MONTHLY
December '25 - Issue #188

Left: RTC Board Member and enthusiastic volunteer removalist, Rev. John de Boer, concluding our time at 125 Pigdons Rd with a prayer of thanksgiving. Right: Some of our "muscle crew," who did an amazing job helping us vacate the Waurn Ponds campus on time.

College News

Much has happened since the previous edition of RTC Monthly! At 125 Pigdons Rd, it was a race to the finish line as we worked to completely vacate the premises by the settlement date (12 December). We are deeply thankful for the sterling efforts of an army of people, including staff, volunteers, and the "muscle crew" we recruited for the occasion. By God's grace, the seemingly impossible task was completed on time.

Before we handed over the keys, we held a small service of reflection and thanksgiving. Steve Voorwinde (retired lecturer in New Testament and Greek) began by sharing the history of how the college came to acquire our Waurn Ponds property. Murray Capill and Phillip Scheepers then spoke about the process of establishing ourselves in Melbourne, the Lord's provision in making the sale possible, and future plans. We were reminded of the great assurance in Psalm 90 that the Lord is our dwelling place in all generations. This was certainly true during our time on Pigdons Rd, which gives us deep hope for our future in Melbourne.

After a time of open prayer, RTC board member Rev. John de Boer (who also came across from Perth to help with the move) led us in a final prayer of

thanksgiving for the many years of teaching, learning, and ministry that we were able to enjoy at our Waurn Ponds campus.

Three days after the settlement on the sale of 125 Pigdons Rd, we successfully completed the purchase of Level 8, 221 Queen Street. So much hard work happened behind the scenes to make this possible, and we are grateful to the Lord for the gifts and abilities He has given His people. Please rejoice with us in this outcome.

Of course, we now head into another period of intense work, much of it involving getting our expanded campus ready for the next academic year. There will be extensive works at Queen Street, which will hopefully commence before Christmas. Please pray that everything will run smoothly and for wisdom in the many decisions that will need to be made along the way.

Thank you so much for your prayers and support of the ministry of RTC throughout this year. May he grant you a wonderful time of peace and hope as you celebrate the coming of Immanuel, God with us.

Thinking of Theological Study?

This is a time of the year when many people are making important decisions about their future. If this is true for you, we encourage you to consider adding the possibility of theological study to your list of options to pray about. Immersion in the Bible, reflecting on theological and historical truths,

and sharpening ministry skills are invaluable investments. These pursuits are not only beneficial for those heading into full-time vocational ministry but also for anyone seeking to serve Christ and advance the gospel in whatever sphere He has placed them. Study at the RTC offers flexibility, with options ranging from as few as four units for a Certificate in Theology to a full Master of Divinity. Classes are available in various modes to suit different schedules and needs. Semester 1 begins on the 17th of February, and we warmly invite you to join us. If you have any questions about registering for RTC Study, please contact our registrar, Paul Lucas, at plucas@rtc.edu.au

For those ready to take the next step, the application form can be accessed here: https://rtc.edu.au/study-with-us/application/apply-now/

We hope you will prayerfully consider this opportunity to grow in your knowledge of God and service to His kingdom.

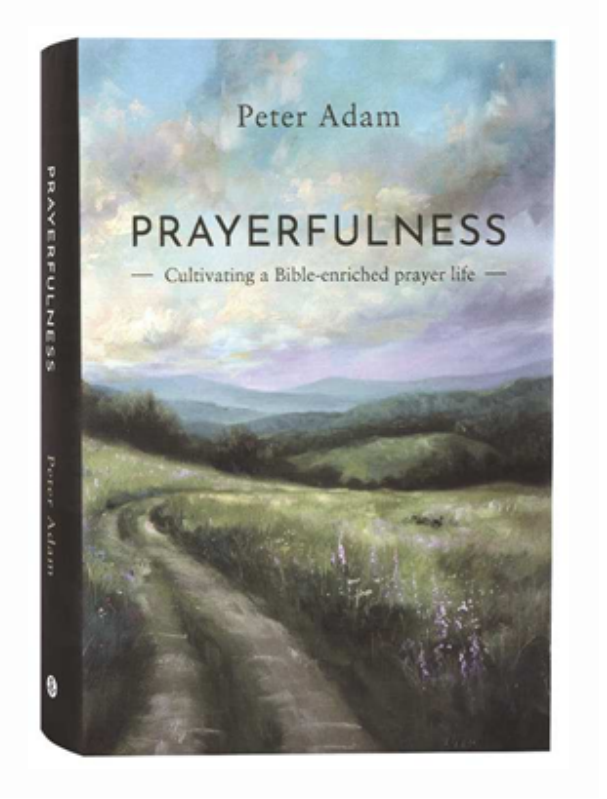
Faculty News

At the end of January, **Phillip Scheepers** will travel to Latvia to present a unit on the Theology of Mission at the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary in Riga, Latvia. This trip will take place in partnership with ITEM, International Theological Education Ministries (item.org), a group dedicated to supplying lecturers for short term teaching stints at emerging Reformed seminaries around the world.

As usual, **Murray Capill** will be taking Strand groups and workshops at Engage Conference, 23 – 26 January, held at Belgrave Heights Convention Centre, Melbourne. If you are in Victoria, this is a great training weekend to learn how to handle God's word better. Check it out here: https://www.engageconference.org.au/.

Book Recommendation | Dr Murray Capill

Peter Adam, *Prayerfulness: Cultivating a Bible-enriched Prayer Life*. Matthias Media, 2025. 342pp.



Many of us, perhaps all of us, need help when it comes to prayer. We may struggle with a lack of discipline in prayer, with a constantly distracted mind while we are praying, with only praying small prayers, or maybe with praying very little at all. We might also readily feel guilt and inadequacy about our prayer life. Or maybe complacency and a pharisaic self-righteousness.

I am quite confident that wherever you are at with prayer, Peter Adam's book will be an immense help. To those who already have a strong and vibrant prayer-life, this will book will give further encouragement and enrichment. For those struggling with prayer, it will open up multiple, non-guilt-inducing avenues toward a richer prayer life.

Adam here combines rich theology, biblical depth, personal insight and great practicality. He has a wonderful way of putting profound truths simply and accessibly. Beginning with the question, "What is prayer?" he grounds the whole discussion in the reality that God is relational: "God likes talking, and God likes listening. God likes talking to us, and God likes hearing us when we talk to him" (p9), He proceeds to explore to what it means to pray to a relational God, grounding our prayers in his promises, actions, character and reputation.

While clear and encouraging, the book is also heart-searching. In the chapter entitled "An anatomy of prayerlessness", he diagnoses multiple factors that may keep us from prayer. He calls us to identify the specific reasons that lead to prayerlessness, urging repentance and change. But the challenge is matched by Adam opening up the world of prayer in inspiring ways. He presses on the reader the richness of a great variety of kinds of prayers of petition and intercession.

A dominant theme is that the Bible should enrich our prayer life. The entire book is soaked in Scripture; and that reflects what Adam is calling for. He examines how people in the Bible prayed, including a chapter on the Lord's prayer; and he urges us to learn to pray the Bible back to God, using the words of the Bible in our prayers. He teaches us how to model our prayers on Bible passages, praying the truths of Scripture.

Along with this, Adam strongly advocates writing out our prayers. He challenges the notion that the best prayers are spontaneous while written prayers are artificial and insincere. "Every time we sing a song in church, we are using a prepared prayer or declaration of the truth, usually written by someone we do not know, and often from a different place and time. Every time we listen to a sermon, we are (hopefully!) listening to a carefully prepared exposition of God's word" (p82). Adam himself daily uses written prayers and includes many of them in the book. He gives multiple examples of prayers based on Scripture passages, prayers of many different kinds, and prayers for every day of the week.

As someone who has never been drawn to written prayers, I found his encouragements challenging and, to my surprise, profoundly helpful. He is not advocating for any kind of repetitious, mindless use of pre-written prayers, but using them as a prompt to pray more widely and deeply than we would if we simply prayed out of what is in our head at the moment. Adam's daily prayers for himself, for ministry, for other people, and for the world, do that in a wonderful way.

Later chapters address other practical matters: unanswered prayer, fasting, prayer for deliverance from evil, a praying church, and how to plan to pray.

It is abundantly clear that this book is the fruit of a lifetime of prayerfulness alongside a life of ministry. And if the depth and helpfulness of this book were not sufficient reason to buy it, then an added bonus is that it is beautifully presented, making it a delight to use and an ideal gift for others.

Ministry Spot | Dr Murray Capill

The Art of Clear Teaching and Preaching

Some people have the unfortunate gift of making simple things complicated. Others leave hard things sounding hard. But the art of the best teachers and preachers is to take complicated things and make them simple.

Simple, but not simplistic. They don't reduce truths of substance to something trite or superficial. Instead, they help you see much more clearly the true depth and beauty of truths that previously seemed obscure or inaccessible.

Such clear teaching and preaching usually seems effortless. The speaker makes it seem so obvious. But that is only because they have mastered skills that produce clarity and simplicity without losing profundity.

So, what are those skills? The eighteenth-century English bishop, J. C. Ryle, wrote what is, perhaps, the most outstanding article ever written on "Simplicity in Preaching."[1] I'd be very happy for you to stop reading this article and just read his! But leveraging off what he says, as well as my own

observations and experience, I want to suggest nine things to work on if you want to be clear in your Bible teaching and preaching (whether that is a sermon, a Bible talk, a devotion, a lesson for kids, or any other ministry of the word).

1. First, make sure you yourself are very clear on the meaning of your text.

Ryle says, "If you want to attain to simplicity in preaching, take care that you have a clear view of the subject on which you are going to preach." That, he says, is the most important thing of all. If it is not clear to you, you'll never make it clear to others.

Clarity has to begin in your own head. You need to have the text by the throat. You must be crystal clear on what it means and why it matters. After plenty of Bible reading and study, you should be able to distil exactly what it is about so you could summarise it in a couple of minutes to a child or hold forth for ten minutes to a ministry colleague. You won't need your notes to do that because you know exactly what this text is all about. Clarity starts there.

2. Second, make sure your whole message is about one main thing.

Most texts contain many great truths, and you'll probably deal with several of them in your message. But the message as a whole needs to drive home one main thing. Some preachers call this the sermon proposition, or thesis, or big idea. I like to simply call it, the main message statement. In one sentence, what is the main message of your talk, lesson or sermon? Is that main message clear, interesting and useful?

3. Third, make the structure of your message clear.

If you are talking for more than a few minutes, you will need some pegs to hang up your main ideas. Clear points help break the one main message down into bite-sized chunks. That makes it easier to chew and swallow. Personally, I don't like to call my points "points" because the issue is not how

many points my sermon has; the issue is how many good things there are to see in the text. So, I say things like, “There are three incredibly important things here for us to see, and the first is…”, or “Now I want to show you two wonderful truths in this text. First…”

4. Fourth, if you prepare a written manuscript or notes, write for the ear not the eye.

Reading is very different to listening. When someone reads, they can look back at the immediate context, and they can see paragraphs, headings and maybe some bold print. They can use a highlighter or underline a key word. But they can’t do that when they are listening; so you have to do it for them. You have to have verbal underlines, bold print, and recaps.

A few things will help:

- Use short sentences. Short sentences have more punch. They are far easier on the ear than long, complicated, multi-clausal sentences.
- Use repetition. You might repeat a key phrase or heading word for word, or you might say the same thing in different words to slow the message down and give people time to take it in.
- Use pauses. Your hearers can’t see a paragraph break or the space on the page before the start of the next chapter. So, create oral margins by pausing.

5. Fifth, use everyday language rather than academic vocabulary and technical jargon.

If people need a dictionary to understand you, you have sacrificed clarity on the altar of learning. You may be capable of conversing with sophisticated vocabulary, but you will help people understand God’s word if you use clear, straightforward words that most people can easily understand. While we will want to introduce people to the Bible’s theological language, we don’t need to introduce them to many Latin phrases, Greek words, or obscure technical terms. Ryle says, very simply, “Try to use simple words in all your sermons.”

6. Sixth, make sparing use of quotations, scholarly references and discussion of multiple sources.

An apt quote can be powerful. A striking statement by someone else may add spice to the message. But once you start to litter your sermon with quotations, references to other people, and discussion of the eight different views of the text, you cloud the message for your hearers. Your job is to study the text for yourself and be across what others have said, so that you can present the main message to your hearers in your own words.

7. Seventh, employ plenty of contemporary illustrations and word pictures.

Jesus turned to the culture and landscape around him to put truth into everyday images. Farmers, fishing, parties, weddings, vines, birds, and family life constantly feature as Jesus teaches. Stories, metaphors, similes and analogies are the clothes many of his ideas wear. Following his lead, we will increase clarity and accessibility if we frequently present biblical truths with familiar pictures. Scan everyday life around you, rather than online professional illustrations or historical stories, to throw light on the truths you are talking about. “If you would attain simplicity in preaching,” says Ryle, “use plenty of anecdotes and illustrations.”

8. Eighth, be concrete and practical.

It is hard for most people to follow multiple steps of an abstract argument. We will be clearer when we frequently turn abstract ideas into concrete realities. That means application is the best friend of clarity. When you apply what you are teaching, you press truth on this life, our world, people’s hearts. People start to see what it looks like in practice. So, for example, the providence of God is not just a great concept, but a beautiful truth that impacts how we handle the rain deluge that ruined the church picnic, the amazing opportunity we had to share our faith, or the confronting diagnosis our child just received. Get truth into life; and people will thank you for being so clear.

9. Finally, speak warmly and personally.

Clear teaching and preaching is never divorced from who we are as a teacher or preacher. It is "you" speaking, so make sure it sounds like you, not someone else. Speak so hearers sense that you care about them, that you care about what you are saying, that you are talking to them personally and not to the back wall, and you are speaking as their pastor, as a friend, as a human, not as a walking theological encyclopedia.

Interestingly, most of these nine tips (especially tips 4 to 9) are the very opposite of the rules of good essay writing. What we learn at university or theological college might make us good scholars, but we need a different set of skills to be effective communicators. In fact, we may have to unlearn what college has driven into us.

It is worth working hard at being clear and simple, without being simplistic. It will take time and effort, and it might mean sacrificing your pride. But it is one of the best ways to love and serve the people God has given you to speak to. It is the best way to help them see how good God is and how rich his word is.

1 Ryle, Simplicity in Preaching, Banner of Truth, 2010. Also available free online on several sites.

Christ-centred training for life and ministry

p 03 5244 8600 e admin@rtc.edu.au w rtc.edu.au
RTC Melbourne Campus
3/221 Queen St, Melbourne VIC 3000

© 2025 Reformed Theological College, All rights reserved.

Update your preferences or Unsubscribe