
- ◆ Are we innovating or just copying?

'IF IT'S NOT BROKE DON'T FIX IT' MINDSET

Nothing stays the same in life or in business.

To be a leader, to grow and expand, you need to be innovating, improving and moving forward.

I advise many companies in developing their business plans. One of the questions I ask is

Where do you want to be in three years?

- ◆ Sell?
- ◆ Grow by 10%
- ◆ 20%
- ◆ 100%?

The only non-acceptable option is to stay where you are. *Why?*

Because if you stay the same your business will stall, costs will continue to increase, customers will lose interest and leave – your business will eventually fail.

The same thing will happen in your relationships and your life if you are not moving forward.

'I HAVE EVERYTHING I NEED' MINDSET:

Do you find yourself saying, "I have enough to do what I want, pay the bills, educate the kids, feed the family, why do I need more?" Think for a minute – this could be a selfish attitude! Maybe you could generate more, be able to give towards those in need, generate more jobs, help your local community. Nowhere does God say He wants our businesses to fail, our churches to fail or our relationships to fail. He wants us to grow in our relationships, our faith and every aspect of life.

"... I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers." 3 John 1:2

When you decide to do something – and, after much consideration you are convinced this is the way forward. Don't be surprised at the mindsets you will have to confront, and often within your own organisation!

The Way Forward

- ◆ **Set the course:** My wife & I discuss each year the vision for our relationship, family, church involvement, and business. We don't seek other people's mindsets but what we believe God wants in these areas.
- ◆ **Mix with positive people:** Those with a 'Can Do' attitude. Stay away from negative, bottom of the pile thinkers, don't let them influence your decisions.
- ◆ **Understand that problems:** obstacles and difficulties will always come. As we resolve each one, we grow, and our businesses, relationships and lives improve as a result.
- ◆ **Be prepared to face the negative attitudes positively:** Be excited by the possibilities of life (view the alarm clock as an opportunity clock).
- ◆ **Learn to bring people on the journey:** Make the time to encourage and inspire (it doesn't just happen in a busy schedule).
- ◆ **Demonstrate problem-solving ideas & give your people the freedom to work through their own solutions.** They will grow and the business will improve as a result.
- ◆ **There will be some who will not make the journey with you.** Don't be discouraged, or judgemental, simply give them the grace to move on.
- ◆ **Be aware that you too will have mindsets on some things:** be honest with yourself and prepared to change.

Stop and Change When Necessary

One of my favourite sayings is: **"If the horse is dead, dismount"**

There are people in business and life everywhere who find it hard to recognise when the horse is dead! The current economic market either stalls companies or they make changes. This is a great time to market differently or stand out in a different way. I have experienced many difficult times but have seen the businesses that make changes succeed, then grow and accelerate in the good times that eventually follow.

People have asked **'HOW DO I KNOW WHETHER TO PERSIST OR STOP AND CHANGE?'**

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Change Your Business Mindset (...continued)

Check your original Vision and purpose

If your original vision is the right one, don't throw it out - look at what you are actually *doing* to fulfil that vision.

The purpose does not change, however the methods we use do. In advertising when a retail promotion for McDonalds did not work we did not persevere we made changes and moved on, the character of McDonald's family restaurants did not change, just the one promotion.

Change is inevitable - so GET USED TO IT!

If you want to build anything to last - a business, a strong family, a company department, a powerful life-testimony – it will need room to grow, to change and evolve in the process. If you don't change your work practices as you grow – e.g. if you keep the same products and packaging, the same programs or services without variation, stifle people in their jobs by not allowing them to grow and develop, then things will either stagnate and die, you will lose customers, or you will lose your most promising staff to other businesses where they can grow.

If you want a bigger business, you will need to look at constant ways to change and improve, nothing stays the same forever

See change as your friend

A sign we saw recently on a local church read “*You can't control the wind but you have to adjust the sails*”

Don't be afraid to do things differently, change can be challenging at first but it's also exciting, it brings freshness and life.

- ◆ Look positively at what is working in your business and what is not. Are the things you are currently doing fulfilling the vision and purpose originally set?
- ◆ Are they working but need some adjustments – could they be better?
- ◆ Are there things you are not currently doing that should be explored?
- ◆ What about your staff or team members – do they have insights and suggestions that need to be actioned?
- ◆ Are there creative ‘One Off’ ideas to try for short periods to gain momentum?

Develop a culture of change

If the business has operated for some time without innovation and development it becomes difficult to introduce anything new or kill off anything that isn't productive. People become very protective of their jobs.

How do you develop a culture of change – one where people are not threatened?

- ◆ Inspire the team - make sure your team are on board with the vision and purpose.
- ◆ Keep them up-to-date with progress.
- ◆ Get them involved in working out better ways to do things.
- ◆ There are changes that just HAVE to be made where individual staff are creating morale issues.
- ◆ Introduce changes needed over a period of time, and structure your business so that it can grow and change with minimal disruption.
- ◆ Get people used to the fact that there will be constant change in order to see the vision and purpose achieved.
- ◆ Celebrate –enjoy the journey!

There are times you will need to draw a line in the sand and start afresh. If you try to band-aid over or skirt the problems they will get worse.

Don't change for change's sake

Not *everything* has to be changed. Beware of throwing out your purpose and direction for the sake of innovation.

Look critically at your business or organization –

- ◆ Are you doing too many things?
- ◆ Are there areas that need to be axed?
- ◆ Do you need to re-launch an area?
- ◆ Or simply have a cosmetic change – eg. design work or the décor of the reception area.
- ◆ Is there need for specific staff training?

Whatever the innovations make sure they are moving you in the right direction for your life and business.

Be Flexible

In business - be flexible – as things change learn to respond quickly

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Change Your Business Mindset (...continued)

DO YOU DITCH THE PLAN?

NO – you *need* an actionable business plan, but within that plan there will be room to change and adapt. Technology is always changing, social or media issues arise and new products become available all the time. Today's customers look for 'What's in it for me?' - this all effects how we market and do business.

LET'S LOOK AT SOME EXAMPLES

New technology

1. Seen in a recent newspaper article: **A North Sydney restaurant has become Australia's first to replace printed menus with Apple iPads.** Diners can see what each dish looks like, along with tasting notes, specify how they want the meat cooked, which sauce they prefer and are given suggestions on wines to go with each dish. The app can also keep track of stock levels so if certain dishes sell out they automatically disappear from the on-screen menu.

What a great idea – just watch just how quickly this becomes commonplace!

2. Word of Mouth: **A local Discount Pharmacy (Drug Store) take the details of your script and texts you when a repeat is due,** asking if you want it filled. Being a stand-alone store this helps them generate store traffic and repeat business (it also helps forgetful customers!)

Training

The legendary story of former IBM chairman Tom Watson looks at training as more than theory. A company employee made a \$100,000 mistake. The man's confidence clearly knocked, led him to offer his resignation. Watson replied: "Are you kidding? We just spent \$100,000 on your training". Which is more effective, the school of hard knocks or learning theory up front? We need to be flexible with our team, allow them to make a few mistakes rather than micro-managing.

Don't stay small

There's a certain species of fish that when you place them in a tiny aquarium, they stay small. However if you place that same fish in a large body of water, it will grow to its intended size. You and I are the same. If our thinking is influenced by an environment that's limited and small, we will stay small. If we get around people who think big, dream big and plan big then we will grow to our intended size.

IT'S TIME TO EXPAND YOUR THINKING

When times are difficult, it's the wrong time to bunker down, stop growing and marketing, lay low and wait until it passes. This is the time to expand your thinking – look for creative ways to go forward. I find tough times bring out the best ideas and the most innovative thinking. These are the times to learn and grow, to look for new solutions.

PUT YOURSELF IN THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

The book of Proverbs says

"Become wise by walking with the wise; hang out with fools and watch your life fall to pieces." Proverbs 13:20

You can complain that you don't have "wise" people to walk with, however there is a wealth of wisdom to tap into. Put yourself into the right environment by tapping into resources from people like John Maxwell or reading about people like Bill Gates, Jim Collins, Steve Jobs, Joyce Meyer and others who inspire you. You may never personally meet them, but you can decide to spend time listening to CDs in the car, reading or researching online.

TIPS

- ◆ Start a small group of people who will stretch and enlarge you – study a good leadership book together
- ◆ Don't allow negative people to drain you – limit their influence over you
- ◆ Balance what you hear, read and watch in the mass media – it can influence you in the wrong direction. The principle of sowing and reaping applies to what you watch, listen to and read. If it is consistently negative, that's how you will think and act.
- ◆ Get a coach or mentor who will encourage you. Even a good, positive friend who can do the same
- ◆ Look for short events and courses that will expand your thinking

DON'T STAY WHERE YOU ARE

Now is the time to grow - to learn, plan, innovate and break away from limited thinking and mindsets.

Peter Irvine

www.peterirvine.com

Peter is Co-Founder of Gloria Jean's Coffees Australia, author of 'Win In Business' and 'Building your Business, your People, your Life' and keynote speaker.

Redfern Prayer

Pastor Ray Minniecon wrote a prayer in 2009 which became known as the 'Redfern Prayer'.

God of our Dreaming. Father our all Aboriginal nations in Australia.
You have lived among us since time immemorial.
We have always known You.
You gave this land to our Aboriginal nations.
You have not dispossessed us nor destroyed us.

People from other lands, who do not understand our unique culture, our unique lifestyle and our unique heritage have come and destroyed much of our way of life.
Many of these people from other lands now want to understand and reconcile with us.

But for many of us Aboriginal people, we find this reconciliation business a little difficult.

Too many of our children are still in jails.

Too many of our children are still living in sub-standard housing.

Too many of our mothers are living on the streets or in refuges.

Too many of our children are still uneducated.

Too many of our children have no land and no community to go back to.

Too many of our children have not got good opportunities for good employment.

Too many of our children are living in extremely unhealthy environments.

Too many of our children are living among violence and abuse.

Too many of our children are dying to drugs and other soul-destroying substances.

God our Dreaming and Creator of our people, we sometimes feel overwhelmed by these things. Many of us feel like we are refugees in our own land.

Today we are coming together again on one of our battlegrounds to cry out to You for mercy and justice for our children, for our families and for our land.

We pray that more resources will be given to our local community organizations to help us grow healthy and strong.

We pray that the peoples from other lands will be given a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone so that they can understand us and support us properly.

We pray that your Spirit will help and encourage us to grow good strong Aboriginal leaders.

Father we want to grow strong and healthy again in our own land.

We want to take our rightful place in our land and make our contribution to the re-building of our families, our communities and our nation.

Please hear our cries for justice. We ask these mercies in the name of Your Son.

Amen.

[Source: www.CreativeSpirits.info, Aboriginal culture - Spirituality - Redfern prayer, retrieved 25 June 2015]

The Children in Prayer Movement: Raising up Men and Women of God who will Transform our World

By John Robb (2015)

The Lord has always sought to engage with children throughout history, calling them at a young age to serve His purposes as mighty men and women of God. Children have often figured in the moves of His Spirit in both revival and mission from Biblical to contemporary times. As if to accentuate the importance of children in His global mission, the Children in Prayer movement (CiP) arose in its modern form and has spread to many nations around the world. This began with Esther Inisky, a pastors' wife and mother who started the Children's Global Prayer Movement in 1989. Jane Mackie later got involved and started an Australian version of this movement and then began doing training of children in prayer internationally. Jane was part of our international CiP network in the International Prayer Council for some years.



This expanding international network is still affiliated with the IPC and is now under the leadership of Tety Irwan and Irma Chon, two women pastors with a deep heart for the equipping of children internationally. They coordinate a team of CiP leaders that brought together over 500 children from around the world for the World Prayer Assembly in 2012 and have continued to train hundreds of Christian workers to develop CiP in various nations, praise the Lord.

It was Esther Inisky who brought together 50 youth and child intercessors for GCOWE in 1995 in Korea at the invitation of Luis Bush and Peter Wagner, colleagues of mine in the AD2000 and Beyond Movement. About 4000 adult participants had the pleasant wake-up experience of watching these child intercessors, with their mature sensitivity to the Spirit, pray their powerful prayers for our world. For example, the Ebola outbreak in the Congo stopped abruptly after the Spirit showed one of them the shape of the organism and they prayed accordingly. Some of us in the mission movement began to tumble to the fact that children were important ministry partners who should not be ignored or just be kept in Sunday School.

It was not until 2002, after ten years of discovering the power of transformational prayer in many national prayer initiatives in the midst of war and other difficult conditions, that I began to wake up to the importance of including children in such initiatives. Slow learner!

It was through reading Luke 10:18-21 about the awesome spiritual authority God has revealed to "little children" (of course including childlike adults too) that I began to put two and two together about including the children in the international and national prayer initiatives in which we were involved.

Jesus' words about "becoming like a child" to see or enter His Kingdom and that the greatest are those who humble themselves like little children also convinced me we should ask World Vision national offices and other Christian organizations to invite children to participate in these initiatives wherever possible. It was always moving, and many times we witnessed church and even political leaders weeping after the kids prayed for them and for their nation.

The same has happened in the United Nations with three international prayer initiatives involving ambassadors and UN staff. Last time, in 2013, the former ambassador of one Middle Eastern nation told some of the Arab participants that his life has never been the same since a child prayed for him during one of the preceding initiatives. He is now in a high UN position in Africa.

In 2002, some World Vision colleagues of mine agreed with me that we ought to undertake a survey in five of World Vision's national offices to discover the impact of children's prayers on the development process in poor communities. The staff came back within a year raving about all the miracles of transformation they were witnessing, both personal, familial and infrastructural, and asked if they could extend this project for another year. We had a consultation in Kenya in order to hear all the results which were just amazing- miracle after miracle- community splits reconciled, parents healed from terminal illness, community leaders and parents coming to Christ, clinics and wells brought in by the government's decision to put them where the children were praying! Terrorists in one country were kept from coming into the area where the kids were praying!



(continued next page)

The Children in Prayer Movement (...continued)

Without any hyping, word of all of this spread like a ground fire to 20 other national offices who adopted CiP as a model for spiritual nurture within their development programs and began to see similar wonders of God through the prayers of the children.

By 2006-2007, fifty of World Vision's national offices wanted to learn how to adopt CiP into their programming. The general feeling was one of great enthusiasm and excitement, not only because of the transformational impact our staff were seeing, but also because they knew they were nurturing a new generation of men and women of God, a sacred trust while we had the children in our programs.

Of course, such a move of the Spirit among children has sometimes been challenged by imperceptive adults who do not understand how God can use little ones, yet He has done so over and over again both in Scripture and the history of revival. For example, after Hannah dedicated Samuel, taking him from kindergarten to the Tabernacle, he became available to the Lord through intimacy in prayer for a lifetime of powerful ministry as prophet, priest and judge. Israel's enemies were defeated and the nation was transformed by his leadership for 40 years.

John Wesley, the great English revivalist of the 18th century, had a team of three to five year old kids who supported him and his mass evangelism efforts with passionate prayer accompanied by tears. Those who object to CiP usually don't believe that God can use little ones because they have no direct, personal experience of seeing the kids pray and the wonderful impacts that can result. Or, they may be controlled by a rationalistic paradigm that does not understand or welcome the supernatural presence and power of God's Spirit. Some others fear that we have manipulated the children by including them as partners in ministry through the CiP movement.

My colleagues and I who have been part of CiP have never sought to tell the children how to pray or to teach them adult methods of prayer. On the contrary, we urge them to just open up to God and pray as He leads them from their hearts- as naturally as breathing- in simplicity and faith. During those early years after 2002, we produced four videos (still great resources for giving people the vision) that are now on the IPC website at www.ipcprayer.org. These videos describe some of what the Spirit is doing within the international CiP movement and enable anyone to see how children take to prayer so naturally and powerfully. These videos have helped skeptical adults to understand more clearly and have helped to defuse criticism of this growing movement.

One of these videos, *From Trash to Treasure*, describes the amazing ministry of the Royal Kids, approximately 8000 children who are either orphans or come from very poor families in India. The founder of this ministry, Father Anton Cruz, along with his team of teachers and helpers have enabled these kids to get a good education in order to rise out of poverty. They have also effectively nurtured the children to become life-long intercessors who pray each day for the nations of the world and run a weekly TV program that reaches 2 million viewers. It is instructive to see how God can transform and use even the poorest and weakest children to become mighty instruments in His hands that even affect the nations of our world.

Some fear that CiP will get out of hand (that is out of adult control). In every case I have witnessed, the children have always been a great blessing to the adults and one another. They never get out of control, but are both modest and refreshingly open to the Lord. Undoubtedly, the evil one wants to exploit such misunderstanding to block the development of CiP with the release of the kids into their spiritual destiny through relating to their Father in prayer. More than anyone else, it is actually Satan who fears the prayers of children, perhaps even more than those of adults. He is simply terrified of them because, in their childlike innocence, they are so close to the Kingdom, and God's powerful workings are often mediated through their simple, faith-filled petitions.

The Children in Prayer movement continues to flow like a partially hidden underground stream, breaking up to the surface from time to time in different nations and international events. May it one day become like a mighty river, impacting all the nations of our world and raising up a whole new generation of men and women of God that He can use to bring Kingdom transformation! Praying children, as one adult so aptly said, are "God's secret weapon".

Following Jesus' example, I believe we adults need to continually bless and pray for the children with whom we come into contact. We should encourage them to relate directly to the Lord in their own unique ways, learning to enjoy the companionship of God for the rest of their lives. In that way, while they are young, they will grow to discern His voice like Samuel. Through such intimacy with the Lord, he received the triple anointing- prophet, priest and judge- through which he played such a formative role in shaping the history of his people Israel. What untapped potential the children around us have to transform the future of our world!

JOHN ROBB is chairman of the International Prayer Council. He is also a member of America's National Prayer Committee.



Daily Prayer Calendar for July - *the Arts*

(Compiled by Lilian Schmid)

The Ministry of Arts in Australia

The Ministry for the Arts develops and administers programs and policies that encourage excellence in art, support for cultural heritage and public access to arts and culture.

The funding and support provided by the Ministry of Arts helps artists and organisations shape the Australia cultural landscape, increase cultural diversity, and inspire, educate and entertain audiences across Australia and around the world. Please uphold all the sections within the Ministry of Arts and meditate on the scripture related to each section:

Day in July

- 1 **Creative industries** have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent. They have the potential to create wealth and jobs through the generation and use of intellectual property. Creative industries can include music, performing arts, film, television, radio, advertising, games and interactive content, writing, publishing, architecture, design, and visual arts. The Ministry for the Arts administers policies and programs to develop creative industries and encourage the cultural sector's engagement in the digital environment.
"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)
- 2 **Cultural diversity** - Australia is a party to the UNESCO Convention that covers cultural diversity. International cultural collaboration provides the opportunity for Australia to take its unique cultural diversity to the world, and also gives local audiences and cultural practitioners access to a diversity of cultural expressions and experiences. Please pray that God protects this area from any corruption and all Art cultures are respected and honoured.
"And he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze." (Exodus 35:31-32)
- 3 **Film & television** - Australia's iconic film and television industry showcases the talents and creativity of our actors, writers, producers, directors and post-production workers. Australian film production is an important contributor to the nation's cultural life and continues to shape and develop Australia's national identity. Please uphold all the people who work in this area in your prayers
"Teach me, LORD, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end." (Psalm 119:33)
- 4 The **Australian Screen Production Incentive** is the Australian Government's primary mechanism of supporting film and television production. It provides generous tax incentives for film, television and other screen production in Australia. Pray that the Government invest wisely into this area.
"Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh." (Romans 13:14)
- 5 **Filming in Australia** - One of the most popular destinations for filmmaking in the world, Australia has an enviable lifestyle, spectacular and diverse locations, well respected and sought after crews and creative talent, exceptional cast and internationally recognised technical facilities, and Oscar winning post-production services. Combined with the economical cost of film production and an established, collaborative network of film agencies committed to assisting producers, means that Australia is a world-class location for filmmaking. Pray that God is glorified in all areas in this above, all these places be holy before the Lord our God
"But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit," (Jude 1:20)
- 6 **Indigenous arts, languages and repatriation** - the Ministry for the Arts administers Australian Government funding that supports Indigenous languages, visual arts and culture.. Please pray that the Government continues to fund this Indigenous Art, asking God to provide everything to keep the heritage of Indigenous people of the land.
"For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly." (Psalms 84:11)
- 7 **Literature** - excellence in literary works by Australian authors warrants rewards, whether through literary prizes or practical steps to ensure writers and publishing houses can thrive. The Ministry for the Arts supports the literature sector's vitality and sustainability in various ways. Please pray for all Australian Authors, Writers, Publishers and everyone who has the gift of Literature that the Lord himself inspire them and be the centre of their creativity. Read the Gospel in John chapter 1.
- 8 **Movable cultural heritage** includes objects that people create or collect and forms an important part of a nation's identity. These objects are known as cultural property and can be artistic, technological, historical or natural in origin. There is increasing trade and exchange of cultural property between nations. This exchange can enhance international appreciation of cultural diversity, but it can also lead to the loss of significant aspects of a

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Daily Prayer Calendar for July - the Arts (...continued)

nation's cultural heritage. Pray that this area is preserved and honoured. Read Psalm 16 and meditate on it.

- 9 **Music** - millions of Australians enjoy listening to music created by local artists and the international success of Australian musicians has made music one of our greatest cultural exports. The Australian Government supports the development of Australia's contemporary music industry through a number of initiatives. Pray for everything and everyone involved in the above list, keep in mind that some music is ungodly and we need to pray hard to bring holiness in the Music domain in Australia. Read Psalm 21 and Meditate on it.
- 10 **Performing Arts** - The Australian Government provides funding and support for Australia's vibrant performing arts sector. Arts training bodies arts.gov.au/about/who-we-support/training-bodies - please pray for each entity. Performing arts training organisations and institutions foster excellence and contribute to Australia's thriving creative economy. The Australian Government provides funding support to these centres of excellence.
"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;" (Psalm 24:1)
- 11 **Regional and touring arts** - Regional Artist Development Fellowships are granted to five individual artists or arts workers and have a focus on professional and creative development and supporting regional artists to develop their professional practice, promote their work nationally and internationally and deliver benefits to their local communities. Please pray for God's guidance on these Fellowships and let Him be in charge of all funds given to these artists.
"For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you." (Isaiah 41:13)
- 12 The Australia Council's **National Regional Programs** support performing arts, music, exhibition touring and arts events at festivals. These programs aim to provide access to the arts and increase audiences throughout Australia, with a particular focus on regional and remote communities. Meditate on Psalm 23 asking God to provide safety and assistance to the initiatives above.
- 13 The **Visual Arts and Craft Strategy** is a Cultural Ministers Council initiative, delivered by the Australian Government in partnership with the states and territories, to support a strong and dynamic visual arts and craft sector. **Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support** provides funding to Indigenous art centres and allied industry organisations, with the objective of building a stronger Indigenous visual arts industry. The **Indigenous Art Code** is an industry-led voluntary code of conduct that guides ethical commerce and provides greater certainty for consumers that the artworks they buy come through ethical processes. Please pray for these initiatives and discern the spirit behind each project – meditate on the Lord's prayer.
- 14 The **Australia Council for the Arts** delivers a broad program of strategic initiatives and partnerships. These strategies are designed to enhance the profiles of artists, develop markets and audiences, and facilitate collaborations and cultural exchanges, nationally and internationally.
"For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. (He never withdraws them when once they are given, and He does not change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call.)" (Romans 11:29)
- 15 **Australian Film Television and Radio School** - committed to producing dynamic, flexible daring and creative practitioners AFTRS is famous for its 'hands-on' practical courses and stellar alumni. AFTRS is Australia's national screen arts and broadcast school and is rated as one of the top Film School's in the world - by The Hollywood Reporter and is the only Australian institution of any kind to make the list!
Educating for creativity specifically for the screen arts and broadcast industry AFTRS is the only institution of its kind in Australia AFTRS students work together under the one roof with industry standard facilities and gear. Please pray and invite Jesus into every section in this school Let God's power move in and out and let this place be transformed for God's glory. Amen.
Pray also for illustration of God's power
"There is no one who calls on Your name, Who arouses himself to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities. But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD, Nor remember iniquity forever; Behold, look now, all of us are Your people." (Isaiah 64:7-9)
- 16 **Bundanon Trust** - supports arts practice and engagement with the arts through its residency, education, exhibition and performance programs. In preserving the natural and cultural heritage of its site Bundanon promotes the value of landscape in our lives. See bundanon.com.au This is an amazing trust please uphold this project in your prayer and all the people involved with this it.
- 17 **Creative Partnerships Australia** - their role is to increase business, philanthropic and social investment in Australia's arts, creative and cultural sectors. Established in 2013 following the merger of Australia Business Arts Foundation (AbaF) and Artsupport, Creative Partnerships Australia changed the landscape of arts funding, launching Australia's first federally-

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Daily Prayer Calendar for July - the Arts (...continued)

funded matched funding program for the Arts, amongst other funding and development programs. See creativepartnershipsaustralia.org.au
Prayer: Psalm 91 for God's protection

- 18 The **National Archives of Australia** can best be described as the memory of our nation – collecting and preserving Australian Government records that reflect our history and identity. As well as preserving the Australian history, the National Archives plays a key role in helping to ensure the Australian Government and its departments are effective and accountable to the people. The archive consists of tens of millions of items, and includes records about immigration, military service, transport, Indigenous Australians, science and the environment and more. See www.naa.gov.au
“Then Solomon said, ‘The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud. I have surely built You a lofty house, A place for Your dwelling forever.’ Then the king faced about and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing.”
(1 Kings 8:12- 14)

Thank you Lord for people who invested time and efforts to create this organisation, we ask the Lord to protect this place and bring true holiness into it. This is a treasure for Australia. Please pray that the National Archives of Australia is a place where God resides and our faith is kept alive.

- 19 The **National Film and Sound Archive of Australia** is the nation's living archive – collecting, preserving and sharing our rich audiovisual heritage. The national collection holds more than 2.16 million works. The NFSA aims to develop a collection that has enduring cultural significance and is internationally recognised as a centre of excellence in active audiovisual preservation.
*“God of creation, all-pow’rful, all-wise,
Lord of the universe, rich with surprise,
Maker, Sustainer, and Ruler of all,
We are your children - you hear when we call.
God of the ages, through time’s troubled years,
You are the one in whom hist’ry coheres;
Nations and empires your purpose fulfill, Moving in
freedom, yet working your will. Amen”*

- 20 **The National Gallery of Australia** - the National Gallery's collection of Australian art reflects its unique national responsibility to present the story of visual art in Australia. The collection includes works by artists from all Australian states and territories and by Australian artists working overseas, as well as works by artists living for a time in Australia, and the work of Indigenous artists from all regions and urban areas of Australia. More info at www.nga.gov.au
The king rejoices in your strength, Lord. How great is his joy in the victories you give! You have granted him

his heart’s desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. You came to greet him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked you for life, and you gave it to him—length of days, for ever and ever. Through the victories you gave, his glory is great; you have bestowed on him splendor and majesty. 6 Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence.
(Psalm 21:1-6) Please pray that God will protect the National Gallery of Australia and raise up Christian Artists to provide and contribute their gifts to the Gallery's work and bring the word of God inside the Gallery. Let Jesus be the author of this place and let your Holy Spirit lead and transform people's lives who work inside the gallery and also touch all the galerie's visitors and Artists.

- 21 **National Library of Australia** - “We cannot understand the present or plan for the future without the knowledge of the past.” Prime Minister Harold Holt, Stone Ceremony March 1966 (www.nla.gov.au/about)
But I say *we don’t need to know what the future holds but we know who holds the future.* Let us pray for the National Library of Australia.
We pray for everyone working in the National Library, we pray for everyone who is doing research in the Library, we pray for everyone who visit the Library, we pray for the board, for all Admin for all resources, all entrances, all connections, all media, all communications, all agreements and policies and everything to do with archives. We ask to expose lies from the National Library and bring the Truth out. Let the bible be the authorised book in the National Library.
“Whenever you pray, say, ‘Father, let your name be sanctified.” (Luke 11:2) *“Jesus said to him: ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.’”* (John 14:6) *“This is the confidence that we have toward him, that, no matter what it is that we ask according to his will, he hears us.”* (1 John 5:14)

- 22 **National Museum of Australia** - the National Museum is a social history museum, exploring the land, nation and people of Australia. The focus is on Indigenous histories and cultures, histories of European settlement and our interaction with the environment.

Let us meditate on Acts 17:25-27

“Nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ...”

All history is in the hands of God alone and He is the

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Daily Prayer Calendar for July - the Arts (...continued)

one who knows the past, the present and the future.

“You alone are the LORD You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them You give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before You.” (Nehemiah 9:6) *“For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being, declares the LORD ‘But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.’”* (Isaiah 66:2) *“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”* (Revelation 4:11)

23 Prayer for Artists across Australia:

Bless the creators, O God of creation, who by their gifts make the world a more joyful and beautiful realm.

Through their labors they teach us to see more clearly the truth around us.

In their inspiration they call forth wonder and awe in our own living.

In their hope and vision they remind us that life is holy.

Bless all who create in your image,

O God of creation.

Pour your Spirit upon them that their hearts may sing and their works be fulfilling.

Amen.

- 24 **Prayer for the Minister of Arts** - Senator the Hon George Brandis QC (appointed 16 September 2013)
Lord, Grant this man your wisdom to walk in Holiness and accept your will in his life, his work and his ministry duties and portfolio, assist him with your daily protection and grace. Give him your revelation to rely on you in every decision he makes with his staff members and fellow colleagues. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen
Scriptures:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.” (Ephesians 1:3-5)

25 Pray against Evil that has entered into the Arts

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; That put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa 5:29).

- 26 From the Lausanne Movement focus on The Arts -

“Truth and the arts in mission”

(at conversation.lausanne.org/en/home/the-arts)

“We possess the gift of creativity because we bear the

image of God. Art in its many forms is an integral part of what we do as humans and can reflect something of the beauty and truth of God. Artists at their best are truth-tellers and so the arts constitute one important way in which we can speak the truth of the gospel. Drama, dance, story, music and visual image can be expressions both of the reality of our brokenness, and of the hope that is centred in the gospel that all things will be made new. In the world of mission, the arts are an untapped resource. We actively encourage greater Christian involvement in the arts.”

Do a little research and find some local Christian Arts movements and/or organisations close to you - dedicate a day of prayer for them.

27 Reclaiming God’s Power over the Domain of Arts

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12)

28 Destroying Satan’s Strongholds in the Arts

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled” (2 Cor 10:4-6)

29 Defeating Satan and his cohorts in the Arts

Read Psalm 94 and Meditate on it

30 Jesus is glorified in the Domain of Arts - Hallelujah!

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.” (1 Peter 3:18)

31 Declare The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary:

Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell:

The third day he rose again from the dead:

He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty:

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:

I believe in the Holy Ghost:

I believe in the holy catholic church: the communion of saints:

The forgiveness of sins:

The resurrection of the body:

And the life everlasting. Amen.

Praying for the Persecuted Church



“And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua 24:15

Read more and how you can help at www.vom.com.au

PAKISTAN: Legislation Proposed to Curb Abuse of Blasphemy Laws

Pakistan is set to introduce new legislation to curb the misuse of the country's notorious blasphemy laws. Human rights observers have documented the widespread abuse of Pakistan's blasphemy laws, which are often used to settle personal scores, eliminate rivals, or persecute religious minorities.

Source: *International Christian Concern*

- ♥ Praise God that Pakistan's government is taking the first steps towards necessary reform.
- ♥ Pray that the new legislation will be approved and implemented to curb the misuse of the blasphemy laws in Pakistan.
- ♥ Pray for four Christians who are on death row for being found guilty of blasphemy.

MEXICO: Death Threats against Christians

A group of Christians in Hidalgo State, Mexico, were allegedly issued death threats in late April by a local government representative.

Sources: *International Christian Concern*

- ♥ Ask God to strengthen the believers in Chichiltepec village; may they continue to stand firm in faith despite these threats.
- ♥ Pray that God will give the Christians discernment and grace as they talk with officials about persecution.
- ♥ Pray that the example of the Christians will lead others to listen when they preach God's Word.

Egypt: Christian Prisoner Endures Brutality

It has recently been reported that Bishoy Armia Boulous (formerly known as Mohammed Hegazy) is now enduring an overextended prison sentence with frequent assault.

Sources: *Release International*

- ♥ May the Spirit of God dwell richly in Bishoy, giving him great peace and hope throughout this brutal and humiliating ordeal, knowing that "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).
- ♥ Pray the jailers will see the light of Christ in Bishoy and, as a result, be responsive to God's invitation for salvation.
- ♥ Pray for the success of Bishoy's lawyer, Karam, as he contends in the courts on behalf of this young father's release.

Iraq: Christian Outreach to Displaced Kurds

A VOM-supported team of Christian workers is providing assistance to Kurds from Yezidi and Shabak backgrounds who were forced to flee their homes due to violence and threats from Islamic extremists.

Sources: *Voice of the Martyrs USA*

- ♥ Ask the Lord to pour out His Spirit on the Yezidi and Shabak people so they may come to understand the Gospel and to love and serve the Lord.
- ♥ Pray that through the VOM contacts and other outreach ministries all those who have been displaced will be cared for.
- ♥ Pray the Lord will bring an end to the violent reign of Islamic State.

Uzbekistan: No Religion Without Permission

Uzbekistan has enacted a Prevention Law aimed at preventing all practise of religion without state permission.

Sources: *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin*

- ♥ Pray the Lord will minister and bring healing to Turdiyev, Kuzebayeva and others who have been directly affected by the actions of the government.
- ♥ Pray the Lord will give Uzbekistan's Christians, especially pastors and evangelists, great wisdom as they seek to navigate the increasingly hostile and difficult environment.
- ♥ Pray for church unity so that believers will be a blessing to each other through testing times.



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