

A U S T R A L I A N

Presbyterian

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

june 2002

FEARING GOD

Our lost reverence

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and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*

Man's vain search • Timor rebuilds • Church directory

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The quotation on the cover is from Hebrews 12:28,29
(New International Version).

editorial

A.W. Tozer, one of the greatest prophetic voices of the 20th century, said that “the heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of him ... In all her prayers and labours, this should have first place.”

Tozer knew better than most that history has revealed that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. I was reminded of this as I was reflecting on one of Calvin's statements in the first chapter of his Institutes. In speaking of the experience of a range of people such as Abraham and Isaiah, Calvin points to the importance of our understanding of God. He says: “It's certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinise himself.”

Calvin's statement set me thinking. To what extent is the modern church looking upon the face of the true God? According to journalist Chris Stamper, the popular view of God “looks less and less like the one true God and more and more like the star of a do-it-yourself gospel pulled off a tray at a postmodern cafeteria”. Our generation has recoiled in fear from the vision of the no-nonsense God of Scripture. We are deeply unsettled by the thought of a God who probes our inmost thoughts under the searching light of his holiness. Such an idea is too traumatic for today's “feel-good” religionists.

If we are to recover a vital spirituality in the Church, we must start afresh by gazing upon the face of God. Isaiah, in a period of personal and national crisis, received an awesome vision of God in his holiness. He was never the same man again. He was shattered and overwhelmed by the sense of dread that he felt in the presence of such raw power and purity. But he was also comforted by God's promise of grace and pardon to a contrite sinner.

Isaiah's vision of God's burning holiness, his deep experiential acquaintance of his own sin as well as his liberating experience of God's forgiveness are the preconditions for a return to true Christian spirituality and effective service.

Peter Hastie 

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No fear or favour

Lack of reverence enfeebles Christians in worship and practice.



The loss of God is the outstanding fact and experience of western Christianity and culture today. Towards the end of the 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche, the prophet of modern secularism, could already see signs of the death of God in European culture. Now we are enveloped in a Nietzschean world of unreal images and freedom from absolute truths in what we believe and how we live. In the process, God is being pushed to the margins of life and no longer counts for anything meaningful to a majority of people.

Naturally, this culture of change affects the churches and the individual Christian. After all, God is the fundamental reality of truth that shapes everything else that we believe and live by. What we believe about God and how we picture him shapes our views about the world, human beings, morality, and the future. So if our hold on God is weak or our image of him is wrong, then all these other realities will be affected badly. This is why it has rightly been said that the question of our time in the modern West is the question of God.



**Douglas
Milne**

To be more specific, what we have lost in this generation is a conviction about the holiness of God. God's holiness means that he is different from us because he is the infinite Creator of all, the One who has always been there, and is morally perfect in his purity. The prophet Isaiah has forever captured the message of God's holiness in his encounter with the King, the Holy One of Israel, high and lifted up, his glory filling the temple and the whole world (Isaiah 6:1-8). Since even the sinless angels shrouded their faces in his presence, how much more a sinful man! The holiness of God is like a blinding light and a lava flow that penetrates and burns up everything in its path. Only the Lord's own cleansing through forgiveness and renewal can fit us for his service and keep us standing in his presence (Isaiah 6:5-8). The holiness of God is a call to gratitude,

reverent trembling and praise (Hebrews 12:28 — 29).

This loss of God, especially his holiness, cripples everything else in Christianity. Without it, our sin becomes only anti-social behaviour, our message becomes one among many in the marketplace of ideas, our message of grace becomes a therapy that heals our human hurts, our morality becomes a matter of good advice in the light of private interest, and our worship becomes a drama in which we act out our pleasures for the sake of our felt needs.

On the other hand, where Christians attach themselves to God's holiness everything in the Christian landscape of faith and knowledge comes to life. As Presbyterian theologian David Wells, puts it: "The holiness of God is the very cornerstone of Christian faith, for it is the foundation of reality. Sin is defiance of God's holiness, the Cross is the outworking and victory of God's holiness, and faith is the recognition of God's holiness. Knowing that God is holy is therefore the key to knowing life as it truly is, knowing

Christ as he truly is, knowing why he came, and knowing how life will end.”

How are we to explain this loss of God? We can identify four powerful movements that have converged to bring about the cultural and religious milieu of this century.

First, there has been the philosophical movement of the Enlightenment with its turn to the human subject, a belief in the powers of reason and the limits of religion. Immanuel Kant was the one who more than any other redrew the map of human consciousness by pushing the idea of an objective and supreme God to the margins of thought. Instead, he focused on the “real” world of historical experience.

However, the failure of the Enlightenment project of creating a utopian society based on freedom, equality and fraternity among the peoples of the world through human reason, technology and science has led to postmodernism. This dominant culture of our time is rooted in the rejection of all values. In spite of being a protest against the pretensions of the culture of modernity, which came to an end symbolically with the collapse of communism, just like modernity it also denies the possibility of the objective reality of a transcendent Creator-God.

Second, we are seeing in the realm of western culture the coming of a global economy of capitalism and consumerism, a way of life pandering to a growing demand for leisure and pleasure, created and stimulated by the market and the media. But this in turn erodes still further the belief in a sovereign and holy God who sets limits to our freedoms by calling us to the higher goods of self-denying love in the service of others. This form of late capitalism is irreligious to the core. Ours is the first civilisation in the story of humankind that has found its rationale within itself by dispensing with the belief in the transcendent world of God to sustain its vision, morality and communities.

Thirdly, in the world of theology there has been a loss of the transcendence of God. The transcendence of God refers to his being outside the creation he has made as the One who dwells apart in his Self-generated being. The God of the Bible is also immanent which means that he is engaged with and towards the world, interacting in the lives of men and women and the future of the whole creation. During the 20th century, theology largely collapsed God’s transcendence into his immanence with the result that Christians

and churches have lost their vertical awareness of God by becoming one-dimensional in their faith and worship.

Lastly, in the realm of the human spirit there is a withholding of the divine Presence from a civilisation that abandons God in the service of its pagan and selfish cravings for power and pleasure. Romans 1:18-32 is the classic account of this development within the soul of a people.

Since the 1960s western generations have progressively thrown off what remained of the centuries-old legacy of historic Christianity, experimenting instead with the new gods of drugs, free love and social engineering. Two generations later we have descended to the legalisation of drugs, hardcore pornography throughout all the media, euthanasia and the reproductive cloning of the human species. Through all of this God seems silent, but his silence is our self-inflicted judgment for exchanging the truth about him for a lie.

People begin by pushing God out of their lives and their laws. However, they end up indulging every kind of sordid passion and destroying one another. The result? As the poet W. B. Yeats says: “Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold, mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.”

How should Christians respond to the loss of the transcendent in their culture and their churches?

First, we can begin by reading our Bibles and looking out for the whole doctrine of God contained there. Be alert for passages that describe God’s attributes, his three-Personed being, as well as the various acts and promises of God. Take up a book like Revelation with its ethos of heavenly worship where God sits upon his throne and the whole of creation engages in endless adoration of the timeless God.

Second, we can pray for the God of heaven to move in our times and in our local scene in such a way that his people will shine like lights in the world, holding forth the word of life (Phil. 2:14-16). Let us keep on asking for reformational revival.

Third, we can compensate for the loss of God’s transcendence today by tapping into that long history of Christian writing on this subject from the church fathers to the present day. For example, we may

This is no time for the evangelical world to lose its nerve.

think of God as the One than whom nothing greater can be imagined, of the God who is hidden even in his revelation, of the holy One whose presence awakens an awe that both repels and attracts, of the God who is wholly Other, of the One who is ultimately unfathomable Mystery, of the perfect Community of hallowed Self-giving Love.


Fourth, if we are pastors/teachers we can preach through a series of sermons on the Persons, the attributes, the promises, the covenants, and the works of God.

We can and should promote God-centred acts of worship. As David McCullough helpfully reminds us: “Sometimes, what passes for worship is more human-centred than God-centred. We want to make sure everyone “gets something” out of the experience, and for good reason: this tends to be the standard most of us use to judge whether a service was “meaningful” or not. Was *I* inspired? Were the sermon and music to *my* liking? Were *my* needs met? If not, well, there’s always another church down the street to try next Sunday ... But what difference does it make if God is not at the centre?”

Fifth, we can plan a reading course dealing with the remarkable works of God, those times of special mercy when God rejuvenates his church throughout the world. The history of real revivals, beginning with the book of Acts and coming on to our own day in countries like China, changes the tone of our spiritual lives and lifts our expectations and prayers for what God can do.

Finally, we should try to retrieve the fear of God as a central Christian virtue. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of real wisdom in any age. It was the heart of Old Testament piety, but it is no less essential for Gospel living in personal relationships like marriage and the congregation (Eph. 5:21), as well as for everyday holiness (2 Cor 7:1).

David Wells has seen the challenge that lies before us: “Our culture has never been riper to hear a Word about a God large enough to provide meaning rooted in his own transcendent character and forgiveness that is objective because of Christ’s cross ... This is no time for the evangelical world to lose its nerve. It is a time to recover a faith strong and virile enough to offer to our culture the alternative that it needs to hear.”

Professor Douglas Milne is principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in Melbourne. 

The disappearing God

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The Psalmist complains that we have an all-too-human view of God (Ps. 50:21). To what extent are wrong ideas of God at the root of our spiritual problems?

I think that our basic problem is that we try to scale God down to our size. And because we think God is like us, we do not reverence him. As a result, we're not scared to disobey him. This means that for most people in our society today, God is at best peripheral and at worst irrelevant to their lives.

Do you mean that God has become peripheral even in the lives of Christians?

Yes. I think it's true of Christians as well. Many believers think that by going to Church on a Sunday morning they somehow pay their dues to God for the coming week. Once they've got that out of the way, they figure that they can do as they please for the rest of the time.

What does it mean to put God at the centre of your life?

Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 10:31 is one of the best explanations you will find. There the Apostle Paul says: "Therefore, whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." If you combine that idea with the very first petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be your name" (Mt. 6:9), you arrive at the concept that having God at the centre of your life means that you exist to please God by honouring him. All your thoughts and deeds have to be directed towards that end. There is no idea here that you can live for yourself.

Christians today need to accept the challenge of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which reminds us that our great aim in life is "to glorify God and enjoy him forever". Obviously, if the aim of our lives is to think, feel and act in a way that recognises God's absolute authority over us, then he will be at the centre of our lives. Of course, none of us can attain this position in an absolute sense because no Christian has God at the centre of his life every waking moment. There are times when we're driven by



**Jerry Bridges
talks to
Peter Hastie**

other motives. But living for God's glory should be our constant goal.

Regarding our lack of knowledge of God, is it a wrong emphasis to focus on practical issues to the exclusion of theology?

Yes, I have no doubt that it's absolutely the wrong emphasis. In fact, many churches in America are not focusing on God at all; instead, they're focusing on people's felt needs: how to feel better about oneself, how to raise your children, how to have a happy marriage, how to manage your finances well. Typical church flyers have a disturbingly familiar ring to them: they all focus on man. The message is: "Come to XYZ church and meet new friends, get acquainted with people in your neighbourhood and satisfy all your social needs." There's usually nothing there whatsoever about God. I've got one at home and God is completely missing from it. It's all about satisfying a person's felt needs.

What impression does that create?

Well, first of all, it gives the impression that the Church exists for us and not for God. And then, following on from that, it suggests that we have no obligation to God.

Of course, if we give people the idea that God is only useful to meet our needs, then we shouldn't be surprised if they have no sense of respect or reverence for God. Sadly, I think Paul's statement in Romans 3:18: "There is no fear of God before their eyes" applies not only to unbelievers today but also, to some degree, to people in the church as well. By the way, I'm not suggesting that people who don't fear God are true believers, but they are in the church. And I'm talking about evangelical churches, not just mainline ones.

If Christianity is essentially a personal

relationship with God, why should believers fear him? Isn't God safe to be around if you are a Christian?

It all depends. It might be safe to be around a nuclear reactor in some circumstances; but it can be dangerous in others. I don't think we should ever be afraid of God in the sense of being afraid of something wild and unpredictable like a tornado or of a sadistic bully who terrorises his victims. It's not that kind of fear. God is not irrational or malicious. In fact, the passage which I often use to teach the fear of God is Exodus 14:31. There we read that "when the people saw what God had done to the army of Egypt, they feared the Lord and put their trust in him". So to fear God is to be in awe of God. It means to know God as the sovereign, all-powerful One.

Perhaps a good working-definition of the fear of God is something like this: to truly fear God means to be in awe of God's being and character as well as in awe of what he has done for us in Christ. When you put these two ideas together, you have an absolutely sovereign Creator of the universe who punishes those who resist him, and yet loves us and sends his Son to die in our place. Surely that's good reason to fear or reverence him.

You've used the word "awe". Awe is a rather flexible word these days. People talk about a film that's "awesome". Surfboard riders talk about waves in the same way. What exactly do you mean by it?

First, I'd like to point out that we usually profane the word when we use it today. We've got to get back to its real meaning. To be "in awe" of someone means to venerate, honour and esteem him. I've got a book of synonyms at home. I looked up the word "awe" to see what sort of synonyms and antonyms it had. Interestingly, what caught my attention was one of its antonyms — "to take for granted". Tragically, I think this phrase describes large sections of the Christian community today. Many Christians now take God for granted. Is it any wonder that we're no longer in awe of him?

So, to get back to your question — yes,

I get irritated when I hear the word “awe” used in profane ways. It makes me righteously annoyed every time I hear people use the word perversely. For instance, people will say “that was an awesome ice-cream”, or something like that. When you think about it, that’s a terrible misuse of the word.

You’ve said that the word “fear” can mean “reverence”, “venerate” or “admire”. Does the word also suggest “cringing” or “servility”? Do these ideas play any role at all in the biblical idea of fearing God?

“Cringing” and “servility” are foreign concepts to the biblical idea of fearing God. I think that what the Bible means when it talks about fearing God is that we don’t take God for granted. You must treat God with absolute respect because he is a God who judges sin.

Let me give you an illustration. I know a Christian worker who divorced his wife so that he could chase another woman. Obviously, he had to resign from his organisation. When confronted with his sin, he said: “I know it’s wrong, but God will forgive me!” Clearly, this man has no fear or respect for God. He was not afraid of God’s discipline in his life.

The apostle Peter talks about Christians having a “Father who judges each man’s work impartially”, and as a result, “living our lives as strangers here in reverent fear” (1 Pet. 1:17). I liken this to my boyhood days when growing up. My dad was very loving, but he wouldn’t take any nonsense or disobedience from me. So I had a very healthy fear of him that kept me in line. But it certainly wasn’t a servile fear. We had some great times together. Although I had a very healthy respect for my dad, I never cringed or felt that he was going to hurt me or anything like that.

You speak of the fear of God as though it’s one of the hallmarks of the Christian life. But Paul does not mention it as one of the fruits of the Spirit.

It’s really not difficult to explain. For example, in Jeremiah 32:38-42, God says: “I will give them singleness of heart ... so that they will always fear me for their own good ... I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.” So I’d say that anyone who is a genuine believer, who has been born again by the Spirit of God, has at least the seed of this biblical fear of God within him. Therefore, in that sense, the fear that the

Lord places in the believer’s heart is very much the fruit of the Spirit. Like all the other clusters there in Galatians 5, fruit has to be cultivated. The same holds true for the fear of God. It has to be cultivated as well.

So is it possible, like Jesus, to delight in fearing the Lord?

Absolutely. That’s precisely what Isaiah says about Jesus in chapter 11, verse 3: “He will delight in the fear of the Lord.” There Isaiah is speaking of Jesus’ humanity; it’s a messianic passage. And Isaiah tells us that as the Spirit of God came down on him, so he perfectly feared the Lord. We should do the same if we are followers of Jesus.

Why is it that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom? Why not the love of God?

Because I believe that the fear of the Lord is the most fundamental attitude that we can have toward God. In fact, in my own prayer life I have several Bible verses that I pray over frequently. I have them in what I call “priority-order”. The most important is marked #1, the second #2, and so forth. The one that comes at the top of the list is Psalm 86:11: “Give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name.” Having a deep reverence for God is absolutely fundamental as I read my Bible. I mean, is it ever possible to overestimate the importance of God? I think the question answers itself. Our responsibility is to remain continually in awe of God. We must reverence him for who he

is and what he has done for us in Christ.

Once you have established your respect or reverence for God, then your next priority is to grasp the love of God. That’s number two in my mind.

When Martin Luther expounds the Ten Commandments in his Small Catechism, he begins each answer by saying: “This commandment means that we must fear and love God by...” Is Luther saying that fearing God comes before loving him?

OK, let me put it this way. One in four times where the term “fear the Lord” is used in the Bible, it’s connected with our obedience. But it’s also true that our obedience is motivated by love for God. As Jesus says, “He who has my commands and keeps them, he it is who loves me” (John 14:21). So I would say that it’s almost a redundant expression. Of course, I hesitate to say that. I have difficulties sorting that one out myself. But Deuteronomy 10:12 links fear, love and obedience together. Moses says to the Israelites: “What does the Lord ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, and to serve the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul?” He brings those three terms — to fear God, to love him and to serve him — all together in the one passage. And the way the terms are used, it’s almost as though they are interchangeable expressions.

Is the state of morality and crime in a community directly related to the

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people's fear of God?

Well, absolutely! Do you remember the first time that Abraham uses the term "fear of the Lord"? It was when he lied about his wife, Sarah. Abimelech, the king of Gerar, asked him why he did it. Abraham said: "I said to myself, there's no fear of God in this place, so they will take my wife and kill me!" (Gen. 20:11). It was obvious to Abraham that a fear of the Lord is the most powerful restraint against sin.

Paul expresses the same idea in Romans 3. From verse 10 he sets out the tragic nature of man's problem: no one seeks God; all have turned away; and no one does good. Then finally, he says: "There is no fear of God before their eyes". Paul's conclusion is that as you work your way up the chain of sin you finally come to the root cause – that people have no fear of God.

Again, this is also linked to today's idea that there's no such thing as a judgment. I'd say that's pretty much an almost universal belief now. People think that the idea of a judgment is simply a religious device to keep us under the control of the church. They hate the thought that they're accountable to God. That's why bereavement sympathy cards say things like: "Your friend has gone to a better place."

Is the fear of God a proper motive to which we can appeal in stimulating Christian growth and ministry?

Oh, absolutely! Again, to me it's primary and fundamental. We must start with a reverence for who God is. This is why I strongly urge people to read through the

whole Bible every year. We need to be constantly saturating our minds in God. You can't think about God in the Old Testament without being struck by his awesome sovereignty and holiness. Think, for example, of how he crushes the Assyrian army in Isaiah 37. He strikes 185,000 of them dead in one night without firing a shot. Now that's awesome. The more you read of biblical history the more you think: "Wow, this God plays for keeps." We need to cultivate this mind-set because this is reality. This is how the real world works; God visits his judgment upon his enemies sooner or later.

Christians need to know this deep in their souls. Even though we know that our sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ and that we are perfectly righteous in him, we must never forget that we cannot fool around with God. He treats sin seriously. A man I once knew said: "I know that having lustful thoughts for women is wrong, but God will forgive me." This man hadn't realised what it means to fear God.

Many Christians struggle with besetting sin. Can a knowledge of the fear of God get them out of the cycle of repetitive habits of sin?

First, I'd say that the thing that's going to help a person get out of a cycle of repetitive sin is the knowledge that their sin has been dealt with by Christ on the cross. They need to understand that God no longer counts their sin against them. In fact, in Psalm 130:3,4 the Psalmist says: "If you, Lord, kept a record of sin, then who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you that you may be feared." It's certainly

a terrifying thought to think that God may keep an accurate record of our sins. Because he is holy he could do that. But because he's also gracious he freely forgives us through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. And when I see that God has forgiven my sin through the death and resurrection of Christ, then this puts me in awe of him. I think it's important not to separate those two components that I started with: the fear of who God is and the awe of what he has done for us in Christ. We cannot separate those two.

If, for example, in the area of besetting sin, we just focused on the first one, then the person tends to see God as his judge and he is reduced to a servile fear. But if he sees that God is not only his judge but also his saviour, then his fear is not really servile; it's a fear that has love intermingled with it. You cannot deal with the power of sin as long as you are faced with just the guilt of it. So when a person comes to me to ask for help with besetting sin, the first thing I try to do is to help them see that God has already dealt with their guilt. This frees them up from it so they no longer see God as their judge. Instead, they see him as their heavenly Father who is for them. Then they realise that God is there to help and empower them to deal with it.

Only then do I begin talking about the practical steps that they can take such as memorising Scripture, prayer and setting up a system of personal accountability.

Calvin speaks of the dread and wonder which believers experience in God's presence in both Old and New Testaments. Should we experience the same thing?

I believe so. I think it's a paradigm of the Christian life throughout the Scriptures. We see this more vividly in some people than in others. For example, this attitude is very prominent in Moses after God appears to him in Midian. We also see it in Joshua, Gideon, Ezekiel and Isaiah. But we also recognise it in Peter, Paul and John. So it's definitely a paradigm for the believer. But today, sadly, we don't see this type of spirituality very often. I would say that a Christian who genuinely exhibits the fear of God is in a small minority, even in the church.

How do we cultivate that "awe-struck" attitude that the Bible says we ought to have?

First of all, I think we should pray like the Psalmist who asked the Lord "give me an undivided heart that I may fear your

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name” (Ps. 86:11), and then claim the promise of Jeremiah 32:40 where God says “I will inspire them to fear me”. Say to the Lord: “O God, you have put this fear in my heart. Please cause it to grow.” Ask the Lord to help you to grow in reverence.

Second, I think that we need to read the Old Testament frequently if we want to grow in the fear of God. Even if we can’t participate first-hand in God’s great acts of power like the parting of the Red Sea, we can still re-live them by sharing in the original story. They took place in time and space. They were real events and we can share in them.

Third, another profitable course would be to read some great books on the nature of God. Here I am thinking of A.W. Tozer’s *The Pursuit of GOD* and *The Idea of the Holy*. Another good book is *The Holiness of God* by R.C. Sproul. Sproul’s great strength is that he has devoted his whole ministry to emphasising the holiness and awesomeness of God.

Have those particular books had a profound effect on your life?

Yes, although the book that has had the most impact on my life and which I would love to recommend is one that I can’t because it’s so difficult to read. I’m referring to *The Existence & Attributes of God* by the Puritan Stephen Charnock. Unfortunately, no one is reading this sort of stuff today. You really have to be a die-hard fan of the Puritans to digest it. His chapter on the holiness of God, for instance, is a hundred pages. And this book has left a greater impact on me than almost any other. I guess the other book that has helped me to grow in the fear of God is A.W. Pink’s book, *The Sovereignty of God*. These are the sort of books that drive people to their knees.

Is it difficult to grow in the fear and love of God?

It’s not easy because it involves struggle and determination. Sadly, many Christians don’t seem to be ready for it because they are not interested in hard work. They’re just not motivated. Most Christians have a baseline for their Christianity which includes regular attendance at worship services and avoidance of any scandalous sins and being a nice, decent sort of people. All they want is to stay above the baseline. However, they’re not interested or willing to pay the price to grow. They’re more interested in the football and the golf and how their shares are doing in the market — these kind of things.

Go to your average, after-service fellowship and listen for the topics of conversation: it’s the weather, it’s sports, it’s business, it’s how your children are doing — these kinds of things.

One day I decided I would see what would happen if I asked questions about a man’s spiritual growth. So I said to him: “What’s God been teaching you lately?” And he looked at me with a shocked expression. He said: “No one’s asked me that question before!” He simply didn’t know how to answer it. So we have this baseline and we’re just not interested in going beyond it.

What positive effects does the fear of God have on the life of a believer?


It will increase the person’s reverence for God; it causes the person to realise something of the majesty and transcendence of God. Further, when you couple that with the love of God in Christ for us this will result in a gratefulness to God. When you are reverent and grateful, you’ll be asking the question: “OK, Lord, what do you want me to do?”

I think we see this in the Isaiah 6 passage; the vision that Isaiah saw in the Temple. There he sees the holiness of God. He hears the seraphim crying out: “Holy, Holy, Holy!” He is overcome by the majesty of God. Then he becomes aware of his sinfulness. After that he experiences forgiveness. The angel says to him: “Your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for.” Then he hears God say: “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” Isaiah doesn’t say: “Lord, go where

and do what?” He just says: “Here am I, send me!”

I think that’s the approach we have to take. I think that today we want to get people into some form of ministry so quickly that we don’t take people through the steps of who God is and what he’s done for them in Christ. So consequently, when we make the appeal to serve God in any way — whether it’s in being a steward of the congregational finances or teaching a Sunday school class or caring for homeless people — most Christians are not up to it because they’re lacking this deep-rooted motivation.

Again, we take the cross for granted instead of being absolutely amazed by it. I mean, we sing the hymn: “Amazing love ... and can it be ... that Thou my God shouldst die for me” and we’re moved by it emotionally. But it stops there. The thought of the cross doesn’t inspire us to lay down our lives in humble service. So I think that pastors, teachers, and other Christian leaders ought to be presenting the high and holy God who has loved us in his Son. And then, as a consequence of that, people will respond.

Jerry Bridges is a highly respected author and Bible-teacher, who has written a number of well-known books such as The Pursuit of Holiness, The Practice of Godliness, True Fellowship, Trusting God, Transforming Grace and The Joy of Fearing God. He has a close association with the ministry of The Navigators and lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA. 

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Holy seer

God sees through us, then sees us through. This amazed Augustine.

Abraham was embarrassed! He knew he'd been foolish the moment he'd done it but at least no one knew. At least, no one who would tell. Sarah wouldn't, and he could always pay Eleazar and a few of his trusted servants a bit more to keep quiet. Now, here were Hagar and Ishmael back again, and they were adamant that God had sent them. Worse still, Hagar said that God had been watching the whole sorry saga right from the beginning (Gen. 16).

Abraham knew God, and he knew that God knew him. He loved God and had great hopes for the fulfilment of all the divine promises; Jesus said so (John 8:56). But there was one thing that Abraham forgot: God sees everything! Our problem is that we forget it too.

God's people have always been blessed when they reflect carefully on what it means to be "in the presence of God". It's true that some have completely mangled what it means and shrouded it in all sorts of unhelpful and false mysticism. At the other extreme, it's all too easy to ignore its consequences altogether, and live as if God doesn't see anything at all.

Within the history of the Church, one man who forces us to be brutally honest

Graham Nicholson

about facing up to seeing our lives as God sees them was Augustine of Hippo, Christian preacher and pastor in North Africa during the late 4th and early 5th century.

Augustine grew up with a little bit of Christian knowledge. His mother was a Christian, but his father was not converted until after Augustine left home. Not surprisingly, there was little real discussion of theology in his youth (how do our homes rate here?). Augustine knew he was supposed to believe in God, but his idea of God was something like the proverbial "Old Man" up in heaven. Then he left home to go to school, and God didn't seem to matter any more.

As a result, he was easy prey for a cult which said that God could only ever be the good part of the Universe and that there was a bad part where God did not rule. People were a mixture of both. If this was true, it meant there was some part of his existence where the God of Good did not reach.

For 10 years, these ideas kept him away from Christianity. It also provided him with a wonderful excuse for his sinfulness. When he failed, he could just blame the bad bit of himself. However, when he at last came to accept that God was always everywhere, there could be no hiding from him any more, and no excuses for his sin. God had to be faced.

It is not easy to consciously think of God in terms that do not depend on time and space. We all know the child's questions: "If God is everywhere, then is he on the chair when I sit on it?" "How can God be here and there at the same time?" Augustine wrestled with the same sorts of questions. Eventually he found it helpful to think of things like Beauty, Goodness and Truth which were certainly "real", but which did not take up any space. They could "be" anywhere and could not be cut up, or get smaller as more beautiful, good or truthful things came into existence.

Once Augustine realised that he could

think of God as everywhere present in all his attributes, it set him free to love God in a whole new way. A love like that could never be limited by any place or by any person.

Augustine thought that living in the presence of God meant that we should think of our lives as one long continuous "prayer". If you read Augustine's reminiscences in his *Confessions* you will quickly realise that this is one of the things he is careful to emphasise. Much of that book expresses a prayerful regret that so much of his life was lived without a conscious love for God.

But living totally in the presence of God meant that God must know more about Augustine than he would ever know about himself. So why should he pray? Why tell God imperfectly the things he already knew perfectly? Augustine concluded that in consciously praying, he would be forced into an honest awareness of how sinful his own heart really was, and how desperately he needed grace. By his honesty in describing his life, he hoped others would be prompted to do the same.

He wrote: "O LORD, since eternity is yours, are you ignorant of the things which I say unto you? Or do you see at the time those things which come to pass in time? Why, therefore, do I place before thee so many complicated things? Surely it is not so that you will know what I tell you, but so that I may awaken my own love and that of my readers towards you. Then may we all say, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised" (*Conf.* 11.1).

Realising the timeless presence of God makes the reality of our conversion all the more remarkable. God has chosen to draw us to himself fully aware of all our past! (This is what Paul meant in Romans and Ephesians.) To Augustine, this was proof of a love which defied all attempts to understand it, but which could not be taken for granted. It prompted his famous quote: "You arouse man to take joy in praising you, for you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (*Conf.* 1.1.1).

Prayer was not really for God's benefit, but his. If there was to be any "hiding", let

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it rather be Augustine "hiding" in God, in life as well as in death.

Augustine believed living joyfully in the presence of God should also spur us on to challenge others with Christ. Augustine gives us the following illustration in a sermon on Matthew 20:1. Suppose a father is terminally ill. Death is guaranteed, and sleep seems a blessing. But suppose also that a doctor were to say, "Wake your father up, don't let him sleep if you want him to live for a bit longer." Then, Augustine suggests, a son would "beat, squeeze, pinch, prick or otherwise trouble the old man" (well, we get the point!), so that the father will live a few more days. And, as the father does live, there will naturally be great joy in the household.

We can argue with the illustration, but not until we have heard Augustine's closing application: "With how much greater affection than ought we to plead with our friends, especially when we don't want to live with them for just a few more days in this world, but in God's presence for ever! Let them then have reason to love us, and do what they hear us say, and worship him, whom we also worship, that they may receive what we also hope for."

Augustine lived in an age of doctrinal struggles. He was well aware that heresy and hypocrisy were often hidden under the pretence of the truth, and that they threatened to deceive many. Many who seemed religiously correct on the outside were false on the inside, but how to tell? He was even tempted to use deceitful methods himself in order to identify them, but *s t e a d f a s t l y* refused. The God of truth would not bless work based upon deceit. God who sees all, sees what even the ungodly and deceitful have hidden, and will bring it to light.

The faithful Christian need not fear. God can be relied upon to bring them to nothing, "for God shall bring into judgment every work".

The presence of God gave meaning to every sphere of Augustine's life. We live in days when people desperately want their lives to make a difference. They want their lives to have meaning. The philosophers of our age cannot give that assurance, and

the best they have been able to come up with is: "Don't worry about finding meaning in what you should be. Just enjoy the reality of your existence now as you make choices, moment by moment."

Augustine's reply to such ideas is a simple one. "It is not surprising that we live empty lives, for only those who keep God's commandments really know what it is to live meaningfully. Every other life is really a vanity, and as long as one remains disobedient there will never be any true understanding of life."

Though we can find a few areas where Augustine was quite seriously out of step with the Bible, the fruits of one man's love for "the God who sees" continues to make a difference more than 1500 years later. We need to resolve to live so that if God were to preserve the effects of our life for 1500 years, the same might be said of us.

Graham Nicholson, a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, has just completed a PhD on Augustine at the University of Queensland.

To expand your understanding, read Confessions, particularly books 1-9. If you are a bit more adventurous, finish reading the Confessions, then read his City of God. ^{ap}

God's people have always been blessed when they reflect carefully on what it means to be "in the presence of God".

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Thinking rightly

Perverted notions of God rot religion, warns A.W. Tozer.

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God.

For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God. Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God. She can never escape the self-disclosure of her witness concerning God.

Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question "what comes into your mind when you think about God?" we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man. Were we able to know exactly what our most influential religious leaders think of God today, we might be able with some precision to foretell where the Church will stand tomorrow.

Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and the weightiest word in any language is its word for God. That our idea of God correspond as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance to us. Compared with our actual thoughts about him, our creedal statements are of little consequence. Our real idea of God may lie buried under the rubbish of conventional religious notions and may require an intel-

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



ligent and vigorous search before it is finally unearthed and exposed for what it is. Only after an ordeal of painful self-probing are we likely to discover what we actually believe about God.

A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb, the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.

It is my opinion that the current Christian conception of God is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity.

Among the sins to which the human heart is prone, hardly any other is more hateful to God than idolatry, for idolatry is at bottom a libel on his character. The idolatrous heart assumes that God is other than he is and substitutes for the true God one made after its own likeness.

A god begotten in the shadows of a

fallen heart will quite naturally bear no true likeness of the true God. "You thought," said the Lord to the wicked man in the psalm, "that I was altogether like you." Surely this must be a serious affront to the Most High God.

Let us beware lest we in our pride accept the erroneous notion that idolatry consists only in kneeling before visible objects of adoration, and that civilised peoples are therefore free from it. The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of him.

The idolater simply imagines things about God and acts as if they were true.

Perverted notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear. So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards declines along with it. The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God.

Before the Christian Church goes into eclipse anywhere there must first be a corrupting of her simple basic theology. She simply gets a wrong answer to the question "what is God like?" and goes on from there. Though she may continue to cling to a sound nominal creed, her practical working creed has become false. The masses of her adherents come to believe that God is different from what he actually is; and that is heresy of the most insidious and deadly kind.

The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of him. We do the greatest service to the next generation of Christians by passing on to them undimmed and undiminished that noble concept of God which we received from our Hebrew and Christian fathers of generations past. This will prove of greater value to them than anything that art or science can devise.

This extract is taken from The Knowledge of the Holy, by A.W. Tozer (James Clarke, 1961).

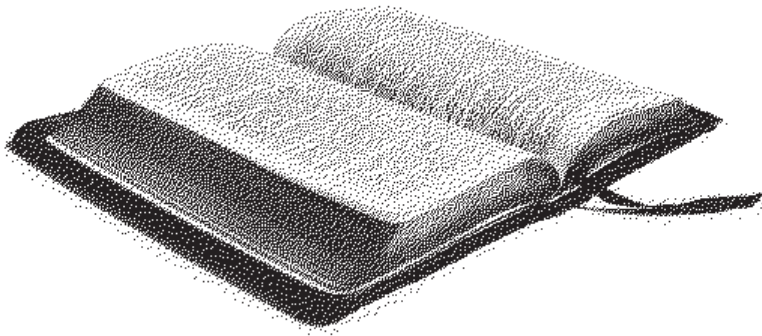
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Word for the wise



**The theme this month:
The God who comforts us
(Psalms 30-41)**

The last 12 psalms of Book I of the Hebrew Psalter (Psalms 30-41) take us on a difficult but enriching journey. Some of us can identify with David's experiences quite closely; others of us have been one step removed as we have walked beside a family member or close friend as they have gone into the "slimy pit" and the "mud and mire". Some of us may yet have such experiences in front of us in God's providence. One of the exciting things about God's Word is that it shows us there is no experience, no matter how dark, that God has not taken one of his servants through before. As you read these psalms this month, particularly Psalms 35-39 (day 10 — day 17) remember also that Jesus went through all this for you, carrying not the burden and guilt of his own sin, but yours!

Bruce Christian

DAY 1 *Wailing turned to dancing*

THE PASSAGE PSALM 30:1-12

THE POINT The Lord hears our cries for help; his presence makes all the difference to the way we experience life.

THE PARTICULARS

- There will be people who will take pleasure in our suffering and distress when we try to follow God's way.
- When we call out to God for help he always hears & answers — sometimes by protecting us from danger, sometimes by rescuing us from a bad situation or healing an illness.
- God's people will suffer hardship & difficulty, even feeling rejected by a God who seems to be angry, but in the long run this will be only like a fleeting experience and will soon pass.
- God's favour towards us will last through our whole lives.
- It is a fact of life that our moods & circumstances change dramatically, but God remains the same and can turn sorrow to joy.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Are there times when you feel really secure as a child of God? How does this psalm help you make the most of these times?
- What will you do next time you feel down & alone? What does this psalm teach you about prayer?... about waiting & trusting?

DAY 2 *God's 'Safe House'*

THE PASSAGE PSALM 31:1-8

THE POINT God provides for us a place of safety & security where nothing can harm us if we hand everything over to him.

THE PARTICULARS

- God is able to rescue us from harm, danger, embarrassment, things going wrong, planned opposition, worry, or distress.
- God can hear our prayers and act quickly for us.
- We can depend fully on God's absolute values & unchanging character: his righteousness, his truth, his love and his mercy.
- Because of God's character (name) he will never lead us astray.
- It is useless trusting in anything other than the God of the Bible.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Jesus put verse 5 to the test on the cross, and conquered sin and death for us. Have you discovered him as 'the way, the truth, and the life' (John 14:6), and as your Redeemer?
- Have you really discovered the secret of not trusting in all the 'worthless idols' that aren't the one true God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you 'hate' the part of you that hasn't?!

DAY 3

In safe hands

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 31:9-18

THE POINT No matter how desperate or discouraging the situation around us we can rest secure, knowing that our lives are safe in the hands of the only One who can, and will, rescue us.

THE PARTICULARS

- Even believers, whose faith in God is strong & firm, will experience times of distress, illness or depression.
- Commitment to God and obedience to his Word does not protect us from rejection, neglect, insult or slander (even by friends!).
- God wants us to renew (in spoken words!) our commitment to him at times when we feel specially lonely, weak & vulnerable.
- It is right to ask for, and expect to receive, God's help in times of opposition and distress; and to ask HIM to avenge you.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Do you have a view of God's sovereign power that would let you say to him confidently, "My times are in your hands"?
- What action did you take the last time you felt that everything was against you and you were really down? What action will you take next time you feel like this?

DAY 4

A rainbow through the rain

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 31:19-24

THE POINT It is in our times of greatest distress that we best come to know and understand the goodness of God. It is then also that our faith and trust in him finds its truest expression.

THE PARTICULARS

- God is not ashamed to reveal publicly & openly his goodness to all who honour him and trust him.
- God can protect his children from their accusers & attackers.
- God shows his wonderful love most clearly at times when we feel the need of him most because we are completely desperate.
- God hears and answers genuine cries for help.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Has there been a time in your life (recently?) when these final 6 verses of Psalm 31 could have been your personal testimony? Why not store them up in your mind for when you need them?
- David discovered God's goodness in the middle of a time when he was experiencing overwhelming distress. Is this the only way we can really discover God's goodness, or is there some easier way? What does this teach us about suffering?

DAY 5

Who is covering your sin?

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 32:1-11

THE POINT When we try to cover over our sins our lives are restless and troubled; when God covers them over we are secure & blessed.

THE PARTICULARS

- True joy & happiness come from knowing that our sins are forgiven, not from deceitfully thinking we are not sinners!
- Physical & emotional distress can often be the result of unacknowledged & unconfessed sin.
- The safest and best place to be is in God's presence; we can only enjoy God's presence if our sins are confessed & forgiven.
- When we pray to him, God promises to guide & direct us — not 'blindly' or impersonally, but through the wisdom he gives us.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Do you have something troubling you at the moment? Is it some secret sin you've been trying to 'cover up'? What will you do?

My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought,
my sin, not in part, but the whole,
is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more,
praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

Horatio Spafford

DAY 6

The LORD rules, OK!

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 33:1-11

THE POINT The LORD is on his throne; he made everything & has it all under control; he is faithful & loving ... so let us sing & play for joy!

THE PARTICULARS

- God declares us righteous by his grace — the most appropriate response is to praise him loudly with everything we've got.
- God has told us what is true in his written Word, the Bible, and we can trust him to be faithful to all his promises.
- When our lives match up with his in terms of righteousness and justice he is pleased (implying that when they don't he isn't!).
- God created the whole universe by his spoken word (not by evolution!) and he maintains it constantly. This should cause all people everywhere to bow before him as Lord (cf Romans 1:20).
- All nations today, and all their plans, are under God's control.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What warning do this psalm & Romans 1:20 give to those who think they can safely ignore God and profess ignorance?
- Are you rejoicing today in the truth of God's faithful Word?
- Do verses 10-11 help you to remain calm in our present world?

DAY 7

Futile forces, worthless weapons

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 33:12-22

THE POINT The LORD in heaven rules over all things. A nation's security does not depend on the size or sophistication of its military capability, but only on its attitude and relationship to him.

THE PARTICULARS

- God rules everything from his throne in heaven: no nation or army has any power against him; no person can hide anything from him or do anything outside his control.
- Blessing only comes from recognising God & belonging to him.
- We as a nation ought to be more concerned about where we stand before God than about our defence capabilities.
- The promises God made to the 'people he chose for his inheritance', the nation Israel in the Old Testament, apply specifically to his Church today. We should depend on these promises for our security & our prosperity, not on human plans & methods.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Make a stock take of your personal life, your family life, your Church life. How much are you depending on human resources, techniques & abilities instead of on God? (Be brutally honest!)
- Are you rejoicing in him? ... waiting in hope for him?

DAY 8

Guardian angels

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 34:1-10

THE POINT The LORD is able to protect us always, & deliver us from every difficult situation. The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

THE PARTICULARS

- David was full of praise & admiration for God because he was able to save him from a very difficult & threatening situation in answer to his prayers.
- David was keen for others to join him in his praise to God.
- We are protected continually by heavenly guardian angels.
- A radiant face is evidence of a person trusting God completely.
- To really 'see' the LORD's blessing we need to decide to 'taste' it for ourselves; no one else can do this for us.
- God looking after us is better than if we had the capability of a young lion to fend for ourselves.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Are you trusting God to meet your every need? What particular need(s) do you have today? Will you trust him fully in this?
- Do you take hold of every opportunity to join with others to praise God for his protection & provision? How often is this?

DAY 9 *Fear of the LORD – Grade 1*

THE PASSAGE PSALM 34:11-22

THE POINT The ‘fear of the LORD’ does not come naturally to us; it involves a learning process that requires serious commitment, but the rewards are well worth the effort.

THE PARTICULARS

- We need to learn God’s ways as children in school.
- God blesses all who seek his ways with good days, protection, close personal attention to needs, deliverance and acquittal. Verse 20 was fulfilled specifically for Jesus on the cross.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

The beginners’ ‘Fear of the LORD’ check list:

- Do your tongue & lips always observe the ‘Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?’ rule before kicking into action?
- Do you make a positive decision to recognise what is evil & turn away from it (while watching television for instance)?
- Do you make a positive decision to discover what is good & do it (even if no one else is looking on or is able to help)?
- Do you make a positive decision to find out what will lead to greater harmony & peace and pursue it without giving up?
- Does your sinfulness break your heart & crush your spirit?
- Do you do all things with the attitude of being a servant?

DAY 10 *The LORD will fight for you*

THE PASSAGE PSALM 35:1-10

THE POINT This psalm reflects Moses’ words as Pharaoh’s army approached God’s people, trapped & helpless at the Red Sea: “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” (Exodus 14:14). We can depend on God to protect us from our enemies.

THE PARTICULARS

- David uses strong & explicit military language to call on his God for help at a time when he is being viciously attacked.
- David needs God’s spoken reassurance: ‘I am your salvation’.
- David is aware of the help of angels against his enemies; it is a spiritual battle, needing to be fought with spiritual forces.
- We should not be surprised when people try to ambush us as we seek to walk with God and follow his ways.
- David begins to praise God for victory even as the battle rages.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Are you being attacked for being a faithful follower of Jesus? Have you asked God to fight for you, to protect & save you?
- How are Jesus’ life (eg his temptations in the wilderness), death & resurrection an outworking of the truth of this psalm?

DAY 11 *When ‘friends’ are enemies*

THE PASSAGE PSALM 35:11-28

THE POINT David knew he could keep on trusting God even when friends he had helped & defended turned against him. He had unfailing confidence in God even when his circumstances might cause him to question God’s providence.

THE PARTICULARS

- David had to contend with the attacks and taunts of people he had helped, protected & encouraged in the past. This betrayal by friends was particularly hard for him to bear; therefore he relied heavily on God’s help, protection & final vindication.
- Sometimes when we pray for others our prayers seem to fall on deaf ears causing us great grief and pain; we are not alone.
- The cry, ‘O Lord, how long ...?’ is a common cry of God’s people in Scripture; unanswered prayer teaches us patience.
- It is really hard when people opposed to God’s ways gloat if things go wrong for us, but prayer & praise can get us through.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Are you experiencing what David experienced? Pray in faith!
- Do you know someone else who is experiencing what David experienced? Pray in faith for them & seek to encourage them.

DAY 12 *If God is missing, all is lost*

THE PASSAGE PSALM 36:1-12

THE POINT If we leave God out of our lives it affects everything we do — we become the opposite of all he intended for us, made in his image.

THE PARTICULARS

The characteristics of the wicked man are:

- he has no respect or time for God in his life;
- he is so caught up with his own importance that he is completely blind to his sin, let alone able to see it as wrong;
- he is deceitful in his speech;
- he has lost all wisdom and ability to do what is good;
- he is always planning evil, even outside ‘working hours’;
- he never turns away from what is wrong.

By contrast, God’s characteristics of love, faithfulness, righteousness, etc. are without limit, impartial, generous, life-giving, and illuminating; they are what sustain & protect his people.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- How do all the characteristics of the wicked man stem from the very first one of having ‘no fear of God before his eyes’? What warning is there here for us? (see Psalm 111:10)
- What recent experience has confirmed God’s love, etc. to you?

DAY 13 *No worries*

THE PASSAGE PSALM 37:1-13

THE POINT Our trust in God, and commitment to his ways, should never be compromised by the pressure of seeing wicked men prosper.

THE PARTICULARS

- It is a natural reaction even for us to be worried when we see evil men prospering, or to be envious of their apparent success. God reminds us, however, that true & lasting success can only come through obedience to him and therefore all else is fleeting.
- God promises to bless all those who put their trust in him.
- God tells us to ‘be still before him’, to ‘wait patiently for him’.
- Fretting & anger must be stopped quickly or they lead to evil.
- Meekness is the secret to peace & prosperity in God’s realm.
- God has the ‘last laugh’ in the final destruction of the wicked.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Psalm 37 deals with a very real problem that Christians face in an evil world opposed to God: If he is in control, why do the wicked prosper & the good suffer? Are you proving its truth?
- How do the life, death & resurrection of Jesus prove its truth?

DAY 14 *Two ways to live... and die*

THE PASSAGE PSALM 37:14-29

THE POINT Just as the righteous and the wicked are completely different in their approach to life, so will they be completely different in the way God deals with them. Present outward appearances may be deceptive but God knows what the real situation is and he has the final say. In the end, nothing else matters.

THE PARTICULARS

- The wicked abuse the poor & needy, but so will God treat them.
- Poverty in God’s presence is better than wealth without him.
- Nothing can happen to us outside his sovereign will; even in bad times he will care for us; even if we stumble we won’t fall.
- Generosity marks the righteous off from the wicked.
- The eternal destinies of the wicked & the righteous are poles apart. (Jesus gives a vivid picture of this in Luke 16:19-31.)

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- How are you dealing with the pressures of our society to make wealth & prosperity the measure of success & security? Are you willing to accept the opposite point of view presented in this psalm? In what practical ways are you showing in your life that you live by the perspective of Psalm 37?

DAY 15

The test of time

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 37:30-40

THE POINT The eternal law of God is rooted in the righteous man's heart; the life of the wicked man is rooted in this passing world; in the end, the fruit in each case is exactly what we would expect it to be, although the wicked may appear to do well for a while.

THE PARTICULARS

- The righteous man always does & says what is right & just — it is the fruit of God's law written deep in his heart.
- By contrast, the wicked are treacherous & homicidal.
- The righteous might suffer & even be brought to trial by the evil plans of the wicked, but the LORD will bring justice in the end.
- The wicked might prosper for a time because the world's ways are their 'native soil', but their final downfall is certain.
- The righteous are men of peace; they are the ones with a future.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Reflect again on how the message of Psalm 37 applied to Jesus' life. Does this help you to keep trusting God in difficult times?
- Are you prepared to take God at his word & patiently entrust your whole future to him? How will this affect you today?

DAY 16

Down, and (almost) out

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 38:1-22

THE POINT David has sinned against God & is suffering the consequences at a very deep level; there is no part of his life unaffected. To make matters worse, everyone, including his close friends, has taken the opportunity to 'kick him while he is down'. In his utter loneliness and distress he cries out to the LORD for help.

THE PARTICULARS

- David's great distress is the result of his own sin, a fact he is prepared to confess openly. He recognises God's right to be angry and to discipline him, but in his grief he pleads for mercy.
- God's discipline can affect us both physically and emotionally.
- David's close friends not only deserted him at his time of greatest need, they used the opportunity to criticise him hurtfully.
- Despite all this, David knew the LORD as one who saves.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Have you ever felt utterly abandoned? What did you do?
- What do you do if a fellow believer is in trouble, perhaps as a result of a sin, say a moral failure? Does Psalm 38 help you to understand how they feel? How can you help them not to feel deserted in spite of their failure? Why aren't we good at this?

DAY 17

What's life all about?

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 39:1-13

THE POINT Viewed from a purely human perspective, much of our life seems confusing & contradictory. We want to cry out in protest to God that we don't understand the way he deals with us, even allowing for our sinfulness and its consequences. But then we realise that in God's terms our life span is as nothing, a breath! Why should he care anyway? So all we can do is throw ourselves on his mercy, leaving everything in his hands, sometimes wishing he didn't even exist!

THE PARTICULARS

- David tried to be loyal by not complaining to others about God's harsh dealings with him, but it all got too much for him.
- He desperately needed affirmation from God that there was a deeper purpose to life than its apparent brevity and futility.
- He acknowledged he was estranged from God, & God's right to deal with him as he did, but pleaded for mercy and deliverance.
- David's final plea (13) was really sarcasm born of frustration.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why does God include an outburst like this in his written Word? To encourage us to bring all our frustrations to him because he wants us to know he understands and really cares?

DAY 18

Out of the slime... at last!

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 40:1-10

THE POINT At last David is starting to see some light at the end of the tunnel and he wants to share with others his newly discovered joy; at last God has vindicated his trust and obedience and has set his feet on a rock after the time he has spent in the miry pit.

THE PARTICULARS

- In Psalms 35-39 David shared with us his dark journey through confusion, discouragement & despair which he likened to being in a slimy pit. The LORD has now lifted him out of this pit & set his feet on a rock. He wants us to rejoice with him as he takes this opportunity to challenge us also to trust God in hard times.
- He now sees clearly God's power & grace at work in all things.
- All that God requires of us in the end is the humble submission & obedience to his will that comes from having his law written on our hearts. This is the example Jesus set, as Hebrews 10:5-7 recognises. The suffering in Psalms 35-39 is part of this process, except that in Jesus' case it was our guilt he bore, not his own.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- When God does something wonderful for you do you want to share it with others? When was the last time this happened?

DAY 19

...but not for long!

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 40:11-17

THE POINT David is now standing on the 'rock' God has provided for him but his troubles are not yet over: his sins still plague him, his enemies still surround and attack him, his own built-in weakness is still there. But there is nevertheless a stronger sense of confidence in God's power to save.

THE PARTICULARS

- David is always aware of the need for the LORD's mercy, love and truth to protect him.
- David does not make the mistake of underestimating the magnitude of either his own sins or of his spiritual enemies.
- David relies on God to confound and turn back his enemies.
- David always points to the LORD as the focus of his praise & worship and the source of his salvation, encouraging us to do so as well; he never failed to acknowledge his own frailty.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What happens when we are not protected by God's mercy, love and truth?
- Read Jesus' Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12. How much do they reflect David's experiences in these psalms?

DAY 20

A Psalm of David Jesus

THE PASSAGE

PSALM 41:1-13

THE POINT David was a strong advocate for helping the weak & helpless. When he was in that situation himself he found that others, rather than helping him, took advantage of his vulnerability and made things harder for him. This in turn gave David the opportunity to reaffirm his dependence on the LORD alone.

THE PARTICULARS

- David's attitude to the weak & helpless was borne out in Jesus' earthly life. It reflects God's character in all of Scripture.
- Sadly, David did not receive the same consideration he showed to others when he was in need. This is often the experience of those who seek to reflect God's character in their daily lives.
- Jesus' own experience was no different. John 13:18 tells us that Judas' act of betrayal was a direct fulfilment of Psalm 41:9.
- David's final shout of vindication & triumph (verses 10-13) is looking forward to the victory Jesus will win on our behalf.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What opportunities might God give you today to have 'regard for the weak'? What if it is someone who has/might hurt you?
- Are you trusting in Jesus alone to be in his presence forever?



Come worship with us!

If you are passing through or moving nearby, feel free to ring the Minister, Clerk or Elder.

australian capital territory

CANBERRA, BELCONNEN

Cnr Gatty St. & Ross Smith Cres, Scullin.
Sunday Service 10:00 am
Elder: Mr R Howe (02) 6247 9586

CANBERRA, FORREST (St Andrew's)

1 State Circle (opp Parliament House).
Service Times: 9.30am. & 7.00pm.
Church Office: (02) 6295 3457

CANBERRA, TUGGERANONG

Isabella Plains: Isabella Plains Primary School,
Ellerstone Ave. Worship Service & Sunday
School 10.00am.

Rev Tim Abbey (02) 6292 6772

GUNGAHLIN-NORTH BELCONNEN

Ngunnawal Primary School 10.00am. I.M:
Rev. Keith King Enquiries: (02) 6253 8257.

new south wales

ANNANDALE

Hunter Baillie, Johnston & Collins Sts.
10.00am, Rev Colin Alston (02) 9969 8071.
Welsh Church: Chalmers St, Surry Hills.
3.00pm. each Sunday.

ARMIDALE

Faulkner St, 9.30am. & 7.00pm.
Rev. Richard O'Brien (02) 6772 3093

ASHFIELD

Liverpool Rd. & Knox St.
Rev Peter Hastie (02) 9798 6572.

BEACON HILL-NARRAWEENA

244 Warringah Rd. 9.30am. & 7.00pm.
Rev. Andrew Clausen (02) 9521 2361.

BEECROFT

Mary St., 8.45am. 10.30am. & 6.30pm.
Rev Martin Levine (02) 9876 2478.

BEGA — EDEN

Bega -Upper St; Eden — CWA Rooms,
Imlay St. Clerk: Mrs J Gill (02) 6495 6062

BLACKTOWN (EAST)

Gallop Grv. & Heffron Rd. Lalor Park,
Service Times: 10.30am. & 6.00pm.
Rev Stuart Coulton (02) 9626 0866.

BONDI

Cnr. Castlefield & Miller Sts.
10.00am & 7.00pm.

Rev John Graham: (02) 9597 5214

BONNYRIGG

Western Regions Chinese Church
14-16 Bibbys Place. 9.30 am. (English) &

11.00 am. (Mandarin)

S.Clerk: Stanley Chen (02) 9753 2073

BOWRAL — MITTAGONG

Bowral: 20 Bendooley St. 10.30am.
Kid's Church: 9.30 am. 1st & 3rd Sunday
Mittagong: Cr Alice & Edwards Sts. 9.00am.
Rev. Doug McPherson: (02) 4872 4052.

BURWOOD

48 Belmore St. 9.15am (English)
Burwood: 11.00 am (Cantonese)
5.00 pm (English).

Rev Jim Elliott (02) 9745 3935.

Rev. Dennis Law (02) 9715 3889

CAMPBELLTOWN

34 Lithgow St. 8.30 am. 10.00 am. 6.30 pm.

CARINGBAH

393 Port Hacking Rd.
Rev Graham Flick (02) 9524 6406 (O).

CASTLE HILL

247 Old Northern Rd. 9.30am. & 6.00pm.

Rev Dr Ron Keith (02) 9634 2911.

CHATSWOOD

St Andrew's, Anderson St.
9.00am.& 7.00 pm.

Lane Cove, St James, Farran St. 11.00am.

Rev. Jeff Read (02) 9419 5932 (W) 2077 (H)

CHERRYBROOK

John Purchase Public School Hall, Purchase
Road, Cherrybrook 9.30 am

Rev John Irvin (Minister) (02) 9875 4894

CHINESE CHURCH

Cnr Crown & Albion Sts. Surry Hills.
English/Cantonese/Mandarin/Bilingual
Services. Office (02) 9331 4459.

Rev Joe Mock (02) 9642 8861(H).

Rev Daniel Ng (02) 9797 2342(H).

Rev Ezra Tseng (02) 9500 1259(H).

COFFS HARBOUR (St Andrew's)

187 High St. 8.00am. 9.45am. & 6.30pm.

Rev Peter Moore (02) 6652 3183(O).

CONCORD

Cornerstone Community Presbyterian Church
Meets Concord Public School 9.30 am.

Cnr Burwood Rd. & Stanley St. Concord

Rev. C S Tang (02) 9688 7880 (H)

COOTAMUNDRA (Scots)

Cnr Parker & Francis Sts 11.00 am.

I.M. Rev F. Monckton (02) 6977 1642

COWRA

46 Macquarie St. Also Gooloogong,
Morongla.

Rev John McClean Ph (02) 6342 1467.

CRONULLA

13 Croydon St. 9.30am.

Rev. Russell Stark (02) 9523 5875.

EAST MAITLAND

George St. **Beresfield:** Beresford Ave.

Raymond Terrace: Irrawang St.

Rev Donald Smith (02) 4933 7443.

EPPING

Bridge & Rawson Sts.
Rev David Tsai (02) 9876 1188.

FORSTER/TUNCURRY

Bruce St. Forster, 9.30am.
Rev. John Thompson (02) 6552 1082

GILGANDRA (St Stephens)

14 Myrtle St. 11.00am. & 9.00am. (4th Sun).
Rev. Tony Adams (02) 6847 2036

GOSFORD

14-16 Young St. West Gosford. 8.00am.
9.45am. 6.30 pm. Office: Ph (02) 4323 2490.
Rev Rod Mallinson (02) 4385 5231.

GRIFFITH

Opp. Collina Oval, Blumer Ave. 9.30 am.
Rev. Peter Gobbo (02) 6962 4827.

Dr L. Thorpe (02) 6962 1934

GUNNEDAH

Marquis & Barber Sts. **Boggabri:** Court
House Rev. Stefan Slucki (02) 6742 0551

HURSTVILLE

Cnr. Park Rd. & McMahan St. English:
9.30am. & 6.30pm. Indonesian: 4.00pm.
Rev Kevin Murray (02) 9153 8176.

KIAMA

Terralong St. 9.00am & 5.30pm.
Pastor: Noel Creighton (02) 4233 1554

KOGARAH

Cnr Kensington & Derby Sts.
9.30am. & 7.00pm.

Rev Ray Osborn (02) 9587 5577.

KOREAN, SYDNEY (Young Nak)

7-9 Manson St, Telopea. 9.30am. 11.00am.
3.00pm. S.Clerk (02) 9816 3807

LEETON

Cnr. Sycamore & Cypress Sts. 10.00 am.
Rev. Richard Keith (02) 4272 9407

LISMORE (St Paul's)

188 Keen St. 9.00 am. & 7.00 pm.
Rev Peter Playsted (02) 6624 7050

MACQUARIE

Herring & Abuklea Rds, Marsfield
Rev. Rex Swavley (02) 9878 4202

MANLY (St Andrew's)

Raglan St. & Augusta Lane. 9.45am. 5.30pm.
May/Sept; 7.00pm Oct/April.

Rev Tony Lang (02) 9976 2801

MAROUBRA, Kingsford

8 Robey St, **Maroubra.** 9.30 am. 7.15 pm.
94 Houston Rd, **Kingsford** 11.15am

Chinese Service, **Maroubra** 4 pm.

Rev Johnnie Li (02) 9349 1312

MOREE (St Andrew's)

Cnr Albert & Auburn Sts, 10.00am.

Rev. L. Fowler (02) 6752 1083

MOSMAN (Scots Kirk)

Belmont Rd. (nr Military Rd), 9.00am.

Rev R J McCracken (02) 9969 6101.

MURWILLUMBAH (St Andrew's)
Wollumbin St. 9.00am. & 7.00pm.
Tyalgum: 11.00am. (3rd Sun).
Rev. Philip Strong (02) 6672 1088

NEWCASTLE (St Andrews)
Cnr. Laman & Auckland Sts 9.15am & 7.00pm.
Office: (02) 4929 2857

NORTH SYDNEY-GREENWICH
(St Peter's) 234 Blues Point Rd. 10.00am.
& 6.45pm. Wednesday 1.15pm.
Greenwich: (Taylor's Memorial)
86A Greenwich Rd. 10.00am.
Rev Dr Paul Logan (02) 9955 1662.
Assistant Rev A B Clark (02) 9638 7471

ORANGE (St James)
Cnr Anson St. & Matthews Ave. 10.00am.
Rev. William Stewart (02) 6362 6304

PARRAMATTA CITY
Cumberland High School, Dunmore Ave.
Carlingford. Rev. Luke Tattersall.
S. Clerk: Mike Whiteman (02) 9484 1240.

PENRITH (St Andrew's)
Doonmore St. near High St, 9.00am. &
7.00pm. Rev William Morrow (02) 4721 2440.

PORT MACQUARIE (St Andrew's)
Cnr William/Munster Sts, 9.00am., 10.30am
Rev S Donnellan (02) 6582 2505

RANDWICK
Alison Rd. & Cook St. 10.00am. & 5.00pm.
Rev. Grant Thorpe (02) 9399 3183.

ROSE BAY (St Andrew's)
Cnr Dover Rd. & Carlisle St. 10.00am & 6.00pm.
Rev Bruce Christian (02) 9388 1206(O).

RYDE
Bowden & Squire Sts.
Putney: Douglas St.
Rev Andrew Unwin (02) 9809 3197.

SOUTHERN CROSS
Park Ave. East Lismore
Rev. Stephen Cree (02) 6621 3655

SPRINGWOOD
160 Macquarie Rd. 10.30am. & 6.00pm.
Winnalee: 481 Hawkesbury Rd. 9.00am.
(02) 4751 1188(O).
Rev. Robert Benn (02) 4751 9968

STRATHFIELD (St David's)
Barker Rd. & Marion St. 10.00am. & 6.30pm.
Rev Robert McKean (02) 9746 8123.

SUTHERLAND
Cnr Flora & Glencoe Sts. 9.30am & 5.30pm
Rev Adrian Clausen (02) 9521 2361

SYDNEY (Scots Church)
142 Chalmers Str., Surry Hills (temporary)
Service Time: 10.30 am.
Rev. Adrian Van Ash (02) 9817 0587.

TAMWORTH (St Stephen's)
23 Matthews St, also at **Moonbi**.
9.00am. & 6.30pm
Rev Stuart Andrews (02) 6765 8754.

Tamworth Community Presb Church,
Oxley High School Piper St Nth T'worth
10 am. Rev Keith Walker (02) 6762 5759

Manilla: Court St.
Rev. Vic Johnson (02) 6785 1627.

TAREE
Albert St. 9.00am.
Rev John Thompson (02) 6552 1082(O).

TENTERFIELD
117 Logan St. (07) 6977 1642

TERRIGAL (Scots Kirk)
2 Willoughby Rd.

Rev Phillip Paul (02) 4385 2240.

WAHROONGA
Wahroonga Presbyterian Church,
Cnr. Illoura Ave. & Stuart St. 9.30am.
Rev. Murray Fraser (02) 9489 3690

WEE WAA
Mitchell St. Mr Mark Powell (02) 6795 4259

WENTWORTH FALLS (St Andrew's)
Falls Rd. 9.00 am. Session Clerk: Mr Bernie
Tucker (02) 4757 3518

WENTWORTHVILLE
7 McKem St. **Girraween:** 15 Tungarra Rd.
Rev. David Griffin Phone: (02) 9896 3297.

WESTLAKES
Warnervale Community Hall, Warnervale Rd
S.School 8.30 am. Service 9.30 am.
Rev. Esa Hukkinen (02) 4393 5530

WEST WYALONG
Pioneer Memorial, Court St. 9.00am. &
11.00am. Also at **Barmedman, Mahda,**
Talimba & Weethalle.
Mr. Lance Jackson (02) 6972 2143.

WOLLONGONG (St Andrew's)
Cnr Kembla & Burelli Sts. 9.45am. &
6.00pm. Rev Bruce Hammonds (02) 4226
1458(H) (02) 4226 1725(O).

WOOLGOOLGA
Cnr Scarborough St. & Landrigan Cl.
9.00am. Rev. Peter Moore (02) 6651 2301.

WOONONA
7 Gray St. Rev Peter Currie (02) 4284 4057.

WOY WOY
120 Blackwall Rd. 9.00 & 10.30 am.
Rev. Jamie Newans (02) 4342 2856

queensland

ACACIA RIDGE
Cnr. Mortimer & Beaudesert Rds.
8.45am. & 6.00pm. Pastor Stephen Teale,
(07) 3277 0010, (07) 3344 5022 (H).

ASCOT
68 Charlton St. (Near Airport).
Nundah: 14 Rode Rd
Rev Guido Kettniss (07) 3216 4151.
Rev Les Hall (07) 3267 0558

ATHERTON
Cnr. Alice & Jack Sts. 10.00am & 6.00pm.
Rev. John Trappett (07) 4091 1375.

BALD HILLS
58 Strathpine Rd. 8.30am. & 7.00pm.
Rev Peter Bloomfield (07) 3261 4305.

BRISBANE KOREAN
145 Ann St. 8.00am. 12.00 noon, 7.30pm.
Rev Dr M. M. Y. Kim (07) 3300 3132

BRISBANE (St Paul's)
53 St Pauls Tce. Spring Hill.
Rev A. Gardiner (07) 3831 7458(O).

BUNDABERG (Scots')
Cnr. Water & Alice Sts. 9.00am & 7.00pm.
Rev David Newman (07) 4153 2954

CABOOLTURE
24 Cottrill Road. 9.00am & 6.00pm.
Rev. G. Watt (07) 5494 1181

CAIRNS
85 Sheridan St. 9.15 am. & 6.30 pm.
Rev Donald Broadwater, (07) 4036 0421(H).
Rev Russell van Delden, (07) 4054 3241 (H).

CALLIDE VALLEY
Biloela: Cnr. Kariboe & Melton Sts.
10.00am. & 6.00pm.
Jambin: Three Ways 8.30am.
Pastor Walter Posthuma (07) 4992 1441

CALOUNDRA
Cnr Kalinga & Ormutz Sts. 9.30am. &
7.00pm. Rev N. Thomason (07) 5493 3594

CAPALABA
74 Lyndon Rd. 8.30am
Rev B Enchelmaier (07) 3824 0958

CHARLEVILLE/BLACKALL
78 Galatea St. 9.00am.
Pastor Alan Grant (07) 4654 3100.

CHARTERSTOWERS
Blackthorn Hall, Thornburgh College,
King St. Mr. S. McDonald (07) 4787 3395

CLAYFIELD (Scots Memorial)
29 Bellevue Terrace, 9.30am.
I.M. Rev. Robert Herrgott (07) 3300 6158

CLEVELAND
Cnr Bloomfield & Ocean Sts.
10.15am & 6.30pm.
Rev Brian Enchelmaier (07) 3824 0958

COORPAROO
Emlyn St. 10.00am. & 7.00pm.
I.M. Rev D. Mihailovic (07) 3800 3799

CREEK ROAD
PCYC Centre, 27 Narracott St., Carina
9.00 am & 5.30 pm.
Rev Peter Barson (07) 3398 3607.
Rev D. McDougall (07) 3397 5244.

DALBY
Condamine St. (cnr. Patrick St).
Rev Roland Lowther (07) 4669 7074

EUMUNDI
Memorial Drive, 10.45am. (weekly) &
6.30pm. (2nd & 4th Sunday).
I.M. Rev. Noel C. Thomason (07) 5493 3594

GAYNDAH
Warton St. 10.00am.
I.M. Rev. Noel C. Thomason (07) 5493 3594

GLADSTONE (St Andrew's)
Goondoon & Bramston Sts. 10.00am. &
7.00pm. **Benaraby:** O'Connor Rd. 8.00am.
Also **Calliope.**
Rev. David Secomb (07) 4972 1058

GOLD COAST (I)
Arundel: 132 Allied Drive 9.15am.
Rev Bob Carner (07) 5545 0947

Robina: Cnr University & Cottesloe Drives
10.00 am. & 6.30 pm.
Rev. Kevin Ridley (07) 5571 1416

GOLD COAST (II)
Mudgeeraba: Cnr Mudgeeraba Rd &
Regency Pde. 9.00am. & 6.30 pm.
Rev. Glenn Samuel (07) 5530 7003

Mudgeeraba Korean Congregation:
11.30 am. Rev. Jo Kim (07) 5574 4001

Palm Beach/Elanora: 'The Meeting Place'
Cnr. Coolgardie & Guineas Creek Rds. (cnr.
Pines Shopping Ctre) 9.00 am.
Rev. Donald Geddes (07) 5522 8982

GYMPIE
11 Crown St. 9.30am. Woolooga 11.00am.
Rev. D Cranney (07) 5482 7629(O).

HERVEY BAY (St David's)
Denmans Rd, Scarness, 9.30am. & 7.00pm.
Rev. John T Roth (07) 4124 7018.

IPSWICH
Cnr Limestone & Gordon Sts. 8.20am.

10.00am. 6.30pm.

Coominya: 8.00am.

Forest Hill: Church St, 9.00am.

Rev John Langbridge (07) 3294 7999.

Rev Wesley Redgen (07) 3282 9829.

ITHACA

100 Enogerra Tce, Paddington.

Service: 9.30 am. 6.30pm.

Rev. Robert Herrgott (07) 3300 6158

MACGREGOR

268 Padstow Rd. Eight Mile Plains 8.30am.

I.M. Rev. Dan Mihailovic (07) 3800 3799

MACKAY

Cnr Harvey St. & Evans Ave. Nth Mackay.

7.30am; 9.30am & 7pm.

Sarina: Sarina Beach Rd. 9.00am.

Pinnacle: Red Cross Hall, 4.00pm

(1st & 3rd Sunday).

Rev. Jim Brown (07) 4955 3829.

MALENY

Cedar St. 9.00am.

Rev. Noel Thomason (07) 5493 3594

MARANOA

Roma: Queen Street 9.00am.

Surat: (1st Sunday) 11.15am.

Pastor Walter Posthuma (07) 4622 1158

MAROOCHYDORE

Okinja Rd. Alexandra Headland.

9.00am. & 7.00pm.

Rev Keith Mayers (07) 5445 9209.

MARYBOROUGH

523 Alice St. 9.00am.

Pastor John Tucker (07) 4123 5920.

MILES

Miles 80 Murilla St., 9.00am.

Dulacca Temple St., 2nd & 4th Sunday

Condamine 1st & 3rd Sunday S'time 7 am

W'time 11am

Pastor Harold Wills (07) 4627 1180

MONTO

Bell St. 10.00am. & 7.00pm. (2nd & 4th

Sunday). **Abercorn** 11.45am. (1st Sunday).

Kalpowar: 7.30pm. (3rd Sunday).

Pastor Elton Wiltshire (07) 4166 1441.

NAMBOUR

21 Solanda St. 8.45am

I.M. Rev. Noel C. Thomason (07) 5493 3594.

NORTH PINE

57 Old Dayboro Rd. Petrie.10.00am. &

6.30pm. Rev Neil McKinlay (07) 3285 2104.

PEACE PRESBYTERIAN

Student Centre, Deception Bay State High

School 9.30am.

Rev. John Gilmour (07) 3261 7804

REDCLIFFE PENINSULA

WoodyPoint, Cnr. Ellen & Hawthorne Sts.

9.30am. & 6.00pm.

Scarborough: Jeays St. 8.00am.

Rev. Peter Whitney (07) 3284 2578.

ROCKHAMPTON (St Andrew's)

Cnr. Bolsover & Derby Sts. 10.00am. &

6.00pm. St John's: Parnell St. 8.30am.

Rev Charlie Kennedy (07) 4922 8241.

ROCKHAMPTON (John Knox)

Rundle St. 10.00 am. & 7.30 pm.

Rev. Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825

ROCKHAMPTON (St Stephen's)

Burnett St. Nth Rockhampton, 8.30am.

Rev Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825

Mt Morgan: St Enoch's, East St. 9.00am.

Rev Gilbert Jansen (07) 4938 2485.

SANDGATE

Loudon St. 9.00am. & 6.00pm.

I.M. Rev. D. Todd (Em.) (07) 3269 9359

SPRINGSURE

Charles St. 10.30am.

Emerald: High School Frazer St., 8.30am.

Rev B J Harrison Phone (07) 4984 1550.

TEWANTIN

Anglican Church, William St. 11.45am.

Rev Keith L. Mayers (07) 5445 9209.

THE GAP

1195 Waterworks Rd., 9.00am.

Rev David Niven (07) 3300 2987.

THURINGOWA -TOWNSVILLE

John Calvin, Carthew St. Kirwan. **Condon:**

I.M. Rev. Colin Barwise (07) 4728 4224.

TOOWOOMBA NORTH (St David's)

Mary St. Also at **Geham**

TOWNSVILLE (St Andrew's)

113 Wills St. City. 9.30am. & 6.30pm.

Ass. Min. Rev. Walter Jones (07) 4778 3823

VICTORIA POINT

164 Colburn Ave. 8.30am.

Rev Brian Enchelmaier (07) 3824 0958

WEST TOOWOOMBA

Cnr Greenwattle & South Sts. 8.00am,

10.00am & 6.00pm.

Rev R. Sondergeld (07) 4633 4188.

Mr Ross Turner (07) 4634 6053

WYNNUM

Cnr Bay Tce & Cedar St. 9.00 am & 6.00 pm.

Rev Dr George Logan (07) 3893 1712

south australia

ADELAIDE (St Andrew's)

92-98 Archer St. North Adelaide. 10.30 am.

Session Clerk: Mr. Jim Petrie (08) 8395 6252

Largs North, Brenda Terrace. 11.00 am.

Rev R. Burns (08) 8267 1056.

ELIZABETH

106 Goodman Rd, Elizabeth South. 9.30 am

Session Clerk: Mr Bob Arstall (08) 8825 5226.

MILLICENT

Cnr Fifth & Sixth Sts. 10.30 am.

Rev Andrew Slater (08) 8733 2062.

MT BARKER

Hutchison St. 10.30 am.

Pastor Rupert Hanna (08) 8391 3151.

MT GAMBIER

Allison St. 10.00 am. 6.30 pm. Also **Allendale,**

Glenburnie, Nelson (Vic), OB Flat.

Rev R. Waterhouse Ph/Fx (08) 8723 9028

MURRAY BRIDGE

Masonic Hall 5.00pm. (1st, 3rd & 5th S'day)

Rev Wally Zurrer (08) 8296 0801.

NARACOOORTE

Church St. 10.00am.

Rev Rudi Schwartz (08) 8762 1035

NORWOOD (St Giles)

79 The Parade. 9.15am & 7.00pm.

Rev Dr Reg Mathews (08) 8395 7841

PARA HILLS

174 Maxwell Rd. 10.45 am.

Rev Dr Reg Mathews (08) 8395 7841

PENOLA

Portland St. 10.45 am. Rev. Alan Clarkson

(08) 8737 2984 Also **Dergholm, Kalangadoo**

PORT AUGUSTA

Jervois St. 11.00 am.

Rev Laurie Peake (08) 8648 6777.

SEACLIFF

Kauri Pde. Seacliff. 9.30am.

Rev Wally Zurrer (08) 8296 0801.

WHYALLA

28 Ramsay St. 9.00 am.

S/ Clerk: Helen Mashford

(08) 8645 0818

tasmania

CROSSROADS (Hobart)

Campbell St. School 6.00 pm.

Rev David Jones (03) 6223 4701

DEVONPORT (St Columba's)

Edward St. **Don:** Waverley Rd.

I.M. Rev. Daniel Combridge (03) 6425 9525

HOBART

(St John's) 10.00 am & 7.00 pm

188 Macquarie St. (03) 6223 7213

Rev. Robert White (03) 6278 1370

LAUNCESTON (St Andrew's)

Civic Square. 9.30 & 11.00 am. @ 7.00 pm.

(Dec/Jan 10.00 am. & 7.00 pm.)

Church Office: (03) 6331 5412

Rev. Peter Thorneycroft 0438 315 412

Yth. Pastor: Brett Rutherford (03)6331 2584

MONTROSE

Cnr. Islington Rd. & Walker St. 10.00 am.

Rev. Steve Warwick (03) 6272 2608.

RIVERSIDE

Eden St. 10.45am.

Glengarry: 9.15am. Frankford H'way.

Winkleigh: 2.00pm, 2nd Sunday.

Ps. Norman Shellard (03) 6327 2967

ROKEBY

Presby. Community Church, Tollard Dr.

Mod. Rev Steve Warwick (03) 6272 2608

SCOTTSDALE

George St. **Bridport:** Westwood St.

Mod.Ps. Bryan Crawford (03) 6352 4024

STANLEY (St James)

Fletcher St. **Rocky Cape, Mawbanna**

Mod. Mr I Bessell (03) 6443 4299

ULVERSTONE (St Andrew's)

65 Main Rd. 10.00am.

Rev Daniel Combridge (03) 6425 9525.

WEST TAMAR

Auld Kirk, Sidmouth and Mole Creek

Mod: Rev. John Britton (03) 6339 4480

victoria

ARARAT

Cnr. Campbell St. (Pyrenees H'way) and

Queen St. 10 am. Mr Norman Sharp

O.(03) 5334 3747 H. (03) 5352 4054

ASHBURTON

Junction of High St. and High Street Rd.

near Warrigal Rd. 10.15am.

Rev Peter Orchard (03) 9889 6034.

ASPENDALE

Cnr Station St. & Lyle Grv. 9.00am. &

6.00pm. Rev A. Campbell (03) 9580 0530.

AUBURN

Cnr Rathmines & Station Sts
Hawthorn East 10.00 am.
Rev S P Swinn (03) 9882 5256

BAIRNSDALE

7th Day Adventist Church, 149 Nicholson St. 10.00 am. 1st of Month 5.00pm.
S/school 9.00 am.

Past. Laurie Leighton (03) 5153 1669

BALACLAVA

Hotham St. & Denman Ave. 10.00am.
Rev Mike Wharton (03) 9527 3270.

BENDIGO (St John's)

Forest St. 10.30am.
Rev Andrew Clarke (03) 5443 6189.

BLACKBURN

53 Gardenia St. 11.00am.
Rev P Locke (03) 9725 6417

BUNDOORA

Bundoora Hall, Noorong Ave. 10.00 am
Admin: Mrs M Goodson (03) 9431 1851

BURWOOD

(Chinese Presbyterian Church) 11.00am.
Cnr. Greenwood & Tennyson Sts.
Rev Dr John Elnatan (03) 9801 7645.

CAMBERWELL- Trinity

cnr Riversdale & Waterloo Sts. 10.00am.
Rev. Philip Mercer (03) 9882 8102

CAMPERDOWN-TERANG-GARVOC

9.30 am Aug — Jan. 11am Feb — July
Terang: 1 Warrnambool Rd.

Camperdown: Campbell & Brooke Sts.

Garvoc: 2:30pm. 2nd & 4th Sunday.

Pastor Bernie Thomas (03) 5592 1041

CANTERBURY

146 Canterbury Rd. 10.30am. & 7 pm.
Rev. Grant Lawry (03) 9836 4601.

CANTERBURY JAPANESE

146 Canterbury Rd. 10.30 am
Rev. Hugh Price (03) 9894 2384

CAULFIELD-ELWOOD

Caulfield: Neerim/Bambra Rds. 11.15am.
Elwood: Scott/Tennyson Sts. 9.15am & 4.00pm. Rev Stephen Tay (03) 9505 3013.

Assistant: Mr John Cho (03) 9571 5218

CHELTENHAM Pioneers' Presbyterian

8 Park Rd. Cnr. Charman Rd. 9.30am.
Rev. David Palmer (03) 9583 2785

CLIFTON HILL

Cnr Michael & McKean Sts North Fitzroy.
10.30 am
Int.Mod. Rev Peter Phillips (03) 9481 4642.

CROYDON HILLS

Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School
57 Plymouth Rd. Croydon. 10.00am.
Rev. John Diacos (03) 9725 5370

DANDENONG

51 Potter St. 10.00am.
Ses. Clerk. (03) 9793 1423

DONVALE

Cnr. Springvale & McGowan's Rds. 8.30am, 10.30 am & 6.30pm. Rev Gerald Vanderwert (03) 9842 9493. (03) 9841 7020 (O)

DROMANA — MORNINGTON

Dromana: St Andrew's, Gibson St. 9.00am.
Mornington (The Chapel) Cnr Strachans Rd. & Nepean Hwy. 11.00am.

Rev Andrew Venn (03) 5975 9514

DROUIN

Church St. 9am. 10.30am. 7.30pm.

Sept-April; 7.00pm. May-Aug.
Rev. Ken Brown (03) 5625 1126.

ELTHAM

23 Batman Rd. 10.00 am
Rev. Don Elliott (03) 9439 9720

ESSENDON

Cnr Wilson & McPherson Sts.
Moonee Ponds 9.30am. & 7.00pm.

Rev. Paul Ridgewell (03) 9370 1281

FRANKSTON

30 Radiata St. 10.30am. & 6.00pm.
Rev David Kumnick (03) 9786 2976.

GLEN WAVERLEY-KNOXFIELD

Highvale Primary School,
Ashton St. Glen Waverley 9.30am.

Rev. Trevor Cox (03) 9764 9141.

HAMILTON

St Andrew's, Gray & McIntyre Sts. 10.00am.
& 5.00pm. (last Sunday of month)

Rev Keith Bell (03) 5572 1009

HAWTHORN

580 Glenferrie Rd. 11.00 am. & 7.00 pm.
Rev Dr Graham Lyman (03) 9819 5347.

KANGAROO GROUND

265 Eltham-Yarra Glen Rd. 9.30am.
S. Clerk: Dr R. Baldock. (03) 9437 1265

KOREAN

16 Walnut Rd. North Balwyn.
English language service. 11.00 am

LEONGATHA

Cnr. Bent & Turner Sts. 10.00am.
Session Clerk: (03) 5662 4734

MALVERN

161-163 Wattletree Rd. 10.30am. & 5.00 pm.
Rev John S Woodward (03) 9509 7373.

MELTON

Mowbray College, Centenary Ave.
Rev Peter Owen (03) 9747 8195.

MOE — YARRAM

Moe: 34 Fowler St. 10.00am.
Yarram: Cnr. Dougherty & Montgomery Sts. 2.00pm. Rev Jared Hood (03) 5127 1296.

NOORAT-DARLINGTON

Noorat: Cnr Mc Kinnons Bridge & Glenormiston Rds. 10.30 am.

Darlington: Hall St. 8.45 am. (1st & 3rd Sundays) Rev. Barry Oakes (03) 5592 5220

NUMURKAH

58 Saxton St. 11.15am.

Tallygaropna: Victoria St. 9.30am.

Cobram: Cnr High and Pine Sts. (Anglican Church) 2.30pm.

Pastor John Rickard (03) 5862 1621.

RESERVOIR

81 Edwardes St. 10.00 am. & 7.00 pm.
Rev Chris Siriweera (03) 9460 9523

RINGWOOD-HEATHMONT

Cnr. Waterloo St. & Canterbury Rd.
Heathmont 10.00am. Enq: (03) 9728 3374

ROCHESTER

Cnr. Victoria St. & Echuca Rd. 11.00am. & 7.30pm. **Timmering** 9.30 am

ST KILDA

Cnr Alma Rd. & Barkly St. 11.00am & 7.00pm. Rev Bob Thomas (03) 9537 1642 (O)

SALE

89-93 Dundas Street. 10.30 am.
I.M. Rev. P.W. Swinn (03) 5122 3406

SHEPPARTON

Cnr. Hayes & Leithen Sts. 9.00am. &

7.00pm. Also **Stanhope, Kyabram.**

Rev Kyung Ee (03) 5831 6494.

SOMERVILLE

Cnr Jones Rd. & Park Lane.
Rev. Ian Brown (03) 5977 5469.

SOUTH YARRA

621 Punt Rd. 10.00 am. & 6.30 pm.
Rev. Stuart Bonnington (03) 9867 4637

SORRENTO-RYE

Rye: St David's, Col'wood & Lyons Sts. 9.30am.

Sorrento: St Andrew's, Kerferd Rd. 11.00am.

SUNSHINE

McKay Memorial, Anderson Rd. 10.00am. & 7.00pm. Rev Cor Vanderhorn (03) 9311 1661

SURREY HILLS (St Stephen's)

Canterbury & Warrigal Rds. 10.15am. & 7.00pm. (2nd Sun: Youth Service 7.00pm).

I.M. Rev. Peter N Orchard (03) 9889 6034

UPPER YARRA — WARBURTON

3471 Warburton H'way. 10.00am. & 6.00pm.
Mr. Tony Archer (03) 5966 2309.

WANGARATTA — REGIONAL

PARISH

Wangaratta, 158 Rowan St. Yarrawonga,
47 Orr St. Myrtleford, 78 Standish St

Rev. Neil Harvey (03) 5721 6444

WARRNAMBOOL (St John's)

Warrnambool: Cnr Spence & Manifold Sts.
10.00am & 7.00 pm. Sunday Night Life 5.30

South Warrnambool: McDonald St. 9.30

Woodford: Mill St. 11.00 am

Warrnambool Office: (03) 5562 2029

Rev Chris ten Broeke (03) 5561 5373

Rev. Philip Burns (03) 5561 7899.

WEST FOOTSCRAY

141 Essex St. (Scots) 10.00 am.
Session Clerk: Ms J Swift (03) 9687 5701

WILLIAMSTOWN (St Andrew's)

87 Cecil St. 10.00am.
Rev. Bruce Riding (03) 9397 5338

WOORI YALLOCK

Healesville Rd. 9.15am & 5 pm, (7pm DLS)
Rev David Brown (03) 5964 6014.

western australia

BICTON

Harris St. & View Tce. 9.00am & 7.00pm.
S.Clerk Mr R Kent (08) 9339 1089

FREMANTLE (Scots)

Cnr South Tce & Parry St. 10.00 am
Chinese Worship & Sunday School. 3.00 pm.

Rev James Nocher (08) 9319 2208.

WHITFORDS (St Mark's)

Anglican School, St Marks Dr Hilarys.
9.00am. Rev Alan Perrie (08) 9447 1074

To register your church in this section of the Australian Presbyterian is an easy, low cost exercise. Facsimile the AP office on: (03) 9723 9685 or E-mail us at: austpres@bigpond.com

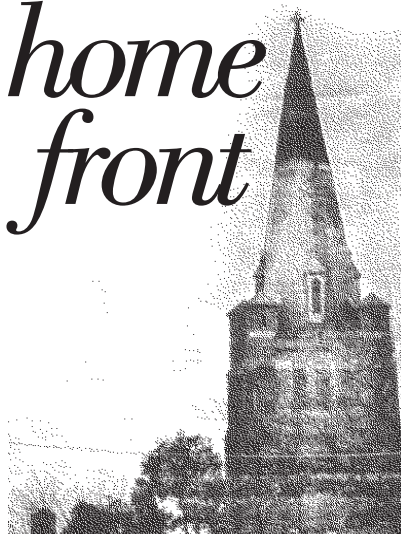
The Annual Fees are:

Congregations under 50 \$45.00 plus GST

Congregations 51 -99 \$55.00 plus GST

Congregations 100 or more \$65.00 plus GST

home front



A vital vote

Swan Hill Presbyterian Church, Victoria, has played a key role in speaking out against the sin of homosexuality and the need for homosexuals to find a new life in Christ. The minister, Rev Martin de Pyle, has endured much opposition and yet seen much blessing. In the past he and his congregation have been able to significantly discourage a gay and lesbian festival in their district. The festival has been proposed again. We need to support them in prayer. We can also vote against the festival through the following ABC poll: "Should Swan Hill go ahead with the gay and lesbian Breakout Festival this year?"

<http://www.abc.net.au/milduraswan-hill/vote/default.htm>

Just one vote makes a difference!

SA Assembly

Rt Rev. Alan Clarkson was inducted as moderator when the 116th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Australia opened at Penola on 6 May. Some 80 people attended the opening worship at **St Andrew's Penola**, at which Rev. Clarkson preached.

Business began the next morning, and **Rev Bill Lutton**, (director of APWM) preached from 1 Peter. The commissioners reportedly applied themselves diligently, but there was time for some commissioners from the upper Spencer Gulf to enjoy dancing in the fallen autumn leaves during morning tea. During the sittings, the ministers' wives were taken to Cameron's Corner for morning tea followed by a tour of the area. The assembly dinner was held in the church hall, cooked and catered by the ladies of the Penola church.

One of the features of the final day was

Matthew Byrne from Seacliff Church speaking of his call by God into the mission field and his year's service in West Asia with the **Red Sea Team International**.

PWA conference

'Praise' was the theme for the annual conference of the PWA (SA), held on 29 April in **St Andrews, Nth Adelaide**. Guest speakers were **Rev. Carl Aitkin**, coordinating chaplain at the Adelaide Women's and Childrens Hospital and **Rt. Rev. Jack Knapp**, **Moderator General** and convener of the **Presbyterian Inland Mission**.

Going Green

Fire on the Mountain will hold its 8th annual Christian worldview teaching weekend on 6-8 September at the **Tamborine Mountain Convention Centre** in south-east Queensland. The keynote speaker is **Doug Green**, Associate Professor of Old Testament at **Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia)**. His keynote sessions will look at a Biblical perspective on ecology.

Dr Frank Stootman, senior lecturer in physics at **University of Western Sydney**, will reflect on the difficulties Christians wrestle with as they try to take both science and the Genesis record of creation seriously. **Esther Kulp**, an internationally accomplished lyric soprano, will look at the major features in the last 2000 years of church music and hold a workshop for church musicians. **Daniel Scot**, a pastor in the **Assemblies of God** active in a ministry

to Muslims, will speak on understanding Islam. **Roger Marsh**, an assistant pastor in the **PCQ**, will survey Australian Christian history from 1788 to the present.

For more details, contact **Kim Dale** on (07) 5545 2041, tambopc@bigpond.com or www.fireonthemountain.net

Elwood turns 90

Elwood Presbyterian Church, Melbourne, celebrated its 90th anniversary on 28 April, reports **Rev. Stephen Tay**. Elder **Robert Belcher** chaired the meeting and gave a brief history of the church.

The Elwood Congregation held its first service as a house church in **Scott Street** — and within eight months it had moved to a new church building — now the church hall — on its present site on the corner of **Scott and Tennyson Streets**. Its first minister, **Rev. Alexander Yule**, was inducted six months later.

Melton bears fruit

The **Melton Presbyterian Church** is planting a church in its immediate area of Melbourne's outer west, supported by the **Presbytery of Melbourne West**, by June 2003. **Rev. Peter Owen** and the congregation are seeking a suitable property and an appropriate resident ministry family.

Mobile Mission Workshop

The **Mobile Mission Workshop** has just returned to **Mildura** from a 10-week assignment in **Dromana, Vic**, building an extension to the **Presbyterian Church**

*Conference for those in Ministry
and Master of Arts in Theology subject*

Professor Tremper Longman III

"Proverbs and Pastoral Praxis"

at the

Presbyterian Theological Centre
77 Shaftesbury Road Burwood NSW 2134

Monday 19th – 23rd August 2002

*For more details, and to register for the Conference
or enrol in the subject, contact the **PTC** office:*

Phone: (02) 9744 1977

Fax: (02) 9744 5970

See you at the Pole

A prayer meeting that began 11 years ago with just one youth group in the US is now an international event. Australia this year became the fourth country to go national with **See You at the Pole** — a day of student prayer — on 9 May. The event happened before school, with young people bowing in prayer at their school flagpole, asking God to bring moral and spiritual awakening.

This year's See You at the Pole theme was "desperate for God", from "my heart and flesh cry out to the living God" (Ps. 84:2). Last year more than 2000 students gathered from all denominations. Many teachers were pleasantly surprised that students would actually pray publicly at school, reports *Tina Waldrom, Australian director, SYATP*. Christian clubs have been started and continue to run in many schools.

New Life

Baise-Moi banned

Ros Phillips of **Festival of Light** greeted the recent banning of controversial film *Baise-Moi* as a victory for democratic processes and for mums, dads and children.

Mrs Phillips said a distraught Adelaide mother had phoned her three days ago, traumatised by her viewing of the film *Baise-Moi*. She had previously enjoyed going to the cinema and had seen "R" films before — but had been completely unprepared for the extent of the explicit sex and gratuitous violence of this film.

"I wish to record our heartfelt thanks to federal Attorney-General Daryl Williams for initiating the review of *Baise-Moi*, and to the Film Review Board for upholding the plain meaning of the OFLC guidelines," she said. But she urged Mr Williams and state attorneys-

general to amend the classification legislation so that films for which a review has been ordered are not allowed to be screened.

world news



Indonesian massacres continue

Assailants in black masks last month hacked, shot and burned to death 14 Christians, including a six-month-old baby, in the capital of Indonesia's Maluku province, threatening a fragile peace pact.

Carrying automatic rifles, grenades and daggers, about a dozen men stormed the predominantly Christian village of Soya on Ambon's outskirts, 2600 kilometres east of Jakarta, witnesses said. A Protestant church and 30 homes were set on fire, and the men went from house to house, shooting into those that were occupied, witnesses said.

The killings came two days after a militant Islamic group, Laskar Jihad, rejected the February peace deal, which was meant to end three years of fighting between Muslims and Christians here that has left 9000 dead.

New York Times

Court allows prayer

A five-year-old kindergarten student at the Dorothy Nolan Elementary School in New York has been allowed to continue to say grace out loud before lunch following a formal hearing in the United States District Court. While school officials cited the separation of church and state as reason to ban the prayer, the judge issued a temporary court order while lawyers prepare for a full trial later this year to establish that Christian students have the same rights of expression as other children in school.

The Rutherford Institute

Cult kills Chinese

An unknown number of leaders of a major house church movement in China have disappeared in what is suspected to be cult activity. About 30 leaders of the **China Gospel Fellowship** disappeared on 19 April. At first they were thought to be victims of Public Security Bureau raids. That view later was changed.

A source in Hong Kong has said members of the **Eastern Lightning** cult a year ago posed as leaders of a Bible institute in Singapore offering free in-depth training to house-church leaders. So in April the China Gospel Fellowship leaders went to attend meetings allegedly arranged in six locations inside China. When some of the leaders arrived at one location, they were told the situation was "very tight" (meaning the PSB was coming) and were asked to hand over their mobile phones. When some refused, they were beaten and the phones forcibly seized. One woman escaped.

Eastern Lightning is a cult that believes Jesus Christ has returned as a Chinese woman named Lightning. If Christians do not willingly convert, they are enticed, beaten or even killed.

Assist News Service

Epping Lalor Presbyterian Church, Victoria

Seeks a

Parish Minister

who is a member of the
Presbyterian Church of
Australia.

For information and a
Parish profile please
contact the Interim
Moderator:

**Rev Chris Siriweera,
Telephone (03) 9460 9523**

PCA Yearbook 2002 Corrections

Page 202, Slater, D A.

Phone should read: (03) 9877 5951

Page 233, Defence Force Chaplains
please add: Griffin, David

N6 Part Time Phone (02) 9896 3297

Email: davidgriffin@bigpond.com

Page 176, Gorton, B M, should read:

Phone/Fax (02) 6040 7466;

Office (02) 6025 1836

TV Watch

The Secret Life of Us

Reviewed by Phil Campbell

Even in its title, *The Secret Life of Us* (Network Ten, Mondays) promises to show life as it really is. No more “pretend TV”. No more taboos. Here’s a drama series that will bring us face to face with real-life issues in a way no television drama has ever done before. Which is why viewers were brought face to face recently with the very real-life issue of abortion.

Set in Melbourne’s trendy St Kilda, *The Secret Life of Us* traces the everyday lives of a group of eight twenty-somethings sharing a Melbourne apartment block. According to the producers, here’s what it’s all about: “They’re all looking for the same things ... love, sex, romance, success, and anything else that’s worth going after. The problem is they haven’t worked out how to get it yet, so they make it up as they go along.”

The popular cast includes Logie-winner Deb Mailman as the latte-sipping and love-lorn Kelly, and the magnetic Claudia Karvan as Dr Alex Christensen. Ironically, it’s upwardly mobile Dr Alex who suffers the indignity of an unexpected pregnancy. Partner Rex has taken a new job out of town. “I just wish he’d turn up and want to marry me... but I know it will never happen,” cries Alex. Life’s like that. So what will she do? The tension is palpable – and as television drama, it’s quite moving.

A flurry media of media debate pre-

ceded the airing of the episode. “It will be interesting to see if the scriptwriters allow the concept of compassion, rather than selfishness, to be involved in Alex’s decision,” said Anglican social issues writer Amy Butler. “Compassion, that is, for the new life which has been created inside her. Will she put her ‘rights’ aside to allow her child to live?”

And Alex agonises over exactly that decision. How do you choose when both options are terrible? “I don’t want to be a mum right now. I want to have a few adventures,” she sobs to friend Gabrielle. The pre-abortion counsellor puts the issue this way — “What we need to talk about is whether you feel ready to be a parent.” “I’m not,” says Alex... “but I could get ready. I feel like I’ve made my bed and I should lie in it.”

Sadly, that’s as good as it gets. Gabrielle offers a comforting hug. “Whatever decision you make will be the right decision for you.” Butler’s hope that the script writers will allow Alex to consider what’s right for the unborn child are dashed on the rocks of a selfish moral pragmatism. That, and scriptwriting pragmatism as well — after all, a baby just wouldn’t fit the lifestyle in a trendy St Kilda apartment.

So the decision is made. The announcement is matter-of-fact, and the procedure is disarmingly simple. “I’m going to have an abortion. Just have to go to a clinic for a few hours.” The flatmates gather for a group hug, a spirit-lifting twirl of Latin dancing on the rooftop ... and then it’s time.

At this point, there’s a genuine effort to be real – this is no fun. The faces in the waiting room are sad. In fact, at this point the scripting is overly didactic. As Alex is called in, we listen while the suction curettage method is explained in detail. It’s OK though – it’s only “the contents of the uterus” that are being removed. No mention of a baby. Alex is scared. And the dramatic tension – for me at least – is still building. There’s still time to say no ... until the mists of anaesthetic bring the issue to a gentle close.

Meanwhile, back at St Kilda, the flatmates are cooking up a storm. There are flowers, there’s pasta, there are caring friends around the table. And – in true *Secret Life of Us* style – Evan’s voice overlays the scene with a closing narrative. “The four of us sat around talking as if nothing had happened. But every now and then I’d see a sadness in Alex’s face that hadn’t been there before. A sadness that hadn’t been there yesterday.”

So there it is. Job done. A morally responsible episode of *The Secret Life of Us*, since lauded by newspaper columnists for sensitively handling what was once a “taboo subject” on popular television. “The take-home message of Alex’s abortion experience is simple,” says commentator Leslie Cannold in Queensland’s *Courier Mail*. “In the real world, women make careful and competent decisions to have terminations for reasons they consider to be sound. And for the first time in Australian television, this hasn’t been kept a secret.”

Maybe not. But while the episode ended with “a sadness in Alex’s face that hadn’t been there before”, my guess is *The Secret Life of Us* failed to show the true dimensions of the dilemma. And my guess is, instead of being haunted by her decision for the next 50 years, Alex won’t even be troubled for the next five episodes. In my experience with friends who have been through the same ordeal, this is a sadness that won’t easily go away.

Sure, this was an episode of a television drama that tried to deal with “real life”. Let’s not ignore the stark reality that statistics show that one in every three Australian women will have an abortion. But let’s remember while this episode invited us to share a sad day in the secret life of Alex, there was another secret life at stake that didn’t get much air-time.

Phil Campbell is the editor of Culture Watch, and serves in the ministry team at Mitchelton Presbyterian Church.



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Timor rebuilds

A PLC project in Dili bears much fruit.

Dili burned in October 1999 for three terrible days as enraged people destroyed property not owned by Indonesians or pro-Indonesian militias. The nation fled to the hills and for three weeks lived from the land until the Interfet forces arrived. This is the story we know.

There is another story of an army chaplain contacting Robert Benn, urging him to visit the island and make contact with the protestant church (IPTL) synod office. Robert in turn raised an awareness of the great needs of East Timor in many areas. One aspect was education.

Formerly thriving kindergartens and primary schools were left without windows, doors and roofs. There was no furniture, pencils or books. There were no trained teachers, no curriculum from which to build a program of instruction.

At Presbyterian Ladies College, Sydney, students and staff wanted to take some form of constructive action. The principal, Dr McKeith, visited East Timor in 2000 to meet the moderator. Jointly a vision emerged of the college in a servant role helping re-establish kindergartens linked to the churches. We accepted an invitation to become involved with two sites.

The first kindergarten was at the Ekaristi Church in northern Dili. The year 10 students first committed themselves to funding repairs, filling a container load of equipment and resources. Kate Lanceley, a teacher at the college, offered to stay in Dili, undertake a liaison role and help local people undertake teaching roles.

Graciously the IPTL agreed to year 10 students coming over in small groups to



Robert Benn and Bill Lutton talking to east Timorise outside the kindergarten



**Peter
Burke**

assist with some work linked to the kindergarten and to learn from the circumstances of East Timor. To date there have been three visits by students, with a fourth due mid-year.

The kindergarten has been inspected by the authorities and has been nominated as the country's best. For the independence celebrations, students of 17 other kindergartens were due to come to the Ekaristi Church.

After inspecting the kindergarten at Becorah, church authorities agreed that it would be best to construct a new building. Work has begun, using local resources, and the building should be completed soon.

The two kindergartens are expected to employ six staff and cater to about 75 students. For the immediate future, due to economic conditions in Timor, the salaries will need to be underwritten.

I visited East Timor in early April with Robert Benn and Bill Lutton, Robert's successor as national director of APWM. My task was to formalise the financial arrangements and to identify opportunities. Very kindly, Robert and Bill took the approach that we should work as a team. The result was an opportunity to watch, observe and take part in discussions with East Timor leaders active at synod and local church levels.

I was given exposure to East Timor culture, requiring me to modify a number of personal practices. One challenge was for an extremely left-handed person like me to meet a cultural expectation to operate as a right-handed person. Robert Benn several times had to gently chide me for lapses.

How negotiations are undertaken is very different. A matter that may take five minutes in Australia to resolve will take hours in East Timor. A further complication is that the postal services are not yet functioning, and the synod does not have a telephone.

One of the privileges I enjoyed was meeting the East Timor people and finding out their stories and learning to appreciate the fellowship given. One special time was a fish BBQ on the beach East Timor style. We sang, listened to Robert Benn reminding us all that the Bible is not a collection of human responses to God but God's truth, and prayed.

Some of the experiences include:

- Speaking to a group of home missionaries attending an in-service course.
- Visiting a small village in the hills and meeting people who, despite circumstances, were serious about their faith in Jesus Christ.
- Meeting Moises, the synod treasurer, and having to come to terms with different ways of attending to financial matters.
- Meeting Daniel, clerk of synod, several times.
- Meeting Francelino, moderator of synod, to learn his views about the big issues facing the church.
- Meeting WEC missionaries, including Susan Mandrell, an APWM appointee.

I left the country very aware of the privileges I had enjoyed being in the company of Robert Benn and Bill Lutton, and the fellowship given by some very remarkable people. Bill Lutton has a list of needs to consider in a diverse range of skills and resources. Possibly the biggest need is for persons who are willing to go to East Timor and to model applied Christian values.

Peter Burke is bursar of Presbyterian Ladies College, Sydney. ap

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prayer

JUNE 2002

- 21 Stewart Dinnen, senior Launceston elder, and Marie, as they continue their varied 54 years service with WEC International.
- 22 St Paul's Lismore parish, NSW, including Nimbin and Wyralla; about 390 communicants and adherents, 20 younger folk and 21 elders; Peter and Marilyn Playsted.
- 23 Robert and Leonie Betts from Ashburton and Canterbury congregations, Vic, as they work in Kenya with the Sudan branch of Wycliffe Bible Translators facilitating Old Testament translation and in administrative work.
- 24 Presbytery of Wide Bay-Sunshine Coast, Qld; 6 parishes and 2 home mission stations totalling 11 congregations with 740 communicants and adherents, 5 retired ministers, 1 under jurisdiction; John Tucker clerk.
- 25 Wandoan home mission station, Qld, including Noonga; about 20 communicants and adherents, 10 younger folk and 2 elders; vacant, David Knott moderator.
- 26 Keith and Kathleen Benn from Creek Road charge, Brisbane, Wycliffe Bible Translators for over 25 years, as they promote Scripture use and encourage further translation in the Philippines.
- 27 Morwell parish, in Victoria's Gippsland; about 90 communicants and adherents, 6 younger folk and 12 elders; Robert and Mary Boan.
- 28 North Albert (Beenleigh) home mission station, southern Qld; Gordon and Mary Jackson and the elders, communicants and adherents.
- 29 Implementation of decisions of the recent Tasmanian Assembly; David Turner clerk.
- 30 Your own minister and other ministers known to you. Many under great

stress on health and family through conflicting expectation, overwork and other pressures.

JULY

- 1 Matthew Byrne of Sealcliff, SA, as he prepares to leave for further training in England before taking up long-term service with Red Sea Team International in the Middle East.
- 2 Historic Bowenfels parish near Lithgow, NSW, including Mt. Lambie, Portland and Wallerawang; about 65 communicants and adherents and 7 elders; vacant; William Stewart interim moderator.
- 3 The vacant Kaniva-Nhill home mission station, far western Victoria; about 40 communicants and adherents and 12 younger folk; Keith Allen moderator, supply preachers and interim session.
- 4 Presbytery of Illawarra, NSW; 7 parishes and 2 home mission stations totalling 20 congregations with 1540 communicants and adherents, 1 naval chaplain, 9 retired ministers, and 1 under jurisdiction; Peter Currie clerk.
- 5 Gympie parish, north of Brisbane, including Woolooga; about 60 communicants and adherents, 15 younger folk and 4 elders; David and Elizabeth Cranney.
- 6 Cowra parish, western NSW, including Gooloogong and Morangala; about 200 communicants and adherents, 40 younger folk and 13 elders; John and Elizabeth McClean.
- 7 Ballarat North home mission station including Lexton; about 100 communicants and adherents, 3 younger folk and 11 elders; Grant and Esther Wayne.
- 8 The NSW General Assembly meeting this week at PLC Croydon. John Irvin moderator, Paul Logan clerk — all office bearers and conveners.
- 9 Broadford-Kilmore home mission sta-

- tion, Vic.; about 20 communicants and adherents, 40 younger folk and elders; vacant, David Schulz moderator.
- 10 Continued debates, decisions and fellowship at the NSW General Assembly.
- 11 The David Shearer PIM Patrol in southern Western Australia — David and Doreen Hart.
- 12 The 127 million people of Japan with per capita income 20% above USA, but where only 1.5% profess Christianity, while 70% follow Buddhism and Shinto, and 24% new religions.
- 13 South Yarra Arabic home mission station, Melbourne; Botros and Beta Abdalla; Stuart Bonnington moderator.
- 14 Presbytery of Kilnoorat, western Vic; 6 parishes totalling 15 congregations with 930 communicants and adherents, 1 school principal, 1 minister under jurisdiction; Philip Burns clerk.
- 15 The vacant Mt Isa home mission station, Qld; about 10 communicants and adherents and 15 younger folk.
- 16 Epping parish, northern Sydney; about 600 communicants and adherents, 130 younger folk and 43 elders; David and Meredith Tsai.
- 17 Recognition of the God-given gifts of all members of your congregation — the laos, the people of God — so that the work of the church is not left to a few persons, let alone one — Ephesians 4:12-16.
- 18 Todd Galvin, exit appointee at Nambucca River parish, northern NSW, comprising Macksville and Nambucca Heads; about 215 communicants and adherents, 45 younger folk and 8 elders.
- 19 Cameron and Melissa Webster from Springwood, NSW, serving in administrative work in Jayapura, Indonesia.
- 20 South Korea, where 35% of the 47 million people are professing Christians and where are found the world's largest congregations, theological colleges and Christian gatherings, but 35% are non religious and 24% Buddhist.

The National Journal Committee in conjunction with the Director of APWM, Rev Bill Lutton, is planning to send to every Missionary and Church Worker around the world a monthly copy of the *Australian Presbyterian* and we are seeking your help. If you can help us please mark your envelope with your donation "Magazine Missions" and forward it to the *Australian Presbyterian*, PO Box 375 Kilsyth VIC 3137.

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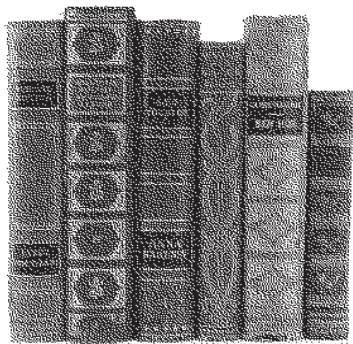
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books



Where was God on September 11?

John Blanchard
Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2002.
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

This is a crucial topic which needs to be handled with biblical sensitivity and discernment. Thankfully, John Blanchard is just the man for the task, and he has performed it admirably in this 32-page booklet.

Blanchard is perceptive enough to see that there are real issues involved in this question, but he does not take a backward step in giving us the answer. "Where was God when religious fanatics killed those 3,000 people in America?" Replies Blanchard: "Exactly where he was when

religious fanatics killed his Son, Jesus Christ — in complete control of everything that happened."

Blanchard writes with simplicity and with depth. This is an ideal booklet for churches to have on hand, and to make good use of. It deserves to be widely used.

Peter Barnes is books editor of AP.

Connect

Edited Sue Boaden
CEP Sydney South, 1997.

This is a very attractive set of books for use in teaching Scripture in schools. The lay-out is excellent, the cost is reasonable, and the fact that each child has his/her own book probably contributes to the child's sense that Scripture is a subject to be taken seriously. The theology behind the books needs to be revisited. It would probably claim to be Reformed, but often what comes across is the typical approach of "God loves you, what are you going to do about it?"

The use of the Contemporary English Version (CEV) for the Scripture quotations is, in my view, a retrograde step. The CEV is about as memorable as the daily newspaper. As for the cassette of songs for use each semester, some songs were better than others. The worst ones were simply inane.

For all that, this is a worthwhile series. Its problems are those which most other series share these days, and its strengths are significant indeed.

Peter Barnes

Unspoken Lessons About the Unseen God: Esther Simply Explained

Derek Prime
Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2001.

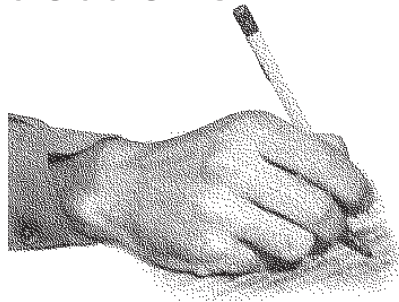
Esther is not quite unique in the Bible — it is named after a woman (so is Ruth) and it does not mention God's name (neither does the Song of Solomon). Yet, as the title of this commentary makes clear, God is everywhere behind the scenes in what takes place in the book.

As the drama unfolds, and Esther makes her courageous decision to intervene with the king of Persia to try to save her people, we see evidence of God's work in every chapter. Even King Xerxes' insomnia is perfectly timed to achieve the perfect purposes of God (see Esther 6).

Derek Prime takes the reader through the book of Esther with a sure touch. For all the threatening clouds on the horizon, we ought never to be disheartened. God is sovereign, and faith gives courage. Esther is just the book to strengthen Christians in difficult days, and Derek Prime is a worthy guide.

Peter Barnes

letters



Local showers

I would be aghast if orthodox Presbyterians were required to endorse the populist argument for a global flood (*AP*, May). Quite apart from the fact that Jewish Talmudic sages did not regard the flood as geographically universal, and leaving aside arguments from

geology, zoology, geography, archaeology and the like, I make the following points:

1. The post-flood world was not radically different from the pre-flood world. The description of rivers pre-flood (Gen 2:10-14) was obviously meaningful in a post-flood world, as John Calvin pointed out 450 years ago. The flood was a real event, but the animals in the ark were no more than could be loaded with their food by eight people on seven days notice. This itself suggests that the flood was probably limited to Noah's cultural region, with the Ark carrying some hundreds of creatures rather than the tens of thousands modern knowledge tells us is required by the global theory.

2. The definition of the flood's universality is not to be established by our benchmarks but by God's. When Jesus said that the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans would be "unequalled from the beginning of the world (not "since the

flood") and never to be equalled again" (Mt. 24:31), he illustrated this principle. The greater loss of life in the Holocaust, for example, does not deny it, for Jerusalem's overthrow was related to God's covenant purposes in a special way.

3. God's intention in the flood controls the crafting of Genesis 6:10-9:19, with its centre point at 8:1 — "God remembered Noah". The flood was to prefigure the final judgment of all humans who have ever lived and the deliverance of those saved by Noah, a righteous man, a second Adam, into a new and cleansed world. There will never be another flood with such epochal significance in God's purposes. As it turned out Noah's righteousness was not such as could carry the world's redemption. The ultimate fulfilment is through Jesus, the truly righteous one, the last Adam.

*Rev. Dr Rowland S. Ward
Knox PCEA, Wantirna, Vic.*

Man's vain search

The quest for perfection can lead to the Gulag or the Cross.

In 1922 H. G. Wells published *A Short History of the World*. He would have been better off sticking to science fiction. At the end of his book, Wells wrote: "As yet we are hardly in the earliest dawn of human greatness ... What man has done, the little triumphs of his present state, and all this history we have told, form but the prelude to the things that man has yet to do."

He asked: "Can we doubt that presently our race will more than realise our boldest imaginations, that it will achieve unity and peace, that it will live, the children of our blood and lives will live, in a world made more splendid and lovely than any palace or garden that we know, going on from strength to strength in an ever widening circle of adventure and achievement?"

This quest for perfection — and belief that it was attainable — was characteristic of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In Christian circles, it led to the teaching of perfectionism, that Christians could actually become perfect in this life. It was behind a lot of the naïve political thinking of the day whereby people such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb became convinced that the Soviet tyranny of the 1930s and 1940s was actually a new civilisation, worthy of admiration and imitation. In Germany the notion of utopianism could be found in the Nazi master race theory.

Another manifestation of this idea can be found in the eugenics societies that existed in most Western countries before World War II. The Nazis managed to give eugenics a bad name, but not dissimilar views continue to prevail today. The various family planning associations (known as Planned Parenthood in the USA) began life as eugenics societies dedicated to the principle of racial improvement.



Peter Barnes

Now we are seeing that same philosophy taken the next step. Having children is increasingly becoming a kind of shopping experience. Babies are supposed to be defect-free or their lives are forfeit. Genetic testing is being used to "weed out" undesirables. There are three cases before Australian courts whereby people with disabilities are suing their doctors and perhaps even their mothers for "wrongful life". In effect, they are suing because they



George Orwell

One cannot have any worthwhile picture of the future unless one realises how much we have lost by the decay of Christianity.

were not aborted. The demand for perfection can produce tyranny, a cheapening of life, and degradation.

Yet Christianity too demands perfection. Christ commands us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect (Mt. 5:48). God's ways are perfect (Ps. 18:30), and we are to walk in his ways. There is, however, a considerable difference between the biblical view of perfection and the various worldly views.

Paul said that he strove for perfection, while realising that he had not attained it (Phil. 3:12-14). Indeed, we cannot attain it

in this life. It is part and parcel of the limitations of this earthly existence that here we see in a mirror, dimly, and know only in part (1 Cor. 13:12).


H. G. Wells' view of life led him from idiotic optimism to despair. His last book, written in 1945, was entitled *Mind at the End of its Tether*. Sadly, that is how he died. The Christian quest for perfection does not lead to despair but to humility. We recognise that we will never attain perfection by ourselves. In repentance, we see that our only hope is in Christ: "For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).

H. G. Wells rejected any belief in the Fall, and any subsequent understanding of the limitations of humanity. The Christian, on the other hand, is conscious of the awful reality of human sin.

This keeps us from the kind of presumptuous folly that infected Wells' thinking. But it does not make us content with sin. While recognising its reality, we rejoice that Christ has overcome it, and that in heaven there will be no more sin.

I came across a highly interesting quotation from George Orwell, who was not a professing Christian although he did come to see the dangers in the humanistic quest for heaven on earth. Orwell wrote: "One cannot have any worthwhile picture of the future unless one realises how much we have lost by the decay of Christianity."

The quest for perfection can lead to Auschwitz or the Gulag, or it can lead us to the foot of the cross and ultimately to heaven.

Peter Barnes is minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, Sydney. 

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