

Think Training

Encouraging and promoting the training of God's people for ministry

Issue 10 Autumn 2009

Welcome to the latest Training Bulletin!

Introduction: Why are we doing this?

FIEC, as you will know, is going through a time of significant change, which we refer to as 'restructuring', but which, thankfully, we are also calling by a more positive phrase, 'FIEC for a New Day'. Many times during the past two years or so, since these ideas were first mooted in Council, I and other Council members have asked ourselves, 'Why are we doing all this? What's the point?' Come to think of it, 'What's the point of FIEC?' - and for this particular publication, 'What's the point of Training?' I am sure that most of you could provide excellent answers to those questions, and I will spare you my own responses, but I would like to answer in a somewhat different way by sharing something from work I am doing outside my immediate local church context. Just over a year ago I embarked on a course of part-time theological study at WEST (Wales Evangelical School of Theology) in Bridgend. The three residential weeks each year have been a delight, not least because I have enjoyed good fellowship with others doing the same or similar courses. The essays and their deadlines, on the other hand, have been demanding, not least because of the requirement for extensive reading, careful thought, reasoned argument and meticulously referenced writing. More than once I have found myself asking the same question, 'Why I am I doing this? What's the point?'

I am not going to burden you with my own personal reasons for doing this course. Perhaps when I have finished there will be a time for that, but I want to share something striking from my current work on an essay on

the subject of the inerrancy of the Bible, part of a module simply entitled 'The Doctrine of Scripture'. I have been reading books on this important subject, both ancient and modern, and have been trying to become familiar with some of the recent debates, both beyond and within evangelicalism. Of personal interest to me has been the re-visiting of some of the books that were quite formative in my own Christian life and theological thinking in the 1970s and 1980s.

Among those were the writings of **Francis Schaeffer**, founder of L'Abri Fellowship and author of many popular but significant works dealing with aspects of theology, philosophy, culture and ethics. He wrote extensively on the subject of Scripture, and inerrancy in particular. Indeed, he was on the Executive Committee of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, which produced the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy in 1978. In one of his last books, 'The Great Evangelical Disaster', published in 1984, he asks about inerrancy, in his own words, the very questions I have been asking, for quite different reasons, about 'FIEC for a New Day' and about my own study at WEST. Why are we doing this? What difference does it make? His warning focuses the mind!

"I would ask again, 'Does inerrancy really make a difference - in the way we live our lives across the whole spectrum of human existence?' Sadly we must say that we evangelicals who truly hold to the full authority of Scripture have not always done well in this respect. I have said that inerrancy is the watershed of the evangelical world. But it is not just a theological debating point. It is the obeying of the Scripture which is the watershed! It is believing and applying it to our lives which demonstrate whether we in fact believe it!"

The same must apply to us in FIEC or to me in my study. What difference does it make? It is important to get the structures right and to do the hard strategic thinking about where we want to go and how we can best get there, but however helpful our structure or however good our training schemes, the test is always whether we 'live up to what we have already attained' (Phil.3:16). Is our training and equipping making a difference to the way we serve and the way we live? Are our churches benefiting?

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In this issue of 'Think Training' there are two related emphases – one is on leadership and the other is on the practical outworking of the two specific initiatives in which FIEC has invested considerable time and effort over the years – Prepared for Service (PFS) and Learn2Lead (L2L). The L2L report is from **Colin Paris**, an elder at a large well-known evangelical church on the South Coast. The PFS articles are from **Peter Pilgrim**, part-time pastor at a village chapel in Sussex, **Paul & Bernie Mason** from an FIEC church in Leicester, and **John and Barbara Froggatt** who work with Canal Ministries, engaging in outreach on the British Inland Waterways. In all of these situations there has been a need for consistent effort to make training work. But in the end they would all say the results were well worth the effort.

On the wider scene, we have stimulating contributions from two men who work in wider circles than FIEC but who have already been hugely helpful to us in FIEC Training. **Brian Boley** draws on his experience to ask whether we need to think differently about leadership in church life; and **Marcus Honeysett** looks at the very practical question of how church leaders can keep fresh in their work.

More widely still, we are grateful to **Ray Evans** for mining yet more quality comment from his extensive reading. His two book reviews are a challenge to learn from others, and from the best that is being done.

Why are we doing this? Well, you may have your own answers to the particular questions that face you. If not, keep asking until you do! For all of us the answer to all our 'why?' questions must be found once again in that great commission given to us by Jesus himself, to 'make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.' (Matt.28:19-20). This is our mission, and all that we do should be contributing, sooner or later, to that great aim. For our encouragement and empowerment we have also his great promise, 'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'.

Martyn Hallett

Martyn Hallett leads Hope Church Goldington in Bedford and is chairman of the FIEC Training Team. To engage with him about any matters in this Introduction or other aspects of the Training Bulletin please contact him at martyn@hopegoldington.org.uk

A New Type of Leadership!

Brian Boley (*Christian Training*) looks at some findings on leadership in a secular context and asks what we as Christians can learn from them.

We need a new type of leadership! That's the conclusion of a recent survey of hundreds of "learning and development" professionals – that a new type of leadership is needed in today's fast-changing business environment. As the survey revealed that this was the view of 91% of respondents, the consensus of opinion was overwhelming.

The poll also revealed that 49% believe that the greatest priority in skills development is the ability to think flexibly and creatively, with motivation and staff engagement close behind it (47%). These were followed by change management skills (40%), business skills and acumen (26%), enhanced communication skills and empathy (24%) and the ability to influence people (20%).

One of the sponsors of the survey said: "The findings of the survey reinforce what we know from our discussions with Learning & Development practitioners and experts. Leadership is a highly topical subject for people in all walks of life from politicians to the general public, and the current economic situation is forcing people in positions of leadership to adapt and learn new skill sets in order to be effective in their role and deliver the results that UK businesses currently need."

How much of this can be applied to church and mission agencies? Certainly we should never think that we have got it all sorted out and that we have nothing more to learn. Paul in Romans 12:3-6,8 writes this: Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well...If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously.

What does taking leadership ability seriously look like? In this article, we explore two specific areas of leadership development.

Equipping Leaders to Lead through Difficult Times

These ideas come from some research I've completed in business circles and I'm not entirely sure how they apply to the difficulties that are faced by churches and other ministries. Please read through the seven ideas and let me know what you think.

1. Communicate frequently – clearly, credibly and candidly. During difficult times, communication is more

important than ever. Ambiguity and uncertainty equate to stress. If you go silent, people will make up their own stories about what's really going on with you, and these rumours will often generate negativity.

2. Keep connected – manage by walking around. You can't afford during times like these not to know what's really going on. Be diligent in seeking out information, even the bad news. It's a mistake during a crisis to hide; stay visible and keep checking to see how your people are doing.
3. Pay attention to task and people – be alert to people's emotions. Don't fall into the trap of thinking all is well or that your team will simply need to "deal with it." Develop a proactive plan to recognize, identify and deal with current challenges and emotions. Set time aside to allow people to vent and talk about their anxieties and challenges.
4. Be the anchor in the storm – display calm confidence and optimism. Model what you want from your team. This is your golden opportunity to truly lead by example and live out your values.
5. Keep your team focused – identify the single most important priority goal that everyone needs to commit to in order to weather the storm. Make sure everyone understands it and is clear what their part will be.
6. Engage hearts and minds – facilitate a session to get all hands on deck. Bring the team together to brainstorm creative solutions for the game-plan. Focus on core strengths and values, vision and how to keep confidence high.
7. Stay the course – reinforce the plan with follow-up, recognition, redefining expectations and adequate resource support for weathering the storm. Everyone's extra effort should be noted and recognized.

Remember what Paul says – that if God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. This doesn't mean that we can sit back and think that we have arrived! We could ask those around us (whom we can trust) to see whether there are any practical ways we can lead others through difficult times.

Equipping Leaders to Manage Change

Change happens! There is no way that we are going to develop and grow unless we allow changes in our own lives and in our churches. I was running a "change management" workshop for a group of church leaders and we had a quick brainstorm of individuals and communities in the Bible who were confronted with change. The list included Abraham and Jonah, Paul and Peter, Nicodemus and Nineveh, the Children of Israel and the early church. Maybe you could think of others you could add to the list.

Leaders have an important role in managing change and yet it is an area that is a real challenge to us. Change means that we have to step out of our comfort zone and

work in un-explored areas; this causes people to react in ways that are difficult to manage. Their responses could include:

"They say something like this every year; keep your head down and it will soon go away!"

"After all the effort I've made and now they're taking it all away!"

"They have no idea what's really happening on the ground."

"They never listen to us."

"It's just the new pastor trying to make an impression."

"They've been wasting money for years; now they want even more."

"They are bound to reorganise my work."

"All this could have been sorted out ages ago."

The reality is that when faced with change, individuals are likely to express their reactions in four main ways:

1. through misunderstandings
2. by raising objections
3. by focusing on personal consequences
4. through emotional suspicion and mistrust

As leaders we need to develop ways of dealing with all these reactions and ensuring that we drive the process of change by engaging with the people we are leading. The easiest thing is to resist change, but it is often the process God uses to bring us through difficult times.

Brian Boley

You can engage with Brian about the contents of this article via brian@christiantraining.org.uk. He is always willing to talk through all the issues that pastors and church leaders face in trying to establish a training culture in our churches. We'll include more material on managing change in the next bulletin.

Spiritually Fresh Leaders

Marcus Honeysett looks at why many church leaders struggle to keep spiritually fresh.

I was recently asked the following question on Premier Radio's Leadership Show: 'If you were to list what we might call 'freshness busters' (things which typically trip up Christian leaders) what would you include?'

I have a LONG list in answer to that. Here are five of my top answers:

- 1) There are no easy ways to measure success in gospel ministry, because our success is measured spiritually and invisibly. Numbers alone are not a good measure. In the absence of measures (and remember every other type of work has them), it can be easy to feel guilty or imagine that we haven't done enough—and there is nobody who will tell us to stop. Indeed it is possible to get to the point where people think that us doing 110% is the norm
- 2) Connected to that, nobody who isn't in Christian

leadership understands what it entails or how much time and effort it takes. People don't know how much time is taken confidentially in pastoring, how long it takes to prepare a sermon or how long it is appropriate for a leader to pray as work time. The result is that almost all leaders are doing many more working hours than anyone thinks they are. When a church appoints a leader, the church will have certain expectations, but these expectations may not be achievable in a realistic time scale. I regularly look at job descriptions given by churches seeking leaders and wince, because they are looking for the impossible; and I know a leader will try to live up to it – and probably kill themselves in the process. It is a brave leader who says “This simply isn't do-able!” Add to this the fact that many people assume that because they are in church during their time-off on Sunday, it should also be considered as time-off for the pastor, and you have a recipe for heavy over-work at the expense of spiritual freshness

- 3) The expectation that the leader should do everything. Sadly, there are still many churches that assume that it's not the leader's job to facilitate the ministry of the body, but to do it all for us. People think it isn't a proper sick visit unless the pastor did it. They assume that all meetings need to be led and every sermon preached by the pastor. After all, that's what we pay him for!
- 4) There is no fellowship of real spiritual depth and honesty. No places to be real. Nobody to whom you can say things you would never say to your church. Nobody who takes a genuine deep interest in your spiritual welfare and growth when you do that for lots of others. There tends to be an assumption in churches that their leaders are being spiritually fed. Very few would think otherwise and even fewer dare to ask. It is normal for nobody to spot when spiritual health isn't happening until something goes badly wrong
- 5) There is no opportunity for review. No definite time set aside to evaluate or change direction. Or when review is undertaken, it is done badly by people who don't know how to evaluate the work of a pastoral worker.

And all of this is without considering the impact of criticism, opposition, lack of friends, low incomes and sustained disappointment.

The Bible says *'Hope deferred makes the heart sick,'* (Proverbs 13:12). It also tells us to labour to make our leaders' work a joy because otherwise what good is it doing to the church? (Hebrews 13:17).

Do you want leaders in your church who are fresh and full of spiritual vitality? If so, here is the primary biblical principle for ensuring it happens: **honour them**. We see that in 1 Timothy 5:17 – ‘The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double

honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.’ We see something similar in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 – ‘Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in highest regard in love because of their work.’

In a related passage (Hebrews 13:7) the leaders (the same word as in 1 Timothy and 1 Thessalonians) are the ones who spoke the word of God to you and who keep watch over your souls. It says we are to consider their life and faith and *obey them as a joy*, submitting to their authority.

The reason we are to obey leaders is because they keep watch over our souls by speaking the word of God to us. The authority with which they speak is the word of God. That is why Paul says that elders who preach and teach are worthy of double honour – they have an awful, terrible, glorious task in the church.

Whenever I see a worn-out, burnt-out Christian leader, I will give odds of 10 to 1 that their church rarely thinks about honouring them, submitting to them, following them or obeying them. It's more likely that they will have been resisted, criticised and poorly paid. It's likely that they will have had their godly dreams for the church expunged by committees or members' meetings that think that democratic caution, rather than following leaders, is the way to go in church.

If, in your church, you never ask the question, "How are we honouring our leaders?" then you probably aren't. And you are probably heading for leadership burnout. Maybe not this year or next, but with ever-growing likelihood for five or ten years' time.

Do you want leaders who are fresh, who keep pressing on, loving the Lord, loving the church and loving leading? Then *'make their work a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you'.* (Heb 13:17)

Marcus Honeysett

Marcus Honeysett works for 'Living Leadership' – 'training and sustaining biblical leaders.' He can be contacted at marcus@livingleadership.org

Learn2Lead at Lansdowne

Colin Paris is the elder responsible for Training at Lansdowne Baptist Church in Bournemouth. Here he reflects on four years of Learn2Lead at Lansdowne.

Lansdowne Baptist Church in Bournemouth was founded in 1876 and presently has around 400 members. The church building is situated close to one of the main routes through Bournemouth and has several large Bournemouth University Halls of Residence within

walking distance. The Sunday congregations are reflective of the nature of a town with many retired people and students, and a good number of families and singles, all drawn from a wide area across the conurbation of Bournemouth and Poole. Over the years different forms of ministry have been developed and leaders appointed to take responsibility for them.

Several years ago it was acknowledged that although the existing patterns of training 'on the job' were of great benefit, there was a need for the establishment of a training programme which could develop gifts and deepen devotion, in order to better 'prepare God's people for works of service'. It was also hoped that such training would become part of the heartbeat of the church and be a natural expression of the desire of the members to be the best for the Lord. So Learn2Lead was introduced.

Four years and two complete Learn2Lead courses later, we look back with thankfulness to the Lord and with gratitude to those who at the beginning produced study material ideally suited to our situation. It has slotted in well as part of the suite of evangelistic and discipleship courses being run by the church.

We have learned a number of lessons.

Firstly, we should be prepared to adjust the course programme. We started by running Tracks 1 and 2 (Bible Overview and Principles of Leadership) in parallel, monthly. This proved not ideal for us, as some course members lost track of what was happening and when.

We therefore changed the programme into blocks of four, five or six consecutive weeks running in January/February, April/May, June, and September/October, and this programme seemed to work better.

We needed further to acknowledge the variety of aspirations of those attending. We were often told 'I won't be coming as I don't want to be a leader', so we pointed out that Tracks 1 and 3 (Bible Overview and Bible Doctrine) were suitable for all believers, and in any case, how did they know that the Lord wouldn't give them some leadership responsibility somewhere down the line!

We targeted certain groups as the material became more specialised. It is clear that the Overview and Doctrine tracks were relevant to every believer, so all were invited to join. As the course progressed and the material became more user specific, those leading particular ministries, for example, youth, small groups, and outreach, were additionally targeted to join the sessions relevant to their ministry.

We discovered that it is essential for the course to be fully supported by the church leaders and embraced by the church members. This was achieved by inviting the Senior Pastor to take a significant part in the leadership

of the sessions, by producing attractive flyers for each track, and by publicising and explaining the course to the congregation at every possible opportunity.

Throughout each course encouragement was given to the course members to complete the study material in advance to prepare a basis for the actual session. It became clear that not all managed to do this, and those who led the sessions needed to make allowance for this in the way they prepared and presented the material.

We realised that having a variety of people to lead the sessions could be of benefit for it enabled gifted men to gain further experience, and provided course members with leaders selected for their experience in the subjects covered. This also opened up fellowship with another local church by having their pastor teaching some sessions and one of their youth leaders enrolling on the course.

What impact has Learn2Lead had at Lansdowne? This is difficult to measure as so much is hidden in the hearts of those who attended. Many have testified to finding the course helpful, and some have been moved forward in their Christian lives and ministries and have taken on leadership roles. For this we give thanks to God. We pray that the Kingdom of God will see lasting fruit in the years to come.

We are now considering whether or not to continue into a third course in the new year. The pond appears to have been well fished already, and the numbers likely to attend during the next two years are small. Nevertheless new people are joining the church and perhaps we should be looking at other ways to use the material, or offer courses in partnership with those in other local and like-minded churches. If we do continue we will certainly let other churches know and invite them to join with us. As well as the obvious benefits of running a basic study course with leadership training, Learn2Lead provides great potential for drawing gospel churches together in fellowship and interdependency, and we shouldn't let this opportunity pass.

Since 2007 Learn2Lead has been published by the Good Book Company, with the same material now in five tracks, each in a separate booklet: Understanding the Bible, Understanding Doctrine, Understanding Leadership, Leadership in Practice 1 and Leadership in Practice 2, along with a large Tutor Manual which includes all the material!

Colin Paris

Colin Paris is a retired pastor from London. In addition to his responsibilities at Lansdowne, he is the FIEC Coordinator for Learn2Lead, and the pastor to the course members of the FIEC Prepared for Service course in Reading. If you want to follow up anything in this article please contact him at colin.paris@ntlworld.com

Prepared for Service!

The Prepared for Service Course (PfS) draws people from a wide range of backgrounds and situations; and prepares them for a variety of ministries. Here we “listen in” on the stories of several former PfS students who reflect on the help the PfS course was to them.

1. **Peter Pilgrim** leads Rudgwick Chapel in Horsham, West Sussex. Here he describes how the PfS course served as a preparation for church leadership.

Is it possible to fit in part-time ministry training with other responsibilities, whether employment or family? For me it did prove possible.

Following a reorganisation at work and redundancy a few years ago I found myself with a new part-time job (three days a week) and an opportunity to give the rest of my newly-free time to the Lord’s work.

After pushing at a few doors that did not open, I responded to an advertisement in a Christian magazine that asked for a part-time pastor at Rudgwick Chapel. After some initial contact I was asked to preach, and that led to a call to move to the Chapel and the village of Rudgwick (which is in West Sussex, about 20 miles south-west of Gatwick Airport).

We were living on the Isle of Wight at the time, and needed to sell our house and purchase one in the village. So until such time as that happened I agreed to preach fortnightly. We used to leave the Island on the 7.30 am car ferry (8 am in the summer) on Sunday morning and land at Portsmouth to drive to Rudgwick, returning after the evening service.

I had been thinking about some training, and we heard of PfS, the course run by the FIEC. So my wife and I both attended the introductory session at Reading and were duly interviewed. Those who interviewed us were quite definite that we should do the course; we were not so sure but in the end we did sign up, with the agreement of the Chapel.

It was accepted by the Chapel friends that when we moved to Rudgwick and I took up my pastoral duties I would still only preach once a fortnight, to allow for time to study during the course. As things worked out we did not in fact move house until after the course had ended, so for the whole two years we were living on the Island and I was commuting – to London two days a week for work; to Rudgwick once a fortnight to preach; and to Reading once a month for PfS.

At that time the PfS modules started at 6 pm on a Monday evening, and ran until lunchtime on the Thursday. I was contracted to work three days a week for my London job, so with my manager’s agreement I altered my working week for the PfS modules. On the Monday I went to work in London, and after work caught

the train down to Reading to arrive just in time for the start of the module. My wife drove up from the Island after a day at her work to meet me there. At lunchtime on Thursday I got back on the train to London to do half a day in the office, and also worked for London on the Friday. That meant I had only lost half a day, which I could make up the following week. By this means I did not have to use any of my annual leave to do PfS.

Perhaps the hardest part of the course was the assignments, one to be completed after each module. This involved more studying in-between work and preparing to preach – but somehow we managed to hand them in each time.

I found the PfS course to be very helpful, it has changed the way I preach for the better and given me much more of an insight into the story of the Bible as a whole. I would certainly recommend it just for that. One of the extra benefits was the lasting friendship we have made with a couple from Carey Baptist Church who were our hosts for the two years. Another was the very professional and dedicated way the course administrators, David and Laraine Cook, handled everything. They set a really good example of organisation at its best.

Above all thanks are due to the Lord for His help with every aspect of the course; and to the fellowship at Rudgwick Chapel for their support.

You can contact Peter Pilgrim at peter.pilgrim@btinternet.com

- 2) *In April 2009 Paul Mason became Pastor of Laburnum Road Community Church, Leicester. He and Bernadette (Bernie) believe God has been at work, ‘Moulding the Masons for Ministry’.*

After 28 years with Royal Mail came to an end in voluntary redundancy in April 2007, Paul began to think about his options. He and Bernie had been praying for a long time about what the Lord’s will was for their lives and when the opportunity presented itself to go on PfS together (at their Pastor’s suggestion) it seemed an ideal training course to prepare them for whatever God had for them to do. The course covers a wide range of interesting subjects and what is taught can be used in every aspect of church life. Paul found systematic theology lectures on Biblical Doctrines significantly stimulating and Bernie, with her love of history, greatly enjoyed Richard Lee’s chronological series tracking the key developments through Church history, as well as Desi Maxwell’s exhilarating Bible Overview lectures. PfS prepares students for serving more ably through a range of ministries in their churches, such as teaching in Sunday school, speaking at Ladies’ meetings, preaching or going into full-time pastoral ministry.

When they began the course Paul and Bernie did not know which way God was leading, but He revealed His will for their lives as a door opened for ministry at Laburnum Road Community Church, Leicester at the beginning of April 2009. This is a small and committed fellowship, celebrating 50 years as a church in 2009. After nearly 49 years of meeting together in a school, the church has recently moved into their own building. The acquisition of this new church building provides greater opportunities for reaching out to the local community. After 14 years Bernie has stepped down from her role as manager of Bethel Christian Bookshop, Wigston, in order to serve the church alongside Paul. The PfS course has proved to be invaluable in preparing them both for what lies ahead and has provided them with a firm foundation from which to start this new phase in their Christian lives. They have had the joy and the privilege of making new friends on the course, as well as those who have provided them with hospitality over the two years.

3) **John and Barbara Froggatt** live on their 70' Narrow boat "Ichthus" on the Kennet and Avon Canal in Wiltshire. In addition to their secular employment they are part of Canal Ministries (see www.canalministries.org.uk) who engage in outreach and caring ministries on the British Inland waterways.

This article was originally written for 'The Word' and has been adapted for 'Think Training'.

We are still on the Kennet & Avon Canal here in Wiltshire, close to Trowbridge. John keeps himself occupied at the marina at Hilperton, whilst Barbara excels at making cakes and talking to people at the Canal Trust's tearooms at Bradford on Avon. Those who know Barbara know how difficult she finds it talking to people (!)

We do find it a little difficult in curbing our natural nomadic instincts and just pushing off into the sunset, but we really do feel that The Lord has placed us here for a purpose. John sees boat hirers, private boaters, people who are interested in buying boats; all sorts of people. Barbara sees an even more varied clientele on the towpath; walkers, boaters, cyclists, anglers and gongoozlers.

We have both been attending the FIEC's Prepared for Service (PfS) course held at Carey Baptist Church in Reading for the last two years. Our costs were generously sponsored by Canal Ministries. PfS is an intensive course with a vast range of topics from theology to preaching skills, from cults to running deacons meetings! There are monthly assignments on different subjects and it certainly has led to several major results. Our ability to evangelise and witness has greatly improved and we now have far more boldness and knowledge than we ever had and that makes things

easier when we encounter all sorts of people from all walks of life on the towpath.

If there is one thing that really sticks in our minds and our hearts, it is the grace of God. His love, grace and generosity knows no bounds and He has been there all the time enabling us to have time off from work and for the course to be paid through generous donations to Canal Ministries.

This came to a climax on the 3rd June at Carey Baptist Church, when we both graduated. Please continue to remember us in your prayers. After all, we don't need your prayers; we rely on them!

In His Name,

John & Barbara Froggatt

If you would like to have information regarding the PfS Course please contact **David Cook** - 01202 738416 - pfs@fiec.org.uk

Books, books, books...

Some are brilliantly helpful; others hardly worth the effort. How can we know which is which? Here Ray Evans gives us his thoughts on two books he is glad he has read! They cover similar themes, as you will see, and both come from across the Atlantic, but either would be well worth getting hold of.

A Journey Worth Taking. Finding your purpose in this world Charles D. Drew
(Presbyterian and Reformed, 270 pp,
CLC list price £8-95)

This is a cracking book. I enjoyed it hugely, and can't wait to do a teaching series based around it! Charles Drew is a church planter in New York City (yes *another* gifted one of those!), and it comes with the 'Tim Keller stamp' of warm commendation.

This great book describes the outworking of four grand theological themes. After his introduction he opens up the idea of Creation. We live in a universe that is God's workmanship, and we, each of us, are made by Him. This has tremendous practical implications for us. We have dignity and significance, our work has value, and we express our creativity without having to 'evangelistically justify' everything we do. We can 'magnify' our great God in all we do, and being made in His 'Trinitarian image' we must outwork all this in community with others. It reminded me of some of Schaeffer's helpful unpacking of this theme.

The second section looks at the Fall - 'something wrong with every step'. Problems are encountered everywhere;

the Christian is not caught out by this, nor does he become a cynic. The biggest problems emerge within our hearts – idolatry, ‘the prime problem’, and ‘self-sabotage’, are what we all experience. We can all too easily feel the effects of the Fall overwhelming us, and our daily lives speak more of ‘ruin’ – delusion, loneliness and envy, and joyless work.

‘Redemption – help along the way’ comes next in the unfolding drama of God’s plan. The work of Christ makes me think differently about myself. No longer do I have to be driven to get accepted, achieve standards, impress, hide from, or try hard to get God to ‘owe me’. Now there is such mercy that I can ‘be safe’. The ‘safety’ the gospel provides frees me to follow a new trajectory, in communion with others. My life is no longer ‘all about me’ and I am free to live. There is freedom *from* a fear of failure and from a fear of wasting my life, and freedom to commit myself.

Section 4 is about ‘Consummation’. Leaning on the suggestive ideas in C.S Lewis’ ‘The Great Divorce’ he unpacks some of the earthly implications of the Bible’s teaching on ‘the new heavens and the new earth’. The section will get you excited about what God has in store for those that love him, but it also has an invitation to patience even as we seek to ‘enjoy God now’.

Each chapter closes with a short section of questions for reflection and discussion. As well as for personal use, these would be great for ‘a reading circle’ or small group. The book also has some extended testimonies from people at his church who have experienced the power of these four great themes impacting their lives. It’s a ‘must read’, a ‘good read’, not at all a difficult read (a slightly better phrase than ‘an easy’ read – I don’t want to put anyone off), and a massively encouraging read. Warmly recommended (you knew that by now!).

‘Unfashionable. Making a difference in the world by being different.’ Tullian Tchividjian
(Multnomah, 205 pp, Wesley Owen list price £11-99)

Written by Billy Graham’s grandson, this is a challenge to Christians to ‘march to the drum of a different drummer’ from the world around us. “Truthfulness, not trendiness, is what the new generation are thirsting for,” he writes. ‘Unfashionable’ describes what it is like to be ‘out of sync’ with the culture around us and to be aligned with God’s ways with regard to community, lifestyle, work, money, relationships, worship, and the church.

His opening chapters in Section 1 on ‘The Call’ lean heavily on David Wells’ work, arguing that a greater sense of ‘transcendence’ needs to pervade the professing church. The greatness of God has been lost, and instead we settle for what is ‘cool’. We go with the flow of mainstream culture and only offer the same kinds of things as other movements, albeit with slightly different packaging.

Section 2, ‘The Commission’, opens up the theme of why we should be different. Suggestive theological ideas underpin this section. He particularly explores the idea of God’s great rescue plan being about ‘cosmic renewal’, not just ‘an evacuation plan’ for our souls. That is, he highlights the reality of the *bodily resurrection* of the Lord and all that implies for us and for the universe God has made. Too few of us live out the implications that the creation is waiting, as in childbirth, for its bondage to decay to end, and we should long for the redemption of our bodies at the Lord’s return. He also emphasises that we are called ‘together’ to live out this teaching of the Bible. This ‘community’ point is a healthy note in a culture that is heavily individualistic and in which believers often become dominated by a consumer mindset even as they live in the church, let alone ‘the world’.

Section 3, ‘The Community’, is largely an unpacking of Ephesians 4:22-5:6, examining how we can be distinctively Christian communities where trust, holy anger and reconciliation, honesty and generosity, ‘redemptive words’ and sexual purity can be lived out to show a needy world just what a difference the gospel makes.

The final short section, ‘The Charge’ is a heartfelt call to follow our ‘unfashionable trailblazer’, dying to self and living for Christ.

The book comes with a foreword by Timothy Keller and is endorsed by a host of evangelical luminaries. It will make you think, particularly making you grapple with biblical ideas often downplayed, and as a church leader it will make you determined to lead the people of God to be salt and light in dark world - but salt that hasn’t lost its saltiness and light that is not hidden under the ‘blanket’ of our culture.

Ray Evans

Ray Evans leads Grace Community Church in Kempston, Bedford. If you want to respond in any way to Ray’s reviews, contact him at ray@graceinthecommunity.org.uk

The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches
39 The Point, Market Harborough, Leics., LE16 7QU
Telephone 01858 434540
Fax 01858 411550
e-mail admin@fiec.org.uk
www.fiec.org.uk

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