



MONTHLY

September '26 - Issue #195

College News

It's hard to believe that we are already halfway through Semester 2! We are very thankful to the Lord for sustaining us through some very busy weeks, and it has been a joy to see how well our new library facilities have been used. As always, we were privileged to welcome a number of visitors to our community gatherings, among them Roger Burgess, the newly appointed National Director of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC). Roger spoke warmly of the growing gospel partnership between RTC and FIEC, with more than half of Victorian FIEC churches sending students to RTC for training.



On the 21st of August, Phillip Scheepers hosted the principals of the other Melbourne-based colleges of the Australian University of Theology for lunch. This was a great time of fellowship and sharing, as we reflected on our coming calling to train men and women for gospel work. We also hosted the Candidacy Committee of the Christian Reformed Church of Australia on the 28th of August. It was wonderful to reflect on the many decades of cooperation between the college and CRCA, and to discuss the formation of ordination candidates studying with us.

During the first week of September most students are taking a well-deserved study break. However, some of the ministry candidates from our supporting churches are joining us for an intensive on '*Pastoral Ministry in Reformed Churches*', with attendees travelling in from all over Australia and New Zealand. It is always a delight to spend time with students whom we may not see all that often. Please pray that the Lord will fruitfully use this time in their lives and ministries.



Upcoming Events

A Day at RTC

13 October 2026

Join us as we open our doors, both in person and online, to anyone interested in experiencing life at RTC. Attendees will have the opportunity to take part in devotions, attend classes, join a special session on studying at RTC, and engage in conversations with lecturers and students over lunch.



[Learn More and Register](#)

RTC Elders' Retreat

17 October 2026

This year's Elders' Retreat, led by RTC Faculty, will focus on serving together as a team. Plan to join us for a rich day of teaching and equipping. This will be both an in-person and livestreamed event, with special pricing for eldership teams to join together in a 'watch party'. For more information, and to register, please click below.



[Learn More and Register](#)

Staff News

Andrew Stewart gave a presentation at the Presbyterian Theological College (Melbourne) Graduate Research Seminar on Friday 28th August on "The Spirit of Piety in the Old Testament Era – Luke and Old Testament Saints."

Murray Capill will be speaking at a preaching conference in Hastings, New Zealand from 22–24 September. The conference is put on by the Gospel Training Trust. He will be preaching from Ecclesiastes, talking about how to preach from it, and leading workshops for preachers. The details of the conference can be found here: <https://www.preachers.nz/>

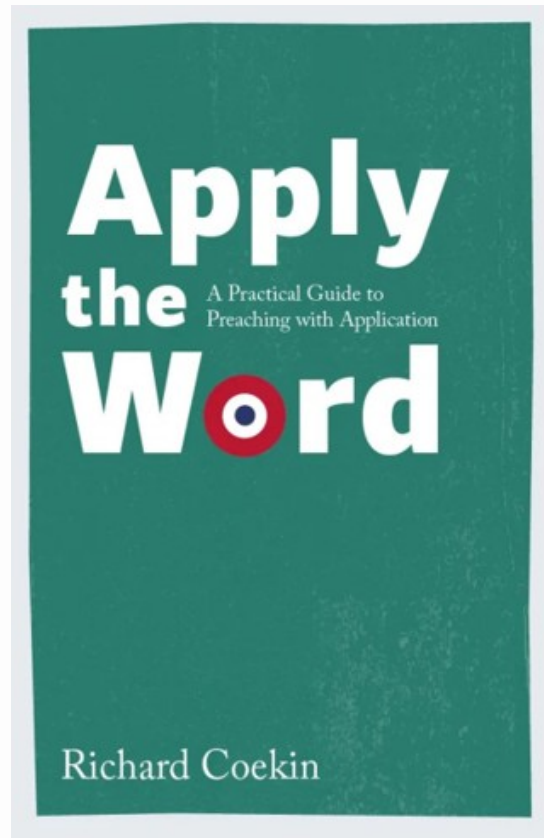
Phillip Scheepers and **Aleesha Bransgrove** participated in the NextGen conference at Clayton Chinese Christian Church from 3–6 September. This was a conference, with some great speakers, aimed at young adults seeking to discern God's call on their lives.

Book Recommendation | Dr Murray Capill

Richard Coekin, *Apply the Word: A Practical Guide to Preaching with Application*, Evangelical Press, 2026. 196pp.

Books on application in preaching are surprisingly rare. Given that the central task of every preacher is to apply the word of God to those they preach to, one might think there would be more help in application, matching the vast number of resources to aid them in exegesis, biblical theology and homiletics. So this book by Richard Coekin is a very welcome addition to the preacher's bookshelf.

Coekin brings to bear his own rich ministry experience as a pastor, church planter, and key reformed evangelical leader. His writing is warm, humble, practical, personal, realistic and genuinely helpful. He really has written a "practical guide to preaching with application."



He defines application as "drawing out the necessary implications of God's Word for the lives of the hearers" (16-17). He argues that application is the purpose of Scripture and without application, preaching will be impersonal, irrelevant and dull like an academic lecture (26). Not only is application the point of the Bible, but it is also the reason God has given us preachers. Their task is to apply the word – to correct, teach, and encourage from the Scriptures. Furthermore, it is precisely what congregations need. Both believers and unbelievers need to hear the implications of God's word for their lives. God's intention is that their lives be changed by his powerful word.

Coekin constantly emphasizes that application comes from the Scriptures. "Application is not inventing something alien to the text, but discovering the necessary implications of the text for our lives" (32). Preachers must respect authorial intent and place each text in the context of the whole story of the Bible. He gives extended treatment to how to apply OT texts,

placing them in the context of salvation history and therefore preaching Christ as we apply the text.

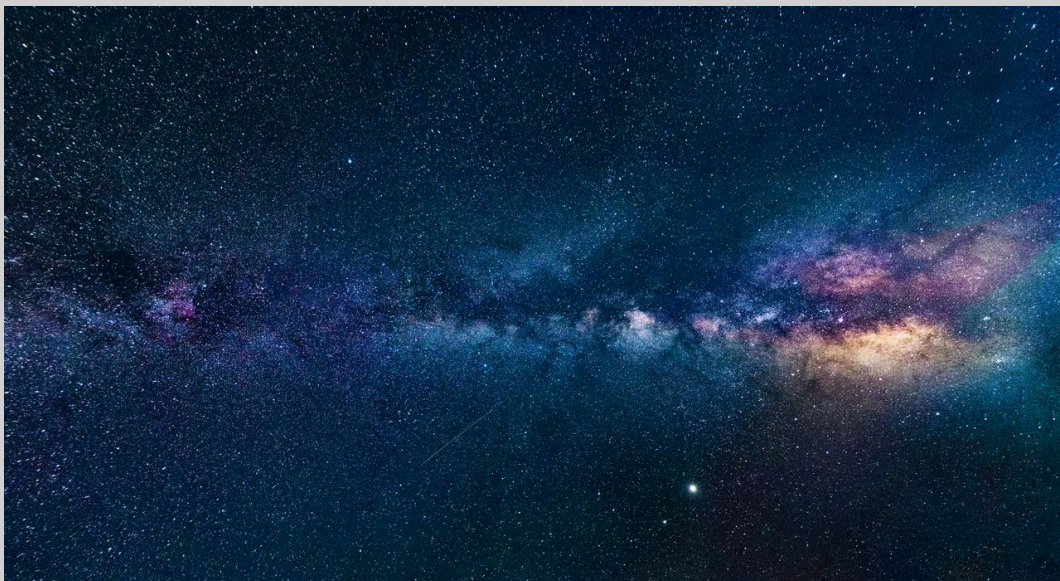
The book has four parts: Why application is so necessary?; How do we ensure our applications are faithful to God's word?; How do we ensure our applications are helpful to God's people?; and How do we bring this all together in practice?

Throughout, Coekin includes many worked examples, alongside personal anecdotes, confessions and insights. In one chapter, he identifies more than a dozen things we should remember, such as, remember we sit under God's Word with our congregation; remember people need both encouragement and rebuke, but above all hope; and remember people need to meet Jesus above all else.

In the last three chapters he walks through the process of constructing a sermon, using the analogy of building a house. It's a rich metaphor and a helpful overview of effective sermon preparation .

Preachers, new and experienced, will do themselves and their congregations a favour by spending time in this book and allowing Coekin to coach them into greater effectiveness in applying God's Word.

Ministry Spot | Dr Andrew Stewart



Talking about Eternity

Have you ever tried to explain the word "eternity" to a child? Perhaps the word has cropped up in a Bible reading in family worship. Or, perhaps you were lining up in a queue and exclaimed with barely concealed impatience,

“this will take from now to eternity.” Then comes the question, “But what is eternity?”

We might be tempted to respond that eternity is waiting in a queue for something that takes ages to happen. Or it might be sitting in the back seat of a car during a long road trip. Were we to do that, we would seriously misrepresent a very important biblical word. We would also dishonour God, for he is “the eternal God.”

Eternity is an attribute of God which we find hard to understand and explain because it describes him as infinite. By contrast we are finite and everything around us is finite. On a road trip to Sydney, we may clock up many kilometres and it may last for many hours, but it is finite. It is not eternal.

Moreover, when the Bible describes God as eternal it is not simply putting him onto a longer timeline than anything else that we have experienced. Instead, it recognises that he is outside and beyond any timeline we have ever experienced. When Isaiah 57:15 tells us that God inhabits eternity, he does not mean that God inhabits a distant solar system, or even every solar system, but that God inhabits a dimension we have never experienced.

Such distinctions may seem to be too abstract and difficult to explain to our children, or even to ourselves. We might ask why we would want to discuss them anywhere outside a theology class. Some who have sat in a theology class may remember how some of God’s qualities, eternity being one of them, are described as “incommunicable.” This term which may make them seem remote and inaccessible. Yet, there are three good reasons why we need to think about eternity and what it tells us about God.

The first reason is that the Bible uses the word “eternity” (and other words which describe the immensity of God) to encourage God’s people. In Deuteronomy 33:26–29 Moses concludes his blessing of the twelve tribes of Israel as they were about to enter the uncertainties of the land of Canaan. In verse 26 Moses describes the uniqueness of Israel’s God, and then in verse 27 explains the wonderful comfort which flows from this truth. “The *eternal* God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the *everlasting* arms.”

In Isaiah 57:17, the prophet speaks to a nation which will go into exile and encourages them to remember that God will hear them when they repent and cry out to him for mercy. “For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits *eternity*, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.” It would be many years before they humbled themselves before God, but when they do, they are to remember that their God inhabits eternity.

This brings us to the second reason why we need to think about eternity and what it tells us about God. God's eternity and his other "incommunicable" attributes help us grasp the dimensions of those attributes which we find easier to understand and relate to, such as God's goodness, love, kindness and wisdom. Not only is God good, he is eternally good. Not only does God love his people, his lovingkindness lasts forever. Not only is God wise, there will never be a situation when he does not know what is best. When God saves his people, he gives them eternal life. "And this is *eternal* life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3).

There is a third reason why we need to consider what it means for God to be eternal and we find it in Ecclesiastes 3:11. "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put *eternity* into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." This does not mean that God has put something infinitely big into a finite space. It does mean that God, who made us in his image, has placed in our hearts a hunger for something infinitely bigger than ourselves and the world around us. That is one reason why our children ask questions which we struggle to answer.

Nothing illustrates this fact of human nature better than the curiosity aroused by the word "eternity." It captured the imagination of the Sydneysider Arthur Stace at a time when he was out of work and living on the street. He went for a free lunch at St Barnabas' Church and heard an evangelist speak on the words of Isaiah 57:15, "For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits *eternity* ..."

Stace was convicted of his sin and soundly converted to Christ. But that text never left him. "Eternity went ringing through my brain and suddenly I began crying and felt a powerful call from the Lord to write Eternity." For the next thirty-five years he wrote the word Eternity in a distinctive copper-plate type on pavements all over Sydney. That was his way of telling others about the majesty of God.

When the city of Sydney wanted to celebrate the beginning of the new millennium on 31st December 1999 it lit up the word "Eternity" with fireworks on the Harbour Bridge. This was more than just a nod to one of its more colourful citizens, or a way of noting the passage of time. It was a testimony, perhaps subconscious, to the captivating allure of God's eternity. Theologians may refer to this as one of God's incommunicable attributes, but Paul tells us in Romans 1:20 that even secular people can clearly see the invisible attributes of God – including his eternity.

May those of us whose hearts and minds have been captivated by the immensity of our great God learn how to speak about eternity, not only to

our children, but also to each other, and to a world that, in spite of itself, cannot avoid asking itself the big questions about God.



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