



Lifting the Burden

Matthew 11: 25-30

*At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. **Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**"*

This is one of the few times Matthew records Jesus at prayer. We see here a unique insight into Jesus' relationship with God. He clearly sees himself as the recipient of God's grace, and therefore responsible as God's ambassador. Following his prayer, Jesus moves directly to an invitation for others to come and share his 'yoke', that is, his working relationship with the God he calls Father.

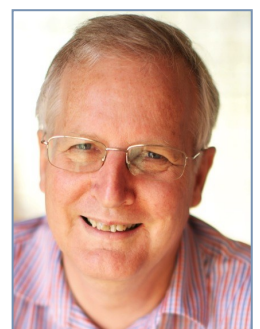
When we fantasise about how life could be we often do so in negative ways, dreaming of the absence of this, or the absence of that. "If only I was born a person of independent wealth", or, "If only I had a different job, or a more understanding partner". Common to these dreams of ours is the notion of work being something from which to escape. Why do we

always think of a 'rest' as the absence of something? When Jesus talks about the style of life which will bring us ultimate fulfilment and purpose he talks explicitly about 'take up a yoke', or 'stepping into harness' The 'rest' we long for is not to be found in the absence of toil and struggle, says Jesus, but in a commitment to the **type** of work which Jesus calls us to participate in with him. Jesus invites us to get 'into harness' with him and plough the fields of human life.

Being in harness with Jesus is not the end of toil and hard work. In fact, it may well be quite the opposite. What **is** promised however, is that working 'in harness with Jesus' in the cause of the Kingdom of Heaven is the only way we will find the real 'rest' (Sabbath) which we so desperately long for. When in harness with Jesus we are built up and affirmed; our lives discover meaning and purpose, and the struggles of life develop character instead of despair.

Being a Christian is not an easy field to plough, but it is a field rich in reward and fulfilment for those who step into harness with Jesus.

Dr Greg Elsdon



The centrality of the scriptures as our authority for Christian belief and practice¹.

Having grown up in a Christian home as a Pastor's kid², the Bible was a central part of my life. As expressed by Robert Cornwall, any issues I have seen or experienced regarding scripture have been generated over interpretation rather than a question of authority³. Throughout my childhood and into adulthood, the role of scripture was largely legalistic⁴. Our family never had a Christmas Tree or Easter Eggs because they were pagan; as a teenager I learned that rock music was demonic. Anyone who partook of the emblems of the Lords' Table that were not 'saved' would "eat and drink damnation to themselves."⁵ These edicts are not far removed in principle from the Churches of Christ churches that refused musical instruments in a Sunday service because it was not in scripture⁶, or even Thomas Campbell himself going about on foot wearing only a white robe in an attempt to live like the apostles⁷.

Clearly the proclivity for applying scripture literally, despite different cultural, linguistic and political environments, is in common between Australian churches in recent years and the Stone-Campbell movement a couple of centuries ago. The 'Last Will and Testament' asserts that the Bible is the sole authority for preaching, teaching and guidance⁸, but Barton Stone and Thomas Campbell both held strongly to the "interpretation principle"⁹, that ordinary people could "read the Bible and understand it for themselves."¹⁰ This premise is in direct opposition to my upbringing that demanded unquestioned acceptance of the message from the pulpit and discouraged any personal interpretation

as being 'dangerous'. This concern, addressed by the Stone-Campbell Disciples, recommends that "the most responsible way of interpreting the Bible¹¹" is to do so with others.

Moving from a restrictive and fear driven background into the church I currently attend has been a challenging, and occasionally frightening, experience as the I have begun to question the foundations of my beliefs. I am still coming to terms with scripture not being a book of rules¹². There is a sense of security entrusting scriptural interpretation to an 'expert', but it may promote ignorance and spiritual laziness. Besides, there is nothing as thrilling as discovering the heart of God in scripture. Congregations should be encouraged to critically engage with scripture together, and to connect with God through exploration of the Bible¹³.

Stone and Campbell were right to establish the Bible as the highest authority, and to encourage freedom for all to interpret scripture within the context of a community of believers¹⁴. Yet it is also expressed that "where scripture is silent we are silent" and so we do not have any justification to judge with human intuition¹⁵. Unity does not mean identical duplication and uniform acceptance of scriptural interpretation but rather grace, love and respect for each other within surrender to the Spirit of God¹⁶.

Heather Restall

(Heather is a Churches of Christ student minister studying a Master of Divinity at Tabor College in Adelaide. This is an excerpt from an essay she wrote for the subject *Churches of Christ History & Identity* in 2016).

¹ Churches of Christ SA & NT Vision & Mission Statement

² Not Churches of Christ

³ Cornwall, Robert D, *Freedom in Covenant: Reflections on the Distinctive Values and Practices of the Christian Church* (Disciples of Christ) (Wipf & Stock, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers) Kindle Edition. 17

⁴ Braided hair, trousers for women, pierced ears and make up were forbidden as decreed in scripture (1 Tim 2: 9; 1 Peter 3: 3; Deuteronomy 22: 5)

⁵ 1 Cor 11: 29

⁶ Robinson, E.J, "Fighting for the pure gospel" in *Christian History: issue 106*, (2013) 24

⁷ Hughes, R, "Who was that white-robed man?" in *Christian History: issue 106*, (2013) 12

⁸ Campbell, Thomas; Stone, Barton W, *Declaration and Address & Last Will and Testament* (SCM e-Prints. Kindle Edition) Kindle Location 272

⁹ Cornwall, *Freedom in Covenant*, 12

¹⁰ Hughes, R, "Freedom's ferment" in *Christian History: issue 106*, (2013) 5

¹¹ Cornwall, *Freedom in Covenant*, 13

¹² Cornwall, *Freedom in Covenant*, 28

¹³ Cornwall, *Freedom in Covenant*, 13

¹⁴ Campbell, Thomas; Stone, Barton W, *Declaration and Address & Last Will and Testament*, Kindle Location 704

¹⁵ Campbell, Thomas; Stone, Barton W, *Declaration and Address & Last Will and Testament*, 703

¹⁶ Col 3: 12 – 17

Fraud Alert - Email scams

From time to time scammers attempt to take advantage of not for profits and religious organizations. We have recently become aware of an attempt to 'hack' into a church Officer's email account. Known as 'spear-phishing' or 'CEO scamming' a bogus email was sent purporting to be from the church officer with the request to make a payment. The CCFS banking platform is secure and certified by Australia's banking regulator (APRA). This high level of security blocks scammers and often scammers redirect their attention to church Treasurers or accounts payable staff to elicit their co-operation.

Please be extra careful when processing payments via electronic funds transfer. Churches should review their internal control systems to ensure that payment requests are genuine and that the destination account number is correct. Here are some practical steps you can take to minimize this type of fraud:

- ♦ Check that the sender's email address is correct. Often an email scammer will give an email identity different from the actual email address.

- ♦ Be skeptical about requests to transfer funds or data coming from a senior staff member's email address. Seek verbal or face to face confirmation from the church officer requesting payment
- ♦ Don't use the reply function to an email you believe might not be legitimate – send a fresh one to avoid being routed to an alias address.
- ♦ Obtain invoices and associated paperwork before processing payment.
- ♦ Payments to new payees should have details verified. For example, call the payee by phone.
- ♦ As a further precaution churches should ensure that individual email addresses are removed from their website. To minimize fraud many churches use a contact form as an alternative.
- ♦ Where possible, ensure email security is set up to guard against sender address forgery.

Please advise us of any unauthorized attempt to defraud your organization via the contact form on this website.

Kind regards,

The CCFS Team



Conversations on Mission: Exploring India

Join us for coffee and cake, and an afternoon of conversation on mission in India. Church Reps, Ministers and all who are interested are most welcome.

**Sunday 26 March 2017,
2:30 – 4:00pm**

**Hampstead Gardens
Church of Christ
28 Gambia Ave,
Hampstead Gardens**

**For more info contact
Val Zerna:**

**val@gmp.org.au
8352 3466 or
0412 201 133**

Taking Stock:

Reviewing our life together as a Conference of Churches of Christ in SA & NT

In December 2016 Conference President, Doug Walladge, announced that the State Board has initiated an independent review of the operations of our Conference of Churches of Christ in SA & NT.

A small Review Team consisting of some members of State Board and others from our churches is being established to oversee the process, working with an independent consultant, Derek Linsell from Apricot Consulting, who will facilitate and resource the process.

In February the State Board spent a day with Derek discussing the objectives and scope of the review. The conversation was wide-ranging and covered many questions, including:

- What does it mean to be an affiliated congregation of Churches of Christ in SA & NT?
- What are the 'privileges' and 'responsibilities' of being an affiliated congregation of Churches of Christ in SA & NT?
- What has shaped us as a Movement in the past, and what calls us together in the future?
- How do we make important decisions together, and hold each other accountable?
- What are the most important/valued roles and responsibilities of the State Board – historically, currently, and into the future?
- What are the most important/valued roles and responsibilities of the State Office and State Ministry teams – historically, currently, and into the future?

- What are the most important services provided to the churches by the State Office and State Ministry Team?
- How are 'centralised services' going to be financed in the future?

The next step in the Review Process is to invite a broader group of people into conversation about these and other questions. To this end, two **Focus Groups** of approximately thirty people each will be convened in late March, facilitated by Derek Linsell. Individual members of our Churches are being specifically invited to participate in these Focus Groups to ensure the diversity of our churches is represented.

Information and insights from these Focus Groups will then be collated by a Review Team, and presented to our Churches for discussion at a series of nine regional meetings during the month of May. All nine of these meetings will be open to everyone who wishes to participate.

It is the intention of State Board to report the Findings and Recommendations of the Review Process to the Conference Annual General Meeting in November 2017. Regular updates about the Review Process will appear in the Need2Know throughout the year.

Please support this important initiative in your prayers and interest, and take advantage of opportunities to contribute to the Review Process throughout the coming months.

Surrender Truth Lab

Adelaide

Featuring Ash Barker

Thursday, 30. March

Western Communities Church of Christ
Danby Street, Mile End.

We're excited to announce Ash Barker will be joining us at our Truth Lab in Adelaide, as we explore what it looks like to follow Jesus to the least, the last, and the lost.

Having been on urban mission for 25 years in both Melbourne and Bangkok, Ash and his family have recently made the move to Winson Green

in the UK. Since the move in 2014, they have lived in a residential community in Newbigin House. Ash hails from Melbourne, helping found and lead both UNOH and SURRENDER.

Book launch: Building Communities of the Kingdom by Andre Van Eymeren

Special guest performer: Georgia Germein

It's going to be an incredible night. Stay tuned.

Tickets: \$10 at the Door

www.surrender.org.au

adelaidecoordinator@surrender.org.au

0431 555 778