

metconnexion

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FEATURING

DAVID HULL, ANDY FROST & CHRIS FROST, GRACE PRATT MORRIS-CHAPMAN,
JOSEPH BOOT, PHIL MEADOWS



D I S C I P L E S H I P



EDITORIAL

Marian Izzard

The theme for this autumn edition of MET Connexion is 'Discipleship'. Discipleship is a lifetime journey for all of us as Christian people - as we seek to follow Jesus and become more like him in our daily lives by the equipping and enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We have a wealth of material in this edition - so much so - that we have given extra space to some of our articles and have expanded this edition to 40 pages!

Our Chair, David Hull shares the vision for 'A Fresh Focus' that MET will be taking this autumn as we look for a fresh move of God to bring revival to ourselves, our churches and our nation. He outlines the mini tour which will focus on Preparing, Praying and Pursuing Revival.

Brothers Andy and Chris Frost share two chapters from their new visual resource for Leaders: 'Leadiagrams' (Leadership Diagrams). They provide a refreshing and creative insight to help leaders thrive in their faith and equip them for effective leadership.

Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman, Methodist Mission Partner in Uganda challenges us as individuals and as a church in her article: 'Is There Balm in Gilead?' to engage actively with spiritual disciplines as part of our pattern of discipleship if we are to see our churches transformed.

Apologist and Philosopher Joseph Boot, founder of the Ezra Institute for Contemporary Christianity presents his article 'Cultural Discipleship and the Total Claims of Christ' and explains the inescapable nature of discipleship, and what it means for the formation of culture.

Phil Meadows presents a double article on 'Discipleship and Mission in the Wesleyan Spirit' and explores insights from our Wesleyan heritage for contemporary Christian Mission. This was written as an academic paper, commissioned by MET to mark the 200th anniversary of the turnaround plan of the 1820 Liverpool Conference.

Our Bible Study by Derek Balsdon is Part 2 in the 3 part series on 'Images of the Holy Spirit'. This second study explores the image of Wind.

Praying Always is compiled by Roz Addington, our Prayer Coordinator who provides us with a weekly focus for prayer over four weeks featuring The Church, Great Britain, World Issues and Climate Change.

The next edition will be the winter edition available in January 2024.

Every blessing

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REVIVE US, O LORD: NEW SEASON, NEW FOCUS

David Hull

DAVID A. HULL, CHAIR OF MET, PRESENTS MET'S FRESH FOCUS, AS UNANIMOUSLY ENDORSED BY THIS YEAR'S AGM.

'I think we sing Charles Wesley's hymns, enjoy them tremendously, but we don't always listen to the words, or hear what the words mean. I've been thinking of that hymn ... "O thou who camest from above, the pure celestial fire to impart, kindle a flame of sacred love on the mean altar of my heart".'

It isn't very often that MET Connexion articles begin with a quotation from a prime minister, but those were the words of Margaret Thatcher, when speaking at the reopening of John Wesley's House in 1981.

A number of her predecessors have similarly made remarkable claims about the Evangelical Revival which birthed our Methodist Movement. Lloyd George said that his native Wales, 'owed more to the movement of which Wesley was ... leader, than to any other movement in the whole of its history. It civilised the people ... There was a complete revolution effected in the whole country.' Stanley Baldwin said that historians, 'now realise that they cannot explain nineteenth century England until they can explain Wesley.' He added, 'I believe it is equally true to say, that you cannot understand twentieth century America, unless you understand Wesley.'

For the sake of political balance, having quoted two Conservatives and a Liberal premier, I'll add a further comment from former Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson, who

affirmed Morgan Phillip's claim that the Labour Party owes more to Methodism than to Marx. Wilson didn't, however, see why Methodism should be given all the credit, and suggested that the alliteration should be dropped in favour of non-conformity more generally.

They all observed something that seems so easily to be overlooked. We cannot understand our culture in the UK today, until we have grasped that much of what we value has its roots in the Evangelical Revival. It was a moment of refocussing and reenergising which fundamentally changed our country. It seems to me that we now stand in need of revival once again, perhaps more than ever since then.

Over recent years, as we have reflected within Methodist Evangelicals Together upon not only our national context, but also that of our denomination, a clear consensus has emerged that we are now in a new season, and a new focus is therefore needed. MET is a river which runs with the water of three streams: a conservative evangelical emphasis on the authority of the Bible brought to us by Conservative Evangelicals in Methodism, a charismatic dependence on the renewing power of the Holy Spirit contributed by Dunamis magazine, and a commitment to pray for revival which was the raison d'être of the Methodist Revival Fellowship. Whilst each of these emphases have continued to guide our work over the years, and will continue to do so into the future, we have concluded that it is time to put Prayer for Revival 'front and centre' again, with three points of focus.

PREPARING FOR REVIVAL

I am often inspired by remembering that, before the Evangelical Revival began in England, John Wesley read Jonathan Edward's account of revival in America. He recorded his conclusion in his journal: 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes!'

I am sure that the book must have sparked a passionate longing for revival in Wesley's own heart. He did not have long to wait. As the year turned from 1738 to 1739, he met with his brother Charles, their great friend George Whitefield, and about sixty others to see in the new year with an all-night prayer service. At three o'clock in the morning, they had an astonishing experience:

'As we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God come mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.'

The fire of the Lord fell! A flame was kindled in his heart and, empowered by that experience, Wesley travelled to Bristol at Whitefield's invitation, preached for the first time in the open-air, and the revival flames began to spread like wildfire.

First, however, the kindling was prepared. It seems to me, that was what happened as Wesley read the account of revival in New England. It opened his heart and mind to a deeper understanding of the Word and work of God and put a desperate, passionate longing within him.

As we place Prayer for Revival front and centre once again, I believe this is our first task. We need to prepare for revival with teaching from the Bible and testimonies from past revivals, reminding ourselves what revival really is. Personally, I understand revival to be the recovery of authentic Christianity, accompanied by the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit, resulting in wide-reaching transformation.

Let's Prepare for Revival by rediscovering all the Bible teaches about revival and telling again the stories of past revivals, increasing our openness, expectation and longing for the Lord to repeat such marvellous work in our own day.

PRAYING FOR REVIVAL

It was in a prayer meeting that the flame was kindled in the hearts of the Wesley brothers and their friends as they encountered the presence of God in an extraordinary way. Later that year, when John Wesley was in Bristol, the Methodists in London realised they were losing the sense of God's presence in that extraordinary way. They wrote to Wesley, urging him to return. As soon as he did, they gathered again in Fetter Lane, the same place in which they had met to see in the new year. They humbled themselves, confessed their unfaithfulness and acknowledged they had grieved the Holy Spirit through their divisions, through relying on their own strength, and through being dismissive of the Spirit's work. 'In that hour,' Wesley wrote in his journal:

'We found God with us as at the first. Some fell prostrate upon the ground. Others burst out, as with one consent, into loud praise and thanksgiving. And many openly testified, there had been no such day as this since January the first preceding.'

I am often greatly encouraged to remember that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them all, not only once, but repeatedly, and I am challenged and spurred on by the fact that they found the way back to be through deliberate and desperate prayer.

Over dinner during the first week of this year, someone mentioned to me the American UMC pastor, David Thomas. His name was new to me at the time, but a few months later I had the privilege of spending some time with him when he was visiting the UK to speak at a conference. He has spent much of his life studying revivals of the past and was asked to 'shepherd' the recently reported outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Asbury, which he did very quietly and humbly in the background, unbeknown to many. We talked about how, through his research, he has discovered that almost every revival, perhaps every past revival, has been preceded by a particular kind of prayer, which he refers to as Travailing Prayer.

It is the sort of prayer in which Elijah engaged on the top of Mount Carmel. After the fire of the Lord had fallen, and having pursued the so-called prophets of Baal, Elijah climbed Mount Carmel again. Having trusted the Lord for fire, now in the midst of a severe drought, he had to trust the Lord for rain. Perhaps they had used the last of the water when he had instructed them to pour it extravagantly over the sacrifice he had prepared. He sent his servant to look out towards the sea. Six times the servant returned, saying 'There is nothing there'.

Each time the servant turned back from the sea, he would have seen an extraordinary sight. Elijah had 'bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees' (1 Kings 18:42). The only possible explanation of that extraordinary posture, it seems, is that it was the position, in the ancient world, of childbirth. Elijah was travailing in prayer, groaning as in the pains of childbirth. Paul the apostle would later share the experience, writing to the Galatians: 'My dear children,

for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you ...' (Galatians 4:19).

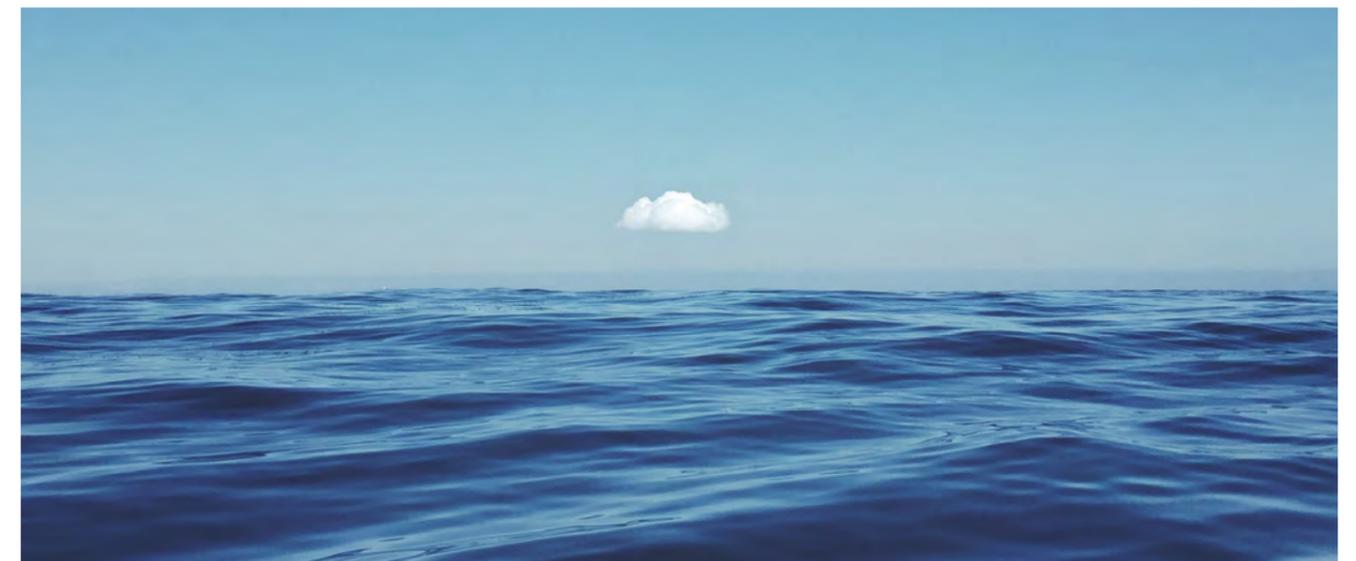
It was only after an extended time of such travailing prayer that, on the seventh time of looking, the servant was able to report the sight of coming rain: 'A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea' (1 Kings 18:44). It was an image that Charles Wesley applied to revival in his heart-stirring hymn, 'See how great a flame aspires, kindled by a spark of grace'.

As we place a focus on Revival front and centre once again, surely our central task must be to Pray for Revival - rediscovering what it is to travail in prayer. Let's pray deliberately, determinedly and with desperation, that a spark of grace would kindle revival fires once again.

PURSUING REVIVAL

When I read the accounts and reflections about the reported outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Asbury earlier this year, I was a little concerned that some seemed to suggest that the answer, for all of us who long for revival, is to copy what was happening there. The mistake with that, it seemed to me, was that they were seeking to replicate the effects of the outpouring, rather than what led to it. We will never truly know all the ways in which the ground was prepared. There were years of faithful prayer across the USA for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on university campuses. That day, an ordinary group of staff and students gathered in the chapel for an ordinary chapel service, just as they gathered every week, and an ordinary preacher spoke, feeling as he concluded that he had failed. It was then, in his grace, that the Lord poured out his Spirit.

Revival is always and only in the hand of our Sovereign God, and he determines when to give his gifts according to his perfect purposes. However, if revival is - as I understand it - the recovery of authentic Christianity, accompanied by the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit, resulting in wide-reaching transformation, then perhaps there is a part we can play in pursuing revival - doing all we can to rediscover authentic Christianity.



That, it seems to me, is one of the great lessons we can learn from the Evangelical Revival which swept across this country, and across the world more widely, almost three hundred years ago. Our Lord Jesus himself has taught us how we can know him more deeply, experience more of his power and grow in his likeness. We seek extraordinary acts of God through the ordinary means of grace: bible reading, prayer, fasting, worship, holy communion, fellowship and merciful service.

I remember the late Donald English once telling the story of being approached by a man after he had preached in a church he was visiting. The man wanted to know more about becoming a Christian, but Donald was unable to arrange to meet him because he was due to travel again. Instead, he suggested that the man simply started reading the Bible, beginning with the Gospels, each time with a prayer for revelation. He said it wasn't long before he received a letter from the man, letting him know that he had become a Christian. He wrote 'As I read, I suddenly became aware that he, of whom I was reading, was present with me'.

I think we can too easily forget what these means of grace are: channels through which God's Spirit really does flow into our lives. As we do these things, he really is with us and we can encounter him, more than in any other way. Though let's always remember that we seek God, not because of what he can do for us, but because of who he is - to know him more deeply and grow in his likeness. Ultimately, we seek his face, his heart, more than his hands.

Surely, our placing Prayer for Revival front and centre should aim at spurring us on to Pursue Revival, seeking extraordinary acts of God through the ordinary means of grace, to know him more deeply, grow in his likeness, and trust him to act as he knows best. Whatever happens in this world and within our denominations, nothing that is gained through seeking our extraordinary Living God through the ordinary means of grace will ever ultimately be lost.

Let's join together in Preparing for, Praying for and Pursuing Revival - a recovery of authentic Christianity, accompanied by the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit, resulting in wide-reaching transformation!



*The Revd Dr David A Hull is
Chair of MET and Lead
Pastor of Freedom
Church Bristol.*

O THOU WHO CAMEST FROM ABOVE

Charles Wesley

O thou who camest from above
the pure celestial fire to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work, and speak, and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up thy gift in me -

Ready for all they perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat,
till death thy endless mercies seal,
and make the sacrifice complete.



NEW SEASON:NEW FOCUS

MET LOCAL

Join us at a venue near you as we Prepare for, Pursue and Pray for Revival together!
... Inspirational Worship and Preaching ... Prayer for Revival and Personal Renewal ...

SPEAKER | REV DR DAVID A. HULL

285 years ago, the greatest revival these nations have known began. It birthed our Methodist movement.

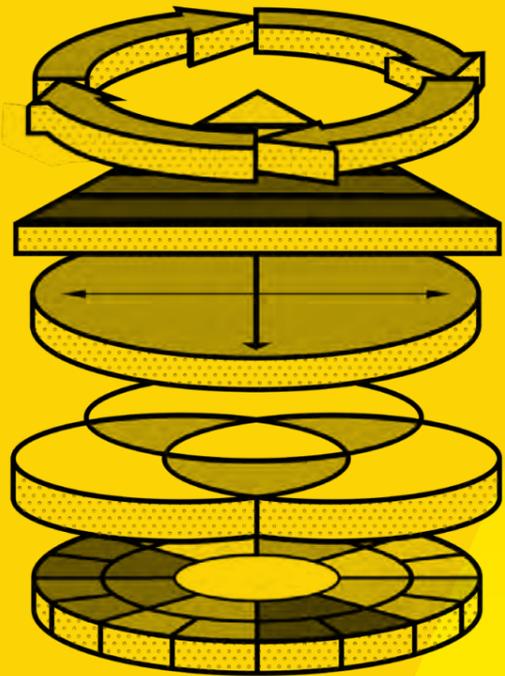
It has shaped our national life to this day. Both church and nation now stand in need of revival again.

For more information about dates and venues, go to revive.me.uk

**To explore possibilities for bringing the tour to your church or circuit, contact Marian
on admin@methodistevangelicals.org.uk / 01983 642024**

met | Methodist
Evangelicals
Together

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)



LEADIAGRAMS

*Andy Frost
& Chris Frost*

BROTHERS ANDY AND CHRIS FROST SHARE TWO CHAPTERS OF THEIR NEW VISUAL RESOURCE FOR LEADERS: LEADIAGRAMS (LEADERSHIP DIAGRAMS)

Over their Christian leadership journeys, brothers Andy and Chris have regularly traded newly created or discovered leadership diagrams. They consistently found that in our visually-based and time-poor culture, diagrams are indispensable for effective communication; they summarise principles that remain memorable. When they discovered that no Christian leadership book existed based upon diagrams, the idea and commitment was born to create the book 'Leadiagrams: 52 visuals to help you thrive in your faith and lead effectively'.

What follows are two free preview chapters on diagrams about discipleship from the 52 found in Leadiagrams.

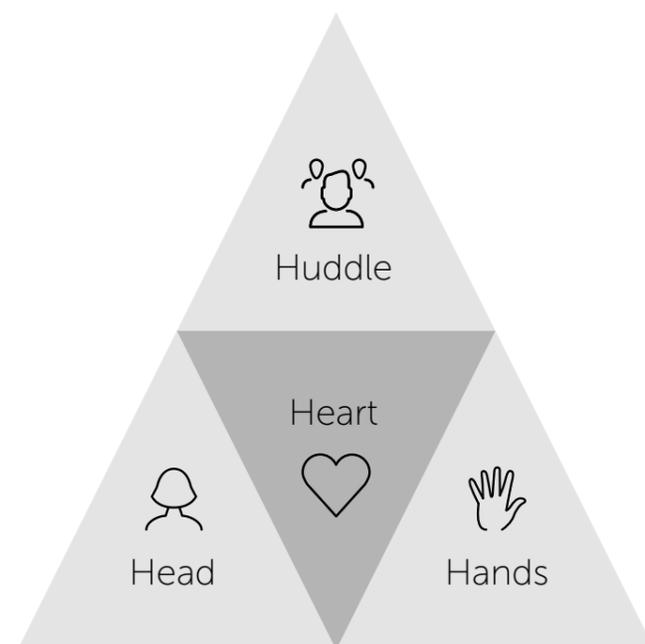


Andy Frost (left) and Chris Frost (right)

CHAPTER 2 HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY

THE HEART, HEAD, HANDS
AND HUDDLE TRIANGLE

CHRIS



SETTING THE SCENE

'The Combination Person' is a fun drawing game we used to love playing as kids. The first player starts by drawing a head and neck; they fold the paper over and the second player draws a torso and makes another fold. Then the third draws some legs and folds, before the fourth draws a pair of feet. The paper is then unfolded to reveal the combination. The result - a person with a distorted design and shape - often elicits much laughter. To this day, I can still remember the thin, but oversized, butler-cum-surfer we once created!

Sadly, this disjointed picture can also be reflective of our spirituality. Jesus wants to be loved with 'all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' (Matthew 22:37). And we are encouraged to work out this relationship with God in a Christian community (Hebrews 10:24-25). But we often emphasise one or another of these elements at the expense of others. The result is an odd combination of spirituality, that if unfolded, would likely make us balk.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

A single triangle contains four identical triangles that together represent essential building blocks for a holistic, or healthily integrated, Christian spirituality. These are:

Heart. The Heart represents a core connection with Christ, a deep knowing of him. It's related to your emotions but goes even deeper than that, into your will. It's expressed through activities such as personal worship, Scripture meditation, prayer, retreats, counselling, spiritual direction, silence, solitude and reflection. This is the central triangle, demonstrating that all the other triangles flow out from this. It's also the only inward-pointing triangle, primarily representing the inner life.

Hands. This represents the use of your body in service to Jesus. It's expressed through what may naturally come to mind when we think about being the hands and feet of Jesus. It's doing what Jesus did: caring for the sick, embracing the poor and grieving, feeding the hungry and healing the broken.

Head. In reading this book, you're actively practising the Head of spirituality as you're engaging your brain in an attempt to become a more mature disciple of Jesus Christ. Anything that helps strengthen your understanding of God comes into play here. Examples would be personal study through things like books, talks and pilgrimages, which centre on topics such as Scripture, doctrine and church history.

Together the Heart, Hands and Head represent the foundation of and flow into the ...

Huddle. This is about coming together with other followers of Jesus. It represents a closeness of community life with other disciples. It will include activities such as communal meals, breaking of bread and wine, prayer, teaching and worship. As the top triangle, it demonstrates how an individual's Heart, Head and Hands act as a gift, in service to the communal Huddle.

The holistic idea is that the four triangles are interdependent, and only through their combined strength does the structure stand firm. If one triangle is removed, or is disproportionately sized, the structure's stability is compromised. The complete triangle together points outward, towards mission, and upward, towards glorifying God.

THINKING BIBLICALLY

Like the Pharisees, we often practise some commands but neglect others: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practised the latter, without neglecting the former" (Matthew 23:23). When it comes to the four Hs, there's a biblical emphasis on practising all four:

Heart. Jesus didn't die just to get you into heaven one day but to get heaven into you *today*; he wants to be known in your heart. In Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17, like a forceful footnote, he explains what it is to have eternal life: "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). This type of knowing is intimate. The same word is used to describe how Mary didn't 'know' Joseph before she gave birth (Matthew 1:25), revealing that they had not been intimate as husband and wife.

It follows then that Jesus wants us to love him with all our hearts (Matthew 22:37), having our hearts undefiled (Matthew 15:18) and soft towards him (Mark 8:17). Therefore, we follow Jesus from our hearts (Romans 6:17, Ephesians 6:6), and we may find them burning within us (Luke 24:32), as we connect with him from there (Ephesians 5:19).

Hands. It was probably the sixteenth-century reformer Martin Luther who said, 'We are saved by faith alone, but that faith is never alone.' It's a great summary of James 2:14-26, which argues that a true and alive faith in Jesus will result in good works, or, in the diagram's terms: Heart will lead to Hands. Indeed, James makes the argument, 'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world' (James 1:27). Pragmatically, this means using our bodies, aka Hands, to do godly things and not do ungodly things.

Head. Romans 12:2 says, 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.' We're encouraged to do this through growing in our knowledge of Jesus (2 Peter 3:18) by letting the Word of God dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16).

Huddle. There are fifty-seven 'one another' commands in the New Testament, such as loving one another (John 13:34), bearing with one another (Ephesians 4:2 ESV) and not lying to one another (Colossians 3:9). It's impossible to obey these in a silo, so we're also commanded to not give up meeting together (Hebrews 10:25). Indeed, Acts 2:42-47 paints an aspirational picture of a thoroughly committed and unified Huddle.

HOW DO I APPLY IT?

To grow in knowing, understanding and obeying Jesus in a Christian community, this three-phased circular process should help.

Review: Have a think about how you're doing at each H triangle. Ask those close to you how they think you are at each one. Try taking a week to log your practices under the four H triangles.

While it's perfectly normal to have one or two triangles stronger than the others, you've hopefully discovered some room for growth in the weaker ones. Perhaps one triangle doesn't even exist for you, and like a three-wheeled car, you're moving forward but not effectively.

Learn: Explore how you can grow the H you want to work on. The Knowing God: Divine Connections diagram on the following page will help with that. Ask others for their insights. Create a plan.

Practise: Put the plan into action, and then review again.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Draw four triangles proportionate to the size of how you think you are doing at each one. What stands out to you?

What weekly practice could enlarge your smallest triangle?

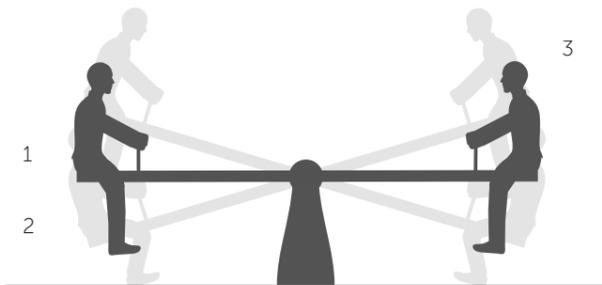
Who do you know who excels in each of the four Hs? Why do they excel in them?

GO FURTHER

To take a survey on your Heart, Head and Hands strengths check out wearemakingdisciples.com. (N.B. The Huddle is not distinct in this test but is incorporated into the other Hs.)

CHAPTER 18 RELATE, LISTEN AND THEN SHARE

THE FEEDBACK SEE-SAW CHRIS



SETTING THE SCENE

The Emperor's New Clothes, written by Hans Christian Andersen, finishes with the emperor walking proud in a procession before a whole town, completely naked. The problem? The emperor's clothes were made from a fabric that was supposedly only invisible to those who were unfit for office or unusually stupid.

The result? Everyone was afraid to give the emperor the feedback he desperately needed. When a child eventually points out that he's naked, and the whole town finally agrees, it's too late and the emperor carries on regardless.

We often dis-serve others by failing to give the critical feedback they need, usually out of fear. Conversely, we allow our blind spots to evolve if others are afraid to give us the feedback we need.

When I worked on my first media job, I was abruptly sat down by a senior journalist. For nearly half an hour she shredded my report to pieces, only eventually stopping when she saw tears well up in my eyes. My confidence was knocked for weeks, if not months.

By contrast, a fellow pastor once made me a coffee, asked how I was, and then gently brought up a couple of blind spots he'd seen in my preaching. It wasn't easy to hear, but I still heed those corrections today, and I'm a better leader as a result.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Giving and receiving honest feedback with those who you live and work with is essential to ensuring continued improvement. Without a culture of feedback, errors are repeated and frustrations are allowed to fester. The See-Saw diagram outlines a simple and memorable three-step process for giving effective feedback.

1. Relate. The see-saw starts flat. You (on the left), and the person or persons you are giving feedback to (on the right), are level. This must be the foundation of feedback: One human, created in the image of God, is speaking to another human(s), also created in the image of God. Too often feedback is given instantly and/or irritably, doing more damage than good.

2. Listen. The see-saw beam first lowers left on the pivot. You (on the left), bend your knees, to allow an elevated position to the person(s) you want to give feedback to. This is the most critical yet most forgotten stage. Before providing feedback, even if you have been directly asked to give it, first ask for the other person's perspective on the issue at hand.

3. Share. The see-saw beam now switches, and the right side lowers on the pivot. Having had their perspective listened to, the other person(s) is now more receptive to your perspective. Here is your opportunity to share those things that will ultimately strengthen that person(s).

After this three-step process, you're ready to repeat the process until the conversation is satisfactorily finished. Specifically, you Relate again, Listen to the other person's perspective, then Share your feedback appropriately, before repeating if necessary.

THINKING BIBLICALLY

To some extent we are all 'pleaseaholics'; we care about what others think of us, and so crave, in some measure, for them to be pleased with us. The root of this is good. What kind of person would want everyone to be displeased with them? Indeed, Paul said, 'I try to please everyone in every way' (1 Corinthians 10:33). However, this becomes a problem when this desire to please prevents us from taking valuable action, such as giving feedback. Therefore, the first hurdle to applying the Feedback See-Saw diagram is getting on the see-saw.

Knowing that appropriate feedback is a service to others (Proverbs 26:24-28, 27:6, 28:23, 29:5) helps us get onto the see-saw, break through our 'pleaseaholic' status and paradoxically say with Paul, 'If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ' (Galatians 1:10). Scripture also helps inform our approach in the three-step process.

1. Relate. When Paul wanted to confront Peter for the way he refused to eat with Gentiles, he 'oppose[d] him to his face, for what he did was very wrong' (Galatians 2:11 NLT). To relate well, we need to follow suit and, as a general rule for serious feedback, give it face-to-face.

When Jesus confronts Peter's denial on the shore of Galilee, he first cooks him a fish breakfast, before taking him to one side and raising the issue (John 21:9-17). Good leaders intuitively do the same; they ensure the basic needs of their followers are met before offering feedback.

2. Listen. Rushing straight into your feedback can make you look stupid: 'Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions' (Proverbs 18:2). By genuinely listening first, you may find there's a 'plank in your own eye' (Matthew 7:4) or a different perspective that you hadn't yet seen. No wonder Francis of Assisi prayed, 'O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek ... to be understood as to understand.'

3. Share. 'Wounds from a friend can be trusted' (Proverbs 27:6) and even desired because 'iron sharpens iron' (Proverbs 27:17). Therefore, by 'speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ' (Ephesians 4:15).

HOW DO I APPLY IT?

Once you're on the see-saw, it's a case of intelligently applying the see-saw process.

1. Relate. Seek to relate to the other person by affirming their value. Separate the behaviour or issue you want to address from them as a person; they are more than this mistake.

2. Listen. By raising the subject, but asking for the person's perspective first, helpful outcomes can follow, such as:

- The person raises their mistake, saving you the awkwardness of having to raise it yourself. It's amazing how aware people can be about the mistakes they make.
- You find you have misread the mistake and failed to appreciate mitigating circumstances.
- You discover you're somewhat to blame, and there's some helpful feedback for you to take on board.

It's important to apply active listening here, as outlined in the Passive Listening Curve diagram (see page 74). Once complete, like a see-saw, the conversation should naturally bounce back to you, and you're ready to share.

3. Share. This isn't your turn to let loose; it's time to gently and specifically feed back on the issue you want to address, so thinking beforehand about what you're going to say is helpful. This can obviously be updated to incorporate any new information you've gleaned. You may want to use the following framework: 'I now understand that you did w because of x. However, when you did w, it made me feel y. In the future I'd appreciate it if you did z.'

If you're giving more general feedback, it's obviously important to highlight the positives as well as the negatives. But beware of relying on the 'praise sandwich', where you cushion the issue with positives, as this can often camouflage the issue and cause confusion.

Unless feedback is encouraged by creating time and space for it to be shared, you can find yourself trapped in a positive feedback loop, much like the emperor in the story, in which no one feels at liberty to be honest with you.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What feedback have you received that has served you well?

How did you feel about it at the time? And now?

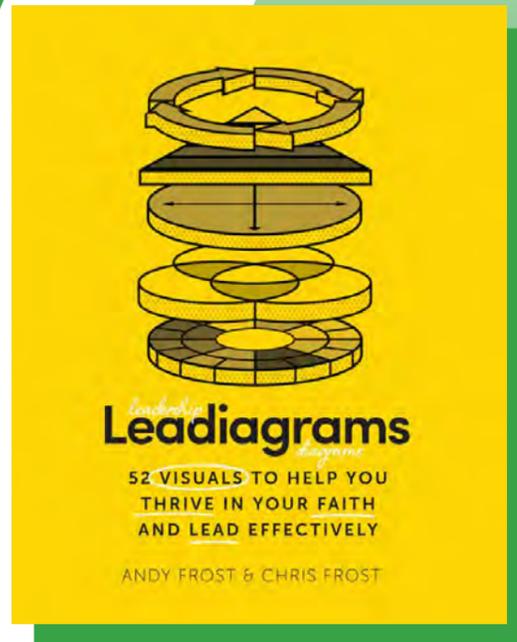
Is there someone you could serve by arranging to give them feedback using the See-Saw process?

GO FURTHER

Read *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* by Kerry Patterson.

Andy Frost @andythefrosty is the director of Share Jesus International, the chair of the London Mission Collective and joint CEO of Gather Movement. He has an MA in applied theology, has authored a number of books and presented the Jesus Series.

Chris Frost @christthefrosty is the lead elder at Gateway Church, Leeds. He serves leaders more widely as the UK team leader for ChristCentral churches. He has an MA in Mission and Leadership, an MSc in Senior Leadership and is a chartered manager.



LEADIAGRAMS

Andy Frost & Chris Frost

UK: 100 Movements Publishing, 2023
ISBN 978-1-955142-35-9 | pp.238, £14

Andy and Chris Frost introduced this new book at the Ekklesia Conference in March with very short, illustrated talks on leadership, which were excellent practical contributions to the event.

Many people are visual learners, but we can spend too much time submerged in a quagmire of words. This is a great leadership resource which is very accessible because each of the 52 chapters is based on a simple diagram. The brothers have put together their learning from many years of ministry experience and produced a book packed with 'big and memorable ideas to help you thrive in your faith and lead effectively' - as it says on the back cover.

More than half the diagrams are drawn from other sources, and it is great that these visual ideas have been put together in one book and shared more widely. There is a year's worth of material for a weekly dose of helpful learning. I have dipped in and read it in a short period, but it would be far better to set aside a time each week to read and properly digest just one chapter.

I look forward to taking more time to explore this great resource to help me grow further in terms of personal development and areas of leadership - the chapters are grouped together in sections on Leading Others, Leading Projects and Leading Church Life. I like the way each chapter gives a short illustrative scene-setter before explaining the big idea; then there is some biblical thinking followed by helpful ideas on how one might apply any lessons learned.

This has been well thought through and crafted into a helpful shape that presents clear ideas and encourages deeper reflection on different areas of leadership. I highly recommend it.

Reviewed by Rev Brian Harley, a United Reformed Church minister based on the Isle of Wight. Brian led the Group for Evangelism and Renewal within the URC (GEAR) for 20 years. He serves on the council of Evangelical Alliance and on the board of Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International (PRMI).



Ekklesia Conference - video recordings from 2023 and previous years can be accessed on the Share Jesus International YouTube Channel - www.youtube.com/@SJNews

Save the date for next year's conference:

Ekklesia 2024: 13 - 14 March 2024 at Westminster Chapel: www.sharejesusinternational.com/ekkleisia



IS THERE A BALM IN GILEAD?

Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman

GRACE PRATT MORRIS-CHAPMAN, METHODIST MISSION PARTNER IN UGANDA, CHALLENGES US, AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS A CHURCH, TO ENGAGE ACTIVELY WITH SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES AS PART OF OUR PATTERN OF DISCIPLESHIP IF WE ARE TO SEE OUR LIVES AND OUR CHURCHES TRANSFORMED.

One of the great malaises of the church is this strange tendency, gradually and subtly, to lose our fervour or passion. Slowly but steadily, as though somehow not in control of ourselves, we slip into some sort of stupor, all the while thinking that all is well. We become comfortable, self-assured and settled in our church life, lacking passion and, though appearing healthy, remain fruitless. We congratulate ourselves for the great accomplishments of our churches, for all the good we are doing and all the innovative styles of worship and mission we have produced and all the while we are dying within, running out of power and becoming

insignificant to the world around us. Is there a balm in Gilead for this sort of malaise? Churches are frantically investing time and resources in all kinds of remedies, balms which for a while soothe but offer no lasting solution.

In the book of Jeremiah, we read of how the people of Judah had gradually fallen into a state of apathy towards the Lord and his word. We read of the futility of the various solutions the people of God turned to in order to save themselves from the consequences of separation from the Lord. For a while these solutions worked, but ultimately they failed, for that which was troubling them had no cure. There was One to whom they could have turned in order to be restored, but they sought him not.

In Jeremiah 8 there is a heart-wrenching cry in response to the state in which the people of God were living - they had lost their passion, living as though all was well. The leaders who should have corrected the people treated "the wound of my people as though it were not serious" (Jeremiah 8:11). God's people had turned away from him who had done such wondrous things for

them out of his great love for them, and exchanged the life-giving covenant the Lord had made with them for the gods and the practices of the peoples among whom they lived. The book of Jeremiah speaks of the physical and spiritual consequences of their actions; they had set in motion the infliction of wounds for which they would find no remedy. The prophet's deep pain and sorrow, and indeed that of God too for these were his beloved people, is expressed in these words: 'Since my people are crushed, I am crushed; I mourn, and horror grips me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?' (Jeremiah 8: 21-22).

There was a balm (ointment) produced in Gilead which was renowned for its healing properties, but there was no source of healing or recovery for what was to come upon the people. So it is for the Church today: our present condition requires much more than the fancy dressings we have been treating ourselves with.

Scripture and church history are punctuated with breathtaking accounts

of certain moves of the Spirit of God which brought new life to the people of God, changing lives way beyond the borders of the places where these acts of divine grace took place. Think for a moment about the impact of the move of God through the Welsh Revivals, through the lives of John and Charles Wesley, the Azusa Street Revival of 1906-1908, and the East African revival of the 1930s. They all took place during chapters of the church's life when people had settled for having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. It is the particular role of the Spirit to invade our seasons of rot, decay and stupor, stirring us up again, leading us to rediscover our first love, granting us a renewed commitment and passion for the Lord.

A LIFE-GIVING GIFT

Some of the amazing gifts of the grace of God to his people are the disciplines of the Christian life - prayer, confession, worship, service, submission, fasting, silence and solitude, the study of Scripture, meditation and so on. The role of these disciplines in the disciple's life is to lead one into a way of life which centres firmly on being under the gaze of the Lord - under the transformative gaze of the Spirit. It is a way of life which yearns, above all, to dwell in the presence of the Lord and to be in constant communion with Him. This may seem impossible to some, or may be considered available only to a select few, but the truth is that all can live in close communion with the living Lord.

It is interesting to note that a key distinguishing feature of the lives of the people associated with the stories of the great revivals in church history is the role of the spiritual disciplines in their growth as disciples. Most especially, it is the fact that the disciplines were crucial in the enduring nature of the fruit they bore.

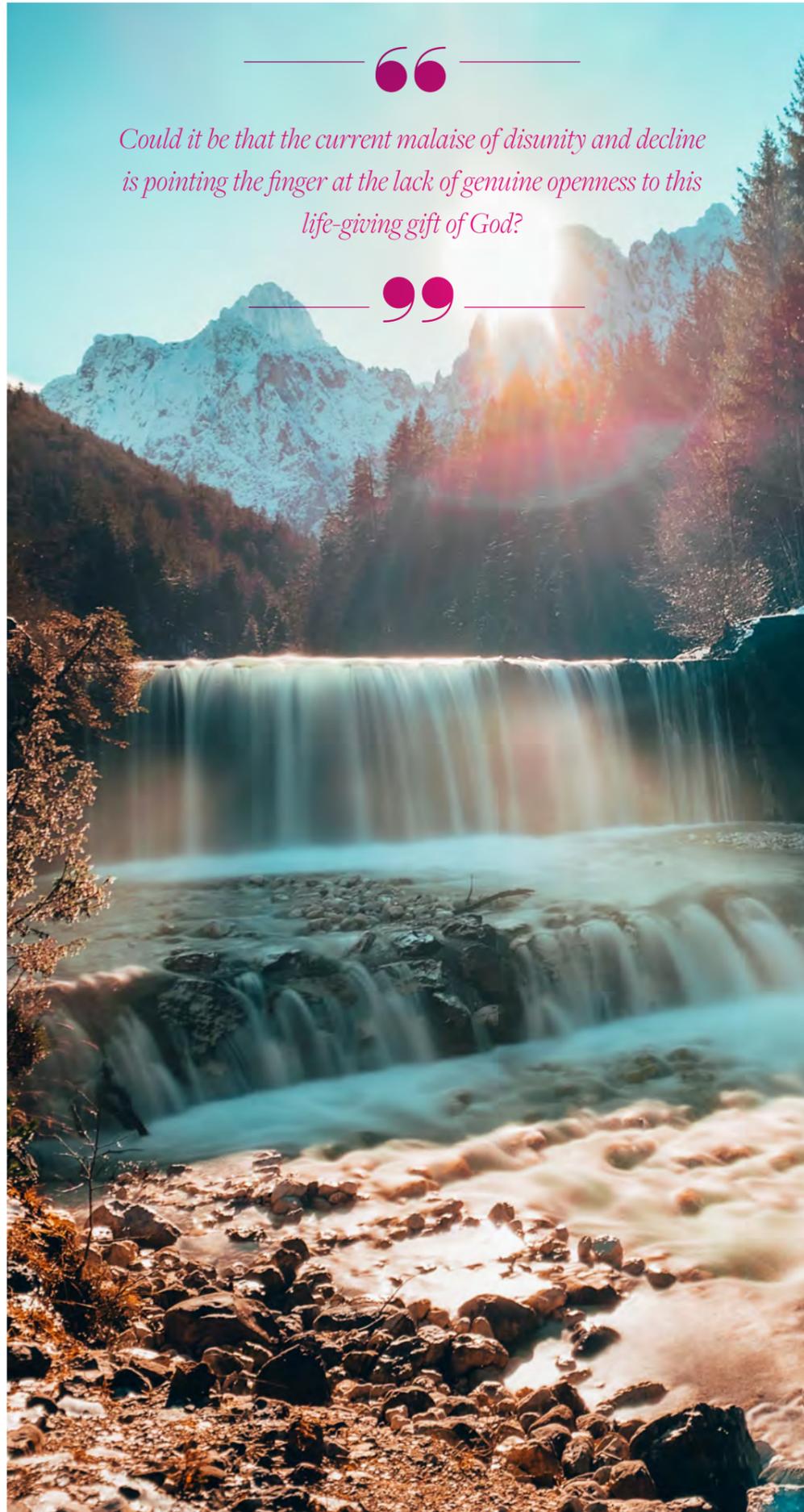
It is well documented that the atmosphere in which revivals have sprung up have been characterised by a pursuit of God, a raw yearning for God, a longing to be more like Christ Jesus and the desire to please him. These are exactly what the disciplines produce in the disciple. Under the guidance of the Spirit, (and

this is crucial, in that without the Spirit, the disciplines are useless - they have no power of their own) the disciplines produce an overwhelming awareness of the love of God, an acute awareness of the gravity of sin, prompting deep remorse and repentance, an insatiable hunger and thirst for God, driven by an unrestrained pursuit of and an ever-deepening love for the Lord. This is accompanied by the desire to serve his kingdom purpose wholeheartedly.

The purpose of the spiritual disciplines is the transformation of the disciple's whole life. To borrow the words of the Apostle Paul, it is the putting off of the 'old self' in order that we may become more and more like Christ Jesus, having our thinking, feelings, desires, priorities, hopes and dreams, (in fact all that we are) renewed, in order that we may grow increasingly in tune with the kingdom purposes of God. This is an ongoing process, a daily experience which requires the disciple's wholehearted surrender. It is quite clear from the stories of revival which have been told and retold that it is in this position of submission and surrender to God that revival is experienced.

The disciplines have the purpose of kindling 'the flame of sacred love' in the disciple's heart and in the life of churches, reinvigorating communities of believers and energising their witness. Thus, there is a unifying effect and a missional impact accompanying the transformative encounter with God through his Spirit.

Could it be that the current malaise of disunity and decline is pointing the finger at the lack of genuine openness to this life-giving gift of God? Could it be that the root of our growing insignificance in society has something to do with the fact that we have rejected the fountain of living water and been too busy digging our own cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:13)? Through the gracious gift of the disciplines of the spiritual life we experience that fresh bubbling spring of living water within which will refresh us personally, revive our churches and empower our witness (John 4:14).



“
Could it be that the current malaise of disunity and decline is pointing the finger at the lack of genuine openness to this life-giving gift of God?
 ”

UNWRAPPING THE GIFT

The life of the disciple involves the daily unwrapping of the riches of God's grace under the guidance of the Spirit. After Pentecost we read of the incredible acts of the Spirit through the apostles. The dramatic encounter with the Spirit begins the unfurling of their ministry. We read of beautiful unity, generosity, devotion to the Scriptures, teaching, prayer and fasting, the bold declaration of the gospel, the performing of miracles and the daily addition of new believers. Pentecost set them ablaze for such a world-changing purpose that, even after many millennia, their story is still bearing fruit.

So it was, with the 'greats' of the world-changing revivals which continue to inspire us today. It was by the infilling of the Spirit that they were enabled to be disciples of Christ and accomplish wondrous things in his name. They served the purpose of God in their day and we today are beneficiaries of their legacy.

We will never truly experience the fullness of all that God has purposed for us without the Holy Spirit. Our role as disciples is the daily discipline of submitting to the activity of the Spirit of God in our lives.

Could it be that the decline we see in the Church today is a result of the lack of openness and submission to the Spirit? Some may argue that the issue maybe more to do with the lack of effective biblical teaching and ineffective discipleship programmes. However, the fact remains that without the Holy Spirit, all our efforts, no matter how brilliant and well meaning, are lifeless, powerless and fruitless.

WHAT THEN SHALL WE DO?

Scripture assures that if we draw near to the Lord, he will in turn draw near to us. If we seek him with all our hearts and turn to him in repentance and faith there is no limit to what the Lord can do in and through us by his Spirit. The Lord in his grace has shown us how we can draw close to him; it is no secret, and it is a gift waiting to be unwrapped. Discipleship is an open invitation from the living Lord to each one of us to participate in his kingdom purposes.

Our Lord Jesus Christ modelled for us what it meant to be totally submitted to God and to desire that his kingdom comes and that his will is done. God has made his very presence available to us by his Spirit. All that remains for us to do is to be radically, ruthlessly open to him, to his word and his will. What comes out of that is in his hands, but we can be assured that it will be way beyond what we could ever imagine or comprehend.

Are we ready to see churches revived ... the gospel being preached with boldness, accompanied by miracles ... new communities of faith blossoming everywhere ...? May the Spirit of the Lord fall afresh on us and set us ablaze for his glory. May our hearts cry be:

*'Lord, send revival, start with me,
 For I am one of unclean lips
 And my eyes have seen the King
 Your glory I have glimpsed
 Send revival, start with me'
 (Matt Redman)*

Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman is a Local Preacher and Methodist Mission Partner working in Uganda. Grace is one of the guest speakers at the MET REVIVE National Gathering from 17-19 November 2023. For more information and to book, visit methodistevangelicals.org.uk/revive



○ BREATH OF LIFE

Elizabeth Ann Head

○ breath of life, come sweeping through us,
revive your Church with life and power;
○ breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,
and fit your Church to meet this hour.

○ wind of God, come, bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need;
then in your tenderness remake us,
revive, restore; for this we plead.

○ breath of love, come, breathe within us,
renewing thought and will and heart;
come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
revive your Church in every part.



Elizabeth Ann Head (Bessie Porter Head, 1850-1936)

Bible Study | Part 2 | WIND: EZEKIEL 37:1-14

IMAGES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Derek Balsdon

THIS IS THE SECOND OF A THREE-PART BIBLE STUDY ON IMAGES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Within the Bible, wind and breath symbolise God's Spirit. The Old Testament Hebrew word 'ruach', and the New Testament Greek word 'pneuma,' can be translated as breath, wind and spirit.

- Where in the Bible is God's Spirit symbolised by wind and/or breath?

A key Old Testament scripture is in the book of Ezekiel. It's all too easy to miss the awesomeness of this vision. As you read, try to imagine what the prophet saw, heard and felt, and reflect upon what catches your attention.

- Read Ezekiel 37:1-14.

Within Ezekiel's vision there are a number of stages which I invite you to consider.

First Stage: God's Spirit. It's all too easy to miss the significance of v. 1. Ezekiel believed that the hand and Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and gave him this vision. This vision was the awesome work of God's Spirit.

Prior to this, Ezekiel had promised God's people a change in their fortunes: new leadership, a restored land, rebuilt cities and many features of the Messianic era. But things didn't go well; in 586 BC Jerusalem had fallen, and many of the people were exiled in Babylonia. Into this bleak situation, this vision gave hope.

- Are there things in your own life, or church life, which appear hopeless? How does God increase your hope through this vision?

Second Stage: Dry Bones. The bones were so dry that they could never come to life by natural means. In v. 11, the Lord explained, 'these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say "our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off."' In v. 3, the Lord asked: 'Son of man, can these bones live?' Even though God was referring to his Old Testament people, we can also apply this to Christians and churches today.

- Concerning your church, if God asked you, 'Can these bones live?' how would you respond?
- What do you make of Ezekiel's reply, 'O Sovereign Lord, you alone know'?

I think that Ezekiel answered very wisely. He didn't deny God's ability, but perhaps lacked faith. He recognised that the Lord is sovereign, and that he can do whatever he wants to do. 'For nothing is impossible with God' (Luke 1:37). If God can transform a valley of very dry bones into a vast army, then he can transform any dry congregation into a flourishing Body of Christ - if the wind of the Spirit is allowed to blow upon us afresh.

If you are feeling spiritually dry, if the Lord asked you, "Can your dry bones live?" how would you respond? You could reply: "O Sovereign Lord, I believe that you can bring new life to my life." MET's fresh focus is on revival; the reviving breath of God's Spirit can enable us to be a very active part of his vast army.

Stage Three: Bones into Bodies. The Lord instructed Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones: 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.' In essence this was preaching: proclaiming the word of God. God has always required that his people should listen to, and obey, his word.

- How well are you and your church doing at hearing and obeying 'the word of the Lord'?

If we are not hearing and obeying 'the word of the Lord', then we can't expect the wind of God's Spirit to be blowing through our lives and ministries. If we want God's Spirit to be breathing abundant life into us, we need to be listening to God's word, and acting upon it.

The Lord's ultimate aim comes through in v. 6, 'Then you will know that I am the Lord.' His main purpose is not to raise up a vast army of Christians, but to enable each one of us to know him. In Ephesians 1:17, Paul prayed that God 'may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.' Even though we may want more Holy Spirit to increase our effectiveness in ministry, his most important work is enabling us to know him. Closer intimacy with the Lord should result in greater fruitfulness, yet knowing him more deeply should be our main aim.

In vv. 7-8, as Ezekiel prophesied, amazing things began to happen; the bones became bodies! In v. 6 the Lord had promised to breathe into the bodies and that they would come to life, but v. 8 ends, 'but there was no breath in them.' Something more than his preaching was needed: prayer. Ezekiel continued to listen, and the Lord said: "Prophesy to the breath; ... Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live." Ezekiel was to invoke breath into the bodies.

Stage Four: Breath into Bodies. V. 10: 'So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.' This has similarities to Genesis 2:7 where God formed a man from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. In this vision, what had resembled a battlefield strewn with the bones of fallen soldiers, became a vast army; what an awesome transformation! What preaching by itself failed to achieve, prayer made a reality.



- When have you witnessed prayer and preaching coming together with amazing results?

In 1807, the vision for the first Mow Cop Camp Meeting was to pray for God to move in power. As people gathered, they did what Ezekiel did; they prayed to God and preached his word. Many were converted, and Primitive Methodism was born. Jesus likened the Spirit to the wind and said to Nicodemus: 'You must be born again. The wind blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit' (John 3:7-8). Even though the wind is invisible, we can feel it, and even though God's Spirit is invisible, we can feel his gentle presence and great power. Each one of us can enjoy new birth and new life through the life-giving, life-enhancing, breath of God's Spirit.

In March 2022, the Revd Dr Bill and Mrs Laura Phares came from the USA to pray at key Methodist sites across the UK. When we visited Mow Cop, the wind was blowing, and it felt like God was providing a visual aid as we prayed for Holy Spirit to blow afresh. Like Ezekiel, Bill prayed prophetically for the wind of God's Spirit to breathe new life. To watch a video of Bill at Pill, Avonmouth, visit methodistevangelicals.org.uk/stir-the-fire-video. In February 2023, Asbury University in Kentucky experienced God's Spirit blowing in greater power. That didn't just happen. The college encourages its students to attend chapel 3 times a week for praise, prayer and preaching. And in response, God's Spirit blew in greater power and many young lives were transformed.

Stage Five: The Interpretation. During the vision, I can't imagine that Ezekiel had chance to think about what it meant. In vv. 11-14, the Lord gave the interpretation. He explained that the bones symbolised the Jewish nation, who thought that their bones were dried up and that their hope was gone. Having been in exile in Babylonia for several years must have meant that they felt so cut off from the land of Israel, from Jerusalem, and from all the worship and sacrifices at their temple. They must have felt more 'cut off' than we did during the Covid pandemic.

After prophesying to the bones and to the breath, Ezekiel had to prophesy to the demoralised people.

- Re-read Ezekiel 37:11-14.
- Into what appear to be hopeless situations, how does God give hope?

Opening up their graves spoke of God giving life to the dead. He also spoke of bringing them back from the lands they had been scattered across, which they would have understood to mean bringing them back to Israel. In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God promised that if his people turned back to him, he would forgive them and heal their land; through this vision God is promising to heal their land. In v. 13 and again in v. 14, the Lord spoke of them knowing him. Jesus Christ came, lived and rose again, and gave his Spirit so that we can know him.

Even though we have reached the end of Ezekiel's Vision, we need to consider further fulfilment of this prophetic message.

Stage Six: Post Easter. Ezekiel's vision was partially fulfilled on the evening of the first Easter Sunday when the risen Jesus appeared to his followers, breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20:19-22). It was also partially fulfilled 50 days later when they experienced something like wind and fire, and were 'all filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:1-4). At Pentecost, the Lord put his Spirit into the followers of Jesus and brought them to life, and the early church grew into a vast army taking the Good News of Jesus Christ across the world. In this 21st century, Ezekiel's vision is also being partially fulfilled through us.

Stage Seven: 'I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.' This is the key stage, and resonates with MET's fresh focus on revival: 'Lord, send revival, and begin with me'.

- In what ways have you experienced the breath of God's Spirit? In what ways would you like to experience God's life-giving Spirit?

The sovereign Lord wants to fill every human being with his Spirit, so that we have life - not physical life, but abundant spiritual life. That is not the same as an easy life, or a long life, but it's a Spirit-filled life. It is a life of knowing Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit; with us, within us and working through us. No matter how hopeless we may feel our situation is, may we experience the wind of God's Spirit breathing into us abundant spiritual life. As individuals and as churches, may our prayer be 'Holy Spirit, revive me'. The sovereign Lord declares: 'I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.' Amen!

The Revd Derek Balsdon served as the MET Development Worker from 2018 - 2022. He is an accredited minister with the Global Methodist Church, and is currently offering preaching and healing ministries. Derek and his wife Hilary live in Congleton, are involved at Cross Street, their local Pentecostal Church, and are open to God's future plans for them. Hilary will lead worship at MET's November conference: REVIVE (see methodistevangelicals.org.uk/revive for more info and to book).



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Rev Gareth Higgs	Superintendent Minister, Plymouth Methodist Central Hall
Mrs Liz Miller	Local Preacher in the Launceston Area Circuit



For further details and to book go to
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Grace is a Local Preacher and Methodist Mission Partner working in Uganda.

REV DR DAVID HULL

Chair of Methodist Evangelicals Together and Lead Pastor of Freedom Church, Bristol.



Book online at methodistevangelicals.org.uk/revive
or complete form enclosed

CULTURAL DISCIPLESHIP AND THE TOTAL CLAIMS OF CHRIST

Joseph Boot

APOLOGIST AND PHILOSOPHER JOSEPH BOOT EXPLAINS THE INESCAPABLE NATURE OF DISCIPLESHIP, AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE FORMATION OF CULTURE.

THE INEVITABILITY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is a common theme in evangelicalism. The word itself certainly has a biblical provenance, with Christ himself endorsing and participating in the discipling relationship with twelve close followers. Discipleship was entrusted to the church in our Lord's last incarnate words of the Great Commission, to 'make disciples of all the nations' (Matthew 28:19). Many believers throughout history have discerned a multiplicity of truths and implications from the biblical references to discipleship. And while discipleship is typically depicted as a positive practice or relationship, we also recognize the importance of doing it well - we want to be disciplined in a certain direction, by a person whose life, character, and worldview align with what we want for ourselves. And when we speak of doing

anything well, we are acknowledging the possibility of doing it poorly. Another way to put this is that discipleship is an inescapable concept. All of us are being actively disciplined at every moment by someone; it only remains to be established whether that discipleship process is inclined in a God-honouring, or a God-dishonouring direction.

For nearly two decades, I've been privileged to serve as President of the Ezra Institute, an evangelical think-tank and worldview training organization I founded based on the observation that opposition and objection against the Christian faith were increasingly being framed in cultural, civilizational, and political terms. The Ezra Institute was envisioned as a biblical response to a deep crisis in Western culture that had decisively impacted the church; a crisis rooted in the widespread loss of a comprehensive gospel, a distinctly scriptural worldview, and ultimately a failure to recognize the religious root of all human life and thought - from education and law, to politics, medicine, art and science. In short, godless discipleship has been doing its work for several generations, and such a loss requires the constructive recovery

of a full-orbed gospel and cultural apologetic capable of confronting systematic unbelief with systematic belief in every sphere of life.

GRASSROOTS REFORMATION

Consequently, from its founding, the Ezra Institute has operated from the foundational assertion that Christ-centred cultural reformation, beginning with God's own people, is an urgent necessity in our age, because the organs and institutions of Western cultural life have been thoroughly saturated by humanistic and increasingly pagan assumptions. These assumptions lie at the roots of all human actions and institutions, and like roots they are often hidden underground, unspoken and sometimes even unconsciously held, yet they nourish and shape all of our outward activities. In our time, a resurgence of pagan and humanistic religious presuppositions has steadily brought about efforts to redefine the norms of our cultural institutions, unleashing real evils, and enchaining Western society in a radical opposition to Christ and the freedom and hope brought by the gospel.

As just one ready example, consider the increasingly prominent question of human sexuality. Our perspective on this question stems from the way that we answer more basic questions, such as 'what is a human being?' If we believe that human beings are the result of billions of years of random mutation, adaptation and evolutionary processes, then that belief will find expression in the way that we understand ourselves, our desires, and our responsibilities towards our fellow man. If, on the other hand, human beings are a unique creation of a loving and personal God, made in his image and intended to be in a covenantal relationship with him, then we will answer those same questions about ethics, responsibilities, and sexual relationships in a very different way from the evolutionist.

FOR THE CHURCH

The story of the Ezra Institute's founding and ongoing activity must include the unpleasant reality that the Christian church herself has not escaped the influence of resurgent humanism and paganism in our secularized society and has often been complicit in advancing, by silence or surrender, slavery to sin - enabling unrighteous laws, corrupted education, sinful political practices, evil social behaviour, debased art and a moribund cultural direction to persist. The theologically compromised urge to synthesize Christianity with other

worldviews has led to a pervasive privatization and truncation of the gospel so that the witness of the church to the world-renewing reign of Christ and his kingdom has been largely eclipsed. The result has been a radical de-Christianization of culture and the predictable decline of our civilization. This has brought the Western world to a widely acknowledged point of existential confusion, spiritual rootlessness and socio-political inanity.

We should not be surprised by this state of affairs. From the standpoint of scriptural revelation, truly Christian thinking must be concerned first and foremost with Jesus Christ, following him, and having his Word dwell and abide in us by his Spirit. But submitting oneself to being a humble follower doesn't come easily to anyone - especially professional thinkers. The human inclination is always toward autonomy, preferring to live the illusion that we can legislate for ourselves. We are an age living in rebellion, and to be a king without a country in the rootless despair of defiance seems preferable than submission to a sovereign Lord. Being a professing Christian in the church does not entirely remove the temptation or inclination to strike out alone and follow our own desires, living by our own priorities and setting to one side the awesome and all-consuming

call to be a disciple of Christ; to come and die in order to truly live. Yet this is precisely what Christ calls us to. Being a 'living sacrifice' sounds excruciating and involves a transformation of the mind, which implies the pain and suffering of rejection by a world conformed, in the final analysis, to a very different spirit. But the divine midwife insists this is the only way. We must be reborn, transformed and given a new heart, a new mind.

As Christians we may claim to follow Christ, but the lifelong challenge in developing a truly Christian mindset requires regularly asking ourselves if we have followed him far enough. Have we been to the Jordan and seen the dove descending, but hung back from the mountain to avoid his exposition of the law and radical insistence that only those who teach that law can be great in the Kingdom? Have we fallen asleep in pious satisfaction at the gates of Gethsemane, or lingered from a safe distance at Golgotha, never making it to the slopes of Olivet or to the Upper Room in Jerusalem with the dancing flames of fire? Is it possible that we are not yet Christian enough? It is all too easy to follow Christ only as far as is convenient, till the tarrying is just too tiring. If we only follow him part-way, then we are uninvolved in key aspects of the drama and miss the significance of God's full act in history.



Truly Christian thinking must be concerned first and foremost with Jesus Christ, following him, and having his Word dwell and abide in us by his Spirit.



In a hostile context, the temptation is to follow him just as far as culture and fine feeling permits. When the storm rises and dread grips us is precisely the time we are called to step out of the boat and walk upon the Word - despite the wind and waves of the world's antagonism. We must not suddenly become hard of hearing. And if we will not hear that Word over the inimical clamour of idolatry, we certainly cannot then speak it. If our cultural moment is allowed to determine how far we follow Christ, then we cannot follow him at all. We may perhaps hear hosannas from a distance, but we won't be found stammering with the doubter, 'My Lord and my God!' We may even be permitted by our age to stand near the wooden cross of a brave martyr or a moral teacher, but not upon the mountain of ascension with the ruler of the kings of the earth.

The entire work of Christ in all his offices must become contemporaneous with us if we would truly be transformed by the renewing of our minds. It is not sufficient to appreciate Christ washing Simon Peter's feet at the last supper as a model of service if we refuse to see him, let alone join him, where the bloodied Stephen saw him - exalted in heavenly places, standing up from his seat of total authority at God's right hand. Unambiguously, we must see him as priest on the road to Calvary, but we must also recognize him on the footpath to Emmaus as resurrected Lord, the gardener of creation among Arimathea's roses, if we are to truly follow Christ and know the renewal of our minds.

GOSPEL CULTURE

The vision of the Ezra Institute is thus a vision for cultural reformation. Through a distinctly Christian philosophy, cultural apologetic, and biblical worldview teaching, we are working to bring all human thought and action under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and his Word, re-forming a comprehensive faith that applies to all of life, recovering and exploring the scriptural framework of a Christian mind and social order.

Jesus called us to disciple the nations in everything that he had commanded: an all-encompassing, world-changing discipleship. At the Ezra Institute we refer to this as gospel culture. Culture

is properly understood as the public manifestation of the worship of a people, or externalized religion. It is the concrete outworking of what any society believes is the ultimate origin, purpose and meaning of life, expressed in laws, arts, education, medicine, economics, church, farming, and many other areas of life.

The expression 'gospel culture' is a recognition that there is a particular vision of culture implicit in the Christian gospel—indeed, the gospel is a culture, because it is centred on the worship of the living God, through Jesus Christ, and the enthronement of Christ as Lord over the heart, mind, soul and strength of every believer. That the gospel forms a new culture is thus an inescapable deduction from the meaning of both terms. If culture is the public expression of the worship of a people, and the gospel restores man to true worship (i.e. of the Creator, not the creation), then the gospel restores man to true culture.

Paul tells us in Romans 1 that in the final analysis there are only two types of worship. The worship of the creator (Christ), or the worship of the creature (something created). When a person turns to the Lord Jesus in repentance and faith they are made new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17), their hearts being redirected towards true worship. This radical redirection necessarily means the re-creation of true culture, which the Bible calls the kingdom of God. Both the challenge and the joy of being a Christian is that we are inescapably part of this gospel culture and, though against stiff spiritual opposition, we have the privilege of being called by the Lord to be co-workers in the reconciliation of all things to God, '...for from him and through him and to him are all things...' (Romans 11:36).

INFORMING FAITH

To this end we work to equip current and emerging Christian cultural leaders with a biblical worldview, Christian philosophy and cultural apologetics studies through residential training programmes and print and digital resources.

Our aim is that God's kingdom people become a reservoir of strength out of which successive generations of church

and cultural leaders will emerge, able to formulate, articulate and credibly defend a truly scriptural view of life as the sole source of truth, freedom and beauty, thereby shaping the future to the glory of God (Philippians 1:7; Colossians 1:15-20).

The accommodation of the Christian mind to the ever-changing whims of society takes the bread whose flour is eternal and reduces it to play dough for children, devoid of nutritional value and molded to the petty preferences of a superficial and malnourished generation. But Christ will not be reduced to a part-time waiter, satisfied with bringing out whatever the customer demands. Neither is the baker answerable to the dough; the Bread of Life is indeed available without money, but not without cost, and only on his terms.

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JESUS, ALL FOR JESUS

Jenifer Atkinson & Robin Mark

Jesus, all for Jesus;
All I am and have and ever hope to be.
Jesus, all for Jesus;
All I am and have and ever hope to be.

All of my ambitions, hopes and plans,
I surrender these into your hands.
All of my ambitions, hopes and plans
I surrender these into your hands.

*For its only in your will that I am free
For its only in your will that I am free.*

DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION IN THE WESLEYAN SPIRIT

Phil Meadows

“*Later in life, Wesley wrestled with a key missiological question: If the Christian gospel is the good news that every human being was made to hear, then why has Christianity made such slow progress around the world? His conclusion is startlingly simple, yet profoundly challenging. ‘The grand stumbling block’ to the spread of the gospel, he says, is ‘the lives of Christians’.*”

PHIL MEADOWS EXPLORES INSIGHTS FROM OUR WESLEYAN HERITAGE FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MISSION: AN ACADEMIC PAPER, COMMISSIONED BY MET IN OUR SERIES TO MARK THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TURNAROUND PLAN OF THE 1820 LIVERPOOL CONFERENCE.

There have been a number of unfolding and overlapping shifts in recent Western thinking about mission. First, the dominant understanding of mission as sending people overseas to pre-Christian cultures has been overshadowed by the need for missionary activity in our own emerging post-Christian context. The ‘Gospel and Our Culture’ movement has helped the church understand the Western world as a mission field, to which all the principles of cross-cultural mission can be applied.¹ A second shift has liberated the whole idea of mission from bondage to the inherited structures of the church. The ‘Missional Church’ movement has sought to address the challenge of domestic mission by letting the principles of cross-cultural engagement shape the development of culturally and contextually relevant expressions.² A third shift, which is presently gaining momentum, refocuses our attention from missional ecclesiology to mission spirituality, and makes authentic discipleship the heart of missional engagement.³

1. See George Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, *The Church Between Gospel and Culture* (Eerdmans, 1996).
2. See Darrell Guder et al, *Missional Church* (Eerdmans, 1998), and Church of England, *Mission Shaped Church* (Church House, 2004).
3. See Roger Helland and Leonard Hjalmanson, *Missional Spirituality* (IVP, 2011). Alan and Debra Hirsch have claimed that ‘discipleship has become

From this perspective, it is not ‘churches’ but ‘people’ that participate in the mission of God. The world is not evangelised by structures, but by Spirit-filled and Jesus-shaped disciples who love God and neighbour. The aim of this paper is to survey some resources of Wesleyan theology and spirituality for points of contact with this evolving conversation about missional discipleship and its significance for the future of the Wesleyan movement today.

THE MISSION OF GOD

Neither Wesley, nor the early Methodist preachers, use the terminology of ‘mission’ as such, but they do speak about ‘the work of God’ and about being co-workers with God. This more directly biblical language perfectly captures the essence of the *missio Dei* as the activity of God in the world, and our participation in it. For Wesley, the work of God is fundamentally what God does to lead humanity through the whole way of salvation; by setting us free from sin, filling us with the divine life, and renewing us in holy love. There are two ‘grand branches’ to this work. On the one hand, there is the work that God has done for us in Christ, to forgive our sins and bring us into right relationship with the Father (i.e. justifying grace). On the other hand, there is the work that God does in us through the Spirit, setting us free from the power of sin, and conforming us to the likeness of Christ (i.e. sanctifying grace). The Spirit works preveniently in the hearts of all people, and plants an inner restlessness that can only be satisfied by this life-transforming work of God.

a frontier issue for the people of God at this time in history’ (*Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship* (Baker, 2010), 23.

Through this divine initiative, we are enabled to be co-workers with God in our own salvation and in the salvation of others.⁴ First, we become co-workers with God as recipients of his mission, when we are caught up in the missional flow of God’s prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace. We are invited to ‘work out’ our own salvation, as the Spirit works in us ‘to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose’.⁵ Second, we are co-workers with God as participants in his mission, when the love and grace we have received reaches out to others in a life of witness and service. ‘For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do’.⁶ Wesley says, all ‘the children of God are ‘workers together with God’, in every good thought, or word, or action’.⁷ Third, those who are called to missional leadership,

4. Philip Meadows, ‘Entering the Divine Embrace: Towards an Ancient-Future Wesleyan Theology of Evangelism’, *Wesleyan Methodist Studies*, 3 (2011), 3-30.
5. Philippians 2:12. See John Wesley, Sermon 85, ‘On Working Out Our Own Salvation’, in: *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 3 (Abingdon, 1976–). Hereafter, BCE.
6. Ephesians 2:10. BCE 3, Sermon 98, ‘On Visiting the Sick,’ ¶12.
7. BCE 3, Sermon 72, ‘Of Evil Angels’, §11:9.

become ‘co-workers in God’s service’, through the activity of sowing, planting and watering the gospel in people’s lives.⁸ The early Methodist preacher-pioneers were frequently observed to have ‘the work of God at heart’, which overflowed in a zeal for the work of God in the hearts of others.⁹

MISSION SPIRITUALITY

Later in life, Wesley wrestled with a key missiological question: If the Christian gospel is the good news that every human being was made to hear, then why has Christianity made such slow progress around the world? His conclusion is startlingly simple, yet profoundly challenging: ‘The grand stumbling block’ to the spread of the gospel, he says, is ‘the lives of Christians’. He observes that the generality of those who call themselves Christians are not living proof of the gospel; since they lack the ‘power of religion’ in their hearts, and fail to embody the beauty of holiness in their lives. For Wesley, God’s chosen medium

8. 1 Corinthians 3:5-9
9. 2 Corinthians 6:1. See Philip Meadows, ‘Mission Spirituality in The Early Methodist Preachers’, in: Robert Webster, *Perfecting Perfection* (Wipf & Stock, 2015).

for the general spread of the gospel is the witness of ordinary people whose lives are made extraordinary by the holy love of God and neighbour. If the church would recover its vocation to be a holy people, non-Christians would ‘look upon them with other eyes, and begin to give attention to their words’. The ‘holy lives of Christians will be an argument they will not know how to resist’.¹⁰

Wesley narrates the origins and growth of Methodism to illustrate his point. From the gathering of a few young men in a ‘holy club’ at Oxford University, and starting a few small ‘societies’, there emerged a growing movement that would spread all around Great Britain, Ireland and America. The work of God began with a ‘mustard seed’ of hunger for God, that motivated a pursuit of holiness, and led to the experience of evangelical conversion and growth in grace. This seed then spread into ‘a large tree, and put forth great branches’; as others were invited onto the journey of holiness, and became living proof of the gospel in their own lives. Although Wesley saw the work of God ‘breaking

10. BCE 2, Sermon 63, ‘The General Spread of the Gospel’, ¶121.

out' in a 'shower' or 'torrent of grace' during seasons of revival, he concludes that 'in general...the kingdom of God 'will silently increase, wherever it is set up, and spread from heart to heart, from house to house, from town to town, from one kingdom to another'.¹¹

'Mission spirituality' has been defined as the work of God to draw all people to himself, in order to transform hearts and lives, then send them out as co-workers and contagious witnesses in the world.¹² From a Wesleyan perspective, mission spirituality has its source in the conscious experience of God's justifying and sanctifying grace, and is expressed in a way of life that is missional by nature. This inner wellspring of holy love overflows in the missional love of neighbour, motivated by a zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Michael Collins Reilly has helpfully concluded that 'all Christian spirituality must, in one way or another, be for mission'.¹³

MISSIONAL CHURCH

John Wesley left the Methodist movement with a cautionary prognosis about its future. He said, 'I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid that they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this will undoubtedly be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out'.¹⁴ Many suspect that this should now be taken as a diagnosis of contemporary Methodism, evidenced by a failure to reproduce the founding charisms which gave it birth.¹⁵ Churches may languish because they have invested more in the form of religion than the power of godliness; and rendered themselves impotent for renewal.

Reflecting on the purpose of church structure, Wesley asked, 'What is the end of all ecclesiastical order? Is it not

to bring souls from the power of Satan to God, and to build them up in His fear and love. Order, then, is so far valuable as it answers these ends; and if it answers them not, it is worth nothing'.¹⁶ Wesley adopted a pioneering approach to forms and structures; in which the true test of authenticity is fruitfulness in discipleship. I would argue that there is a difference between pioneering and pragmatic stances towards church structure.¹⁷ On the one hand, a pioneering approach begins with practices of disciple-making, and then allows effective structure to emerge providentially. The pioneers of early Methodism did not set out to plant societies that could make disciples, but to 'plant the gospel' and make disciples who needed, longed for, and gathered themselves into empowering community. On the other hand, a pragmatic approach begins with the business of revising structures in order to renew discipleship, and this is often done by imitating successful churches. Ironically, these models of 'success' have typically flourished through pioneering approaches to mission: creating and adapting structures to keep up with what God was doing providentially in their midst. In an attempt to reproduce this success, however, we tend to exchange a pioneering spirit for pragmatic solutions, by mimicking structures rather than the mission spirituality from which they arose. The danger with such pragmatism lies in reproducing new forms of nominalism, no matter how scientifically proven or culturally relevant they may be.

From this perspective, the way we 'do church' is to be valued only insofar as it functions as a means of grace, through which we become co-workers with God. If we invest disproportionately in the form of religion, we end up with power failure. If we invest extravagantly in the power of godliness, however, we are more likely to end up discipleship movement and church renewal.

11. Ibid, ¶17.

12. Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (Rome, Libreria Editrice Vaticana: 1990), ¶190.

13. Michael Collins Reilly, *Spirituality for Mission* (Mayknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978), 237.

14. Works 13:320. 'Thoughts Upon Methodism'.

15. See Scott Kisker, *Mainline of Methodist* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2008), ch.1.

16. John Telford, *The Letters of John Wesley* (Epworth Press, 1931), 2:76. Hereafter, Letters.

17. Philip Meadows, "Embodying Conversion," in: Kenneth Collins & John Tyson (Eds), *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001). In this chapter, I use Wesley's language of "prudential" rather than "pioneering" approaches, but the meaning is the same.



MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP

It is widely argued that mainline Methodism has been pre-occupied with maintaining structures rather than making disciples, and needs to recover its identity as a missional movement.¹⁸ On the one hand, the need to preserve denominational structures has made managerial competence an indispensable quality. On the other hand, the desire to preserve flagging membership has often turned pastoral ministry into a mixture of personal therapy and palliative care. Either way, holy living has been traded for cheap grace, and has concealed the radical demands of the gospel on daily life. We have tended to settle for spiritually impoverished lives, with an anaemic sense of God's presence, and little expectation of his power to transform.

Even where churches have tried to be more missional, they can end up repeating the same mistakes in new ways. We manage outreach programmes, relevant worship and fresh expressions without addressing the underlying nominalism and practical atheism that plagues ordinary Christian life. Or we run membership courses and discipleship programmes as quick fixes for renewing the church and trying to increase our confidence in the gospel. Examining the nature of early Methodism as a mission movement reminds us that discipleship is more caught than taught. It starts on the ground with ordinary people, desperate for God, who will do whatever it takes to become truly Jesus-shaped and Spirit-filled Christians. It grows when such people gather together in small groups, to help one another in the pursuit of holiness. And it spreads, as God keeps his promises, and grace abounds from heart to heart.¹⁹ 'Indeed, this I always observe,' says Wesley, that 'wherever a work of sanctification breaks out, the whole work of God prospers. Some are convinced of sin, others justified, and all stirred up to greater earnestness for salvation'.²⁰

18. See George Hunter, *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2011), and Gil Rendle, *Back to Zero: The Search to Rediscover the Methodist Movement* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2011).

19. See Steve Addison, *Movements that Change the World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011).

20. Works 4:56. Journal, 5 Aug 1775.

Cultivating the spirit of a movement, therefore, will mean raising up leaders who have a greater passion for making disciples than maintaining structures. Generally speaking, this kind of passion comes from leaders who are disciples themselves, and who delight in opportunities to mentor others in the way of Jesus.

MISSIONAL FORMATION

If mission is ultimately a spiritual issue, then spiritual formation for mission is the primary challenge. Drawing the threads of this paper together, we can identify four principles for developing the spiritual life of missional disciples in the hope of promoting a discipleship movement. It is not just each ingredient that is important, but the logic of disciple-making that exists between them.²¹

1. Seeking Holiness

Wesley claimed that God had raised up the Methodist movement 'to spread scriptural holiness over the land'.²² Further, he believed that the goal of 'Christian perfection' was the 'grand depositum' which God had given them to proclaim.²³ For Wesley, 'scripture perfection' can be defined as 'pure love filling the heart and governing all our words and actions'; or becoming like Jesus in heart and life.²⁴ Methodists are not those who have arrived at this goal, but 'any who sincerely follow after what they know they have not yet attained'.²⁵ Disciple-making leadership is not just about 'feeding the flock', but making them hungry for more of God. When those who live without God come into contact with a people whose lives are in the process of becoming radiant with the beauty of holiness, Wesley believed the truth of the gospel would be not only credible but attractive and compelling.²⁶ Becoming captivated by the vision of perfect love, as the promise

21. For a more detailed analysis, see Philip Meadows, *The Wesleyan DNA of Discipleship* (Grove, 2013). These represent some of the core principles of the Inspire Movement (<https://inspiremovement.org>).

22. Works 8:326. 'Minutes of Several Occasions'.

23. Letters 8:238. John Wesley, Letter to Robert Carr Brackenbury, September 1790.

24. Works 11:469.

25. Works 8:384.

26. BCE 1, Sermon 24, 'Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: Discourse 4', §IV:1-3.

of a Jesus-shaped and Spirit-filled life, is what motivates the pursuit of holiness.

2. Spiritual Discipline

Wesley encouraged the early Methodists to pursue scriptural holiness through taking up the practices of spiritual discipline as 'means of grace', by which our life-transforming communion with God is entered and deepened.²⁷ These means include 'works of piety'; such as prayer, searching the Scriptures, participating in the Lord's Supper, and fasting or abstinence. They also include 'works of mercy'; which include caring for others in body, such as visiting the sick, and in soul, by 'awakening sinners' and 'contributing in any manner to the saving of souls from death'.²⁸ Disciple-making leadership is not just about 'doing ministry' for others, but also equipping disciples for a life of intimacy with Jesus, and responsiveness to his Spirit in daily life. As missional practices, works of piety and mercy involve us in a movement of divine grace that fills, transforms and overflows our lives with love of God and neighbour. They are also called 'good works' insofar as we become co-workers with God through them: in working out our own salvation and working for the salvation of others.

3. Sharing Fellowship

It takes deep spiritual friendships to help us maintain a life of spiritual discipline, and keep us intentional about the pursuit of holiness. Wesley taught the early Methodists that there was no such thing as 'solitary Christianity' because the inevitability of spiritual dissipation, the temptation to quit and the deceitfulness of the human heart, are all too great to overcome by ourselves.²⁹ The core purpose of Methodist society was 'to watch over one another in love',³⁰ so they might 'help each other to work out their salvation'.³¹ The societies were subdivided into small groups of around twelve people called 'class meetings',³² who held one another accountable, and helped one another respond more faithfully to the movements of divine

27. BCE 1, Sermon 16, 'The Means of Grace'.

28. BCE 2, Sermon 43, 'The Scripture Way of Salvation', §III:10.

29. Works 14:437.

30. Hebrews 13:17.

31. Philippians 2:12.

32. Works 8:269f.

grace. Those who hungered for greater intimacy and spiritual maturity were gathered into even smaller groups of three or more, called 'bands', arranged by age and sex.³³ Disciple-making leadership is not just about 'attracting crowds', but investing in the formation of deep spiritual friendships, a few at a time, for the sake of deep and lasting growth. As missional practices, mutual accountability and group spiritual direction make us more attentive to the presence of Jesus, and more responsive to the leading of his Spirit, in the ordinary flow of everyday life.

4. Everyday Mission

Seeking holiness, spiritual discipline, and sharing fellowship all contribute to a God-centred life that is missional by nature. From a Wesleyan perspective, mission is best understood as the character of a holy people who are set apart for God and sent out into the world to live and work for his praise and glory. The ethos of everyday mission is embodied in what Wesley called 'social holiness'; meaning that every Christian disciple is embedded in a nexus of personal relationships through which the life, love and grace of God may be revealed. He says, 'this is the great reason why the providence of God has so mingled you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God may be communicated to others'.³⁴ The spirit of everyday mission is also encapsulated in Wesley's principle of 'good stewardship', which demands that we become ever more fully surrendered to God's purposes.³⁵

CONCLUSION

The spiritual life is a gift, not to be owned and possessed, but to be enjoyed in the process of giving it back to God, in the service of others. Disciple-making leadership is not just about developing 'mission strategies', but raising up everyday missionaries, who give up

33. Works 8:274f. For a contemporary innovation of the band meeting, see Philip Meadows & Anthony Watts, *The Fellowship Band: A Quick Guide* (Inspire Movement Publishing, 2019) and Philip Meadows, *Fellowship Bands: Spiritual Formation for Everyday Missionaries* (Inspire Movement Publishing, 2019).

34. BCE 1, Sermon 24, 'Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: Discourse 4', §I:7.

35. BCE 2, Sermon 51, 'The Good Steward'.

their lives to God, and lay down their lives for others. As missional practices, social holiness and good stewardship shape a way of life that impacts others as occasion demands, in the here and now of daily life, one act of mercy at a time.

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WORD 2023

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MAY THE MIND OF CHRIST MY SAVIOUR

Katie Barclay Wilkinson

May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do or say.

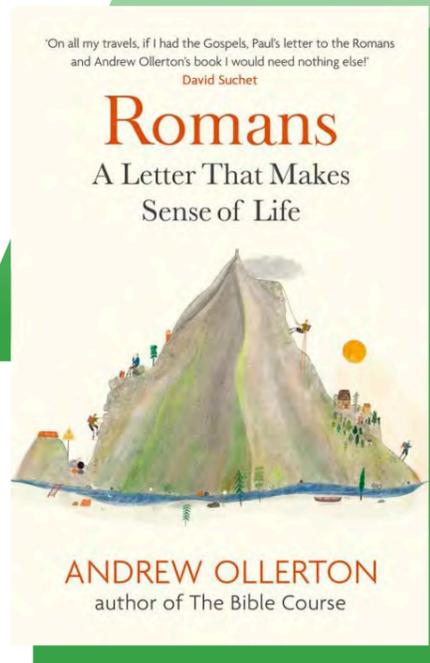
May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea;
him exalting, self abasing -
this is victory.

May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859-1928)



ROMANS: A LETTER THAT MAKES SENSE OF LIFE

Andrew Ollerton

Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton, 2023
ISBN: 978-1-399-80642-8 | pp. 267, £16.99

Andrew Ollerton's new book is fresh and accessible. The book has good hand-feel, is pleasingly laid out on the page and has an attractive cover. He lures us into the subject matter with the persuasive dexterity of a competent parent showing their child that the water is not actually shark infested. He is patient and generous with anecdotes and illustrations from his own family. He talks much of mountaineering, and – although heights and narrow ledges terrify me – Andrew talks us through the construction and presentation of Romans as though we were in fact with him on a mountain; climbing, negotiating and battling through, before carefully descending into the world to live with the understandings gained from the adventure of having explored and understood the text.

The themes and the structure are well laid out. They make sense and provide a solid, trustworthy framework onto which the complexities of the text of Romans can be laid out for ease, yes ease of understanding. He uses pictorial illustrations as well as his own stories for when we have had a surfeit of words. Maps, diagrams and charts all help us to negotiate tackling the letter. Andrew pauses, as a true mountaineer who is managing a reluctant or less fit climber, to admire the view and reflect on where we have been in the chapter with some searching questions. His style is to root us so much into the narrative of Paul's text that it is natural to apply it to our own mission, discipleship, and our understanding of doctrine and

theology. He shows us how Romans assists and educates us in the art of being Christian. I like this. Especially in today's Methodist landscape, having such a Jesus-centred book about a Jesus-centred letter is refreshing and galvanising.

As many Methodists are battling through their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mandatory Training at the moment, Andrew offers us the biblical view. The Church in Rome was doing all of this way, way back. Andrew directs us initially to chapter 16 where we have the personal greetings and from which we deduce that the mix of enslaved people, servants, business class, the elite rich people and poor people, those from a variety of ethnic background and those with Jewish history as well as those who met Jesus while part of another culture and had their lives transformed – men and women – were all meeting together. This was radical and counter cultural when placed against the proud, Roman hierarchical structure of society. He outlines the potential issues that such a mix of people working together would face and how Jesus in their midst transforms attitudes and understanding without compromising the gospel's integrity.

Andrew's structure of the mountain with numbers to show how far we have come was good. At first I took delight in seeing my progress. Later on, when I was a good way on in the book, like the mountaineer I am, I was getting weary and

was ready to finish! It is a good system, however, please don't let my fickleness put you off pursuing the course with a steady pace and plenty of breaks. The structure is helpful and eases the reader into Paul's rhetorical style.

Throughout the book, we are challenged about the relevance of the gospel to our present society – this definitely has a post-pandemic feel to it. There is a sense of the UK culture which many authors who are not immersed in real life in the UK can miss. It is the UK's TV shows and music scene that are drawn on. It is the UK landscape and mountains that are referenced. This sense of 'home' makes it very accessible to engage with.

For ordinary disciples, Andrew's book is a grounded working out of Paul's complex theology and doctrine. He makes 'the Big R' accessible for all disciples who yearn to grow in faith. We don't need to avoid it because it is 'too hard'!

I read the whole book and was delighted by it. We are encouraged to place our very own selves into the scriptures which anchor us to God's promises. We are reminded that those same promises are real for us too.

Most importantly, the question of identity is embraced as we find ourselves located and identified 'in Christ.' When we, the people of God, embrace this for ourselves, so much makes sense.

I do commend this book to you. I've put Romans on my church preaching and study curriculum for the next Methodist year.

Reviewed by Catherine Hutton, Superintendent Minister of Sutton Circuit. Catherine is minister at Epsom & Cheam Methodist Churches, where she regularly writes bespoke Study Materials, innovates for mission and encourages deepened discipleship across the church.

**Andrew Ollerton joins us online on
Saturday 9 March to explore more of Romans**

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BIBLE TEACHING
DAY ON ZOOM**

HOW TO CLIMB THE MT. EVEREST OF THE BIBLE

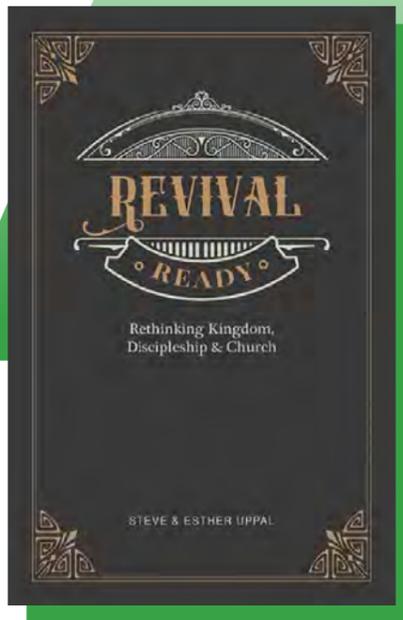
EXPLORING THE LETTER OF ROMANS

Speaker Rev Dr Andrew Ollerton
Saturday 9 March | 10.00am – 1.00pm On Zoom

Free event, donations welcome!



To book, please visit: methodistevangelicals.org.uk/romans



REVIVAL READY: RETHINKING KINGDOM, DISCIPLESHIP AND CHURCH *Steve and Esther Uppal*

Great Britain: All Nations Publishing, 2022
ISBN Paperback 978-1-73-909861-2 | pp. 300, £15.00

Are we Revival Ready? Rooted in Scripture and the prophetic, this is the most helpful book that I have read in years.

It brings an urgent message to a docile church, challenging it to awake once more.

Much has been said of late about the need for change and new wineskins being required for new wine. This easily read book begins there and then considers the practical implications as to how we can set about being revival ready by rethinking Kingdom, Discipleship and Church.

The book calls us to consider afresh our approach to church growth methodology, looking to move away from secular business models and to deepen our relationship with God, relying on him, rather than ourselves, in order to revolutionise the way we operate in discipleship and mission. Success is then measured as to our obedience to the Almighty rather than any other criteria. This contemporary challenge, written for these post-pandemic days in which we live, calls for the people of God to seek a future that is God-dependent.

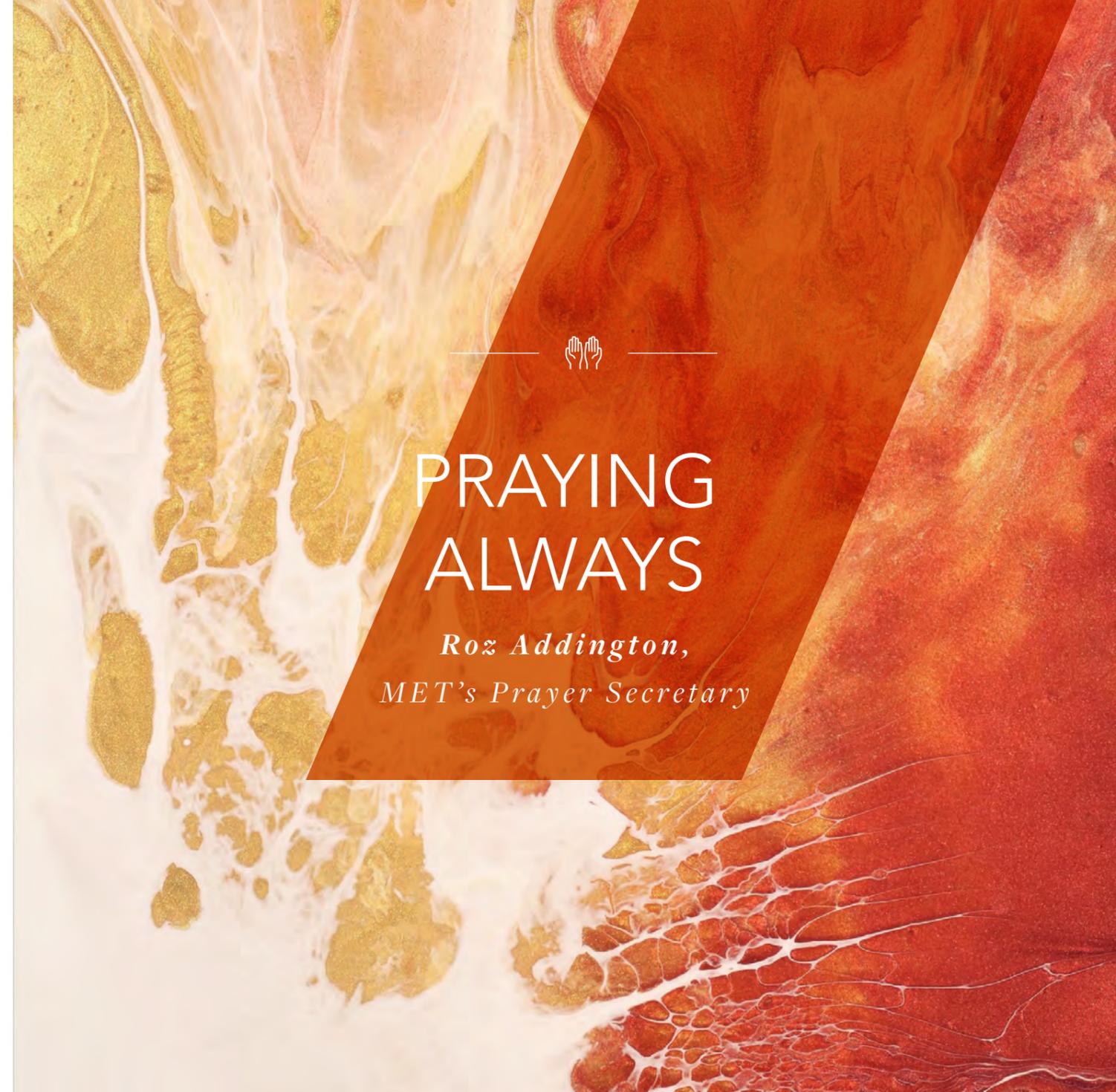
The book is split into 6 parts reflecting prophetic themes. It combines Scripture with testimony as the authors share their personal journey of entering into a new way of living life as Christian disciples. At times the challenge presented in this book provides much food for thought as the reader is encouraged to go deeper in their relationship with God, setting aside the things of this world to grow more like Jesus.

At the end of each section there are helpful questions to consider for reflection and points for prayer.

I heartily recommend 'Revival Ready' for reading and reflection and am delighted that one of the authors will be speaking at our MET November Conference, 'REVIVE'. Having read this book, I am eager to hear more in person from Steve Uppal as we prepare for the way ahead in seeking God, that he may revive his Church in these lands.

Reviewed by John Hogarth, a Local Preacher with a keen interest in Discipleship and Evangelism. He has recently assisted MET with some projects as Interim Development Worker.

'Steve Uppal will be joining us as one of our speakers at the Revive National Gathering from 17-19 November 2023 at the Kings Park Conference Centre. Book online at methodistevangelicals.org.uk/revive



PRAYING ALWAYS

*Roz Addington,
MET's Prayer Secretary*

'When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast'. These are the words, originally written by Ada R. Habershon, of a song sung by Keith and Kristyn Getty. They are words I feel we all need to hold on to in these difficult days through which we are living. We are living in unprecedented times with all that is happening across our nation and, indeed, the world. It seems that almost every day something else happens and we lurch from one crisis to the next; everything seems to be constantly changing.

Our God, and our faith in him, is the one constant that never changes. Whatever happens and whatever life throws at us,

God is there to help us through these difficult times. He is the one constant who never changes, and who will never let us down. It is comforting to know we have our God by our side though thick and thin, and the power of the Holy Spirit helping us through. When we pray to him, he will always listen to us, and when we ask, he will always answer, even if it is in ways we don't expect. We have a truly amazing God, and he will hold us fast through these difficult times. Nothing can separate us from his love (Romans 8:38-39).

If you wish to contact Roz with any prayer requests then please email her at: roz.addington1@btinternet.com



WEEK 1 | THE CHURCH

Every day: for a deepening of discipleship and Christlikeness in our own lives, in the churches of which we are a part, and across the whole church, for personal renewal and corporate revival.

- 1. Repentance:** The acknowledgement of sin and the need for repentance; we repent of moving away from biblical truth and holiness; of denying the Holy Spirit's power; of not seeking God's vision for the church. (2 Peter 3:16-18; Proverbs 28:1).
- 2. Church Leaders:** The President and Vice-President of Conference, Rev Gill Newton and Deacon Kerry Scarlett as they take up their new roles; the Secretary of Conference, Jonathon Hustler; all in positions of leadership. (Acts 20:28-30; Proverbs 3: 5-6).
- 3. Scriptural Holiness:** The wind of the Holy Spirit to fall, bringing holiness and a rediscovery of the understanding of grace; the centrality of prayer within the church; a thirst for biblically based preaching and a passion for seeking God's truth in scripture. (Matthew 7:15-23; 1 Peter 1:13-16).
- 4. Mission and evangelism:** Those serving overseas as mission partners; for a dynamic and renewed vision and boldness for reaching out to communities; strategies based on biblical teaching; God's power to bring about revival. (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 10:13-15).
- 5. The work of MET:** The 3R's: re-kindling of the Wesleyan vision, renewing the Wesleyan mission and raising up of a new generation of Wesleys; God's provision, vision and guidance for the future; for David Hull as Chair, and for Chris Briggs as he prepares to take on the role of Chair; the trustees and the executive; Revive Prayer Conference 17th - 19th November. (Isaiah 41:9-13; Hebrews 10: 22-24).
- 6. Cliff College:** The principal, Ashley Cooper, and the staff; mission opportunities; the uptake of students on both residential and on-line courses; protection over all of Cliff's work. (Psalm 25: 4-5; Colossians 3:23-24).
- 7. Children and young people:** Nathan Veall, seeking to reach out to the younger generation; inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit for all youth and children's workers; clear Biblical teaching; protection from erroneous teaching and false doctrine. (Proverbs 22:6; Matthew 19:13-14).



WEEK 2 | GREAT BRITAIN

Every day: for a deepening of discipleship and Christlikeness in our own lives, in the churches of which we are a part, and across the whole church, for personal renewal and corporate revival.

- 1. National Leaders:** Wisdom and strength for the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak and all cabinet members; a return to God at the centre of government and the formulating of godly policies; courage and boldness for Christian MP's to speak out against injustices; the Royal family; integrity and justice; artificial intelligence. (Zechariah 7:8-10; Proverbs 28:2).
- 2. Social unrest:** The economic crisis; growing social discontent across the nation; those struggling with increasing debt, particularly mortgages; charities seeking to help, particularly Christians Against Poverty; adequate resources for Foodbanks; a turning back to God. (Deuteronomy 28:1-3; 1 Peter 5:6-7).
- 3. NHS & Social care:** The backlog of those awaiting treatment, exacerbated by strikes; better communication between the various departments - children's services, social services & mental health; care packages for the vulnerable, adequate funding. (Psalm 91:1-2; Nahum 1:7).
- 4. Revival:** A recognition across the country of the need for God, and an awareness that he alone can answer our needs; for the Holy Spirit to convict people of corporate selfishness, pride, greed, arrogance, self-righteousness, and egotism. (Matthew 6:33; 1 John 1:5-10).
- 5. Immigration:** Wisdom for the government in how to tackle the situation; those fleeing persecution in their own countries; the exploitation of those crossing the channel in small boats; bringing to justice criminal gangs perpetrating the exploitation and suffering of vulnerable people. (Leviticus 19:33-34; Zechariah 7:9-10).
- 6. Gangs, knife crime and County Lines:** Youngsters entangled in gang culture; knife crime and drug abuse; County Lines; those reaching out to young people, giving positivity and purpose; for the Christian message of hope to reach all young people. (Psalm 145:17-20; Psalm 107:13-16).
- 7. Christians in the workplace:** Those struggling to stand up for Christian values in workplaces, especially in media and education; for their integrity to shine out; courage and boldness to speak out against injustices; protection against false accusations and lies. (Isaiah 43:1-3a; Psalm 27:1-3 & 5-6).



WEEK 3 | WORLD ISSUES

Every day: for a deepening of discipleship and Christlikeness in our own lives, in the churches of which we are a part, and across the whole church, for personal renewal and corporate revival.

- 1. The Persecuted Church:** Islamic controlled countries and dictatorships; justice and upholding of basic human rights; exposure of discrimination and inequalities; strength and resilience for those suffering. (James 1:12; Romans 8:35-39).
- 2. Russia/Ukraine war:** For de-escalation of the conflict; the Russian people detained for speaking out against the invasion; exposure of Putin's lies and a continued weakening of his grip on the Russian population; strength and resolve for Ukrainian troops and people. (Psalm 55:16-19; Psalm 31:14-15).
- 3. War torn areas of the world:** Refugee camps; adequate resources for relief and aid agencies to tackle famine and disease; safe access to areas of greatest devastation; those affected to find their hope through the redemptive love of Jesus. (Proverbs 14:31; Psalm 121).
- 4. Natural disasters:** Climate refugees, especially those who have lost their land due to rising sea levels; aid agencies working to alleviate the suffering caused by natural disasters, in both financial and mental health support; the will of world leaders to tackle underlying causes. (Galatians 6:2; Acts 20:35).
- 5. World poverty:** People living in poverty; compassion and aid from the richer nations; provision for those facing starvation; adequate sanitation and housing and health care; support and resources for those charities tackling the situation. (Proverbs 11:24-25; 1 John 3:17-18).
- 6. Terrorism:** Perpetrators of terror to encounter God; victims to find the peace of the Lord; change to those regimes across the world that encourage acts of terror; cyber-attacks and international espionage. (Psalm 34:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7).
- 7. Those living under repressive regimes:** Nations where there is no democracy, particularly Hong Kong, Russia, Myanmar, Belarus, North Korea and Islamic states; those detained for speaking out; access to basic human rights; exposure of injustices; governments to take action. (Proverbs 31:8-9; Psalm 72:12-14).



WEEK 4 | THE NATURAL WORLD & CLIMATE CHANGE

Every day: for a deepening of discipleship and Christlikeness in our own lives, in the churches of which we are a part, and across the whole church, for personal renewal and corporate revival.

- 1. Repentance:** Forgiveness for our abuse of the planet; our ravaging of its resources; destruction of its ecosystems; pollution of the land and sea; reduction in biodiversity. (Isaiah 24:4-6; Revelation 4:11).
- 2. Give thanks:** For initiatives tackling our exploitation of the planet bringing renewal and change; conservation areas on both land and sea; projects supported by A Rocha. (Psalm 33:6-9; Jeremiah 10:12).
- 3. Britain:** To commit to pledges made to reduce carbon emissions; increased commitment to re-cycling and up-cycling; legislation to prevent sewage being dumped in rivers; public resolve to halt the littering of the environment; strategies to increase biodiversity. (Genesis 2:15; Psalm 104:24-25 & 30).
- 4. Carbon emissions:** The pioneering of new technologies to reduce emissions; an urgency among governments to act collaboratively; financial guarantees from wealthier nations to enable poorer nations to make greener and more sustainable choices. (Hebrews 11:3; 1 Timothy 6:17-19).
- 5. Despoiling of the earth:** Illegal logging; rising sea levels and those living with the consequences; loss of habitats and extinction of wildlife; destruction of ecosystems; pollution of land and sea. (Nehemiah 9:6; Jeremiah 12:4).
- 6. Plastics:** Worldwide commitment to reduce all plastics; funding of initiatives to discover environmentally friendly alternatives; the clearing up of polluted habitats. (1 Timothy 4:4-5; Jeremiah 32:17).
- 7. Changing weather patterns:** Areas affected by extremes of weather - soaring temperatures & flooding; resources to combat the underlying causes; new strains of crops to stand extremes of weather; farmers coping with these extremes of weather. Cry to the Lord for mercy. (2 Chronicles 7:13-14).



*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.*

PROVERBS 3:5-6
N K J V



FROM THE CHAIR

The Revd Dr David A. Hull

Dear Friends,

To celebrate Sarah's birthday this year, we had a family day out at Burrington Combe in Somerset. Whilst there, we visited the cleft in the rock which is said to be the place Augustus Toplady, then a local curate, was inspired to write his famous hymn whilst taking refuge from a sudden storm:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me
Let me hide myself in thee.*

Although Augustus Toplady later disagreed strongly and sharply with John Wesley over theological debates, Toplady was converted under the preaching of one of Mr Wesley's preachers in Ireland. It was whilst he was a student at Trinity College Dublin that Toplady joined a gathering in a barn where he heard John Morris, an illiterate preacher. Toplady, who had been raised in a Christian home, wrote of his conversion:

"Strange that I, who had so long sat under the means of grace in England, should be brought nigh to God in an obscure part of Ireland, amidst a handful of God's people met together in a barn, and under the ministry of one who could hardly spell his name! Surely it was the Lord's doing, and is marvellous!"

Earlier in this edition of MET Connexion, I wrote of John Wesley reading Jonathan Edwards' astonishing account of revival in New England, and of Wesley's subsequent comment in his journal, quoting the same words of Psalm 118:23, 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'. I am struck by the fact that they used the very same words, one to speak of widespread revival, the other to speak of personal conversion. Each is equally

the Lord's doing, and each is therefore equally marvellous.

In that earlier article you can read of our fresh focus for this new season in the work of MET. I hope you will be inspired to prepare for, pray for and pursue revival with us. Please do have us in your prayers as we develop this work.

I am very much looking forward to travelling to various churches and circuits over this Autumn and next Spring for a series of 'MET Local' events, joining in worship, sharing our vision, and praying together. If you would like to host such an event in your church or circuit, please do contact Marian Izzard (admin@methodistevangelicals.org.uk / 01983 642024); we would be delighted to explore possibilities with you. We don't need large numbers of people: just a group committed to seeking the Lord together and willing to make an open invitation for others to join.

You will also see in this edition that we are re-advertising MET's new Director of Ministry post. I was able to update the AGM that, although we offered the post at the conclusion of the last interviews, we reached a point in the subsequent processes where it became clear that it wasn't going to be possible for the candidate to be able to accept the role at this time. This has given us an opportunity to revise the job description, which is now available. Please do look at the advert and related documents, and if you or anyone you know might be interested in the role, please do prayerfully take the next steps. We continue to be very grateful indeed for the generous financial donations to make this appointment possible. If you are able to make a contribution at this stage,

either for our Director of Ministry appeal or for our general funds, please do visit methodistevangelicals.org.uk/donate.

As well as unanimously endorsing our fresh focus, the other major business at this year's AGM was to elect the new Chair, the Revd Chris Briggs, who will take office on 1 January 2025 at the latest. Please do pray for him and for the whole Executive Committee as we prepare for this transition. I am delighted that Chris has agreed to serve in this way and look forward to passing on the baton in due course.

Finally, if you have not already booked, please do consider joining us at our national gathering, REVIVE in Northampton this November, where I will be joined by fellow speakers, Steve Uppall (author of Revival Ready) and Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman, who currently serves in Uganda; Hilary Balsdon will be leading worship. Further details can be found at methodistevangelicals.org.uk/revive. We would love to see you there!

As I conclude, I would like to take the opportunity to thank sincerely Marian Izzard for all she does, both as Editor of MET Connexion, and as Administrator for MET. John Hogarth has been serving as Interim Development Worker and, likewise, I am very grateful to him for all he has done.

All that remains is for me to wish you a very Happy New Methodist Year!

Rejoicing in our Partnership in the Gospel,

David



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