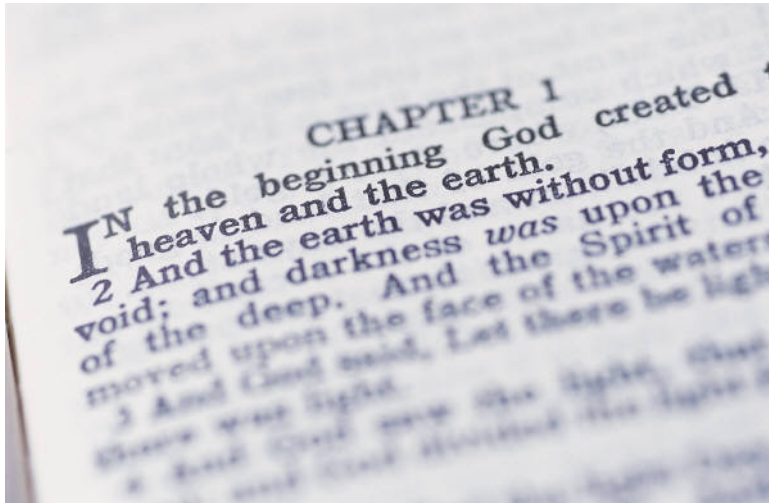


# The Bible & Whole-life Discipleship

A Resource for Leaders & Small Groups



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## Introduction

Equipping Christians with the capacity to engage with the whole Bible is of critical importance to the task of creating and sustaining whole-life disciples. A significant element within LICC's Imagine project has been a desire to help churches engage with Scripture in ways that will impact how Christians might read the Bible faithfully so that they might live fruitfully in all of life.

All too often, although we affirm the centrality of the Bible in our communal life, we do not have the opportunity to reflect on exactly how and where the Scriptures are being used and how people's lives in our churches are being impacted by the Scriptures. This resource does not prescribe a solution, but seeks to begin conversations, help you evaluate where your community is at the moment and give an impetus and context for engaging with the Scriptures further.

Consequently, this resource demonstrates some initial strategies for reading the Bible from a whole-life perspective. It includes a questionnaire to help you reflect on how the Bible is read in your community and points to follow up resources you might find helpful. We hope that as you engage in reflection and discussion you will discover creative ways forward in your context.

Intended to help a church leadership or small group begin to reflect on some of the issues, this is an integrated resource containing the following elements:

- DVD (50 mins)- an informal filming of a talk on the Bible and Whole-life Discipleship given by Antony Billington at a recent Imagine workshop for church leaders
- Audio CD (33 mins) of the talk
- Printed material (in this pack) comprising:
  - A handout connecting to the talk
  - A transcript of the core material
  - Questions to provoke engagement with the issue
  - Bible & Whole-life Discipleship Questionnaire
  - Further reading and resources

Copies of the CD & DVD are available from [www.licc.org.uk/bookshop/](http://www.licc.org.uk/bookshop/) or by calling 020 7399 9555.

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## **Using this Pack:**

### **The Bible & Whole-life Discipleship DVD or CD**

Filmed informally at a recent Imagine workshop, the DVD begins the process of group reflection. Reaffirming the importance of the Biblical material, Antony Billington raises the question of how we engage 'ordinary' Christians with the Scriptures in such a way that they are shaped and sustained as whole-life disciples living for Christ in contemporary culture. He outlines two approaches for reading the Bible from a whole-life perspective.

This talk is accompanied with an outline and transcript. For those who prefer to listen to the talk, a CD is also available.

### **Follow-Up Questions**

The questions are designed to earth the issues in practical outworking and to give a shape to your discussion as you reflect on the material in the light of your context. Further, they allow you to experiment with some of Antony's suggestions as to how to enable the biblical material to speak into a number of contemporary situations.

### **The Bible & Whole-life Discipleship Questionnaire**

This questionnaire will help you assess how people are currently reading the Bible in your church. This gives you the opportunity to:

- 1) Understand where the Bible is being read (place).
- 2) Understand how it is being read (method).
- 3) Identify the issues people experience in reading the Bible.
- 4) Articulate people's expectations about how the Bible should be read.
- 5) Ask how you assess how a person's engagement with the Bible impacts their daily life.

## **Using this material with a group:**

The materials in this pack are intended to be flexible resources for you to employ in your context as you deem most appropriate. So, they could be used over 1, 2 or more sessions. However, the following are a few suggestions for how you may want to order the sessions.

- 1) Before meeting, distribute the questionnaires to allow people the opportunity to reflect on Biblical engagement as individuals and in the church.
- 2) Begin the meeting by showing the DVD or listening to the CD, allowing time for thoughts and questions afterwards.
- 3) Spend time working through some of the examples provided in the questions. Reflect on how you found the exercise - how did you find working on this as a group, did the approach work for you, what differences did it throw up etc.
- 4) Discuss your responses to the questionnaire. Try to make this an open and positive experience as well as an honest reflection about how the Bible is currently being used in your situation. There may be a temptation to want to pass on to solutions, but seek to identify where and how the Bible is being used currently. If there are areas you haven't considered before, or responses that are surprises, try to examine these areas further.
- 5) Spend time brainstorming ideas to enable your community to engage with the Bible in fresh ways.

# **The Bible & Whole-life Discipleship: Talk Outline**

## **I. Prologue:**

### **The Poet's Delight (Psalm 1:1-2)**

Blessed are those  
who do not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
or sit in the company of mockers,  
but who delight in the law of the LORD  
and meditate on his law day and night.

## **II. Two Suggestions**

1. The Bible makes sense of the whole of life
2. The whole of the Bible makes sense

## **III. Two Strategies**

1. Reading the story the Bible tells
  - Creation
  - Corruption
  - Chosen people
  - Christ
  - Church
  - Consummation
2. Handling the literature the Bible contains

## **IV. Postscript:**

### **The Prophet's Diet (Ezekiel 2:8-3:3)**

But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

# The Bible & Whole-life Discipleship

## Antony Billington

(Transcript - May 2008)

Hello, and welcome to these reflections on the topic of 'the Bible and whole-life discipleship'.

This presentation has its origins in a workshop for leaders of churches involved in LICC's Imagine project. It was part of a larger programme of discussion and reflection designed to begin a conversation on how Scripture is used, and might be used, in the formation of individual Christians as well as church communities more broadly.

My name is Antony Billington, and I am Head of Faculty at LICC. I bring with me to this topic a long-standing interest in the Bible, a theological commitment to Scripture as God's self-disclosure - his word - to human beings, and a real concern that we handle God's word *faithfully* in order to live in God's world *fruitfully*.

There is a fairly basic structure to this presentation. At its heart is two suggestions and two strategies. Ideally, we would spend several hours exploring each of these; and, of course, it could easily be *ten* suggestions and *ten* strategies. But, as we've said, this is the *beginning* of the conversation, not the whole of the conversation. We also want to begin and end with reflections from Scripture itself. Let me, then, direct you to Psalm 1, where we encounter the poet's delight...

### I. PROLOGUE: THE POET'S DELIGHT (PSALM 1:1-2)

Psalm 1 begins by describing the way of the righteous person. How is the righteous person described? The first word of the first verse tells us - *blessed*, or *happy*. As we read on, this blessed person is described *negatively* in terms of what he or she is not like, in verse 1 - 'Blessed are those who do not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers'. And then comes the *positive* description, in verse 2 - 'but who delight in the law of the LORD and meditate on his law day and night'.

The same word 'law' is used twice. It's the Hebrew word *Torah*, which could be translated as 'instruction' or 'direction'. Those are two words we don't often put together - *delight* and *direction*, *love* and *law*. Actually, however, we wouldn't really want it any other way. Should it really be a huge surprise for us to discover that God's primary agenda in giving us his direction is for our delight? Should it really come as a shock to find that God's strategy in disclosing his instruction to us isn't to *curb* human joy but to *cultivate* it?

In fact, of course, the word 'Torah' is much broader than law in the sense of legislation. It could refer to the first five books of the Bible. Those books *do* contain specific laws for how the people should relate to God and to each other, and how their life together should be ordered. But those books also contain the *story* of how God created the world, how God called Abraham, how God was

present with his people, what God did in saving them and bringing them out of Egypt.

That's important, because we tend to think of law as something that we should *do*, something we should *keep*; but the Torah contains *grace* as well as command, story *and* statute. The Torah tells the story of the *salvation* of God that shapes the *people* of God as they walk in the *ways* of God. This is God's *direction*, his law. The happy person of Psalm 1 delights in God's direction, and shapes their life by it.

So, there's a challenge for us, perhaps. Do we delight in God's word? And if we don't, why don't we? We might be missing out on real blessing! It's a challenge for our *churches* too, to continue to value Scripture, so that *together* we may delight in God's word. And there's another challenge too. As we go through our daily life, how much do we engage with God's direction, even over mundane things? How much do we bring his word to bear on our world?

We delight in it so much, says the psalmist, that we *meditate* on it day and night. The word here is the word for muttering, musing, a speaking out loud, perhaps even so that others can hear. So, this is not an inner meditation which involves *emptying* our minds; it's about *filling* our minds with the law of the Lord - continually - reminding us that at the heart of reading Scripture is a relationship with the living God who speaks to us through his word, who calls us to muse on it, to live by it, and to find great delight in doing so.

So, I would like this to set something of an ethos for the rest of our reflections together. With that in mind, let's come to our two suggestions...

## II. TWO SUGGESTIONS

The first suggestion, or proposal, when thinking about the Bible and whole-life discipleship, is that the Bible makes sense of the whole of life...

### 1. The Bible makes sense of the whole of life

Of course, it's worth acknowledging that that doesn't always seem to be the case. There are many issues that the Bible doesn't appear to address directly: reproductive technologies, genetic engineering, cloning, animal experimentation, the new physics, corporate management... including all sorts of personal concerns: who shall I marry? how many children should we have? what job shall I do? where shall I live? do I go for gas or electric central heating? where should I do my shopping? We're all aware that the list could go on.

With issues like these, there are a number of paths we sometimes go down, not all of them mutually exclusive. I might decide that the Bible has *nothing* to say about certain things - like whether I should buy organic fruit and vegetables, what toothpaste I should use, or what car I should drive - so it's simply left out of the reckoning. Or, it may well be, if we're honest, that our problem is not so much cynicism as basic *ignorance*. For whatever reason, we simply don't know enough about the Bible. Or, maybe, we have a false perspective as to who should be working on the Bible; we've inherited a view which says that it's the job of *other*

people to understand it - like ministers, for instance - and *they* simply tell *us* what's what. Or, maybe we slice reality into sacred and secular, spiritual and physical, eternal and temporal; and we assume the Bible is only interested in the first of those pairs. It doesn't really occur to us that the Bible might have something to say about technology, philosophy, science, or the arts.

Part of the issue here, I think, is that when it comes to the relationship between ourselves and Scripture, we tend to put ourselves in the driving seat. Often, the model has been of us standing over the Bible, whereas isn't it more appropriate to think of the Bible standing over *us*? The model has been of us getting to grips with the Bible, whereas isn't it the case that the Bible gets to grips with *us*? The model has been of us asking questions of the Bible, whereas, of course, the Bible also asks questions of *us*.

I don't want to be misunderstood here. It is fully appropriate to ask how we should make sense of the Bible. On other occasions, I would like us to be able to spend some time talking about how we do that. But it is just as important to ask not only how *we* make sense of the Bible, but how the Bible makes sense of *us*, and of the whole of life.

What sets my agenda for the way I look at the world? This question really came home to me a number of years ago chatting to a colleague. I said something like: 'I was watching Ben Elton last night; he was very funny, he said such and such a thing, and made me realise what a mess the world is in.' My colleague responded: 'Yeah, but I don't need Ben Elton to tell me the world is in a mess; I'm a Christian, I know the world is in a mess.' His point was that as a Christian, whose perspective is informed by Scripture, I can understand the world better than it understands itself. At the heart of this suggestion, then, is that we become people of the Bible who engage with the world on the basis of a biblical *worldview*.

The analogy of glasses is sometimes used for worldview. They are the lenses through which we view the world, and much of the time we're not even conscious of them. My mother, who wears glasses for reading, has occasionally done what a number of people who wear glasses have done. She has been known to hunt high and low around the house looking for her glasses, when all the time they are perched on the end of her nose! We sometimes say of someone that they see life through rose-tinted glasses. (Beer goggles is a variant of the same sort of thing!) What we mean by that is that everything they look at takes on the rosy hue of the lens through which they look at the world.

But *every* pair of glasses is tinted. That has suggested to some that we think of worldview as a set of *prescription lenses*, lenses which *correct* our vision, lenses which bring reality into sharp focus rather than leave things blurred. Centuries ago, John Calvin made the point that we need Scripture to become the 'spectacles' through which we read and interpret the world. The tendency has been for us to read Scripture through the glasses given to us by our place in the world, and in the light of agendas we might bring to it from the world. But what if we reversed this? What if we recovered Scripture as the glasses through which we view the world rather than the other way around? The suggestion, then, is that we're called not just to make sense of Scripture in the light of the world but to make sense of the world - and the whole of our lives as disciples of Christ - in the light of Scripture.

So, we work towards being people for whom Scripture so informs and forms our worldview, such that when we approach issues we do so from the perspective of a biblical view of God, the world, and ourselves, so that we see things as Scripture sees them.

In all of this, harking back to the Psalmist's delight, we recognise the importance of the Bible changing us. It's not just about applying the Bible in some kind of detached, professional way; it's about *being changed ourselves*, from the inside out, to be people, as J.I. Packer once put it, whose blood becomes 'bibline'.

In thinking about the Bible and whole-life discipleship, then, suggestion number 1 is that the Bible makes sense of the *whole of life*. More briefly, suggestion number 2 is that the *whole of the Bible* makes sense.

## 2. The whole of the Bible makes sense

We adopt a perspective which looks at the whole Bible. A theology and practice of whole-life discipleship not only needs to understand that the Bible makes sense of the whole of *life*, but needs to be based on the whole *Bible*.

The Bible has lots of little details and small parts, but it has an identity given to it *as a whole*. It paints a big picture, and when we don't read Scripture with the big picture in mind, we risk seeing the Bible as a series of unconnected fragments with no coherence. We are taught to read a text in the light of its literary context, but in this case we extend that context to Scripture *as a whole*, and so see how the whole Bible hangs together. So, this is the second suggestion: if we're to have a worldview informed by Scripture, it needs to be informed by *all* of Scripture.

How might we do that? Well, let's come to the two strategies...

## III. TWO STRATEGIES

It's important to say that these strategies flow out of a recognition of how God has chosen to reveal himself in Scripture.

It's possible to us to work with an unhelpful or even inappropriate view of the Bible. Maybe, for instance, we wish that God had given us something like an encyclopedia. This is almost certainly what I would have done if God had given *me* the job of writing the Bible! It would be an alphabetical list of entries, or a numbered series of logically ordered points, beginning with the triune nature of God, ending with whether we should eat mince pies before or after the Christmas carol service, taking in nuclear weapons, vegetarianism, and cloning along the way. Wouldn't *that* be great?

But God didn't give us an inspired exhaustive encyclopedia which would cover every conceivable circumstance and issue and dilemma faced by all his people throughout the entire history of Israel and the church. He gave us a collection of different types of literature, various literary *genres*, all of which work in different

ways, but all of which are connected, amongst other things, by a common story line. And both those things are important.

So, the first strategy is reading the story the Bible tells.

## 1. Reading the story the Bible tells

One of the most significant ways of making sense of the Bible and allowing the Bible to make sense of us and our world, is to look at the *story the Bible tells* - from beginning to end. It's a strategy which says: what if we indwell the world of the Bible, what if we allow its story of God's dealing with his people to inform our view of the whole of life, so that we look at topics like humanity, sexuality, family, suffering, technology, globalisation, and so on, from the perspective of the story line of the Bible, and that story line becomes formative for our worldview. It's an approach which reminds us that we understand those topics best only in the light of the major plot points in Scripture, from start to finish.

It's not too difficult to see the Bible as a single overarching story, spanning creation to new creation. Christians look to the biblical account of *creation* for their understanding of what it means to be human, created in the image of God. The opening chapters of Genesis describe the place of humans in relationship to the world, to each other, as well as our capacity to relate with God. They affirm that the world was created good, that man and woman were created good, that male-female complementarity is good, that sexual intercourse between a man and woman covenanted together in marriage is good, that procreation is good. It's crucial these things form part of our worldview. Alas, it also goes on to show us that things don't stay good...

*Corruption* creeps in. We see how human sin has tragic effects on our relationship with the world, with each other, and with God. Genesis goes on to show the harsh reality of human existence: men and women rebel against God and are unfaithful to each other, and become estranged from others, and abuse others, and relate to each other through suspicion, envy, greed, pride, anger. It's crucial that this also forms part of our worldview.

Fortunately the biblical story goes on to show how God works first through a *chosen people* (Israel), and then tells of God becoming flesh and living among us in *Christ*. God himself is 'embodied' in what Christians call the incarnation - not as an end in itself, but because the only way we can be rescued from sin and its consequences is through the restoration achieved by Jesus' death on the cross on our behalf - in order to bring about renewed relationship with God, and with each other, and ultimately with the rest of creation.

And the story doesn't end there, for Christians meanwhile belong to the *church* of Christ, a people in whom God's Spirit lives, which shapes our character and mission in distinctive ways. And we look forward to the *consummation* of all things, Jesus' return, the remaking of the universe, and new bodies. Until then, we remain 'on the way' to becoming fully human, truly 'images' of God, with our identity finally complete at the end of the story.

The point for us is that the whole biblical story shapes our worldview, moulds the way we view God, the world, and ourselves as his image-bearers.

This has been the emphasis of a number of recent approaches to the Bible. One important example is a book by Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, called *The Drama of Scripture*. They argue that we don't make sense of the Bible on our terms, but seek to make sense of ourselves on the Bible's terms. We don't try to fit the Bible into a convenient space in our world, but to fit our world into the Bible, to find our place in the story of the Bible, to immerse ourselves in it, so to indwell it that we think and live out of its perspective. One of the main concerns of their book is that a Christian worldview needs to be formed and informed by the 'big story' of Scripture. They're not the only ones to adopt this sort of approach. An increasing number of others are doing so too.

So, to take an example, when it comes to marriage, husbands and wives need to recognise that the way they love each other should be shaped by the way the biblical story line portrays that commitment: from the creation of man and woman through the relationship between God and his people, and between Christ and his church, to the consummation with the marriage of the lamb and his bride.

We see this in Jesus' own teaching. When Jesus is asked about divorce (at the start of Matthew 19), he takes us back to the start of the biblical story, to *creation* (19:4-5). Marriage should be indissoluble; what God has joined together, no-one should separate (19:6). And yet, he also recognises the factor of *sin* in the biblical story, and allows for hardness of heart, for damage, for divorce (19:7-9). And then, a few chapters later, we are told that in the resurrection, we will neither marry nor be given in marriage (22:30)! So, we have an affirmation of the supreme goodness of marriage (this is how it was in the beginning) fairly close to a reference which somehow deprives it of *absolute* value (this is how it will be at the end). But there is also an acknowledgement that, meanwhile, breakdown in relationship is possible - though always regrettable - because of hardness of heart.

So, we can see how the story line of the Bible comes together in passages like this. Within a few chapters in the gospels, we are taken back to creation, and called to live according to that designed pattern, alongside a reminder about the difficulties in doing so because of sin and hardness of heart, all in close proximity to the expectation of what will be at the end! Jesus was a great biblical theologian, and he appealed to the story line of the Bible when he did his biblical theology!

The biblical story makes a difference to how we think about our marriages. As Paul points out in Ephesians 5, the measure of the way the husband loves the wife is the measure of nothing less than the gospel: as Christ loved the church. Which means Paul is not talking about the occasional bunch of flowers or that self-sacrificial glow husbands feel when they do the dishes every once in a while. Being a husband is bound up with our discipleship to Christ, with patterning our whole life, including our marriages, after Jesus. All this is profoundly important for a Christian worldview on marriage; and it makes a difference to how we preach, teach, pastor, and counsel about marriage.

The story the Bible tells shapes our discipleship; it shapes how we think and how we live; it shapes our giving, our hospitality, our use of time, our sexual activity,

the way we bring up our kids, the way we relate to each other, how we see the world and people in the world.

But there's a second strategy to consider, not just reading the story the Bible tells, but also handling the literature the Bible contains...

## 2. Handling the literature the Bible contains

One of the most helpful ways of gathering together what the Bible says on a particular issue is to do so on the basis of its different types of literature - law, narrative, poetry, wisdom, love poetry, prophecy, gospel, letter, and vision - and by asking how each type contributes to the big picture. And, just as the biblical story forms our worldview, so also the different literary voices in Scripture shape the lens through which we look at the world, and shape us in the process.

Let's take the example of family. How do we form a biblical worldview on family? Given our first strategy, we might say that the topic of family could be addressed from the perspective of the story the Bible tells - a story which embraces creation, corruption, Christ, and consummation - with all the implications bound up with that.

But we might also say that the topic of family can be addressed from the perspective of the literature the Bible contains. And, when we do that, as we allow the biblical genres their distinctive voices, other significant issues will come to light. Think of the Old Testament legislation about family; think of all the stories of families and relationships in the Old Testament narratives; think of the reflection in wisdom literature on the relationship between husbands and wives, and the task of bringing up children; think of the accounts of Jesus' example and teaching told in the gospels; think of the stories of the early church in the book of Acts; think of the teaching and the exhortations given in the letters; think of the hope of final harmony in the book of Revelation.

All of this means that a biblical perspective on family will not be built merely on the study of isolated passages which are then reduced to a list of dos and don'ts. There *are* some commands; but there are also stories, wisdom sayings, love poetry, prophetic oracles, the teaching of Jesus, the letters - all of which create a rich tapestry, a *biblical ethos* in which we are able to see different dimensions of family.

...

And the two strategies come together and complement one another.

A biblical perspective on *suffering* listens to *Genesis* 3, and the suffering that comes about because our relationship with God, with each other, and with the earth itself is fundamentally broken. It has to do justice to *Lamentations*, and the suffering we might bring on ourselves because God judges our wilful disobedience of him. It takes account of *Job*, and the suffering of someone though innocent, for some higher purpose. It considers *Deuteronomy*, and the suffering that comes from God's hand as a loving parent, to discipline us. It reflects on *Isaiah* 53, with God's

servant suffering on behalf of others. It includes *Daniel* and *Revelation*, and the suffering which comes about as a result of persecution, when God's people suffer for their faith. And it listens to these distinct literary voices in the larger flow of the biblical story extending from creation (and fall) to consummation (and the end of evil and pain).

A biblical perspective on *sexuality* has to do justice to the celebration of sexuality in the poetry of Song of Songs, to the circumscribing of sexuality in the legislation in Leviticus and the letters, to the contemplation of sexuality in Proverbs, and so on - all within the context of the biblical story stretching from the creation with Adam and Eve to the new creation with the wedding supper of the lamb and his bride.

How does the Bible as a whole - both in the story it tells and the literature it contains - form our worldview on these central whole-life issues? The two strategies together say that one of the profoundest ways for Christians to engage with whole-life discipleship issues is to do so from the perspective of thinking which not only embraces and indwells the entire scriptural story, but which listens to its different literary voices.

And so, finally, we come back to Scripture itself. Having begun with the poet's delight, we conclude with the prophet's diet, in Ezekiel 2:8-3:3.

#### IV. POSTSCRIPT: THE PROPHET'S DIET (EZEKIEL 2:8-3:3)

The passage presents a dramatic picture of *internalising* the word of God. It was a great thing for a prophet to learn: his words would not be his own, but *God's*. Ezekiel would not have to concoct his own message; it would be one hundred percent *divine* in origin. And yet it has to become subjectively *his own* before he can preach it to others. He must digest it and absorb it into his own personality. And the word becomes one hundred percent *human* in that process of digestion. So, they will be his own words; but God will embody *his own* words in the words of a human being. It's a great picture of what I think we're called to in our engagement with God's word. Not that we will become merely more technically competent in *handling* Scripture; nor even that we just learn more about God and his word; but that we will see something of the importance of his word becoming so much more a part of *us*.

Eugene Peterson explores this in a recent volume in his series on spiritual theology, called *Eat This Book*. He asks whether we read the Bible merely to be *informed* about God, or to be *transformed* by God. Do we read just to extract principles to apply to our lives every now and then as we need, or do we read for Scripture to nourish our lives on a continual basis? Eugene Peterson writes about the kind of reading of Scripture which understands the 'transformative power of words', the 'reading that enters our souls as food enters our stomachs, spreads through our blood, and becomes holiness and love and wisdom'.

Like Ezekiel, we're told: 'Eat this book!' Eat it, taste it, swallow it, chew on it, savour it, digest it; so that it gets into your metabolism, your nerve endings, your muscles, your bones, your reflexes, your guts, your synapses, your brain, your

imagination, your whole life; so that you don't just read it, but somehow *participate* in it, and *live* it.

I suggest to you that - in all our engagement with God through his word - we keep that picture before us as a directing principle. Scripture works not necessarily in giving us more and more information but in forming us and transforming us, from the inside out.

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What, for you, and in your particular 'patch' (related perhaps to church, work, or your individual self), are the issues to do with Scripture and its interpretation that you would like to see addressed by Christians today?
2. Reflect on how far you agree with each of the two 'suggestions'. What other suggestions, if any, would you want to make?
3. Your church leadership team decides to put together a four to six-week series of home-group studies on what the Bible says about work...
  - (a) What might such a series look like using the strategy of 'the story the Bible tells'?
  - (b) What might such a series look like using the strategy of 'the literature the Bible contains'?
4. How could a focus on 'the story the Bible tells' be applicable to how your church might shape a statement on your thinking about globalisation?
5. You have been asked to help compose a short course on what the Bible says about wealth and poverty. How might reflection on the different biblical genres contribute to this task?

# **The Bible & Whole-life Discipleship**

## **Questionnaire**

Although Scripture is at the very heart of our communities and lives as believers, we do not often make the space to reflect on the role it actually plays in forming and transforming us as disciples.

The following short survey provides you with an opportunity to begin reflecting on how Scripture is engaged with in your context. Although you may want to spend time reflecting on these questions alone, we suggest that you use them to form the basis of a discussion, perhaps as a leadership team, amongst small group leaders or with engaged individuals in your church. Think about current practices, share stories of how Scripture has been used and consider the role it has played in the transformation of your own and other's lives.

1) What place does the Bible have in the life of your church? What role does it play in gatherings, small groups etc.?

2) How are members of your congregation empowered and equipped to engage with the Bible?

3) How do you assess the depth of an individual's engagement with Scripture? What resources have you found helpful?

4) What are the challenges you've faced as an individual & group in reading the Bible?

5) How would you use the Bible to help an individual facing an issue in their home/work life?

## Further Resources

The following list provides a selection of the resources and material available on the issues considered, and makes some specific suggestions for further research. Lots of other useful stuff is available online, via journals, blogs, and other pages, if you're prepared to spend some time looking for it; it might be worth doing careful searches for some of the authors and titles mentioned here in order to chase up some of the ongoing discussion about the issues.

### On Christian worldview formation

The resources listed in this section discuss the significance of developing a Christian worldview based on Scripture. If you're new to this area, begin with Hardyman and Ryken; any of the others will do if you're already off the starting blocks and want to think further.

Bertrand, J. Mark, *(Re)Thinking Worldview: Learning to Think, Live, and Speak in This World*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2007.

As the title suggests, this is a call for readers to rethink their own perspective on the nature of reality, as well as to think about the idea of 'worldview' itself. Its three main parts address worldview, wisdom, and witness. The full text of the book can be freely browsed online at <<http://www.gnpcb.org/product/9781581349344>>. A pdf excerpt can be downloaded at the same address.

Goheen, Michael W. and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, forthcoming 2008.

Due out later this year, this promises to provide a general introduction to Christian worldview thinking and how it applies to key areas of life such as education, economics, and politics. See also their book in the next section.

Hardyman, Julian, *Glory Days: Living the Whole of Your Life for Jesus*, Leicester: IVP, 2006.

Not a theoretical exploration of 'worldview' as such, but an excellent semi-popular and short exploration of the 'worldviewish' notion that God is as concerned with our family, hobbies, and politics as much as he is concerned with our prayer life, Bible reading, and church attendance.

Naugle, David K., *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

A fairly full and technical treatment of the concept of 'worldview'. Chapter 9 can be downloaded as a pdf file from the Eerdmans website: <<http://www.eerdmans.com/shop/excerpts/0802847617.pdf>>. Perhaps more useful, David Naugle has kindly made many of his papers on this topic freely available via his website: <<http://www.dbu.edu/Naugle/papers.htm>>; this is well worth checking out.

Pearcey, Nancy R., *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2004.

A full discussion of Christianity as a 'worldview', based on Scripture, and applied to various issues of contemporary concern, particularly from a USA perspective. The full text of the book can be freely browsed online at <<http://www.gnpcb.org/product/1581347464>>. Excerpts can be downloaded at the same address, as well as other resources at <<http://www.gnpcb.org/sites/total.truth/>>. The book was republished in 2005 with a 31-page study guide, which is also available as a separate downloadable document at <<http://www.pearceyreport.com/TotalTruthStudyGuide.pdf>>.

Ryken, Philip Graham, *What is the Christian Worldview?, Basics of the Reformed Faith Series*, Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 2006.

A short booklet, and a very useful way into the topic for those new to the area.

Sire, James W., *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*, Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.

A slim, helpful book taking a largely theoretical look at the notion of 'worldview'. See Naugle (above) for a fuller treatment of the same sort of area.

Wolters, Al, *Creation Regained: The Biblical Basis for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd edn., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

This was first published in 1985, and has been a very influential work outlining the creation-fall-redemption schema as the basis for a biblical worldview. The revised edition comes with a final chapter co-written with Michael Goheen which links Wolters' approach to similar emphases in works by Lesslie Newbigin and N.T. Wright.

## On the biblical story

This section contains books, written at different levels, which overview the content of the Bible, or explore the biblical 'big story' and its significance.

Bartholomew, Craig G. and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, Grand Rapids/London: Baker Academic/SPCK, 2004/2006.

This is probably the best of the growing number of works doing biblical theology by foregrounding the significance of the biblical storyline for developing a distinctively Christian worldview. Bartholomew and Goheen trace the theme of the kingdom of God in six acts through Scripture: Act 1 - God establishes his kingdom: creation; Act 2 - Rebellion in the kingdom: fall; Act 3 - The King chooses Israel: redemption initiated; Interlude: A kingdom story waiting for an ending: the intertestamental period; Act 4 - The coming of the King: redemption accomplished; Act 5 - Spreading the news of the King: the mission of the church; Act 6 - The return of the king: redemption completed. It might be worth noting that this book was first published by Baker in the USA in 2004; SPCK republished it in the UK in 2006 in a different format. The SPCK version is shorter, has fewer endnotes, and contains sections of reflection on contemporary significance and study questions (which are not found in the Baker version); but the Baker version is fuller, and contains maps and diagrams (which are not found in the SPCK version!). A sample of the SPCK version is available online for you to... well, sample: <<http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/dosbooklet.pdf>>. The book is also supplemented by a website containing a number of useful resources: <<http://www.biblicaltheology.ca/>>.

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book By Book: A Guided Tour*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

The book by Bartholomew & Goheen does a better job of looking at the biblical storyline than this one manages, given its specific focus on the content of the biblical books, but this would provide a good supplement to Bartholomew & Goheen and helpfully complements Fee & Stuart's earlier excellent work: *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* (see below).

Glasser, Arthur F., with Charles E. Van Engen, Dean S. Gilliland, and Shawn B. Redford, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

A full book, highlighting the theme of 'mission' in its tracing of the biblical storyline.

Goldsworthy, Graeme, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament*, Exeter: Paternoster, 1981, and *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*, Leicester: IVP, 1991.

The approach of the 1981 book (explored further in the 1991 book) has been highly influential on some segments of evangelicalism in Australia and the UK. Goldsworthy argues for a

threefold idea woven throughout Scripture, which is 'God's people, in God's place, under God's rule'. When we use that as a rubric, he says, we can see God's kingdom in Eden: Adam and Eve (God's people) living in the garden (in God's place) under God's rule. But, he says, we see the same motifs again as the biblical story unfolds, with the kingdom revealed in Israel's history, the kingdom revealed in prophecy, and the kingdom revealed in Christ.

Greenslade, Philip, *A Passion for God's Story: Discovering Your Place in God's Strategic Plan*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002.

A very good semi-popular book, well worth a read.

Greenslade, Philip, *God's Story: Through the Bible Promise by Promise, Cover to Cover*, Farnham: CWR, 2001.

A set of 365 short Bible readings which will take you through the main contours of the biblical story, 'cover to cover'.

Griffin, Winn, *God's EPIC Adventure: Changing Our Culture by the Story We Live and Tell*, Woodinville: Harmon Press, 2007.

A large-format paperback, and not at all prettily laid out inside. Perhaps tries to cover too much, but the content is great (heavily influenced by N.T. Wright) and the approach excellent. This gives the book by Bartholomew & Goheen a run for its money as the best of its kind in this section.

Jenkins, Simon, *The Bible from Scratch*, rev. edn., Oxford: Lion, 2004.

An 'oldy but goody', resurrected from an earlier edition; very easy to read as well as informative.

Paul, Ian and Philip Jensen, *What's the Bible All About? Understanding the Story of the Bible*, Grove Biblical Series 40, Cambridge: Grove Books, 2006.

An excellent booklet-length treatment outlining the biblical story. Read this if you don't have time for the Bartholomew/Goheen or Griffin books. And read it even if you do.

Peck, Andy, *A Life to Die For: Discovering Your Part in God's Story*, Farnham: CWR, 2007.

Not so much on the biblical story itself as an extended reflection on the notion of 'discovering your part in God's story', this would complement some of the other books in this section.

Peterson, Eugene H., *The Invitation: A Simple Guide to the Bible*, Colorado Springs, NavPress, 2008.

A gathering together and reissue of the introductions to the biblical books provided by Eugene Peterson in *The Message*, with some shorter opening essays.

Roberts, Vaughan, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-line of the Bible*, Leicester: IVP, 2003, and *Life's Big Questions: Six Major Themes Traced Through the Bible*, Leicester: IVP, 2004.

The first book follows Goldsworthy (see above) in organising the biblical storyline around the theme of kingdom, defined as 'God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing', which is then traced through Scripture: 1. The pattern of the kingdom; 2. The perished kingdom; 3. The promised kingdom; 4. The partial kingdom; 5. The prophesied kingdom; 6. The present kingdom; 7. The proclaimed kingdom; 8. The perfected kingdom. The second book is a follow-up item which does exactly what it says in the subtitle, thus providing some helpful worked examples of the 'storyline' approach.

Williams, Michael D., *Far as the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption*, Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 2005.

Written from a Reformed theological perspective and, as you might guess from the title, looks at the scriptural story of redemption from the perspective of God's covenant with his people.

Wright, Christopher J.H., *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, Leicester: IVP, 2006.

An excellent, large book, arguing for what Chris Wright calls 'the missional basis of the Bible'.

Wright, N.T., *Simply Christian*, London: SPCK, 2006, esp. Part 2.

A significant book seeking to express, in a manner reminiscent of C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, the heart of the Christian faith. The chapters in Part 2 provide a brilliant summary overview of the biblical story.

## On the biblical genres

This section contains books which reflect on the significance (for reading and/or for preaching) of the literary diversity of Scripture.

Arthurs, Jeffrey D., *Preaching With Variety: How to Re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007.

Seeks to give attention to the rhetorical dynamics of the biblical literary types, with suggested implications for preaching.

Cosgrove, Charles H. and W. Dow Edgerton, *In Other Words: Incarnational Translation for Preaching*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

A more demanding read than the other books in this section. The key to their approach is in the phrase 'incarnational translation'; they seek to suggest how the text might have been presented if it had been written in the contemporary preacher's own place and time.

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*, 3rd edn., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

A brilliant 'how to' book which concentrates on defining the principles appropriate to the interpretation of different types of literature in the Bible. A 'must' read, and well worth reading again if you haven't picked it up for a few years. If you're buying it, make sure to get the most recent edition.

Graves, Mike, *The Sermon as Symphony: Preaching the Literary Forms of the New Testament*, Valley Forge: Judson, 1997.

Similar in concern to Arthurs' book (above), but more narrowly focused on the New Testament.

Longman, Tremper III, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind*, Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997.

A helpful introductory book which mostly focuses on interpreting and applying the different types of literature in Scripture.

Motyer, Stephen, *The Bible With Pleasure*, Leicester: Crossway, 1997.

Previously published as *Unlock the Bible* (London: Scripture Union, 1990), this is similar in scope to Fee & Stuart's *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth*, but even more popular in its approach. Excellent stuff.

# The Imagine Project

*“Imagine is an exciting blend of the visionary and the practical and the prize is a radical change in church culture that places the nurturing of whole-life disciples at the centre of our efforts to win the lost.”*

Derek Allan

## The need ‘Imagine’ addresses

4.5 million people attend church in the UK once a month or more but research undertaken by LICC has highlighted the struggle that churches have to equip Christians to live the whole of their lives as growing, missionary followers of Christ in a radically changed and rapidly changing culture. We have enough people to reach and impact our nation but, in the main, we do not resource the people we have. As Bishop Graham Cray has commented, “Churches have to realise that the core of their calling is to be disciple-making communities, whatever else they do.”

‘Imagine’ is focused on helping churches make ‘whole-life’ disciple-making central and effective in their community life, encouraging growth in faith, life, and mission in and through the lives of Christians in their everyday contexts. So the Project is driven by four imperatives: biblical, missional, pastoral, cultural.

## The scope of ‘Imagine’

Two conclusions have significantly shaped the development of the Project. Firstly, the need that ‘Imagine’ seeks to address has its roots in two fundamental flaws:

*Theological:* specifically the failure to grasp the comprehensiveness of God’s salvation and his interest in all aspects of human life. People are not fully persuaded that God is really interested in every aspect of life, both personal and public. That is why they live with the sacred-secular divide.

*Methodological:* Churches are struggling to find relevant, transferable and sustainable ways of making disciples for all of life in today’s context.

These flaws have helped determine the default settings of the church. In the main, local churches are set primarily to evening and weekend activity not to 24/7 life; they are largely locked on to the local neighbourhood not wherever Christians are; they tend to orientate towards inner piety rather a whole-life adventure with Jesus in the real world. As a result of these default settings we tend towards ‘leisure-time’ Christianity, rather than ‘whole-life’ Christianity.

So the UK Church needs a fundamental shift in church culture and this means a change in core values. This has the potential to radically transform the effectiveness of the UK Church’s ministry to its own people and its ministry and mission to those currently outside the Church. In sum, Imagine is not a project designed to offer the church a new tool, to add a raisin to the church bun, it is a project designed to add yeast to the dough, to change the orientation of church communities in the UK.

## An outline of the Project

The Project has four core foci:

- To champion the cause for whole-life disciple-making church communities, envisioning local church leaders and their communities, key influencers in the

denominations, para-church organisations and theological and ministerial training colleges.

- To run a three-year experimental church pilot programme with a small number of representative local churches in order to develop the models and methods that will effect this culture shift.
- To develop appropriate training for church leaders and the starter resources that support the task.
- To feed the above through focused biblical, historical and contemporary culture research and analysis.

To date the Project has produced two foundational booklets, which have been distributed to around 60,000 people, *Imagine how we can reach the UK* and *Let My People Grow*; a DVD for use in small groups and churches, a book and a website. There has been a wide-ranging series of consultations, speaking engagements, a conference in 2005 with highlights available in an audio CD set, and a series of workshops in 2006 with feedback on the website.

### **An outline of the Church Pilot Programme**

The three-year experimental church pilot programme commenced in January 2007. The project is now at capacity and starter resources to support the pilot have been produced. The primary aims of the pilot church research programme are as follows:

- Challenge 15 churches representing a reasonable spectrum of the UK church to live as whole life disciple-making communities.
- Work alongside these church leaders as they work it into their own lives and out into the life of their church over a period of up to three years.
- Identify the key principles, practices and resources that enable churches to start to live out a growing whole-life discipleship as communities of believers committed to 'all apprenticing together'.
- Present the learnings of this research programme to the wider church world so that others are able to appropriate and apply these learnings without the direct input of LICC.

Through the work of this last year we're hearing stories of change and we're seeing leaders re-frame their understanding of their role and start to experiment with doing things differently. At sea the Navy turns its helicopter carriers by small degree shifts - otherwise the helicopter falls off the end! We encourage our pilot churches to think of one degree shifts - changes they can make in how they do things in their church - that will take them ultimately in a new direction.

### **Anticipated outcomes from the Project**

These are likely to include an understanding of the dynamics of culture shift within local church communities, mechanisms to help leaders assess their churches as whole-life disciple-making communities, vision-casting tools for use by leaders, leadership training modules, Bible Study products, a networking of churches together, identification of best practice, key web, print and DVD publications.

We've been excited by the hunger with which 'Imagine' has been received, and by the wide range of support expressed. The opportunity is enormous and also daunting. May God give to us all his wisdom, grace and joy as we work on this together.