



InterSections

An Australian journal for Christian encounter and encouragement

Editorial

Feature ①

Asking the Right Question: Mentorship

Food for Thought ③

The faith of our youth

International Letter ④

Ministry in Australia

Book Review ⑤

The Bible in Australia: A Cultural History
(New South Books, 2018) by Meredith Lake

News ⑥

Harding Students in Australia
The Point Church - 20th Anniversary
Camp Revive 2018

Interview ⑧

Views from Five Young Adults



Subscriptions

InterSections is available free in PDF format or at AUD\$27.50 (incl GST) per year for 4 print issues.

Past Issues

Past issues of *InterSections* are found at: www.intersections.com.au

Welcome to the November 2018 issue of *InterSections*.

For the first time, we have an issue that's almost entirely written by young Christians from around Australia and overseas. As they're the future of the church, it's fitting to give bright youthful minds a chance to be heard. This issue offers a platform for them to articulate their faith with honesty and love – and thus serve others with the gifts God has given them. In our *Feature* article, Christian Bargholz seeks to recapture mentorship – as exemplified by Paul and Timothy – as a means of supporting and keeping our young people. He sees mentorship as the key to bridging the gap between older and younger Christians, and mentoring as the method to help young people find meaningful responsibility within their churches.

In our *Food for Thought*, Nathan Clark explores the importance of asking questions in the pursuit of greater understanding and knowledge of the Christian faith. He encourages young people to ask questions, and those with the wisdom to answer them to create an environment where questions are valued and welcome.

Kyle Keesee writes to us from the United States in our *International Letter*, reflecting on the ministry in Australia which he and his wife, Carley, undertook. He encourages us to hold on to the Australian idea of mateship and the traditions and patterns of fellowship which that entails.

Dale Christensen reviews Meredith Lake's recent prize-winning book, *The Bible in Australia: A Cultural History*. Lake seeks to understand the influence the Bible has had in the formation of Australia and its culture. In our *Interview* section, we hear the responses of five young people to the question: 'Is the church relevant in the 21st century?' Finally, our *News* section contains updates about Camp Revive outside Melbourne, a visit by Harding University students in Victoria, and the 20th anniversary of The Point Church in Brisbane.

We hope you find this issue provoking and encouraging. We pray that it will encourage you to reach out to the young people in your congregation as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

InterSections editorial team

Feature

Asking the Right Question: Mentorship

In 1955, the American songwriter and activist Pete Seeger wrote a song that would become an icon for the folk music genre: *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* Later, the song – with its poignant lyrics – became a lament about America's involvement in the Vietnam War: 'Where have all the young girls gone?', 'Where have all the young men gone?', and 'Where have all the soldiers gone?' The song ends with a question that is, tellingly, never answered: 'When will we ever learn?'

As a young Christian, I've often fielded questions about the church along the lines of those asked in Seeger's song. 'Where are all the young people?', I've been asked. 'Where have they all gone?'





Over the years, Australian churches collectively have experienced the painful, steady drain of young people. For one reason or another, almost entire generations have gone. This is not to point fingers or assign blame. It's a call to acknowledge that, historically, as a spiritual community we have not done a good job at keeping our young people. It's a lesson we seemingly have yet to learn.

This problem is made more complicated by the fact that, often, young people leave and we don't seem to know why. It's one thing to know why someone chooses to leave the church. It's another thing entirely when someone leaves and it seems totally out of the blue. The first suggests we know the person and share knowledge of their struggles. The other is indicative of no such relationship at all.

When people leave the church, we tend to ask the wrong questions. The key to keeping our young people (or anyone for that matter) comes not from asking: *'Why did they leave?'* Instead we should ask: *'Why would they stay?'* The first is a question asked too late; it leaves us powerless to change the outcome. The second is proactive; it calls us to action in order to prevent what seems inevitable. It is the answer to this second question that this article seeks to find.

I suggest that the basis for an answer to that question is not new. It is, in fact, quite old. Written about in the New Testament, it's exemplified in the relationship between Paul and Timothy. It can be described as mentorship.

The word 'mentorship' is not explicitly found in the Bible. Yet the concept features eminently in Paul's letters to Timothy. The relationship between Paul and Timothy is like that between a father and a son, or between two brothers. As such, it was not a relationship predicated simply on common work or even friendship. It's one of deep and mutual trust, loyalty, respect, and love between members of a family.

Paul demonstrates this love by expressly stating it in his first letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 1:2), and by extolling Timothy's virtues in his letter to the Philippian church (Philippians 2:22). On both occasions, Paul calls Timothy a son. This refers to how Timothy has worked with Paul as a son does with his father. Because of Timothy's love and faith, Paul also calls him a 'brother' in the letter to Philemon (Philemon 1:1).

Paul didn't simply mentor Timothy by instruction and encouragement, but also through empowerment. He equipped Timothy to be his co-worker and eventual successor. This involved identifying and encouraging Timothy's gifts (2 Timothy 1:6), training him in those gifts (1 Timothy 4:6), and finally trusting him with the responsibility to use them to spread the Gospel (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

In other words, the Paul-and-Timothy relationship was not passive or one-way, where one person was expected to do all the work and the other all the learning. Rather it was active and two-way, where Paul had the humility to train, teach, and eventually trust Timothy with responsibility, and Timothy had the humility to submit to Paul's wisdom and guidance as Timothy served the church.

This loving relationship of trust and humility is the archetype for the kind of relationships that should emerge within the church. The older among us should love, teach, guide, and encourage those younger. In turn, the younger should respect, trust, and love the older. Through this mutual humility and love, the roles of mentor and mentee emerge.

I sometimes look around the church today and wonder what happened to my generation: one which was once blooming with potential, one which should be fulfilling its role now in its late-twenties. Instead, I see a generation where many slowly fell away and left us who remained wondering what happened.

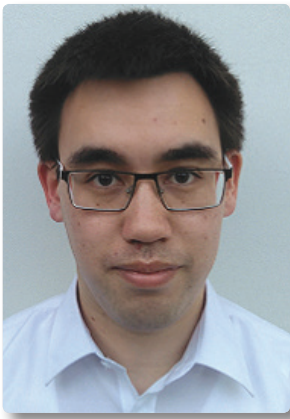
During those reflective moments, I came to realise that I've been asking the wrong question. Instead of asking those who left *'Why did you leave?'*, we should be asking those who have remained *'Why would you have chosen to stay?'*

If I ask myself that question honestly, my answer is because as a young Timothy I had many Pauls. I had older men who took me under their wing and gave me the older brother I never had. I had older people who listened to me, who treated me as a friend, a mentee, and a brother. As mentors, they helped me identify my gifts and helped me realise my potential to serve the church with those gifts. My steadfastness in the faith, if it may be described as such, is owed in no small part to the loving mentors I had as a very young man.

This is the vision that we need to recapture if we wish to keep anyone – especially our young people. To those who are older, imitate Paul as you imitate Christ. Be leaders who serve. Be willing to listen, teach, and trust the younger generations with meaningful responsibility. To those who are younger, imitate Timothy as you imitate Christ. Be followers who submit. Be willing to serve, seek to know your gifts, and cherish the wisdom of older generations.

To the entire church, let us ask ourselves how we can contribute to creating a community of mutual submission, humility, and love in which everyone has a role, where everyone is truly known, and where everyone has a chance to serve. The future of our young people, and therefore our spiritual community, depends on it. ◇

Christian Bargholz is a twenty-something millennial, an associate editor of InterSections and a member of the Eastside Church of Christ in Sydney.
christian.bargholz@gmail.com



Food for Thought *The Faith of our Youth*

Some of the most important tools of a Christian are knowledge and understanding. Without correct knowledge and understanding of God's Word, concepts like God, Jesus, and even Christianity will mean nothing to a person. However, it is dangerous to take knowledge and understanding for granted. Incomplete information or misinformation about God can distort someone's perception of Christianity.

This is especially true for the youth of today who are growing up in a world that is increasingly insistent in telling them what they should believe without letting them learn and decide for themselves. Today, many young people, as well as adults, are seeking answers that are a bit bigger than the world around them. Many are coming up short of answers.

This is a challenge that we Christians must be aware of so that we can give others the opportunity to learn about and understand the story of Jesus. This can only be done through our own understanding of who we are, why we are here, and our place in society.

Once, when I was in my high school final year, my homeroom teacher asked the class a question. He asked everyone: 'What's God like?' Many said they saw God as controlling, vengeful, and highly judgmental. One saw God as a judge, watching every action, waiting to punish someone for a moment of sin. Only one or two in the class brought up the idea of a loving or forgiving God. Most had never heard of a gracious God.

From talking with my friends, I gather that at least some of this stems from snippets of knowledge from the Old Testament. Most young people have heard about the Ten Commandments or the Great Flood. They conflate this with the New Testament idea of hell and eternal punishment for breaking God's laws.

Some young people know New Testament stories which tell of Jesus walking on water or turning water to wine. But they can't tell you why. Some don't know the distinction between the New Testament and the Old Testament. They don't know why the two testaments exist in the first place. They have gained some knowledge of Christianity, but it is incomplete. So, the picture they have based on their knowledge is usually not a nice one. This is an example of what dangers incomplete or assumed information can cause.

Could this problem of incomplete or assumed information be a problem for youth who have been raised in a church environment? It can be.

When a young person is raised in the church all their life, they've often heard stories from the Bible. Bible classes can help them cultivate their knowledge of God's Word as a child. But, there's always a point when that person has to make a choice. They have to choose whether they actually want to dedicate themselves to be a follower of Jesus or not. They can't continue being with the church if they lack interest. Or only because their family expects them to. If they aren't there for the right reasons, then they won't try to learn or understand.

This is the point when youth may question the world around them, including the things that they've been raised to believe. This is usually the time when they really start to pay attention to what goes on in church. They listen to lessons. They ask questions. They're on an inquiry process to gain a true measure of knowledge and understanding about what they've been hearing over the years.

At this point a young person born into a church environment can start running into problems. From friends I've talked to and what I've experienced myself, having been raised in a church can sometimes make this inquiry process more difficult than it should be. A young person inside the church is often surrounded by older people who have made their choices to become a follower of Jesus. When they compare themselves to those older ones, they can feel intimidated.

They can become afraid to question things. They may feel that they should have known the answer to such questions already and that others would look down on them for asking. They may fear the reaction of others when it comes to questioning the basics of Christianity. They may hesitate in case someone would take offence or claim that it's not their place to raise questions. Because of this, they never come to a proper understanding of the basics of the Christian faith. If so, they may end up shackled to the church out of obligation instead of making their own decision to be a follower of Jesus out of faith and free will.

To assume that the youth in church are knowledgeable Christians simply because they grew up in our midst is risky. Our youth must gain Christian knowledge and wisdom in the same way that an outsider would. They have to make their own decisions about God based on their own knowledge and beliefs.

So, when you greet a young person in your church, ask them how they're going. Ask them if they're interested in any questions about Christianity. Then work with them to help them find the answers they're looking for.

Just some food for thought. ◇

Nathan Clark is in the Queensland Government Service and a member of The Point Church in Brisbane. grimmuald@gmail.com



International Letter

It has been a year since my wife, Carley, and I left Australia. We had the privilege to live in Campbelltown, New South Wales, and work with the SouthWest Church of Christ for a little over two years as part of the HIM (Helpers in Missions) Program. Before that I had the opportunity to go with Kent Hartman on a few campaigns.

Living in Oklahoma now, we really miss the beach, the diverse food

(especially snags cooked on the barbie), the public transport, and even the loud birds. But most of all we miss the people. Everyone we met blessed us. Not only did the people bless us, but also God has blessed us through our experience. We learned many lessons from our time in Australia. I would like to share a few lessons about fellowship.

Fellowship is of the utmost importance. This does not only apply to church, but also to life in general. Slowing down during the day to have a cuppa with a friend allows you to build a deeper relationship. In our world of smartphones and constant connection, taking a break to focus on the present is paramount. Often we are too attached to our devices. Always being connected makes us disconnected from those around us.

Australian culture naturally works against this: like going to the park or beach for a barbeque with no time schedule; or having a tea break between Bible class and worship. Hold on to these traditions. Even if it means drinking coffee instead of tea, slow down for fellowship.

It was amazing for us to see the great fellowship between the different congregations of the Lord's church in Australia. (Unfortunately, many churches in America are a bit more isolated than churches in other parts of the world.) Between the seminars, lectureships, family camps and the like, we truly did feel part of one big church family. One of our favourite parts of living Down Under was attending the youth and family camps. We would always look forward to seeing our friends at the next camp.

But don't let it stop there. It can be easy for us to only catch up at these types of gatherings. We must fight this urge. Life gets busy. Between work, school, and family, it can be hard to find time for friends – especially friends on the other side of Sydney or even interstate. We must prioritise our time and our friendships. Sometimes we assign too great an importance to earthly things. We must put God and his people first in our lives.

Australian 'mateship' is one of the best aspects of Australian culture. Although we joke with each other all the time, the friends we made in Australia will still be our mates even though an ocean now divides us. Being mates is more than just being friends. Mates will do anything for each other. Mates will drive hours just to see each other. Mates might not see each other for a few years but, when they are together, they pick right up where they last left off. There are few obstacles that can come between the friendship of mates.

Most Christians have great mates inside the church, and some outside the church. But often it can be hard for us to try to blend the two together. How frequently do we invite our friends from work and friends from church to the same barbeque? When we have a birthday party for our kids do we invite our neighbours as well as the kids from church? Do we let our workmates or schoolmates into our life in Christ by sharing our beliefs with them?

It once came as a shock to one of my high school teachers to find out my Dad is a preacher. She wasn't shocked as in: 'Kyle, you're not as weird as other preacher's kids are.' She was shocked because my behaviour wasn't much like Christ's. After that experience, I try to act always in a way that people wouldn't be surprised to find out that I'm a Christian.

Our friends from work, school, our neighbourhood, at the shops, and anywhere else we spend our time, must know that we are Christians. There are people we come into contact with who won't contact another Christian in their entire life. We might be the only one who could share the Gospel with them. I can think of no better way to be a true mate to someone than by introducing them to Christ Jesus.

Australia and her people will always have a special place in our hearts. We learned so much about God, church, fellowship – and even more about ourselves. At the end of each campaign I attended, they would always give us a boomerang to remind us to come back to Australia. Although we don't know when we can visit, we look forward to fellowshiping with the saints 'Down Under' again. ♦

Kyle Keesee and his wife, Carley, were in Australia during 2015-2017 working with the Southwest Church of Christ in Sydney as part of the HIM (Helpers in Missions) program. keesee.kyle@gmail.com

InterSections is a quarterly journal designed to inform, inspire and unite Christians in Australia seeking to restore New Testament faith and practice. The editors are responsible for selecting material for publication, but each article reflects the views of its author(s). Advertisements in *InterSections* are broadly consistent with the ethos and goals of the journal; however, they do not necessarily constitute endorsement by the journal. *InterSections* is published by Klesis Institute (© Klesis Institute, 2018). Copyright permission is given to anyone wishing to reproduce an individual article for non-commercial purposes, as long as due attribution is given to the author and *InterSections*. Klesis Institute is a division of CommAsia Australia Pty Ltd (ACN 097136171 ABN 53702023602).

Editor: Benny Tabalujan
Managing Editor: Jenny Ancell
Associate Editors: Nathan Holyoak, Christian Bargholz
Board of Advisors: Dale Hartman, Allan McNicol, David Mowday
Enquiries: Klesis Institute, PO Box 700, Glen Waverley, Victoria 3150, Australia.
Art & Design: Gekko Graphics / H.M.Cox igecko.com.au
Publisher: Klesis Institute www.intersections.com.au
Email: info@intersections.com.au Fax: +61 3 8677 9575

To subscribe: • PDF format: email to info@intersections.com.au & request to be placed on the *InterSections* mailing list. Provide us with your name, mailing address, phone & email.
• Printed format: write to *InterSections*, PO Box 700, Glen Waverley, Victoria 3150, Australia, providing your name and address and cheque payment to Klesis Institute for AUD\$27.50 (per year for 4 issues). You may also use the on-line *InterSections* subscription form, available from www.intersections.com.au

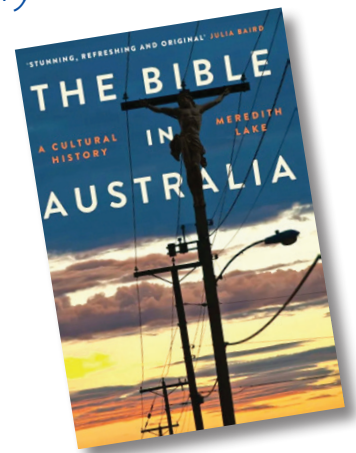


Book Review *The Bible in Australia: A Cultural History* (New South Books, 2018) by Meredith Lake



As Christians, we affirm with the inspired writers that Scripture is 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:16). Scripture is also 'living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart' (Hebrews 4:12).

Or, in the words of historian of religion Meredith Lake, 'The Bible is no dead letter ... it is a word to be believed, a means of knowing the living God.' (p 13). With these words Lake characterises the belief so many Australians have had in what she calls 'the theological Bible'.



Yet the strength of her book, *The Bible in Australia: A Cultural History*, lies in her exploration of the Bible's impact beyond the bounds of this belief. Every Australian – believer or not – lives in a world steeped in, and shaped by, the Bible. It is vital for our evangelistic efforts that we understand to some extent how our fellow Australians perceive and experience the text of Scripture. For this reason alone, *The Bible in Australia* is a worthwhile read.

Lake unfurls her thesis in the introduction. She asserts that the theological Bible is a 'globalising Bible' and also a 'cultural Bible'. The first of these refers to the use of the Bible as a tool of British colonisation: it is a 'part of what connects Australians to other places and peoples' (p 5). For indigenous Australians, the Bible 'arrived with the British flag and an influx of white settlers onto Aboriginal land ... the scourge of new diseases, and the fracturing of families, clans and societies' (p 45).

Early settlers would try to both evangelise and Europeanise the natives – with the settlers often not even being conscious of the difference in verb meanings. Subsequent missionary efforts were therefore stymied by the conflation of these aims. As one Ngarrindjeri man said in 1860, 'How do you know the Bible is Jehovah's book? Did not whitefellow make it?' (p 57).

Likewise, the 'cultural Bible' recognises the central role the Scriptures have had in building Western (and by descent, Australian) civilisation. It is what allowed Julia Gillard – one of our only avowedly atheist Prime Ministers – to say that 'understanding the Bible is one of the keys to Western culture' (p 9).

The evidence for this emerges in altogether unexpected situations: from the meticulously recorded tattoos on the bodies of convicts (e.g. fourteen-year-old Joseph Dummet's inscription 'the serpent beguiled me & I did eat') to the subversive art of Reg Mombassa's Australian Jesus; from the early settlers' reference to Van Diemen's Land as 'the land of Nod' to the scripturally loaded lyrics of Paul Kelly and Nick Cave (e.g. *Meet Me in the Middle of the Air*, *The Flesh Made Word*). According to Kelly, 'the stories ... and language of the Bible are part of the cultural air that we breathe' (p 359).

Weaving threads of all three conceptual models – theological, globalising, and cultural – Lake tells the story of the Bible in Australia from European settlement to the 21st century. *The Bible in Australia* is not quite a history of Australian Christianity, although there is plenty of overlap. Instead, the focus on the reception and interaction of Australians with the Word of God gives it more of an anthropological slant and a practical benefit. Again, it is difficult to share the Gospel with compatriots who have a foundationally different relationship with the Bible.

Apart from this utility, *The Bible in Australia* is filled with remarkable anecdotes from this country's spiritual history, drawn from Lake's extensive reading of primary documents. For example, readers may be interested to discover that the term 'Bible-basher' is an Australian invention. Some might perhaps be disappointed that the delightful synonyms 'sky pilot' and 'amen-snorter' failed to gain the same cultural traction. More consequentially, Lake shows that – despite the many flaws of early missionaries – they 'did more to learn local languages than any other group of colonists' (p 75). As a result, several functionally extinct indigenous dialects are only able to be reconstructed through the Biblical translations they composed.

When I first came across the book I had more than a few doubts. Robyn Whitaker (a Uniting Church minister who often uses her considerable learning to write contemptuously of various Christian orthodoxies) had showered it in praise on *theconversation.com.au*. Happily, my cynical instincts were proved wrong. *The Bible in Australia* is a very accessible work of popular history, written in a tone that lacks the customary academic derision for genuine believers. It is worthy of the title of 2018 Australian Christian Book of the Year – which it was awarded by SparkLit in August. It is worthy of the attention of Christians across Australia. ◇

Dale Christensen, a PhD student at Monash University, and his wife, Gina, are members of the Heidelberg West Church of Christ in suburban Melbourne.
dale.christensen@monash.edu



News

Harding Students in Australia

The July visit by Harding University students to Australia was yet another success. They visited several congregations around the Melbourne area and also the Border Church in Yackandandah/Albury in the 12 days they were here. Activities consisted of plenty of visits with elderly Christians, gardening, letter-boxing, and handing out blankets to homeless people in the city of Melbourne.

We spent a Saturday driving up to Albury, stopping in Glenrowan for lunch and to learn a bit about Australia's most notorious outlaw, Ned Kelly. We also stopped in Wangaratta and visited with Alice Jackel who had some wise words and advice for the students. We spent the Saturday night in Albury and worshipped there, encouraging and being encouraged by the Christians present.

The students were extremely thankful and desired to come back some day. A big thank you goes out to Erastos and his wife Sylvie (Harding team leaders) and the students: Sarah, Ashley, Emma, Melissa, Savanna, and Valerie. A big thank you also to those who hosted the Harding team and everyone who helped out and participated. ♦

Roberto Quintanilla rob_quinta@hotmail.com



The Point Church - 20th Anniversary

October 2018 saw the 20th anniversary of the planting of The Point Church in Brisbane. To mark this occasion we gathered on Sunday, 7 October, for a special barbecue (or *braai* for the South Africans!).

As churches, we don't often get the chance to take a step back from our day-to-day busy-ness to reflect on the past. This was a great opportunity to do that together as a family. It was a time of prayer and thanksgiving for how God has blessed us, taught us, and grown us—through the good times and hard times. It was also great to share memories with each other: old stories, old photos, and remembering loved ones who have moved on.

Many things may have changed in 20 years, but God's goodness has not. ♦

Nathan Holyoak nathan@helmsdeep.org



The Point Retreat Easter 2018



Camp Revive 2018



So do not fear, for I am with you. (Isaiah 41:10)

Camp Revive 2018 in Victoria was again a time of encouragement, learning, and fellowship among the young and young-at-heart from all around Australia.

This year, we were blessed to have Johnathan Atchley and Rosie Cronin come from Tauranga, New Zealand, and speak to us about overcoming fear through Christ. Over the three days Jonathan led our thoughts around the ideas of healthy and unhealthy fears, the false perception of Christianity as a 'crutch for the weak', as well as the words of Revelation 3:21 - 'To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.'

It was also encouraging to see two young men step up to lead, with Joel's devotional about the Lord's Prayer as a reminder of God's role as our ruler, our provider, and our spiritual counsellor, as well as Andrew's reflection on the lessons.

In the girls' split session, Rosie shared her own struggle with fear when relocating to New Zealand: facing a new country, a new relationship, a new job. She was reminded to put her trust in God. The story of the woman in Luke 8 demonstrated how our fear of rejection, punishment, and failure can be overcome by godly fear and faith. Rosie also showed us God's faithfulness by looking at Israel's history, reminding us of God's steadfast presence in our lives. I heard that the boys' split session was full of challenging questions and thought-provoking discussions as well.

As always, there was a lot of work put in behind the scenes to provide fellowship, learning, and fun for all the participants, so I would like to thank Nancy Wu Won, David Chao, and Dale and Gina Christensen on behalf of everyone.

May we glorify God through our thoughts, words and actions until we do it all again next year, if God wills it so. ♦

Faith Tabalujan faith.tabalujan@wesleycollege.net



ACCET provides grants
to churches of Christ
in Australia for evangelism



A donation is a gift that keeps on giving!

P: 0468 719 025 or 03 9890 4494 • enquiries@accet.org.au
www.accet.org.au • PO Box 552, GOSFORD, NSW 2250, Australia.

©Australian church of Christ Evangelistic Trust ABN 18 064 594 371



Interview *Dylan, Amanda, Samantha, Damian and Yichen*

For this Issue of Intersections, we asked five different young individuals at varying stages of their walk with Jesus to answer the following question: Is the church relevant in the 21st century?

1. Dylan Bourke

I'm from a typical Australian family who attended church each Sunday and children were sent to faith-based schools. Nonetheless, I drifted away from God and have only rediscovered faith recently, encouraged by my wife and Eastside Church of Christ.

My experiences of church as a teenager made me lose interest in spiritual development as almost all of the sermons were repeated, no one was encouraged to study the Bible, and there was no fellowship among church members.

Despite all this, churches remain not only relevant but critical to overcoming this century of self-gratification and distractions. Churches bring people together to encourage each other in the pursuit of a stronger relationship with God. Attending a church that will help you grow through reading the Bible and loving one another is critical. It allows you to develop an optimistic outlook – drawn from faith that there is more to life than death – and is also timeless beyond the confines of the 21st century.

2. Amanda Minder

Absolutely. But there's something essential missing from church. We regularly offer milk, not solid food. Worship, family, and encouragement are important, but they need to be accompanied by deep understanding of the Bible. If my experience counts for anything, youth want more. We don't want fancy power-points or teen-life focused sermons. We want evidences for God, where the Bible's from, why we believe it, and the uncomfortable parts. Why does Yahweh seem so harsh? How should that affect my theology? I want Old Testament. It feels like there should be something important in there.

I know that being a young woman isn't an excuse. So—now that I'm teaching the girls' Bible class—I'm designing and teaching a Bible survey. It's a lot of work but we're all learning so much. I want the girls to have what I lacked—to have something to say. In our 'Judeo-Christian' culture, people feel Christianity is nothing different. We're full to bursting with people telling us to be good, but with so few who can explain why. The church is always relevant, but it's our job to live up to what church is supposed to be.

3. Samantha van den Bos

Attending a 'non-denominational' Christian school during Year 11 and 12 had many challenges. One of which was the exposure to differing beliefs regarding salvation doctrines or worship practices. I grew up attending the Church of Christ, with visits to other congregations still under the umbrella of Churches of Christ, and briefly experiencing a house church. However, I never fully realised or thought about the existence of other denominations. Perhaps that was ignorance and a sheltered upbringing, or maybe I am now at an age where I can understand the world around me.

It became abundantly clear to me during one of my Christian Life Studies classes that not everyone had the same views as I did. As I listened to them, their beliefs confused me and I was convicted to find a satisfactory resolution. I resorted to studying topics for myself. At first I wanted to defend my own beliefs against those

who challenged them. But later my study grew into wanting to develop my own personal understanding.

There was only so much personal study I could do before I hit a wall, no longer knowing how to proceed. So, I asked members of my church to help me. They let me explain my new-found knowledge from my studies and, in turn, explained their own beliefs with biblical evidence. From there I prayed and came to my own conclusions.

When I needed clarification, God provided that in the form of the church. Brothers and sisters who care about me and my convictions and are more than willing to support me through my spiritual journey is just further evidence of God's love for his people.

So, I believe that the church is relevant to me in the 21st century because it supports and encourages my spiritual journey.

4. Damian Grasso

The message Jesus gave us in first century Palestine is just as relevant today. Looking at the Old Testament law, and even the practices of Islam, Christianity by comparison is designed for people to express their love for God in a personal way. Instead of defining laws, it focuses on a relationship with God, which transforms individuals and their relationships with others. When we observe law, in religious and secular contexts, we should ask ourselves—have they ever been effective at changing the hearts of individuals? Or are they better at upholding structure and maintaining standards of behaviour? A relationship with the Creator transcends race, sex, nationality, or any aspect of our human identity. It is timeless. Law falls short, but love never ends (1 Corinthians 13:4–8).

'For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.' (Hebrews 8:7, NKJV).

5. Yichen Zhang

People nowadays are best at finding the fastest way to do everything—we always try and find a short cut, and we lose patience for activities that won't provide instant gratification. However, when it comes to the church, patience, consistency, and hard work are necessities. 'Sing to the Lord, all the earth, proclaim his salvation, day by day.' (1 Chronicles 16:23) There are absolutely no 'short cuts'. On the contrary, it takes a long time to even understand what it takes to build this relationship with your church and God. It is for this reason among others that, to 21st century society, the church is not seen to be relevant. ♦

