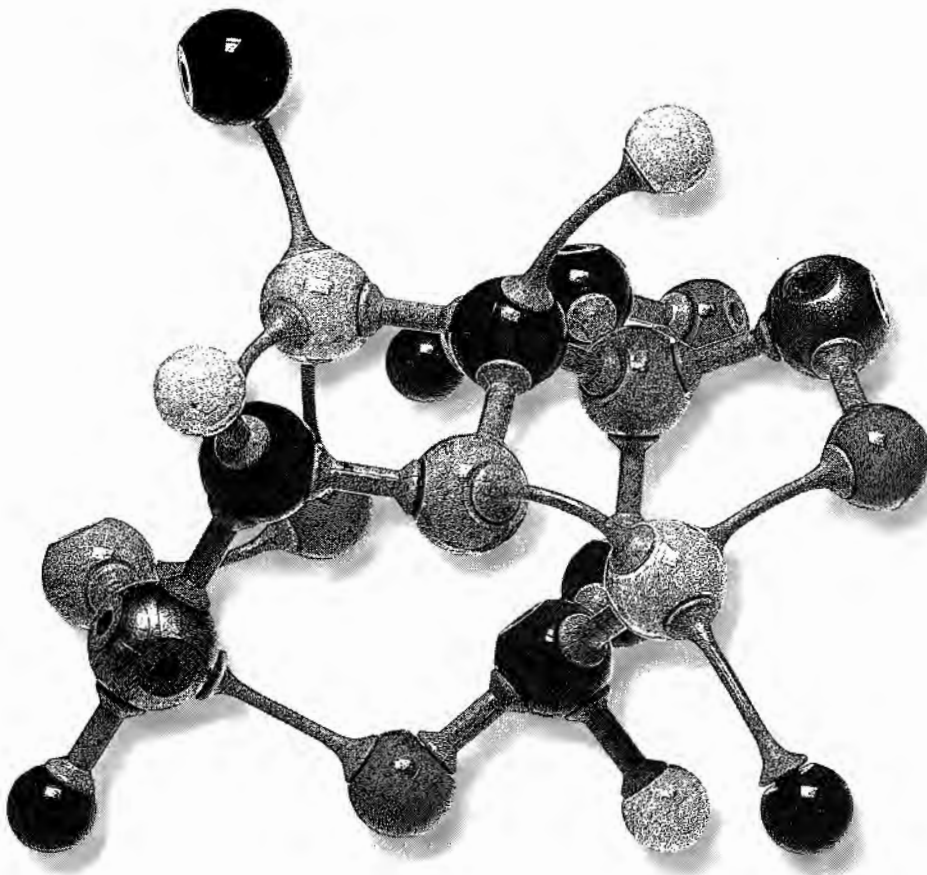


# TALK

*The Mainstream Magazine*

Autumn 2006



## **Dangerous people? Unleashing intentional discipleship**

Mike Breen  
Ken McGreavy  
Rob White  
Juliet Kilpin  
Sandra Crawford

and more....

*Connecting leaders*

# **Mainstream is committed to:**

Get passionate about knowing God.

Get real in relationships.

Get stuck into God's mission.

# Tea and lifestyle

Looking back, it's the cups of tea that were most significant.

I'd heard lots of sermons, been to a ton of gospel gigs, read *Journey Into Life* and watched scary US films about the end times. But it was tea with Audrey that swung it.

She sat and listened. She didn't judge me, she helped me to explore what I thought and felt as well as what I was hearing from others. She lived what she said. I saw it in the way she treated people, was there for them when they needed it.

And she made great tea.

She's why I'm a Christian (taking the work of the Holy Spirit, prevenient grace and the call of God for granted, of course!) She invested time in a rock-obsessed, slightly bookish teenager who wanted to change the world and so introduced me to Jesus.

More than that, she modeled discipleship and ministry to me, gave me opportunities to grow in my faith by thrusting me into situations where I had to talk about my faith in front of skeptical and sympathetic audiences.

Like many of the contributors to this issue, I look back over my Christian life and I see how crucial mentors have been, starting with Audrey.

Making disciples is crucial if the Christian faith in the UK is not to become a distant memory, written up history books but not lived on the streets. And many of our contributors tackle this issue head-on, showing how it can work in church and out on the streets, with those who profess faith and those on a spiritual journey.

There is no more important topic for Christian leaders today. So read the magazine, come to the conference, chat these ideas over with your colleagues and friends.

But above all just do it. That way we'll become dangerous people, part of a movement that could once again infect our neighbourhoods with the life of God's Kingdom.

**Simon Jones** is the editor of *Talk*. He is also team leader at Bromley Baptist Church and author of *Why Bother with Church?* (IVP 2001)



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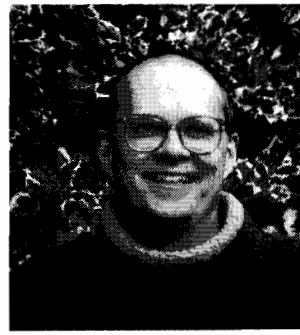
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# Making Disciples in a Local Church Context

By Chris Densham



I suppose my initial reaction was; "It all depends what you mean by making disciples". For me it's the whole process of seeing not-yet Christians come to faith and then seeing them grow to become mature followers of Jesus.

There's a lot of very helpful material around connected with the coming-to-faith bit. In particular the shift from a decision-making event to a process. From conversations I have had, I'm not sure how far down this concept has filtered into many of our churches but we'll get there!

My experience of the coming-to-faith process is that things like Alpha, the Y-Course and so on are invaluable, but it does take people time. Many are coming from so far back. I still remember a lady attending one of our midweek small groups for the first time and after a little while as the discussion around Ephesians continued asking: "Will this bloke Paul you keep talking about be here next week?" It really did happen!

The time factor has meant that we've had quite a few folk stay in a small group after Alpha, still not knowing what they believe. Eighteen months to two years later they discover that they now believe this stuff!

In the UK we face a situation we've not faced for generations and traditional approaches don't work anymore. Historically most of our post-conversion discipling material has been information based. The assumption being, presumably, that if you give people the right information, then it will transform their lives. If we are to see the transformation of people's lives it's not merely information they need, but values-based material.

There is a bit of a clash here with some of our evangelical culture where we see telling people the truth is sufficient. If coming to faith is seen increasingly within the context of a journey, then how much more is

discipleship an on-going journey? In the journey to faith and especially making progress afterwards Lyn and I have found three of the more significant factors to have been:

## a. Relationships and Community.

People need to be in relationship with people they trust. For us that has been belonging to a group where they can ask tough questions and not be given pat answers. In a group where there is authenticity, where experienced Christians admit their struggles but reaffirm that absolute trust in God. For many discovering there were people here they could trust was a significant step towards a willingness to deal with tough issues in their lives. It often means relaxing together on "their" patch (i.e. in their homes).

## b. The way issues are dealt with

We have discovered that as people begin to talk openly and freely their theology is often warped and there are significant issues in their lives that need addressing. Our temptation is jump into "fix-it" mode, to explain where they are wrong and tell them how they should behave. We have discovered that God is a better judge of these things and He does really know what He's doing! Obviously there may be things that do need addressing at the time but we found that over a period of time, as people determined to follow Jesus, He raised these things in their lives. They were then *really* ready to deal with them.

It becomes a careful balance between what is on our agenda for the evening and what may be on theirs because of what's happening in their lives. Sometimes (often?) what is going on in their lives is a God-given opportunity for us to grasp. People are much more teachable in these moments because we're addressing their real issues and we need to allow the Spirit to lead us into truth.

## c. Get them to take responsibility right from the beginning

In the context of the small group we followed what is I suppose a classic cell

format so:

- We studied the Bible together; but stuck to straightforward applications with an emphasis on "Is there anything you need to do in the light of this?" Many of the studies were around values and behaviour.
- We taught them to pray by using simple methods (such as sticking to one sentence, write them out first etc.) and we expected them to pray.
- We got them to prepare and lead some parts of the evening. So we encouraged them to choose two Christian songs they enjoyed from a CD and play them to us. We never called it leading worship as it would frighten the life out of them.
- We encouraged faith sharing, even when there wasn't any yet, because when they are excited about the journey of discovery they talk about it. We supported them within non-Christian friendships. Indeed when they had friends in trouble they would often bring them to the group for prayer and support.

In summary making disciples would be great if we could get a one size fits all package that we simply stuck people through. Secretly many of us are still looking for the package!! The reality is it's not supposed to be like that, every person is different so each journey is different. It's often very messy!! But then so are babies and early childhood, come to think of it so are the teenage years! Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 sum up his approach "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us."

*Chris Densham is minister of Dereham Baptist Church.*

# 15 Men and an Egg-shaped Ball

by Rob White



Rob

Yes, you've got it! Rugby! And what a game - far better than football, in my book. Full of action, adventure, passion and teamwork. A man's game, without doubt, although of course now played also by women. No mixed teams yet, and I don't suppose there ever will be!

As I said, it's a game full of action, adventure, passion and teamwork. Sounds like the church, doesn't it? Or does it?! When that scrum (no, I don't mean the church!) gets down and you've got your head stuck between two other backsides, with 2000lb worth of pressure directed through your neck, you've got to understand teamwork! When that line stretches out across the field and you're on the run, passing the ball back, you've got to know the other guys pretty well so that you can understand how best to work together in order to gain ground. When the ball comes in to the line-out you've got to know who's going to jump and who's going to lift and how you're going to take advantage of the catch in order to set up an opportunity for a try.

Coaches of rugby teams and, of course, of any sporting team know how to make disciples: impassion, envision, train and release and, as they're doing it, build a strong sense of team. A good coach will also build meaningful relationships with individual players and exercise discipline where needed. Good coaching hones the bottle needed by players who are involved in what is a high impact sport.

Church leaders need to be good coaches or at least, that skill and ministry must be present on the leadership

team. Problem is that you don't get paid as much! Still, who's concerned? The rewards are actually far greater. To see a disparate group of people impassioned, envisioned, trained and released is fruit worth working for.

If I remember rightly (and I know I do without looking it up!) the main objective of the Great Commission in Matthew 28 is to make disciples - and yet it's probably the thing that we fall down on most. Jesus' coaching yielded a team that was strong and impassioned enough to make major inroads for the Kingdom in a culture that, whilst having a religious heritage, was largely hostile. I don't think we're a million miles from that ourselves in this day and age so we could do with following Jesus's coaching methods here and now.

Anything I write here has been written about and said time without number, but perhaps we're desperate enough to now do something about it. The whole thing must start with purpose and intentionality. We must **firstly** set our sights on the priority of making disciples. The more I think about that word, "making", the more I'm challenged by it. Disciples don't grow on trees and, usually, they don't just happen.

**Secondly**, we as leaders have to model it - both living as disciples and working with a small group to make them disciples. That's why the best place to start is with the church's core leadership team. Indeed, that's where it should start. There's a necessity to spend regular time together, learning, sharing and holding one another accountable, if

we're to make disciples of others. If the Minister spends her priority time with another small group in order to make disciples the danger is that the leadership team falls behind in being relevant to the purpose.

I must be honest here. I think I started well whilst in Poynton, but dropped away as time went on. The usual busyness and demands on time took over and the disciple-making process, within the leadership, faded. I wouldn't hide the fact that in my current role with Mainstream I will be passing on what I learnt as much from mistakes made as from fruitfulness developed. However, in the church of which I and Marion are now a part, we're again relating to a leadership team on a purposeful journey of discipleship. And it's very challenging!

If the leadership team is a group of growing disciples the **third** point I want to make is obvious, namely that the discipling culture will spill over into the rest of the church - not by default, mind, (although there will be more of that than before) but by design. Each member of the leadership team passionate about, and involved in, making disciples - imagine it!

OK, get started! You may start slowly, but at least start purposefully. Me? I'm going to spend a bit more time at Sale Sharks rugby matches and see if I can pick up a few more tips.

Mainstream apostle, encouraging churches and leadership teams in the work of mission.

Marion works closely with him. We are grateful to them both. Please pray for them.

You can contact him on [rob.marion@ntlworld.com](mailto:rob.marion@ntlworld.com)

# Gentle Mentor

Simon Jones talks to Ken McCreavy, one of 2007 Conference's key note speakers, about discipleship, mentoring and why Acts 6 is crucial for understanding leadership.

**K**en McCreavy was converted as a teenager. His best friend was led to the Lord by his brother and Ken was invited to come to a meeting. He went along more out of politeness than interest. He met Jesus. 'And the guy who led me to the Lord became a friend.'

One thing you notice about Ken McCreavy is that it's all about people and relationships. He has over the years worked with some pretty high-profile people - Clive Calver and Roger Forster among them - and yet he has none of the swagger associated with the charismatic glitterati.

Rather what matters is people. And in particular that people not only meet Jesus but get grounded in their faith, released into ministry and leadership and are enabled to do the same with others.

He walks and talks, lives and breathes intentional discipleship.

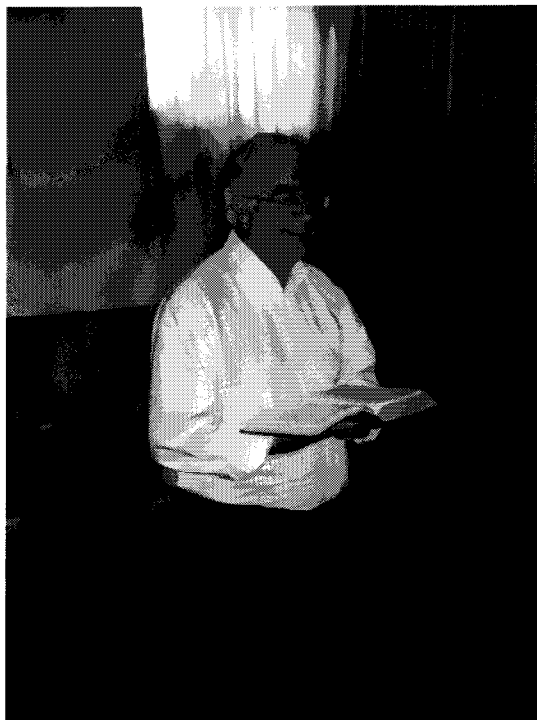
'The guy who led me to the Lord became my friend,' he says. 'We met in his house every Monday evening for ten years. He was a missionary in Leeds and he took me with him when he went out speaking. I prayed and read the Scriptures and within a year of being converted, he was giving me opportunities to take the meetings he'd been invited to do because he believed in me.'

'He shaped who I am,' he continues. 'He had time for me, believed in me and gave me opportunity.'

There is probably no better definition of a mentor. And certainly many would describe Ken as a mentor to them as his friend was mentor to him.

He left school and worked for a ski-wear manufacturer. And then at 22 he went to London Bible College. He speaks of having a sense of destiny or call but lacking the language to describe it. From college, he went to Youth For Christ as an evangelist and then as Director of Pastoral Care during Clive Calver's time at the helm.

Still living in Leeds but travelling all



over the country, Ken worked with YFC, including caring for 120 full-time workers, for 15 years all told.

'Then I met Roger Forster,' he recalls. 'His preaching seemed to give answers to some questions I was wrestling with. I came down to London to look at what Roger was up to and was invited to join the team at Ichthus in 1983. I was part of the leadership until 1999.'

During that time he also travelled quite extensively overseas - first with YWAM but then to speak at conferences and churches abroad. All this time, he was making relationships and in particular feeling what he calls 'a growing passion for equipping, mentoring and supporting leaders.' So he set up Amen Ministries and has been devoting himself to working with leaders and leadership teams ever since.

'Lots of leaders have no problem with getting information and inspiration,' he says. 'The trouble comes with implementation. So there is a huge need for mentoring among leadership teams.'

Within this, he suggests, there are a

number of particular issues. Obviously there is the whole issue of building the right team, developing good, healthy relationships among team members and helping the team to grow and own the vision of where they are going.

But there are two other key issues that Ken has identified over the years. 'One is about handling people of influence in the church who want to influence in a different direction to the vision of the leadership. Leaders can lose their churches because of such people and so need to be able to deal with them well.'

'The second is that individual leaders need to feel that they've got a spirituality big enough for the calling on their life,' he continues. He admits to not being sure what language to use to describe this, but settles on 'spirituality.' He adds: 'You see, you might have a definite call on your life but do you have the resources to live up to it? And where will you find them?'

One of Ken's major concerns is about ensuring leadership has what it needs for the long haul and the skills to handle transition and succession well. This means that we need to plan well in advance how the baton given to us will be handed on to those coming after us.

'We don't put sufficient stress on leadership succession,' he says. 'We don't recognize that Jesus didn't plant a local church or even put in place the structures for doing that. Rather he talked intentional discipleship with his team and demonstrated and proclaimed the Kingdom of God.'

'He did this for three years. Then he gave the last 40 days he spent on earth exclusively to his disciples, reminding them of all he'd taught them, helping them to take hold of the baton,' he says. 'This is investment in succession - three years, followed by a focused, intensive 40 days. Look at Elijah and Elisha - that succession was planned and worked at over a ten year period. Moses took even longer with Joshua. We need to spot leadership



early and plan succession in good time - otherwise it won't go well.'

He argues that the church has not actually been very good at leadership. Wherever you look - whether in traditional denominations or new church groupings - leadership has been a weakness. And he points to Acts 6 as a crucial place for us to get a model of good leadership.

He explains why: 'In Acts 6 we see the apostles as leaders who knew their own priorities and what was required to address the situation that had arisen. The two key words here,' he continues, 'are direction and inclusion. Leaders give direction but all the people in the church need to be included. This is exactly what happened in Acts 6. The apostles analyzed the situation and outlined a solution. But the people chose the people to implement that solution.'

'It is vital that leaders relate not just to themselves but to their church,' he says. 'The body gives dignity to leaders to lead and leaders give the body the dignity of inclusion. It's crucial that we're getting the body praying for and with us, sharing insights with us - in the form of words, pictures and prophecies. Jesus included the marginalized. Sometimes we create marginalized people by not including them in what we're doing.'

The issue in Acts 6 was that a key

group of people felt excluded from what was happening - namely the distribution of food. Such exclusion is a major issue at all areas of church life - especially where a church or the world around it might be changing rapidly. Even individual members of a leadership can feel excluded.

'Everyone in a leadership team needs to be heard,' Ken says. 'Even if at the end of the day, they are not agreed with. Good leaders give people the feeling that they have heard what others are saying to them and are taking it seriously.'

'Leadership is about maintaining focus among all the changes of emphasis that happen on a daily basis. It's not easy. Are we advancing or merely going round in circles? Forward momentum is crucial but how does it happen? Through focusing on the core values of faith, intimacy and mission. These values must precede any structures we put in place to make them happen.'

And with such core values sounding pretty similar to Mainstream's, we can be sure that we're in for a treat when Ken shares his experience with us in January.

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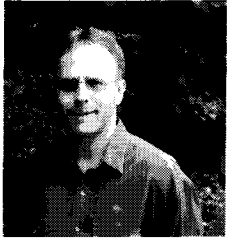
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# The Bible and Discipleship

By Andy Twilley



*Andy is a Baptist Minister who was in local church ministry for 13 years. He then worked as Bible Promotion Manager for Scripture Union for 3 years, and for the past 18 months has been an Associate Director with the Nationwide Christian Trust. He has a passion to see churches throughout the UK become increasingly effective as biblically functioning communities.*

It's not rocket science, in fact it is so obvious it is hard to believe that anyone would ignore the fact, yet so many do: if you remove the main ingredient from something, it will not work. Your car with no engine will go nowhere, so too, remove the Bible from the heart of Christian discipleship and growth will not be experienced.

The Bible is the foundation of Christian understanding, Christian life, and Christian experience. At a personal level it acts as a light; to guide, to highlight right and wrong, to illuminate our path as we journey through life. It acts as a sword, to clean up our lives and to defend us against the attacks of the devil. But fundamentally it acts as milk and meat; it is basic nourishment enabling growth in our understanding of God, as well as growth in our relationship with God. No one can grow and mature in their faith without drawing on this source of nourishment. And at every stage of our Christian journey, from first entering into the family of God, right through to the day we die, we will only grow into the men and women God intended us to be, through regular engagement with his Word. Failure to do so means we grow older, but don't mature properly, we won't grow up as God intends.

It's no new problem. The writer of Hebrews in chapter 5 wrote of the people being spiritually lazy, unwilling to grapple with the

tougher issues of faith, content with the "elementary teachings". Unless we encourage and enable Christians to engage effectively with the Bible for themselves, the growth God intends will simply not happen... no matter how good our exposition of God's word is on a Sunday. As the well known illustration says: "Give someone a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach them how to fish, and they are fed for life".

Why has this become such a problem? A core reason is how we have come to handle the Bible. We live in an age of anecdote, which often leads to the Bible being portrayed as superfluous, fulfilling a very secondary role in church life. It is used very superficially, being tagged on to sermons which have jokes and illustrations at their heart, and it is used selectively, simply using verses or concepts which are safe and comfortable.

Such abuse of the Bible has its consequences. First for the individual themselves, but secondly for the church as a whole. Just think about the tensions and problems which occur in local church life; many are the result of spiritual immaturity, a failure to build lives on the Bible's teaching. We can never become biblically functioning communities without such a foundation. But the consequences go further still. This failure means we don't clearly understand our *raison d'être* to be salt and light in a

dark and tasteless society, so the consequences spill over into the communities within which God has placed us, as we fail to be the people he intends us to be.

What can be done to correct this imbalance?

1. People need to understand that engaging with the Bible is for information and transformation: The Bible changes us.
2. We need to model positive connections with the Bible, through sermons, in our worship and in other conversations with those in our churches.
3. We need to provide people with the skills to handle God's word appropriately and effectively. Different people with different learning styles inevitably need models of engagement suitable to them. We have a responsibility to provide such training.
4. We must help people to see how the Bible all connects together. It is all too easy for people to conclude that parts of the Bible are irrelevant. We should be helping people to see how it all fits together, under God's wonderful plan of salvation from Genesis through to Revelation.

As we do this, I believe we will see a transformation taking place: the building of mature disciples; the establishing of biblically based churches; and a significant impact on the communities within which God has placed us.

**Rev Andy Twilley**  
**Associate Director: Nationwide Christian Trust**

*The Nationwide Christian Trust is committed to supporting people in their journey of faith. We produce Living Light, daily Bible reading notes which treat the Bible with integrity, and make it accessible to ordinary people. Copies are available free of charge. And we provide training seminars for local churches, covering different aspects of Church life. Two of the areas covered are:*

1. Looking at issues surrounding Bible engagement, including one entitled *the Word in One... understanding the Bible's Big Picture*.
2. Training for small group leaders.

*If you would like more information, please get in touch:*

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# A Lazy Gospel

by Stephen Ibbotson



Stephen Ibbotson is on the pastoral staff at Altrincham Baptist Church and is a former editor of *Talk*

The season of *Alpha* is with us again. Thank God for the opportunity to share the good news. I'm a fan of *Alpha* because it gets us sharing gospel in a way nothing else has, since the demise of the Billy Graham approach.

But my delight is more in its method than its message. The practice of hospitality in table-fellowship demonstrating gospel as Jesus did, the open-ended group discussions providing a platform for people to name their questions, doubts and experiences, and the offering of spirituality and experience of God beyond the endless cerebral approach of previous generations; these are a demonstration of gospel.

However, along with much else called gospel preaching, our message feels tired. So often it sounds anaemic, marketed effectively amongst the plethora of self-help 'gospels' on offer today, but hardly subverting their basic appeal or our general culture. Our gospel leaves the person intact in a fundamental individualism, leaving virtually undescribed the believer's horizon, as she's ushered into a Kingdom that should subvert or re-shape every key value of Western life. It leaves gospel as a bolt-on for a decent, moral person in modern liberal society, providing a sense of worth and meaning; personally life-changing but hardly world-transforming. I can hear readers already jumping to *Alpha's* defence. No need! I've no anti-*Alpha* campaign running.

But I do have a campaign running. It's not 'anti' anything. I hope I'm always glad when Christ is preached. After all 'better the way you do it, than

the way I don't do it.' The campaign is that as evangelicals we have become lazy with our gospel. We think, 'Of all parts of the Church, us evangelicals both know and understand the gospel, after all aren't we the ones who are always talking about the need to witness and evangelise.' I'm unconvinced by this. But I've become more convinced that what's needed more than anything, is an on-going reformation of our gospel, amongst the children of The Reformation! The sad thing is that there's so much work being done out there that could help us with the task of appropriating and articulating a gospel afresh, but somehow there is a disconnect between that work and what people in the proverbial pew think, or think they ought to be thinking.

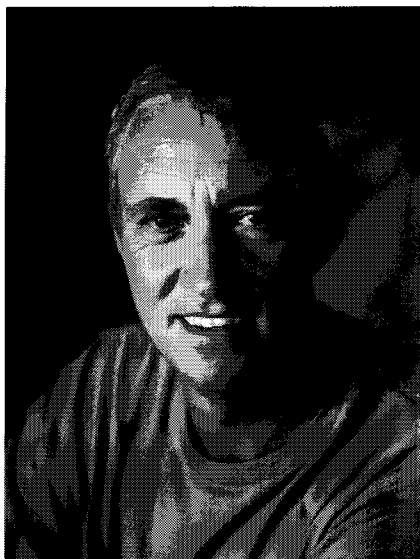
As I have read more about Jesus and his ministry to reform Israel as a counter-Temple movement called to step out of its ghetto mentality through its crucified-risen Saviour, to become carriers of God's mercy to a world of violence, elitism and discrimination, I've become more excited by a gospel that *The Four Spiritual Laws* had reduced to boring banalities. And as I've read about Paul raiding the dictionary of Emperor Augustus's imperial propaganda machine, with its use of words like 'gospel', 'lord', 'righteousness', 'peace', 'security', 'son of god', 'faith/fulness', 'power', 'coming' etc. etc., to communicate his own counter-imperial gospel, I've come to see that the way I've been brought up to believe, that we have 'personal faith over here and public politics over there, and ne'er the twain shall meet', is nothing less than the emasculation of a full-blooded gospel. If Paul

deliberately articulated his gospel in such clear counter-imperial terms, and if he attended to the minutiae of how Romano-Greek culture pressed itself locally upon the tiny burgeoning communities he wrote to, striving to fashion them as genuine, embodied alternatives with a distinct story, set of values and habits, then this carries a whole load of implications. It requires a new understanding of gospel as we live as exiles and strangers within the imperial and violent system of Western hegemony. It requires we learn the habits of what it means to be counter-imperial whilst not anti-imperial.

Our greatest resource is our gospel. This gospel locates us in time, something *Alpha* totally neglects, providing resources to awaken the disciple to the new age that dawned in Christ and dawns each day in the Spirit making all things new: spirituality, identity, relationships, gender, morality, politics, aesthetics etc. In fact a church is only as good as the gospel that forms it and carries it hence. We neglect it at our peril. And urgency often dictates its neglect as we rush for the next wave, method, restructuring exercise or makeover in our management obsessed culture, shaped by the corporate world. The tyranny of the urgent effaces the important. But the Church's calling is apostolic, 'set apart for the gospel of God' (Romans 1:1). Attention to our gospel is the first and final apostolic task. How we need leadership with this one.

# Giving Shape to Intentional Discipleship

Simon Jones introduces us to Mike Breen, one of our 2007 conference key note speakers and suggests a couple of ways to get the best out of coming and hearing him.



**A**t the beginning of his book *A Passionate Life*, Mike Breen tells the story of his experience in a sun shower, which his daughters described as like being on the beach in South Carolina. They pressed him to try it. So, pound in hand, he stepped into the white tube by the pool.

And nothing happened. Naturally, everyone was disappointed. But his daughters didn't give up. They persuaded him to try it for longer and longer periods. But each time, he emerged from the sun shower baffled. It wasn't anything like being on the beach at South Carolina.

His daughters were equally baffled. How could he not think this is the best thing ever, they wondered. Persuaded to try it one last time, Mike stood and examined the space he was standing in. Having put in his pound, he'd heard lots of clicking and whirring each time he'd been in - and yet it didn't seem to do anything for him.

This time he noticed a door handle. Turning it, he entered a room 'filled with the most refreshing light rays and replicated ocean breeze I could ever imagine.'

The trouble is, he'd been standing in the changing room each time he'd been in, so no wonder he got nothing out of it.

He uses this story to launch us into

LifeShapes. The obvious point is that so many Christians are in the waiting room wondering if that's all there is to the Christian experience. They've put their coin in the slot and are feeling short-changed. Mike's passion is to help Christians get into the spiritual equivalent of the sun shower so their lives will be changed by God's grace.

Mike Breen was team rector at St Thomas Crookes Church in Sheffield, an Anglican and Baptist fellowship. Over his time he grew it into a 2,000 member church, 80% of whom are under 40. Now he's dividing his time between the Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Arizona, the Fuller Seminary where he teaches a course on mission and travelling to introduce others to LifeShapes. He is also the international leader of the Order of Mission.

He and his new colleague in ministry, Walt Kallestad, describe their ministry in these words: 'As pastors, we understand the turmoil church leaders are dealing with today. For the past decade it has become apparent that the modern church models and methods are no longer effective. High control/low accountability church leadership systems are not working. The preoccupation with programmes, property and products is missing the mark. We know you want to see real life change in your people and to see your church grow. We know you want your church to make a difference in your community and in the world. Jesus showed us the way in his teaching to his disciples 2,000 years ago. It is the only way.'

Of course, you could say that what they proceed to offer us is another programme - this one called LifeShapes. But it's probably fair to say that at heart LifeShapes is less like a programme and more like a way of living designed to help people of all kinds and at every stage in their Christian life become more effective disciples.

So what drives Mike Breen? We asked

him. And here's what he told us:

## **Can you tell us how you were called to Christian ministry?**

I became a Christian reading the Bible at 16 years old. I immediately felt called to be a missionary leader and over the years I've learnt to understand this more and more.

## **Where have you had ministries and how long did they last?**

My ministries have been mainly city based. In the early years I was based in poor inner city communities such as Brixton and Hackney. In the later years me and the family were based in Sheffield at St. Thomas' Church.

## **How did the LifeShapes process develop?**

When trying to teach non literary people in inner city areas I found that the method of discipleship shapes was the easiest way for people to understand the principles Jesus wanted to teach.

## **What effect do you hope LifeShapes will have on Christians and Churches?**

LifeShapes provides transformational tools that empower Christians to follow Jesus more closely.

## **Can you tell us about the Order of Mission - why it was established, how it operates, where, how many are members of it?**

The Order of Mission was established to provide a covenant community for people called to mission in the contemporary world. It was started when church leaders around the UK began to describe us in ways that led us to look at historical models of missional movement. There are about 250 members based all around the world. The three main principles that it operates on are simplicity, accountability and purity.

## **What is the burden of your ministry now?**

My call is now to coach and mentor church leaders as they take on the call to lead the church in radical mission



and discipleship.

**What are the challenges facing the church in the UK and US at the moment? Are they the same? What differences do you discern?**

The difference is mainly centered on the number of people who are God conscious and church attendees. In the US the percentage of the population who are God fearing and church attending is much higher so therefore much of the work is centered on helping churches realize the need to reach out and the perils of future decline. In the UK on the other hand, the churches and Christian leaders realize we are working in a post-Christian environment and therefore the main task is to provide tools that will equip churches to reach beyond their own congregation.

**What will you be saying to the delegates at the Mainstream conference in January?**

- Discipleship
- How to structure our churches for mission
- How to understand the Scriptures from a fresh perspective

**What do you miss about the UK**

**now that you live in the States?**  
Chocolate and friends

**Who were the people who mentored you in the faith when you were a young Christian? Who were your ministry mentors? Why?**

A young curate called John Bellam, a local pastor in Hackney called John Pearce and although they didn't know it -George Whitfield, Charles Spurgeon, Martin Lloyd-Jones and John Wimber.

Mike Breen is keen for Christians - and especially leaders - to see the days of upheaval we're living in as days of real opportunity for mission. That's why he is currently the leader of the Order of Mission - the Superior in its parlance.

The world is changing faster than the church and this often leaves us - its leaders, let alone the people we lead - feeling disoriented and unsure about where we stand and how to talk about Jesus to our neighbours.

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through such times of turmoil. And each time God has stirred his people to fresh thinking and bold action for him - from the Celtic monks to the early Methodists and on to the Salvation Army, God has raised up communities of people who take Jesus at his word and seek to model their lives on his in their context.

So check out the Order of Mission's website ([www.missionorder.org/](http://www.missionorder.org/)) and look at Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad's two books *The Passionate Life* and *The Passionate Church*. Check out the St Thom's website too ([www.sttoms.net/modules/wfsection/](http://www.sttoms.net/modules/wfsection/)). There's a host of thought-provoking stuff here that you'll find useful for your own walk with God and as you work with others in your churches.

And come to the conference and interact with Mike's sessions and the seminar strands. Ask the hard questions and come away armed with the means to fulfil the Great Commission - which is that as we go into world, we go with the intention of making disciples (the only command in Matthew 28:19), starting where we are and working to the ends of the earth.

# Giving Shape to Intentional Discipleship

Simon Jones introduces us to Mike Breen, one of our 2007 conference key note speakers and suggests a couple of ways to get the best out of coming and hearing him.



At the beginning of his book *A Passionate Life*, Mike Breen tells the story of his experience in a sun shower, which his daughters described as like being on the beach in South Carolina. They pressed him to try it. So, pound in hand, he stepped into the white tube by the pool.

And nothing happened. Naturally, everyone was disappointed. But his daughters didn't give up. They persuaded him to try it for longer and longer periods. But each time, he emerged from the sun shower baffled. It wasn't anything like being on the beach at South Carolina.

His daughters were equally baffled. How could he not think this is the best thing ever, they wondered. Persuaded to try it one last time, Mike stood and examined the space he was standing in. Having put in his pound, he'd heard lots of clicking and whirring each time he'd been in - and yet it didn't seem to do anything for him.

This time he noticed a door handle. Turning it, he entered a room 'filled with the most refreshing light rays and replicated ocean breeze I could ever imagine.'

The trouble is, he'd been standing in the changing room each time he'd been in, so no wonder he got nothing out of it.

He uses this story to launch us into

LifeShapes. The obvious point is that so many Christians are in the waiting room wondering if that's all there is to the Christian experience. They've put their coin in the slot and are feeling short-changed. Mike's passion is to help Christians get into the spiritual equivalent of the sun shower so their lives will be changed by God's grace.

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# When is a person not a disciple?

by Adam Eakins



Adam Eakins is Director of Joshua Generation. He mentors, trains and resources the 20's and 30's generation in leadership development and has co-authored 'The JoshGen guide to Manifesto for Life' (JoshGen, 2001). He also has spoken at many conferences and retreats including EA assembly and Spring Harvest's At Work Together. Alongside this he is leading a small team who are planting an emerging church in a cafe/bar in Northampton called Quench. This is part of a local Baptist church where Adam is on the leadership team. He is currently studying for a degree in Popular Culture and Sociology. Family life is full of fun, being married to Karen and looking after Joel, and Lauren who was born in May 2005.

The title sounds like the beginning to a bad joke but have you ever thought to yourself when it was that the 12 disciples, you know, Pete, Matt, Pip, Jim, Andy, Tom etc., actually became Christians? Now I know they weren't called Christians until later, so in some sense it is a bit of a non-question.



However, have you ever considered when it was that the disciples were saved? Was it the moment that Jesus said 'Follow me'? Was it for Pete when he makes his confession in Mark 8:27-29? Was it after the first Easter Sunday or was it at Pentecost? I'm not sure - maybe you have your own thoughts. There are far better people than me who can argue about this one with far greater knowledge.

But I do know that they were disciples from the moment they were called to follow Jesus. As learners (one of the definitions of a disciple) they committed themselves to learning as much as possible from their slightly unconventional but really exciting teacher, Jesus.

There was a great tradition of

religious teachers having disciples in Jesus' time. At around age 14 or 15 years most boys were now learning the family business and starting families of their own. Those left were the best of the best and would now apply to a rabbi to become one of his disciples. The goal of the disciple was not just being a student, not just to

learn what the rabbi knew, but to be just like the rabbi.

The rabbi would test the student to check to see if he was up to the task. Did the student have what it took? The rabbi didn't want to waste his time so he wanted to be sure that the boy knew what it would take. If he didn't think he was up to the task he would say something like, you obviously love God and know the Torah but you do not have what it takes to be a rabbi, so go home and continue to learn the family business. However, if the rabbi believed that this kid did have what it took, he would say, "Come, follow me."

Jesus, aged 30 years, the time when a rabbi generally began his public teaching and training of disciples comes to the Sea of Galilee. He sees

two brothers who are fishermen. This is important, they have learnt the family business of fishing so they are not disciples, they weren't good enough, couldn't cut it. Jesus calls those who didn't make it and said, "Learn from me and you can become like me."

Later he comes across Jimmy and Johnny, fishing with their dad. They are still learning the trade, the family business. If they are still under the guidance of their dad they may only be 14, 15 or 16 years old. Jesus took these lads not good enough to complete school and changed the course of human history. That is the power of discipleship when Jesus is involved.

Understanding the importance of discipleship has led me to think that the whole area of discipleship may need to be blown apart to grasp a far wider understanding than we have seen traditionally within evangelical churches here in the UK. The word 'disciple' occurs 269 times in the New Testament compared with only 3 times that the word 'Christian' is used. Maybe we should give this idea some more considered thought and discussion.

The first aspect to consider is that it would have been far easier if we had been called to make converts. How different would the church landscape of this country look if we could count all converts instead of disciples? We often use language around conversion which is not helpful and can limit what we do as leaders in a number of ways. Talk of converts, winning souls and personal salvation appear to suggest an action that needs to take



place so that the person is in the gang - got their ticket - their very own get out of jail free card.

However, in The Great Commission we are called to make disciples and not converts. A point made very well by Dallas Willard in his classic 'The Spirit of the Disciplines'. This is not simply praying a prayer (which is not in the Bible!) and off you go. No, discipleship is the 'lets have a conversation rather than a conversion which is going to be over a considerable amount of time and we are committing ourselves to growing, learning, challenging and changing.

One of the first things Jesus said in his public ministry in Mark 1:15 is, "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Repent and Believe is the two fold part of discipleship. The 'repent' relates to observing, reflecting and discussion while the 'believe' is linked to action, accountability, in other words behaviour. Becoming disciples is the process that we all need to go through more than once as we receive fresh revelation and insight as we continue in this conversation with our Heavenly Father and those around us who we have made ourselves accountable to as disciples.

There are a few people that I disciple

at the moment. Some of them would call themselves Christians and some not. Whether those who don't call themselves Christians are but don't yet fully know it, is another discussion for another time. It appears that Jesus didn't see discipleship beginning at the moment of conversion and it has certainly been my experience that some of my discipling I have done covertly.

Most Mondays at the moment I now meet for coffee with someone who I have been discipling for 11 years. We have developed a close relationship over that time and have shared in many special occasions including the privilege of conducting his marriage. When we get together we discuss all aspects of life, faith, marriage, fatherhood, football and much more. After eleven years of discipling he now prays regularly and describes a relationship with God but doesn't call himself a believer. Has the discipling here failed? No, I don't think so; we are walking together in a conversation as we both are learning what it means to seek to honour God in our lives.

So I will continue to disciple those that God gives me the opportunity to do so with, some may know it and others may not (well at least to begin with). One question I often asked people however old they maybe in the faith is

who are you discipling and who is discipling you? It is a question for all of us as we seek to live out The Great Commission.

May I take this opportunity to thank Terry, John, Matt, Matt, Brian, John, Richard and Ian who have all disciplined me at different stages of my life and whom without I would not be the person I am today.

Special mention of Rob Bell's book *Velvet Elvis* for the very helpful insights into how rabbis choose their discipleships.



Juliet Kilpin is one of the ministers of Cable Street Community Church in East London. The church developed out of the work of Urban Expression, a mission agency which recruits, equips, deploys and networks self-financing teams to pioneer creative and relevant expressions of church for under-churched areas of Britain's inner-cities. For more information visit [www.urbanexpression.org.uk](http://www.urbanexpression.org.uk). She is also a half-time Mission Advisor for church planting and evangelism.

# A Dangerous Liaison?

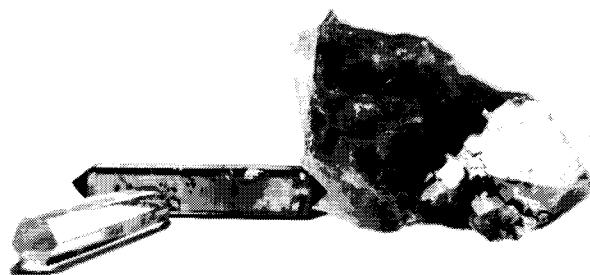
by Juliet Kilpin

This summer I went to Leading Edge with my family. Together we camped in the grounds of a school in Warwick. Apart from the two tornadoes we experienced, the weather was good and we all had a thoroughly great time chilling out with friends.

One of the consequences of living in the inner city and being part of a small church plant is that we sometimes feel that our children lack the discipleship readily available for children in a lot of other congregations. So for us, Leading Edge is part of our way of intentionally building in positive discipleship experiences for our two children. The children's programme is great, and is not simply entertainment, which you sometimes feel is offered at large Christian events rather than genuine opportunities to grow in faith.

Being part of a small church is not abnormal for us Baptists. Half our 2000 congregations are considered 'small', so I guess there are many others who face this challenge too. In a generation where discipleship isn't always offered on a plate, how do we intentionally build this into our lives, and especially into the lives of those who we are passing the faith on to? I have no answers for this one just a question for you to mull over!

One afternoon while at Leading Edge, the day after one of these tornadoes, we decided to take our rain soaked clothes to the nearest laundrette. As we



waited for them to dry we wandered down the high street and I ended up going into one of those 'new-agey' shops festooned with crystals, magic wands, fairies, angels and books about Mother God.



As I wandered around the lady behind the counter introduced herself to me as a clairvoyant. She explained to me that if I wanted a reading done she could book me in later that day, and if I needed any other help I should just ask. I offered her my thanks and told her that I was just looking around.

After picking up a few more crystals and flicking through a few more books she asked me if I was a healer too. I paused. It's not often you get asked that type of question! I thought, and then I answered 'yes, of sorts!' I explained that I was a minister of a church, (which always comes as a surprise to people when you are a woman anyway!), and without batting an eyelid she told me that she could tell

because of my blue aura! In fact, she said I have quite a large blue aura!

We then entered into a conversation about expectations. She told me how some of the Christians in the town had opposed her shop and had spread rumours about her cutting heads off chickens and weird things like that! She explained how she had an encounter with a force, a higher being, when she was a child and simply wanted to help others connect with this thing that had given her such a sense of purpose. Christians had perhaps had a misguided expectation of her and had not entered into dialogue in order to understand her more. What would they have discovered if they had...a Satanist, perhaps; a twisted materialist, perhaps; or just maybe, a woman on a journey with her Creator without the language to explain it?

Having heard her story I went on to explain that many people also have misguided expectations of Christians. In fact, at Leading Edge there was a perfect example. We were blessed this year by the presence of 'Panshakes', a mobile stall selling hot pancakes of all varieties throughout the week. I think our family got through





quite a considerable number, but we felt justified as ten percent of all sales were going to Leading Edge!

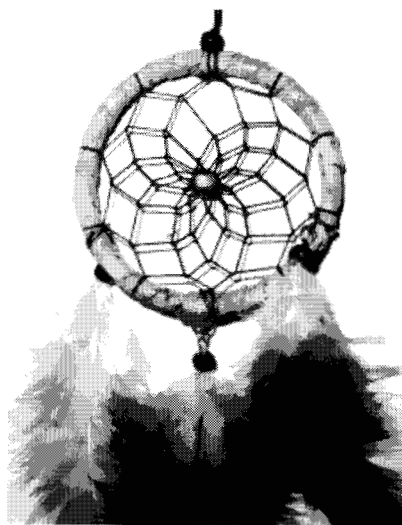
Turning up at the site they had their reservations about being surrounded by Christians for a whole week. (I often feel the same if I am honest!) However, within minutes of turning up they had people helping them set up their tent, and had a hot cup of tea thrust into their hands, made by their neighbouring campers. That's odd, they thought! Then, as the popularity of their pancakes increased, the queues formed, and often they got in a muddle with who had paid, and who hadn't. Several people got away without being asked for payment, but made the effort to pass on their money anyway, much to the owner's surprise. At most boot sales and markets where they go they can see people actively trying to get away without paying. What was going on? Then they began to hear the fun and laughter, music and worship coming out of the main venue just behind them. This didn't sound like church they thought. So they came in and had a look, and much to their surprise, liked what they experienced.

Their preconceived ideas were shattered, and perhaps they are now, as we speak, continuing to investigate this Christianity which seemed to offer so much friendship, inclusion, fun and laughter.

And what of the clairvoyant? I

wonder if having a friendly, non-judgemental conversation with a Christian minister made any impact on her? I wonder if many other Christians have dared enter her shop or whether they have simply stood outside praying against her, when essentially here (from my impression) is one woman, among many, on a spiritual journey, seeking answers, asking questions, trying to help others along the way.

When we ask questions about intentional discipleship we need to consider those who are not only a few steps away from our evangelical, charismatic understanding of faith, but consider also those who are already on a spiritual journey, but for whom Jesus is not yet a considered traveller. We often think about those who are seemingly millions of



miles away from faith - the agnostics, the atheists, the humanists, the materialists. We consider how we might use our apologetics to argue our corner and prove Christianity to them in the hope that they might find renewed meaning and purpose in life. And so we should. But on that day in Warwick I was also challenged about those who are already exploring faith, who in some ways are perhaps closer to the truth - certainly they are seeking, even if they have got diverted along the way.

One colleague of mine when starting a new expression of church heard of a spiritual fête which took place regularly in the town. He wondered how he might engage with these seekers and one day, in fear and trepidation, rang up the organisers to ask if he could run a stall. The answer surprised him: 'We were wondering when the Christians were going to get on board!' they said. Their welcome astounded him and the conversations that ensued from the fête excited him.

Let us be bold and creative as we explore intentional models of discipleship for a generation of people who are seeking a higher being, but won't come and look for that in a church, no matter how purpose-driven it is, or how sexy our Powerpoint is!



# DNA Groups - Discipling Young People

by Tim Moyler

Our youth group - The Barn - is a source of inspiration, pleasure, and even pride to those of us looking on. Around 40 teenagers, with a full-time youth worker and volunteer team, meet every Wednesday evening and Sunday morning. Some of these young people have grown up in the church, others have been invited. The Barn meetings provide fellowship, worship and relevant Bible-based input. People from other churches comment on how blessed we are... and we know it!

However, some have slipped away. Why was this? Did our young people really feel understood, valued, included? How could we be sure that every Barn member had a real experience of what it means to follow Jesus? And could they communicate that to others? And what about those going to university - were they graduating from The Barn as reproducing disciples of Jesus, with the confidence to make good choices?

We talked with Barn members and they told us they wanted to go deeper. They needed a safe place, outside of their family, where they would be accepted, where they could open up in a secure environment and where they could ask their questions, about church, Jesus, the Bible, life... in fact anything, without feeling stupid.

We concluded that single sex groups of three or four, with an adult leader, were the answer. When we put this to them, they jumped at it. When we said it would be challenging, that they would need to be accountable to the leader and the group, and that it would be "Jesus centred and great commission focused", they were not put off! The groups were to be called DNA - we wanted to see genuine *discipleship*, *nurture* and *accountability* taking place among our young people.

Our church is a gold mine of life experience and godly wisdom. But who would give up an hour or two



every fortnight, would be available in-between meetings, and would invest time in prayer and preparation when so many were already busy with jobs, family and existing church activities? One Sunday morning, the vision for DNA Groups was explained and we were all challenged to ask God whether we should be leading a group. After the service, a small impromptu queue formed and we soon had around 20 adults wanting to know more.

By Autumn 2005, ten DNA Groups were up and running. We had lots to learn and there was a settling in period for both group members and leaders. Some groups naturally adapted to the needs of their members. Some needed some materials and resources to provide a framework and, one year later, we have built up a small library of useful tools.

By the end of the first year, some members had slipped away. Perhaps they were not ready for the extra challenge. But we do have some wonderful stories of changed lives. Some have learnt to ask for help, rather than just battle on with life's challenges. Others have learnt the importance of trust and confidentiality - hallmarks of a DNA Group. One lad

was inspired to jump on his bike and get fit. He wrote, "DNA has been a great help to me... it has allowed me to get closer to God. I can bring up personal issues in a relaxed and confidential environment." His mother wrote, "There is more of a solidity about his faith and life choices." A 19 year-old wrote, "I have been baptised and become more confident. With the help of the group leader I have been able to follow what God has put on my heart, to become a football coach". In the summer, he went on an overseas mission, coaching and sharing Jesus with young people.

The new academic year has begun and it's all change. Some new leaders have been appointed, new groups started and the new intake of 14 year-olds are being invited to pray about joining a group. Some of the older group members are being challenged to help disciple the younger ones - and they need little persuasion.

We would love to see other churches try DNA Groups and would be happy to share what we have learnt.

Tim Moyler  
Forest Hill Community Church  
tim.moyler@ntlworld.com

# Dangerous People?

Unleashing intentional discipleship  
~~Unleashing intentional discipleship~~

## Speakers:

**Mike Breen** The landscape of the Church and our culture have blurred beyond recognition. Mike Breen is intimately familiar with these challenges facing the Church and society as a whole. As a result of wanting to have lasting, satisfying answers he developed LifeShapes - eight biblical truths that transform churches and the lives of those people in them. As rector and team leader of St. Thomas' Church in Sheffield, Mike used LifeShapes to grow the largest church in the north of England, 80 percent of whom are under age 40. He's on staff at Community Church of Joy in Glendale Arizona and teaches at Fuller Seminary in California, where he helps church leaders in issues of transition and coaches church planters on how to be effective in our contemporary culture. Mike is the author of The Apostle's Notebook, Choosing to Learn From Life, The Circle, and co-author with Walt Kallestad of The Passionate Church and A Passionate Life. Mike is married to Sally; they have three children Beccy, Libby and Sam. As a family they enjoy travelling, movies, golf and eating roast dinners.

**Ken McGreavy** Ken has been involved in full time ministry for over 35 years, and has ministered in 30 different nations. In September 2000 he founded Amen Ministries, whose passion and purpose is the supporting, equipping and mentoring of leaders and leadership teams. Ken is married to Hazel, and they have two children and a granddaughter. He loves sport of most kinds

**Pete James - Worship Leader.** Pete lives in Sheffield with his wife Nicky and works for St Thomas' Church Philadelphia Campus as worship director. Through his role within St Thomas', Pete is excited about developing worship for all ages through dance, drama, and arts as well as music

## Seminar Streams

Alongside the key-note sessions there will be streams where a lively and interactive format will explore, over three sessions, different dimensions of discipleship. You will be able to choose to examine The Challenge of Discipleship from a church perspective – how do we create a church that grows mature mission- focused disciples? – or from an individual perspective – what does a 21st century disciple look like? Both will be covering a kaleidoscope of issues: accountability, 24/7 life, prayer, family, modelling discipleship, the global and environmental dimension, spiritual disciplines, LifeShapes, the persecuted church, cross-generational considerations, freedom in Christ – and more!

## Booking Form

### How to Pay

Please make cheques payable to:  
'MAINSTREAM'

£30.00 non-returnable deposit for **each** place booked.

Balance due on **1st December 2006**.

Full amount is due for any cancellation after 1st January 2007.

Please detach (or copy) and return this booking form to:

**Ian Frith**  
1 Kenilworth Close, Sutton Coldfield  
West Midlands B74 2SE  
E-mail: [i.frith@mainstream-uk.com](mailto:i.frith@mainstream-uk.com)  
0121 323 2839

### Accommodation

**Nos:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Standard:

Double @ £110 pp £  
Twin @ £110 pp £  
Single @ £125 pp £

#### En suite:

Single @ £140 pp £  
Double @ £140 pp £  
/Twin

#### Total of Accommodation

No of People - Total Price £

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please enter full details of other members in your party on a separate piece of paper

## The *Mainstream* Conference

8th - 10th January 2007

The Hayes Conference Centre

Swanwick, Derbyshire

Registration: Monday 8th from 2:00pm

Ends after Lunch Wed 10th

## The Hothorpe Gathering

By Stephen Ibbotson

Leaders of the *Mainstream* movement met at Hothorpe Hall for 24 hours over Wednesday and Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> September to establish greater clarity in its vision and purpose.

Consideration centred around a prepared understanding that ***Mainstream is a Word and Spirit network of missionary leaders and churches intent on making missionary disciples.***

*Time was spent considering what this means. The understanding developed was that a missionary disciple is one who pursues the life and aims of the Kingdom as a priority in every walk of life.*

*To achieve this will require gathering missionary leaders in local and regional gatherings that have a relational ethos. Throughout the 24 hours time was spent using the *LifeShapes* material developed at St Thomas, Sheffield, under the guidance of Paul Maconochie. A member of the Leadership Team, Stephen Ibbotson said, 'In 30 years of ministry I've been in many ministers' meetings where we talk endlessly about the professional stuff of ministry. Using *LifeShapes* at a group recently immediately changed the agenda from professional talk to sharing personally.'*

The gathering also explored how it would be a Spirit-led movement. In this it will prioritise Days of Prayer and Fasting, where the priority is not to discuss and decide, but to seek God, pray and wait on him to hear his voice. It wants to move beyond a committee-based ethos.

The place of apostolic ministry was also highlighted as essential. The gathering was reminded that *Mainstream* aspires to being an apostolic-led movement. More work is needed to understand what this means within a tradition that has a congregational ethos and practice.

The provision of a place for leaders to regularly reflect theologically was considered. A useful model to develop nationally, which has grown within *Mainstream* North, is having Theology Days to complement Leaders Days. It is felt this would provide something truly distinctive within the movement.

Stephen Ibbotson summed up the time as 'an opportunity to define the DNA of the *Mainstream* movement. Now the hard work is putting it into practice. But we feel we are on the way, and we want others to join us and help us grow the future.'

## Building muscle among Bulgarian Baptists

By Peter Nodding

Peter Nodding, chair of *Mainstream*, and Pam Bryan, also on the staff at Purley Baptist Church, were invited to lead a conference in Bulgaria over the first weekend in October. Over eighty leaders attended from different Baptist churches in the country. Peter addressed discipleship issues and Pam spoke about getting involved in the community and pastoral care.

Revd Tedi Oprenov, the General Secretary of Bulgaria's Baptist Union organised the conference with his wife Didi. It was held at the Sofia Baptist Church where they are co Pastors. The Oprenovs have had a relationship with Purley Baptist since their training at Spurgeon's College in the early 1990s.

In 1989 there were 700 Baptists with four full-time Pastors; today there are about 5000 members with a larger number of full and part-time Pastors. Churches have grown in numbers, but there has been a need to deepen their spiritual lives in discipleship and for them to become more involved in their communities.

Tedi and Didi said, 'very important issues were covered, many small churches received encouragement, and Peter and Pam were ready to share both strengths and weaknesses and not just theological teaching. Also as Bulgarian Baptist churches do not ordain women, the visitors from Purley modelled the importance of spiritual input from both men and women.'

Also in attendance at the conference were President of the Baptist Union, Vasil Vasilev; President of the European Evangelical Alliance, Nick Nedelchev and the former General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation. However, alongside these were men and women who are exercising invaluable ministry in their different towns and cities in the country.



## Mainstream Midlands A Word & Spirit Network

It all began at this year's Mainstream Conference 2006. It was noticeable how many people were there from the Midlands. During the Conference we were asked if we would ever consider starting a group. It had been on some of our hearts for a few years but we wondered how? God has His own timetable.

At the HEBA retreat this year in February a meeting was called for people interested in starting a Mainstream group in the Midlands.

A number of people showed a great deal of interest and so we embarked on a journey to start a group. We quickly established it had to have a Mainstream DNA and it had to be different from what already was on offer in different clusters.

To help us in this quest we enlisted the help of Stephen Ibbotson who came and spoke to us at Four Oaks Baptist Church, Sutton. Eight of us attended. We spent time in worship and prayer. Stephen very helpfully led us through the morning session on the Mainstream's values.

**Get passionate about knowing God.**

**Get real in relationship.**

**Get stuck into God's Mission.**

We decided to call the group "Mainstream Midlands".

There was an earnest desire in the group for deepening of relationships with the Lord and with one another and we felt that from out of being passionate about God we would be more passionate to let other people know about Him too.

The relationships with each other aren't going to happen overnight, but



we realised if we were willing to explore together we could have a very significant group in the Midlands area that would support us tremendously in ministry, family life and ignite us even more powerfully for God.

Stephen also shared a little bit on the Lifeshapes discipleship programme from St. Thomas Church in Sheffield. We feel this will help us to open up and be honest and accountable to one another.

The group asked Martin Hobgen and myself to co-ordinate. There are now 22 people interested in Mainstream Midlands.

We have continued to explore what the Mainstream Midlands group might look like and we really liked the format of the Mainstream North Group. So we have planned an exciting innovative programme drawn up by Peter Burns and Andrew Phillips for 2007 entitled "Called into the fullness of life?" and in the periods

in-between the teaching meetings of the programme, will be Fellowship meetings.

We're having a big promotional launch on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2006 called "What's it all about?" We are inviting everyone interesting in being part of a brand new Mainstream network in our area and we are delighted Rob White will be our speaker for this event. If you live in the Midlands come along and check us out.

Remember the group is in embryonic form, but it's growing as we find out how God wants to shape it, so please pray for us.

Dave Ellis  
Small Heath Baptist Church  
Mainstream Midlands

## Stephen Rand - Profile



**Peter Nodding** brings us news of the Mainstream network and other connections. Peter chairs the Mainstream Leadership team and is the Senior Pastor at Purley Baptist Church, Surrey. [Peter.nodding@purleybaptist.org](mailto:Peter.nodding@purleybaptist.org)

### Word & Spirit Network

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Around this time I had been first alerted to the vision for cancelling the debt of the world's poorest nations, and for ten years I have been at the heart of what emerged as Jubilee 2000 and became Jubilee Debt Campaign. How exciting to see a biblical concept as the catalyst for a global popular movement that has an equally global impact. This reinforced my conviction that evangelism and the search for social justice are inseparable - if the church cannot live out the values of the King and his kingdom, what gospel is it that we are communicating?

Mainstream has been of great significance. It was at a Mainstream Conference where Susan and I first sought and received a fresh experience of God's Spirit. Rob Warner first got me involved in Mainstream leadership - and he also invited us to 'come over and help' at Kairos, the Baptist church he started in Wimbledon a few years ago that now meets in the Odeon Cinema. Here we still wrestle with the challenge of being faithful to the gospel and exploring its relevance to contemporary life, whether that is in a wonderfully open and flexible approach to Sunday services or building relationships for the kingdom on the local estate.

Years ago David Coffey came to Tearfund and challenged the leadership team to articulate their core calling to ministry. That was the moment when I realised that my passion was all about encouraging the church to be the church that God intended. Right now I am grateful that I can still focus full-time on that passion - through Mainstream leadership, writing daily Bible notes for Bible Reading Fellowship - as well as through my current paid employment, mainly with Open Doors and with one day for Kairos and one day for Jubilee Debt Campaign.



**M**y initial Christian understanding came from an upbringing in a Brethren assembly - here I gained a love of biblical study and my conviction about the corporate nature of church leadership. At Crusaders I not only learned the virtues of interdenominationalism - I also met my wife Susan on a Crusader work party at the Mayflower Centre.

I was a student at the end of the Sixties, longing to change the world, appalled by the reality of global poverty - and struggling to find any sign that Christians might share these concerns. I might well have given up on church altogether had it not been for Susan, my conviction as a history student that Christianity was true, and discovering Tearfund as a network of Christians not only concerned, but doing something about it.

Susan and I became voluntary Tearcraft sales reps. Then Tearfund advertised for someone to develop their volunteer scheme, and I began travelling the country meeting people with similar enthusiasms and speaking in many churches. A number of roles on the Tearfund leadership team followed - which meant the enormous privilege of seeing God at work through his people in remote places and challenging circumstances, a unique form of theological education through the global Christian family, which I attempted to share in a book: *Guinea Pig for Lunch*.

# Discipleship

by Sandra Crawford

**Y**ou have got one minute to write down the 10 sermons that have had the most influence on your life (I reckon even preachers will struggle to get above 3!!)

You now have another minute to write down 10 people who have had the most influence on your life.

When I analysed my list of 10 people it was mostly made up of Christian leaders who had taken me under their wing at some point or another in my life (it also included my mum and my husband). I've been a follower of Jesus for 25 years, and as I look back there have been a number of key people, who have encouraged, challenged, taught, given me opportunities to serve, and invested time in me. They allowed me into their homes, their families and their lives, and I watched and learnt. There have also been times when I have chosen to go it alone, and soon found myself in a mess.

I look at the life of Jesus and see him spending time with people, investing in people, loving people, and doing life. He had the 12 disciples, who he spent oodles of time with. Out of those 12, there were three who he seemed to have a closer friendship with, and then there was John who had a special relationship with Jesus. With the disciples, Jesus loved, cared, hung out, went on picnics, went fishing, went to weddings, ate with them, taught them, delegated to them, chastised them, went on walks with them, he lived life with them. Beyond this group there was a wider group, and then the hundreds of people whose lives Jesus touched.

I am a youthworker. For youthworkers Matthew 28:19 says

'Therefore go and make youth groups in all nations, playing crazy games, eating pizza, and baptizing them in the name of

the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them about sex, drugs, self esteem, Big Brother, relationships, and other stuff which crops up on the journey'.

A minister recently said to me that youth work was about babysitting young people, and we needed to get more serious about discipleship. I have to admit, I couldn't even be bothered to respond, I think I smiled sweetly and kept my mouth shut (a rarity for me).

If I look back to a particular group of young people I worked amongst over a period of 8 years, we spent loads of time together. We had teaching times (usually Sunday mornings, or cell group), we had youth group nights where we ran off energy, invited friends, ate too much junk food, we also had a fairly open house, and young people would drop in, eat our food, watch TV, play with our children's toys...just be part of our lives. Sometimes they would come wanting to talk through a particular issue; sometimes they just wanted to 'be'.

Opportunities to talk through issues, to challenge behaviour, to encourage, to bounce around ideas often came naturally as they ate us out of house and home.

Within this group of about 12 young people, I had a closer friendship with some than others. One of those young people I still have a close friendship with. For the past 11 years I've had the privilege of intentionally walking alongside Helen; through school, GCSEs and the fear of failure, family issues, death of family members, sibling rivalry, college and career choices, and she has walked with me through the ups and downs of being a minister,

the birth of 2 children (well she wasn't actually there for the event, but you know what I mean). She has seen the good and the bad, the times I've messed up, and the times I've struggled to get up and carry on. She has seen a normal Christian trying to live for Jesus 24/7. I haven't been the only person that has walked with her; in fact I made sure there were others. Our relationship has changed on the way, she has grown from being a 12-year-old girl in the youth group, to a young leader, and now a young adult, a family friend, and a peer as she is now a children's worker in a Baptist church.

There are dangers of having such an in-depth and close friendship with a young person, however I was also being disciplined and mentored, and my relationship with Helen was often part of those discussions. I recognise the dangers of creating dependency, of being accused of favouritism, of creating a clone (please God, no!); but let's recognise the dangers, strive to avoid them and get on with the task.

When I was at college I remember studying part of a module on Discipleship, it consisted of critiquing various books, courses, and ready to use meeting guides. I found this quite a weird way of looking at discipleship, because for me discipleship means intentionally walking alongside someone; living life together.

Discipleship cannot be confined to a series of courses that we offer, the latest book or gimmick that we can buy. It can't be a something that we can tick the box on our aims and objectives at the end of the year; it should be an ongoing process for each of us. It is about taking Jesus' example and doing life together.



*Sandra is a Youth Specialist Minister and has been a missionary to the North West of England for the past 12 years (originally from Essex). She is currently the Regional Minister for Youth for the NWBA and also the Youth Pastor at Leyland Baptist Church. She has been involved in youth work for 21 years (go on say it...she doesn't look old enough...thank you!) She is passionate about seeing young people and young adults come to know Jesus, learn to walk with him, serve him within their culture and amongst their peers. She also wants to see them being an active part of God's family in the local and wider church.*

*Sandra is married to Tony (also a Baptist Minister), and they have two children, Abbie and Luke.*

# Just Discipleship: What God has Joined Together...

by Stephen Rand

Writing a regular column is like preaching every Sunday: occasionally you have that uneasy feeling that you might be repeating yourself! So I checked back (because, like every writer and preacher, I'm convinced that someone might remember what I said last time - a conviction that is, of course, completely based on hope rather than reality).

I found that indeed I have been repetitive: I have regularly quoted Micah 6:8: but just in case you've forgotten - here it is again: *He has showed you, O people, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* When I'm preaching on this passage, I always ask the question (rhetorical, of course - wouldn't it be terrible if someone answered back): Is this three activities - or three aspects of one activity?

The answer is key to our understanding of discipleship; the consistent adoption of the wrong answer in practice as well, often, in theory - has crippled, almost fatally wounded, the church's mission in contemporary society. The church has been remarkably adept at sundering what God has joined together, giving the impression that there is a discipleship option that is about walking humbly with God, leaving justice and mercy as optional extras. But how can we walk with God and not share his concerns?

So here are some separations that need serious attention as church leaders model, mentor and teach discipleship - what it means to follow Jesus.

## Justice and righteousness

These two words exist in English; but there is only one word in Spanish and Welsh, for example. The impact of seeing '*Righteousness exalteth a nation*' in Gothic text on a Teddington station poster was in stark contrast to seeing '*justicia exalta a la nacion*' scrawled like graffiti across a shanty town shack in Lima, Peru. They both



mean doing the right thing - and God expects his disciples to do the right thing in their private life and their public life; in their home, in their family, in their street, in their church, in their workplace, in their community, in their nation, in the world - God is equally concerned about all. There is not - and must not be - any suggestion that our faith is for private consumption only.

## Church and society

Of course church is distinct from society, and must always be wary of assimilating society's values rather than influencing and altering them, acting as salt and light in the community to edge it into line with God's kingdom values. But our model of discipleship must always be focused on equipping God's people to live effectively in society rather than become simply faithful attenders of church meetings and services.

## Sacred and secular

So which areas of life are outside God's sovereignty and concern? Why is it that so many African politicians were educated at mission schools, attend church on Sunday and embezzle state funds on Monday? For exactly the same reason that Christians in the UK can so easily put God in a box labelled 'to be opened

only on Sundays' rather than grapple with what he has to say about medical ethics, the health service, the legal system, supermarkets, asylum-seekers and inner-city housing.

## Worship and service

We all know that worship is more than the songs we sing in a Sunday service. But do we make as much effort 'to prepare God's people for works of service' (Ephesians 4:12) as we do to prepare God's people for a service of worship? Why, when people ask us what our church is like, do we tell them about the Sunday service and not about the Wednesday community action night? And where do we most want to see our disciples - in the worship group or the council chamber? How can I 'lead worship' that connects with God and at the same time encourage people to become 'God-connecters' in their street.

## Clergy and laity

So many people have come to me at Spring Harvest and Greenbelt to explain they are thinking of moving into 'Christian work'. I recently received a communication informing me that one of my former colleagues had been 'called into ministry' after 23 years with Tearfund - I suspected he had thought he was called into





ministry 23 years earlier; and actually, from what I know of him, he probably thought that he had been called into ministry when he was a lawyer even before that! If the church is to be effective in fulfilling God's mission, it has to be effective in finding new ways of fully integrating lay people into leadership within the church and releasing them to service outside the church.

#### **Evangelism and social action**

Not so much even two blades of a pair of scissors as inseparable dimensions of what it means to love our neighbour. People who see the life-changing gospel in others will want to discover Jesus for themselves; if our message is only words it will struggle to be heard. Sometimes I feel we need less training in how to articulate what we believe and rather more in how to make friends and be friends how to love people as God loves them. I'm more than ever convinced that social action without evangelism is inadequate and evangelism without social action is ineffective. When people discover that Christians really do care, they start to care about Christianity.

#### **Individual and church**

Discipleship is a corporate activity: we cannot serve God adequately by ourselves. Not every individual can take on the debt campaign, the persecuted church, the local council, global warming, prison-visiting, overseas mission, youth work and fair trade. But as a church we can make had thought he was called into ministry 23 years earlier; and actually, from what I know of him, he probably thought that he had been called into ministry when he was a lawyer even before that! If the church is to be effective in fulfilling God's mission, it

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#### **Individual and church**

Discipleship is a corporate activity: we cannot serve God adequately by ourselves. Not every individual can take on the debt campaign, the persecuted church, the local council, global warming, prison-visiting, overseas mission, youth work and fair trade. But as a church we can make sure we affirm everyone in their specific focus and own all these issues as a body.

#### **Male and female**

The church still drastically undermines its mission mandate by unbiblical practice and still, sometimes, teaching that marginalises women in a way that appals people outside the church and reduces the overall effectiveness of the church itself. Our discipleship of men and women must take this issue seriously, otherwise another generation will once again learn the bad habits of the past.

Here's a final thought. We all need a big picture, a vision of hope to keep us going. I love this explanation of the word *hesed*, the mercy that Micah 6:8 exhorts us to love let it inspire you to encourage discipleship that expresses the wholeness and breadth of God's





# The Growing Blogosphere

by Simon Jones

**Simon Jones** is team leader at Bromley Baptist Church and author of *Why Bother with Church?* (IVP, 2001). Previously he was BMS World Mission Co-ordinator for London and the South-East. His *Crossway Bible Guide on Galatians* is published next year.

I don't know whether it's insomnia or an incurable belief that everything we have to say is interesting, but there are increasing numbers of us blogging.

A blog (web log), is an online diary, a place where someone can muse on life, the universe and everything and others can comment. So, blogs offer the opportunity to have conversations with like-minded people, debates on the pressing issues of the day and the exchange of ideas.

Over recent weeks, my blog has been humming with people offering insights and ideas about membership. The debate has been lively and pretty well informed. You can catch it all at <http://bromleyboy.blogspot.com> (note that many blog sites do NOT have www in their address).

I have many blogs logged in my Windows Explorer favourites and my morning ritual after picking up my emails is to pay a brief visit to see what people have been talking about overnight.

I always start with Mark Goodacre's unceasingly stimulating New Testament Gateway blog ([www.ntgateway.com/weblog](http://www.ntgateway.com/weblog)). I often check the links he has to other NT bloggers down the left-hand side of his blog page. Among my favourites are *The Stuff of the Earth*, written by Canadian evangelical NT scholar Michael Pahl. He blogs a lot about Thessalonians, including a sort of blogged commentary which is worth checking out (<http://michaelpahl.blogspot.com/>) and Euangelion, managed by highland-based red-headed Baptist scholar, Michael Bird (<http://euangelizomai.blogspot.com/>)

Then I check out the Baptists. Sean Winter, NT tutor at Northern and current convener of the BUGB

Council can be found at <http://seanthebaptist.blogspot.com>. Andy Goodliff can be found musing on life, culture, music, theology, books and youth ministry at <http://andygoodliff.typepad.com>. and Stuart Blythe of the Scottish Baptist College in Glasgow is found intelligently ruminating on politics, theology and faith at [www.thewordatthebarricades.typepad.com/](http://www.thewordatthebarricades.typepad.com/).

There are probably more out there but I've not come across them yet so if you blog, know someone who does, let us know.

Elsewhere, the web is not exactly awash with discipleship resources. There are lots of sites offering to sell you books - but you can go to your favourite shop for that - or recycling sermons by a vast range of ministers. You need to be pretty discerning with these. But there are some sites worth pausing at.

The Bible Reading Fellowship has launched a new web-based discipleship programme called Foundations 21 ([www.foundations21.org.uk](http://www.foundations21.org.uk)). It looks pretty lavish and extensive but it costs £9.99 a month, so you'd hope it is. You can buy a starter DVD and 45 day sub for £7.99.

Free stuff not as good and certainly not as systematic can be found on the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America site [www.elca.org/evangelism/dailydiscipleship/index.html](http://www.elca.org/evangelism/dailydiscipleship/index.html). It consists of a series of pdf files for each week of a given period with biblical material, prayers and thoughts.

Also from ECLA, by the way, is an excellent portal [www.transformingchurch.com](http://www.transformingchurch.com) which has a huge number of articles on emerging church and making disciples in the modern world.

The United Methodist Church also has a good downloads section with some useful resources on [discipleship](http://www.discipleshipresources.org/downloads.asp) ([www.discipleshipresources.org/downloads.asp](http://www.discipleshipresources.org/downloads.asp)). And there's a whole book called Transformational Discipleship written by a couple of Americans available at [www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcFTP\\_TransformationalDiscipleship.pdf](http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcFTP_TransformationalDiscipleship.pdf). It looks quite helpful.

Of course, you must check out the St Thomas Crooks site for information about Life Shapes. [www.churchnext.net](http://www.churchnext.net) takes you to the world of Tribal Generation. I'm sure I've talked about this excellent site before. Aimed at the emerging generation (whatever that is), it's full of practical, intriguing, imaginative resources that aid your walk with God. And [www.sttoms.net/modules/wfsection/article.php?articleid=26](http://www.sttoms.net/modules/wfsection/article.php?articleid=26) will take you to the place on the St Thom's website where they talk about Life Shapes. You can also go to the US site that supports Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad's *Passionate Life* and *Passionate Church* books [www.lifeshapes.com](http://www.lifeshapes.com). The books are also a good introduction to Life Shapes.

There is a tendency to think of discipleship only in terms of personal spirituality. But a key part of discipleship is how we live in the world of work, politics, the media and business. A good place to have your thinking stimulated in these areas is Ekklesia, a Christian think tank voted one of the twenty most influential think tanks in the country. A host of good things can be found at [www.ekkleisia.co.uk/](http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/).

Ekklesia is a close friend of our own Anabaptist network. A host of really great stuff on following Jesus in a complex world can be accessed at [www.anabaptistnetwork.com/](http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/).

# Being a Voice for the Voiceless

by Marion White

*The Lord said "I have indeed seen the misery of my people....I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.... So now, go..." (Exodus 3:7-10)*

As I write this article there are about two days to go before eight of us board a plane at Heathrow bound for Mumbai. I feel strangely numb to it all as I have no idea how I will feel when I finally arrive and see with my own eyes and experience with all my senses what I have heard so much about.

We have an itinerary for the week that we are in Mumbai that includes a visit to the red-light district, the slums, a half-way house, an Aids community and several Government remand homes for children and also a street children's project. It can seem so flat and emotionless when read on paper but I suspect that in the flesh it will not be like that at all.

The aim of all this is to arrive home with a much better understanding and perhaps sensing a little more of God's heart for this terrible injustice, so that we can tour round in January and February 2007 with a renewed desire to see human trafficking stopped and to encourage all people to use their voices and whatever means to lobby governments to act.

Paul Field, my brother, has finished 'Cargo', the musical story of slavery from Wilberforce to this present day, and is intending to spend all of 2007 performing it in large or small ways all round the UK.

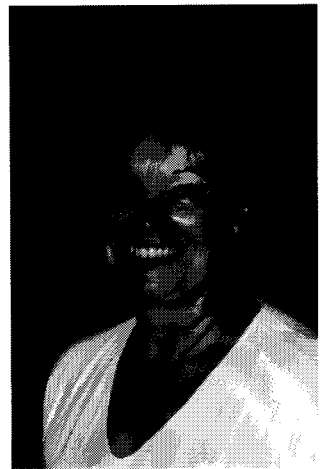
When we tour together in Jan/Feb we will be giving a multimedia presentation which will include songs, film clips from Mumbai and hopefully Haiti\*, dialogue, story and visual images. We hope to interview people in each location who are involved in helping to prevent trafficking and in caring for those who have been trafficked and possibly even those who themselves have been trafficked.

\*Compassion UK is working in Haiti with children called Restaveks who are trafficked into domestic slavery and we hope to raise sponsorship for some of these children.

The idea of the Fairtrade Market as part of the evening is to continue much of what Make Poverty History highlighted and to encourage buying fairly traded goods in this country to begin to make a difference to those who are the extreme poor in the two-thirds world.

The 4 major aims of the tour are:-

- To raise the profile of human trafficking globally and in the UK
- To enable us to be informed and make a difference
- To raise funding to support various projects
- To be a voice to governments for those without a voice



Marion is Spring harvest leader and married to Rob. She'll be reporting on Stop the Traffik over the next year or so in forthcoming issues of Talk.

Mainstream and many of you individually have been so helpful and have encouraged, given, and supported this initiative. Please continue to pray and ask God what you and your church can do to speak out and make a difference to those who are the weak, vulnerable and oppressed in our world.

## Venues for UK Tour

28 Jan - 9 Feb 2007

Presentation from 7.30 to 9.30pm

Doors open 7 till 10pm

Date	Venue	Contacts
<b>Jan</b>		
Sun 28	Manchester Town Hall	Deborah 01625 573248 <a href="mailto:debs.joshwhite@ntlworld.com">debs.joshwhite@ntlworld.com</a>
Mon 29	Oakwood Centre, Teesside	Sue 01642 781919 <a href="mailto:sue.sorrell@theoakwood.org.uk">sue.sorrell@theoakwood.org.uk</a>
Tues 30	Bradford Cathedral	Lisa 01756 701099 <a href="mailto:lisa@skiptonbaptistchurch.com">lisa@skiptonbaptistchurch.com</a>
Weds 31	Claremont Hall, Bolton	Rose 01204 577723 <a href="mailto:holdens@xalt.co.uk">holdens@xalt.co.uk</a>
<b>Feb</b>		
Thurs 1	Riverside Centre, Derby	Office 01332 332044 <a href="mailto:office@emcf.net">office@emcf.net</a>
Fri 2	King's Centre, Norwich	Dave 01603 765795 <a href="mailto:david@kings-norwich.com">david@kings-norwich.com</a>
Mon 5	Rising Brook Baptist, Stafford	Sue 01785 21475 <a href="mailto:admin@rbbc.org.uk">admin@rbbc.org.uk</a>
Tues 6	Trinity Church, Cheltenham	Office 01242 262306 <a href="mailto:conference@trinityuk.org">conference@trinityuk.org</a>
Weds 7	Haslemere Hall Doors open 7.30 Presentation 8pm	Office 01428 643636 till 1pm 01428 658710 till 6pm <a href="mailto:office@3countieschurch.org">office@3countieschurch.org</a>
Thurs 8	Wickbourne Centre, Littlehampton	Steve 01903 782744 <a href="mailto:steve.west@aruncc.org.uk">steve.west@aruncc.org.uk</a>
Fri 9	St Paul's Hammersmith, London	Nicki 0208 421434 <a href="mailto:stopthetraffiklondon@hotmail.co.uk">stopthetraffiklondon@hotmail.co.uk</a>

# off the shelf



Review compiled by Daniel Pritchard  
Pastor of Woodingdean, Brighton

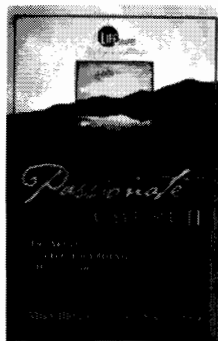
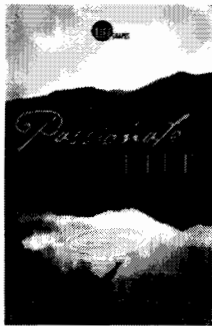


## Building our discipling skills

Making disciples is more about drinking tea with people than giving them a book. But there are some resources that can assist the process.

If you're looking for a way to get a handle on the whole LifeShapes thing and can't attend the week's introductory course that St Thom's runs at least once a year, Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad have written two books and other resources are being rolled out to accompany them.

*A Passionate Life* (NexGen 2005) is a workbook that introduces LifeShapes to an individual and shows how it can help them to lead the kind of life God wants for them. The trouble with the book is that it's explaining a relationship-based way of living as though it were a self-help programme. However, there are lots of good things here and it would form the basis for a home group or cell group to get into LifeShapes.

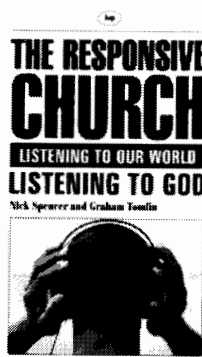


The companion volume, *The Passionate Church* (NexGen 2005), aims to equip leaders to apply the LifeShapes thinking to their leadership and especially their making of

disciples through the communities they lead.

Much of our role as leaders is taken up

with helping our churches and the individual members within them to engage with the world in a way that creates opportunities for discipleship conversations.

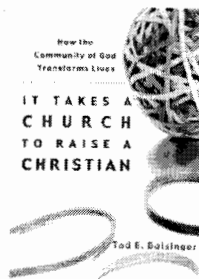


Nick Spencer and Graham Tomlin's *The Responsive Church: Listening to our world, listening to God* (IVP 2005) is a good place to start. Spencer works with the

London Institute for Contemporary Christianity and has produced a number of studies on how non-churchgoers think and feel about life, faith and church. Graham Tomlin is principal of the HTB-based St Paul's Theological Centre and the author of *The Provocative Church* (SPCK).

Together they've produced a thoughtful and well-informed guide to how the people we're seeking to disciple think about things and how we might a language that will engage them in conversation about the Christian faith.

Tod Bolsinger *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian: How the Community of God Transforms Lives* (Brazos 2004) is a theological reflection on the role of the church in making disciples. It is written for an American market but is full of good stuff for our side of the pond. In particular it

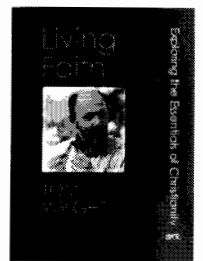


contains a searing critique of individualism and offers a rich Trinitarian theology of relationships as the basis of church life.

Brian McLaren, one of the leading thinkers and church leaders in the emerging church movement, has produced a wonderful guide for the perplexed to issues of discipleship and spirituality. Aimed at the thoughtful, seeking church avoider, *Finding Faith: a Self-discovery guide for your spiritual quest* (Zondervan 1999) is a clearly written introduction to Christianity that repays careful reading by those who've been in church for a long time.

Agape, the people behind the Jesus film in the UK, has produced a really useful DVD resource to help our churches think about what they're here for. Strictly speaking *Mind the Gap* is not a discipleship course. Rather it's a way for a church to become mission-minded and focused on making disciples.

And the peerless Tom Wright has produced a course called *Living Faith: Exploring the Essentials of Christianity* (SPCK 2005). This is a ten session DVD-



based introduction to the Christian faith delivered in an easy-on-the-ear style by the Bishop sitting at a kitchen table with some friends who are asking questions and offering responses to Tom's answers. It's clearly produced for the American market - his questioners are Americans - but no one explains the faith like Wright and this is an ideal resource for thoughtful, reasonably well-educated searchers-after-faith.



Photo: Jackie Sheppard

**Dr Nigel G. Wright.**

is Principal of Spurgeon's College and a former President of the Baptist Union.

He has just published *God on the Inside: The Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture*.

# Inclusively Exclusive

By Nigel G Wright

In identifying some of its core values, the Baptist Union of Great Britain identifies itself, in aspiration at least, as being a prophetic, inclusive, sacrificial, missionary and worshipping community (as in the BU booklet *5 Core Values for a Gospel People*). Of all these words the only one which might be thought problematic is 'inclusive'. But in what sense can any Christian community be really inclusive? After all, to participate in its central sacraments one has to believe sincerely in what they represent. Immediately therefore, an inclusive community begins to feel exclusive in its most important moments.

The problem with words is that you never know whose mouth they have been in. 'Inclusive' is a bit of a weasel word, and it is no surprise to find it being used with elasticity. In some circles it is used as a codeword for those churches which are prepared to 'welcome and affirm' practising **h o m o s e x u a l s**. Inclusivechurch.com is a network of churches which aims to change the climate and the received teaching of the church in this regard, using the word 'inclusive' as its weapon. 'We have to be inclusive, don't we?' On this basis more traditionally-minded believers might begin to feel a tad suspicious of the word.

Traditionally-minded or not, the Archbishop of Canterbury recently expressed his doubts in an interview with a Dutch newspaper: 'I don't believe inclusion is a value in itself. Welcome is. We welcome people into the Church, we say: "You can come in, and that decision will change you." We don't say: "Come in and we ask no questions."'

The fact is that there is only one way in which the church of Jesus Christ can be inclusive and that is 'in Christ'. It is 'in Christ' that, 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28). The massive inclusiveness of the Christian faith is therefore both enabled and qualified by what it means to be 'in Christ', that is to say made one with him and conformed to him by faith and spiritual union. Inevitably therefore what includes those who believe must exclude those confessions of faith and patterns of life which are manifestly other than the way of Christ.

When I was on the pastoral team at Altrincham Baptist Church we used to have an Alpha-equivalent which we called 'Workout'. This was part of our strategy as a 'seeker-friendly' congregation. The idea was to draw people into the life of the church and the faith it professed by taking seriously the journey they were on and the beliefs they currently had. However, inevitably, in the course of explaining the faith it would become clear that not every previously held belief was compatible with the Christian faith, and not every lifestyle was acceptable within it. Our evangelism was found to have a firm centre which was not up for alternation. The process of moving from 'welcoming and affirming' to 'welcoming but rejecting' was an interesting one because it would become clear that there was going to be, with some, a parting of the ways.

With Christianity, there is exclusion as well as inclusion. There are gods and lords, beliefs and practices, attitudes and instincts which cannot be

incorporated 'in Christ' but which need to be excluded. It is as well to know this from the beginning and in our presentation of the Christian faith to be up front about it. As the Archbishop said, inclusion is not of itself a value. Sometimes it would be entirely the wrong thing to do. Welcoming people of whatever colour, creed, culture, class or orientation must always be right - provided we never pretend that becoming Christians is anything other than a renewing, life-changing, conversion experience.

Where, then, does this put the 5 core values? Well, for my money they are due for a good review. For a start it was risky anyway to isolate only five values. Over time 5 core values become *the* 5 core values, as if they are all we have, a complete and adequate summary of the whole. Actually, I can immediately think of two more that should have been there from the beginning: *faithfulness* and *freedom*. We are called to be a *faithful* community in adhering to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Scriptures that bear reliable testimony to that Gospel and to the way of discipleship to which we are called. We are called to be a *free* community in that we affirm the freedom of believers in Christ, the freedom of local congregations, and the freedom of a well-ordered and kindly social order. And 'inclusive', however much it chimes in with current reputed social orthodoxies, is a word whose inadequacies have been revealed with time and is now better expressed as *welcoming*.

*5 Core Values* has not done a bad job for us. It is time to stay ahead of the game and bring them up to date.