

Weekly Newsletter: 31st January 2023

Reflection: Do You Want to Live the Book of Acts?

By Joe Barnard

For many of us, being a Christian is like wearing an old jumper. Faith is a comfortable thing. We feel as if the basic truths of the gospel fit snugly around the edges of our lives. Yes, there are, on occasion, nettlesome conversations with unbelieving family members- and, yes, there are an increasing number of religious trip wires in the workplace – but faith in Jesus is something we put on and wear with ease. We casually pick up our Bibles, join a prayer meeting, or step into a church without any hint that, in doing so, something dangerous – even subversive – is happening. There is no real concern that devilish lions are prowling our streets or that unseen principalities and powers are pulling levers within our society. In many ways, we are like children playing in the waves of a noisy sea. We are so caught up with our games that we are paying no attention to the powerful currents swirling beneath our toes.

How do you break out of such a potent daydream? I can think of two aids which are like caffeine to the soul. One is to spend a little time in the book of Acts. It's sobering experience to contrast the life of the early church with the life of the modern church – at least in the West. The experience is a little bit like being weighed and measured in a doctor's office. We can often feel relatively healthy as we get up and move about an ordinary day. However, the standards of health quickly shift as soon as we visit a GP. A personal measure of health and a GP's measure of health are not always the same.

Something similar happens when we read Acts. A lot of the things that we obsess about in modern church life are strikingly absent from the annals of the early church. There is no mention of church buildings; there is no mention of musical styles; there is no mention of denominations; there is no mention of rotas, Sunday schools, or coffee mornings. Instead, what we find in Acts is a humble scattering of believers who, through a simple fellowship in prayer, word, and mutual affection, spread their roots from one crevice of society into another. There are few better ways of unsettling a cosy Christianity than studying the rollicking life of the early church.

A second way of stirring ourselves out of spiritual lethargy is to pay closer attention to the experience of persecuted Christians. The truth is that the gap between the persecuted church and our own situation is less than we often suppose. There are two types of war: hot and cold. While the tactics of each style of warfare is different, the strategy of each is ultimately the same. All warfare is about one thing: one power subduing another.

By studying the life of the persecuted church we are reminded that the church in the West is just as much at war against the forces of evil as the church elsewhere. The difference is merely that ours is a cold war. In the West, the devil is using the engines of propaganda and mindless conformity rather than the those of torture and fear. Yet, the agenda in all places is the same. The devil hates the church and wants to do whatever he can to stymie her growth.

Now, why am I raising all of this?

In February, we will be heading into a new study as home groups. Our curriculum will be a guide to the book of Acts called 'Dangerous Faith', which has been produced by Open Doors. My hope and prayer is that this study will unsettle us in a good and healthy way. In the West, we are too easily surprised by suffering, angered by opposition, and disheartened by cultural friction. We need a shift of perspective. We need to relearn the basic rule that the gospel is 'antifragile' – that is, it flourishes in conditions of pressure, persecution, and opposition. I think this new study will be a good reminder of this essential truth.

The first page of 'Dangerous Faith' begins with the following anecdote:

Once, when visiting Indonesia with Brother Andrew, a group of Christian leaders came to meet us from a big city in Java. They were full of excitement.

'Oh, Andrew,' they said. 'We are living in the book of Acts. We've seen growth, angels, healings, miracles, amazing conversions. 'Come,' they said. 'Walk onto the pages of the book of Acts.'

Andrew just said, 'Oh, the book of Acts is it? Then, take me to see your persecutions.'

'Persecutions?'' they said. 'We don't have any. We are doing so much good here. Everyone loves us.'

Andrew shook his head. 'Then you can't be living in the book of Acts,' he replied.

Prayer Meeting – Wednesday 8th February

The prayer meeting next week will be in person at the church at 7pm. Lorna Ferguson will be joining us to share more about the work in Japan and how we can be praying. We are hoping to have a Zoom option available for those who want to join from home. The codes will be sent out as usual next Wednesday morning.

The prayer meeting this week will be on Zoom at 7pm.

Ladies Breakfast



Give thanks for the Ladies' Breakfast that took place on Saturday.

44 women joined together to enjoy food, hear Skye's testimony and were encouraged to 'look up' as Lorna spoke from 1 Peter 1:3-7. We were challenged as we discussed what it meant that our faith was worth more than gold and ended by praying together. We are looking forward to the next one already...

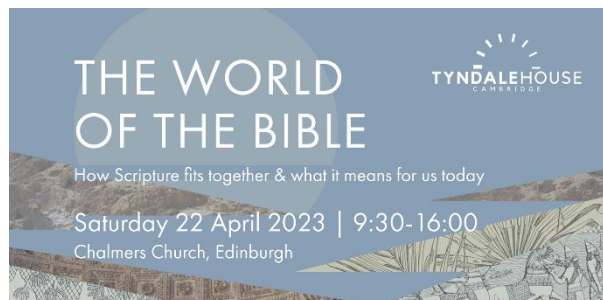


Warm Space update

By Bill Wright

Yesterday was another successful day for the Warm Space with some great conversations taking place. We had 32 adults, 6 children, 2 babies and 2 dogs. For the first time our study area was occupied for most of the day.

The World of the Bible – Tyndale House



Tyndale House are having their Edinburgh Day Conference on 22 April 2023 looking at 'The World of the Bible – how Scripture fits together & what it means for us today' It promises to be a great day of teaching from Tyndale House researchers. Take a look at the talks they have lined up [here](#). Tickets (Full price £15; Live stream £5) are limited and can be booked [here](#). Location: Chalmers Church, EH10 4AZ

Raising Kids for Christ in a Confusing World – Saturday 4th March

We're excited to have Mel Lacy (from Growing Young Disciples) speaking at our parenting conference on **Raising Kids for Christ in a Confusing World** on Saturday 4th March. The conference will run from 9.30am until 3.30pm and is free to attend.

Mel is one of the most helpful voices in the UK in terms of helping parents navigate the difficult waters of identity, technology, sexuality, and the basics of raising children for Christ. It promises to be a great day!

Please contact Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) to book and anyone is welcome to attend so please pass on the details to family or friends who may be interested.



Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Monday:
 - Baby & Toddlers Group from 10 - 11.30am
 - Warm Space from 12.30 – 4pm
- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm on Zoom
- Thursday: Session Meeting at 7pm in person
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
 - Equip at 6pm (and live streamed)



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