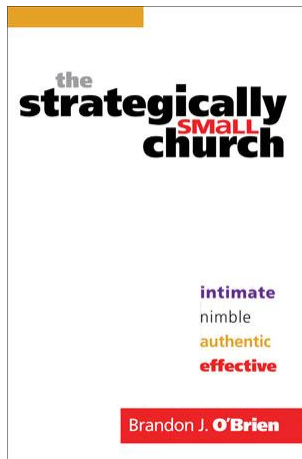


Mission Possible Ezine

August 2010

BOOKS

BIT SHORT ON THE BOOK FRONT THIS TIME AROUND – BUT PLENTY OF QUOTES INSTEAD...!



Brandon O'Brien, associate editor for *Leadership Journal*, has written a new book, *The Strategically Small Church: intimate, nimble, authentic, effective*. In this work, he seeks to demonstrate how small churches are uniquely equipped for success in today's culture.

In an *interview with Ed Setzer*, he says:

A "strategically small" church is one that has learned to recognize and leverage the inherent strengths of being small. Being strategically small means that instead of trying to overcome your congregation's size, you have learned to use it to strategic ministry advantage.

In other words, I'm not advocating a new model of doing church. Instead I'm hoping that by telling the stories of some truly innovative and effective small churches, other small congregations will stop viewing their size and limited resources as liabilities and begin thinking about them as advantages.

....your church--whatever size--has everything it needs to be used in extraordinary ways for the Kingdom of God. You don't need more resources or more volunteers; you just need the imagination to see how God has equipped you uniquely to carry the gospel to your neighbours.

This is an exciting interview, and if the book is anything like what O'Brien says in it, it will be well worth reading. Not only will it encourage those who are in small rural or suburban churches, ones that those with 'big [church] vision' regard as too small to be of any use, but it will show that small isn't necessarily nonviable.

Published by Bethany House August 2010

"A successful person is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks that others throw at him or her."
David Brinkley

For peace of mind, resign as general manager of the universe. Unknown

If you want to test your memory, try to recall what you were worrying about one year ago today. -
E. Joseph Cossman

LEADERSHIP



Two quotes from *Len Hjarmalson's* article on leadership in a recent edition of *Next-Wave*:

“We need to move from the leader as hero, to the leader as host. Can we be as welcoming, congenial, and invitational to the people who work with us as we would be if they were our guests at a party? Can we think of the leader as a convener of people? [We need] a fundamental and unshakeable faith in people. You can't turn over power to people you don't trust. It just doesn't happen.”

Martin Luther King Jr. put it, “power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anaemic.” And Henri Nouwen reminds us, The temptation of power is greatest when intimacy is a threat. Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead. Many Christian empire-builders have been people unable to give and receive love.

[The full article is here.](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

Sunday lost to workday blues: Kiwi experts have backed UK research showing 26 per cent of workers have their weekends ruined by the thought of Monday mornings.

Teresa Ash, from Signature Psychologies in Auckland, said people didn't have enough time to recharge their batteries and low moods were particularly common on Sunday afternoons and evenings.

The UK research, by mental health charity Mind, revealed work had a negative effect on sleep patterns and caused high rates of illness and low morale. "Workplace demands are increasing. Increased competition between companies filters down to individuals."

See the [complete article](#), original published in the *NZ Herald* in May.

This next piece could go under the 'mission' heading too, but I thought it might be more of a mental health piece – especially if you're living in Turkey. Since most of us are not, its warning is that knowing the cultural approach of those we're dealing with can help us keep our sanity....

In Turkey, it is normal and expected to say that you will do something, have done something, or agree with something when, in fact, you won't, haven't, or don't. This is so common that no one thinks of it as lying, in the sense that it is not viewed as unethical.

It is just being polite. They assume you *know* they're not being truthful, and they expect you to be lying as well, so it all evens out.

[Claire Berlinski](#)

MISSION

In a kind of serendipitous morning, three posts arrived from various blogs I keep in touch with that all seemed to link together. Maybe it's not so serendipitous given that all the writers are mission-minded in one way or another....

[David Fitch wrote](#)

Neo-Reformed Theology is built on the same logic as evangelical theology. In fact this is also the same logic as the protestant mainline theology and for that matter the Emergent theologies. They all rely on the cultural foundations of the West and in particular the Enlightenment. And, for me, this means all of these movements will eventually fail to engage the new and changing cultures of Post-Christendom in the West for the gospel, they will fail at resisting the consumerist forces of modern American society, they will fail at transformational engagement (eventually). They will all end up repeating the fate of evangelicalism – i.e. being successful at harvesting those who are already in some way culturally inclined towards Christianity but not capable of inhabiting the new post Christendom cultures of the West for the gospel. This is why we need a third way!!



[Len Hjalmarson began his post](#) in this way:

In *The Secret Message of Jesus* (2006), McLaren devotes an entire chapter to contextualizing the concepts of the kingdom of God for the current generation.

Len's shorter post looks briefly at each of McLaren's 'contexts' and comments on some of them:

the dream of God;

the revolution of God;

the mission of God;

the party of God (a la Tony Campolo);

the network of God;

the dance of God.

[Paul Fromont, on Prodigal Kiwi\(s\)](#) also quotes another writer - Barry Taylor - who doesn't at first seem to be writing about mission...but is - note what he says about listening....

“...On the final day [of a two-week intensive class on Theology and Popular Music] I attempted to sketch out something of a beginning posture for the initiation of a conversation between these two elements. Posture, being the operative word, because for me, any act of theology requires a posture, an attitude, from which it springs, and for me, this is first and

foremost, listening - to the other - *if you don't listen, you can't hear and if you can't hear, you cannot know*. All too often, in my experience, people begin with a pre-formed schema, which is then imposed over whatever it might be, and then, what fits is accepted and the bits around the edges are cut-off--negated etc. A bit of a broad dismissal of the theological enterprise I know, but I use that analogy simply to say that my approach is a bit different--I am interested in the surprising intersections that arise because of the rupture and disconnect as well as the congruity and synchronicity between various elements..."

Reggie McNeal's book, *Missional Renaissance*, has been out for some time, but it's still gaining attention in various quarters. **Harold Fickett** notes at the beginning of an interview with McNeal that he calls for a "new alignment of evangelical Protestantism with Christ's mission to restore creation. McNeal writes about how local churches should reorient toward having an impact on society. He praises the recent phenomenon of "missional communities"—small groups with a dedicated purpose—springing up to address particular social ills. He claims that what's happening today in the church may change the institution as much as the Reformation."



You can read the whole of the [interview](#) here; it appeared online in '[High Calling](#).' The interview is valuable in giving an overview of McNeal's thinking about mission, and also an overview of the book.

Tony Whittaker, the Coordinator of the online magazine, *Internet Evangelism Day* has written an [Open Letter to Mission Agency Leaders](#). He begins in this way: *Digital communication is transforming our world in ways that we are only beginning to discern. There are now over 3 billion mobile phone owners and 2 billion web users, and the majority are outside the West. Facebook has 500 million users in nearly 100 languages, making it (in terms of 'population') the third largest 'country' in the world. This new 'digital communication culture' is superseding the West's 'print communication culture'. And remarkably, it has much more in common with the 'oral communication cultures' that many of us are so familiar with. Its strengths include two-way interaction and relationship building, visual storying rather than left-brain abstract analytic thinking, and the ability to offer information and help anonymously.*



Tony goes on to discuss ways in which Mission Organisations are still needing to catch up with the digital revolution. There's something of a mindset that the digital age is only affecting the West. This may (in part) be the case with the Internet, but in terms of mobile phones, the revolution is huge, enormous, increasingly global.

Read the rest of his letter and see just how remarkable the potential is for far-reaching changes in global mission.

STATS

If there is a 50-50 chance that something can go wrong, then 9 times out of ten it will.

I'm always interested to see whether stats are as true as they're claimed (see [Bradley Wright's book on this topic](#)). [Mike Fleischmann](#) has written an article in the *Leadership Journal* called [How outsiders find faith](#), which deals to a widely-held statistic, as follows:



It was something I had heard repeated as long as I had been in ministry: "85 percent of all people who accept Christ do so before the age of 18." I was never exactly clear where that statistic came from, but I had no reason to doubt it either. Everyone I knew considered it an evangelistic axiom.

He goes on to show that there's an element of truth in it: around 85% of those brought up in a Christian home with two Christian parents who are actively involved in their church will become Christians before the age of 18. That doesn't leave just 15% of people who become Christians after this age, even though at first sight it looks as though it should. [Check out the [rest of this blog post](#)]

For anyone who might be interested, I have just put together a pdf file (you can also have it in Word) which pulls together all the posts from the [Mission Resource blog](#) that relate to [older people](#). It includes NZ and overseas demographics as well as a variety of items relating to such matters as retirement, working longer, Alzheimer's, mission to the elderly, and more.

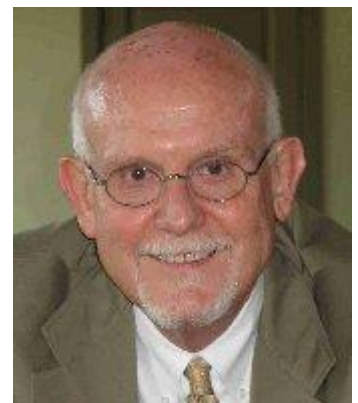
With the number of older people increasing in our churches (and not just because they're the only ones still attending) it's worth having some information at your fingertips about what they think, who they are and other matters.

Just drop me a line on missionadmin@maxnet.co.nz and I'll email you a copy. *I can also do similar pdfs on other topics from the blog, if you're interested.*

Before you quote statistics...

In a short piece on the [Associated Baptist Press site](#), [Roger Lovette](#) (he's the chirpy looking chap on the right) talks about a group of 13 pastors of various ages who've all been dismissed from their churches. In the middle of his article he writes:

The best statistics tell us that 1,600 ministers are dismissed or forced to resign every month in America. Leadership magazine reported



more than a decade ago that nearly 23 percent of all ministers will be forced out before their careers end -- and that 67 percent of those affected will face forced termination more than once. Various indicators suggest these percentages have continued to climb. The Barna Institute says that in the United States a pastor is forced out every six minutes.

I've previously [posted on the blog about the 'best statistic' above](#), except that when I last read it, it was 1,500 pastors burning out every month. I guess someone has now concluded that since that stat is supposed to be a few years old, another 100 pastors needed to be added into the mix.

In a month of 30 days there are 43,200 minutes. Now if a pastor is forced out every six minutes, as Barna's figure is supposed to claim, in a month that's a total of 7,200 ministers leaving their churches. Does something strike you as a little odd here? Barna's figures are four and a half times more than the 'best statistics.'

I keep reading about these 1500 or 1600 pastors doing something every month, and the more I read it the more irritated I get. Use statistics by all means - I do it in my job all the time - but for goodness sake check your facts. As [Bradley Wright](#) points out in his book, too many statistics are badly read, poorly reported, and go on to perform a statistogynistic (think misogynistic) role in life. Let's start nipping the worst of them in the bud.

TRENDS

Spiegel Online International has an [interesting three page article](#) by Manfred Dworschak about young people online which I'd suggest all those who are interested in how young people use the Net should read.

It seems that while the current generation uses social media a good deal it doesn't regard being online as a top priority. Meeting friends face-to-face is at least as important, if not more so - and much of what they do online is the same as they do off. The Internet is no big deal to them: it's always been there, so they don't have any sense of excitement about it.

This is a bit of a surprise to many educators - and media pundits - who'd claimed that this generation would be the ones most savvy about the Net. As it turns out, they're not particularly savvy at all (though of course there *are* exceptions). Given a task to do on Google, many secondary students don't actually know how to use it well to find information. They go for a scattershot approach and often miss the very things they're looking for.

A very small percentage will blog (the Internet is awash with abandoned blogs, many of which barely survive the first post), but it's not regarded as something they do.

They appear to be online a good deal, but in fact when they *are* online, they're often doing other



things as well - like texting.

Dworschak's article covers a lot of other ground, considers a number of studies that have been done on the subject, and questions the way we've thought about the Net and young people. We may have to rethink the strategies!

One of the ugly sides of the Internet:

One of the least mentioned issues in ministry is porn, particularly the easy availability of Internet porn. I'm not talking about child porn here, but porn intended for men in general.



And it doesn't just affect men in the congregations, it affects some ministers as well, though at present we have no New Zealand statistics on the extent of this problem.

A recent interview showed up on [Newsbusters](#). The article has the title [CNN highlights porn's destructive effects on society?](#) (I'm not sure why there's a question mark at the end.)

The interview is with *Gail Dines*, the author of **Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality**. The figures she presents are horrific: 420 million Internet porn pages, 4.2 million porn websites, and 68 million search engine requests for porn each and every day. (While these are American stats, most of these sites are presumably available to New Zealanders as well.)

Furthermore, according to one study, in 56% of divorce cases, one of the partners has an obsessive interest in porn. Porn becomes the equivalent of a man having an affair, and worse, the women in question are able to 'satisfy' needs that his wife may not be willing or able to.

Plainly, getting up on a Sunday morning and preaching on this topic would be something of a shock to the average congregation. But for some men in the congregation, it may be necessary....

*There'll be no denominations in
eternity - Anon*

WELLNESS

Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them - Work, Family, Health, Friends and Spirit and you're keeping all of these in the Air.

You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back.

But the other four Balls - Family, Health, Friends and Spirit - are made of glass. If you drop one of these; they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for it."

Work efficiently during office hours and leave on time. Give the required time to your family, friends & have proper rest.

30 second Speech by Bryan Dyson (CEO of Coca Cola)

Richard Floyd writes in a recent post: I have always had an allergy to identity politics, and question whether it is helpful for one to think of oneself as primarily identified by race, gender, sexual orientation, or for that matter, disability. If pressed for an identity I would pick a really big one, such as "created in the image of God," and its new creation correlate, baptism. I say this because I believe that any identity that ignores our relationship with God is bound to be too narrow, and lead to some form of self-deception.

[His post is mostly about an accident](#) he had a number of years ago which caused brain injury, being regarded as 'disabled', and the way in which we live in hope of a resurrection where all tears and pain will be wiped away. Oh, and did I mention it's about grace?

As the amount of inputs go up, as the number of people and ideas that clamour for attention continue to increase, we do what people always do: we rely on the familiar, the trusted and the personal.

The experience I have with you as a customer or a friend is far more important than a few random bits flying by on the screen. The incredible surplus of digital data means that human actions, generosity and sacrifice are more important than they ever were before.

From **The blizzard of noise (and the good news)** – [Seth Godin](#)

Depression loses its power when
fresh vision pierces the darkness.
Peter Sinclair

Procrastination makes easy things
hard, hard things harder.
Mason Cooley

"It's become a cliché that education is the most valuable resource in a global knowledge economy. I would argue that fostering empathic capacity is just as important to achieving a world of citizens at peace with each other and with themselves." Matthew Taylor, exploring the meaning of 21st century enlightenment. From [a video by RSAanimate](#).

The [National Mission Resource Site](#): new posts can be emailed to you as they're published.