

## College News

- The College is firing up for another year. This week Dr Martin Williams is leading his first Intensive Greek course with about thirteen in the class. Dr Scheepers is running Task3 training for CRCA pastors, having already run a course here in January and one in Perth earlier this month. Students begin regular lectures next Tuesday, 19 February.
- This year, for the first time, we will begin the year with a college camp. At the end of the first week of lectures, staff, students and their families will gather at a campsite near Anglesea for **Launch '13**. It will be great to begin the year by building relationships with each other and spending time in God's Word.
- At the end of last year the RTC Board promoted Dr Phillip Scheepers to the position of Senior Lecturer. Over the last three years Phillip has contributed tremendously to the work of the college, writing new courses, developing and now leading our distance education program, taking over the Task3 program and himself becoming fully qualified as a BILD trainer. We are deeply thankful for the expertise in missions and church history that Phillip has brought to the college.

## Distance Ed options

We are continually working to broaden the range of units available through distance education. We are, therefore, quite excited by the fact that we will, Lord willing, be able to offer three distance subjects for each semester this year. The subjects offered are:

### Semester One

TH401/601 The Knowledge of God  
NT 301/501 The Content and Setting of the Gospel Tradition  
CH 302/502 The Church from 1550

### Semester 2

PE 301/501 Introduction to Christian Ethics  
NT 302/502 The Early New Testament Church  
EM 426/626 Church Planting

Please contact Phillip Scheepers at [pscheepers@rtc.edu.au](mailto:pscheepers@rtc.edu.au) or (03) 5244 2955 for more information.

## RTC Faculty – all over the place

The RTC Faculty has been all over the place this summer – geographically speaking. Phillip Scheepers was in India, Bill Berends in Pakistan, and John de Hoog in Israel. This month we briefly profile John's trip to Israel, and next month Bill will report on his work in

Pakistan (his travel diary can be found on the RTC website).

Our OT Lecturer, John de Hoog, thoroughly enjoyed his opportunity to visit Israel and Jordan for 12 days in December. The purpose of the trip was to help him prepare to lead our planned RTC Study Tour in Nov-Dec 2013. In a few words he captures some fleeting impressions...

- Travelling Israel coast-to-coast (Dead Sea to Mediterranean) can be done in less than half a day.
- Herod the Great has left a massive imprint on the Land – Masada, Machaerus and Caesarea Maritima just three examples.
- Mt Carmel is a great place to fit lots of OT geography into a single view.
- Megiddo has probably 25 layers of civilization; you understand its importance when you see its location.
- Falafel, hummus, fried eggplant, fiery chillis and much more – a feast for the palate.
- Unedifying marketing spin jostles for your attention with real historical insight in place after place.
- Israel is very secular and there are many barriers to the gospel in the things Christians do.
- The Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea, Jerusalem, the Wailing Wall, Bethlehem – so many places, time for thinking in short supply.
- Israel lives with a siege mentality.
- Jericho – no road signs in Hebrew; it's an Arab town.
- Walk the walls of Jerusalem and understand Jerusalem's geography.
- Petra in Jordan – words fail.

Bottom line: can't wait to go again in November!

## Barkley Hall

There has been a lot of action at the RTC's residence, Barkley Hall, over the last couple of months. Mick and Jane Elliott have begun their work as House Parents and have been helping out in lots of ways as well as welcoming new residents. One of the men's kitchens has been relocated and undergone a much needed renovation, which was aided significantly by gifts from people in the Kingston church. And six large rooms have been divided into 12 smaller rooms, increasing the number of residents we can house. Most of this work was done by a team of builders who came down from Bray Park and were also assisted by some builders from Narre Warren.

It's been a huge blessing to us to have this help and we look to God to now give us a "full house" and a positive community for 2013.

## Book Recommendation

(by Dr Murray Capill)

**Kauflin, Bob. *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2008.**

This book has been out for a few years now but I have only just come across it, and I wish I'd known of it earlier. Bob Kauflin has written some great contemporary songs/hymns (one of my favourites is "O Great God") and this book distills the theology and thinking that lies behind his compositions. Kauflin approaches worship with a sense of the greatness and glory of God. He is concerned for worship to be gospel-centred and God-glorifying, not merely people-pleasing. As a musician he offers many great insights into music and song in worship, and into the skills of leading in worship. But he also covers much other ground, considering the spirituality of those who lead in worship, a theology of worship, relationships between those involved in leading worship, and some of the things that must be balanced in biblical worship, such as head and heart, vertical and horizontal dimensions, and planning alongside spontaneity.

Kauflin, who works for Sovereign Grace Ministries, can loosely be described as a reformed charismatic Baptist. That could either mean he has something to please everyone or something to annoy everyone! Actually, however, I think this book manages to provide something to stimulate everyone to clearer thinking about the way they engage in corporate worship.

## Ministry Spot

(by Dr Murray Capill)

This morning I didn't feel like getting up. The alarm went off but my eyes didn't want to open and my body didn't want to dislodge itself from its comfortable, warm, horizontal position. I had a fair bit of trouble persuading it to do what it needed to do: get up, have a shower, have a cuppa and head to a quiet place for my morning devotion. Such discipline, I find, is necessary but not easy. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

It is probably a fair to say, however, that godly people are disciplined people. It is hard to be godly if you are lazy, self-indulgent, disorganized or lack self-control. That's because godliness doesn't just happen; it is the fruit of training ourselves to be godly. That is what Paul urged Timothy: "Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things..." (1 Tim 4:7).

But while discipline is necessary for growth in godliness, it doesn't necessarily lead to godliness. Discipline might lead to self-righteousness, to pride, to legalism or to frustration. Effort alone doesn't make us holy. Even spiritual discipline doesn't necessarily make us godly. It's possible to be very disciplined in getting up for prayer, or attending church, or tithing, and yet have a heart that is really quite distant from God, or be living in sins that are deeply entrenched and unchallenged.

So if discipline is necessary for godliness yet it does not automatically lead to it, what is the relationship between being disciplined and being godly? The question is really a

theological one. How are we sanctified? How do we grow in Christlikeness? How do we become more holy? These questions really have only one answer: we grow in holiness as we grow in Christ. We are transformed into the likeness of Jesus as we spend time with him, as we have fellowship with him, as we enjoy him, as we depend on him, as we seek him and savour him. He is our life and the Holy Spirit changes and renews us as we grow in him and he in us.

As we focus on Christ and live in close fellowship with him, the Spirit slowly transforms us. Our love of Christ begins to displace other loves. Our sinful habits become less appealing, even distasteful. Our ambitions and goals are revised. Our ways of thinking and acting are incrementally changed. Our relationship with Jesus forms in us new desires, new perspectives, new attitudes and new actions. The excellence of the gospel is that Christ is not only our model of holy living but the enabler of it. He lives in us to empower us to live for him. As Paul put it, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

The key issue, then, is faith in Christ and relationship with him. And that is where discipline comes in. Spiritual discipline is simply about prioritising relationship with Jesus. It is not that times of prayer make us holy, but we need time talking to Jesus. It's not that having a daily Bible reading makes us godly, but we need to be hearing God speak to us. It's not that going to church is the benchmark of godliness, but God has placed us in the body of Christ and so we need to be a part of the body, loving, serving and worshipping alongside other believers.

Spiritual disciplines are simply the actions we take to put ourselves in the flow of grace. When our kids were smaller we often used to play Pooh sticks. Winnie the Pooh inspired the game of standing on one side of a bridge and dropping small sticks into a river, then rushing to the other side to see who's would come out first. The fastest stick would be the one that fell where the current was strongest. Similarly, I need to daily place myself in the current of God's transforming grace. There's not a lot of transforming grace in watching TV soapies, or reading glossy magazines. But there is value in a range of spiritual disciplines that put us in the flow of grace. There are practices that help form deeper relationship with Jesus.

Over the next edition or two of *RTC Monthly* I hope to reflect on some of the disciplines that help cultivate relationship with God: personal spiritual disciplines, corporate disciplines, physical disciplines and work/rest disciplines. This is a subject of great importance to pastors and church leaders because it is easy to be so busy in ministry that we short-change our personal relationship with Christ. We can find ourselves leading others in spiritual disciplines but not being disciplined ourselves. We can be disciplined in leading a church but not in walking with God. We substitute activity for sanctity.

The disciplines matter because they are about prioritising relationship with Christ, and that alone leads to holiness. So it was good to get out of bed this morning, despite what my body was saying, because it gave me the chance to begin the day with God.