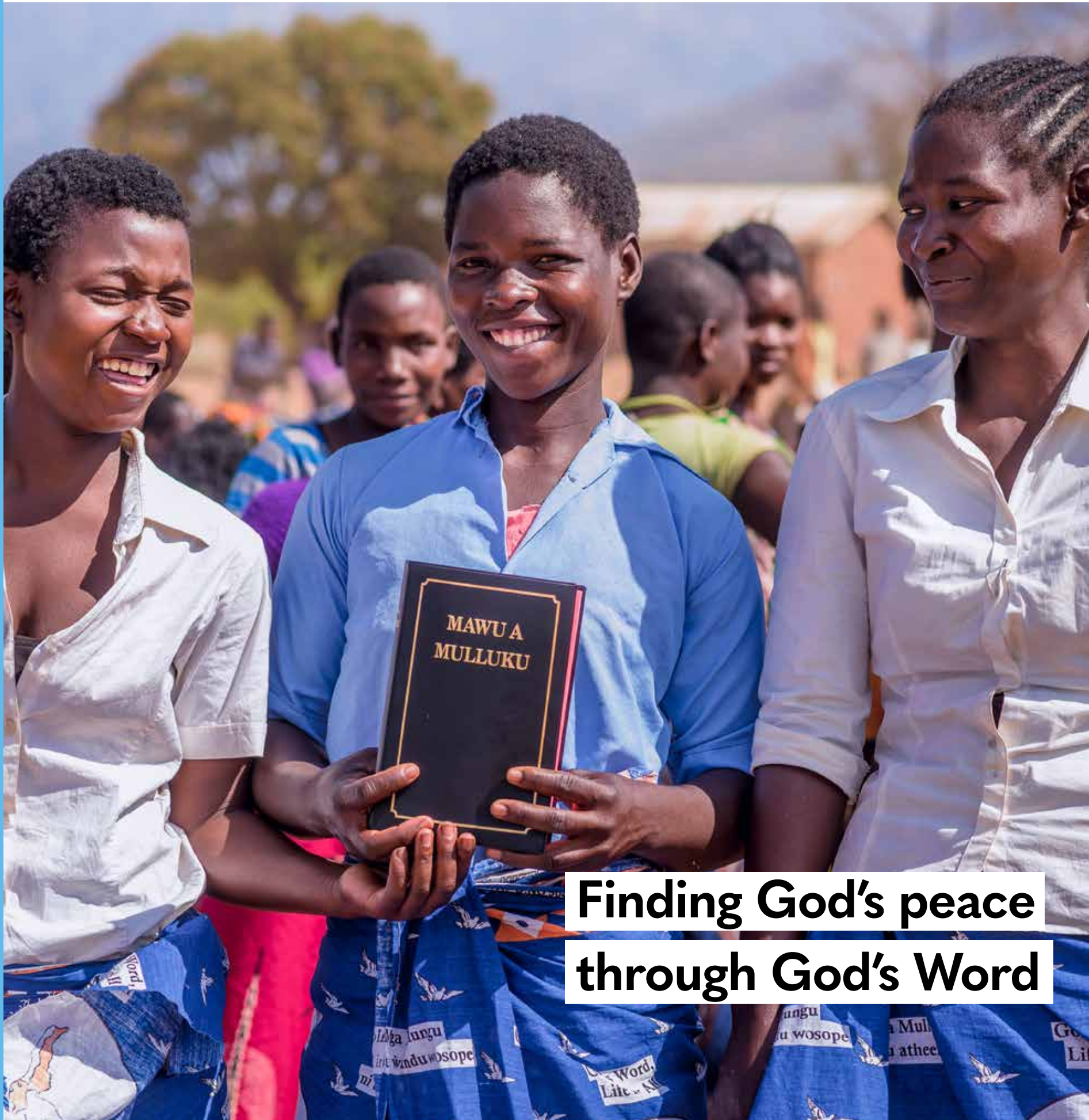




Bible Society

MAGAZINE



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Sower

We are all in this together

Dear Anna, Bronwyn, Graham, Margaret, Beverly, Pete, Miriam, Bruce, Angela, Yvonne, Elizabeth, June, Mike, Harold and other friends of Bible Society, *Eternity* and *Koorong*,

Let me first say 'Thank You.' I loved all your comments and ideas for a new name for our new combined magazine.

Your contributions were fantastic! Sowing for *Eternity*. *Eternal Seed*. *Beyond*. *Given*. *Trinity*. However, the overwhelming consensus was to stick with *Bible Society Magazine*, as that name says it all.

So, welcome to *Bible Society Magazine* issue 2.

We will continue fine-tuning the look and feel of the different sections of our magazine.

I mentioned in the last edition about our Staff Devotion on Wednesdays. Over the past few weeks I have been leading a series on culture.

In 2 Timothy 1:13, Paul tells Timothy to 'hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.' (NKJV) As I spoke to the Bible Society team across Australia, I painted the picture of a patchwork quilt.

All the different squares, different patterns, can look mismatched or disjointed up close, but when knitted together they form a magnificent cohesive whole.

As Christians we are urged to hold fast to the pattern of words which have been laid down, knitted together, in the Bible and by Christian thinkers, theologians, writers, pastors, leaders, friends, over the centuries since Paul wrote that letter.

In our patchwork quilt, we have our 200-year history of Bible Society, and we have you, our precious donor, supporter and customer. We have those we serve in our mission work here in Australia and overseas, and we have our board, our Bible Society colleagues around the world, and our staff. You help form us, you help us hold fast to our calling. You encourage us. Your contributions form the work of Bible Society in *Opening The Bible* to all people everywhere by all means possible.

May God bless you,

Grant Thomson

CEO, BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA



Bringing God's peace to traumatised communities

Trauma changes people. It is like an open wound that never quite heals. And that wound can remain exposed, even festering, across generations. **Trauma experts now talk about multiple levels of trauma, including institutional trauma, historical trauma and global trauma.**

In the fast-paced world in which we live, where the news cycle moves quickly, people's trauma can be treated as sound bites with little acknowledgement of the ongoing relentless impact upon them. The 'before' no longer exists. The trauma emotionally and psychologically stamps people in a similar way to how the Jews of the Holocaust were physically branded. This brand most often can be invisible to others - but is rarely invisible to those impacted.

People at the frontline of Australia's bushfires earlier this year are still dealing with day-to-day physical loss. Houses not replaced. Charred blocks not cleared. They are also living with deep seated trauma. Children who have not spoken a word since day turned to night, and the terrifying sounds of an unstoppable force wreaked havoc in their formerly safe community.

Survivors tormented by the sight and sound of severely injured animals and ravaged national parks.

The racial equality movement speaks to both historic and current trauma experienced by people who have been ostracised, ridiculed, jailed, abused, disadvantaged simply for the colour of their skin.

Those who have suffered child sexual abuse; have lived in an unrelenting war zone; those currently at the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic are all likely to carry trauma deep in their souls.

US theologian, Shelly Rambo, who has spent more than a decade studying the theology of trauma, writes: "Trauma is what does not go away. It persists in symptoms that live on in the body, in the intrusive fragments of memories that return. It persists in symptoms that live on in communities, in the layers of past violence that constitute present ways of relating. It persists in the symptoms that fuel present wars ... the storm is always present." (*Spirit and Trauma, A Theology of Remaining*)

FRONT COVER: The launch of the Ellomwe Bible in Malawi last year - one of the 50 first full Bible translations completed by Bible Societies over the past five years.



There is no magic wand that takes away trauma. It is not about trying to excise the wound within a person's psyche. **However, the Bible offers some words of deep wisdom, lament and hope that can speak into people's trauma.**

Several of Bible Society's overseas partners are offering programs designed to support people who have significant trauma. With help, communities who have suffered trauma – caused by natural disaster; war; genocide; institutional abuse as just some examples – can start to find new ways of being, while still carrying their wound.

The American Bible Society has researched and written a resource, available in Australia as *Beyond Trauma: A Practical Guide for Spiritual First Aid* (**Free download at biblesociety.org.au/beyond-trauma**). The booklet provides some helpful tips for self-care along with nourishing words from God's word. However, the very title of the book acknowledges that people who survive trauma can find solace but the wounds are still deep.

Many communities are experiencing significant trauma as a result of the broken, hurting world

in which we live. **The work of Bible Societies in offering trauma support, practical help and, in some cases, significant Trauma Healing programs, is paramount to the repair of stressed communities.**

Bible Society Australia is holding a special appeal to help fund these life renewing programs. For example, the civilian population of Syria has been living on a knife edge for almost one decade. As you would have read in the last Bible Society magazine, the Syria Bible Society was forced to close its office in Aleppo for the first time during this period of civil war (even when gunfire could be heard around them) – because of an invisible enemy that has shut down the world.

George leads the Syrian Bible Society and writes: "Personally I think **our Trauma Healing Programs might have done more to break down the walls and open new doors than anything else we have ever tried to do.** Suddenly we have allowed our hearts to link up with others and we have realised that our heartbeats are very similar to those of others.

continued page 4

Will you help the hurting see a way through?

\$44

Puts Bibles into the hands of four people, and shares God's peace.

\$85

Funds vital trauma healing for those doubly affected by coronavirus.

\$104

Provides practical aid and Scripture to help two families cope.

PLEASE GIVE NOW

Use the **DONATION FORM** on the back page, call **1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537)** or visit biblesociety.org.au/sowanew

Trauma support and God's word

"Our method is simple. It brings a group of people together in a safe place, where they can help each other heal. It is a holistic and Bible-based approach to helping people heal from trauma that recognises that trauma affects every part of a person: mind, body and spirit. The lessons use art, stories, activities and questions to help people engage deeply with themselves, with God, and with each other."

American Bible Society explains the approach taken by the Trauma Healing Institute it founded.



from page 3

Note what George says about the 'before' and never being able to return to it: "Are things going back to normal? Maybe the only thing that is normal is the way we are trying to keep our 'home-life' the way it was during those good old years. But when we look at one another, we realise that so much has changed. You cannot blame people for being negative, as nobody was prepared for the tremendous changes that each Syrian's been going through."

More recently, **thousands of people in the Pacific Islands had their lives turned upside down when Tropical Cyclone Harold swept through the region in April.** A different kind of trauma, but it still leaves the same kind of inner wound.

Imagine what it must be like to live through a category five cyclone. The unrelenting noise and power of the storm as it lays waste to everything in its path. Homes, schools, medical clinics, crops, water and power, obliterated. Friends and family killed or injured. Precious belongings, vital supplies, favourite toys treated without respect or mercy by a weather event that has no feeling. And in its wake, a sodden, smelly, tattered mess and broken hearts and lives.

In Vanuatu's Sanma Province, about 90 per cent of the population lost their homes. **Bible Society's Healing the Wounds of Trauma (HWT) project in the Pacific will introduce traumatised families to a resource** which already has proved to be helpful for people in the Pacific.

Church and local leaders trained in the delivery of HWT are running sessions within local communities. These sessions are culturally relevant and delivered by people familiar to participants, while also creating connections with local churches where people can connect for further spiritual growth and guidance.

The project aims to reach 6,000 people across Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Tonga, with the focus on people affected by Cyclone Harold, as well as other vulnerable groups impacted by trauma.

As Christians, we claim the words so powerfully expressed in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians. **Through prayer, we can find God's peace.** "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

How can we help those traumatised through events outside their control? Through prayers ("... in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Phil 4:6) and financial support.

Help equip Bible Societies around the world in bringing God's peace which is beyond our understanding! It is hard to think of anything more wonderful to receive.



Finding God when a child has cancer

Camilla is six years old. She and her family are from a poor community in Chichigalpa, more than 100 kilometres from Nicaragua's capital of Managua. The primary source of work is cutting sugar cane - a dangerous job. Workers are exposed to many pesticides and chemicals which threaten the health of their whole family. Water for drinking, cooking and bathing in, is not safe.

Try to imagine the trauma experienced by families in Chichigalpa as they hope to survive everyday life.

Camilla's family has suffered many illnesses from the chemicals and, about six months ago, doctors diagnosed Camilla with leukemia.

At a hospital in Managua, she has been through five months of treatment for leukemia, the most diagnosed type of childhood cancer in Nicaragua.

Camilla's mother Luz Marina feared she would not leave with her daughter alive.



During her stays in hospital, Camilla's family learned about the work the Bible Society does with its 'Hope and Care for Children with Cancer' program. Through this program, they have received their own Bibles as well as other items needed during their stays. Camilla's family also decided to participate actively in the devotions which are taught by pastors and volunteers.

After sharing and times of prayer with volunteers, the family has decided to begin trusting in God. They are learning every day to trust God with their fear and heartache, even amid the suffering, pain and hardship which this family is going through

Camilla is now stable. She is responding very well to treatment, so she recently has been allowed to return home.

Camilla's mother, Luz Marina, shares: "When we arrived at the hospital we felt lonely, I had never been to the capital, let alone this hospital."

"We entered as an emergency and being transferred to the area of children with cancer I believed that I would not go home with my child alive.

"After seeing the work of the Bible Society and participating in the prayers that the pastors offer, it injected me with faith in God, a God I used to flee from. But now, in this situation I have learned to depend on Him.

"I want to thank each donor and the Bible Society who help so that patients and families have support, the things they need and a Bible of their own. We hold the Bible close now, and that allows us to be closer to God."



Beacon of Light in Pakistan

Suffering comes in many forms. The personal stories shared with us from the Beacon of Light Literacy program in Pakistan demonstrate the release from past hardship and pain which can come when people learn to read and write. Literacy helps with small things, like reading the cost of a packet of flour. It also helps with the big things such as an entrée to the formal job market, instead of a life trapped in servitude.

Amna is enslaved. She works in the brick kiln industry in Pakistan and spends her days making mud bricks. She is married and has three little boys; the youngest is only ten months old.

In February, she joined Bible literacy classes and became a student of the Beacon of Light literacy program for women.

“When I joined the class, my son was three months old. It was hard for me to manage my work, home, little children and learning at the same time - but I wanted to be able to read,” Amna explains.

Not long after Amna started the classes, her job stopped because of the coronavirus pandemic.

She was grateful when the literacy teacher committed to keeping the classes going.



“She gave us face masks and hand sanitisers and asked us to keep our distance. She wanted me to follow the rules to keep my baby safe.”

“Now I am glad that I have had much time to revise my daily lessons. I am thankful to the Lord that I can read my lesson book very easily now. I am glad

that there is no-one affected with COVID-19 in our area.”

Shaping mud into bricks is an arduous, repetitive process. The work is physically hard and most workers are trapped in a perpetual cycle of debt that is often passed on through generations of the same family. Please pray Amna’s new skills will enable her to find other work that is safer and less gruelling.



Will you help women in rural Pakistan learn to read and become beacons of light in their families?

PLEASE GIVE NOW

Use the **DONATION FORM** on the back page, call **1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537)** or visit biblesociety.org.au/sowpakistan



A Bible milestone

The full Bible is now available in 700 languages. This milestone was recently reported by progress.Bible and is a source of great celebration. This means about 5.7 billion people (around 80 per cent of the world’s population) now have the complete Bible available in their heart language! United Bible Societies Director General Michael Perreau says each Bible translation has taken years of hard work and dedication - and there is much to give thanks to God for.

“My prayer is that, amid the many challenges facing the world, this will be the year that millions more will discover the riches of the Bible for themselves,” Perreau said.

Correction

In the Autumn edition of *Sower*, we published a feature on the remarkable 38 years of service to Bible Society WA by the ‘Flying Bible Man’ Trevor Booth. Trevor died in July 2019, not 2018 as we published. We apologise for our error.



Trust

We find ourselves in very strange times and many of us are facing complex and difficult issues which we're really wanting and needing to trust God with. If you're finding true peace of mind hard to come by, you're not alone. May this devotion series help you learn to trust in God during these difficult times.

Devotion 1

Psalm 40:1-3

I've had trust issues all my life. My early family life was difficult, and I grew up in an unhappy home. If I'd been raised in a Christian home I might have learned to trust God but I didn't have that to fall back on. Unfortunately, after a string of very real tragedies, my family completely disintegrated in a world of pain.

No surprises that I made a mess of my teen and early adult years. By the time God sought me out through the work of a Navy chaplain I could identify with the words of the Psalmist.

I became new, no question about it - my life was entirely transformed - and I have tried to follow Jesus every day of my life since. But in times of difficulty or confusion, my trust issues can resurface, and I become anxious and doubt ridden. Rather than turning to God, I tend to turn away. I wonder if you can identify.

Question: Do you have trust issues? Can you identify their cause? What harm do they cause?

Prayer: I believe in you Lord, and I want to trust you. Thank you for the times I can identify your hand and your presence. And forgive me when I can't or when I neglect to. Amen.

Devotion 2

Romans 15:13

Some years ago I hit a wall. Anxiety began to overtake my day-to-day life to the point where it began to affect me physically - I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat. Worse than that, I didn't feel any joy. I hadn't lost my faith but it wasn't bringing me peace or pleasure. I tried doing things in my own strength. It was exhausting.

I knew I had to work out the root cause of my anxiety and after weeks of counsel, solitude and seeking God, I finally acknowledged my trust issue. I had to admit it - I didn't fully trust God.

I was going through the motions, but joy and peace and hope had all but evaporated and no wonder when you read today's scripture. No trust? No hope, joy or peace. It's that simple.

I believed in him, therefore I knew I had to learn to trust. And I knew I couldn't repair my anxious self without trusting God completely. With and in everything. But how?

Question: Do you trust God with everything or only with some things?

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, help me to trust you. And as I learn to do this, fill me with your hope and peace and bring me your joy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Devotion 3

John 6:25-29

Sometimes I find a paraphrase Bible useful for helping me understand something - here's what the Amplified Bible says about 'trust' in John 6:29: 'This is the work that God asks of you: that you believe (have trust in, rely on, and have faith) in the One whom he has sent.'

The word 'trust' comes from the Greek *pisteuo* which appears in the New Testament more than 200 times. If God says something

over 200 times, it must be important. If you take a closer look, you'll find that although *pisteuo* is mostly translated as 'belief' in our English Bibles, a more accurate meaning is 'to put one's faith in; or to trust.' That changes everything because that makes trust a verb - something you choose to do. It's work - sometimes hard and tough work - but it has the potential to change everything.

Author Ann Voskamp writes: 'That's my daily work, the work God asks of me. To trust. The work I shirk. To trust in the Son, to trust in the wisdom of this moment, to trust in now. And trust is that: work ... Intentional and focused. Sometimes, too often, I don't want to muster the energy. Stress and anxiety seem easier.'

Question: Voskamp asks us: 'Are stress and worry evidence of a soul too lazy and too undisciplined to keep my gaze fixed on God?'

Prayer: I confess that I do carry stress and worry that I should rightly leave with you, Lord. Let me share it with you now.

Devotion 4

Joshua 1:9

Trust is easy when things and circumstances are easy, but it gets harder the tougher and more uncomfortable things become. Trusting in and through difficult or uncomfortable circumstances takes strength and courage, but for believers it's not an optional extra - it's an imperative - a commandment no less.

Trust is not about the worst not happening, it's about trusting God will be with us still - even if the worst does come to pass. It is about trusting that no matter what, God is sovereign; that we will believe in his inherent goodness, whether good or bad happens to us.

Question: Do you believe God is good, even when bad things happen to you or loved ones?

Prayer: I do believe, Lord; but help me overcome my unbelief! Be merciful to me and hear my prayer. And while I wait for you or your answer, be with me I pray. Amen.

Devotion 5

John 16:33; John 14:27

John 16:33 isn't a verse that you usually find printed on journals or fridge magnets or photo frames. It's not a verse we really want to hear or remember. But as Christians, we must learn to trust no matter what because God doesn't promise that our lives will be easy. The Bible doesn't promise that bad things won't happen - in fact it says that they will.

Because we WILL have trouble, trust is an ongoing imperative. Because we WILL have trouble, we must find our peace in him.

Jesus wasn't making a purely academic statement. He was no stranger to trouble and trouble was no stranger to him! But in the midst of trouble Jesus was at peace. Perhaps you remember the story of Jesus and his disciples being caught in a storm while they were out on the lake in a fishing boat? The storm was fierce, and the disciples were terrified, but Jesus wasn't. He was so relaxed about the situation that he was actually asleep!

Question: Are you experiencing trouble? Does it help to know Jesus experienced trouble too? How can you know his hope and peace?

Prayer: I'm tired and weary, Lord, and troubled and distressed by the events of this world. It feels like a raging storm and I'm frightened. As I call out to you for help, be with me I pray. Amen.

Devotion 6

Psalm 136:1-5

When we're distressed and confused and experiencing trouble, God encourages us to truly express to him how we're feeling. We also should be convicted to find a turning point in our lamenting and to choose to praise him. Not because of our circumstances but because God's faithfulness endures forever, in and through and despite our circumstances.

In the New Testament the instruction to remember was among Jesus's last words to us as he broke the bread and poured the wine - Do this in remembrance of me. To remember and give thanks is at the very core of who we are called to be as followers of Christ. It is the crux of Christianity and the purpose of all our worship. Why? Because it causes us to trust and to truly believe. No matter what.

Question: How long since you took time to remember God's goodness? How long since you had an opportunity to eat the broken bread and drink the poured wine, and remember?

Prayer: Help me to give you thanks with a grateful heart, dear Lord. Help me to remember that during struggle and strife, you have always been good, you will always be good, and you are good to me. Amen.

Devotion 7

Romans 8:31-34

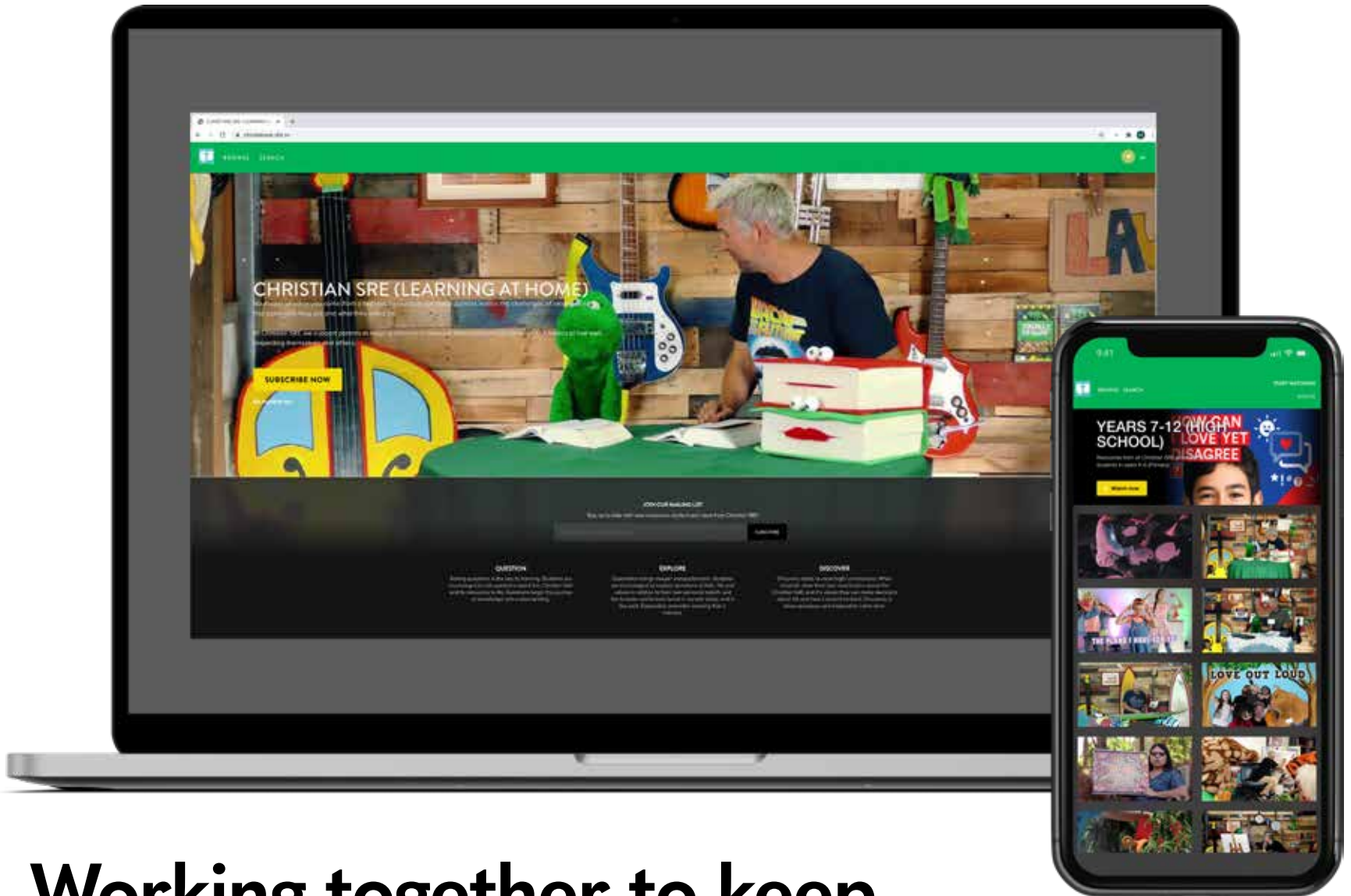
God gave us Jesus - this needs to be our greatest memory and form the basis of our greatest gratitude. God has earned our trust by giving us his very own Son. How will he not also graciously give us all things? Surely he already has. Because of Jesus, I can trust. Trust may not change our circumstances but in reality it changes everything.

When we learn to trust, hope and joy and peace return. And remember - it's a choice and as much a part of our daily work as anything else that needs our attention.

Question: Can I encourage you to actively choose to trust? Not as a feeling but as an action - a decision you make to trust in a good God who promises not just to be with us in every situation, but to bring us through it.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, may we cleave to trust, may we rely on you and your spirit, and may we continue to have absolute faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and our Saviour, our redeemer, and our friend. In his name, we pray, Amen.

Rev Melissa Lipsett,
Chief Operating Officer, Bible Society Australia



Working together to keep Scripture in schools

NSW School Scripture is going online in a bid to have ready-made lessons on hand during this rapidly-changing COVID environment.

Coronavirus has already caused a significant drop in the number of Special Religious Education (SRE) teachers from all faith communities. Tight health restrictions prevent SRE teachers with any COVID-like symptoms from teaching, and many older teachers have dropped out, fearing the risk of personal infection.

For schools that are still operating in classrooms, increasingly this means a substitute SRE teacher must be called in at short notice or the lesson has to be cancelled.

“We’re having to find new ways of doing things to be able to teach in classrooms,” says head of Christian SRE, Murray Norman, who wants to ensure Christian SRE lessons can still go ahead in most instances.

In order to do this, Christian SRE has partnered with Bible Society Australia to develop a digital portal loaded with approved video lessons. Along with more experienced SRE teachers, newly trained and substitute teachers can use them at short notice with reduced preparation. The portal was launched at the end of August.

“The rules around SRE teachers are quite tight, and that’s why it’s become necessary to have this online portal with materials that have been approved by curriculum providers, which can be used in video format,” says Norman.

Resource providers include Anglican Youthworks, the Catholic Church, Love Out Loud Oz, NUA (from Scripture Union Ireland), Quiz Worx and the Centre for Public Christianity. The materials can be used as stand-alone lessons or in a series, Norman explains.

The digital resources will also ensure SRE lessons are delivered in a “COVID-safe” format.

“There’s all these new rules that we’ve never had to deal with before just to make things COVID-safe,” says Norman.

These include less reliance on paper to reduce the risk of disease transmission and, of course, social distancing.

“As we’re seeing that young people can transmit the virus, people aren’t as keen to have paper and for teachers to be looking over kids’ shoulders to help them. Whereas normally in a classroom, [SRE] teachers would be helping kids to look up a passage in their Bible, at the moment that’s not encouraged because it requires close contact.”

Noting that all educators are facing these issues, Norman says the Department of Education has been very supportive of Christian SRE (and SRE providers from other faith communities) in developing digital resources.

“We need to learn to live with COVID, and part of that is looking at new technologies and new means that can be used to help right across the school, and religious education is one of those important areas that needs to keep on going.”

“Religious education is a normal part of school. Having teachers come in and teach students about hope and about love, especially at the moment, is very important and reassuring for students.”



Will you help take God’s word to religious education teachers in our public schools, and tell young Australians about Jesus?

PLEASE GIVE NOW

Use the **DONATION FORM** on the back page, call **1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537)** or visit biblesociety.org.au/sowkids



PRAYER POINTS: SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER

Pray with us

SEPTEMBER 20-26

Bible Translation

Praise God that the whole Bible has been translated into 700 world languages. Please pray God would sustain those who work in this important occupation.

Australia - Scripture Grants

Pray that God would bless Bible Society's partnership with juvenile prisons. Pray that young prisoners will find the new life that Jesus offers by engaging with God's word.

SEPTEMBER 27-OCTOBER 3

Lebanon - Emergency Relief

Please continue to pray for the country of Lebanon following the explosion in Beirut on 4th August. Pray for Bible Society Lebanon as they attempt to rebuild their office and distribute 10,000 Bibles to families who have lost their homes in the blast. Pray for all those who were injured and who have lost loved ones.

Australia - Publishing

Please pray for Bible Society Australia as it develops a new youth Bible that will guide and grow young people. Pray for wisdom, direction and good partnerships throughout the whole process.

OCTOBER 4-10

Slovenia

Please pray for our partnership with the Bible Society of Slovenia in their trauma healing work. This project aims to train the trainer, so many people can benefit from the scripture-based programs.

Australia - RIMS

Please pray for the Remote and Indigenous Ministry Support (RIMS) team as they move forward with the Pitjantjatjara Bible App. Pray this app will be accessible and engaging for all who use it.

OCTOBER 11-17

Cameroon

Please pray for the girls and young women of Cameroon who have experienced sexual abuse and exploitation. Pray for Project Esther, that it may offer space for healing and rehabilitation as survivors work through remaining trauma.

Australia - Children's Ministry

Thank God for the work of those involved in church ministries to children over the trying period of isolation. Please pray for them as they gradually return to face-to-face teaching.

OCTOBER 18-24

Suriname

Please pray for Surinamese children in orphanages, local schools and safe homes who have received a school bag and a Bible through our Kids at Risk project. Many have experienced abuse. Pray God will cover them in his love and peace.

Australia - CPX

Please pray for CPX's new study guide based on the *For the Love of God* doco. Pray it would help participants, especially those sceptical about Christianity.

OCTOBER 25-31

Pakistan

Please pray for the Beacon of Light Literacy project as it assists Pakistani women to read. Pray they also may be impacted by God's word and, in turn, impact their own families and communities.

Australia - Youth Ministry

Join us in thanking God for the opportunities we have had this year to host online youth events. Our YouthQ events in June reached more than 1000 teens and our new-look Masterclass in August was a sell-out weeks before go-live date. Pray that students who attend our youth events would walk away with a more robust confidence in the Bible.

NOVEMBER 1-7

Syria

Join us in praying for the Trauma Healing project which seeks to equip local churches to host Trauma Healing Centres for their own communities. Please pray the program may provide a sense of God's peace for participants.

Australia - BSA Publishing

Please pray for BSA as we prepare to print Bibles for chaplaincy in various state police forces, corrective services, and ambulance and paramedic services.

Pray that God's word would help those who tirelessly serve the Australian people.

NOVEMBER 8-14

Egypt

Pray for the Children and Adult Post Literacy Project as it seeks to develop a lifestyle of literacy for students of all ages in Egypt. Pray this project would reach its goal in preventing relapses into illiteracy.

Australia - BSA Leadership

Please pray for the leadership team of Bible Society Australia. Pray they would make wise decisions about the careful use of limited funds to help people to Open The Bible here and overseas.

NOVEMBER 15-21

Laos

Please pray for literacy programs and classes throughout Laos. Thank God for the enthusiasm churches have shown for this project and pray they may be motivated to host literacy programs as part of their outreach. Pray that as participants learn, they develop a deeper relationship with God.

Australia - Chaplaincy

Please pray for all seafarers reached through the Chaplain and Parachurch Grants Program. Please pray for strength, ingenuity and wisdom for the dedicated port chaplains and that each Bible given will be read, understood and cherished.

NOVEMBER 22-28

Myanmar

Please pray for the Learning through Listening program. Pray that as participants learn, they would engage in God's word and deepen their knowledge of him. Pray the program will be well established in rural areas and accepted by the local people.

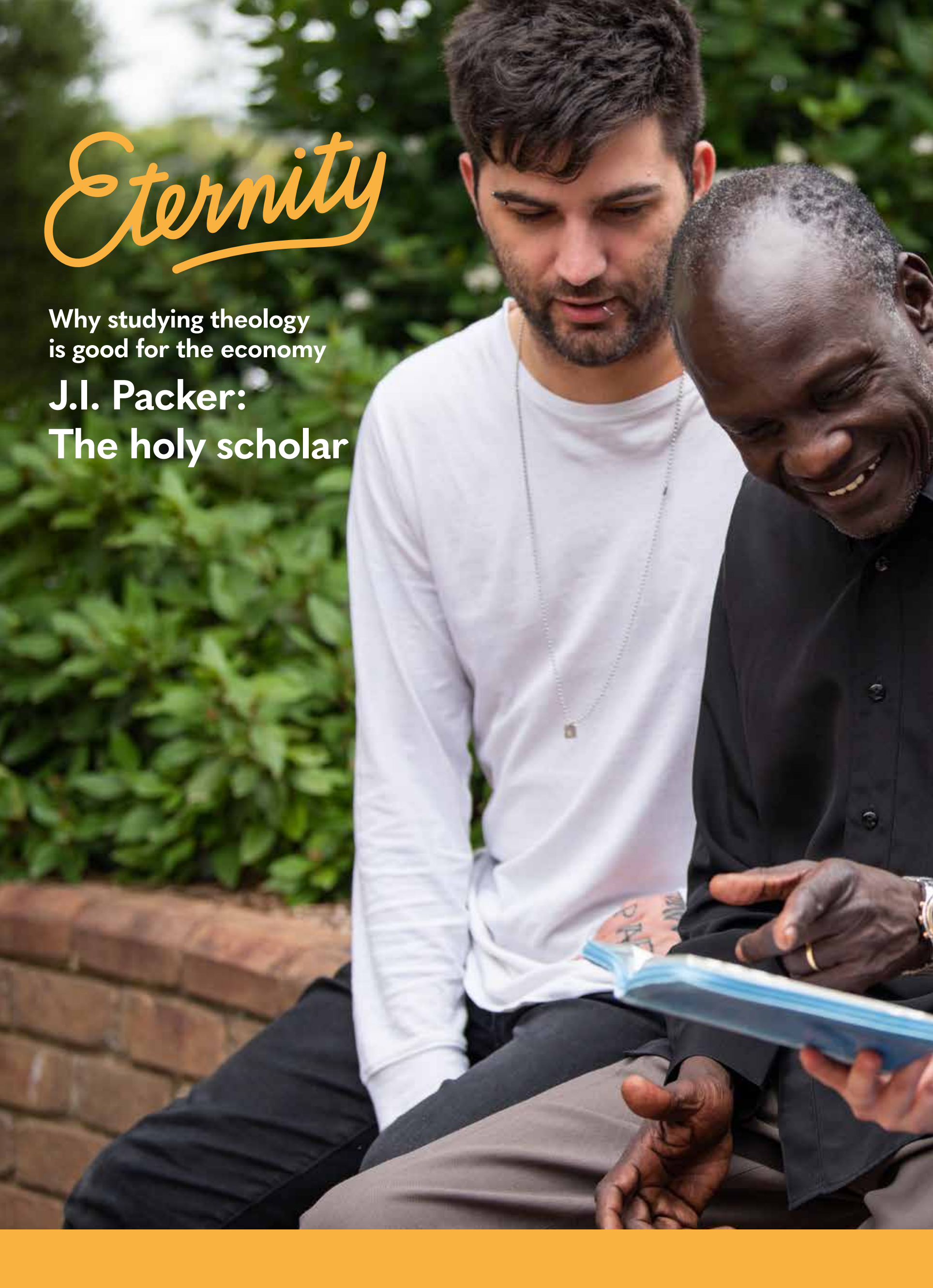
Australia - Donor Support

Please pray for the BSA donor support team who work hard to provide information and assistance to donors. Pray they would be patient and kind as they work together to take calls, answer questions about projects and care for each of our donors.

Eternity

Why studying theology
is good for the economy

J.I. Packer:
The holy scholar



Thanks for praying, ScoMo

If you need more encouragement to pray for our leaders – apart from the Scriptural command to do so – here’s a letter to read. It’s to an *Eternity* reader from one Scott Morrison.

“Dear ----,

Thank you for your kind message and for letting me know you are praying for me. After being a husband and father, being prime minister of Australia is the greatest privilege of my life. I am mindful it is about service to the Australian people. It is encouraging to know that Australians like you are praying for me. We all need prayer – Prime Ministers as much as anyone else. Your thoughts and encouragements are deeply appreciated.

*Yours sincerely,
Scott Morrison*

Obadiah does not know if this is a form letter. But if it is, that is even better – to think that lots of people are telling the PM they are praying for him.

Five words

Simon Jackson of Citylight Church, North Adelaide, asked for five word answers to the question “*Tell me why you’re still a Christian?*” Obadiah’s faves:

“*I’ve tasted Jesus*”
Megan Powell du Toit

“*Jesus died for my sins.*”
Mark Mitchell

“*Where else have we to go? (Six words... sorry!)*”
Rachael Balboa

“*Resurrection! The hope of resurrection.*”
Gordon Cheng

“*I still need grace*”
Geoffrey Folland

“*Because Jesus hasn’t let go*”
Kate Bradford

“*His outstanding patience*”
Simon Flinders

What’s yours?



Reconciliation starts with good education

Gawura is a unique Indigenous day school, located within the grounds of St Andrew’s Cathedral School.

Scholarships are offered from Kindergarten to Year 6 at Gawura and then from Year 7 at St Andrew’s Cathedral School.

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STORIES

'My Scripture teachers led me to Christ – and now into ministry'



Rebecca Abbott
WRITER

My family's not Christian or religious or spiritual or anything like that. Even my grandparents never went to church. When I was a kid, there was a general feeling that it's just not part of our life," 24-year-old Madi* explains.

And yet, as Madi shares her story with *Eternity*, she is employed as a ministry apprentice at an Anglican church in northern Sydney, which she has attended for the past ten years.

So how did she get from a non-believing upbringing to the place where she's ready to commit her whole career (and life) to the spread of the gospel? Well, it all began with Scripture classes at her public primary school.

"I went to school to learn to read and write and do maths, and the like. In that same classroom, I was also learning about God. And so, I just treated them as if they were the same," says Madi.

"I can't remember a time when I didn't believe and had to be won over by Scripture teachers. It was just part of my process of learning about

the world and growing up."

She clarifies that this was during the days when almost all schoolkids attended Protestant Scripture, with the only other option being non-Scripture. So, while her family weren't believers, they were happy for her to attend Scripture classes.

At school, Madi was also surrounded by friends from Christian families.

"I remember a conversation with one particular friend whose family were really solid members of their local church. We were really young, maybe six or seven, and I was having a conversation with her about my parents and how they didn't believe. And she said, 'Yeah, some people don't believe in God, and that means they're going to hell ...'"

"I remember accepting that. I found it sad and upsetting, but I accepted it as truth. And then, I thought, 'well maybe they'll change their minds. Maybe they'll believe.'"

Continued page 12 →

▲ Madi outside the public primary school where she first met God.



▲ Madi still has the first Bible she received.

◀ The personal inscription inside Madi's special Bible.

→ From page 11

Madi's faith grew when a Scripture teacher (who she is still in touch with) gave her a Bible of her very own.

"I was a big reader as a kid, so I started reading it cover to cover (although I didn't actually make it all the way!). So I was reading the Bible and praying pretty regularly as a kid, but kind of keeping that on the down low with my family."

It was during these early years that Madi committed her life to God.

"I did count the cost and understand that I was broken and needed forgiveness, and that meant that things about my life were going to have to change - and I wasn't the boss," she recalls.

In Year 5, Madi moved to Abbotsleigh Anglican School in northern Sydney, where her beliefs were fuelled by chaplains, weekly Christian Studies classes and a lunchtime Christian group.

Later, in high school, a friend invited Madi to a Friday night youth group, and she began going regularly (even if, as she admits, it was mainly for the social side at first).

Soon afterwards, she began attending a Sunday evening service at the same church.

"There were a lot of awkward conversations [with my parents], because I was obviously having to ask for lifts. I was pretty embarrassed to ask my parents. Mum was fine with it and would happily drive me, but I remember Dad being like, 'Oh, it's Friday night or Sunday night. I don't want to go out.'"

When Madi was confirmed at 15 (after first being baptised), she feared her family thought she

was "getting swept up in a cult or something. But I guess they also thought, well at least she's staying out of trouble," she reflects.

Madi's sister (who is two years younger) came along to youth group for several years before she stopped attending, while her brother (seven years younger) joked that Madi was "the weird Jesus freak in the family".

Completing high school with excellent grades, Madi followed the academic path and enrolled in a science degree, in which she also excelled. But then, immediately after completing her degree, rather than going on to study medicine or enrolling in a PhD, Madi made a countercultural decision: she decided to go into church ministry.

"During my honours' year, I was working in a medical research lab for the whole year. And I think I just expected that to be a bit more profound than it was."

"In a sense that was the final straw ... I had read *Don't Waste Your Life* by John Piper and was impacted by that quote near the start: 'Only one life, twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last.' So ideas began bubbling away in my head."

While Madi is quick to add that she believes secular work to be "very valuable", she began to feel a different calling.

"I always wanted to do science and medical research because I wanted to help people and to make a difference. But it dawned on me as I went through uni that while there was heaps of value if I did go down that career path, at the end of the day, if I'm improving someone's quality of life for however many years, what's the point if they're not going to heaven?"

"At the same time, I was getting more involved with youth leading and I was enjoying that heaps more than what I was studying."

So when the opportunity arose for Madi to take on a two-year apprenticeship at her church, she took the plunge. As part of this role, Madi has been teaching Scripture to Year 1 students at the very same primary school she attended.

"It's nice that things have come full circle," she says, smiling. "I've just loved [this role]."

When her ministry apprenticeship finishes in January, Madi plans to continue in vocational ministry, and perhaps enrol in Bible college. She's even starting to think about missionary work in a closed country down the track (hence why her name has been changed for this article).

Although Madi suspects her parents may feel a bit disappointed that she's throwing away a well-paid stable career, she says: "To their credit, they've never said that to me. I think they can see that this really makes me happy and they're okay with that, and they've come to terms with the fact that this is more important to me than money." ●

* Name has been changed



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100 YEARS OF PRAYER AND PROGRESS

Melbourne School of Theology has always thought outside the square

Rebecca Abbott

For the past 100 years, two key pillars have undergirded Melbourne School of Theology (MST) and secured its place as one of Australia’s most influential Bible colleges: prayer and progress.

This September, as MST celebrates its centenary, executive principal Tim Meyers reflects on how these pillars guided the college from its unconventional beginnings to its distinct present form.

“It’s actually difficult to imagine that we would have lasted a single year, let alone a hundred of them, without – at the very centre, and as a foundational commitment by faculty, staff, students and particularly supporters – a deep and perpetual seeking of God’s grace, providence, and direction, through prayer,” says Meyers, who joined MST in 2011 after years with mission agency Pioneers, and serving as a Baptist pastor.

“On countless occasions, through the history of the school, circumstances have been such that the entire future of the college appeared to be at risk

of collapse; often on account of financial needs, but also through times of social upheaval, spiritual attack, moral or ethical dilemmas, or simply the challenge of maintaining a deep commitment to biblical truth in the face of an increasingly challenging, and occasionally even hostile regulatory environment. Each time there has been a call to prayer and, well, here we are, still going.”

Unconventional beginnings

When MST began in 1920 – on the back of what Meyers describes as “a huge thrust into global mission” – it was among a handful of Australian theological colleges established to equip lay people for mission rather than full-time ministry.

“Back then, denominations had their own Bible colleges, but they were very strongly nuanced towards clergy training. And so they were pretty much exclusively available to men,” explains Meyers.

This is where MST first found a niche: it was non-denominational, focussed on training for

mission and had “a deep passion for equipping women in ministry, in ways that aligned with their gifting and their own sense of calling”.

The college – then called Melbourne Bible Institute (MBI) – was the brainchild of C.H. Nash, an Anglican clergyman and a Cambridge scholar who “had a passion for evangelism and for mission.”

“He was invited to set up a school to train people ... with a focus on biblical theology, spiritual formation and evangelism,” says Meyers.

“For many, many years – decades, actually – MBI was the most significant of Australia’s Bible colleges in that sense.”

Meyers points out that well-known church historians Stuart Piggin (co-author of award-winning *The Fountain of Public Prosperity*) and Will Renshaw (author of *Marvellous Melbourne and Spiritual Power*) both describe MBI as “unprecedented in its impact on the church and mission in Australia in those first 50 years.”

He also notes that the Institute’s success was also



◀ Back in the day at Melbourne Bible Institute, now known as Melbourne School of Theology.

thanks to local business people “who had a heart and the passion for it and gave a lot of money and support to it – which is still the case today, actually.”

“So, clearly [the founders] were led into a space that God was wanting to incubate in bringing equipped people into mission and ministry.”

Redefining ‘mission’

While the name of MBI has changed several times – to Bible College Victoria in 1978 and, finally, Melbourne School of Theology in 2001, when it also relocated to a new campus – the college’s commitment to mission has remained. Just with an expanded focus.

“The definition and expression of mission has certainly changed,” says Meyers.

“In the last 10 or 15 years, there has probably been a more overt focus on holistic ministry and not defining mission necessarily as crosscultural mission, although that’s still a very strong part of what we’re doing. But [our students are] also people who might be single dads or single mums or blue-collar workers or professional people who want to integrate into their life and vocation a deeper understanding of God’s word and his calling over their life.

“So rather than a departure [from MST’s original vision], it’s a recognition that given the nature of the Church being so globalised, there is as much legitimacy and need to be effective in your witness to the neighbour over the fence as there is to the unreached peoples of the world.”

From a personal perspective, Meyers adds: “It’s sort of always troubled me that missionaries were seen as this elite class of people with a degree of craziness that they would want to go and live in a jungle somewhere - as opposed to all of us seeing ourselves as called by God, being transformed by God and being used to transform others.”

Recent developments

Today MST has around 300 students – most of whom are studying part-time while working in other vocations. Of those, Meyers estimates around one-quarter are training for full-time crosscultural mission, while others are “thinking about [mission] just in terms of their own life values”.

In light of this broader definition of mission, and in keeping with its progressive focus, MST has spent the past few decades doing two things: Developing strategic partnerships to expand the variety of study options available; and, creating specialist centres for missional training in areas particularly relevant to our changing culture.

The first area of specialisation was MST’s Chinese department, developed in the 1990s to train Chinese pastors and mission workers, both locally and abroad. Then came the Arthur



▲ Tim Meyers credits faithful prayer as a big factor in MST’s longevity.

Jeffrey Centre for the Study of Islam (formerly the Centre for the Study of Islam and Other Faiths), established in 2008. “The centre is the only one of its kind in Australia,” Meyers comments, “and is globally recognised as a centre of excellence in Islamic studies.”

In 2019, MST acquired Eastern College (formerly Tabor), which added degrees in teaching and education to its offerings, among others.

This opened the door to a wider student base by encouraging the “cross-pollination” of courses among students at both colleges.

Just this year – amid transferring all courses online, due to COVID-19 – MST has been establishing two new, innovative specialist centres. The Centre for the Study of Theology and Psychology will teach a “biblical theology to speak into the space of wellbeing and mental health” in response to what Meyers describes as “unprecedented levels of anxiety in society”.

“It’s already attracted a surprising amount of interest – not just locally and nationally, but even internationally. We’ve also had a lot of interest from regular mums and dads, school teachers and professional people,” he says.

Also this year, MST will launch the Centre for Missional Engagement, which will build on the Master of Missional Leadership introduced last year (as MST’s first Master’s program).

“We’re really excited because we’ve got Kirk Franklin joining our faculty, who has just stepped down as executive director of Wycliffe Global Alliance ... The centre will straddle both Eastern and MST, and hopefully incubate some new thinking about missional leadership, for example,” says Meyers.

Regarding the Master of Missional Leadership, he adds: “[The mix of lecturers is] really eclectic, which is exciting to us because it means we’re scratching where people are itching: how do they lead in a way that develops more efficacy and fruitfulness in their own context through a missional lens. A lot of that’s about organisational culture, diversity, ethics and missional spirituality.”

Onward to the next century ...

When asked what’s next for MST, Meyers replies: “There’s lots of ideas, but I think our broad trajectory is to stay true to what’s in the rear-vision mirror - in our essential reason for being - [and] to find contemporary and strategic expressions of that as we look forward.”

“And to bring our supporters with us in that journey. So far, thankfully we have ...

“We still rely very heavily on the prayer support and the financial support of our donors. We’re very thankful that we’ve got a strong group of people that have bought into what we’re doing.

“We’re still very much a faith ministry and that’s something that was true from the beginning.” ●

Theology students are a great investment

John Sandeman

Australia’s 6200 theology students are a great investment for the Federal Government. That’s the finding of a research paper by Paul Oslington, Professor of Economics and Theology at Alphacrucis College.

From undergraduate to PhD levels, the students are spread across 24 universities and colleges (or 58, if we count all the colleges bundled together in consortia which grant degrees, such as the Australian College of Theology).

The government spends some \$4 million per year supporting student places and research. Oslington’s paper says that churches provide \$12 million and the students put in \$52 million.

For that outlay on education, our wider society benefits enormously.

“Religion and theology higher education has a value to Australian society of approximately \$300 million, representing a rate of return to society on its investment of 12.7 per cent,” Oslington writes.

He calculates that value as comprising \$52 million of direct benefits to the graduates themselves, \$37 million to government, and wider social benefits of \$211 million. Including volunteering, better health and reduced crime among social benefits, these are especially pronounced when graduates become pastors, running “social capital powerhouses”.

Oslington notes that “the estimates of government benefits are particularly conservative ... as wider societal benefits will have a fiscal impact”.

The government support for religion and theology higher education is relatively low, and most of it occurs in private colleges rather than public universities. The earning profile for graduates in this field is flatter than for other degrees.

Oslington draws from studies of the value of university education, and research on the fiscal impact of religion in Australia – he is part of a group of academics who have published in this field.

Options for the future of religious education in Australia are also examined in Oslington’s paper, including:

- If the Commonwealth funded all theology students to the same level as university students – enrolments would increase, students would gain \$6.5 million and it would cost the government \$19 million.

- If theology students lost access to FEE HELP: enrolments in the private colleges would fall, net benefits to graduates would fall by \$9.3 million – but the loss to the Government in tax receipts would be greater (around \$10.3 million). ●

Read Paul Oslington’s paper at www.ac.edu.au/valueoftheology

Cats, COVID, and the Livestreamed Classroom

And a voice came from above: "This is my new cat, with whom I am well-pleased."

Welcome to the new reality of the livestreamed classroom: a hybrid of embodied students seated at their own desks, 1.5 metres apart, together with the voices of their self-isolating peers booming from the speakers in the ceiling, slightly out-of-synch with their projected faces at the front of the room. A cohort divided into "roomies" and "zoomies", yet united in their common preference to watch an on-screen cat over anything else that might be happening. Such has been the experience at Morling College since hybrid on campus / online classes resumed in semester two.

But if the world has learned anything during the pandemic, it's that we can adapt pretty quickly when we have to. And the challenges *we* have faced at Morling are very minor in comparison to what many in Australia and around the world have been dealing with; our heart goes out to those on the front lines responding to the health crisis, and to those whose jobs aren't so easily moved online. But we've still been kept quite busy.

A few weeks into semester one, we suddenly found ourselves teaching fully online—livestreaming from homes against a background of family members, pets, and unwashed dishes. It meant we had to reimagine our pedagogy on-the-fly. And this, it turned out, was something of a blessing. It forced us to be intentional about everything, as classroom interaction doesn't happen naturally on zoom. But we found that



Morling student, Hayley, along with her cat, have been livestreaming lectures at Morling College this semester.

when discussion had to be more structured, a more diverse range of students participated.

Having the whole college focused for a few months on the online experience forced us to make improvements to areas such as online spiritual formation, video lectures, and access to a wider range of resources. The Morling library went on an e-book buying spree, meaning that the majority of our reading lists can now be accessed remotely. Not only has this supported students during the pandemic, but it will also be of long-term benefit for the increasing number of students living outside the Sydney area. It will also ensure a consistent student experience as we merge with Vose Seminary, the Baptist college in WA, in 2021.

Post-pandemic, we're looking forward to rebuilding a much more relaxed community life, where we can gather in groups to talk, encourage, and pray for one another, without masks and the lingering citrus scent of hand sanitiser (the

official fragrance of 2020). But we're also looking forward to the ways in which we can use the skills and lessons we've learned about online learning so that even more students can join with us to learn about God, his word, and his world. For Morling, livestreamed lectures and hybrid classrooms are here to stay.

This may present additional challenges for those of us who teach. But we've also learned that if the livestreamed lesson isn't going well, we can always throw to a student who's happy to show off their new pet cat.

Dr Tim MacBride is the Dean of the Bible & Theology Faculty at Morling College, where he lectures in Preaching and New Testament while being frequently upstaged by cat videos.



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Praying well before COVID-19

Ben George

Moore College has always been in the business of praying. As a student a few years ago, I was struck by the faculty's prayerful dependence on our Lord. They prayed at the beginning of each lecture. They prayed as a response and application of what we were learning from the Bible. They prayed with tears of sorrow as we struggled through life's hardships. They prayed with tears of joy as we celebrated the happiest of moments in Christian community. They prayed before each exam, focusing our attention on the goals of growing our relationship with God and developing a deep love for people to come to Christ and grow in him.

Post-College, life has not been easy. Things have not gone to plan, as far as our plans are worth anything. Things have been difficult personally. And in all of this, the faithful prayer of faculty has not stopped. With tears, couched in wise advice of those with years of ministry experience, and with empathy that brings me to tears as I pen this at my desk, some of the faculty who have mentored me have held me in prayer.

Moore College always has been a praying college. Our Governing Board, faculty, staff, students, wider community, alumni, donors, ministry partners and supporters. In Australia and further abroad, shaped by the life-giving gospel that brings us together, Moore College is a praying College.

As Scripture reveals, praying is a big part of Christian life. Praying helps us to keep trusting the Lord Jesus, as we model a posture of dependence. When we pray, we let go of all those burdens in our



life which weigh us down. We articulate our submission to our Lord who is in control of every part of our life. And so, we give him praise and thanks for saving us from an eternity apart from him by that ultimate display of his love on the cross, as well as every daily blessing.

Because of his reconciliatory work, we can ask our Heavenly Father for whatever we need. And we also pray because it is powerful. For as we listen and inwardly digest the Scriptures, the Spirit works to align our affections with those of our Lord. And as we love what he loves and pray in response to what the Scriptures show us, we see that God answers our prayers.

And so, when the pandemic hit us, we did what we have done throughout our history as a College – we all prayed. Students and faculty prayed. And taking the lead from our Principal, Dr Mark Thompson, we came together online in the Men Praying for Moore event, and we prayed. We had

people join us from as close as Sydney city and as far as Carrickfergus, Ireland.

Together, we prayed for the College, the Diocese of Sydney and the continued impact of the gospel around the world. We prayed for all those suffering because of this pandemic, both within

the College community and further afield. And we thanked God that although COVID-19 seemed powerful, our Lord Jesus is more powerful.

I am so thankful for the model of prayerful dependence on the Lord I have received from Moore College. The priority and consistency of prayer speaks volumes to what the College values. Moore College was praying well before COVID-19, and I take it the College will continue praying long into the future, as would be expected of a Christian community who love the Lord Jesus, teach the Scriptures and prepare men and women for gospel service.



MEN PRAYING FOR MOORE



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moore.edu.au/events

J.I. PACKER 1926–2020

Humble and holy: What it was like to study and serve with J.I. Packer

A student – and sister in Christ – pays personal tribute upon the recent death of a renowned teacher, pastor, thinker, servant.



Nerida Peart
WRITER

I studied under J.I. Packer at Regent College in Vancouver from 2006–2010. I also had the privilege of going to church with him at St John's Shaughnessy Anglican Church in Vancouver, where I served as a ministry intern during my studies. As part of our training we got to hear his insights on vocational ministry, and to serve alongside him in leading services and preaching at the early morning Sunday service at St John's.

Packer, who died on July 17 at 93, was the reason I'd chosen to study at Regent College. I'd read *Knowing God* and a number of other Packer titles, and in the front of each of these books I'd read a phrase: J.I. Packer works at Regent College, 5800 University Boulevard, Vancouver.

On a working holiday, I went to check out the home of J.I. Packer, and discovered the wonder of Regent College, its gifted faculty and wonderful learning community.

The thing I responded to in Packer's books was not just his clarity of thinking and his ability to explain deep truths of the gospel in clear and relatable terms, but also his obvious and genuine faith. This faith shines through all his writing, and motivated his years of service in writing and teaching for the worldwide church.

In the introduction to *Knowing God*, he related a story about a person walking along, and sharing with a friend that it didn't matter what else happened in life, because he had "known God" as the deepest truth and joy of his life. That was a knowledge Packer himself clearly shares.

Even now, remembering that story has the power to make me tear up.

When I arrived at Regent I was keen to study under Dr Packer and I began with his class 'Systematic Theology Overview'.

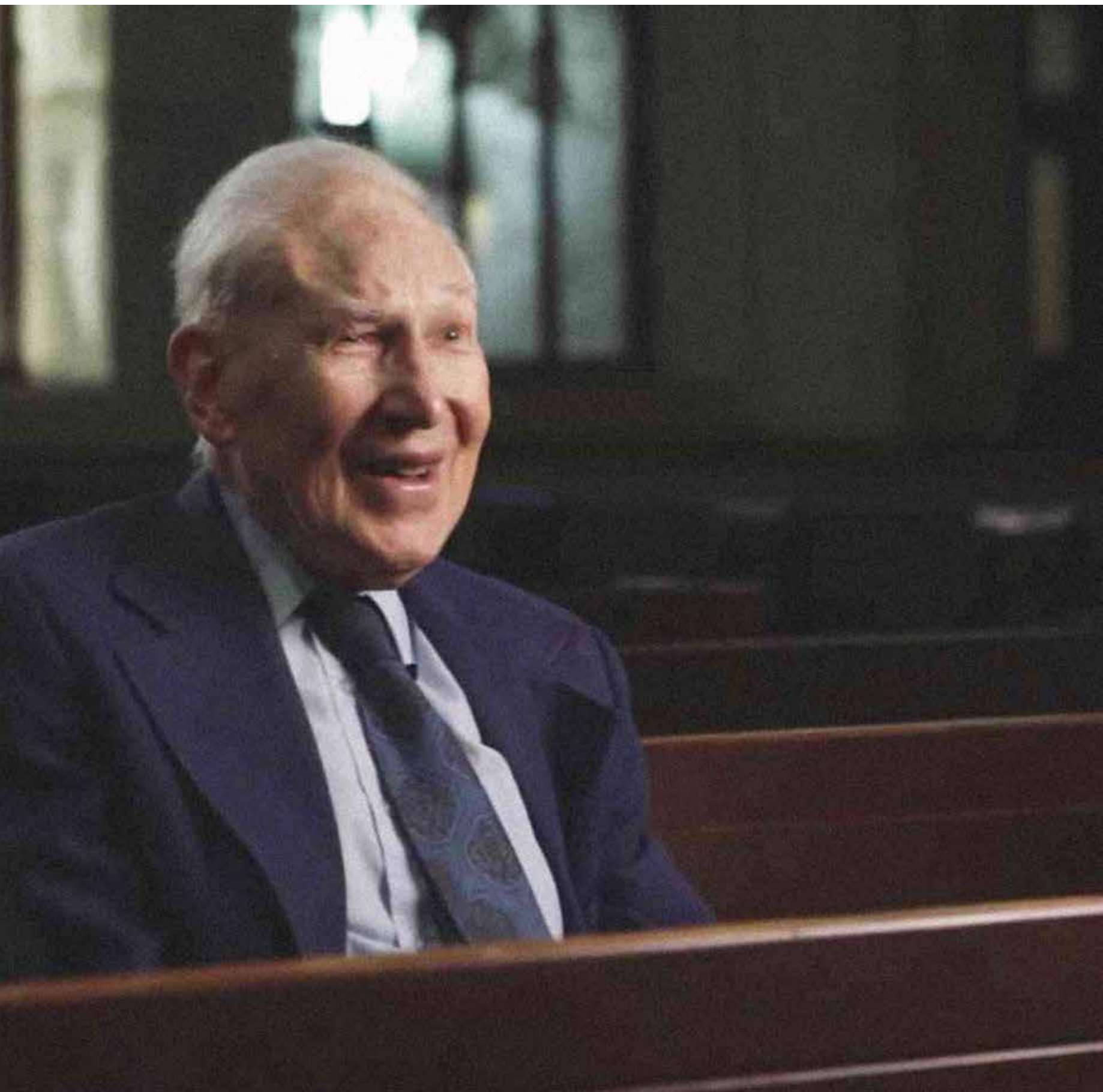
He would start every class with the doxology. "Arise friends," he would say, and everyone would have to stand and sing. At first we all felt very self-conscious, and the singing was patchy and embarrassed. We only did it because, well, who says no to J.I. Packer! But by semester's end, we sang together sincerely and tunefully because we had learned Packer's primary lesson: ALL theology is for doxology – for the glory of God.



Here was a once in a generation mind, an unparalleled published author and theologian, and always his focus was on Jesus Christ his saviour, in making the name of Jesus great. Packer's focus was on seeing Jesus honoured. His theology came out of a desire to help others understand the "glory" and profundity of adoption into God's family.

J.I. Packer, who loved to refer to himself in class in the third person as "Packer", had an amazing mind, and a photographic memory. He might start speaking about the fifth century fathers, and you would watch him gaze up and to the left – you could almost see the cogs turning as he accessed the file in his mind – and then he would continue talking for an hour or two without notes, in incredible detail about the history of the church and its theology. But it was when we got to the Puritans that you got a glimpse into Packer's soul.

As he talked about the Puritans, and their devotion to God and holiness, he would begin to tear up. The great J.I. Packer, happy to show his deepest love of God and emotion in front of snotty



Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life's problems fall into place of their own accord.

— J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

nosed graduate students, because he couldn't hide his love for Jesus even when lecturing.

At Regent there was an expression that "you take the professor not the course." During my time at Regent, I gradually came to understand that the great gift of any Regent course, no matter the subject matter, was getting to know the professor, and getting a glimpse into their faith and spiritual practices, as well as how their unique mind shaped their theological approach.

Packer and his faith, along with many other professors at Regent, were a lasting gift to me of encouragement to perseverance and faithfulness (as those in Hebrews 11).

Although known primarily as a theologian and author, Packer was a pastor at heart. He faithfully served under Rector David Short at St John's Shaughnessy as an honorary assistant. He helped out with leading services, and preaching, as well as adult education and bible studies. His humility and pastoral heart was an example of faithfulness in following Christ and a willingness

to be involved in all the mundanity of church life and relationship.

I well remember something that happened after a service at St John's. We were finishing up and an elderly lady accosted J.I. before he could even remove his surplice [a liturgical outer garment], regaling him with her maladies for a full 20 minutes. Not once did he try to move her on. He listened attentively, and compassionately, and this attitude I saw repeated with students at Regent, whether they be outrageously loud and demanding, or those with pressing theological questions.

Packer loved the liturgy and the depth of insight and faith it fostered through its recitation week after week in church. Well known for personally reciting the morning and evening prayer services as part of his spiritual practice, he was also one of the best people I have ever seen lead liturgy.

Despite having recited the Communion service from the Book of Common Prayer hundreds if not

Continued page 20 →

→ From page 19

thousands of times, every week he spoke it afresh. He never hurried, but imbued it with expression and meaning as though it was the first time he was reading it.

And as he recited the communion introduction, this 80+ year old saint, who looked like a gust of wind would blow him over, would fall to his knees on the hard flagstones, despite it no doubt paining him. He was humbling himself before his God in faithful service, week in week out, as he led God's people in worship.

As part of my training at Regent, and part of my duties as an intern at St John's, I was required to preach at the 7.45am service. The first time I had to do this, having been allocated my passage, I sweated for weeks over the preparation. I had never preached in a church before, and now I would be preaching while J.I. Packer led the liturgy. What an incredible privilege, and what a daunting task!

I admit that what I wanted most was to impress Packer, to knock the socks off him with my preaching prowess – and of course the insight and depth of my biblical exposition. But the reality was I was a completely inexperienced preacher, who no matter how hard I tried would almost certainly not impress. I duly gave my mediocre sermon, and many more, and Packer, while never effusive, never failed to make an encouraging comment or thank the preacher for their words and work.

I have one memory of Packer in particular that I will treasure all my days. After preaching one Sunday, he said to me: "God has blessed you with the gift of preaching, so you must continue faithfully, and use the gifts he has given you to be a blessing to others, both here and in Sydney." So when people question the hard choices I have

“Wait on the Lord” is a constant refrain in the Psalms, and it is a necessary word, for God often keeps us waiting. He is not in such a hurry as we are, and it is not his way to give more light on the future than we need for action in the present, or to guide us more than one step at a time. When in doubt, do nothing, but continue to wait on God. When action is needed, light will come.

— J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

made to continue to be Anglican, and to continue to answer God's call to preach, I always think of the humble and holy J.I. Packer, that great servant who has gone before us to show the way.

It is not just his legacy as a writer, teacher, pastor, and theologian that will remain, but his example as a good and faithful servant, motivated in all things to honour and proclaim his Lord – the Lord he has known and pursued for all those many years, and is finally seeing face to face. •

Upon her return from Regent College, Nerida Peart worked as an Assistant Minister (Young Adults) at St Matthew's Anglican Church, West Pennant Hills, Sydney, for six years. She now speaks and preaches itinerantly for churches and parachurch organisations, while looking after her three small children.



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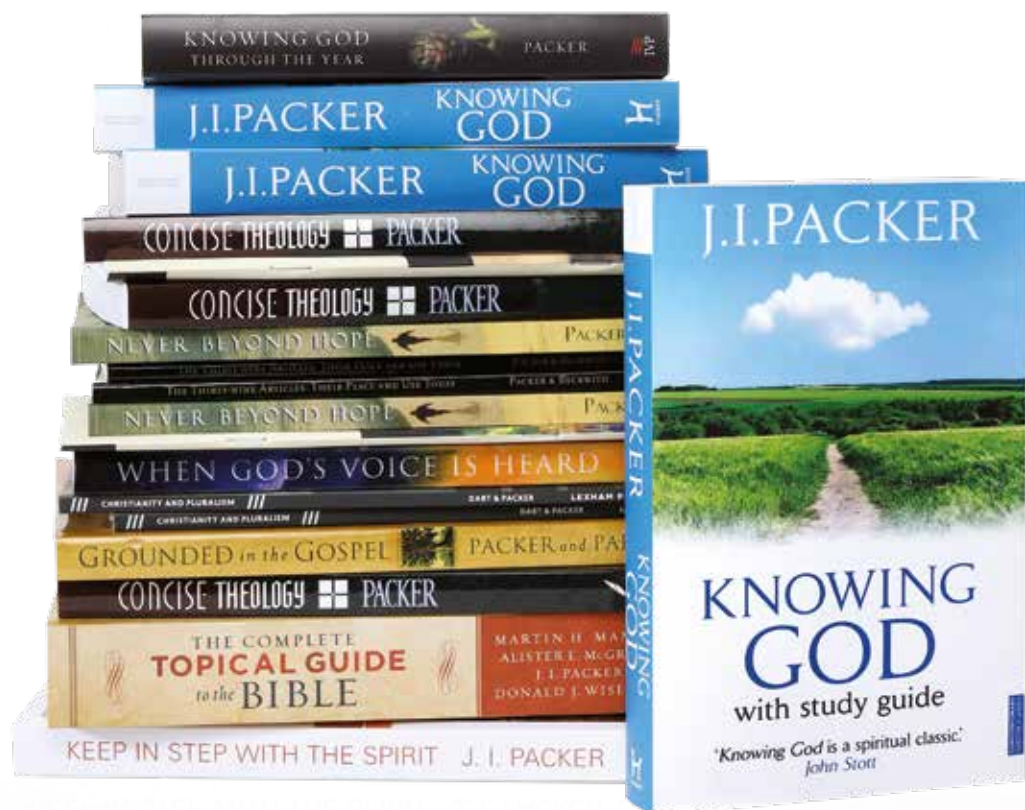
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Packer and the invention of the evangelical scholar



John Sandeman
EDITOR



James Innell Packer, widely known for the best seller *Knowing God*, died at 93 on July 17. In a survey, *Christianity Today* readers named him as one of the most influential theological writers of the twentieth century, second only to C.S. Lewis, as noted in *To Know and Serve God* (Alistair McGrath's biography of Packer).

"Because there were just the two of us, I asked him why *Knowing God* had become such a best-seller, exerting enormous influence in Christian circles around the world," Don Carson wrote in a eulogy for Packer for the Gospel Coalition.

"He replied, 'Because it is a book about Christian spirituality.' It took me a while to figure out what he meant. This is most definitely unlike most contemporary works that talk about Christian spiritual experience. It's a book about God; the topics deal with the attributes and ways of God. But they're cast in such a way that the relevance of each topic to Christian living is carefully spelled out. Never does one feel that God is being talked about because he exists to serve us; rather, God is being talked about because he is God, and we must know him if we are to be saved."

More recently Packer served as general editor of the English Standard Version of the Bible (2001), an evangelical revision of the Revised Standard Version. He was also theological editor of the influential ESV Study Bible (2008).

One early book of the 47 which Packer wrote (more if you count co-authored tomes), was extremely influential in equipping generations of university students with a trust in the authority of the Bible, including this writer.

Fundamentalism and the Word of God (1958) came out at a time when it was seriously argued that no thinking person could be an evangelical. American evangelist Billy Graham was being ridiculed as a 'fundamentalist' and Church of England luminaries argued that he should be banned from leading a mission to the University of Cambridge, according to McGrath's account.

Gabriel Hebert – at the time, teaching at St Michaels' House in Crafrers in the Adelaide Hills – had written a book *Fundamentalism and the Church of God*. His book laid down a challenge to a high view of the authority of Scripture.

Packer's riposte was *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, and became much better known. It was particularly influential among evangelical university students.

In the book, Packer defends the classic evangelical view of the Bible as trustworthy and a sure guide. Alongside John Stott's *Basic Christianity*, it boosted the IVP publishing house in Britain. It also catapulted Packer into being a spokesperson for the broad evangelical movement, not just the Calvinist part of it.

When *Eternity Online* carried news of Packer's death, a Queensland Presbyterian minister David Secomb wrote on our Facebook page. "*Fundamentalism and the Word of God* helped me tremendously as a young theological student in a college strongly influenced by Liberalism and Neo-Orthodoxy. The reaction to my favourably quoting from this work in a major assignment was to require me to write a review of *Fundamentalism and the Church of God* in order to receive a pass for first year. Hebert's thesis I couldn't really follow. Packer was clear as crystal!"

"[Packer book] *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* brilliantly clarified for me how the biblical truth of the free offer of the gospel could be held with the biblical doctrines of predestination and election, particularly as expressed in the Reformed confessions."

Packer's role in strengthening faith in the authority of scripture was especially pronounced in Australia. McGrath points out that his work became set reading for first year students at Sydney's Moore Theological College.

"Jim Packer has for decades now been a friend and encouragement to evangelical ministry in Australia. His friendship with former Moore College principal, D. Broughton Knox, stretches back to the 1950s when they were both studying in Oxford," Mark Thompson, principal of Moore Theological College, tells *Eternity*.

"Jim was one of the very first Annual Moore College lecturers and his personal correspondence with the current principal reveals his continuing sense of fellowship with Moore College and the Diocese of Sydney. In 2008 he was made an honorary canon of St Andrews Cathedral, Sydney."

Knox and Packer overlapped as D. Phil students at Oxford. This might seem to be coincidence, but the presence of both men marked a new wave of evangelical scholarship. Or perhaps the invention of serious evangelical Bible scholarship – in the post-Darwinian era.

*"The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world."*

Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach* poem, although written a few years before *The Origin of Species*, brilliantly captures the shock to Christian faith of Darwin-ism.

Together with the rise of Higher Criticism of the Bible, faith in the authority of Scripture appeared to be withdrawing like the tide down Arnold's shingled *Beach*. But an extra stanza has long needed to be written to the Arnold poem.

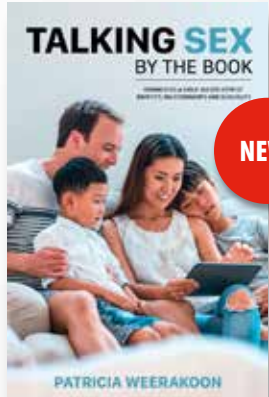
One where a wave of faith roars back up the beach.

Packer was part of a new wave of evangelical scholars brave enough to return to the world-class universities and gain higher degrees. A big part of this wave crashed up the beach in the decade following World War 2. From Australia, Broughton Knox followed Leon Morris to an Oxbridge doctorate (they later became a matched pair of college principals – of Moore in Sydney, and of Ridley in Melbourne). In the United States, Carl Henry (to take one of many examples) was the founding editor of *Christianity Today*, which largely defined the new evangelical movement and the founding of influential Fuller Seminary.

As McGrath points out, Packer is an example of something that was new, an evangelical "career academic" with a conviction that good academic theologians were necessary. ●



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1.8 Billion Bible bits spread worldwide since 2015

Andrea Rhodes

Almost two billion pieces of Bible-related material have gone out across the world during the past five years, according to the latest United Bible Societies figures. Last year marked a record for Bible distribution worldwide, helping to bring the total number to more than 184 million full Bibles distributed by Bible Societies since 2015. And the Oceania region – including Bible Society Australia – leads the way with its share of providing full Bibles.

If every piece of Scripture distributed by the Bible Society network since 2015 was added up, it totals more than 1.8 billion items – enough for almost a quarter of the world’s population.

These achievements are revealed in the latest distribution figures from United Bible Societies (UBS) Scripture. The annual distribution of full Bibles has gone up from more than 34 million in 2015, to just short of 40 million in 2019.

A decade ago, annual Bible distribution was below 30 million.

The huge and growing quantities of Bibles provided reflect the ongoing demand for Scripture – and the commitment of Bible Societies everywhere to put God’s Word into the hands of everyone who wants it.

Looking back at 2019, global Bible distribution clearly is being influenced more and more by the internet. Almost a quarter of Bibles distributed were digital downloads, compared to 17 per cent digital the year before. Regions such as Asia, Central and South America, Europe and the Middle East all saw an increase in the number of full Bibles distributed – primarily because more people are downloading Scripture.

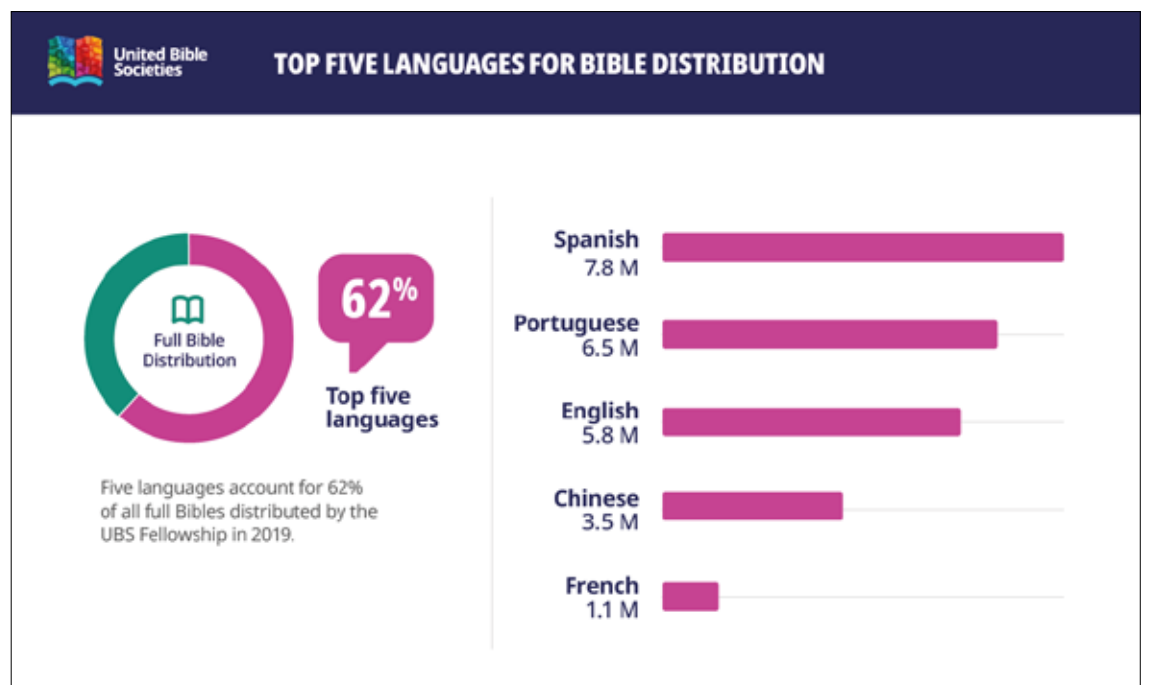
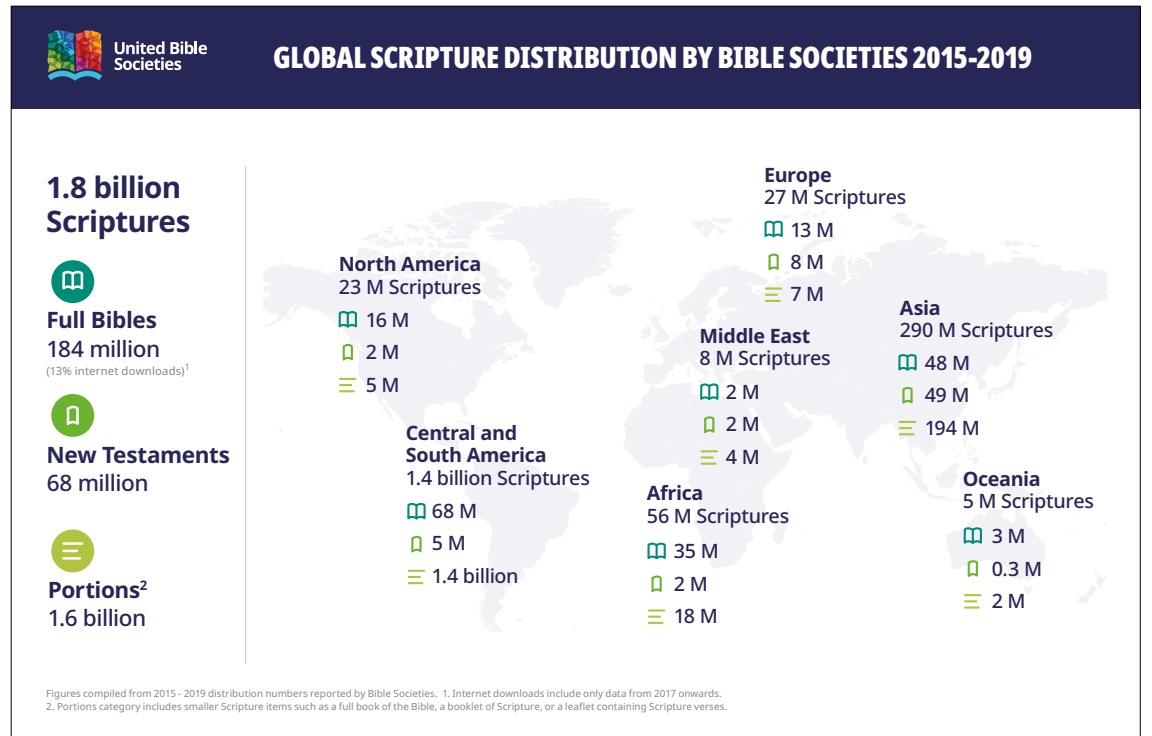
The number of New Testaments distributed reached 15 million for only the second time in the last decade. And in total, more than 315 million Scripture items were distributed around the world in 2019.

But, behind the impressive numbers, an even more encouraging story is emerging: more people are reading Scripture in more formats, which means they’re able to engage with God’s Word in ways that are right for them.

- Nearly 3.7 million Scriptures specially designed for children were distributed in 2019, with the largest number (1.27 million) provided in Africa, the continent which has the world’s biggest youth population.
- Adults learning to read and write also received bespoke Scripture material. More than 4.5 million booklets for new readers were provided in 2019, the majority in Central and South America.
- Bibles with the deuterocanonical books, used by Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox communities, have been distributed all around the world; 1.7 million in 2019.

Michael Perreau, UBS Director General, said: “It’s heartening to know that, through our efforts in 2019, millions more people are able to face the challenges of 2020 with Scripture in their hands.”

“May God’s Word bring comfort and hope in these difficult days. While record-breaking Bible distribution is something to celebrate, more important is we’ll see God’s Word transform individuals, their families and communities, as



people engage with Scripture’s life-changing message.”

The UBS Fellowship continues to be the largest translator and distributor of Scripture on the planet; around 70 per cent of the world’s full Bible translations have been provided by Bible Societies.

Bible Societies worldwide are committed to providing full Bibles – and the proportion of Bibles compared with all Scripture reached a record level in 2019. One in eight of all Scriptures distributed

last year was a Bible.

In 2015, Bibles only made up one in 13 of all Scripture items provided around the world.

Oceania, which includes countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, tops the list for the largest proportion of full Bibles distributed. Four out of every five Scripture items provided was a full Bible. ●



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How can a sport star also follow Jesus?

Stephen Liggins

It was a cold night in Melbourne when the Australian women's hockey team took on the might of China in the Oceania Cup. Australia was the reigning Olympic gold medallist; China – the holder of the Champion's Trophy.

Susie Harris was eighteen, had only been part of the national squad for a year, and was still getting used to playing at this level.

Partway through the second half, Australia moved the play quickly down the right-hand side of the field. Susie ran into position near the edge of the circle. When one of her teammates put in the cross, Susie was ready and slammed the ball first time into the bottom left hand corner of the goal. Within seconds she was swamped by teammates offering their congratulations.

"It was one of those perfect moments," she says. "A moment of pure joy – the culmination of years of training, when everything goes right in an almost perfect way."

Sport, played at any level, has the capacity to offer so many highs – the joy of performing well in an athletic movement; the immersive experience of striving in a head-to-head contest; the satisfaction of contributing to a smoothly functioning team; the thrill of victory in a closely fought encounter; the excitement of success; the release that sport provides from other aspects of life; and time spent with teammates, fellow competitors and opponents.

And Susie knew of these highs. Her rise to international sporting prominence was meteoric. "When I was 15, I was one of the ball-girls in the gold medal women's hockey match at the Sydney 2000 Olympics which Australia won."

"Two years later, I was 17 and actually making my debut for the national team. I had to get permission from my school to miss class!"

Susie went on to play for her country on more than 50 occasions.

But being a believer in the sporting environment is not always easy. Susie had been brought up in a Christian home and, in her early teens, affirmed the faith passed on to her by her parents. But suddenly living out this faith as a young player in the high-powered Hockeyroos squad presented something of a challenge. Spiritually, it was an isolating experience.

"It could be quite lonely," she admits. "I can remember on one occasion feeling quite alone and craving some Christian community during an international tour. We were in Athens at the time and I happened to have some time off on a Sunday, and I stumbled upon a small and very old Greek chapel. Whilst it wasn't the usual church atmosphere I'd experience back home, it was comforting to be in a place where I hoped God was honoured and worshipped. But most schedules were too tight for these sorts of experiences."

Like most areas of life, sport has its real opportunities and challenges for the Christian.

Sport (played in an ethical way) is a great gift from God that can be enjoyed for its own sake. In addition, sport has many potential benefits, such as being great for forming friendships and providing opportunities for outreach to people who do not follow Jesus – or encouragement of fellow believers. It also helps develop character and improve one's physical health and, in some cases, can even provide employment.

But sport, like all good things in this fallen world, has its dangers. There is the ever-present danger of turning sport into an idol, or of adopting various forms of bad behaviour that often surround a player on and off the field. Some Christians have dealt with this better than others. Anyone with a cursory involvement in sport will know of believers who have been real "salt and light" in their athletic worlds, while for others it seems to have been a real avenue for decline.

How can a Christian be involved with sport in a way that honours God – so that it can be a help not a hindrance for God's purposes? Of the many things that could be said, let me highlight three priorities.

1. Stay close to God (the ultimate Supercoach)

David Simmons, who scored more than one hundred first grade tries in the National Rugby League, playing first with Cronulla Sharks and then Penrith Panthers, certainly experienced the benefits of staying close to God.

"I became a Christian a couple of years before I started rising through the ranks," he says, "and recognised the importance of Bible reading and prayer. So, I was growing a lot as a Christian and progressing as a footballer at the same time. This really helped me to negotiate the highs and lows, and to grasp the opportunities and to avoid the dangers associated with the game."

Susie Harris would agree. "When on tour with the Hockeyroos I mostly had to rely on my own Bible reading, prayer, and listening to Christian music for encouragement. But I think God used the challenges of loneliness as a Christian to strengthen me and help me grow in my understanding and relationship with him."

2. Stay close to other Christians

Both Susie and David went to church regularly during their sporting careers. They speak about how it helped keep their faith front and centre. Susie also appreciated the support of her Christian parents: "When I was away from home – which was quite often – they would send me notes full of Bible passages and spiritual encouragement. These notes are still some of my most treasured possessions."

Other Christian sportspeople can also be of great assistance. David recalls the spiritual support given to him as a young player at the Sharks by an older Christian footballer – Jason Stevens. "He was an encouraging friend, and a great example to me of holding firm to one's faith in a hostile environment."

3. Think about how sport can be part of your Christian life

This can be done as we reflect about how the Scriptures apply to our athletic endeavours. Seeking out older and, hopefully, wiser Christian sportspeople for their encouragement and advice can also be of great benefit. Finally, reading about Christian sportspeople, and about how sport interacts with faith, also can be invaluable.

Sport is a gift from God. When we are walking closely with God, it can be a real plus not minus for our spiritual lives and for the kingdom of God. ●



Stephen Liggins is an Anglican minister in the Blue Mountains just outside of Sydney, a former first grade cricketer and Masters athlete. His new book on Christianity and sport – *The Good Sporting Life: Loving and playing sport as a follower of Jesus* – is available from Koorong.

FEBC delivers COVID-19 relief to thousands

Since we began sharing our many stories of devastation and indeed hope during the COVID-19 pandemic in *Eternity*, we have been blessed with so many calls and emails from you all. Thank you for partnering with us to provide additional urgent relief to so many of the world's most vulnerable people during this unprecedented global crisis.

Even as your own lives and livelihoods were threatened, many gave in addition AND in response to help people in greatest need in the face of COVID-19. For this we take the opportunity to say thank you and share with you a short update on the impact of your giving towards FEBC COVID-19 Relief Projects.

India and Pakistan – COVID-19 continues to devastate these two countries at an alarming rate. However, thanks to your support, over 1500 listener care packages of food, medical and sanitary supplies have been provided to families through the **Listener COVID-19 Response program**. Thousands of hours of additional programs, airtime and ministry support has also been provided, as well as computers and production equipment to continue reaching the most vulnerable in these countries during COVID-19. We recently received this testimony: *"The lockdown has left us with no food, support or hope. We are really touched by your compassion. Just for us, you came from so far to provide for our needs at a time like this. FEBC, we are grateful to you."*

Throughout Indonesia, Thailand and hard-



FEBC Thailand delivering urgent food supplies by motor bike to extremely remote villages.

to-reach Ethnic Minority regions, FEBC has delivered food parcels and agriculture supplies to support many villages and families. Almost 3000 SD cards with COVID-19 safety and information messages, Bible teachings and encouragements in ethnic languages have also been distributed. We have funded additional station support and programs to reach the unreached and vulnerable communities affected by the pandemic, with messages of health and the hope of Jesus.

The team in **Mongolia** have distributed over 2500 facemasks and listener support packages to more than 100 needy families, thanks to the generosity of readers like you.

In **Ukraine**, a **COVID-19** listener phone help line has been established and is receiving more than 60 calls a day for listeners in desperate situations. The team provided over 800 care packages to needy people in war affected areas, families of refugees, the disabled and children

in orphanages. *"Every time that I listen to your broadcasts, a wonderful joy fills my heart. My dream is that someday I will help others become believers."*

The generosity of *Eternity* readers in support of our COVID-19 relief support projects has been overwhelming to our field leaders and, of course, those we serve.

COVID-19 may have interrupted our ability to minister to the masses through churches and face-to-face listener groups, but your outpouring of love for the work of FEBC has not stopped. We will continue to be the hands and feet of Jesus and reach the most vulnerable with practical acts of love and support.

From our teams globally, we say Thank You!

If you would like to know more about the work of FEBC Australia or to read additional stories of hope and encouragement, please visit www.febc.org.au

Thank you for providing urgent relief during COVID-19



2500 facemasks provided to families in Mongolia

1500 care packages distributed to families in India



600 radios distributed in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan



800 care packages distributed in Ukraine

3000 COVID-19 SD cards given to remote families in Indonesia



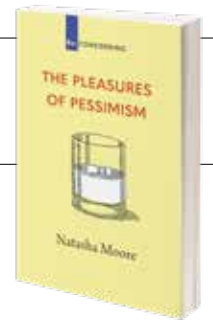
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This is an extract from *The Pleasures of Pessimism* by Natasha Moore and is available at Koorong for \$7.99

Life under the sun



 **Natasha Moore**

There is a moment in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* – the even trippier sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* – when mid-conversation, Alice and the Red Queen begin to run.

'Faster! Faster!' the Queen cries. Yet they never seem to pass anything, and end up under the same tree they started at. 'In our country,' Alice says, 'you'd generally get to somewhere else – if you ran very fast for a long time, as we've been doing.'

'A slow sort of country!' the Queen says. 'Now, here, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!'

One of the great frustrations of modern political life (of human life in general?) is that nothing is ever finally settled. Each issue, policy, system, or belief must be re-established, re-argued, fought for over again in every generation, or even each election cycle. Though we may want to lock things down – to secure particular rights or make particular gains in progress, and then tick that box and move on to something else – achievements of any kind have a pesky way of not staying put.

You don't get to cultivate a free press and then freeze it in place forever; you don't get to build a functional health care system and then cross that off your communal to-do list. As it turns out, you don't get to assume that we've sorted once and for all, and to the satisfaction of every citizen, questions like the preferability of democracy to autocracy, or the efficacy of vaccines.

It's like the second law of thermodynamics but for societies: the natural tendency of a system,

without constant input, will be to degenerate into a disordered state. Most of the time, it takes all the running we can do to keep the current state of things from collapsing. This dispiriting reality has perhaps never been articulated more unflinchingly than in the ancient Jewish book of wisdom called Ecclesiastes. 'I have seen all the things that are done under the sun,' writes the 'Teacher', held by rabbinic and Christian tradition to be King Solomon. 'All of them are meaningless ...'

*What do people gain from all their labours
at which they toil under the sun?
Generations come and generations go,
but the earth remains for ever.
The sun rises and the sun sets,
and hurries back to where it rises ...
To the place the streams come from,
there they return again.
All things are wearisome,
more than one can say.
The eye never has enough of seeing,
nor the ear its fill of hearing.
What has been will be again,
what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun.
Is there anything of which one can say,
'Look! This is something new?'
It was here already, long ago;
it was here before our time.
No one remembers the former generations,
and even those yet to come
will not be remembered
by those who follow them.
(Ecclesiastes 1:14; 1:3-11)*

This is life 'under the sun'. This is history repeating itself. This is weary pessimism in the

face of the ceaseless stream of time, in the face of a future that demands the same efforts of us, over and over and over again. The Teacher gives voice to this apathy up front – these are some of the book's opening words. But if this could be described as the glass-half-empty vision of entropic human life, the glass-half-full version of the same relentless, cyclical reality comes not long afterwards:

*There is a time for everything, and a season
for every activity under the heavens:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from
embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.
(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)*

In place of cynicism or despair, the Teacher advocates an acceptance of the need to discern what this particular moment requires, and to gear up for that. Again. He goes on:

*What do workers gain from their toil? I have seen
the burden God has laid on the human race.
He has made everything beautiful in its time.
He has also set eternity in the human heart;
yet no one can fathom what God has done from
beginning to end. I know that there is nothing
better for people than to be happy and to do
good while they live. That each of them may eat
and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil
– this is the gift of God. (Ecclesiastes 3:9-13)*

There is no autopilot. There is ever the longing for perfection, for permanence – he has set eternity in the human heart – and there is the reality of limitation, the good that I can do while I live, in the particular crisis of this moment.

What is required, then – and what an enervating pessimism makes all the more difficult – is the constant renewal of energies for tasks that must be performed fresh in each generation, and repeatedly within each generation. Which means that what is required is the resistance of apathy, and the constant renewal of patience, and of hope. ●



donnie swaggart

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Why people talk of 'Cultural Marxism' when discussing 'Black Lives Matter'

John Sandeman

Why do discussions of “Black Lives Matter” on social media bring up the subject of “Cultural Marxism”? A little history might give an answer.

*“Whatever happened to the revolution
We all got stoned and it drifted away”*

The Aussie band Skyhooks were on to something as they sang those lines. The traditional Communist parties of the West were disintegrating (it was the Seventies). Marxism, based on theories of ‘dialectical materialism,’ was seen as rigid, and ironically left behind by history.

But not everyone drifted away. Many traditional Marxists, or former Marxists, found ways to link their old dogmas about the working class and revolution with wider ideas of freedom – “we all got stoned” – in particular sexual freedom. Some also could link in with new social movements such as feminism’s second wave. And more recently, causes such as Black Lives Matter.

The Skyhooks-era Communists discovered the Frankfurt School of philosophers, who had built on both Freud and Marx. Critical Theory is the name given to the ideas from the Frankfurt School’s work which underpin many movements of social change. (A short description of the Frankfurt School, from a Christian perspective, is given by Rob Smith of the Sydney Missionary and Bible College here.) Within the actual Communist parties, one group had sought a “cultural turn” since the 1920s with key influencers such as Party theoreticians Antonio Gramsci from Italy and Louis Althusser from France.

An alternative term, “Cultural Marxism”, was first used in a scholarly way. But since it was popularised by Canadian psychologist and philosopher Jordan Peterson, use of the term has become seen as a badge of conservatism.

The term ‘critical theory’ (uncapitalised if not referring to the Frankfurt School) is now applied broadly to movements such as feminism, anti-colonialism, LGBT causes, and racial equality. An allied concept is the idea of intersectionality – that people experience overlapping disadvantage by race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and other markers of identity.

An alternative description that might be useful is “liquid modernity,” a term used by Rod Dreher in his book *The Benedict Option* – which he borrowed from a Marxist sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman. (“The Benedict Option” calls for Christians to develop a “thicker” culture and a renewed church, to prepare for a coming dark age). “Liquid” refers to how quickly this movement changes shape – for example, the speed at which lesbian radical

feminists have been voted “off the island” for being TERFs (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists). “Modernity” points to the idea of human autonomy as seen in the Renaissance, predating Marx.

“Liquid modernity” is another way of saying that critical theory is unstable, like post modernism in general.

Black Lives Matter has caused some Christians to use the term “Cultural Marxism” as a sort of filter. One prominent example is Martyn Iles of the Australian Christian Lobby: “I condemn Black Lives Matter because they are a Marxist movement,” he said in a long Facebook post (June 8). “Marxism is anti-Christ. They substitute sin with power. They substitute the individual with the tribe, imputing guilt, innocence, and judgement to collective groups, not responsible people.” (Iles quickly responded to criticism that he was dismissive of injustice to Indigenous people, by pointing out his personal commitment to racial equality.)

But Nathan Campbell, a Queensland Presbyterian minister, points out that in the age of social media, that sort of reasoning may not work. “[Iles’] post fundamentally commits a kind of reverse ‘genetic fallacy’ in that it links a hashtag that emerged on Twitter, with an organisation that developed around the hashtag and the conversation it linked. Hashtags on social media are a way of participating in linked conversations in a democratised way; and these links can give rise to different movements; but to use a hashtag is to participate in a conversation, and to affirm a truth, it is not to affirm a movement, or an organisation.”



▲ Vladimir Lenin led the transformation of Marxism from a philosophy into an one-party authoritarian regime. But why are we still talking about a political idea that failed?

Black Lives Matter really did start as a hashtag, created by three black women in 2013 – in response to the acquittal of the shooter who killed Trayvon Martin.

Dividing into political tribes is something Christians should avoid, says Michael Jensen who writes in *Eternity* about the inevitable disagreements Christians will have about politics. “Could we all be a little less dogmatic and more curious about politics? Why not be curious about why the other person disagrees so profoundly? Why not patiently respond to the person who inquires into your views? Jonathan Haidt’s book *The Righteous Mind* is an eye-opening account of how and why people of good will disagree – perhaps the disagreement lies more in personality differences than anything? And maybe, just maybe, your political preferences are more about your personality than about your faith after all.”

Ask a family protesting the death in custody of a relative whether they subscribe to a complex leftist manifesto – and they are likely to say they just want police to stop killing black people.

When a social movement goes mainstream – and Christians joining it is often a sign of this – then the “vanguard” movements lose control. The first large BLM demonstration in Sydney this year was actually initiated by a group called the Australian Communist Party, which probably rents telephone boxes for their AGM. They were quickly outnumbered by a broader movement.

So, yes, there is a left. It brings with it some unpleasant characteristics – for example a “cancel culture” that is just a bit, well, Leninist (see

Cancel culture is 'Cultural Leninism'

John Sandeman

other story, this page). For example, the term "Cultural Marxism" was banned from Wikipedia in 2014.

It also brings with it insight into real injustices in this world. But it does not own those causes.

A Presbyterian minister, James Snare, wrote an account in *Eternity* of examining his own privileges. "My Australian middle-class wealth has inoculated me from so many challenges that others face. I have always had food, shelter, heat, healthcare, and access to education." Snare is still a theological conservative – he's just responding with an open heart.

As a mirror image of what happens on the left, there is also an "intersectionality" of the right. To the widespread Christian positions against abortion and gay marriage, some will add skepticism about climate change and dismissal of Aboriginal concerns about deaths in custody – and see that as some sort of unified Christian conservative platform. When elements of that platform are questioned, some Christians feel betrayed. It is real pain. But the right does not own Christianity either.

There will always be Christians on the left and the right. To some the good Samaritan story might need to read ... "and then a Cultural Marxist came along the road," and to others "and then a Religious Right leader came along ..."

"The church is full of unwanted solidarities" is how Rowan Williams (former Archbishop of Canterbury) put it.

Eternity's conviction is that our union with Christ is a stronger reality than mere politics. It is more significant, because it is an Eternal reality. With Aslan, we say to all ideologies that there is something deeper.

"It means," said Aslan, "that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time."

At *Eternity*, we are determined to treat Christians, right and left, as sisters and brothers while emphasising generous and orthodox Christianity. As a journalistic exercise, we will necessarily reflect the mass of our community – which sits towards a centre, as that is how reportage works. But that's not to suggest any insignificance to those of you more to the right than most, or more to the left than most.

The pile ons from left and right on social media tell us from time to time that you feel disregarded. But if you are in Christ you are with us – for *Eternity*. ●

The deputy editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald* said to me "If you have to be a Christian, can't you at least be a Uniting Church Christian?" It was one of those memorable moments, which many Christians have, when a colleague wonders how on earth we fit the culture of our workplace. It was a friendly conversation but made clear that being a Christian meant working really hard to prove you belonged in the job. Fair enough I thought.

I was never cancelled. But another progressive newspaper, *The New York Times* seems to be having a season of cancel culture. First there was the Senator Tom Cotton incident. Cotton, a right-wing Trump supporter was asked by the paper to contribute an opinion piece – "Tom Cotton: Send in the Troops" – on using something called the Insurrection Act, to use Federal forces to put down the riots earlier this year. President Trump was threatening to do just that, so Cotton was well placed to make a timely contribution to the debate.

James Bennet, the opinion editor who defended publishing that column, was sacked following an insurrection in the newsroom. "A contingent of *NYT* staffers voiced their displeasure with the piece on social media," CBS News reported.

The Bennet/Cotton incident led to the publication of the "Harpers letter" signed by J.K. Rowling, Noam Chomsky, Malcolm Gladwell and 150 others protesting cancel culture. Bari Weiss, another *NYT* opinion editor, and somewhat of a star writer, has resigned with the stinging words: "Showing up for work as a centrist at an American newspaper should not require bravery."

She describes the cancel culture within the paper. "My work and my character are openly demeaned on company-wide Slack channels where masthead editors regularly weigh in. There, some coworkers insist I need to be rooted out if this company is to be a truly "inclusive" one, while others post ax emojis next to my name. Still other employees publicly smear me as a liar and a bigot on Twitter with no fear that harassing me will be met with appropriate action. They never are."

Cancel culture consists of hounding people out of jobs in the media and academia because they don't conform to, in *The New York Times* instance, a progressive zeitgeist.

Can I suggest another descriptor for this: Cultural Leninism.

Whether or not you think the term "Cultural Marxism" is a good shorthand for campaigns such as Black Lives Matter or not, the cancel culture appears to be disturbingly Leninist.

Lenin was the strong man of the Russian revolution. His version of Marxism emphasises a one political party state, with the intriguing doctrine of "democratic centralism" – that free speech only applies until the Communist party made a decision. Every member had to then support it.

In practice this led to a culture of denunciation, and the "Red Terror", repression at the hands of the Cheka, the secret police. "Anyone who dares to spread the slightest rumour against the Soviet regime will be arrested immediately and sent to a concentration camp," the Soviet daily *Izvestia* proclaimed in September 1918.

The desire to crush dissident voices is an unpleasant aspect of Leninism inherited by the cancel culture. The Soviets thought that their revolution could only succeed if other parties and

other voices were silenced.

When the Senator Cotton piece went up (online – it was censored from the print edition), the tweet "Running this puts Black @nytimes staff in danger," by *Times* staffers flooded the internet. A letter to management asking for corrections to the Cotton column was signed by 500 *Times* Staffers.

Is a staff rebellion on a newspaper enough to mark a cultural shift? It certainly marks the moment a paper, that has published op-eds by Vladimir Putin, Richard Nixon and Rush Limbaugh (the Alan Jones of the USA) and other controversial figures, is seen to narrow its focus.

Weiss was brought to the *Times* by Bennet at a time when the paper was trying to broaden its analysis – realising the rise of president Trump and the politics of those backing him had not been properly reflected in the paper. Maybe that moment of seeking discussion across the big divide in the US has passed. There is, of course, conservative media in the US (Fox News, anyone?) not keen on reaching across the aisle, either.

But just like all media, *The New York Times* gets to define its own Overton Window within its own pages (The "Overton Window" describes the range of views the mainstream in a society is prepared to discuss.) There are still right-of-centre voices on the paper, such as David Brooks and conservative columnist Brett Stephens. Some might think that *The New York Times' Overton Window* is moving too far left, but it has the right to do that. But Weiss' and Bennet's critics are saying that the article should not have been published anywhere. That is cancel culture.

Eternity's Overton Window is an attempt to reflect "generous orthodoxy" – or historic Christianity. Just like *The New York Times*, we plead guilty to not publishing everything.

Eternity adds to the diversity of Australian media, rather than being another element in a narrow field. This is not a theocratic society like Jean Calvin's Geneva, or Saudi Arabia, where dissidents of even the same faith are silenced.

Yes, it is ironic that cancel culture is closer to these theocratic societies than this avowedly media outlet. What is distressing about the events at *The New York Times* is the view that there are so many voices that should never be heard – not just in a particular newspaper.

Eternity could never have been published in Soviet Russia; we'd have been *samizdat* (hand-written and underground) at best. The old Russian joke comes to mind "Theres no news in *Izvestia* ("the news"), and no truth in *Pravda* ("the truth", and the official party newspaper). That is, no *Izvestia/News* or *Pravda/Truth* that the dominant ideology did not approve.

Cancelling out voices you disagree with, and wanting only opinions you agree with to be expressed in society: Cultural Leninism. ●

My mum and caring for the elderly

Tim Costello



◀
Tim Costello
with his mum Anne.

welfare policies. She has been an exceptional contributor to our common good.

My mother Anne Costello is in another aged care residence that is under complete lockdown. Recently she turned 91. She too has contributed much throughout her life; within the educational field in her working life and as an exceptional mother and grandmother. She saw the televised footage of Merle's comments and told me she felt saddened. "It's not all that bleak," she said. "We're well taken care of. The carers are trying so hard to keep our spirits up. I try to encourage them."

Both responses bookend the range of feelings and despair in this time.

There will be much that needs to be unravelled on the issue of whether there was an adequate Government COVID plan for aged care. In the meantime, scores of Melbourne families are coming to terms with the loss of their loved ones – in circumstances that for many were unexpected and where the deceased was isolated and died alone. All we hear are grim statistics from our beleaguered Premier who fronts the cameras each day with a breakdown of the numbers "... three women in their 60s, four men and two women in their 70s, three men and one woman in their 80s and two men and three women in their 90s ..." and so the numbers roll on. No names, no stories of their lives. Maybe they are women like Merle and Anne

who have had active lives. We do not hear that. No public funerals are permitted. But all of them would have a rich story of a life lived, of families small or large who will miss them.

This period of COVID is making us face up to many things. If we look at the experience of other countries I think the Australian community can be proud of our leaders. They have done remarkably well and have been responsive to all the health advice. Let's give them credit for having done things none of us thought imaginable – like putting homeless people into decent accommodation, and making sure businesses, churches and not for profits have access to JobKeeper to keep their trained staff on the books.

But sadly, there also have been mistakes, bad judgements, and poor decisions. And we are feeling the impact of those now. Victoria is on its knees with so many shops shut, streets empty even in the middle of the day, and a curfew to keep us in our homes at night. I never thought I would live to see days like this.

We are indeed all fragile humans struggling to get by. But vulnerability, as opposed to arrogance and self-sufficiency, is also a blessing. We are dependent on the good will of others to protect us – by wearing masks and getting tested and keeping away from essential work shifts if sick. None of us is given a leave pass to be 'sovereign citizens' refusing masks or even to putting our economic needs ahead of health concerns for the frail.

Jesus said that "in as much as you did it unto the least of these, you did it unto me". I think of the least of these as being the vulnerable in our community – the shut in, the mentally ill, the aged and infirm. What we are doing to protect them is in truth doing it for Jesus who is in our midst. He is there in those aged care homes in the rooms of lonely folk, even those longing to die. He is there in the psych wards where disturbed minds are awake at night, scared and delusional. He is there with the ill in hospital waiting on cancer treatment to save their lives.

We all need ears to hear Jesus's words again. ●

Tim Costello is the executive director of Micah Australia and a senior fellow of the Centre for Public Christianity.

In Melbourne and its surrounds, aged care is a hot topic at the moment. A high percentage of the deaths from COVID-19 have happened across aged care homes. At time of writing, 125 aged care homes across Victoria have infected residents and staff.

Merle Mitchell is 85 and in care. Last week she told the Aged Care Royal Commission that she looks around at her fellow residents and knows that most would rather they were dead. She herself wakes up every morning disappointed to still be alive. "I know I am here until I die so every morning when I wake up I think 'damn, I've woken up.'" Merle Mitchell is well remembered in social welfare circles. She worked tirelessly as a member of Victorian Council of Social Service and Australian Council of Social Service as a contributor to social

'Who am I?' is the wrong question

Martyn Iles

The most popular title for poems written by UK school students is, "Who am I?" Sadly, the question arises so much because many do not know the answer. In our modern world, identity is a smorgasbord of attributes, self-selected, constructed with no boundaries and limited moral clarity.

When the answer to a question is "anything you like," it's the same as saying "nothing at all." Perhaps this is one reason why my generation is the most depressed and anxious in our history. Most of us labour under the confusion and tyranny of not knowing.

So, the question is asked continuously. Indeed, the word "identity" has increased in English publications by nearly 700 per cent since 1950, with most of that increase since 1985. It roughly follows the rise of modern psychology.

We find ourselves here because we have chosen a false foundation for the answer. We have decided that "who am I?" is a question about our inner self, to be answered by self-exploration and self-discovery. It is nurtured with self-love and self-esteem. It is lived out in self-idealism.

One only has to read the resources floating around the school system to see immediately that this is so. Children are continually told that they are "enough," their dreams are worthy, and their

desires are good. I heard it said by one educator that we all have a "melody" in ourselves which the world "needs".

I suspect the world could have done without Stalin's "melody," but I digress.

Compare Jesus' words about the self, "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come — sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person." (Mark 7:20-23)

Also compare his description of those to whom the Kingdom of Heaven belongs – the poor in spirit. Those who know, in themselves, that they have only self-poverty (Matthew 5:3).

Romans 1 speaks of a fundamental human impulse, to serve creature rather than Creator (Romans 1:25). The ultimate expression of that is self-worship over God worship. It answers the question, "who am I?" and therefore the whole character of my life, by looking within, not by looking up.

Romans 1 further explains that this false foundation enslaves a person to all that rises from within, that Jesus described so starkly. Alas, we are condemning our newest generation to misery, not to mention resistance to the gospel which

confronts us with our sin.

This issue weighs on me, not just because of my involvement with young people, but because it is now informing public policy. Everything from laws against offending people on identity grounds, through to 'conversion therapies' legislation which will not permit external standards to shape someone's inner passions.

It strikes me that Scripture never attempts to answer the identity question without relying on God. Right from the start, we are made in God's image, mirroring something of who he is in the holy perfection of Eden.

So, the answer to the question on the modern tongue, "Who am I?" is "no." That is to say, "wrong question."

Ask instead, "Who is God?" and the rest will answer itself. We were made in His image. The revelation of who he is defines who we ought to be.

Of course, Jesus was that revelation – "... Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4) ●



Martyn Iles is Managing Director of the Australian Christian Lobby.

A MINISTER'S THOUGHTS AT 50

What I wish I had learned at theological college

Michael Jensen

Theological education is the site of so many of the contemporary church's anxieties, isn't it? Whenever we encounter a minister who seems ill-equipped for their role, or when we hear another dull sermon, the cry goes up: 'what are they teaching them in college?'

As a result, Bible colleges and seminaries can have programs overloaded with special interests: pastoral counselling, church growth techniques, or courses in management – whatever it is that the many frustrated people in the pews think will mend the problem of incompetent or inadequate ministers.

That anxiety has increased of late as the theological colleges of our nation have realised that they are in a highly competitive market for students. No longer can they survive through denominational monopolies – ordination is no longer a carrot they can dangle. Contemporary students are very picky about their experience. They want excellent pedagogy and, rightly or wrongly, maximum flexibility to choose how they will complete their studies.

I am rapidly reaching one of those landmark birthdays. I graduated from theological college 20 years ago and my ministry since has included a significant time in theological education as a teacher. I've also been a School Chaplain, a church planter, and the Senior Minister in a parish.

So, looking back: what should I have learned in college? Now, notice I haven't said 'what should they have taught me in college?' They may have taught it, but I didn't necessarily learn it! The business of studying is always a partnership between students and their teachers. And as an adult, I have to take responsibility to some degree for what I did and didn't learn. I also realise this is a sample of one – these are not the experiences of everyone. Nevertheless, I think these reflections could help shape theological curriculum.

The most powerful thing I can do is pray

I needed to be told this again and again, for my own survival in pastoral ministry. What I didn't learn in theological college was to love prayer; to see it as necessary and basic for my spiritual fitness; and to trust in it over and above my own gifts and competencies. I did not become aware that leading people in prayer and helping them to learn to pray was the most powerful thing I could offer them. I was not able to see that the church is, if anything, a people who gather to pray to the Sovereign Lord of all history in the name of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

On reflection, I think this is because I didn't deeply understand just who I was praying too. Was I captivated by the immensity, eternity, and mercy of the Lord God? Did I really grasp at the dimensions of God's love for me? I certainly heard it. But I didn't learn it as I feel I know it now.

The word of God is not chained

If prayer is the weapon in my left hand, the weapon in my right hand is the Word of God – the gospel of Jesus Christ committed to the pages of the Holy Scriptures. I know lots of other things, and have learned lots of other things. But knowing the Word of God at depth so that I can feed Jesus' sheep and preach the gospel to the unsaved is what makes the pastor a pastor and not some other thing. By his Word, God brought worlds into being. At his command, death released Jesus from its grip. And by his Word, light overcomes the darkness.

If only I had trusted the Word of God more, and not my own ability to be charming, or to be managerially effective, or to appear intelligent! When Paul was in chains for the gospel, he had



every reason for despair. And yet, he wrote, 'the Word of God is not chained!'

I think our colleges, by and large, do a decent job at teaching students this. I think the problem here is that our congregations wish our pastors knew other things – which is a confusion of expertise.

People are sinful and broken in ways you can't imagine

One thing you learn as a pastor is that humanity is deeply marred. You should know it already, in theory. But the pastoral ministry brings you face to face with human evils small and great – from petty squabbles to deep perversity – all within Christ's church. I wish I'd really learned that.

I was naïve, but I shouldn't have been. I have trusted where I should have been more suspicious. I've been stunned by vindictiveness, greed, and lust – vices that are like a cancer on the human soul. I've been lied to and manipulated. I've been bullied. I've witnessed casual racism and openly misogynistic attitudes. I've also had to remind people of the clear teaching of the Word of God about sin, only for them to wave it away as if it was a suggestion that they could dismiss.

I wish I'd realised just how deeply effected by sin and evil people are, especially as victims. It's taken me years to recognise patterns of trauma and abuse playing themselves out in people – how they hand on their hurts to others in so many ways.

To know this about people – and myself – means we can have a Christ-like empathy for people in their pain and lostness. And also, it means that we can learn to apply the healing words of grace.

Keeping the church one, holy, and apostolic is gospel work

I wish I'd realised growing the church and seeing people converted is only part of the job. Dealing with division and pain within church – keeping the church unified with Christ and with each other – is also a work of the gospel. Of course, the unity and the holiness of God's people is God's work by his Holy Spirit. But he uses pastors (and others) to do this, so the church can be an emblem of the reconciling love of Christ. That's what I signed up for!

In the midst of very difficult times in church life, I've consoled myself with the thought that this is not a distraction from the work of Christ – it IS the work of Christ. It's the gospel that brings the church together, and the gospel that keeps us united – as forgiven sinners who forgive one another.

I am also signed on for keeping the church 'apostolic'. By which I mean: the church of Jesus Christ must dedicate itself to knowing the teaching of the apostles and living it out – even when it is difficult.

My first evangelical duty is as a husband and a father

I wish I had learned this and I probably would have been a better husband and father. I think I was prone to a kind of ministry-careerism. Ironically, living the gospel in my own home with and before those I love is key to the role I have. So often Christians have cast this domestic role as a matter of 'leading' or 'teaching'. Whereas, the New Testament talks about the gentleness of fathers and the self-sacrifice of husbands – as they imitate Christ.

In my weaknesses God is often most visible

This deep truth is so hard to learn, because it goes against everything we naturally think about ourselves. We count our gifts. We feel most productive and useful when we have success, even in ministry – when we are recognised and acknowledged. And yet, I wish I had learned that it is often our failures which are our greatest opportunities to show to the church – and to the world – the gospel of grace. Now, this is not a counsel for incompetence or a strategy of disaster. That would be ridiculous, although sometimes you do wonder if churches have chosen to be woeful in everything from some notion that Christ will be more clearly seen if we are really terrible!

But we do and will fail. I have failed, many times over. Sometimes because I am just not capable. Sometimes because I am sinful. I have hurt those I've been called to love. I have been guilty of misjudgements that have had terrible consequences. I've let people down. I've preached the wrong thing from the pulpit.

What I needed to know was, once more, another theological, deeply Biblical reality: that where I am weak, he is strong. I needed to know that his treasure is in a jar of clay. My fragility is real and is my strength. And God is not thwarted in his purpose by either of them.

I think these truths were taught to me. But I don't think I was able to hear them in a way that I now have.

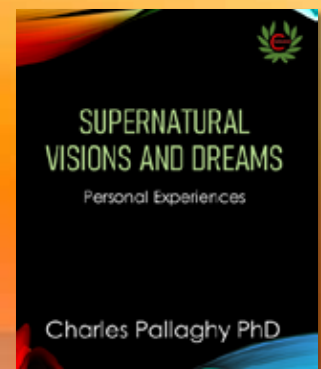
And so that, I think, raises the question: how are theological colleges going to teach so that I can learn what I needed to learn at the depth that I needed to learn it? My own view is that theological colleges have overloaded programs. There's too much on the timetable. Adding on extra things is not the answer. Clearing up space for a deeper, more spiritual and prayerful engagement with the Scriptures is what we most need right now. ●



Michael Jensen is the rector of St Mark's Anglican Church in Darling Point, Sydney, and the author of several books.

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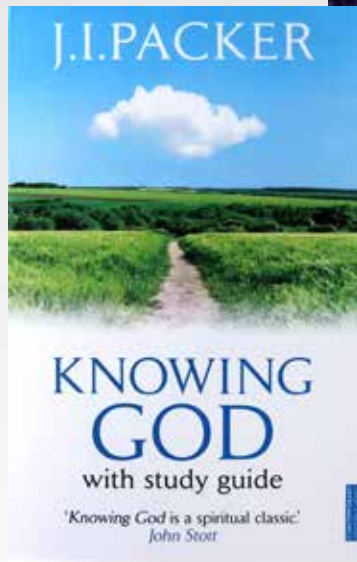
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John C. Lennox

559933 Hardback

“**Knowing God** is a book that set me on a path of transformation. Growing up in a Christian home, life had thrown hard things my way, and as a young woman I found myself experiencing a crisis of faith.

Out of despair, I chose a ‘wild life’ that only led to a deeper longing for meaning. It was time to go back to the basics. I pulled this classic from the family bookshelf, holed up in my bedroom, and read avidly. The wonder, the glory, and the joy of knowing God were made clear. The course of my life was changed forever.

Later I had the privilege of getting to know J. I. a little in Vancouver while my husband studied with him. He was an extraordinary man, profoundly humble, unprepossessing, and blessed by God with great courage and conviction. He was also smart and incisive, with enormous wisdom coming out of his fragile frame. We have lost a great man this July but his words carry on. This book will indeed help you to know God.



Alison McGregor

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Riffing on the title of author George Orwell’s dystopic novel 1984, **2084: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity** is the latest work from Oxford Professor of Mathematics and bestselling apologetics author John Lennox.

2084 is his succinct shot at separating science fiction from fact and investigating ethical and theological questions raised.

“I wasn’t writing the book to tell people what’s going to happen in 2084 [but] to tell them to think about what might happen in 2084 ... because of the developments we already have,” explains Lennox, who wants us to consider what being made “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26) means to the rising tide of AI.

For Lennox, the “transhuman” desire to defeat death and live forever had such strong links with Christianity’s core truth that he felt compelled to write **2084**. “I thought ‘Aha, I can put Christianity in, perhaps, a rather different way and bring in things that people normally don’t ever do writing a book [about AI].”



Ben McEachen

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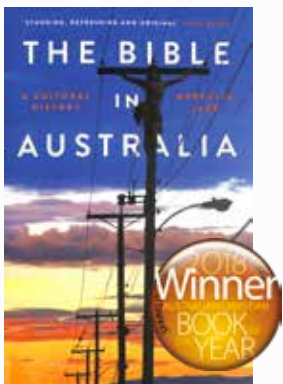
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Discovering Timeless
Truths Through
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Ruth Chou Simons
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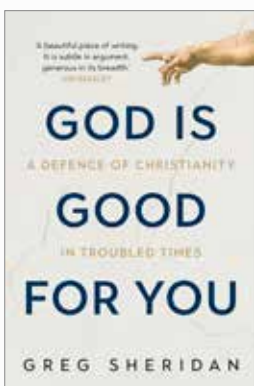


“ Meredith Lake gives an arresting and comprehensive account of how preachers, suffragists, unionists, politicians, writers, painters, musicians, immigrants and Indigenous peoples have used the Bible to shape Australian history and culture... This is a history of national importance and an insight into Australian culture.

*2018 Australian Christian
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The Bible in Australia:
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Meredith Lake
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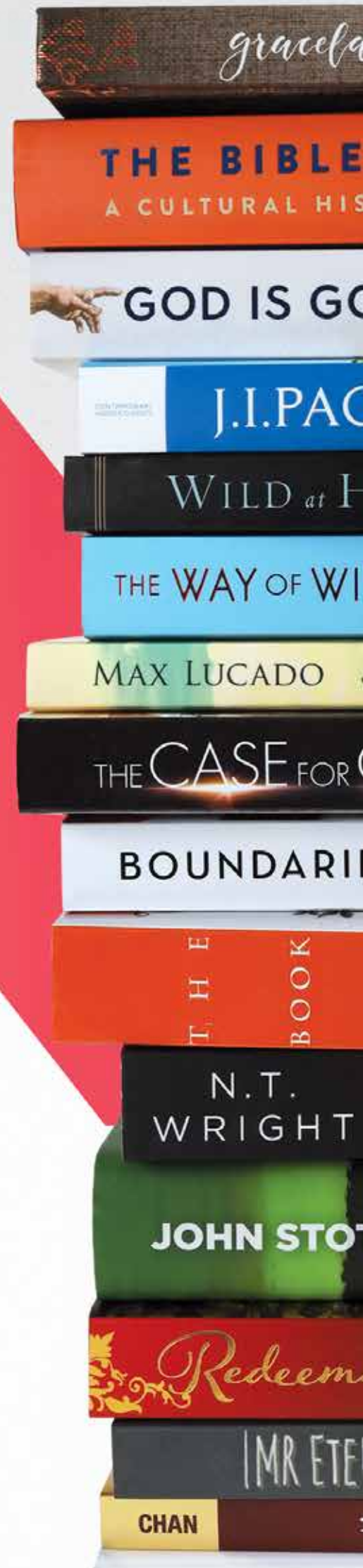


“ What a timely book! As the weight of western secularism attempts to push the air from the lungs of believers, Sheridan does us a great favour by creating a winsome work which is broad yet accessible... All Australians would benefit from reading this book... and having a good talk about it with their friends – regardless of religious persuasion!

Colin Buchanan
FROM GOODREADS, JANUARY 2019

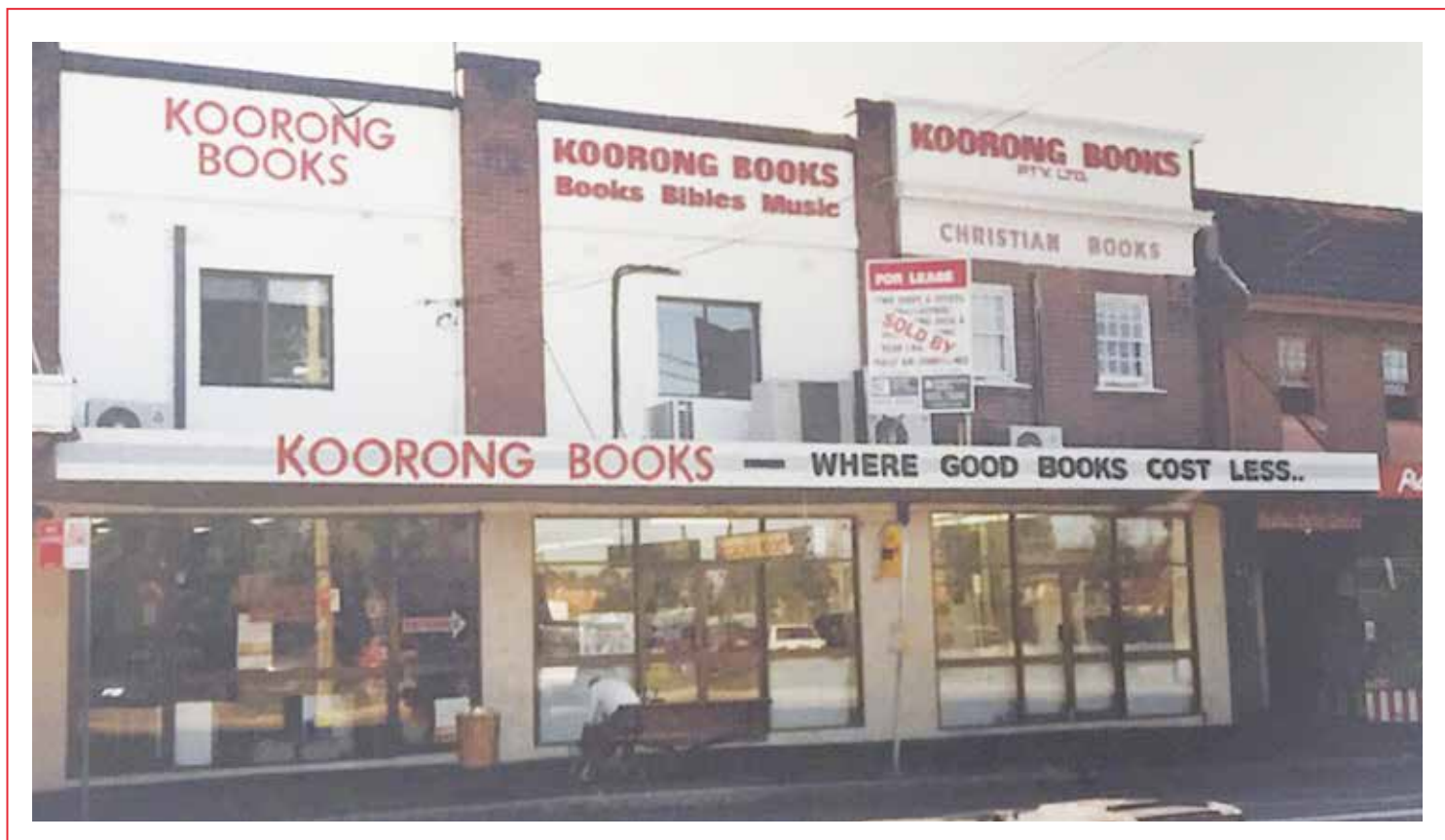
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God is Good For You:
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Koorong has been feeding my faith for 40 years

In 1980, after a church Easter camp I first entered the magical world of Koorong Books. It had been open for just a couple of years in Ryedale Road, West Ryde in Sydney. It was so full of books that it was one-way traffic down the aisles, and sometimes you had to squeeze through sideways. My friends had taken me there to buy my first Bible, and I came away with a blue paperback New International Version, and my eyes opened to the wonderful world of Christian literature.

Koorong has been feeding my Christian reading addiction ever since. It was the source of Bible reading notes, resources for youth groups that I ran, book stalls for Scripture Union Family Missions and camps, quick (often kitschy) gifts for Christian friends, and text books for 15+ years of theological study.

When I had small children, the Koorong playground was a safe place to meet with friends or a Mum's group, and the on-

site cafe combined two great loves: books and coffee.

It was a place to bump into people from past churches or Christian groups, and to occasionally see a Christian celebrity! John Mallison would hold his wonderful mentoring meetings in the café, and once we experienced a Colin Buchanan concert in the carpark.

I am grateful for the existence of Koorong, and that it has continued where other 'bricks and mortar' bookshops have failed. I know it is one brand of many faithful Christian bookstores operating around Australia; and these are vital in their service of the church: both gathered and scattered.



Kara Martin

AUTHOR OF *WORKSHIP AND WORKSHIP 2*

koorong.com/c/kara-martin

Kara's recommendations



Living at the Crossroads (275212), by Bartholomew and Goheen, a wonderful introduction to Christian worldview which I used for a recent intensive I taught.

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook (437220), by Adele Calhoun, which I am using as a resource for writing my third book in the *Workshop* series: *Shaping Christians for the Workplace*. Calhoun has done a masterful job of compiling and commenting on different habits, which can be used by the Spirit to transform us to be more like Christ.

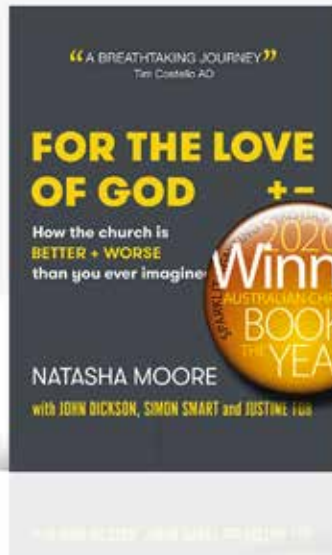
Faith for Exiles (511924), by David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, an insight into why young adults are dropping out of the church, and how the church can respond.



See more of Kara Martin's recommendations at koorong.com/kara-recommends

\$24.99
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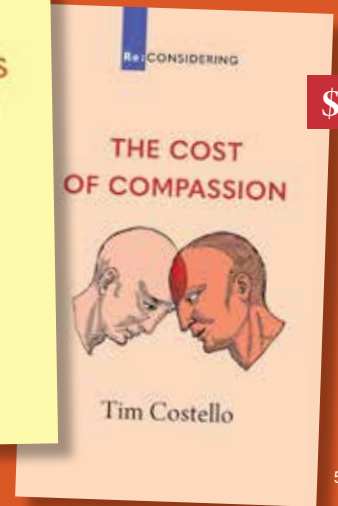
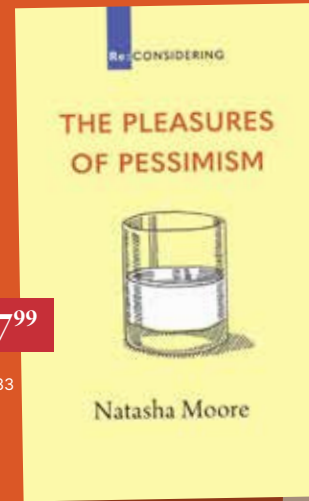
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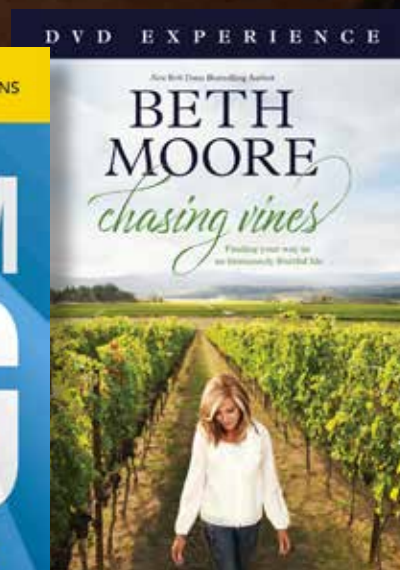
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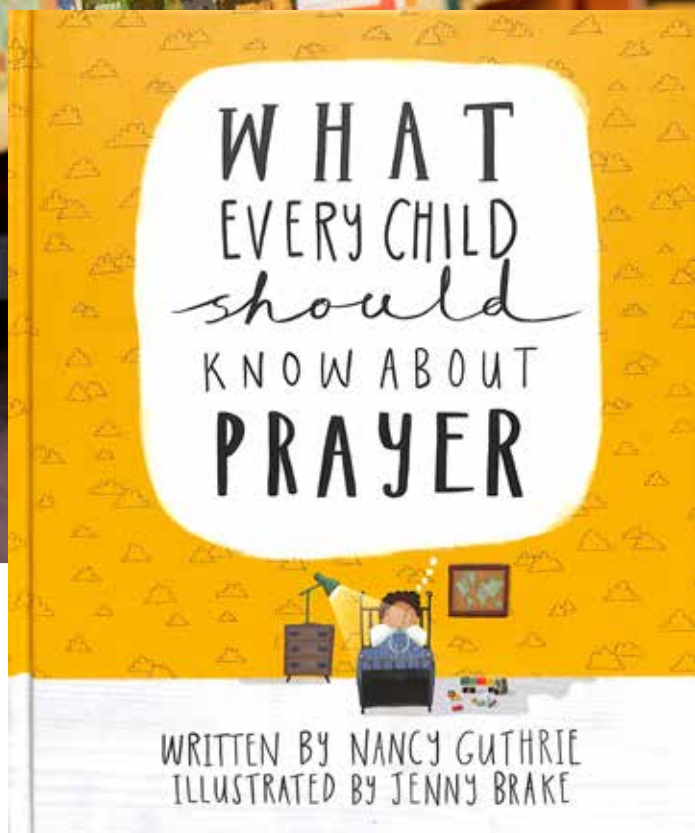
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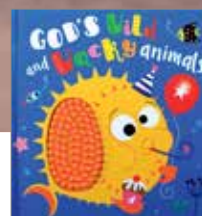
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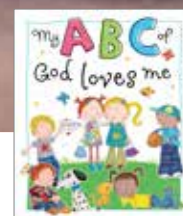
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God's Wild And Wacky Animals
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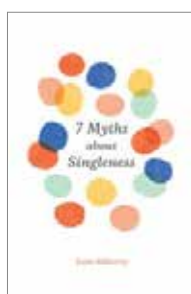
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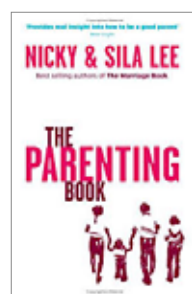
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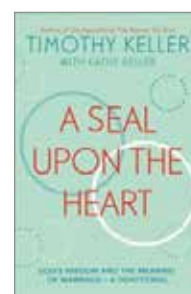
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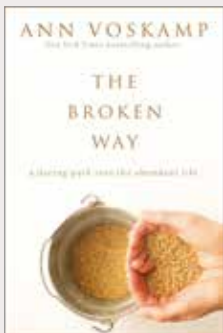
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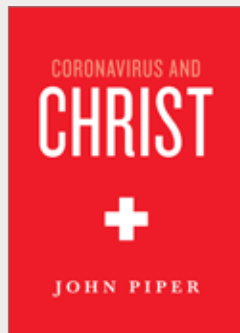
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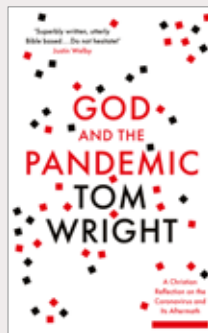
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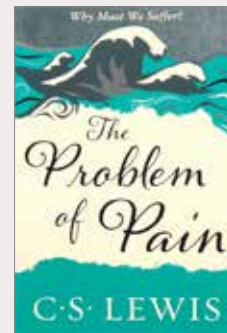
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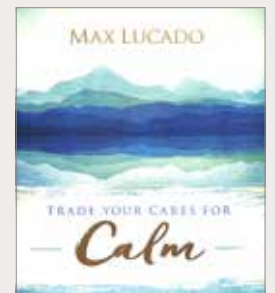
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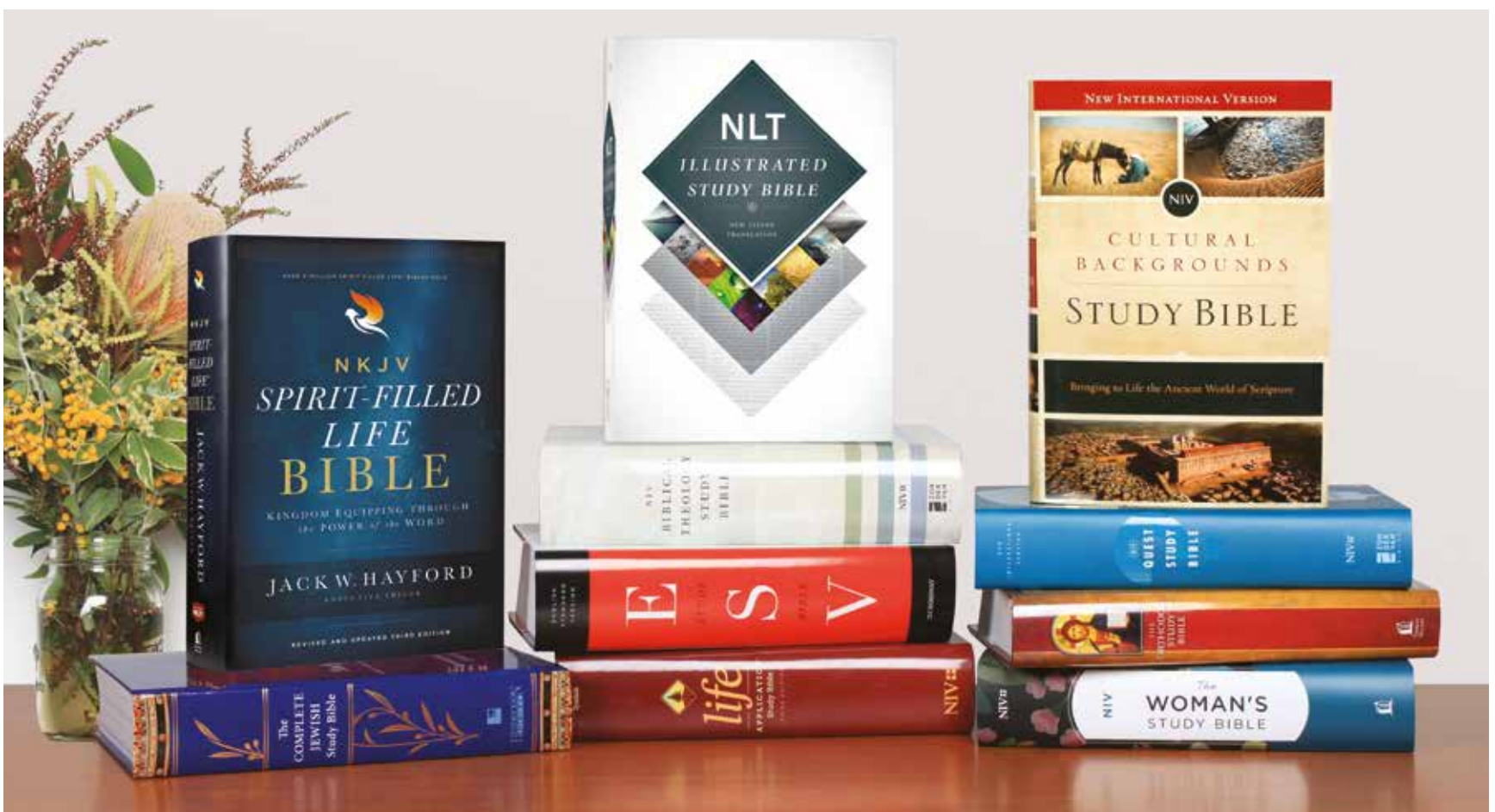


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