

InterSections



Editorial

Welcome to another issue of *InterSections*. This issue has a focus on Christian discipleship. Too often, busy-ness can distract us from taking time to reflect on the priorities of discipleship and how this translates into our daily lives. And yet, experience tells us that even a brief, regular quiet time may help immeasurably to provide clarity on what Jesus asks of a disciple.

In our *Feature* article, Brett Christensen refocuses our understanding of discipleship, what it is and the challenges for Christ-followers who wish to be light to the world.

In our *Food for Thought*, Nathan Guy considers the difficult statements of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: how can modern-day disciples meet those challenging demands and demonstrate fidelity to God? In our *International Letter*, we hear from Kyle Hooper in Cambodia and his reflections on what's involved in the Great Commission given by Jesus. We also interview Christian Bargholz from the Eastside Church of Christ, Sydney, on what discipleship is like for someone in the millennial generation. In our *ChurchScope* section, Frank Cunningham writes about the Southwest congregation in Campbelltown, NSW.

Nathan Holyoak reviews David Platt's recent book: *Counter Culture*. This book examines how the Gospel can address social issues that are often uncomfortable for Christians to confront. Finally, in our *News* section, we hear about the highlights of three camps run in Queensland and Victoria.

We hope that that this issue encourages you to reflect on what discipleship means and how you can fulfil our Master's uncompromising call: 'By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.' (John 13:35).

Happy reading.

The *InterSections* editorial team.

ChurchScope

Southwest Church of Christ, NSW



Every week, as if on cue, as the first worship song commenced, the shouting would start, 'Get up! Get up! Get up!' No it wasn't the songleader asking us to stand and sing. It was the neighbour next to the church building imploring his pigeons to fly. And who could forget the little grubby faced, runny nosed, two-year old with matted hair in a dirty nappy who wandered into the worship service and was shown so much love that her parents allowed her to attend Bible class and worship every week thereafter?

These are just two of the unusual, quirky, true stories you might hear about if you visit the Southwest Church of Christ. Those stories are very much a part of the history of the Southwest church which met in Ambarvale, NSW, south of Sydney. The Southwest church had its first 'official' worship service on 3 April 1983 at the Campbelltown Civic Centre. Among the eighteen people in attendance were three American missionaries – Dale Hartman, Kent Hartman and Charlie Powell – and their families. They were later joined by Tony & Betty Keesee. Together, they helped plant what was then called The MacArthur Centre Church of Christ.

Looking back I wonder if those four missionary families knew what they were in for. Today, these missionary families have returned to the USA and the church's name has changed. Yet, the Southwest church of today is not too much different from the church of the early



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Side photo: Pearl Slender—a member of the Ballina Church of Christ (attending the recent Project Barnabas, April 2016)

years. We still meet in the Ambarvale area, but now in a community hall. Our numbers – like some other churches – have risen and fallen. We currently have a membership of 25. Members come from El Salvador, Colombia, Samoa, Holland, Australia, China, England and the United States. We have 21 adults and 4 children. We enjoy eating together, singing, studying and worshipping our God.

Our motto is 'Sharing God's Love in Sydney's Southwest'. We're doing our best with the Lord's help to live out this motto in the Rosemeadow/Ambarvale area of Campbelltown. The area is made up of private homes and government homes. There are many low-income families. In addition, the area has high rates of unemployment (especially among the 18-24 year olds) and a high number of single-parent families.

We use a range of evangelistic activities to reach out to our community. Most involve face-to-face interaction. We volunteer at the Red Cross 'Good Start Breakfast Club' three days a week. Where possible we talk about the church with the parents of the children we feed. We invite them to Bible study and worship. We're also involved in KATS (Kids At Tallowood): a community-run activity for children where we help out with homework, craft and cooking activities. Again this is an opportunity to invite and share about God and his church.

We also teach Scripture class at Rosemeadow Public School, offer FriendSpeak English courses and hold an annual clothing and toy giveaway day in partnership with the local community centre. We have a stall at the annual Fishers Ghost community event in Campbelltown, participate in letterboxing and Bible correspondence courses, and some cinema advertising.

With an eye on the future of the Lord's church in Australia, Southwest has held an annual youth and young adult camp since 2002. This camp gives young people from churches around Australia another opportunity to come together, be encouraged and strengthen relationships as they walk with Christ. For many years, we've also partnered the Helpers in Missions (HIM) program run by the Memorial Road Church of Christ in Oklahoma, USA. This gives an opportunity for young Americans who are interested in missions to work with an Australian congregation and get a taste of what's involved.

Southwest currently has Kyle & Carley Keesee working with us. Kyle is the son of Tony & Betty Keesee, one of the original families who planted the church in Campbelltown in 1983. This tells me two things. First, those early experiences at Southwest didn't scare off the early missionaries from sending their son out to do mission work. Second, it's a wonderful encouragement to know that, for over 30 years, ordinary people with a faith in an extraordinary God can keep the Lord's light shining by sharing God's love in Sydney's southwest – thus making a difference.

Now did you hear the one about the Southwest preacher and the whipper-snipper thief? ■

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International Letter

I am Not a Missionary



I'm not a missionary. I grew up in a missionary family that lived in India for five years. After we moved back to the United States, I went to a private Christian university and studied missions—where I met other people who grew up in missionary families or were studying to be missionaries themselves.

But I'm not a missionary. In fact, recently I've started to be very uncomfortable when people call me a missionary. Indeed, I don't believe in missionaries anymore.

Look in the Bible. You'll find that the term 'missionary' is never used in the text as we understand it (unless you have a translation that has added paragraph headings like 'Paul Begins His Second Missionary Journey'). Those who were 'sent' were usually referred to as apostles or messengers (Ephesians 4:11-12). They weren't special ministers dedicated to overseas evangelism (a study for another time). Yet that's what we have come to believe missionaries are.

You might say, this is just semantics. You may be correct. But I'm starting to believe that vocabulary about the church and its activity matters. Our vocabulary affects our vision, theology and faith.

What am I?

So what am I? I still believe in God, in the teachings of Jesus and in the church – and I want to share these beliefs with the world. I understand this to be God's 'mission' for us to the world. This is why I presently live in Asia.

Yet my focus has shifted. I believe this makes a significant difference in how I obey the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus' one clear imperative verb (in both English and Greek) is: 'Go make disciples'. All the rest are participles—the 'as you're doing these things' types of verbs. Make disciples. That's the command. Make students of Jesus. Make followers of Jesus. Wherever you go make people fall in love with Jesus in such a way that they want to be baptised and obey everything he has taught us.

Notice what Jesus does NOT say in that famous passage. He doesn't say, 'Go into all the world and plant churches'. Or, 'Go spread this new religion I started'. Or even, 'Go teach them all things I have commanded you'. Jesus' Great Commission doesn't instruct us on how to form a church or how to deal with conflict, prejudice or obstacles in the church. Paul helps us with all that in other parts of the New Testament. Jesus doesn't start by explaining the five steps of salvation or why it's so important to get our doctrines or theology correct. Instead, the text says we're to make disciples and this involves baptising them and teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded.

The foundation of God's mission is to make disciples—exactly the way the Master did it. Jesus chose twelve people in whom he intentionally invested time and energy. Sure, he spoke publicly about the kingdom of God when the occasion arose. Sure, he healed people in droves as they came to him. But the real focus of his mission was making disciples of those twelve men so that they could learn to be like him.

That's what I want to do. I want to be a disciple of the Master. I want to follow his example and make disciples, just as he commanded. So I'm not a missionary any longer; I'm a disciple-maker.

Imagine a church full of disciple-makers

Disciple-making isn't about inviting others to experience your congregation or bringing an unbeliever to your trained preacher who has all the answers. Disciple-making isn't a specialised department of church ministry like youth ministry, family ministry or hospital visitation. It isn't for a subset of trained Christian leaders. Disciple-making is for everyone.

What if everyone in a congregation approached the Great Commission of Jesus as a disciple-maker? Imagine believers making students and followers of Jesus who are falling in love with his teaching and learning to obey it. Imagine if we didn't focus on getting new disciples into our congregation, but trusted God's Spirit to use the disciples who are already there to make other disciples?

The focus wouldn't be on our missionaries, preachers and ministers—it would be on God's Spirit working through believers. It would be a movement of disciples who are making other disciples – something which we probably haven't seen since Acts 8:4.

That's what I believe in. That's what I want to see happen in Cambodia and throughout Asia. That's why I'm not a missionary. That's why I'm a disciple-maker. ■

Kyle Hooper is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman University and Harding School of Theology and lives in Cambodia. Along with his wife, Rebecca, and daughter, Emma, he seeks to make disciples. Kyle also collaborates with a broader network of disciple-makers in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, China, Malaysia and Singapore as they hope to instigate a movement of disciple-makers all over Southeast Asia. kyle@hoopers.asia



Feature

Restoring Biblical Discipleship

Much has been said about restoring the New Testament church — reviving the faith as taught and practised in the Scriptures. Since the church is made up of individual disciples, it follows that such restoration begins with restoring biblical discipleship.

Have you ever wondered how Paul and his companions in Acts 28 could walk into Puteoli, a town new to them, and find disciples – without a phonebook, without Google, without Facebook, without even a mobile phone? I sure wonder, but I wouldn't be surprised if finding disciples depended upon the light those disciples were shining.

Light of the world

Sitting on the mount, Jesus taught his disciples, 'You are the light of the world.... Let your light shine before people so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven.' (Matthew 5:14-16) Clearly, Jesus didn't intend Christian discipleship to be a passive or private matter but a life of good deeds which shines in public.

As Jesus teaches his disciples about shining in the world, he describes a walk that stands out from others. True righteousness is a walk to be demonstrated in ordinary, day-to-day life. The discipleship Christ calls us to is a life which seeks, above everything else, 'the kingdom of God and his righteousness' (Matthew 6:33).

This calls for a different mindset which manifests itself in behaviour utterly discordant with the world around us. What's important to Christ's followers is despised in the eyes of the world. Christ calls his disciples to 'enter through the narrow gate' and he further says 'the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few there are who find it' (Matthew 7:13-14). Being a disciple of Christ is choosing to walk with the few.

This means we can't look to the world around us for the 'how to' guide on Christian discipleship. Surprisingly to some, that includes not looking to the religious establishment. Jesus was as blunt as a sledgehammer when he told his disciples that, unless their righteousness surpassed what the religious establishment was doing, they wouldn't even enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). We are to look higher.

Towards the end of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says where we should be looking. 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven... Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and does them, I will liken to a wise man who built his house on the rock' (Matthew 7:21-24). So it boils down to listening to the Master, learning from his example, and living accordingly.

Follow me

If you've lost sight of how to follow Jesus, if you're wandering in the fog of 'churchianity', if you're preoccupied with religious works 'in Christ's name' (see Matthew 7:22; cf Luke 6:46) and you're allowing these to consume your time and to keep you from shining, then your discipleship needs restoration — indeed, liberation! (Galatians 5:1)

Here's the key: look to Jesus, the originator and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Remember that discipleship is about following the Master who went about doing good, exalting God's will by word and example (Acts 10:38). It's about calling people to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him (Mark 8:34).

Later, John reminds us that, in the midst of life's travails and distractions, we must 'walk just as Jesus walked' (1 John 2:3-6). Paul says that we should look to the example of others who are walking as Christ walked and imitate them (Philippians 3:17; cf 1 Corinthians 11:1; 4:16-17).

Thus biblical discipleship is a whole lot more than going to church. It does include meeting with fellow disciples for encouragement. But it's certainly not limited to that. It requires that we believe the truth about Jesus, love him enough to surrender our life to him (which will mean keeping his commandments) and walk in his steps. It's really as simple as that.

But doing all this is a big challenge – more so in a world where the tide is pulling us in the other direction. Yet we must rise to the challenge of discipleship if we're to be light in the darkness. We must resist being a quasi-disciple who smothers our lamp by putting it under a basket or behind a chapel door. We're Christ's representatives. Now let's live as he lived. ■

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Food for Thought

The Hard Sayings of Jesus



Have you ever read the Sermon on the Mount and said to yourself, 'This seems impossible!' Jesus applies the word 'adultery' to a lustful look. He says that one is in danger of hellfire just for expressing anger. Some of his sayings include: removing limbs that offend; never resisting an evil person; and giving your money clothes, and goods to any person who ever asks for anything. What do we do with the hard-to-understand, hard-to-interpret and hard-to-apply sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount?

Does Jesus mean it?

Some well-meaning Bible teachers claim that Jesus never intended his followers to live up to this teaching. Instead, they argue, Jesus laid out an impossible rule — one that only Jesus himself could ever keep. When the struggling disciple recognises this glorious truth, she will fall on her knees and glorify God for his matchless gift of grace.

On the other hand, there are a number of teachings in the Bible which all Christians believe applies to them — even if we fail to live up to the high calling from time to time. Even the two greatest commands — to love God with all of your heart and to love your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40) — are intended for all believers, though I imagine every one of us falls short and stands in need of improving our love in both directions.

There are three very good reasons to think that Jesus meant for all his disciples to take his words in the Sermon on the Mount seriously. First, Jesus' sermon was not merely intended for the apostles, but for the 'great crowd' who followed him, heard him and believed his sermon was 'teaching them' (Matthew 4:25; 5:1; 7:28-29). Second, Matthew weds the sayings of Jesus with obligations for discipleship when he records the Great Commission. The first followers of Jesus were told to 'make disciples of all nations', not only baptising them, but 'teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you' (Matthew 28:18-20). Third, Jesus ends his sermon with the story of the wise and foolish builders. The wise are those who hear Jesus' words and put them into practice (Matthew 7:24, 26). Whatever Jesus meant, it seems clear that he expected his followers to obey his teaching and put it into practice.

Does Jesus mean it...literally?

Why, then, do we have trouble applying this difficult sermon? We must realise it's not a question of whether Jesus meant it; it's a question of what he meant by it. If Jesus is really trying to give a rigid set of rules meant to apply literally in all situations, then people should be jailed in maximum security facilities for harbouring anger in their hearts — anger being tantamount to murder.

So, we should be careful before declaring it always unchristian to practise self-defence or to take an oath in court. We know intuitively that Jesus never meant it was wrong to deny your child's constant request for money from your wallet; similarly, he does not advocate self-mutilation as the normal practice of Christian behaviour.

What's going on here is the power of hyperbole. Jesus is using exaggeration to make a point. Jesus is not giving a rule meant to be applied hard-and-fast to every case. He's demanding that we get to the heart of the matter rather than settling for legal technicalities to justify our selfish desires. Trying to read the Sermon on the Mount as a list of straightforward rules for every case will drive you crazy. It wasn't intended to be read this way.

Living faithfully: discipleship starts in the heart

Instead of applying every saying literally, Jesus meant for us to apply every saying faithfully...starting with our hearts. Jesus really means what he says: God is watching our hearts. The anger that leads to murder is the real heart of the problem. Similarly, Christians should feel just as bad about lusting in their hearts as they would if they had just committed adultery against their spouse.

In other words, Jesus is not affirming that anger equals murder or lust equals adultery. Instead, he's challenging a common human tendency: explaining away sin so as to justify sinning more. Jesus shows us that every step down these paths makes the sin more heinous. He catches us off guard by naming the whole path as sinful! He condemns our evil desires and challenges us to make necessary changes at the very root where all our problems develop: our hearts.

Let's accept Jesus' challenge. Let's re-order our actions to align with the heart of God. Look beyond our actions on record and examine the deepest desires of our hearts. After all, this is where God wants to live. ■

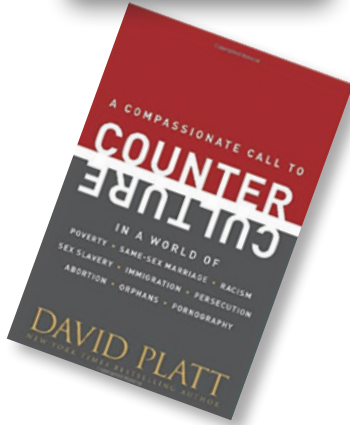
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Book Review



Counter Culture: A Compassionate Call to Counter Culture in a World of Poverty, Same-Sex Marriage, Racism, Sex Slavery, Immigration, Abortion, Persecution, Orphans and Pornography by David Platt
(Tyndale House Publishers, 2015)



On social issues, Christians have recently been on the defensive. Cultural changes have shifted the ground beneath our feet. We find ourselves defending our beliefs against an often hostile audience who once shared common values with us. This situation has frequently led us to withdraw from engaging in various social issues that plague our fallen world. When we do engage with the world, it's usually based on what is least costly for us in the context of our culture.

In his recent book, *Counter Culture*, David Platt makes the case for Christians to go on the offensive. Not an aggressive offensive, but a compassionate offensive. For Platt, the core of our mission is the Gospel. He sees the Gospel as the solution; but it can also be the problem. He says that in confronting the world the biggest issue is not our beliefs on sexuality or abortion. The biggest issue is the Gospel itself. He writes: 'The most offensive claim in Christianity is that God is the Creator, Owner, and Judge of every person on the planet.' (p 16)

Platt argues that this truth is the real cause of our clash with secular culture. Yet our response should not be less Gospel but more. We need to understand the Gospel more and the world needs to see the Gospel more at work in us. When we truly understand the Gospel it transforms how we see the world around us: it calls us to truly love people as God loves them. We will put aside superficial notions of what it means to follow God and give our lives in sacrificial service to our neighbours. We will be the salt and light they so badly need: 'My purpose is to show how the [G]ospel moves Christians to counter all of these issues in our culture with conviction, compassion, and courage.' (p 18)

Of course, to do this we need to have a clear understanding of what the Gospel is. If I have one criticism about this book, it's that Platt's definition of the Gospel is a little too individualistic – it's about what Jesus has done to save each of us personally. But I see the Gospel as bigger than that: it's also about what God is doing with his people in the church, building them into a body to his glory (Ephesians 3:2-11; Colossians 1:15-23).

Nevertheless, a concern for the body of Christ as a whole seeps through everything Platt writes. We – believers and non-believers – are all people for whom Christ has died. As believers, we work together to restore all people to our Creator within that one unified body of Christ. This is the Good News, both for the future and the here and now.

So Platt affirms the central place of the Gospel as the defining narrative in our lives. After that, he unpacks what this means for many of the issues facing us today – issues like poverty, abortion, sexual immorality, marriage and race relations. What light does the good news of Jesus shine on these issues? How does the Gospel change our thinking about ourselves and our relationship to those around us? How can we make a difference in a fallen and hostile world without compromising the truth of the Gospel?

The topics Platt covers demand a consistent and biblical response from us. In doing this, Platt draws on both his theological and pastoral experience. He shares his own journey, wrestling with his conscience, seeking to reconcile what the Gospel was clearly telling him with what he had always been comfortable doing. His candour challenges us to reflect deeply on ourselves. Do we really believe the Gospel enough to let it change our lives? As disciples of Jesus, how are we called to live in our culture?

Such practical questions form the heart of the book. Platt then calls for action. To spur us, at the end of each chapter there are helpful suggestions as to how we can put these ideas into practice. There are things to pray about, Scriptures to dwell on and simple steps to begin the journey.

This book is easy to read. Yet, I found it provocative and challenging. The book is a call to heed the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Lord of every aspect of our lives. It's a call to embrace passionately the Gospel life. That call is radically counter-cultural, but one we all need to hear. The Gospel really is good news, capable of transforming us and the rest of the world. ■

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The Point Church Easter Retreat – Brisbane, QLD

Over the Easter weekend The Point Church held their annual retreat at the House of Happiness on Bribie Island, north of Brisbane. It was a great weekend of fun and fellowship by the beach. We were fortunate to have Graham and Penny Fry from the Canberra church to present the lessons.

The theme this year was 'Citizenship in Heaven'. We all recognise our national citizenship but our citizenship in heaven is much more significant. Just like national citizenship, heavenly citizenship brings great benefits. But it also brings with it important responsibilities to each other and to God whom we represent as ambassadors. Most of all, it gives us a shared identity as God's people – something we all need in this day and age.

As usual, there was plenty of time to share together and relax, with activities like our regular *Old v Young* soccer game (result: 2-2 draw) and Saturday trivia night. The retreat is a great opportunity for the church to be together for more than just a few hours on Sunday. The bonds that are formed and strengthened over the weekend make it a highlight of the year. ■

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2016 Victorian Autumn Camp at Lake Nillahcootie



Lake Nillahcootie is located along the Midland Highway between Mansfield and Benalla, not far from the Victorian alpine region. While the lake had shrunk to mid-drought levels, the attendance at this year's Easter Camp was the largest anyone can remember.

There were 84 full-time and part-time campers. This number swelled to around 110 with day-trippers coming up from Melbourne on Saturday. As well as Melbourne, people came from Bairnsdale, Canberra, Sydney, Gosford, Brisbane, Ipswich and Auckland to hear Trevor Major (also of Auckland) teach 'Stories of Faith' – lessons to be learned from successes and failures in church history.

The many new campers fit straight in with the old. Good food, fellowship, teaching, singing, campfires, sports, performances, fishing and the Easter egg hunt were shared across the four-day weekend. The Victorian Autumn Camp continues to be a time of spiritual refreshment and encouragement with brothers and sisters in Christ. ■

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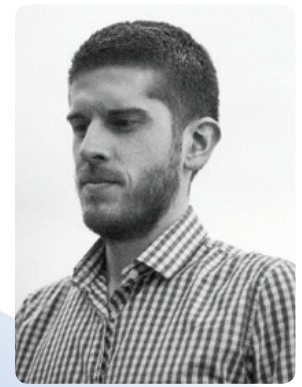
CampING (I Need God) 2016

Nestled close by picturesque views of water is the YMCA Camp Manyung in Mt Eliza, Victoria. The Belmore Road congregation has been coming to Camp Manyung for the annual church camp for around 18 years. The three days set aside over the Labour Day long weekend in March is a time filled with purpose, encouragement, Scripture exploration and spiritual bonding as members of one community. On average, 80 people attend this camp, ranging from babes to seniors.

The long weekend enables something to occur which is really quite special. Time away from the usual schedules; quality time together. Moments and conversations filled with purpose and focus. This year's theme, 'A Broader Outlook', was led by Les Totman who hails from the Bankstown church in Sydney. Les encouraged us with examples of how a church community should look like if it were to be united in spirit and action. We shared stories, sung songs around a beautiful faux-campfire, played board games and competed in tennis and water volleyball. The more adventurous participated in a high ropes course. Those that preferred quieter activities got their nails painted, took naps or frolicked at the beach a short walk away. As usual there was a fundraising auction held to support the churches helped by the Belmore Road mission fund. ■

Richard and Sally-Kate Hooi are members of the Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne. happyhoois@gmail.com





Here we interview Christian Bargholz as one representative of the twenty-something millennial generation. Recently graduated from university, Christian has been raised in a Christian home in Sydney.

1. Let's begin by you sharing with us a little about your background – how would you describe your family, your youth and your upbringing?

I grew up in a family that encouraged inquisitiveness, studiousness and respect, all underpinned with unconditional and sacrificial love. All that is owed chiefly to my parents, who grew up with inquisitive minds. They later learned the love of Christ, subsequently combining the two in the household they raised.

Because of that, my upbringing was defined by amazing inquisitiveness and also wonderful generosity. We had spectacular overseas family holidays, travelling for nearly a decade to almost every continent together, seeing and experiencing different cultures, customs and ways of life. It also took the form of humble and quiet giving, exemplified by my father's willingness to give away so much of what he had earned to those who needed it more: his family, his friends, his church; and by my mother's sacrificial care for her sons, and her care for the elderly, struggling siblings, and sons and daughters in the faith.

2. What persuaded you to become a Christian? What has kept you faithful to date?

The journey to Christ for a second-generation Christian is different from that of someone who has never heard of Christ before. Growing up in a Christian household, I had no 'lightbulb moment' of discovery where everything came together in a moment of understanding. God had always been part of my life and I'd been attending church almost from birth. In that sense, God was nothing special to me; he was always comfortably in the background.

The big decision in my late teen years was whether or not I was going to commit to Christ. Older spiritual brothers encouraged me to study the Scriptures more intimately. I also decided to take my faith more seriously. My decision was helped immensely by respectful parents who gave me space to think and decide for myself. I felt responsible for my own choice and felt sure that I had chosen right not only because I believed Christ, but because I had made the choice on my own for myself.

That the decision was mine has played a big role in keeping me faithful to date. What has also kept me faithful is the love and grace shown to me by God and others who allowed me to choose for myself whether or not to love him and them. That love and grace sustains me when my conviction wavers, my faith is tested or my love is weakened.

3. I know you're a fan of C. S. Lewis and read his books. Tell us why.

I love C.S. Lewis. To my mind, he is the greatest Christian apologist of modern times. He writes with a clarity that is profound. With unbelievable imagination, he makes complicated subjects relatable, coherent and easy to understand.

The first book I read of his, *Mere Christianity*, came at a time of uncertainty in my Christian life. My faith was being constantly questioned and often ridiculed by those

around me. Reading C.S. Lewis was visceral. He showed me how to love God with all of my *mind*. His logical thinking into the rationality of the Scriptures gave me a newfound sense of confidence that my worldview was correct and that Christ was not simply *a* truth, but *the* Truth. That confidence has stayed with me since. It has given me the courage to answer the questions of my closest friends, many of whom had ridiculed me in past years.

4. How would you describe your generation?

That's too broad a question to give a simple answer. Each generation is made up of different kinds of people: socio-economically, culturally, spiritually. With those I spend my time with – here's how I'd describe my generation:

- Intellectually illuminated, but morally confused.
- Financially affluent, but spiritually impoverished.
- Materially satisfied, but starved of meaning.

5. Do you think that being a disciple in your generation is harder than in previous generations? Why?

I think being a disciple in each generation has its own challenges. However, I do think we're seeing a shift away from Christianity and other religious thought in our society more wholesale than in previous generations. I find myself having to be more vocal to meet the criticisms levelled at religion – criticisms which are more public and aggressive than before. And in terms of challenges unique to my generation – the millennials – maintaining the moral standards outlined by God in his Word seems more difficult now than it has been in previous years. Christians in my generation need to find coherent answers to the constant moral questioning of God and those who follow him. In that sense, living the standards today is also more difficult than before.

6. Based on your observations of church life as you've experienced it, what are some things churches are doing well — and what are some things churches can do better?

I believe the church has done very well in its conviction to stick with the Scriptures — to not add or subtract from the teachings we already have in God's Word. I also admire that, out of that conviction, the church seeks to understand the Scripture more seriously.

However, I've found that the church, at times, can be quite unforgiving. I'm not exempt from that tendency. But if we're not tolerant of failings by individual members, they often feel isolated as a result. Often we forget that the church is first and foremost a family — a place where forgiveness, trust and love form the base of the church itself. I hope we can all love one another a bit more sincerely, trust one another a bit more deeply and forgive one another a bit more willingly. ■

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