

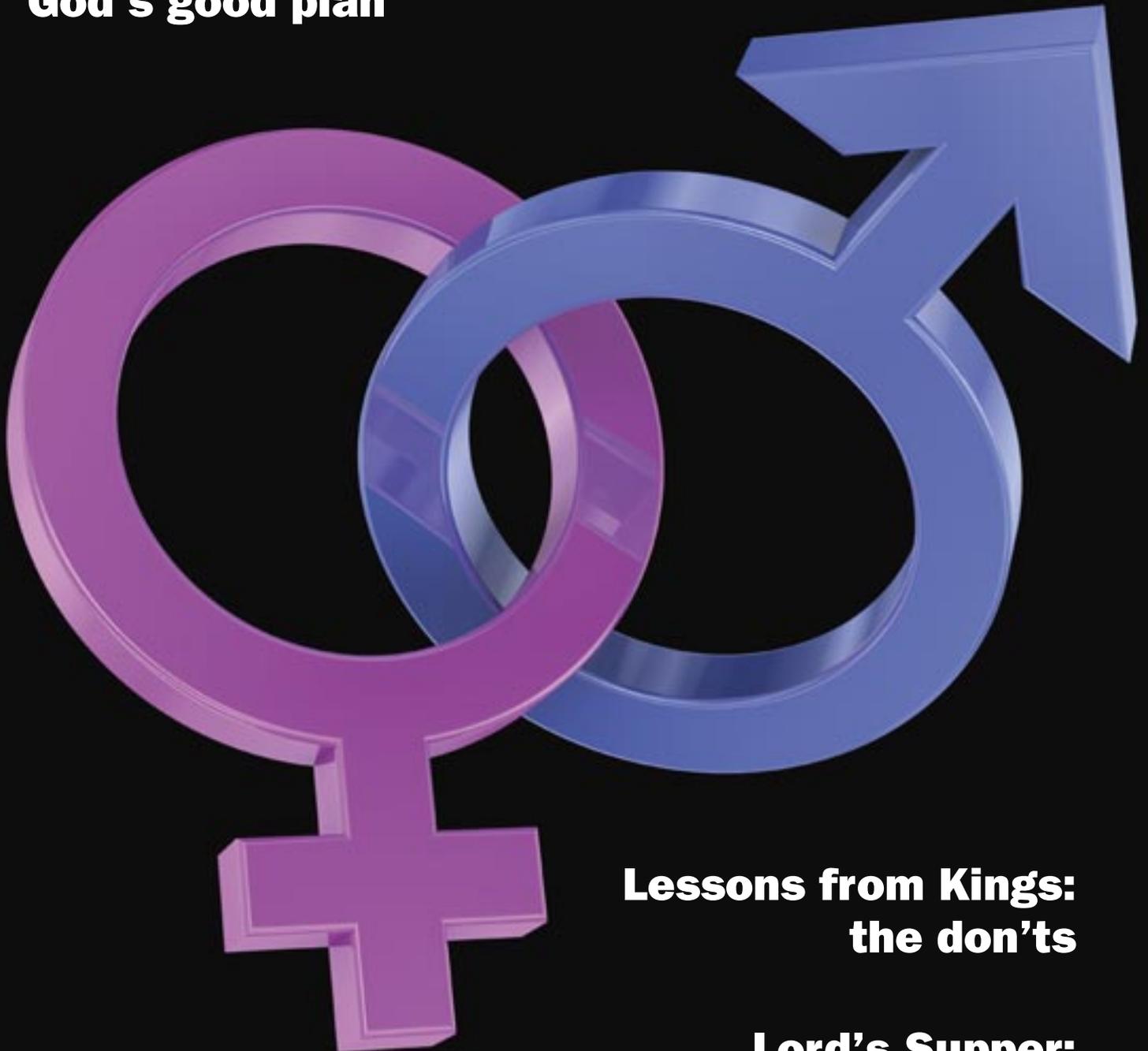
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AUTUMN 2013

Gender

God's good plan



**Lessons from Kings:
the don'ts**

**Lord's Supper:
no need to diet**

Editorial



Nothing is more calculated to upset the modern establishment than the notion that males and females are created for different roles, however much overlap is acknowledged. In Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal.3:28), but that does not mean the triumph of androgyny. There is something self-defeating about the claim that our churches and homes ought to embrace a unisex approach to life. It is as Chesterton playfully put it with regard to the suffragette movement: “Ten thousand women marched through the streets of London saying: ‘We will not be dictated to’, and then went off to become stenographers.”

Women can teach other women (Tit. 2:3-4) and children (Prov. 1:8; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15), and they are to manage their own households (1 Tim. 5:14). They can become deacons, and so reflect something of Christ’s ministry in becoming a servant (Rom. 16:1-2). There is nothing wrong with a woman teaching a man in an informal situation (Acts 18:24-26). Both Testaments tell of women prophets (Ex. 15:20; 2 Kings 22:14-15; Isa. 8:3; Acts 2:36; 21:9). Yet in the Old Testament, elders and priests had to be male (Ex. 18:21, 25; 29:1-37; Num. 11:16-30). In the home, too, the Bible grants the headship to the husband and father (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1).

In the New Testament church, women cannot have authority over men nor teach them in an official capacity (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Women presbyters are not forbidden on the grounds of culture (i.e. the ancient world was

sexist) or education (i.e. women in the ancient world were uneducated).

Rather, the prohibition is grounded in the twin facts that God created Adam before Eve, and that Eve fell into sin first (1 Tim. 2:13-14).

In general terms, “the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man” (1 Cor. 11:3). This does not imply inferiority at all. Christ was subject to Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:51), yet He was their Lord and God!

Male and female are one in essence, but not one in function.

So overwhelming and so clear is the biblical teaching on this subject that attempts to deny it are unconvincing to the point of being embarrassing. It is a test case for evangelical faithfulness. As Wayne Grudem asserts, so-called evangelical feminism is in fact “a new path into liberalism”.

Peter Barnes



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God's good design

Peter Hastie talks to Claire Smith

Feminism blurs that the genders are equal but different.

Claire Smith is a writer and women's Bible teacher who has recently published a book, *God's Good Design: What the Bible Really Says about Men and Women* (Matthias Media, 2012). The book explores a range of issues on the subject of gender within the church.

Claire holds a PhD in New Testament studies from Moore Theological College. Her doctoral thesis examined the place and practice of educational activities in three early Christian (New Testament) communities, with a special focus on gender issues.

Claire is married to Rob, who lectures in theology at Sydney Missionary and Bible College, and they have an adult son. She and Rob live in Sydney and attend St Andrew's Anglican Cathedral.

Claire, after thousands of pages of ink have been spilled on the subject of women's rights and ordination to the ministry, why another book? Is there something special in what you have to say?

Actually, I hope there's nothing special about what I have to say, because the Bible hasn't changed and, in a sense,

Outside the Christian tent, the feminine has assumed divine status. However, what you have within the church is the feminising of the divine.

what I am saying in the book is what Christians have been saying for centuries; that is, that men and women are created equal by God, equally loved by Him, equally in need of salvation, and equally saved. We're equal in all those ways and yet we're created differently as men and women with different roles and responsibilities. So I don't think I'm really saying anything new at all.

However, discussion on this matter has dragged on for several decades now and so it's helpful to have new voices in the debate. While the book may not say anything that hasn't been said before,

it's a fresh new voice, and a woman's voice, and more importantly too, I think, an Australian voice. This is not a voice from either the United Kingdom or America, and I think Australians have their own distinctive contribution to make to this debate.

So what's distinctive?

I sometimes get the impression that books written overseas have a certain cultural perspective to male and female roles that is different from the way we see these issues here. Some of the literature that I have come across from the US context has a certain *Leave it to*



Beaver association where women have certain clearly defined cultural roles, especially in the home and kitchen. Of course, I am not saying that Australian women writers don't have their own baggage. In fact, feminism is part of our cultural baggage at the moment. Nevertheless, I think there is a place for a distinctively Australian Christian voice to be heard.

How do you believe feminism has shaped the way we think about women and what impact has this had on relationships such as marriage?

Well, the most obvious word that comes to mind, I think, is "confused". I think that's the major effect that feminism has had on the way we think about men, women and marriage. And I think that confusion has two sides, and it happens simultaneously. On the one hand there is a view that "gender is everything". So you have affirmative action, anti-discrimination legislation, and all those TV ads that I call "all men are idiots" ads, where men are always portrayed as incompetent and clueless. If any advertiser dared to portray women in the same way, they'd be in real trouble.

Have you got any particular ones in mind?

There are just too many to know where to start. Usually dad's sitting on the couch playing the video game, and mum's doing all the work – or something along that line. Once you start looking for it, you see it all the time. Men are often portrayed as inadequate, wasting time, clueless as to what to buy, incapable of doing basic things like working the TV remote or whatever, and the implication is that they need a woman to work it out for them. So that's the "gender is everything" view.

Then there's the "gender is nothing" view. This is the belief that women can

While feminism has precipitated several urgent and needed changes, it has also opened a Pandora's box of problems too.

do anything men can do so there should be no differences between the sexes, no roles, that is, distinctive roles, and that, in turn, leads inevitably to the introduction of same-sex marriage and gender plasticity. So there are two views: "gender is everything", and "gender is nothing", and depending on which card you want to play, you can play one of those two things. And that's why we have massive confusion today about gender.

And what kind of impact do you think it's having on us?

I think people are having significant identity issues. People are confused about what it means to be a man or a woman. They're confused about how to make marriage work. They're confused in the work place – is there an appropriate level of contact between men and women or should there be none at all? Can you put your hand on the shoulder of someone without it being sexualised? So, there is confusion right across the spectrum.

I saw a news clip from the US a couple of months ago where there was a classroom of six-year-olds and a man in the front of the class room with a white T-shirt that said "Family" across the back. He was telling the children they were free to decide whether they wanted to be a boy or a girl. He said that some people feel like a boy, and others feel like a girl, and some feel like both. His message was: "That's OK!" He was at a public school, telling six year olds that gender doesn't matter. The irony was that he had this T-shirt with "Family" printed across it. So, in other words, this is family. There is neither male nor female. You can decide, day-by-day, what you want to be.

How do you think feminism has changed our perceptions of God? Has it had any impact?

I think it's had a deep impact. I believe it's happening in two areas. The first is outside the Christian tent. What's happened there has been the divinising of the feminine. So the feminine has assumed divine status. You see that in things like the extreme agenda of the Green movement, in witchcraft and Wicca and so on, and in movies like *Avatar* where you have this feminine

earth spirit. So we have the divinising of the feminine outside the church.

However, what you have within the church is the feminising of the divine. So you have God the Father now being called God the Father/Mother, or even our Heavenly Mother. Or you have Jesus who is supposedly fallible, who had to learn from women. Some suggest that the Syro-Phoenician woman taught Jesus that the Gentiles were going to be included in God's purposes. Others say that we should refer to the Holy Spirit as "She". So, yes, the effect has been profound, and, more recently in the world of evangelical thought, there's been discussion about the order within the Trinity and what is meant by the Son's submission to the Father.

After several decades, how do you think we should assess feminism?

I think the first thing to realise is that feminism is now mainstream. It's the dominant mind-set of our society. This means that if we want non-Christians to get what we are talking about, we need to recognise that they don't have the language or the mental building blocks to understand it.

But some things that feminism has brought have been good. For example, rape in marriage is now an offence. Women are educated and can have bank accounts and so on. However, it's a shame that feminism had to be the vehicle to bring about those changes. Still, those changes are good because they're in line with God's purposes for justice and equality between men and women.

But, as I said, on the downside we have confusion about what it means to be a man and a woman. This has led to family breakdown, abortion on demand, the same-sex agenda, the assumption of dual-income households, all of which flow out of the feminist agenda. So, while feminism has precipitated several urgent and needed changes, it has also opened a Pandora's box of problems too.

Are Christians predisposed to read the Bible now in ways that would have been unthinkable 50 years ago?

Yes, I think so. We are more deeply

influenced than we might imagine by the feminist agenda. We need to realise that we all read the Bible with certain presuppositions – we don't come to the text with a blank slate.

The way we are meant to read the Bible responsibly hasn't changed from the very beginning. Even as we read it, we should let the Bible speak on its own terms. The Bible should set the agenda. Obviously, since the Bible was written in a historical context, historical information from that period can be useful in helping us to understand its message. However, it shouldn't be used in a way that contradicts the clear reading of the Bible text.

One of the problems facing us today is that although we have more historical information about the first century Greco-Roman period than ever before, people often use it to silence the Bible. We must allow the Scriptures, as our ultimate authority, to speak to us before we hear what other disciplines such as linguistics, history, and science have to say. It is also important for us to

The teaching about the role-relationship of men and women in the opening chapters of the Bible is like the bulk of the iceberg that then pops up above the surface in the New Testament.

understand how our own personal and cultural blind spots affect us at this point.

Beyond that, we need to pray for the Spirit's enlightenment and see how the saints throughout history have understood these texts, and then read and re-read them. It is also important for us to read the whole counsel of God and resist the temptation to manipulate particular texts to conform to our expectations and preferences.

What's the best place to start in getting a proper view of a woman's identity in her relationships, especially within the church?

Well, obviously there are some foundational texts in the Bible that we need to begin with. In my book I look at key passages like Genesis 1 to 3,

because that is so determinative for interpreting later texts. The teaching about the role-relationship of men and women in the opening chapters of the Bible is like the bulk of the iceberg that then pops up above the surface in the New Testament. So Genesis 1-3, Proverbs 31, 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 2, and then 1 Peter 3 are all important texts. They're the passages where we see the delineation of the differences between the sexes most clearly. It's also where we see the different responsibilities of men and women in the church and family most clearly articulated.

Why did you begin your book by looking at 1 Timothy 2?

I started there because it provides the clearest outline and answer to many of

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the issues we are facing. It's short, it's clear and, as with the other Pauline passages, it's firmly grounded in Genesis 1 to 3. If people are wrestling with the issue of how teaching should be undertaken in the church, then this is the text that they usually remember.

I think people often get stuck on this one thing that happens for 20 minutes in the pulpit, and forget that we're together for a whole lot longer than that.

I mention an episode in my book some years ago when a journalist interviewed me during a debate about the ordination of women. She asked me, "Is there part of the Bible that says what you're saying?" And I said "Oh, yes", and she said, "What is it?" And I recited 1 Timothy 2:11, 12 and she wrote it down. Then she looked at me

and said, "That's what it says?" And I said "Yes", and I thought she was going to say, "How ridiculous". But she said, "Well, what's the argument all about then?" As a non-Christian she had heard these texts and had understood my position about women not being teaching elders in our church.

Paul has certainly come under attack for his comments in that passage, where he says "a woman is to learn quietly with all submissiveness". How should we understand these words? Are they as sexist as they appear to be?

The place to start with these questions, indeed with all questions about what Scripture means, is with our doctrine of God. So, what is God like? If this is God's Word, what is He like?

We know in Christ that God is good and all-powerful. So this reminds me that God can teach me accurately in His Word all I need to know to please Him and what is good for me. So, in a sense, the first part of call is, "Who is God? If this is God's Word, what is God like?" Now, beyond that, the question that you've asked is, is this sexist? Well, in one respect, yes, it is

sexist, if by that word you mean does it make a distinction between men and women? It certainly does differentiate men from women.

If, however, you mean, is it sexist in that women are inferior to men, then it's not sexist. This is not a statement about worth. It's a statement about our participation in the congregation and in one limited aspect of what happens in our congregation involving teaching and authority. In fact, not even all teaching, but a particular sort of teaching: the ongoing, authoritative, formal instruction of the congregation. So, it's saying, "women are to be submissive in that they are not to have a formal teaching role with respect to men in the congregation". They are not to engage in that sort of teaching.

Well, is there any area of responsibility for teaching and leadership that a woman may have within the congregation?

Yes, there is. We see in Titus 2:2 that the older women are to teach the younger women what is good – that is, how to conduct themselves faithfully in their homes, in their marriages, with their



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children, and in their private lives. This will certainly involve them in teaching God's Word to other women and children.

The research I did for my doctoral thesis looked at the vocabulary of "teaching" in 1 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. What I discovered is that there were many activities in the early church that people learned from – that "taught" people. People may not have been teaching through a sermon, but they still taught one another. So you have prophecy, prayer, singing, imitation and rebuking others - all those sorts of things. This means that men and women who aren't official teachers in the church can contribute to the common good. I think we're doing that more and more. It's not just a one-man show; we are brothers and sisters encouraging and teaching one another. I think people often get stuck on this one thing that happens for 20 minutes in the pulpit, and forget that we're together for a whole lot longer than that, and there are many different ways we can encourage and teach one another.

How important is the way that God made the first man and woman in determining the role and relationship between men and women today? Does it have any relevance today, given the fact that human marriages will be superseded in the age to come?

I think that if the New Testament hadn't reiterated what was in Genesis 1 to 3, we might have reason to think that was back then, and it doesn't have any relevance today. However, the fact that when the New Testament writers deal with the relationship between men and women they go back to Genesis 1 to 3 tells us that, yes, how we were originally created and what we were originally created for does have a bearing on how we are to live today. When you think about it that makes perfect sense, because God made us for a purpose, and you would expect that how He created us would have a bearing on how we are to be faithful to Him today.

Of course, it's true that marriage will not continue in the new creation, but that's because the marriage relationship will have fulfilled its purpose in bearing witness to the ultimate union between

Christ and the church. In the age to come Christ will have received His bride, and so the human signpost of marriage will no longer be needed. I am not exactly sure what this means for male/female relationships in the new age, but I believe that our sexual distinctions will remain. Moses will still be Moses and the same goes for Elijah. I think we see that in the Transfiguration: we don't lose our basic identity.

I am not exactly sure what this means for male/female relationships in the new age, but I believe that our sexual distinctions will remain.

Is the idea of male headship a result of the fall, or is it something that existed prior to the entry of sin into the world? And does it make any difference?

The headship of the husband with his wife and leadership of men in the church is not a result of the fall. The way it's exercised is impacted by the fall, but the relationship itself is not a result of the fall. And we see that in lots of ways. When you look at Genesis 2, quite clearly, the man has a role that is different from the woman. He has a priority in that he was made first. God addresses him with a specific command before the woman is made. He names all the creatures, even the woman, and he is the source of the new family. So the man in Genesis 2 is clearly leading. He has a responsibility of leading and headship.

The woman, on the other hand, is made after the man. She is made from him, and Paul makes these points in 1 Corinthians 11 that she is made from him and for him. She is made as his helper. So yes, there may be post-Genesis 3 elements to the way that headship is exercised today, but headship in and of itself is not a consequence of the fall. As men, when husbands and church leaders exercise their headship they are being

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The mistake that feminism makes is to say that for two things to be equal they must be the same. But this egalitarian argument breaks down all over the place.

transformed into the image of Christ, and so they're putting off what is tainted by sin and putting on what is good and godly exercise of authority. And so we should rejoice when we see it well demonstrated.

Paul seems to suggest in 1 Timothy 2:15 that the proper role for women today is to be mothers. Is that a fair reading of his words?

It's certainly a text that commentators and preachers wrestle with. There are several grammatical challenges with the verse but I think the best explanation is that Paul is saying that a woman's faith will be preserved - in the face of false teaching and temptation - if she continues in her God-given role. So it's being used as a sort of short-hand, in a sense, of the woman's role.

The particular context when Paul wrote it, of course, is in Ephesus, where there were false teachers who forbade marriage. And you can understand the women thinking, "well, I shouldn't be getting married, I shouldn't be having children", and so wondering how can they be saved if they're married and they've had children, and so on. And

Paul is saying, "no, you should continue in the feminine role that God has given you, as wives and mothers, and you are to do that faithfully and with self-control, and so on, and you will be kept safe from the dangers of going off-track". As a footnote, I should just say that this passage is not saying that all women must be married or that all women must have children.

Paul also runs into trouble with many people today when he says "the husband is the head of the wife", from Ephesians 5:23. What does he mean? Is he actually denying that women are equal to men?

When Paul says, "the husband is the head of the wife", he qualifies it by then saying, "as Christ is the head of the church". So what informs the headship of the husband and the wife's submission to him is the relationship between Christ and the church. Christ as head lays down His life for His bride, the church. And the church, in submission to Christ, follows and submits to Him, and accepts His sacrificial leadership by accepting the salvation that He provides. So really, we can't wrench the

headship of the husband and submission of the wife from the relationship of Christ with His church, because that's what Paul uses to inform the relationship of marriage.

And so, when you ask is Paul denying that women are equal to men, the answer is no, because the church that is saved by Christ contains men and women, who are equally helpless to save themselves, and equally in submission to Christ. That's there in Ephesians 5. And if you zoom out, and you take in the whole of Scripture, it's perfectly clear that men and women are created equal before God, equally loved by Him, and equally equipped for service in His church, though the service is different in some aspects. So there is no hint of inequality.

The mistake that feminism makes is to say that for two things to be equal they must be the same. But that's not the case. It's not the case with our children, whom we love equally - but they're not the same. This egalitarian argument breaks down all over the place. You know if I had two right hands I would be in trouble. Feminism gets it wrong when it insists that for two things to be equal they must be the same.

What does Paul mean when he says women should remain silent in church services, in 1 Corinthians 14? Is that anachronistic in an age where women are newsreaders?

When the Bible talks about the relationship between men and women it does so in two particular contexts. It talks about it in the church and the family. And so, what happens on news or TV shows is not so much anachronistic as going beyond what Scripture explicitly addresses.

God has told us how husbands are to love their wives in the family. Again, He has told us that in the church family - His household - He wants male teaching-elders. So it is within the family and the church family that these relationships are being worked out. The Bible is not saying who can be Prime Minister, Governor General, or chairman of the board. There may be implications for our broader relationships, but it speaks specifically to family and church life.

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What the Kings teach us: how not to.

John Davies

Right royal mess

The book of Kings gives us a window on a period of Israel's history from its second monarch through to its last. "So what?" we may say. "What if we are just not into ancient history? How does knowing about Solomon's architectural grand designs, or the Judean fleet which was embarrassingly shipwrecked before it set sail, draw us closer to God, or instruct us on how to live in the 21st century?"

One way I learned to read the Bible as a young person was to ask, is there a good example to imitate, or a bad example to avoid? The book of Kings gives us plenty of these, mostly the latter. But is that all there is? Is that principally why the Bible was written? Most of us are never likely to construct a palace complex, or commission a merchant navy. And we could learn more about some of the events of the period covered by Kings from other sources of information (we know some things about Omri and Hezekiah, for example, from other ancient texts).

History is not just what happened. It is the selected and stylised and interpreted account of what happened, written with an agenda by a biased historian. The Bible gives us a particular bias on the events it portrays, a prophetic

perspective. Kings forms part of the coherent account of God's dealings with His people and their response to Him — the continuous story from Genesis to 2 Kings. It is an account that God Himself wants us to read and digest as being profitable at a number of levels.

In particular it presents a long case study of how the gracious covenant that God established with His chosen people at Mt Sinai — a royal priesthood — then reaffirmed and gave particular focus with King David, a never-ending dynasty with universal implications, works out in the real world.

David is a shadow of his former self when the book of Kings opens. He has let his responsibilities slide, and the

Yet right from the start, we are encouraged to read between the lines. The kingdom does not survive beyond Solomon's death; it splits in two.

nation is in turmoil over the succession. When Solomon emerges as the winner, and is given David's blessing, our hopes are raised that this new ruler will preside over a glorious fulfilment of the longing of God's people for a secure and prosperous and peaceful kingdom under God. Solomon both does and does not bring about this Camelot. At one level he has every advantage. Endowed with wisdom (he would win any pub general knowledge quiz), he launches a massive trading and building venture — Israel's golden age.

Yet right from the start, we are encouraged to read between the lines. The kingdom does not survive beyond Solomon's death; it splits in two and eventually both halves are driven into exile, the dignity and independence of the nation gone forever. We observe the quickening momentum of decay such that by the time the book ends, the grand temple, the centrepiece of Solomon's magnificent palace precinct, is no more. Worse, its sacred objects end up adorning the temple of a pagan king.

So we, like Israel in exile, search for reasons. They are not hard to discover. Even if we ignore the intrigue and the ruthless treatment of rivals that consolidate Solomon's reign in the first

couple of chapters of 1 Kings, we are soon informed (3:1) that Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter and his behaviour seems more like the oppressive Egyptian ruler of the exodus period (his people are subjected to forced labour while he lives in pampered luxury) and much of his activity (from the prophetic perspective of the writer of Kings) promotes his own aggrandisement.

There is a lot of double entendre in the way the episodes are told. For example the visit of the queen of Sheba, at one level, tells us that Solomon wins in their diplomatic and trading rivalry. At another level, this pagan queen utters a subtle rebuke that Solomon may have been neglecting the exercise of true justice (1 Kings 10:9).

There is much about Solomon that reminds us of Adam. He is said to be able to "discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9). He lives in a luxurious "paradise" but is it a fool's paradise? Several times the condition of faithfulness if the royal line is to continue is reiterated (1 Kings 2:4; 6:12; 8:25; 9:4-5). Yet the catalogue of sins Solomon commits is precisely those that are identified as no-nos for any Israelite king (Deut. 17:16-20; 1 Kings 10:25-29).

Much of the blame for the demise of the kingdom then lies at his own door. Subsequent kings are evaluated according to whether they follow in the footsteps of his father David (overlooking for the moment one significant lapse on the part of the founder of the dynasty). Those in the south (Judah) are particularly assessed in terms of their action or inaction on

At the end of the book, we see the last king of Judah dining at the table of the king of Babylon (there is a bit of a gastronomic theme running through Kings!).

the "high places" — local shrines where the worship of God got mixed up with elements of Canaanite paganism, the feel-good religion of success and happiness. While there are a few reforming kings, even the best of these, Josiah, does too little too late to avert the looming catastrophe.

The book wrestles with a theological conundrum. What now happens to the covenant commitment God made, never to remove His blessing (2 Sam 7:12-16), while at the same time insisting on the conditional character to the promises and implementing the threatened judgment? Since Israel, following the lead of its kings, has turned its back on God, what alternative is there but rejection and expulsion from the land (a sort of re-run of the garden of Eden debacle)?

Is the book of Kings then one of unrelieved gloom and doom, or is there a glimmer of hope peeping through? While some writers on Kings regard it purely as a sombre account of "where we went wrong" (and it certainly includes that), there is a lot that we can point to that informs us of the character of our gracious God and of the hope that is ours.

Kings presents glimpses of an ideal: a golden age, a fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise of a land where God's people could be secure and prosperous under His rule, now mediated through His earthly representative, His royal "son". The building of the temple marks the climax of the escape from Egypt and establishment of the nation (1 Kings 6:1). The prayer of Solomon on the

dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8) envisages the repentance, restoration and future blessing, not only of the people of Israel, but of foreigners as well. The ministries of Elijah and Elisha, with their miracles of abundance, healing and restoration of life, serve as foretastes of what is possible for God's people as a whole.

At the end of the book, we see the last king of Judah dining at the table of the king of Babylon (there is a bit of a gastronomic theme running through Kings!). Perhaps this is a signal that the monarchy will be restored? It wasn't. Not in any political sense, at least. But the New Testament sees the coming of Jesus as renewing and fulfilling the hopes of God's faithful remnant for the end of exile and the inauguration of the kingdom of God on earth.

In Jesus, we have one greater than Solomon, the King who truly ushers in God's rule on earth. Since Jesus spoke of His own ministry in terms of fulfilling what was written in the prophets (Luke 18:31; 24:25, 27, 44), can we point to passages in Kings which Jesus may have had in mind? There is a danger here in trying to find allegory and hidden meaning in every incident. That is not the point. The point is to see God's purposes being worked out through His people against the backdrop of the world (His ultimate concern). Yes, to heed the warnings of what can happen when God's people under their leaders become complacent and fit in with general trends in society which cut across the call to distinctiveness, but also to renew our confidence in the God who has, despite our rebellion, provided the ideal King, the source of all true wisdom, and called us to be citizens of his eternal kingdom.

History, that is the interpreted drama, matters because it is one connected, unfolding story of which God is the author. We are the once-wayward kings; we are also the restored and future kings, those destined to "reign forever and ever" (Rev 22:5) with the only true King of Kings.

John Davies is the former principal of the Presbyterian Theological Centre in Sydney.



World news

Thugs attack school

A large number of people, including activists from religious parties, have ransacked and set on fire a girls' school in Lahore, Pakistan, and clashed with police following reports that a question paper for a test had contained blasphemous references and "indecent" remarks about the Prophet Mohammad.

According to Legal Evangelical Association Development, people in the area had been demanding police action against the teacher of Farooqi Girls High School accused of blasphemy. But girls at the school refused to be cowed.

Carrying placards and shouting slogans against the violence, hundreds of them protested outside Lahore Press Club against the mob attack.

Assist

'Triple danger'

Senior Anglican Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali has warned of the danger to Britain if the Government disregards its moral and spiritual heritage in his new book, *Triple Jeopardy for the West: Aggressive Secularism, Radical Islamism and Multiculturalism*.

He argued all three were "real dangers". The failure of multiculturalism to integrate communities had left them isolated and exposed to radicalisation and extremism.

Criticising aggressive secularists, the bishop said that the absence of a moral debate on the hot button issues of the day would only make it harder to formulate policies and laws on a whole range of issues like embryo-related research, assisted suicide and abortion.

Whilst acknowledging that it was the task of the Government to balance the competing interests of different communities, he insisted that the state "must have a moral and spiritual vision if it is to do that job properly".

Christian Today

Persecution rising

There has been a steep increase in persecution across the "10/40 window" in the last decade, says Gospel for Asia. It warned that in India alone there had been a "400 per cent" increase in persecution. The 10/40 window encompasses the countries that have been least reached with the Gospel.

Gospel for Asia president K. P. Yohannan said that people who had not experienced persecution "do not fully

PASSION

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MIKE MCKINLEY

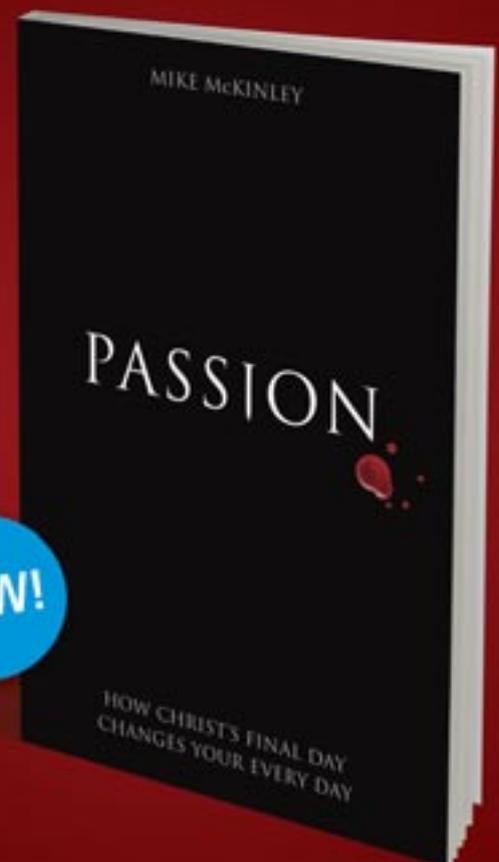
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Collin Hansen, Editorial Director of The Gospel Coalition and author of *Young, Restless, Reformed*

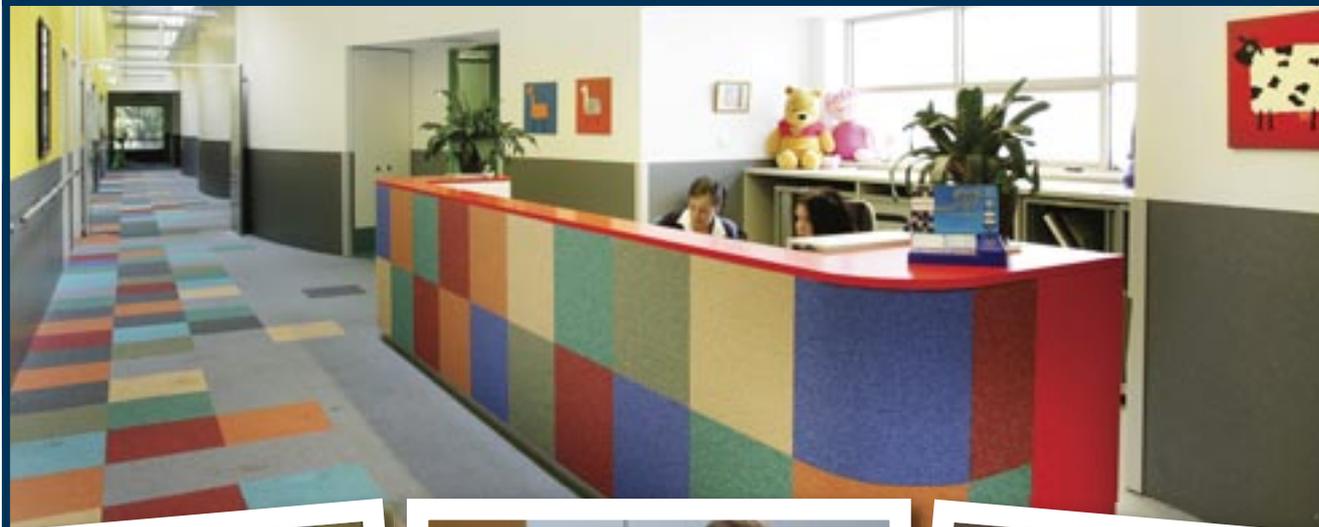
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understand what it means to have their lives threatened, homes destroyed, rights violated and loved ones imprisoned, all because of embracing faith in Jesus Christ”.

“In the 14 countries we serve, persecution of this sort has become a normal way of life, especially for those directly involved in mission work,” he said.

Christian Today

\$160 billion tax bill

Christians have welcomed a British parliamentary report on tax dodging by multinationals, which puts morality at the heart of the tax debate. British development charity Christian Aid says the harm caused to developing countries and poor communities should be seen in the same light, and that tax dodging in poorer countries cost them \$160 billion, nearly one and a half times what they get in aid.

Parliament’s Public Accounts Committee highlighted in December how multinationals minimised corporation tax on the profits made in the UK by exploiting national and international tax structures. It said the evidence it heard from multinationals and the tax authorities about how successful companies “with huge operations” in the UK could pay so little tax “was unconvincing, and in some cases evasive”.

Ekklesia

Islamists rising in Kenya

The church in Kenya and Tanzania is under mounting threat from radical Islamist groups that are carrying out attacks with growing frequency and ferocity in a bid to wipe out Christianity from Africa’s east coast.

There was a barrage of deadly attacks on churches in 2012 and the targeting of Christian leaders in both countries which have previously enjoyed peaceful relations between people of different religions.

The general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) said: Christians have been killed, injured or maimed for life. The violence appears well planned, pre-meditated and systematic.

In Nigeria, militant Islamist group Boko Haram has been wreaking havoc against Christians in its fight to establish an Islamic state.

Saudis track women

Saudi Arabia has introduced a tracking system that monitors any cross-border movements by female citizens after a woman apparently converted to Christianity and fled the country.

The measure, which uses SMS technology, came into force in December. It alerts a woman’s male guardian (father, husband, or other male relative) by text message when she leaves the country, even if they are travelling together.

In the ultra-conservative Saudi Arabia, women are not permitted to leave the country without the permission of their male guardian, who must sign a consent form at the airport or border.

Barnabas Fund

Secular scouts

The Scouts are to drop their historic rule that teenage recruits must declare religious belief, the movement’s leaders have decided. In future boys and girls who join the organisation will be allowed to declare themselves as atheists and make a pledge of honourable behaviour that makes no mention of God.

The retreat from religion marks a break with a tradition begun in 1908 when the movement’s founder Robert Baden-Powell wrote a Scout Promise which required a vow to “do my duty to God”.

The promise survives to this day with the language virtually unaltered, except for alternative versions available for young people of other faiths. The movement has been under pressure from secular campaigners to drop the religious pledge.

Daily Mail

Boxer’s mum blames church

Manny Pacquiao’s glorious boxing career came badly unstuck in December, and his mother blames the Protestants. The formerly devout Catholic Filipino welterweight had previously proclaimed his Catholicism, praying in his corner with the rosary round his neck, but was knocked out in his first bout after he became a Pentecostal.

“That’s what he gets for changing his religion,” Dionisia Pacquiao said in an interview in General Santos City, according to Inquirer.net. Mrs Pacquiao told a TV reporter that her son’s new “Protestant pastors” had distracted the athlete and caused him to lose sleep by studying the Bible.

Yahoo

Islamist installed in church

An agent of the Islamic regime in Iran has been installed at a church in Shiraz; he is preventing seekers from entering, interfering in services and threatening members. Simon the Zealot Episcopal Church has faced harassment from the authorities in the past, but the latest campaign was described by Farsi Christian News Network as “a sudden and sustained upturn of restrictions”.

The Islamic agent, who tells believers where to sit and even interferes in the choice of the songs, has threatened the elders that he will order the closure of the church if his orders are not followed to the letter.

He is said to be offensive towards older members of the church and has ordered parents not to bring their children to services in an effort to stop people from attending.

Barnabas Fund

Churches help refugees

The World Council of Churches’ general secretary, Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, has welcomed the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Dialogue on Protection Challenges in Geneva in December.

The event was part of the UNHCR’s efforts to bring faith-based organisations together to highlight the role of local and international religious communities in protecting uprooted people such as refugees, stateless people and internally displaced people.

Representatives of a wide range of religious traditions and different faiths took part, including a number of WCC member churches and ecumenical partners, along with non-governmental and international organisations. “Hospitality and protection is central to the Christian values,” Dr Tveit said.

books



New City Catechism

Timothy Keller

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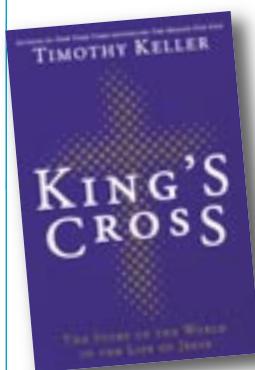
Mark Powell

The learning strategy of catechesis has unfortunately fallen on hard times in most Protestant churches in Australia. Even among Bible College graduates (irrespective of their denominational affiliation) it is rare today to find someone who is even able to list the Ten Commandments in order. Part of the problem is the attraction, and distraction, of the modern entertainment culture and the other is a lack of mental discipline amongst the modern disciple of Christ. This latest endeavour by Tim Keller though is a significant antidote to that endemic problem.

Combining the theological strength of the Westminster Catechism as well as the warmth of the Heidelberg, the New City Catechism gives believers a robust and readable program of instruction for both adults and children in the 21st century. Produced just this year and designed especially for the iPad (unfortunately no android version is available yet), this particular catechism includes a short video for each of the 52 questions from a leading reformed evangelical theologian. It also has a very helpful devotional component of a commentary and prayer of a famous Christian teacher from the past.

If you are looking for something to stretch yourself spiritually and theologically, as well as the members of your family then this is a great product to use. Best of all, it can be downloaded for free from the Gospel Coalition website. While obviously not a book, it can be downloaded as a PDF but it is nowhere near as beneficial or attractive.

Mark Powell is associate minister, Cornerstone Presbyterian Church Strathfield



King's Cross

Timothy Keller

London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2011.

Peter Barnes

This is a strangely appealing and literate ramble through Mark's Gospel. It has something of a C. S. Lewis quality about it. The intention is to draw the reader to the point where he or she says, as Jewel the Unicorn says at the end of *The Last Battle*: "I've come home at last! This is my real country ... This is the land I've been looking for all my life." There are some powerful insights here, especially Cynthia Heimel's expression of pity for celebrities because it is their very success which reveals their emptiness. Keller has a way of drawing on Lewis, George MacDonald, and Franz Kafka.

If you are looking for a detailed exposition of Mark's Gospel, this is not it. But if you are looking for a serious

contemplation on the Gospel, this is for you. One might have desired a little more theology, but the result is a work which might especially be used to present the gospel to unbelievers who are prepared to read and think. Keller not only informs; he also woos and draws.

Peter Barnes is editor of AP

My China Mystery

Marion Andrews

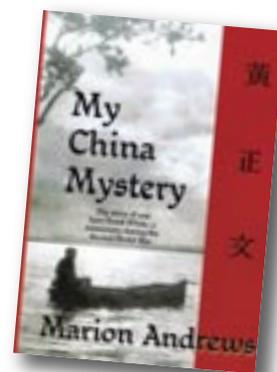
Capalaba: Even Before Publishing, 2012.

Peter Barnes

Marion Andrews has put

together a labour of love in recounting the story of her father, Frank White, who undertook missionary work in China from 1939 to 1949. The woman who was to become his wife, Ella Davidson, joined him in 1946. In 1960, as a 12-year-old, Marion asked her father whether he thought there were any Christians left in China, and he answered with decided finality: "No." Later he commented that Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* "was the China I knew".

Who could have predicted that China would see an extraordinary expansion of the Christian faith within its borders? Humanly speaking, it is the Christian witness of people like Frank and Ella White who sowed the seed for later renewal.



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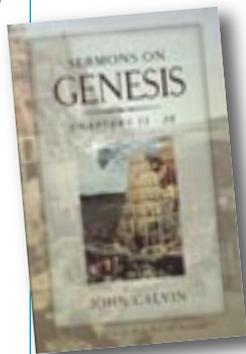
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This is a fascinating account of sickness (“Aspirin for everything above the waist, Epsom’s Salts for everything below”); the darkness of idolatry (interestingly, one of the superstitions that they faced was worship of Jesus Pictures); struggles with language (Frank once bumped into a demure Chinese lady and, thinking he was apologising, thanked her for being of great assistance to him); corruption in the Nationalist camp which was made worse by the Tiger Beating squad that was supposedly trying to curb it; and sheer brutality on the part of the Communists.

White described Chou En-lai, the future Communist premier, as “a green-eye killer who would kill his own grandmother if it would help the revolution”. Miss Lenell from the Swedish Mission was stoned to death after a Peoples’ Tribunal (the Communist counterpart to our Anti-Discrimination Boards) decided that she had been eating the people’s rice and using the people’s money. By 1953, the last Western missionary had been exiled from China – but God Himself remained. This is a story that deserved to be told, and Marion has told it lovingly and clearly.



Sermons on Genesis, Chapters 11-20

John Calvin,
trans. by **Rob Roy McGregor**

*Edinburgh:
Banner of Truth,
2012.*

Peter Barnes

These 48 sermons were preached from late January to mid-May 1560, but they could well be preached next week. Calvin moves very readily from the text to his congregation, and his comments usually have a very contemporary ring to them. His summary of the human condition is succinct: “It is our lot to live and rush about hectically and then return to dust.”

The God of Calvin is the God of the Bible and so, with reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, Calvin affirms that “God is in no hurry to punish the transgressions and iniquities of men”.

Always the style is clear and the content easily understood. To cite just one example, Calvin declares that God “will not permit the great to exalt themselves

without knocking them off their high horse”.

One last citation concerns a lesson that modern Western society seems to have completely lost sight of. Calvin preaches that “those who hold public office must be vigilant to repress wrongs early and make an effort to take preventive actions. For when weeds have taken over, there is no longer time to pull them out, but if you root them out early and at the right time, you will control them. The same is true of vices and crimes”.

The sermons delivered in Geneva over 450 years ago naturally have historical interest, but, much more than that, they are full of insight as faithful presentations of the eternal Word of God.

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No need to diet

There are good reasons for a more frequent Lord's Supper

The Bible is quite specific about the Lord's Supper that "for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). However, it does not directly tell how often we are to celebrate it; we know more about the "how" than the "how often". In the middle of the second century Justin Martyr left a description of the weekly church service each Sunday where he mentions the Lord's Supper as being a part of that service.

Over time, public worship has changed in many ways, not always for the better. By the time of the High Middle Ages, attendance at Mass each Sunday was compulsory, but actually taking part in communion was not. Increasingly, communion was only given in one kind, and the laity were excluded from taking the cup.

The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 had to insist that layfolk communicate (i.e. take communion) once a year. The consecrated host had to be worshipped with head bowed. One magistrate in Queen Mary's day in the 1550s hid in a loft to spy on the congregation to see if any failed to gaze on the consecrated host. By the 1200s eucharistic miracle stories flourished, and people became

One magistrate in Queen Mary's day in the 1550s hid in a loft to spy on the congregation to see if any failed to gaze on the consecrated host.

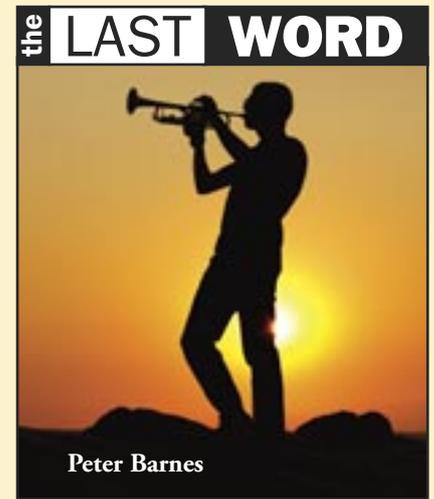
impressed by tales of hosts supposedly bleeding or healing.

During the period of the Reformation in the 16th century, it was the Protestants, not the Catholics, who were keener on a more frequent celebration of the Supper. In fact, Ignatius Loyola, the great founder and leader of the Jesuits was twice imprisoned by the Spanish Inquisition. Part of the reason for his falling under suspicion with church authorities was to do with his advocacy of frequent Holy Communion, which led to the suspicion that he might have Reformed leanings!

Thus it was that when John Calvin at Geneva advocated a weekly communion, the Council and the people in general were somewhat startled. They were simply not used to such a frequent eating and drinking at the Lord's Table. In his Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541 Calvin urged that the Supper be frequent. He wanted this to be weekly but felt that was not likely to succeed so he argued for a monthly celebration, and finally had to settle for a quarterly communion.

And that is how it became common in Scottish Presbyterian circles for communion to be celebrated every quarter! Everything else in the Reformed system of thought and worship might be contested and overthrown, but the quarterly communion continued!

The New Testament does seem to favour a more frequent eating of the Supper than Scottish Presbyterians have followed. Because the Passover was an annual celebration, some have argued that its fulfillment, the Lord's Supper, should also be an annual event. Yet after the Day of Pentecost we read that



believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer (Acts 2:42).

The breaking of bread there presumably refers to the Lord's Supper, which would strengthen the argument that it is also referred to in Acts 2:46 where the breaking of bread is said to be taking place "day by day". At Troas the church is said to have met together on the first day of the week - Sunday - in order to break bread and listen to the apostle Paul (Acts 20:7).

At the church where I minister, the elders recently decided to celebrate the Supper on the first Sunday of every month - at the morning service for each even month and at the evening service for the odd month. We need to recall the benefits of the Supper. As Calvin declared: "There is none of us who can find a single grain of righteousness in himself. Here, then, is the peculiar consolation we receive from the Supper, that it directs and conducts us to the cross of Jesus Christ and to His resurrection, in order to assure us that, whatever iniquity there may be in us, the Lord does not cease to regard and accept us as righteous; whatever material of death may be in us, He does not cease to vivify us; whatever the wretchedness we may have, yet He does not cease to fill us with all felicity."

The Supper proclaims the gospel to us, helps us to remember Christ crucified and risen, confirms our fellowship with Christ and His people, and gives us cause for thankfulness. No wonder Charles Spurgeon commented for all of us: "I need to be reminded, forcibly reminded, of my dear Lord and Master very often."

Peter Barnes is editor of AP and minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, Sydney.