

## ‘GETTING IN AMONGST IT’ AROUND THE WORLD

### - THE art OF KINESTHETIC LEARNING in the church

I have been a Presbyterian minister for five years and planted and developed studentsoul, a church for students on campus in Dunedin. On exiting the School of Ministry in 2002 I was jointly awarded the Begg scholarship and in the last semester break of 2006/7 I combined study leave with holiday and traveled overseas for three and a half months.

- In this report I reflect on experiences with missionaries while traveling with Bunty Bunce, an itinerant evangelist in the UK, and a short term mission in Uganda building a house for the Watoto project.
- I reflect on many churches I visited in the USA and a summit I attended in Colorado called R.E.A.L. presenting.
- I then focus around the art and value of kinesthetic learning which calls for a greater balance of the right and left brain in the way we facilitate a typical service of worship and Christian education in general.
- I attempt to provide some good reasons and a practical resource for ministers and leaders to move away from a sole emphasis on the spoken word to facilitating a greater range and balance of experiences within the context of our church services and youth groups and any gathering which aims to teach and speak the Gospel. It is hopefully a useful tool for anyone involved in Christian education from children to adults.

One of the main problems with the style of preaching or teaching in services, both here and in America, even in those churches that might purport to be ‘emergent’ in some way, is that it is *teacher talk* and appeals to an auditory style of learning and a modernist, linear approach. Some characteristics of this are:

- From the front
- Too much content
- Requires only passive listening
- Exerts control over what is taught and how it is presented
- It may be thoroughly entertaining, have good stories and anecdotes, but it still requires mostly listening skills

Research shows that 40 percent of a spoken message is lost from a listener’s memory after just two minutes. After a half day, 60 percent of the message is gone. And after a week, over 90 percent of the message has leaked out of the memory forever.”<sup>1</sup>

*Active learning* is a way to reverse this condition. While in the USA I was able to attend Group Publishing’s summit called R.E.A.L. Presenting.

**Group’s REAL acronym stands for:**

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<sup>1</sup> Schultz, T and J *The Dirt on Learning* (Group Publishing: Loveland, Colorado, 1999), 70

**Relational**--because person to person interaction enhances learning--and builds Christian friendships. **Experiential**--because what people experience sticks with them far longer than what they simply hear or read. **Applicable**--because connecting God's Word to learners' real world moves learning beyond information to transformation. **Learner-based**--because people learn more and retain it longer when the process is designed according to how they learn best.

Auditory learners can remember about 75% of what they hear.

**But less than 30% of the population prefers this style.**

Only 30% of the population is visual

**Most** remember what they touch, feel, handle or manipulate --- tactile  
and what they experience by doing --- kinesthetic.

We learn best by doing, by active participation in what we are learning, because after 30 days, people remember:

**80% of what they do**

**90% of what they teach to others**<sup>2</sup>

So the goal of the worship service is not to be a star as the preacher and teacher, where people listen to what you say and are maybe wowed by your profound words if you're particularly good at communicating. Even providing PowerPoint, notes, soft seating and food is still reinforcing a passive way of learning. A visual environment doesn't do it either, though it is a crucial aid. By this we are still creating consumers, spiritual spectators who just think they are participating, but really it is just cognitive exposition which leaves it up to spectators to make an application.

The goal is to engage people actively on several levels: emotionally, physically and relationally, as well as cognitively, so that they may love and worship God with the whole of their being, be transformed time after time through poignant experiences and be moved towards God in lifelong service and smaller, daily ongoing responses as a result. This requires a shift in the way we as ministers and teachers think and prepare services and sermons. It requires us to think from the point of view of the learner, different learning styles and the balance of right and left brain, rather than how we can speak better!!!

The truth is that people learn best when the whole person is attended to and treated accordingly. Facilitating this kind of environment will allow God to feed and nurture us on many levels, added to by the interactions and opinion of others and through the power of the Holy Spirit in this mix. It will include both linguistic and non linguistic approaches, coaching people to expect things to be constantly different and to trust and embrace a holistic learning environment. We should be having fun, enjoying one another and exhorting one another to love and good deeds through our interaction. As we do together, put arms and legs on our learning, this will be driven into our long term memory and spiritual growth will occur.

God desires worship and worship services that engage our whole mind!

**Want to read the whole report and get some practical ideas on how**  
please email Helen

[hmharray@paradise.net.nz](mailto:hmharray@paradise.net.nz) or alternatively download the document from  
[www.studentsoul.church.net.nz](http://www.studentsoul.church.net.nz) bearing in mind that it is 45 pages long.

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<sup>2</sup> Schultz, 155