

A few months ago I had the opportunity one evening to lead a Christian Leadership Seminar for a church in south Auckland. We had a lot of fun.

The best seminar ever presented was prepared by the apostle Paul for his young friend Timothy in two powerful letters about Christian leadership. In the first letter Paul begins with the proposition that leaders need to be able to answer ‘strange doctrine’, ideas which take people away from Christ.(I Tim.1:3) In the second chapter he explains the key role of prayer in God’s preparation of our hearts to serve Him.(2:1,2) The third chapter proposes an impossible standard for leaders which should keep all of us humble in the recognition of our inevitable failure to meet the standard.(3:1-7) The fourth chapter reminds us what, why and how we are to teach.(4:11-16) In chapter five Paul begins to show how leaders need to deal with different groups in the church.(5:1-22) He saves the hardest two groups, the poor and the rich, to the last chapter. Slaves were about 60% of the population of the Roman Empire in his day. They had few rights and no freedom but Christ had set them free. There are still many slaves in some parts of the world today but the lowest paid in most developed countries are also virtual slaves to an economic system in which they are trapped by debt. The gospel shows them that they are to serve their Master in heaven who loves them and provides for them. Meantime they are to honour their earthly employer as if he was Christ.(6:1,2) They might even win him to the Lord!

Paul keeps the toughest challenge of all to last, the rich who think they have it all but are in desperate poverty spiritually. They have to choose between two gods, money or the real God. In their rush for riches they often create poverty. If instead they choose to be rich in Christ they have a wonderful opportunity to be rich in good works and so reduce poverty around them.(6:9,10, 17-19)

We are still deeply concerned for the orphans in Uganda. So far 500 are being sponsored but John Wandera hopes to expand the programme to provide for 2000 more orphans. Let Christine know on christinehanne@clear.net.nz if you want to help. Support is slowly growing for the school led by Jampani in South India so 70 kids now get fed each day as well as taught, clothed and checked by a nurse. Albert would love to link you with a needy child. You can reach him on albert.ruijne@woosh.co.nz Jane Freeman is organizing sponsorship for enslaved children in a brick works in Pakistan. She is available through my e-mail jahanne@clear.net.nz. She is also organizing the provision of very inexpensive Bibles to Pakistan and would love your help.

But there is another kind of poverty right on our own doorstep. Social commentators talk about the generation born since 1980 as the Millennial generation who were just coming of age as the 2000s began, or the Now generation because they have grown up to expect that what they want should not be long delayed. Many of them have a poverty of understanding of the Christian gospel because no-one has been able to feed them in ways they can grasp. Much of the reason for this is the way in which the culture of the organized church has diverged further and further from the culture they know. There is no point in blaming anyone for the ever deeper chasm. It is a reality of history. The challenge is to know what to do - and then do it! On Saturday, 5th October from 9-1pm we plan to have our seventh Bible Conference at Fowey Lodge. Our theme is ‘What is the good news for the Facebook

Generation?’ Most of our lecturing team will contribute to the programme. But we need your contribution so there will be plenty of opportunity for discussion and questions. Come and join us and bring anyone who is keen to hear or contribute to this vital topic.

For those who cannot be there in person we will record the day and make it available if you want it. That way we hope to widen the discussion and so reduce spiritual poverty.

Saturday, 11th of May was one of the richest days of our life. Nick and Tracey were married at the Anglican church in Howick. They looked great but even more important, they were so obviously in love. The celebrant, Rhett, Tracey’s brother gave beautiful meaning to the service. The groomsmen and the bridesmaids were a magnificent group of young people. Barry and Pam, Tracey’s parents, have opened their world to us so we have become honorary members of the South African community in Howick. A lot of people joined us at the Lodge for afternoon tea and then in the evening there was a very elegant and meaningful reception. What a day! And now for the bonus. It will not be too long before they make us grandparents for the first time... Wow!

We are writing this from Taupo where we are enjoying a week’s holiday. There is a cold wind blowing and it is pouring with rain but who cares! Taupo has always been one of our favorite places but with Pete now close by in Turangi it is even better. Pete is still putting his whole heart into rescue services. He recently went out with Land Search and Rescue looking for his next door neighbor. He has passed training to drive the fire truck and will next year be attending a course to be a Senior Fire Officer. He is heaps of fun as always.

Every morning at 8.10am for the last two weeks, New Zealanders in huge numbers have been glued to the TV when they should have been at work. There is a national obsession with the America’s Cup being sailed in San Francisco. As of today we are still one tantalizing win away from victory. Because there is a new format to the Cup raced at high speed with 72 foot catamarans loaded with high tech equipment, we are all learning a new vocabulary. While the result still hangs in the balance, the passion is obvious.

If only there were the same passion on a national scale to express the vocabulary of the Christian gospel and win people to Jesus Christ.

We always love hearing from you about your passions, your wins and your losses, and about how rich you have become in Christ. Please let us know!

Our love in Christ

Tony and Christine

