Three months of concentrated Gospel outreach are underway in a country where 94% of the population is Buddhist. Beginning the outreach, evangelist Bill Newman is working in the Songkhla Province of southern Thailand. He will be followed by Will Graham’s series of meetings in December and Franklin Graham will preach in Bangkok in January.

Bill Newman’s Celebration Of Love is reaching crowds of Buddhist background people and hundreds have responded to the preacher’s invitation to receive Christ as personal Saviour. Churches in the area sponsored the rallies and are conducting a follow-up program to help new Christians find their feet in the faith.

Songkhla Province is the energy hub where most of the power for the district is produced. Dr Newman says a greater power, the power of the Holy Spirit, is working in a mighty way here in the hearts of the people.

Quality music presented by W501, one of Thailand’s top Gospel groups, brought excitement and joy to the meetings and prepared the audience for the preacher’s message. Rev Yai translated Dr Newman’s message into the local language.

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Steve Grace Brings A Message Of Hope For Hurting Towns

Gospel singer Steve Grace and his team have just finished a concert tour through the drought affected towns in regional Victoria and New South Wales. Steve reports that it was not an easy tour as these towns are doing it tough, so at each of the concerts they prayed for the towns and prayed for rain.

‘Part of the vision of our ministry,’ Steve says, ‘is to visit regions in their tough times, not just their good times, simply to lift peoples spirits through music. Bringing hope and sharing the Good News.’

Steve thanks those who helped organise events in Warrnambool, Hamilton, Horsham, Albury, Wagga, Condobolin, Tullamore and Dubbo, thanking them for their faithfulness to the Gospel and to the vision we all share for our nation Australia. Steve is looking forward to serving more towns in the next season, any who would like a concert or shed night in their region should go to office@stevegrace.com
SPURGEON: ‘Who Being Dead Yet Speaketh’

The Banner Of Truth Trust recently put out a challenge on their website: ‘If Spurgeon has been a blessing to your soul, would you consider writing a brief testimonial?’ Not an easy task for me to be brief, because Spurgeon has been such a blessing, but this was my contribution:

To begin with, there are the sermons; The New Park Street sermons followed by The Metropolitan Tabernacle sermons, in which Spurgeon takes a small phrase of Scripture and uses it as the key to open up a vista of the rich tapestry of Scripture deftly applied to his hearers for their salvation and edification.

Then there are the devotionals, Morning And Evening, encouraging individuals and families to pause at the beginning and end of each day to have a quiet time with the Lord in contemplation of His Word and prayer. (‘Let prayer be the lock of the night and the key of the morning’, he said.)

The ‘how-to’ books apply Biblical principles to various aspects of the Lord’s work. Lectures To My Students and An All-Round Ministry join Scriptural methods to Scriptural teaching, while Come, Ye Children is a delightful book to place in the hands of youth workers, displaying Spurgeon’s own Christ-like love for children and his ability to speak to them simply but not condescendingly.

The Greatest Fight In The World calls for a Godly approach to discerning the battle lines of conflict and how to defend the true faith. (‘We cannot fight the Lord’s battles with the Devil’s weapons.’)

Smaller books like Around The Wicket Gate and Advice For Seekers were designed to help in one-to-one or door-to-door evangelism; the Sword And Trowel magazine brought the work of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and the pastor’s labours before the wider world, as well as providing a model for Christian authors and editors!

Perhaps smallest of all is Spurgeon’s Mission Statement at the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle: ‘I would propose that the subject of Ministry in this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshipers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ.’ Surely this should give all of us who are engaged in the Lord’s work our supreme focus in His work.

However, I have found the greatest blessing of Spurgeon’s legacy to be his mighty commentary on the Psalms, The Treasury Of David. I dare not preach on the Psalms without consulting it. Here the storehouse of Spurgeon’s own treasury of wisdom and knowledge meets the Psalmist’s to present us with immeasurable spiritual treasure. David’s life experience is matched with many of the Psalms and joined with the experiences faced by the Lord’s people throughout their earthly pilgrimage. It is full of quotable quotes which can still enrich preaching in our own day; it is profoundly simple, yet simply profound.

Remembering Spurgeon brings to mind Hebrews 13.7,8: ‘Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.’

Bob Thomas
The Rev Dr Mark Short has been elected as the eleventh Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Mark Short is currently National Director of The Bush Church Aid Society, and was formerly Rector of Turvey Park and Archdeacon of Wagga Wagga in the Diocese of Canberra-Goulburn. Educated at Moore Theological College and the University of Durham, UK, he became an Anglican priest in 1997. Formerly he worked as a graduate economist for the Commonwealth Department of Industrial Relations and journalist for the Sydney Morning Herald. Mark (51) is married to Monica and they have two children. Mark’s other interests include bushwalking, train travel and reading. He will be consecrated and installed in a service at the Diocesan cathedral of St Saviour in Goulburn early in the New Year.

Barnabas Fund International Director Patrick Sookhdeo will speak on Wednesday 14 November 2018 at 7pm in Bexley Baptist Church, 484 Forest Rd, Bexley (South Sydney). His theme will be Current Trends In Christian Persecution. It is aimed at helping people gain wisdom on the global situation as it affects the Church, including the clash of religious ideologies and the rise of aggressive secular humanism and giving insights to guide prayers for our suffering brothers and sisters, together with an update on what Barnabas Fund is doing to give practical help to persecuted Christians. Those who wish to attend must confirm their intention to attend. Please RSVP by phone (07) 3806 1076 or 1300 365 799, or email at bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org to confirm your intention to attend.

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United Effort By Indonesian Churches To Help In Sulawesi

As search and rescue efforts continue on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, churches in Indonesia are uniting to express their solidarity with the suffering tsunami survivors. Rev Krise Gosal in Palu says churches are donating food, clothes, tents, baby needs, and other supplies as funds. He says that it is still very hard to get past landslides and damaged roads with supplies, and the loss of life is devastating. He says some church leaders are still looking for their families and congregations, as they are burying the dead. Tearfund’s partners have also deployed medical teams including emergency doctors and nurses, an orthopaedic surgeon and a midwife.

– Inspire Magazine

Martin Foord, presently lecturing at Trinity Theological College in Perth, is moving to Singapore next year to teach at the Evangelical Theological College of Asia (http://etca-sia.edu.sg).

Congratulations to New Life’s office manager, Rachael Vrieze, and Joshua Maskell who were married on 3 November. We pray for the Lord’s richest blessings upon them as they embark on their life together.

A boreham bunch – books for sale

A Bunch Of Everlastings (F) 8th Ed.1929.
A Bunch Of Everlastings (G & DJ) Ed.1952.
A Bunch Of Everlastings (F) Reprint 1952.
The Crystal Pointers (F) 1st Ed.1925.
Rubble And Roseleaves (G) 1st Ed.1923.
Rubble And Roseleaves (F) 1st Ed.1930.
A Late Lark Singing (F) 1st Ed.1945.
The Gospel Of Robinson Crusoe (G) 1st Ed.1955.
A Reel Of Rainbow (F) 1st Ed.(P) 1937.

Contact: Rev David Nicholas,
16a/25 Mulloway Rd,
Chain Valley Bay 2259
New Approach To Ministry In An Old Church

Mindfulness sessions are being run in the heart of Sydney’s CBD by Scots Church. The 20-minute *Stillness In The City* sessions are a trial for eight weeks in an attempt to reach out to city workers and residents. The sessions offer skills in stress reduction, using the core qualities of mindfulness, but they are different to secular or Buddhist ideas of mindfulness. They incorporate meditation on Scripture – using key verses in the Psalms that carry the theme of stillness.

Church planting expert Craig Tucker was recruited as Scots ‘team leader’ with the task of replanting the church after it had closed several years ago. Mr Tucker noticed the sense of isolation and loneliness experienced by many who live and work in the city. He says he commenced these ‘mindfulness’ sessions because he found that there’s restlessness in peoples’ souls. Church members are also using this new program to reach people interested in the Gospel.

Seeds For Sowing

Budding Australian Christian entrepreneurs are invited to apply for an ‘incubator program’ to run next year. The *Seed* program was first launched three years ago and has already helped a number of initiatives. Its focus is on understanding God’s purpose. John Beckett, founder and CEO of *Seed*, says the six month program is designed to cater to the particular needs of Christian change-makers. He says that there is enormous latent potential in the Christian community to make a positive difference in the world. This is a unique program in the Christian community that helps both the person and their ideas to grow. The program is open to anyone with ‘an idea they want to grow, a problem they want to solve or a context they want to serve or redeem.’ To find out more about Seed’s Incubator Program, visit the website seed.org.au/incubator – Sight Magazine
Superbook Winning Kids In Japan

The popularity of Superbook is growing in Japan, as it airs on television and features in Sunday schools across the country. Recently 88 churches worked with Word Of Life Press to present Superbook live at the Joy Joy Festival, a combined churches annual event. Two thousand children with their families, many unchurched, were entertained, and heard the good news of God’s love for them. Now in its second month on Japanese national television, the animated Bible presentation Superbook is gaining in popularity. Organisers said that it is difficult to get religious programs on air in Japan, but after broadcasters saw the quality of animation and that the stories helped children, Superbook went to air. In addition to Superbook on television, churches are using it in their Sunday school curriculum. Each person at the Joy Joy Festival was given a Superbook DVD. Superbook is available in English at us-en.superbook.cbn.com

– CBN News

North Korean Christians Treasure Their Bibles

North Korea’s Christians are so hungry for a Bible that they’re willing to risk 15 years in a labour camp, or even death to acquire a copy, according to a Christian humanitarian organization that is working to smuggle 100,000 Bibles into the country. Rachel Godwin with World Help says some people have never even seen a copy of the Scriptures, but they are willing to do anything to get one. A Bible is the greatest gift they could receive, she says. Ms Godwin says that many North Korean Christians have family members and friends in labour camps now, and some have been buried there, but despite the risk, Christians fortunate enough to own a Bible see it as their prized possession.

– Christian Headlines

THE RESTRICTED WORLD: ‘To Boldly Go’

About 80% of the world’s population lives in areas restricting mission activity. Up to 3 billion people are still unreached with the Gospel, meaning there are more unreached people today than there were 50 years ago. Scatter Global’s Jonathan Thiessen told Mission Network a new study has found an estimated 58,000 people a day are being added to the overall number of unreached people in the world. To address this, Scatter Global is helping people turn their careers into passports for Christ. By taking a job in a strategic location, Christians can live out a testimony for Christ, build relationships, and make an impact with the Gospel. Scatter Global finds jobs in specific locations, connects people to the opportunity and provides guidance in the process. The organisation is a collaboration of seven mission agencies. – Mission Network News

MOZAMBIQUE: Compassion And Prayer

A Compassionate Care team is delivering hospice and palliative care deep in the jungle of Mozambique, Africa. The Audio Scripture Ministries team is working where medical resources are hard to come by. Apart from ASM there is little-to-no access to hospice care. ASM’s Compassionate Care team have treated their 100th patient, a sobering milestone showing how necessary their care is. Joshua Harrison with ASM says their team delivers basic medical services and they talk and pray with patients. They also distribute God’s Word in audio, and answer questions from what patients have been listening to. Mr Harrison says the audio Bible distribution is just as critical as the medical care, and even more so, as patients in Mozambique prepare for eternity.

– Mission Network News

IRAQ: Christian School Re-opens In Mosul

The re-opening of the oldest Christian school in Mosul, a northern Iraqi city once controlled by IS, is being hailed as ‘a victory over terrorism and extremism’. The elementary school was closed for four years, but has welcomed 400 students aged between six and 12. The school’s principal, Ahmed al-Saadi, says the re-opening was due to the efforts of volunteers and donors, which he praised as ‘a lesson in foiling extremism.’ The school is under the supervision of the Christians but offers education to students from all religions. Most schools in the area were closed when the city was controlled by the Islamic State.

– World Watch Monitor

God’s Word Takes Root In Refugees’ Lives

Christians on short-term mission trips are bringing refugees encouragement and the hope of the Gospel. Mission Network News reports that as short-term volunteers travel to camps, the Word of God has taken root and multiplied. Many refugees are from unreached people groups and hard-to-reach areas in their native countries, so the camps provide access to present the Christian message, with many refugees coming to faith in Christ, and then leaders among them take the reins of ministry.
MATTERS FOR PRAYER:

Conflicting Reports On Whereabouts Of Aasia Bibi

We have received conflicting reports on the whereabouts of Aasia Bibi who has been acquitted of blasphemy charges by a court in Pakistan after eight years in prison.

At the time of writing, Barnabas Fund reports that ‘She was released from prison on 7 November and flown to Pakistan’s capital Islamabad. Although a number of international news outlets, including the BBC, initially reported that she and her family were being flown out of the country, the Pakistani government later confirmed she was “in a safe place in Pakistan”.

‘Aasia Bibi and her family remain in great danger: As Barnabas Fund has previously reported, any departure from Pakistan would have to be arranged at a government level and at present, there is therefore no reason for any organisation to request donations to help Aasia Bibi and her family leave the country.

‘There has been speculation in a number of news outlets that the UK government has not joined other countries in offering Aasia Bibi asylum due to concerns over “potential unrest” in the UK. However, the claim has not been verified and, at the time of writing, the Home Office has not made any official statement on the matter. After the violent reaction from Islamic hardliners that has already been witnessed on the streets of cities across Pakistan following Aasia Bibi’s acquittal by the Supreme Court, speculative reports about her whereabouts or of other potential unrest serve only to heighten security risks.’

Other reports are as follows:

According to Charisma News, ‘Aasia Bibi is reportedly on her way to the Netherlands after seeking asylum there. Pakistan’s Prime Minister banned Bibi from air travel amid rabid, violent protests from Muslim extremists over her recent acquittal of charges of blasphemy against Muhammad. Bibi’s lawyer, Saif-ul-Malook, who already fled to the Netherlands after his life was threatened as well, confirmed reports of Bibi’s release on Wednesday through a Dutch-based foundation helping persecuted Christians.’

It has also been reported that, ‘Pakistani officials continue to deny that Bibi has left the country, but confirm that they had been moving Bibi to “a safe location”. At this point, Dutch officials will not confirm or deny reports that she has found asylum in the Netherlands. However, witnesses in Islamabad reported seeing Pakistani army units near the prison where she was released and at an airport in Multan. Other sources claim an ambassador from the Netherlands came to accompany Bibi and that she and her family boarded a plane.’

Whatever her situation might be, she is clearly still in need of fervent prayer.

To Keep Up With Franklin Graham’s Grand Tour 2019
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NEW LIFE – 15 November 2018 – Page Six
Daily Bible Readings To Help Prepare Our Hearts For Christmas

Christians in the UK are being encouraged to prepare spiritually for Christmas with free daily Bible readings throughout Advent. Each day the Bible readings *Fresh From The Word* can be received by email together with commentary. The advent passages look at Scriptures from the prophets Joel, Micah, Amos and Isaiah. As we prepare for Christmas celebrations in many ways, the readings will help prepare our hearts for the celebration of the Christ’s birth and His return at the Second Coming. The readings are designed to encourage and inspire faith, as well as providing prayer prompts and practical ideas for action during the Christmas season.

The emails can be received by signing up at the website [ibraglobal.org](http://ibraglobal.org) – Inspire Magazine

**INDONESIA: Broadcasting The Good News**

Global Christian broadcaster Trans World Radio is airing programs aimed at encouraging and informing survivors in Indonesia’s earthquake-shattered Lombok. The programs come amid warnings of more aftershocks after the quake killed more than 400 people and left 350,000 displaced. Utomo Santosa, an Indonesian who serves as TWR’s international director says, ‘The destruction is heartbreaking.’ The TWR program *Therapy For The Soul* is airing to the area from their powerful shortwave station on Guam. Additionally, the FEBC FM station on nearby Bali and a commercial FM station on Lombok have agreed to air TWR’s program. A non-government aid group has agreed to distribute free radios and promote the special TWR programming. TWR’s ministry to Indonesia reaches across more than 17,000 islands. – ASSIST News Service

**Taking It To The Streets**

A man who became a Christian on a street corner is now leading a street ministry. Ivan Itzkowitz says his *Walk For Christ Ministries* has led 5,000 people to Christ since it began 14 years ago. On a busy thoroughfare in Florida, USA, Ivan had listened to a preacher tell how God saved him from a life of drug dealing. Ivan, who had been brought up in an abusive home, was planning to kill his father. He says God spoke to him on that street corner and, after committing his life to Jesus, he went immediately to his father to ask for forgiveness. Two weeks later Ivan began preaching. Ivan says God wants to show people they don’t have to be in a church to hear from Him. – AG News

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**Websites Worth Watching:**
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From His Fullness Ministries
Mukti Mission Promotes Special Needs School Program

One of the programs Mukti Australia is delighted to support is the Special Needs School at Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission in India. Mukti Australia’s overseas volunteer Ingrid Ten Hoopen played a significant role as Principal for the past four years.

Ingrid has been especially pleased with the Perceptual Motor Program she implemented recently, where the younger primary students are clearly enjoying their lessons, happy and keen to give activities on new equipment a go. From the start Ingrid says, there has been a lot of curiosity, big smiles and claps when a task is achieved.

The new PMP has been designed to assist students with special needs to develop their fine and gross motor skills and also their social skills. The equipment used in the program includes balance beams, wooden cubes to climb through, scooter boards, coloured hoops and bicycle tyres.

The mini trampoline has particularly been a great hit, along with the cones and balls the children use for jumping and running in-and-out of in a zig zag pattern. These activities, says Ingrid, assist the children with developing their balance, body and spatial awareness and memory, and essentially, supports the children’s formal learning and reading and writing. It also increases their confidence and strengthens their relationships with peers as they learn to listen and follow instructions and encourage each other. ’The program is not at all competitive but each child is encouraged to reach their personal best’, Ingrid says. ’Taking turns, waiting patiently, encouraging others and helping to pack away equipment at the end of each session, are practical and fun ways to learn life skills.’

Ingrid and Mukti Australia are very thankful for the generous donations given to assist with the cost of equipment for the program. To learn more about Mukti Australia and how you can support women and children in India, visit their website at www.mukti.org.au – Karen Coombs
PERSECUTION WATCH

Egyptian Christians Targeted By ISIS

ISIS militants ambushed three buses carrying Christian pilgrims on their way to a remote desert monastery south of the Egyptian capital of Cairo, killing seven and wounding 19, according to the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Interior Ministry.

The victims had left St Samuel the Confessor monastery in Minya shortly before the attack on Friday. All but one of those killed were members of the same family, according to a list of the victims' names released by the church.

The local ISIS affiliate which spearheads militants fighting security forces in the Sinai Peninsula claimed responsibility for the attack, according to the extremist group’s Amaq news agency. Though its claim could be not immediately verified, Islamist extremists have previously targeted Christians on the same road south of Cairo.

In a recent shootout, Egyptian police killed 19 Muslim terrorists who were responsible for the bus attacks on Coptic Christians. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks. Egypt’s interior ministry confirmed that in the terrorists’ holdout, they found ISIS propaganda. It seems that Egypt is stepping up its punishment of extremists targeting religious minorities. Even last month, 17 terrorists were sentenced to death for three church bombings in 2016 and 2017 – also claimed by ISIS.

Short-Term Missions Encouraging Refugees To Take Up Reins Of Ministry

The Gospel is multiplying in refugee camps around the globe – and it’s happening at both the grassroots level and through the support of the global Body of Christ.

e3 Partners sees this in action as they host short-term mission trips to refugee camps. Through these trips, Christians are engaging refugees with encouragement and the hope of Jesus. Jeff Johnston with e3 Partners says they recognize that refugees have faced many difficulties. ‘Probably nine times out of ten, any refugee you come across has a pretty heart-breaking story of how they wound up where they currently are. Normally, it’s just the dangers of their own city, their own village, their own country [which] are so immense that they have to flee,’ Johnston says.

Because of this, e3 Partners works to bring comfort and provisions to refugees such as food, clothing, and shelter in the camps. ‘But ultimately, we know and understand that the only thing that’s really, truly going to give them peace and hope is the message of the Gospel,’ Johnston adds.

e3 Partners strategizes their ministry work by addressing physical needs and then sharing the Gospel with refugees — many of whom are originally from unreached people groups and hard-to-reach areas in their native countries.

Elizabeth Kendal’s New Book ...

War! Destruction! Violent Persecution! Martyrdom! Forced Displacement!
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For more information go to: www.ElizabethKendal.com
We met John the Baptist in John 1.6–8 and in John 1.19–36. On each occasion, John is testifying about Jesus. This is his last appearance in John's gospel and he authenticates and testifies to the ministry of Jesus.

Notice two things about John:
1. Whatever the background to the question of crowds being attracted to Jesus (v.26), John knows his place. He is the best man to the bridegroom. His joy is complete when the bridegroom is the centre of attention (v.29).
2. He is crystal clear that Jesus is sent by God to speak God’s words (v.34).

John the Baptist stands in contrast to those who reject Jesus’ testimony even though Jesus speaks God's words (v.32; see John 1.10,11). Verse 33 makes it clear that the person who believes the testimony believes that God speaks truly.

The solidarity between the Father and the Son is highlighted: the Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His hands (v.35). To have the Son, through belief, is to have life. Rejection of the Son means that God’s wrath remains (v. 36).

This solidarity of God the Father and God the Son is mentioned numerous times in John’s gospel (John 5.19,20; 6.37–40; 8.29; 12.44–50; 14.9). There may be those who drive a wedge between the severe Father God and His merciful Son. Jesus, they say, seems far more approachable than the ‘aloof’ God of judgment. The apostle Paul tells us that ‘God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ’ (2 Corinthians 5.19). God’s love for the world led Him to send His precious Son to die for it.

Sending out the disciples in Matthew 10, Jesus encourages them, for not only is there solidarity between the Father and the Son, there is also solidarity between the Son and the disciple: Anyone who welcomes you welcomes Me, and anyone who welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me. (Matthew 10.40).

FOR REFLECTION:
How is John the Baptist a model witness for Jesus?
How are you encouraged by the solidarity within the Godhead?

SEEN ON FACEBOOK:
The old Puritan was a profound psychologist, he said, ‘Balaam wanted to die like the righteous but he did not want to live like the righteous’ (...) There are no short cuts in the spiritual life. We cannot play fast and loose with God. We cannot extract just what we want and leave the rest. It is all or nothing in this Christian life.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981)

LUTHER’S FEAR
I am much afraid that the universities will prove to be the gates of Hell, unless they diligently labor to explain the Holy Scriptures and engrave them upon the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution where men are not unceasingly occupied with the word of God must become corrupt.

Martin Luther

NEW LIFE – 15 November 2018 – Page Ten
Partaking in Communion last Sunday, I stared down at the square of bread in my palm and then at the cup in my hands and undertook the solemn reflection in which many other readers would have also engaged; perhaps even concurrently. While reflecting on Christ’s work on the cross – on His body broken and His blood shed – my thoughts were then drawn to the joy of fellowship which we enjoy as a church, as each of us eats and drinks together at the same time.

Looking across the pews, I know that there are some who are lonely, some who are wrangling and seeking to mortify sins of the flesh, some who are resisting the Accuser who seeks to distract them and dissuade them from the surety of their salvation in Christ. We’re all communing together – with one another and with the Lord. This fellowship which we know is not perfect (and will not be while we’re still here below) but it is a blessing and it is very, very good. But it requires zeal and engagement for it to be maintained and nurtured.

This fellowship together, this life as a congregation, is something which John Owen considers in Duties Of Christian Fellowship – A Manual For Church Members. Banner Of Truth have produced this classic as part of their Puritan Paperbacks series and have modernised the language to make it all the more accessible, today.

As the subtitle of this small book indicates, its format is that of a Manual, a primer for readers who are church members. Owen writes for those of us who are sitting in the pews each week. He divides his work into two parts: first, he raises topics which explore how we relate to our pastors and then he explores how it is that we should relate to one another.

Each of these topics or ‘rules’, as Owen calls them is presented in a short, succinct manner of one or two sentences. After placing each rule before the reader, he plainly lays out a selection of verses of Scripture, followed by a commentary from Owen. Banner have also included some discussion questions after each chapter which would be a great benefit for personal, family, or group studies.

A wide range of aspects of church life are considered; from due respect and honour towards the Pastor (part 1, rule 4); support of him and his family (part 1, rule 5); to consideration of how believers might bear one another’s burdens (part 2, rule 8), encourage one another in the battle against sin and worldliness (part 2, rule 5) or pray for one another in the face of persecution and affliction (part 2, rule 13).

For Owen to have written on these topics indicates that they were areas in which congregations needed to pay close attention at the time in which he was writing (the 17th Century), but they remain entirely relevant and applicable today.

Consideration of these rules and then a close study of the Scriptures listed thereafter will give way to self-reflection by individual church members, the result of which should be growth in holiness, love for one another and glorification of our Lord.

If a Bible study group or even a whole congregation were to study this text together over a season and the rules which Owen sets out were adhered to, there is no doubt that they would know great benefits. To do so would mean that the congregation are steered towards the wisdom offered by Owen and immersed in the passages of Scripture which are contained in this work.

This would be a wonderful book to ‘take and read’ for ourselves and would also make a suitable gift for a friend (perhaps wrapped up with Bonhoeffer’s Life Together). I have no doubt that after you have read it, you will wish to share it with your brothers and sisters and perhaps schedule it into your group Bible studies for the year to come.

– Peter Merrick
Ireland Sets An Example With Blasphemy Law Removal

Thanks to Ireland, there is one less country in the world with a blasphemy law on the books. In a referendum on 26 October, the Irish people voted overwhelmingly to remove the outdated blasphemy legislation from their constitution. Ireland’s article on blasphemy formerly stated, ‘The publication or utterance of blasphemous, seditious, or indecent matter is an offence which shall be punishable in accordance with law.’ The referendum vote removes ‘blasphemous’ from that sentence.

Dr David Curry, President and CEO of Open Doors USA, says, ‘These are laws that were put in place ages ago in Ireland to protect the religious sensibilities of the folks there. Unfortunately, what has happened with blasphemy laws is that in many countries around the world, it is misused as a vigilante form of justice. Anybody can bring an attack [or] an accusation on somebody based on blasphemy laws.’

Nobody has been prosecuted for blasphemy in Ireland in over 150 years. However, Irish police investigated comedian Stephen Fry’s comments last year calling God ‘capricious, mean-minded and stupid.’ The investigation was dropped after police concluded not enough people had been outraged. ‘I think what Ireland has done is they have noticed this law that has been on their books [and] they wanted to step forward and set an example,’ reflects Curry. ‘They haven’t been imposing any blasphemy in Ireland for some time, but they wanted to set an example for Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, and others to drop their blasphemy laws. It’s an injustice. It’s a very serious issue around the world and they’re setting a good example.’

– Lyndsey Koh (Irish Flags photo courtesy of Lee Jordan via Flickr under Creative Commons)


‘When the storms are o’er us, and dark clouds before us, then Your Word directs us; in our way protects us.’

Photo credit, Rev John Ross, retired Free Church of Scotland Minister, Inverness.

**NEW LIFE EXTRA**

‘When the storms are o’er us, and dark clouds before us, then Your Word directs us; in our way protects us.’

*Photo credit, Rev John Ross, retired Free Church of Scotland Minister, Inverness.*

**‘THINK ON THESE THINGS’**

One generation will commend Your works to another; they will tell of Your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. – Psalm 145.4,5

Have we ‘dropped the ball’ somewhere in the process God intended to make His glorious Name known throughout his world? Asaph had explained this process in Psalm 78.2-4: ‘I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old - what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, His power; and the wonders He has done.’

Today, our own society wants to get excited about things like 'climate change', and to redefine 'marriage', while at the same time it allows no place at all in its worldview for the God who rules over every aspect of the climate and who has laid down very clear rules and guidelines related to why He created us 'male' and 'female'? We are silenced in the discussion of these important issues because the accepted ‘rules of debate’ have declared that God and His written Word have no relevance in it. It seems that somewhere along the ‘generation to generation’ chain we have failed to ‘commend God’s works and the glorious splendour of His majesty’ with sufficient conviction and enthusiasm to cause the ‘next generation’ to ‘meditate on His wonderful works’.

Sadly, once the link in the communication chain is broken, it is very hard to get started again. When we do speak out, we are treated as if we come from another planet and are speaking an incomprehensible language. It is our different ‘worldview’ that makes all the difference, and that isolates us from what is acceptable and relevant. In this regard, our situation is not much different from the one the faithful Old Testament prophets found themselves in, nor for that matter, the situation Jesus found Himself in.

Two things are important for us to remember: we need to remain faithful to the God who really exists, and who has revealed Himself clearly in Creation, in the Bible, and in Jesus (Psalm 19); and we need to be praying for a mighty outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit into people’s hearts and minds to get the ‘making known’ process back on track.

Remember what God promised to Jeremiah and Ezekiel in their discouraging situations: This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time ... I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother; saying, “Know the LORD,” because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest. ... For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.’ (Jeremiah 31.33,34), and ‘I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws.’ (Ezekiel 36.26,27). Let us pray earnestly for God to do this, and then be ready to grab the ball and make sure we don’t drop it again!

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