



MONTHLY

May '26 - Issue #192

College News

It is hard to believe that we are heading towards the end of Semester 1. We are very thankful to the Lord for sustaining us this far and pray that He will grant eternal fruit on the work that is being done to equip our students for Christ-centered life and ministry.



Some of our students enjoyed a two-week break after Easter, while more than 30 participated in two intensives (*'Theology of Mission'* and *'Introduction to Biblical Theology'*) from 13–17 April. Participants came from all over Australia and New Zealand and so it was a great joy to spend time with some students whom we do not get to see, in person at least, on a regular basis.

One exciting aspect of intensive week was that we finally got to make full use of the new kitchen space on Level 3. It was wonderful to see our students use, and enjoy, the new facilities! While the work on Level 3 is complete, there is still much to be done on Level 8 where we are setting up the new RTC Library. Most books have been shelved, but the mammoth task of scanning and cataloguing the 12,000 or so books on Level 8, to update their location on our system, still has to be completed. Please pray for Carolyn Wakefield (Librarian) and Alvin Anbeek (Library Assistant) as they complete this process. Speaking of the library, it would be wonderful if you could join us for its official opening on 12 June (see below for more information).

Upcoming Events

A Day at the RTC

12 May 2026



Curious about theological study? On Tuesday 12 May, RTC is opening its doors, both physically and virtually, for a free taster day running from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm. Whether you join us at Level 3, 221 Queen Street, Melbourne or online from home, you'll get a genuine feel for life at RTC. The day includes devotions, classes, a dedicated session on what studying at RTC looks like, and plenty of opportunity to chat with lecturers and fellow students over morning tea and lunch. For more information and to register (essential for catering purposes), please click here: <https://rtc.edu.au/a-day-at-rtc-2/>.

Library Opening



Please join us as we officially open our new Melbourne library, to be named the 'Alexander Barkley Library,' after RTC's first principal, on the 12th of June. Registrations are essential for catering purposes, please click here: [Alexander Barkley Library Opening Ceremony – Reformed Theological College](#).

Preaching Conference 2026

Guard the Gospel – Preaching the Pastoral Epistles with Courage and Grace

15–16 July 2026

This year's Preaching Conference will explore the urgent relevance of Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. We are pleased to announce that Lionel Windsor (Moore College) will be our main speaker; he will be joined by several RTC lecturers as they open up the riches of these letters for today's church. Over two days of sermons, lectures, and discussions, attendees will be equipped to handle difficult passages and embody gospel-shaped ministry with greater clarity and conviction.



Please click the link below for more information and to register for this event: <https://rtc.edu.au/pc26/>.

Faculty News

Murray Capill will be speaking at the Adelaide Men's Convention on 18 May. The theme is, "*Life in the Dust: Made for More than Ashes and Toil.*" Murray will open up three sections of Ecclesiastes.

<https://www.adelaidemensconvention.org/>

Murray will also be speaking at the Reach Australia National Conference, 18–21 May, on the Central Coast, NSW. He will be speaking on Transformed Lives, and will take a workshop on "*Preaching and the Power of the Spirit.*"

<https://reachaustralia.com.au/national-conference/>

Phillip Scheepers visited Auckland and Christchurch, New Zealand from 1–4 May. During this time he met up with current and former students and representatives from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ). He also preached at the Bishopdale Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of Dovedale on the 3rd of May.

Phillip will also be attending the Principals' Forum and Consortium Conference of the Australian University of Theology in Sydney from 19–20 June. He will also be preaching at the Christian Reformed Church of Sutherland Shire (9:30 AM, 21 June)

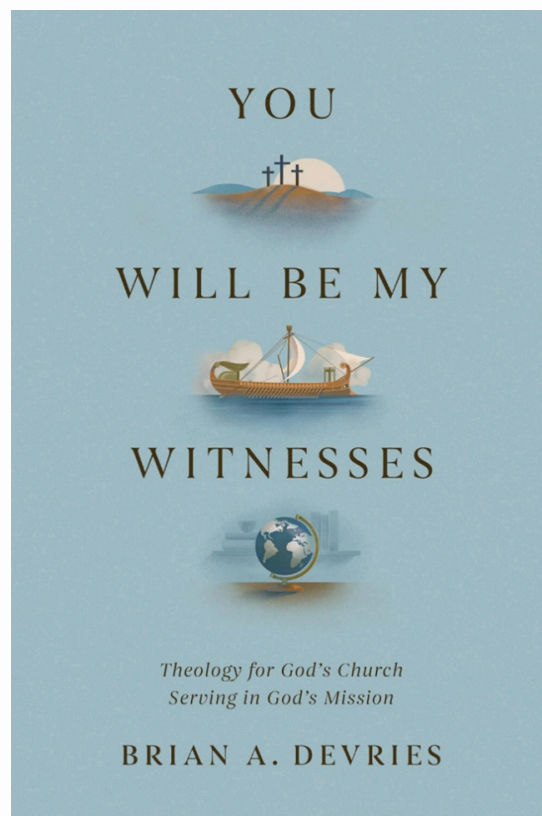
Book Recommendation | Dr Phillip Scheepers

You Will Be My Witnesses: Theology for God's Church Serving in God's Mission by Brian A. DeVries (Crossway, 2024), 320 pages

What do you think of when you hear the word 'mission' and how does mission relate to the calling of the church? The answer to these questions can often reveal quite a bit about a person's

theology and convictions about Christian engagement in the world.

For some, the concept of mission can be broadened to encompass any and all good that Christians could possibly do in the world. And so, *'everything becomes mission'*. Others may ring fence missions as only those activities that involve those who are completely unreached by the gospel. Still others may acknowledge the strong connection between mission and the work of outreach, as opposed to viewing it in overly general terms, but may veer off into pragmatism in promoting 'whatever works' to promote the growth of the church.



The only way in which we can effectively counter reductionistic, and possibly erroneous, views of mission is to go back to Scripture to recover a full-orbed understanding of the calling of the church in the world. This is exactly what Brian DeVries does in *"You Will Be My Witnesses"*. This book, 2024 winner in the Mission and the Global Church category of the Gospel Coalition Book Awards, provides a solidly biblical, theologically rich, historically informed theology of mission that seriously wrestles with the complexities and challenges of the modern world.

DeVries does not write from the ivory tower. He serves as President of Mukhanyo Theological College in South Africa, one of the largest providers of theological education on the African continent as well as being the pastor of a local church in Pretoria. As a North American missionary to Africa, he also had to work through his own personal response to the call to mission. These factors combine to ensure that this book speaks to us with a depth of experience and richness that can sometimes be lacking in more purely academic works on the mission of the church.

At the heart of the book is the reminder that 'bearing witness' is not just one thing, amid a myriad others, that the church could be doing. Instead, it is a defining characteristic of what it means to be the people of God (cf. Acts 1:8). DeVries shows how this insight can be traced throughout Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. Mission is the mission of God, and His people bear witness to his grace, goodness and salvation. This theocentric framing of mission does much to change our perspective on what mission is. It is, in the

first instance, an activity of God, one that we are graciously invited to participate in. This means that mission should be understood on His terms and carried out in His ways! At the heart of this understanding is the promise of the gospel, a message based on the Father sending his Son into our world, and commissioning and empowering His people, through His Spirit, to be witnesses to the world.

When it comes to 'bearing witness,' we are reminded that it primarily involves testifying to the truth and power of Jesus Christ. This insight can act as a powerful corrective to views of mission that tend to reduce it to social action or humanitarian efforts. While mission may include such things, it should never be divorced from the core 'witness-bearing' mandate. DeVries does not merely state this principle and leave it at that. He wrestles seriously with the challenges of defining the relationship between proclamation and social action, maintaining a clear gospel witness in an age of religious pluralism, what it means to be God's church in settings where believers are marginalised, etc. What I find particularly helpful is that he traces a clear line, from biblical theology, through historical perspectives, to 21st century application with many of the issues that he addresses. In each case, DeVries shows us how love for God and responding to His command to bear witness can be brought together in an understanding of mission that truly honours Him and serves people.

"You Will Be My Witnesses" is a great book for those preparing to serve in missions, for church leaders seeking to better articulate the outward calling of the church, and indeed for all Christians seeking to wrestle with how the Great Commission applies to them.

Ministry Spot | Dr Murray Capill



Beyond Local

One of the appeals of travel is the opportunity to go somewhere that is different to where we usually live. It's great to see a different area, walk somewhere else, try new cuisine, experience another culture.

That's also healthy in ministry. It's easy to be so invested in our local church or para-church ministry, we get little chance to see, learn from, or be refreshed by what is happening elsewhere. We focus on our corner of the harvest field and mostly only interact with people from "our tribe".

But whether a church is large and doesn't feel it needs help from others, or small and so busy trying to just stay afloat that there is no time for wider involvement, it is not only healthy but biblically necessary to think beyond our local ministry.

The New Testament repeatedly shows us churches and gospel workers focussing on more than their own patch. In 2 Corinthians 8, for example, Paul tells the Corinthian church about the incredible passion of the Macedonian churches (Berea, Philippi and Thessalonica) for the collection for the poor in Jerusalem. Paul was passionate about collecting gifts from Gentile churches to care for and support the poor and suffering church there. The churches in Macedonia were begging for the chance to help out, even though they themselves were struggling. Paul not only held up their example to the church in Corinth, but sent Titus to them to help them complete their own collection for the poor. Right there, we see a picture of churches in different locations working together and being spurred on by each other, to assist in the work of the gospel in another place.

What will help us think and work beyond our local ministry? I would like to suggest four things that are helpful, especially for ministers, elders and gospel workers, who can then pass on this mindset to the people they teach and lead.

Denominations

First, it is right to invest in your own denomination. The health of denominations varies enormously, some operating as robust, gospel-hearted, theologically faithful networks of churches, while others are beset by bureaucracy, liberalism, or division. Either way, it is right to work for the spiritual well-being of the denomination to which you belong. That inevitably involves some level of commitment and engagement. If the denomination is healthy, it can lead to rich fellowship, shared resourcing of ministry beyond the scope or capacity of the local church, important theological study, as

well as practical structures for support and accountability. Thinking “beyond local” demands some deliberate investment into your own denomination.

Networks, conferences and fellowship

Second, it is good to find places for the cross-fertilization of ideas with people beyond our own denomination. Even if our denomination is strong and we have great encouragement and fellowship in that context, the work of the gospel is wider than our particular denomination. While some people and churches will be too divergent from us theologically for meaningful fellowship to be possible, we can usually find people in other churches and ministries with whom we have sufficient alignment to greatly benefit from engagement with each other.

Conferences and events provide great opportunities to hear and learn from others, and to form relationships with people in other churches and ministries. Some pastors benefit from peer groups that formed during their time at theological college and continue years into the future. Pastors in a local area might meet for prayer and fellowship together. There is much to be said for a minister having a mentor from another denomination. Such a person can help us see things from a different perspective and provide a sounding board for things we are thinking about. In Australia, there are some fine ministries that provide contexts for fellowship and gospel encouragement (such as The Gospel Coalition Australia, TGCA) or training (like Reach Australia). In these contexts, iron sharpens iron, and we are reminded we are not the only ones seeking to serve Christ faithfully.

Gospel ecosystems

Third, it is valuable to invest into the health of the gospel ecosystem in your area. An ecosystem is the rich interplay of multiple factors that together produce an environment for growth and health. For the gospel to spread in a city, State, region or nation, it will always take more than one great ministry, one strong church, or one good denomination.

In a rich gospel ecosystem there are many churches of different sizes, in different areas, reaching different people; evangelistic ministries and events that help spread the gospel; conferences and events that encourage people in their faith or equip them to teach, lead or serve; university campus ministries that reach students with the gospel and equip them to serve; ministries that help raise up the next generation of gospel workers through events, internships and apprenticeship; theological colleges that train people for ministry; mission organisations that open avenues for cross-cultural ministry; and so on. While all these can exist as isolated efforts, gospel work is advanced more effectively when there is synergy, cooperation, mutual

support, generosity, and partnership across these ministries. That is what creates an ecosystem.

It is worth asking, am I working to support the wider health of gospel work in my area? While we will be limited in how many things we can engage with, and by the level of theological alignment we have with others, it is healthy to invest into some work beyond our immediate ministry, for the sake of the wider work of the gospel. It is also important to care about and pray for that wider work, to value and respect other like-minded ministries, to be generous toward them where possible, and to seek out ways of cooperating or partnering with others.

Global mission

A final dimension of “beyond local” is to keep on our radar the world-wide work of God. The gospel must be taken to the ends of the earth, so that people from every tribe, nation, language and tongue are called into the kingdom. It is not enough to be passionate about reaching our own area; we need to care about God’s global gospel plan.

At RTC we regularly have speakers from mission organisations join us for our community time. It is a deliberate strategy to constantly open for our students windows to the world of mission. Wonderful work is being done, and needs to be done, in countries officially closed to the gospel; in the 10/40 window (the area from 10 to 40 degrees north latitude, stretching from Morocco to Japan) where not only two-thirds of the world’s population live but also many of the world’s poorest and most unreached people groups; in Bible translation; in reaching marginalized people; in supporting those in the persecuted church, and so on.

A healthy church has global mission constantly on its radar, partnering with missions by sending, supporting, praying and giving. This ought not be an optional add-on to a church’s life but a core part of its gospel DNA. We want to see the world won for Christ.

There are strong forces to counter any attempt to think “beyond local”. Sheer busyness, not to mention selfishness, parochialism, suspicion or competitiveness, may keep us from working with others. But gospel ministry will be stronger, healthier and more biblical when our focus is not only on what we are doing for God, but on what God is doing in many places, through many people. Church and ministry leaders need to think “beyond local”, and then teach their people to think this way. God will be honoured, we will be encouraged, and gospel work will be strengthened.



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