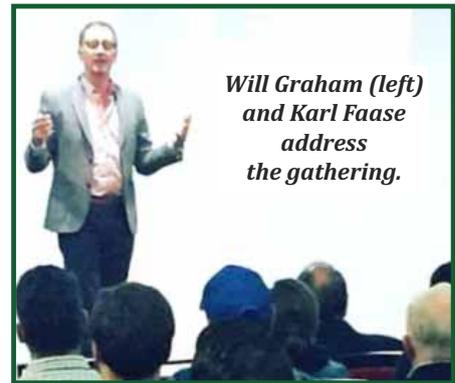


BGEA School Of Evangelism Encourages ALL Christians To Be Evangelists

The BGEA School of Evangelism held in Sydney attracted a large gathering of people with a common love of the Gospel and the need to proclaim it. A panel of experienced speakers and a bag of assorted books graciously provided for participants made for an inspiring and helpful day. Will Graham, Billy Graham's grandson, took the stage.



Will Graham (left) and Karl Faase address the gathering.

Will Graham: The Content Of The Gospel. 'If you live your life as a Christian, and expect that to solely be your ministry, your witness, then you do not grasp what we are all called to do,' Graham announced as he outlined what the Gospel message needs to be. 'Faith comes by hearing, and as such we, who are Christians, are all called to give God's message – to evangelise – no matter where we are.' He said that the essence, or power, of Gospel proclamation isn't due to our eloquence nor the words we say, but solely on the fact that the Gospel is powerful enough to change lives. This was why we should ensure that our messages accurately reflect the centrality of judgment and the cross. There is a tremendous need for the Gospel because only those who are as good as God can enter Heaven, and that's precisely the problem: nobody is. 'It's essential that we teach that all are sinners,' he said, 'all have a sin problem. We need to teach that.' But Will Graham went on to say that the articulation of sin is only one half of the equation in the proclamation of the Gospel. The other is that we need to mention the solution to sin: that is Christ, who died for our sins, so that we can have hope in the gift of life eternal. We need to mention how Christ achieved that for us, through the double imputation: that our sins were placed on Christ, and His righteousness was reckoned to us – if we believe. We know that this was ensured through the proof of the transaction – the resurrection. This, Graham concluded, is the power and truth of the Gospel, and this is what we need to preach.

David Ruiz: The Universal And Timeless Nature Of The Bible. David Ruiz then stepped up to give us an understanding of the very nature of the Bible. However, before he began his talk, he played a video which posed the question: 'Do you read the Bible?' By playing the video, Ruiz wanted to illustrate that the Bible is viewed in an assortment of ways – and we need to understand that in order to engage with people from all walks and paths of life. Ruiz then articulated the different methods by which opponents attack the Bible, going through a list of many of the usual assertions: 'It was written by fallible men...,' 'It contradicts itself...,' 'No-one knows for sure what it means...' Underpinning these statements, Ruiz stated, were a range of different thinking systems – Pragmatism, Subjectivism, and Syncretism – all of which undermined the Bible. However, the beauty of the Bible was the miraculous way it defends itself, and there is an abundance of evidence showing that the Word of God is reliable. When you look at history, Ruiz argued, you see that the fact that not only has Scripture survived to this day, despite the persecution it has faced, but that it has overwhelmingly flourished. This demonstrates just how powerful the Word of God really is, and it needs to be something we treasure and constantly value in our day to day lives.

A Lesson In Prevailing Prayer: Gary Cobb. Gary Cobb next spoke on the importance of consistent prayer. He did this by drawing on the imagery of 'bottles of tears and bowls of prayer'. Cobb reminded his listeners that we should not be afraid to earnestly wrestle in prayer with people, and not be afraid of the tears which come as a result.

(Continued on Page 7)

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Social Media – Enemy Or Friend?

There's no use complaining about social media. Like wealth, it is here to stay. Like wealth, it is very useful. Like wealth, it can be a hard task-master.

When I left SMBC in 2011, the student body presented me with an iPad. Frankly, I didn't know what I was going to do with such a contraption. Now, nearly five years later, I don't know how I ever coped without it. With my iPad I do my banking, receive and send emails, read the newspaper, listen to the radio, check cricket, rugby league and even AFL scores. As well, there are all sorts of apps which I find useful.

However, like wealth, there are dangers. Like wealth, social media is a very helpful servant but a dominating and potentially destructive master. My quality hours for preparation are in the morning. We all know this requires sustained mental effort to understand the sermon passage. How often is this time interrupted by checking my email and Facebook? Have you found that social media has displaced the Bible as your first point of call each morning?

I value various quotes and news which is shared on Facebook, but Facebook is simply not a good arena for working through serious disagreements between us. Where we have such issues do we think that sharing it with many friends who can then tick 'like' and share it with others, is conducive to the maintenance of our unity? We all know that Christian unity cannot be manufactured but must be diligently maintained (Ephesians 4.3). Paul says that humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance are the qualities we need to keep 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4.2). Facebook is an inferior environment for resolving serious disagreements. Face to face meeting, phone calls, a considered letter or email to your brother or sister are much preferred means of resolution.

Has anyone ever said to you, in relation to your device use, 'You've become addicted to that thing'? At one of our grandchildren's school, a seminar was recently conducted on teen computer addiction. Am I an addict, is the servant now a master? I have been confronted by this quote from Michael Horton's book *Perfect Freedom*: 'What we moderns call "addictions", God calls "idols"...'.

The best way to resist the mastery and idolatry of wealth is to take control of it and spread it around. Social media requires us to take the same control so the master becomes a servant again and the idol is smashed. But how? Why not choose your least productive waking hours, for me, 2 – 5 pm, and limit your device access to those hours? In other words, put your device in its place. It serves you, not vice versa.

Where someone has said or written something that offends, go to the person first and seek to deal with the matter face to face, one to one, and think about whether or not it should be in the Facebook arena.

It's not easy to re-assert control, but it's worth it, because when it's put in its place, social media is a very helpful servant. Last year I preached through *Galatians* and was encouraged again to examine the fruit of the Spirit in chapter 5. The last fruit listed is, 'self control' (Galatians 5.23). The believer may be in a regular battle against all sorts of addictions, none of them easy to beat. Recognising addictive behaviour is often the first step to reasserting God's lordship in the power of His Spirit.

I need to regularly teach my wallet that it is not in control, and my use of social media may need that same lesson!

Social media – it's a very useful servant, but can be an interfering and dominating master.

– David Cook

MATTERS FOR PRAYER:

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Church At Risk From Fulani, Seleka And LRA

CONTEXT: In March 2013 France and the West stood back and watched as Central African Republic – which is French-speaking and 76% Christian (mostly Protestant) – fell to Seleka, an exceedingly well armed and funded alliance of mostly Arabic-speaking local and international Islamic jihadists. The conquest of the capital, Bangui, was but the climax of Seleka's jihadist advance southward that involved massive looting, destruction, killing and sexual violence against the mostly Christian population. Thousands were killed and around one million displaced. Many Muslims sided with the rebels against their Christian neighbours, shattering decades of peaceful co-existence. Local village defence militias (the 'anti-balaka') – originally designed to protect villages from 'balaka' (machete) wielding criminals – went on the defensive. Though identifying as 'Christian', the anti-balaka are in no way connected to the Church, which denounces their retaliatory violence. Only when anti-balaka militias started driving Seleka jihadists (and many other mostly immigrant Muslims) out of Bangui, did French and UN peacekeepers intervene. The peace-deal signed in July 2014 was totally meaningless and unenforceable, leaving the Islamic rebels free to re-organise in the north. Many suspect they plan to partition the country. Consequently, recent eruptions of violence in north-west CAR and in Bangui are cause for concern.

NORTH-WEST CAR: In Ngaoundaye, about 500 km north-west of Bangui, clashes between local anti-balaka militias and Fulani cattle herders, backed by former Seleka rebels, have claimed at least eleven lives. According to reports, well-armed former-Seleka and Fulani fighters recently attacked the north-western town of Ngaoundaye, killing six, after the local inhabitants refused to let the Fulani lead their cattle through the town. Peacekeepers have been deployed to the region. According to *Fides* newsagency, the Islamic rebels who attacked Ngaoundaye did not return to their base near Paoua, but withdrew to Kollo on the border with Chad, from where they issued an ultimatum: pay protection money or expect another attack. Much of the population of Ngaoundaye is now hiding in the bush. According to a priest in the area, tensions are soaring and armed gangs are re-forming. The Church is appealing for more peacekeepers.

BANGUI: Tit-for-tat sectarian violence erupted in Bangui on Sunday 12 June and has escalated to claim several lives. On Sunday 19 June heavily armed Seleka rebels abducted six police officers as gunfire rang out around the capital. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bangui, Bishop Dieudonne Nzapalainga, has appealed for calm and for help.

SOUTH-EAST CAR – THE LRA RISES: Founded in Uganda in the 1980s, the Lord's Resistance Army is an occultic militia aided and protected by Sudan's Islamist regime, which has long used it as a proxy against its Christian neighbours. Thriving on insecurity, the LRA will soon also benefit from the withdrawal of Ugandan forces from CAR. The withdrawal of Ugandan forces, announced on 10 June, will give the LRA virtual free reign in predominantly Christian CAR. Buoyed with renewed confidence, the LRA has dramatically escalated its attacks in recent months. This has specifically included kidnappings, with 252 abductions in the first three months of 2016, compared with 113 during all of 2015. It seems the LRA is replenishing its ranks. Last week the LRA kidnapped 29 people from two villages in south-east CAR.

– Elizabeth Kendal, international religious liberty analyst and advocate, Adjunct Research Fellow in the Centre for the Study of Islam and Other Faiths at the Melbourne School of Theology. Elizabeth is Director of Advocacy for Christian Faith & Freedom.

PLEASE PRAY THAT:

- our sovereign God, the King of kings, will intervene to ensure that Central African Republic receives all the diplomatic, military and humanitarian assistance it needs to resist Islamic jihad, eradicate foreign militants and defeat the LRA, while liberating its captives. 'May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble! ... May He send you help from the sanctuary.' (Psalm 20.1,2 ESV)
- God our merciful and compassionate Father will hear and answer the prayers of His traumatised and fearful children; may He protect and deliver them from all the evil plots of men and the devil.
- the Spirit of God will work powerfully and effectively through CAR's Christian leaders – political, civic and religious – giving them spiritual wisdom and insight to know how to respond to their country's crisis; may all CAR's Christians, especially Christian leaders, commit themselves to prayer. 'Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.' (Psalm 20.7 ESV)

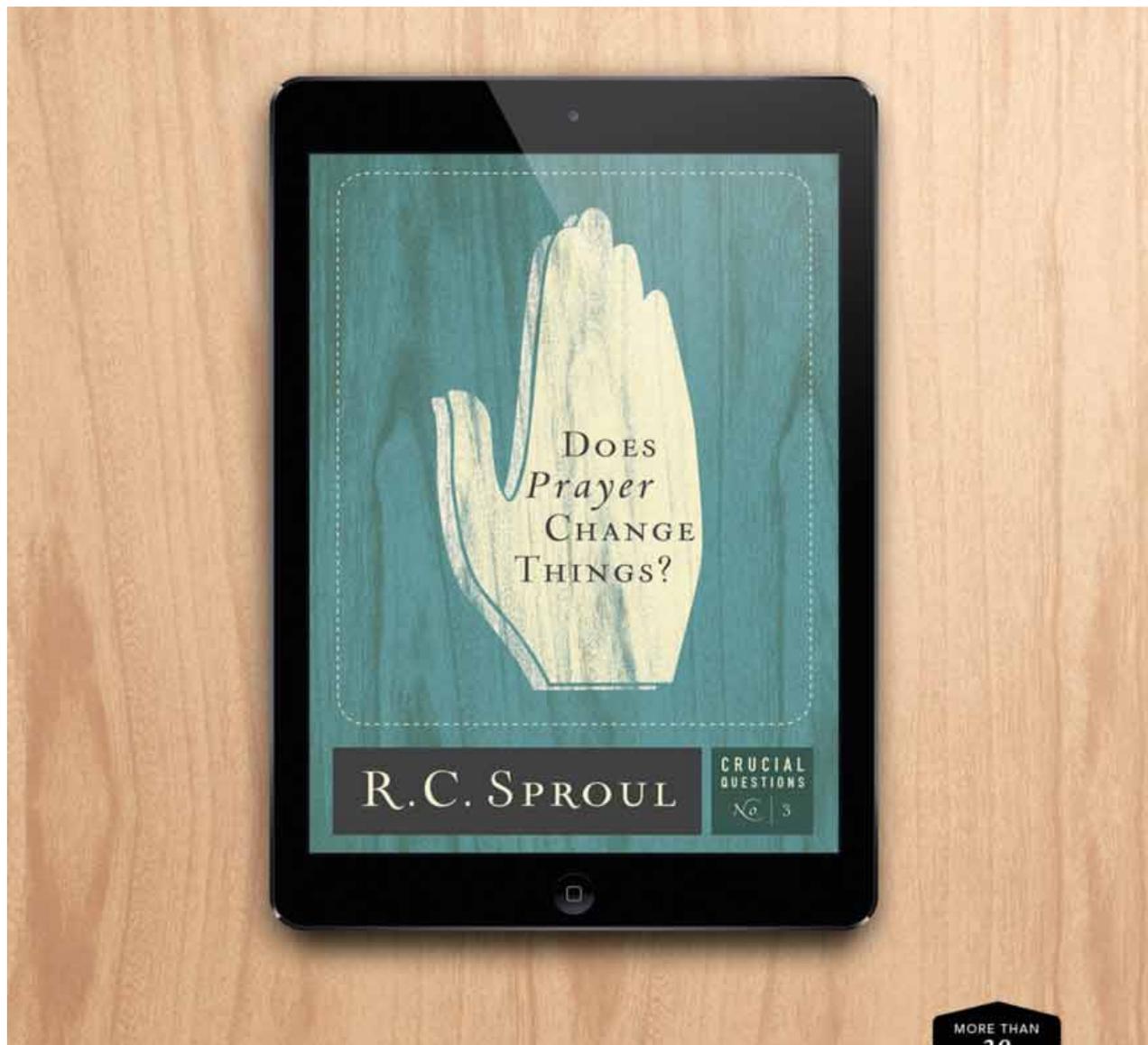
REMINDER: Please pray for Muslims during RAMADAN, 6 June to 5 July. See <http://pray30days.org/>

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The Cost Of Discipleship In North Korea

Missionary Kenneth Bae recently shared his experience as a prisoner of North Korea. He spent two years in a hard labour camp after authorities accused him of trying to overthrow the government. Speaking to the *Christian Post* he says he was running a tour company to hide the fact that he was a missionary. He was sentenced to 15 years hard labour after officials discovered his computer contained videos exposing the reality in the country. Mr Bae says he suffered sleep deprivation and brutal violation of human rights, but through his captivity, he was able to read a Bible and hymnal that encouraged him. He also received hundreds of letters. He was allowed by the state to write letters and call his family a couple of times, but the authorities told him what to write or say. Released after two years, he says he wants to continue ministering to North Koreans who are mostly unaware of how their government is oppressing them. It is estimated that at least 100,000 Christians are in North Korea's labour camps, many of whom face torture or even execution. According to *Open Doors World Watch List 2016*, North Korea is the number one country for the persecution of Christians. – *Christian Post*

Tough Times In Kazakhstan, But ...

The Bible Society in Kazakhstan hopes to put 100,000 Russian New Testaments into the hands of non-Christians during annual Bible Day celebrations in the former Communist country. Bible Society's *Eternity News* reports that up to 300 churches are expected to take part – Orthodox and Baptist, Pentecostal, Evangelical and Adventist. During 70 years of communist rule, Christian faith was severely repressed but after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 there was an upsurge in Christian growth thanks to an influx of missionaries. Today about 26% of the population identify as Christian, mainly Russian Orthodox. But in 2011 the government enacted a repressive bill, which forced missionaries out of the country. Christian advocacy groups report widespread persecution of Christians, and especially Christian converts, in the heavily Islamic nation. Despite the difficulties, many churches focus strongly on outreach and benefit greatly from provision of free Scripture to assist them. Over recent years the Bible Society in Kazakhstan has successfully initiated *Bible Day Celebrations* among churches as a way to promote the Bible and unite Christians. Bible Day also provides the Church an opportunity to reach non-Christians with the Scriptures, as people are invited to special events. – *Eternity News* at biblesociety.org.au

Bangladesh Turns The Tables On Terrorists

More than 5,000 people were arrested in Bangladesh in mid-June in connection with Islamic terror, following an increase in the persecution of Christians. It is thought that the police superintendent whose wife was murdered by militants spear-headed the police raids. About five suspected terrorists were killed during the raids. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the *Christian Post* 'It may take time, but God willing, we will be able to bring them under control.' – *Christian News Headlines*

'Never Heard Of Jesus'

A team from the Operation Mobilisation ship *Logos Hope* visited a hair salon in South Africa recently and were surprised to find a man there who had never heard of Jesus. Customers in the salon were discussing ancestral worship and this gave the OM team an opportunity to share the Gospel. During the conversation one man asked, 'Who is Jesus?' He had never heard the name of Jesus before. The OM team shared the story of Joseph and Mary and how God had become a baby, lived a human life and died and rose again. They explained the way of Salvation

and gave him a *Gospel Of John*. The man listened and decided that God really loves people. Pray that the Lord would open his heart to the truth of God's great love for him. – *Operation Mobilisation*

Turks Find 'Something More Than Gold'

Two years ago, a British Christian visited a Turkish agricultural city of 120,000. He discreetly passed out Gospel tracts that included contact information for requesting a free New Testament. Two people responded. That was the beginning of a church plant where before there had been no Christian witness. Two soon became a group of six friends who now regularly invite more and more people to their meetings and are seeing them coming to faith in Christ and being baptised. They are also sharing Christian love with refugees from Syria, and using social media to tell complete strangers about Jesus Christ. This town is near the ancient capital city where the touch of the legendary King Midas turned everything to gold. Now, in a city where not long ago there were no known Christians, people are finding 'something more than gold' in serving the King of kings. – *Operation Mobilisation*

**Church
Revitalisation
Seminar**

The Rev Bruce Meller, Superintendent of the Ministry and Mission Department of the Presbyterian Church in NSW, will be the guest speaker at a Church Revitalisation Seminar to be held by the Fellowship of Congregational Churches on Tuesday 26 July from 7pm to 9.30pm in Bexley Congregational Church, Corner of Wood Street and Forest Road, Bexley. The cost is \$8 (Students \$4). Supper will be provided. Register at fcccong@bigpond.com or phone: (02) 9588 5128.



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BGEA SCHOOL OF EVANGELISM

(Continued from Page 1) Gary Cobb pointed to the passages in Scripture which record prayer being accompanied with tears, and that God himself sees, hears, and keeps these earnest prayers, as in Psalm 56.8: 'You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in Your bottle. You have recorded each one in Your book.' (NLT), and Psalm 126.5: 'Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.' 'Tears often reflect the cry in our hearts,' he said, 'and God understands this language, so we should not hide from such prayers.' When our prayers are not immediately answered it is not necessarily because the answer is 'No.' 'God's delays are not His denials,' Cobb said. 'Sometimes the answer is "yes" or "not yet"' However, we must be assured that God answers at precisely the right time and always in the right way.'

Karl Faase: Faith Blockers: In the next session, Karl Faase, took the audience through the abundance of faith blockers which can stop people from believing, or even listening to, the Gospel. Much of his content, including the video extracts, seem to be from his video production *Towards Belief*, which focused on the same topic. Whilst Faase outlined a few prevalent faith blockers such as 'abuse by the church' and the 'church's stance on homosexuality'. He focused on topics such as 'suffering', 'the Bible itself', 'religious violence' as well as 'science and God'. His outlines on these topics were helpful reminders. 'We need to show that much of the Bible is supported by an overwhelming amount of historical evidence,' he said.

Bill Newman: The Benefits Of Proclamation: With a spring in his step, Bill Newman took to the stage to talk about the importance of public Gospel proclamation for the local church. Newman, an evangelist who regularly addresses public gatherings throughout the world, spoke about how public evangelistic events can help empower the Church, and vice-versa. As public evangelistic events are supported by churches, it allows for a greater level of impact than any single church could achieve. After all, 'no one church, no matter how large it is, can take a city for God', he added. 'Rather, it upholds a sowing and reaping framework, that the evangelistic event, run by ministries like Bill Newman's own, help plant seeds – and as these new believers go to church, it is the churches that build, or reap, on that.' Bill Newman pointed out the example laid by Billy Graham and Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators. As a young man, Billy Graham went around evangelising, and he noted a need to follow-up on the thousands who were committing their lives to Christ. This is why he reached out to Trotman to be able to provide the support and discipleship that these people needed. It was to be an advantageous relationship – where Graham would be used to bring people into the Kingdom, and Trotman would make sure they were firmly founded. Likewise, this model is something to follow between evangelistic ministries and churches. However, these things need to be considered rather than neglected. We are, Newman reminded us, called to publically proclaim the Gospel, and the New Testament had the disciples out in the towns and the villages. We would be wise not to dismiss this in our own age.

Gary Cobb: Fruit That Will Last. Gary Cobb returned to talk about the importance of follow-up of new converts. Looking at the data coming from the mainline denominations in the United States, it seems that whilst they may see 300,000 conversions a year, one year on, only 30,000 are still in the church. It is almost as if the parable of the 99 sheep was reversed (Luke 15.3-7). 'This demonstrates that churches need to do a lot better at following-up new Christians,' Cobb continued, 'and the first step is to set clear and measurable goals for spiritual development. This means understanding what discipleship is not. Discipleship is not only an evangelistic witness; it is not solely preaching or teaching; and it is not church growth. As John Stott stated, "We should not indulge in triumphalism, of having numbers, for it is often growth without any actual depth". Rather, discipleship is the constant giving of attention to new converts until after they are walking daily with God.'

Cobb outlined eleven steps to help people understand how best we can follow-up new believers:

1. Call the new believer to absolute surrender to Jesus (Luke 14.27, 33).
2. Teach the basics in a way that can change their lives (James 1.22).
3. Provide for personal accountability.
4. Promote people, not programs – someone, not something.
5. Establish small groups that provide fellowship and nurture.
6. Encourage mature believers to spend time with new believers.
7. Invest your resources in reaching the most reachable (kids). 75% of people accept Christ before age 18.
8. Assign your best leaders to discipleship ministry.
9. Foster an atmosphere of friendship, love, and acceptance. Research indicates that new Christians need 7-12 new friends within the first six months in order to stick around.
10. Strike a balance between grace and truth.
11. Be persistent in investing in people and never give up.

Will Graham's Closing Words: Will Graham returned to thank everybody for taking the time to come. He also added that the Christian walk is one fraught with difficulties but is also one which brings forth great joy. As Christians, as evangelists, we need to ensure that we finish with integrity – that we finish the race well, because sadly, many evangelists do not.

(Continued Page 8)

BGEA SCHOOL OF EVANGELISM

(Continued from p.7) Speaking about his grandfather, Billy Graham, and how he is continuing to run that race, but possibly with not too long to go, Will Graham said that there are principles we can gather from him. The first is that we must always be truthful in our statements, ensuring we only speak the truth as to what we know. The second is that we must always behave like we're Christians. We need to act as Christ Himself would act, as we are His representatives. Will Graham then mentioned how Dr Graham always ensured that he always had an accountability partner, and that he was never alone with a woman who wasn't his wife. Even today, there are always two nurses looking after him at the same time. Lastly, we need to ensure that we don't talk badly about other churches or people. We are always to ensure that we live by faith not by sight, and be wary of falling into the trap of slander or gossip. With that, Will Graham closed in prayer for himself and others to recommit to God.

And at the end of the day: As the day drew to a close, I was gladdened by the overall commitment to the Gospel that everybody present had, as well as a shared view of the necessity of proclaiming it publically. Many people dismiss the idea of open-air evangelism, along the lines of Whitefield and Wesley, or even within the New Testament, and say that it doesn't work today. However I think this is not really correct, and is mostly because individuals fear the embarrassment or being heckled by doing so. However, if we truly believe in the necessity of the Gospel, that it is the only way to salvation, while all other paths lead to eternal damnation then surely there is no cost we shouldn't pay to spread this message. After all, since the start of Christendom, individuals have always been dismissed, heckled, or even martyred for doing so. However, even if one person was to enter the Kingdom by God using our evangelism, then surely it has been worth it (Luke 15.7).

The continuation of Billy Graham's evangelistic ministries, as well as others, are demonstrative of a need which still exists, and as such we should ensure that it does not go neglected by our churches. During the event, I caught up with Josh Williamson, an evangelist and member of OAC Ministries, who does some excellent work preaching on the streets of Brisbane. I asked him what he thought of the day, as an actual evangelist himself, to which he replied: 'I thought it was an encouraging and motivating day. It was wonderful to see evangelical Christians from different church traditions uniting for the cause of the Gospel.' Praise God for a day in which the Gospel was lifted up to the high degree it ought to be.

- Brett Lee-Price, Director, Thinking Of God Ministries

*Praise God
for a day
in which
the Gospel
was lifted up
to the high
degree
it ought
to be.*



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A TIME TO PRAY: In the aftermath of Britain's exit from the European Union, churches across the UK are joining together to pray for the guidance and peace of the nation. Churches who take part are being invited to use a prayer issued by the Church of England, designed to bring unity to Britain. The prayer reads in part: 'Guide our nation in the coming days through the inspiration of Your Spirit, that understanding may put an end to discord and all bitterness. Give us grace to rebuild bonds of trust that together we may work for the dignity and flourishing of all, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, issued a joint statement saying: 'We must remain hospitable and compassionate, builders of bridges and not barriers. Whatever our views during the referendum campaign, we must now unite in a common task to build a generous and forward looking country.'

– *Breaking Christian News*

JONI'S WORLDWIDE MINISTRY: For more than 35 years, *Joni And Friends* has worked to accelerate ministry to the disability community around the world, offering a wide array of affirming ministries. The ministry has included the *Christian Institute On Disability, Wheels For The World*, international radio and television programs filled with inspirational stories, and family retreats, where families affected by disability learn they are not alone. Now, JAF has released a new e-book to help churches mobilise volunteers. According to a media release, the third book to launch in the Irresistible Church series, *Engaging Game Changers*, is aimed at helping churches recruit, train and coach volunteers who can make a true difference in disability ministry. One of the key pieces of advice in the book focuses on volunteer recruitment – a topic with which just about any area of ministry can use help. The book is available as a free Kindle download on Amazon.com and other online bookstores.

– *AssistNewsService*

BAPTISTS WANT 'PROFESSIONALS' FOR CHURCH PLANTING: Professional people with experience in business, education, sales, medicine and more, can help start and grow churches in places that career missionaries cannot go, according to a report from *Baptist Press*. Baptist leaders in the USA say they want to encourage professionals (and soon-to-retire professionals) to consider using their skills in cities with upward of 5 million people around the globe. They are thinking of such cities as Tokyo, Jakarta, Delhi, India; Manila and many more. There are 75 cities with a population of more than 5 million, and all of them are under-reached by an evangelical witness. Churches are being encouraged to raise up and equip their members to join church-planting teams in global cities. Missions panel member, Pastor Charles Fowler, says building Gospel ministry on the foundation of work networks in the marketplace allows missions and church planting to happen more naturally as professionals get involved and lead evangelistic and church planting efforts.

– *Baptist Press*

LAUSANNE CONSULTATION TO TACKLE JEWISH MISSION: The Lausanne Consultation On Jewish Evangelism will be placing a special emphasis on involving younger people in the ministry at their next meeting in Denmark next May. The international conference, that began in 1983 and has met every three to four years since, is encouraging each person attending to bring someone younger with them to learn how to reach the Jewish community. Amy Downey, a leader in the ministry says there is a lot to learn in reaching the Jewish community for Christ. She says Jewish evangelism can be a lonely field as it often involves months and even years of work to see the salvation of even one soul. 'Jewish people often need more time to receive the Gospel than people of other religious backgrounds,' she says. The Lausanne Consultation provides a place for young people to learn about Jewish culture, the best way to share the Gospel and an opportunity to step up into leadership roles to make an impact on the Jewish community for Christ.

– *Baptist Press*

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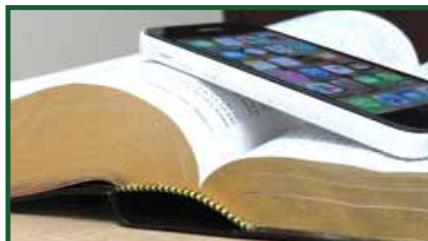


GOOD NEWS FROM ABROAD

How The Holy Spirit Uses Christians Online To Combat Jihad

ISIS may use the internet to stir up jihad, but look at how the Holy Spirit is fighting back...

Global Media Outreach ... has registered more than 167 million indicated decisions for Christ in the last twelve years. They are reaching thousands of Muslims every day with the Good News of God's love. According to a *Denison Forum* report in ChristianHeadlines.com, it's been found that ISIS and other terrorist organizations' use of the internet to draw potential jihadists has been a pipeline of sorts for disseminating their dangerous ideology. In fact one of America's most wanted terrorists is the 'director of external operations for ISIS, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani.



According to the report, he is believed to have used the internet to inspire many violent and deadly attacks, such as the San Bernardino massacre. He reportedly called for more violence during Ramadan, likely to have been the inspiration that tipped Orlando killer Omar Mateen into action.

But there is hope on the horizon, as ISIS is actually losing ground in some core areas in Syria, the report states. And while ISIS is being pushed back physically, there is an even greater spiritual battle that is being waged by Christians online, notes the ChristianHeadline.com report: ISIS is losing ground in its three core areas – northern Aleppo Province, Raqqa, and Deir el-Zour. All three are critical to sustaining flows of money, fighters, and supplies. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that Libyan forces are advancing on Islamic State strongholds there as well.

But here's even better news: The Holy Spirit is using the Internet against ISIS and for the glory of God. So-called 'cybermissionaries' are reaching people in countries where missionaries are not permitted to work or even live. Online ministries are penetrating across Europe and into secular nations such as Japan. And they are reaching Muslims around the world. Let this news encourage you today, and pray for these 'cybermissionaries' whom God is strategically using. In the end, ISIS is no match for the Holy Spirit and the transforming power of the Gospel!

– Aimee Herd, *Breaking Christian News via LifeSiteNews.*

(Photo: Bigstock/ jr4jesus/via FaithandLeadership.com)



TURN BACK THE BATTLE:

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PERSECUTION WATCH

Extremist Mob Burns 80 Christian Homes In Al-Beida Village, Egypt

On 17 June, a Muslim mob looted and torched 80 Christian families' homes in Egypt's Al-Beida village. Christians were forced to flee the area. The mob was angry because of a rumour that a building under construction in the village was going to become a church. The Christians in the Al-Beida village currently have to travel four miles away to worship at the Holy Virgin and the Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church.

When the nearby church's priest heard of the violence he rushed to the scene. The mob set upon his car when he arrived. However he was rescued by other moderate Muslims who protected him from the mob and got him out of the car.



Image courtesy Bible Society of Egypt.

Open Doors USA's Emily Fuentes says this type of violence, while not definitive of the whole country, tends to flare in rural areas where extremists incite some of the villagers against minority Christians. 'It really does vary throughout Egypt. You might see a little bit more tolerance in cities, but in more rural areas or villages like this, you're going to see a bit more tension, some misunderstanding; especially from neighbours [towards] Christians and what a threat they are as a minority group.' Open Doors works through partner ministries in Egypt to help in rebuilding. Fuentes says a few years ago, their partner ministries responded to a similar violent extremist mob attack. In that situation, 200 Christian homes were destroyed, and several churches and Christian buildings were looted and burned down. This mob was also incited with an inflammatory rumour against Christians started by the Muslim Brotherhood. 'It was a horrific situation for these Christians. Not only did they lose their house and churches, but some lost their lives and then some lost their very livelihood. Many were farmers so they lost their livestock and had nothing to help them survive,' says Fuentes. 'Through our partner organizations we were able to help rebuild many of these houses, farms, churches so the Christian community could restart again and continue to be a light even after a horrific attack like this.'

Christians make up 10% of Egypt's population, while the other 90% is Muslim. Although Christians are a minority and suffer from these flares of violence, they do not respond with violence. Fuentes says, '(Because) these Christians are not retaliating violently after a mob attack, but really just rebuilding, people are saying, "Oh, they're not as evil as maybe the Muslim Brotherhood or some of these extremists have said." So it's really reshaping stereotypes that many of these neighbours had because they were ignorant of what Christians really were about. It is amazing because there are little aspects and different ways that Christians continue to be a light in spite of the persecution that really amazes their neighbours. They're beaten down, but not destroyed. They remain resilient, they remain a light. They're not fleeing, and they're choosing to remain strong in their country.'

NEPAL: Eight Christians Released From Prison But Conversion Charges Remain

Eight Christians in Nepal's Dolakha district, including one woman, were released from prison on Friday 17 June, nine days after being arrested on charges of distributing Christian literature to children at two schools with the intention to convert them. News of their release was greeted with thanksgiving across the Nepalese Christian community. However, the charges have not been dropped and there remain calls for the group to be punished.

– Barnabas Fund

NORTH KOREA: Murdered Pastor And His Legacy

Somewhere in China, along the border of North Korea, Pastor Han Chung-Ryeol was martyred for his faith. Knowing the risks of what he was doing, he persisted in his work of ministering to the North Koreans. Han was ethnically Korean, but a Chinese citizen. Todd Nettleton of Voice of the Martyrs said Han worked along the border for decades, providing whatever was needed to people who approached him for help. For

every person he helped with physical needs—like food, clothing, blankets, etc—he shared the Gospel. Over the years, Han helped orphans and women who were sex-trafficked, among others in extreme need. 'He was able to lead numerous North Koreans to the fellowship of believers, to the relationship with Jesus Christ. And many of those who heard the Gospel chose to follow Jesus Christ, turned around and went back to North Korea as missionaries into that culture which is so closed to the Gospel.'

Sadly, Pastor Han's badly beaten body was found at the end of April. VOM reports that he was hardly recognizable. It is believed people from North Korea murdered him. Earlier this year, the North Korean government ordered for Pastor Han to be brought into the country for questioning. But this threat didn't slow his work. After his death, there were reports that people who went back into North Korea after being helped by Han have been gathered for questioning.

– MNN

URGENT CALL FOR PRAYER

Christians Call For Prayer As Russian Government Introduces Draconian Soviet Era Restrictions On Religious Freedom

Christians in Russia have called for prayer as the country looks set to introduce draconian new restrictions on freedom of religion similar to those that existed in the Communist era. Two members of the Russian Duma (parliament) have introduced a series of amendments to anti-terrorist legislation that would require individuals to gain prior state authorisation before even discussing their faith with someone else. The Duma adopted the amendments and the bill will be discussed by the Council of the Russian Federation and then be sent to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The new law will require any sharing of the Christian faith – even a casual conversation – to have prior authorisation from the state. This includes something as basic as an emailed invitation for a friend to attend church. Even in a private home, worship and prayer will only be allowed if there are no unbelievers present. Churches will also be held accountable for the activities of their members. So if, for example, a church member mentions their faith in conversation with a work colleague, not only the church member but also the church itself could be punished, with individuals facing fines of up to 50,000 roubles. There are also restrictions on the extent to which churches can have contact with foreigners; for example, any non-Russian citizen attending a church service would be required to have a work visa or face a fine and expulsion from Russia.

The bill appears to be using the excuse of anti-terrorist legislation to clamp down on any churches other than the Russian Orthodox, support for which is closely tied to Russian nationalism. President Putin has in recent years increasingly emphasised his own membership of the Russian Orthodox Church as a means of bolstering popular support for himself. However, even some senior members of the Russian Orthodox Church have voiced concerns about the bill. If passed, the extent that this law is implemented will depend on local authorities.

Barnabas Fund colleagues in Russia have expressed serious concerns about the proposed measures. The Advisory Council of Heads of Protestant Churches of Russia has urgently appealed to Russian President Vladimir Putin to stop the legislation. Leaders of Russia's Baptist Union urged all Christians to pray for God's protection.

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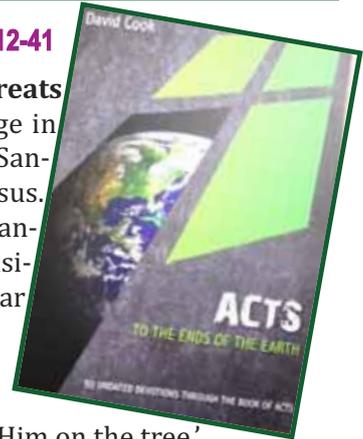
All applications will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

God's Intervention Through The Wisdom Of Gamaliel ACTS 5.12-41

The ongoing growth of the church is inhibited neither by politicians' threats nor by internal hypocrisy. Clearly God is accrediting His Gospel message in miraculous ways (vv 15,16). Luke now tells us that the motivation of the Sanhedrin is jealousy (v 17), the same motivation of their earlier attitude to Jesus. But prison is an ineffective weapon against the Apostles. God's messengers cannot be stopped as long as He has work for them to do. The denial of responsibility for the death of Jesus by the Jewish authorities (v 28) has a very familiar contemporary ring to it.

Verses 29–32 are an excellent summary of the apostolic response.

Note the following elements:



FOR REFLECTION:

Why did Gamaliel and Saul have such different attitudes to the new movement? Note the following: The High Priest and his associates (v 17), the captain of the guard and chief priests (vv 24, 26), the Sanhedrin (v33), the flogging and the silence ordered (v 40). What do the opponents of the apostles have in common?

- God raised Jesus from the dead. 'You killed Him on the tree.'
- God exalted Jesus to His right hand that He might give repentance and forgiveness to Israel,
- We are witnesses of this and so is the Holy Spirit.

The response to such a message is similar to the response to Stephen's speech (7.54) and perhaps the Apostles would have met Stephen's fate but for the wise intercession of Gamaliel (vv 34–39). Gamaliel reminds the Sanhedrin of Theudas (v 36) and Judas the Galilean (v 37) who appeared claiming to be someone but later were killed and their followers scattered. Similarly, he says, let the Apostles go, for their cause will fail if it is of human origin (v 38), but if, on the other hand, it is of God, who can effectively oppose it?

The apostles were flogged, then released, but kept teaching and proclaiming, despite the Sanhedrin forbidding that activity. Saul/Paul, a student of Gamaliel, had no such open attitude to Christianity. He saw more clearly that the old system must stay, therefore the new must be banished.

According to the logic of Gamaliel, the ongoing growth of the church and its continuation to this day is ample evidence of its divine origin.

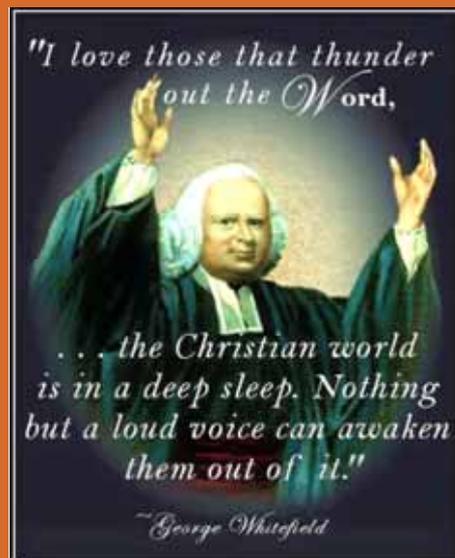
Content taken from 'ACTS – To The Ends Of The Earth' by David Cook, published by 10Publishing, used with permission.

Witness On William St:

This bike was seen recently on William St, Melbourne – A Silent Witness



Seen On Facebook:



BOOKS WORTH READING

INSIGHTS FROM GRECO-ROMAN TIMES, Rex Dale, 2014, Published By The Author, Email: rexfaye@iinet.net.au ISBN: 978-1-4575-3477-5

Author Rex Dale's new release *Insights From Greco-Roman Times – A Christian Response* is well worth a read to get a grasp on how people before the time of Christ thought about life and how to deal with its mysteries. Melbourne writer Rex Dale was born in Western Australia where he graduated. Now retired he has become an even more avid reader and particularly enjoys books featuring biographies, (religious and secular) and Christian spirituality.

'Everyone needs a framework for life and resources to give inner strength when life seems to go wrong,' Rex Dale writes. 'We all have a world view or philosophy which we scarcely think about until we are challenged by those with a different world view, or we live in times, like now, when old ways and assumptions are being trashed.'

Rex Dale got to wondering what people did before the time of Christ to get meaning and how they dealt with life's uncertainties and challenges. This era, for the author, had been rather mystifying. He was aware of such people as the Stoics and Epicureans, and individuals like Socrates and Aristotle. But what was distinctive about them and why did they have such a following? And why did the Romans so eagerly study their writings? If you have wondered about all this, then this book could be for you. Don't let this period intimidate you! In many ways we are like the people of those times.

– Rev Dr Mark Tronson,
Press Service International.

To see more on this book go to: <http://www.christiantoday.com.au/article/insights-from-greco-roman-times-a-christian-response/21866.htm>



'Oh, The Best Book To Read Is The Bible'

Filipino boxing champion Manny Pacquiao publicly speaks about his Christian faith often. Now, the Filipino senator is revealing where his knowledge of God comes from. On Instagram he wrote: 'Reading the Scriptures every day and night and meditating on it has taught me a lot about God and His Kingdom.' Manny says a trip to Israel last November also strengthened that faith, as 'sitting in the place where Jesus taught every day, reminded me to be faithful and obedient to Him.' The Christian fighter and politician previously spoke to *The Christian Post* about the importance of Christian athletes using their platforms to share their faith. 'When I am vocal to others about my faith and my hope of eternal life, it helps those fans of mine and those who watch me to know they can also have a hope,' he said. – *Christian Post*

**Read: *The Judgment Of God And A Place Called Hell*
by David Holden, at www.defenceofthefaith.org**

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From ISIS Spy To Follower Of Jesus

Europe faces an unprecedented threat from members of the Islamic State infiltrating the continent. That should send a sober warning to the West. Several years ago, Pastor Ghassan Thomas fled Baghdad when Islamists threatened him and his family. He went to Turkey and started a church to reach out to other refugees. 'I go everywhere because I was a refugee and I can put myself in their shoes and I understand them,' Thomas told *CBN News*. One day, ISIS sent a spy into Pastor Thomas' church. The visit led to a life-changing decision and also provided an opportunity to learn more about ISIS.



Pastor Thomas arranged a phone call for us with a man we'll call 'Mohammed.' After greetings in Arabic, he said, 'Hello my dear brothers' and began to explain his job within the terror group. When ISIS killed a family inside their house, he would go back and kill anyone who was still alive. 'In that time, I think in this way: I should kill. I should do many things just to be close with my Allah,' he said. Mohammed says this blood lust motivates ISIS. 'For sure it will be more and more since it's in the *Koran*,' he explained. 'If you are not a Muslim, you need to be a Muslim or we should kill you and take your everything—financial, women and everything. This is in the *Koran*.'

Fighting between Sunni ISIS and Shiite militias often put Mohammed's own life in danger. For his safety, family members told him to flee to Turkey. As a devout Muslim, he obeyed his parents. His opportunity came when ISIS sent him to spy on Pastor Thomas' church. But Mohammed also had his own questions about Jesus. 'I saw the people, how they welcomed me and they don't know me,' he recalled. 'And I hate those people and they show me love.' They prayed for Mohammed and it changed his life. 'When they pray for me, I start to cry like a child. And I feel like something come out of my body—very heavy,' he said. 'When I finished the service, I went home, but there is a Person walking with me, just talking, but I feel like I'm not on Earth. I said, "Am I flying? I don't feel like I'm walking. Like Someone carry me."'

Then Mohammed began reading the Bible and comparing it to the Koran. 'I went there and discovered this is the God I'm trying to find. This is the true God. This is what I want for my life,' he said. Pastor Thomas says Mohammed's change of heart means the church in Europe needs more workers. 'For this reason, we need some people [to] come and serve God in Europe with the refugees, just to wake them up—to be against what ISIS do,' he said. This former ISIS member expects more attacks like the one in Brussels. He delivered a warning for Europe. 'Do you think there's a great danger to Europe right now? For sure! It's a huge thing. They should wake up,' he said.

– *Breaking Christian News*

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ONE AFTERNOON IN SYDNEY

...Whose leaf shall not wither - Psalm 1:3

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Aimed to assist mission agencies-society publication editors, Christian bloggers, small Christian media outlets: co-hosted by Rev Bob Thomas (New Life), John Sandeman (Eternity) and Dr Mark Tronson (a daily columnist with Christian Today).

The workshops and panel discussion will inspire a new generation of Christian writers and agencies reaching out through online and social media.

One Afternoon in Sydney has been compacted into an afternoon as it has been combined with Press Service International's Young Writer Annual Conference and Awards - delegates are welcome to stay for the Annual Awards at 4pm.

Press Service International is a ministry of Well-Being Australia.

PROGRAM

9:20 AM Young Writer Conference

 1:30 PM **FAITH AND MEDIA**
 with Josh Reid
CREATIVITY AND FAITH
 with Justin Monaghan
 2:00 PM **PANEL DISCUSSION**
Panel Chair: Chief Editor:
 Press Service International,
 Sophia Sinclair
Panelists:
 Thomas Devenish - Hobart
 Justin Monaghan - Adelaide
 Tash McGill - Auckland
 Charis Jackson - Brisbane
 Josh Reid - Woolongong
 3:30 PM **AFTERNOON TEA**

 4:00 PM Young Writer Annual Awards

SPEAKERS



Josh Reid

Josh Reid is an Australian media professional, author, actor and speaker. For the past eight years he has been the CEO of Pulse 94.1 FM and is currently working on a children's novel. He works with Christians involved in the creative arts and media, encouraging them as they go out and influence culture.



Sophia Sinclair

Sophia, chief editor at Press Service International, will be chairing the panel discussion in the afternoon.