College Life

- The new academic year is underway with an Intensive Hebrew course this week and our full lecture program beginning next week. We look forward to welcoming new and continuing students to another year of study, training and Christian community at the RTC. Please pray for some more late enrolments and for a great start to the year.

- On Friday 19 February we have our College Opening and Graduation Ceremony. Our guest speaker will be Rev. Andrew Grills, pastor of City on a Hill, Geelong. The evening begins with a fingerfood buffet at 6.30pm and the service at 7.30pm. Guests are very welcome to join us for this special occasion.

- A number of rooms are vacant in Barkley Hall and so if you know of anyone looking for short or long term accommodation in Geelong please get in touch with us.

- A couple of weeks ago the heavens opened in Geelong and the RTC, along with many other homes and businesses, was awash from a flash flood. Carpet in parts of the main building and many rooms in Barkley Hall was damaged. We’re thankful that most of the Residence is unoccupied at this time of the year so not too many residents were affected. We are also thankful that insurance will cover the cost of new carpet and repairs where required.

RTC study in 2016

It is not too late to sign up for a course this semester. Even if you don’t live close to Geelong there are some great study options:

- **Theology by Skype!** A unit entitled “Knowledge of God” will be team taught by guest lecturer Dr Peter Adam along with Martin Williams and Bill Berends. Classes will be held for 5 hours a day on eight Fridays through the semester. Each class will be available by skype.

- **The Drama of Scripture.** We are excited to offer this new unit with guest lecturer and international scholar, Dr Mike Goheen. Preliminary readings lead up to the intensive week that will be held from 18-22 July. See the attached flyer for more details.

- **Theology of Missions Intensive.** Dr Phillip Scheepers will teach this key mission course with an online introduction followed by one week of classes from 9-13 May.

- **Get to know your OT better.** “Old Testament Foundations” gives a thorough overview of the Pentateuch and the historical books of the OT. It is an online unit taught by Dr Michael Flinn.

Any of these units can be taken either for degree credit or for audit (audit means you get all the course material and class interaction but you don’t do the assessments or receive academic credit. It costs just $300 to audit a course and is a great way to learn and grow).

You can go to the RTC website for more full details or contact our Registrar, Paul Lucas: plucas@rtc.edu.au

RTC Events

- **Preaching Clinic** with Mike Raiter on Thursday 3 March, 7.30pm. Mike, Director of the Centre for Biblical Preaching, is an engaging speaker and a gifted trainer of preachers. This will be a great evening for both seasoned and trainee preachers and interested church members. The cost is just $10 and you can pay on the night.

- **Organic Outreach Seminars.** Kevin Harney will be presenting ‘Organic Outreach’ seminars in Melbourne and Brisbane, co-hosted by the RTC. Kevin has written extensively on
Evangelism and has presented many seminars designed to equip Christians to share their faith in a natural and loving way.

The details are as follows:

MELBOURNE: Christian Reformed Church of Wonga Park, Saturday 12 March 2016, 10:00am - 4:00pm

BRISBANE: Bray Park Community Church, Monday 14 March 2016, 10:00am - 4:00pm

The registration form can be found on the RTC website.

- RTC Principal, Murray Capill, from 12-14 February to speak with pastors and potential students. He'll also be preaching at the Redlands CRC church on the morning of Sunday 14 February.

New Staff

- We are very blessed to have the Chairman of the RTC Board, Mr Tony Deenick, currently here as our Acting General Manager. Simon Edwards left the RTC at the end of the year and we will shortly be advertising for a new General Manager. In the interim Tony is doing a fantastic job, and his wife Robyn is a great help in the library. We are so thankful to them for their willing service and readiness to assist. While they are here they are living in their caravan on the RTC property.

- In January we welcomed Nicolaas (known as Nicky) Koch as our new Caretaker. Nicky comes from South Africa where he was a policeman for 28 years and also worked extensively in farming operations. He brings many practical skills to the work, including a determination to fix anything!

- We were also delighted to welcome our new House Parents at Barkley Hall, Stuart and Tamara Cuthill, along with their young daughter Adele. Stuart works in IT and Tamara is a hairdresser. They have come to Barkley Hall with a ministry heart, wanting to ensure that all our residents experience a caring Christian community. We are sure they will be a blessing to many.

Book Recommendation
(by Dr Martin Williams)


“Get it, if you sell your coat to buy it” (said Spurgeon of another book in his Lectures to My Students). Similarly, this book is a real gem that should be on the shelf of every pastor and layperson. A pastor of Faith Vancouver Presbyterian Church (PCA), research associate at the University of the Free State, and a noted expert on the Puritans (and co-author with Joel Beeke of A Puritan Theology: Doctrine of Life), Mark Jones has written a book that will richly bless all who have a spiritual appetite to know Jesus in a deeper, richer and more personal way. As Jones points out in his introduction, “to know” is not merely an intellectual exercise but also an affectional and relational experience: “The goal of this book, then, is to look at the person of Christ and give readers — particularly those in the church—a reason to love him more. We can only love him more by knowing him better—which takes us beyond conceptual to relational knowledge. ‘To know’ in the Bible can very often mean to have a concern about something that involves the understanding of the mind, the movement of the will, and the application of the heart. ‘To know’ means ‘to know with particular interest’ or ‘to set one’s affections upon’” (p. xv).

With 27 short chapters (of no more than about seven pages each), Jones lures us into meditating on profound truth, not in a cold and clinical manner but in a way that radiates warmth and enriches both the heart and mind. Each chapter is saturated with Scripture as Jones wrestles with key aspects of Christ’s person and work, including his two natures, his relationship with the Spirit, his sinlessness, his temptations, his miracles, his emotions, his humiliation and exaltation, his voluntary and vicarious obedience, his suffering, his death,
resurrection, his ascension and session, and his threefold office, among many other subjects. Each of these chapters are further enriched with choice quotations from Puritan authors such as John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Richard Sibbes, Thomas Brooks, John Favel and other luminaries of the Reformed tradition such as Jonathan Edwards, B. B. Warfield, Herman Bavinck, Charles Spurgeon, and others. In each chapter he weaves together insightful instruction and personal reflection that challenge us to tease out the practical implications of what he is saying in soul-refreshing ways. As an aid to further reflection the book contains a study guide with thoughtful study-questions making this book useful not only for personal reading but also for group study.

I found this book difficult to put down and had to force myself to read just one chapter a day as part of my morning devotions. This book provides the reader with a very accessible, eminently readable, clearly written, well-presented portrait of Jesus Christ that will both inform the mind and warm the heart.

Ministry Spot: Applying God’s Word
(by Dr Murray Capill)

Recently, in the wake of a few health issues, I embarked on some dietary changes I didn’t particularly want to make. Previously, I pretty much had “healthy” and “tasty” in two different baskets. But to my surprise, eating more healthily isn’t as bad as I thought. My pleasant discovery is that you can re-train your taste buds to enjoy healthy food. Nutritious and enjoyable are not mutually exclusive categories.

Similarly, preaching that has biblical depth and theological substance is not incompatible with preaching that is winsomely applied in the most practical, useful and contemporary ways. Sadly, too often these things are seen as being in two different baskets. Some preaching has great content but it is heavy, dull and largely theoretical. Other sermons are fresh, relevant and full of application, but they lack biblical substance.

Thankfully, we don’t have to choose between the two. There is no need to sacrifice content on the altar of relevance, or vice versa. God intends that the deep truths of his Word are pressed on life and make a difference to the way we live. If we really believe that all Scripture is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, then we should expect that biblical content and practical application go hand in hand.

But how is that achieved? How can a preacher apply God's Word without compromising content and substance? And how does a preacher give great substance without short-changing application?

The first thing we must do is make sure that we give ample time to explaining God’s Word as interestingly and engagingly as we can. We never want to give the impression that biblical explanation is the boring bit, followed by application which is the exciting part. We need to make sure that our handling of the text brings the text to life. We want the main truths to stand out, the story to grip, the context to shed light, the imagery to come to life, the very words of the Scripture to pack a punch, and the gospel to shine. Great application is rooted in great explanation.

But as we explain the Word we must not over explain it. A sermon is not a commentary or an exegesis paper. We must explain as much as is necessary for the text to be understood clearly. But we must allow time to do more than explain the truth.

Next we must take the truths of the text and impress them on people’s hearts so that they feel the impact of the truth. People need to feel joy, delight and pleasure as we describe God and the blessings he showers on us. They need to feel pain, sadness or grief as we explain the consequences of sin. They need to feel guilt and shame as they reckon with their own sin, and feel relief and gratitude as they contemplate a Saviour who has fully atoned for them. Of course we don’t help people feel these things by commanding that they feel this or that but by inducing them to feel these things. It is the way we communicate and illustrate gospel truths that will impact people’s hearts. Our words and phrases, our warmth and force, our stories and illustrations, our examples and observations are the tools God uses to impress his truth on people’s hearts.

On the basis of opening up the biblical text in an engaging way and impressing it on people’s hearts, we can move to more specific areas of application. Applying God’s Word means taking biblical truth and holding it up close to people’s lives – life as it actually is in our culture, our city, our community, our homes, our church.

Gospel truth is not merely to be admired from a distance or analysed academically, it is to make a difference to the way we live. So in applying biblical truth we need to show how culturally relevant it is;
we unpack the difference it makes to know and believe this; we show where this truth shows up in everyday life; we expose ways in which we might fail to live according to this truth; we give practical examples of what it might look like to live this way; we discuss different ways of responding to this truth; we give examples, stories and anecdotes show what it looks like in practice.

Our aim is that those who hear the preached Word come away not only knowing what the Bible teaches, but having actually engaged with the truth of the text. Each sermon takes them deeply and clearly into God’s Word, but the riches they find there are not remote and irrelevant. They leave sensing that God has spoken to them today.

All this takes a great deal of effort and skill on the part of the preacher. Good exegesis and good application are both hard work and take a considerable investment of time. But both work together. One leads to the other and it is the two together that give sermons depth of content and great substance.

This is the diet God’s people need. They may have to re-train their spiritual taste-buds, but when they do, they will find that this kind of preaching is both healthy and tasty, nutritious and enjoyable.