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THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

*idea* EA

WE ARE  
**IMAGE BEARERS**

CREATED TO CARRY **GOD'S LOVE**





EUROPEAN LEADERS ALLIANCE

# ADVENTURES IN THE SUPERNATURAL

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Andrew Cannon  
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Jean-Luc Trachsel  
and others

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Venue: **Life Church Bradford BD3 0EQ**  
Dates: **27-29 July 2020**  
Book: **[europeanleadersalliance.org](http://europeanleadersalliance.org)**



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# WELCOME

## Our ID



Over the weekend I spoke with a friend about who we are and the significance of us being made in

God's image.

My pal encouraged me in the faith and shared that he's pleased to hear that I am discovering who God brought into being when He said:

"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness" (Genesis 1:26).

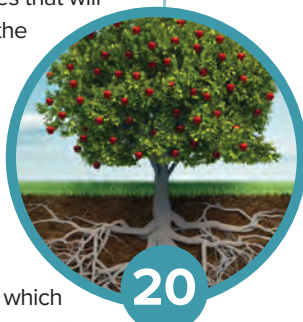
My friend also commented: "I wonder how many of us seek to understand what it means to be human, made in God's image? And, with all the ideas in this present age, how many of us are unsure, baffled or unaware of the importance of knowing?"

His questions reminded me how this 'We are image bearers' edition can add to our progress and joy in the faith. The first in a new series that will focus even more on the church and the contexts in which we seek to share Jesus, it features articles by staff and friends who want us to personally know what it means to bear God's image.

Rev Dr David Hilborn, principal of Moorlands College, lays the groundwork with a theological piece which asks: What does it actually mean to be made in God's image? (p. 2). A discipleship article continues to unpack this theme, considering what it means to be human (p. 4). Other features then explore what we can do to better carry God into the world, as we seek to make Jesus known.

It's another belter, so enjoy.  
Yours truly,

Naomi Osinnowo  
Editor



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What does it actually mean to be made in the image of God? asks **Rev Dr David Hilborn**, principal of Moorlands College.

# Visible GOD

**W**ho am I? Who are we? What does it mean to be human? Ageless questions of identity like these have become more urgent of late.

Rapid social and technological change and heightened debates on ecology, poverty, race, modern slavery, abortion, euthanasia and sexuality have thrown them into sharp relief. They're questions the Bible acknowledges frankly – not least through the words of the Psalmist, who assumes God's existence but still asks Him: "What are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals, that you care for them?" (Psalm 8:4).

Elsewhere in Scripture, such queries are informed by the foundational teaching of Genesis 1:27, that God made humans in His own image. Later, for instance, Paul describes Jesus as the perfect embodiment of this image – the divine saviour whose death and resurrection redeem the corruption of God's image by sin and bring eternal life to all who trust in Him (2 Corinthians 4:1-12).

Unpacking what it means to be God's image bearers is a key part of what's more formally called 'theological anthropology'. The Latin term 'imago Dei' is often used in this context. Making sense of it entails both understanding what the 'image of God' meant in its original setting and how it might apply to shifting perceptions of human identity now. Scholars diverge on the finer

*"Our createdness in God's image and our redemption in the Christ... means that we celebrate our calling to be one people."*

details, but three core points reflect a broad consensus among evangelical theologians.

Firstly, the image of God in Genesis 1:27 applies to all people rather than just to particular individuals or groups. In many ancient societies, the divine image was reserved to a monarch or emperor; here, it's present in every person. God might later have forged covenants with a particular people – Israel – but those covenants were fulfilled in the new covenant sealed by Jesus' sacrifice for people of all nations.

Granted, the universality of the imago Dei had underpinned commands to love one's neighbour and respect aliens and strangers in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18, 33-34; Deuteronomy 10:19). In the New Testament, however, Jesus identifies those commands as defining the very heart of the law (Matthew 22:40), and in

that context charges His followers with a great commission to take His good news of salvation to the whole world – to Jew and Gentile alike (Matthew 28:16-20).

Later, Peter has a transforming vision which confounds his assumptions and convinces him that as a Jewish disciple of Jesus he can no longer "call anyone impure or unclean" (Acts 10:28). Likewise, Paul moves from persecuting Christians to insisting that in Christ neither Jewish nor Gentile Christians are superior to the other (Acts 9:1-31; Galatians 3:28).

Against this background, pioneers of religious toleration and human rights like John Milton, John Locke and John Stuart Mill cited the imago Dei in support of their ideas. William Wilberforce and Martin Luther King invoked it when opposing slavery and championing racial equality. It was also central to the witness of Christians against apartheid in South Africa.

Today, the Evangelical Alliance's basis of faith affirms "the dignity of all people, made male and female in God's image", and we seek to live that out through our One People Commission as it strives to mobilise white, black, Asian and minority ethnic Christians in common action, and through our support of the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberties Commission. It also spurs us to back groups like A21 and Stop the Traffik as they work to combat the scandal of modern slavery, which reduces people made in



God's image to mere commodities. And it informs our championing of Christians Against Poverty, which recognises how economic deprivation can mar God's image in humans.

Secondly, our creation in God's image distinguishes us as humans from other living creatures, from the rest of the natural world, and from artefacts that we ourselves produce. By God's grace, we're distinctively endowed with qualities of reason, language, and altruism, which go hand-in-hand with the authority that God gives us over "the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Genesis 1:26).

Yet just as God delegates farming, fishing, mining and manufacture to us, He also charges us to carry them out sustainably, rather than simply for our own selfish gain. In the economy of Israel, that meant regulated harvests, gleanings for the poor and years of jubilee (Leviticus 23:24, 25:10). Today, it may mean eating food grown locally rather than intensively farmed produce flown thousands of miles. It may mean reducing carbon emissions to help reverse global warming. More generally, it may mean resisting the lure of consumerism, in which created objects become new versions of the idols that led Israel astray (cf. Romans 1:25).

It may mean taking a break from our electronic devices to share meals together around a table; it may mean making presents for friends and relatives rather than always buying them. Likewise, expressing God's image creatively through artistic endeavour – through sculpture, painting, architecture, music, theatre or literature crafted for God's



glory – can be an act of praise which in turn brings inspiration to others. At its best, sport can do something similar.

Thirdly, being made in God's image means our identity is divinely granted, not something we can construct or deconstruct at will. It's God's image in us, not our image to create or reinvent. At its most basic, it means we're blessed by God with the gift of life itself – the life that animates Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:7, 22-24) and that they're charged to replicate as God tells them to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28).

Under this same mandate humans are "knit together" by God in the womb (Psalm 139:13), so God's image is conferred on the pre-born as well as on the born. On these grounds, evangelicals stress that to "terminate a foetus" is, in fact, to take a human life that humans have no right to take (cf. Deuteronomy 32:39). Yet, because the mother in such cases is made in God's image too, she deserves full support to consider an alternative – whether keeping the child or offering it for adoption.

The recent Irish campaign backed by the Evangelical Alliance puts it well: Both Lives Matter. Similar applications of the imago Dei apply to euthanasia: we're not at liberty to 'play God' in proactively causing a patient's

death, but we should support improved palliative and hospice care so that the dying person's end might be as dignified and peaceful as possible.

God's image in humanity is also to be expressed in relational wholeness: just as His approved context for reproduction is faithful marriage between a man and a woman, His prescribed foundation for society is the family (Genesis 1:27). These imperatives are powerfully reiterated by Jesus (Matthew 19:4-6) and underlined by Paul (Ephesians 5:21-33). As John Stott notes, both the commonness of humanity and the differentiation of male and female in God's image become emblematic for church and society as a whole: in a still-fallen world each is called to unity, but unity in reconciled diversity. As an alliance of evangelical Christians, the Evangelical Alliance strives to bring biblically faithful believers, congregations and networks together for gospel ministry more effectively than if they exercised such ministry alone.

As we do so, we seek healing in our wider communities. But we're not aiming to form a single church structure or institution. Our createdness in God's image and our redemption in the Christ who is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), means that we celebrate our calling to be one people, but express that calling in different yet complementary ways.

As we've seen, the doctrine of the image of God is essential for Christian understanding of what it means to be human, and to thrive in society. Sometimes it's inspired radical social change; on other occasions it's stood as challenge to ungodly cultural trends. Either way, its importance is profound, and as relevant today as it ever was.

## Evangelism: Theology and practice

A landmark two-day conference from Moorlands College and the Evangelical Alliance reflecting on evangelism today.

Save the date: **8 - 9 September 2020**

Venue: **Moorlands College, Christchurch**

evangelical alliance  
together making Jesus known



Christians have the best story to share about what it means to be human, so let's live it, tell it and make it known, say the Evangelical Alliance's **Peter Lynas** and **Jo Frost**.

# BEING HUMAN





“**T**his madness – yet how often we, to gain the fruit, cut down the tree.”  
(The Satires of Cynicus)

I was travelling recently on a train and got into conversation with a fellow commuter. Life had been tough, and he shared with me stories of family breakdowns and strained relationships. As we chatted, he made a comment about the challenges of ‘being human’ with all life throws at us. I was struck by the phrase, as this is the title of a bigger project we are beginning work on at the Evangelical Alliance – The Being Human Project. It seems to a number of us that the very essence of what it is to be human is possibly the most contested idea in our current culture – and we as Christians don’t always have a lot to say.

In the beginning God spoke the world into being and it was good. In the beginning God breathed life into humans and it was very good. In the beginning God and people lived together and there was peace. In the end we will gather in a city filled with the light of God and there will be healing. In the end we will gather in the new heavens and the new earth where God will be with us and we will be with Him and there will be rest. In the end God and humans will be reunited and all will be well.

The Christian story has always been a story of what it means to be human – what it looks like to thrive and flourish and live abundantly. It starts in Genesis with a picture of God, the creator of all things, in relationship with His people. It ends in Revelation with a picture of God reconciling all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe to Himself.

At the heart of the story is the moment when God humbled Himself, took on human flesh and walked amongst us. Jesus was both fully human and fully God. He suffered the judgement, wrath and consequence of all human sin and ushered in a new reality of being human redeemed and resurrected with God.

In his new book *Dominion*, historian and agnostic Tom Holland argues that the entire fabric of the cosmos was ruptured when

“*But the Christian story isn’t the only narrative being shared in our culture today.*”

God became human and walked the earth. The crucifixion of Jesus was not merely an event in history but “the very pivot around which the cosmos turns” (*Dominion*, xxvi). Humanity as a whole and the life of each human being is ultimately defined by this moment in history.

The Christian story loudly and proudly declares that to be human is to be God’s image bearer – to be inherently and irrevocably endowed with the dignity and honour that comes from God’s character. To be human is to be committed to community, to love actively and sacrificially. We create, reconcile and sustain, because God creates, reconciles and sustains. Who we are to be as humans becomes clearer as we understand better whose image we bear.

### Culture clash

But the Christian story isn’t the only narrative being shared in our culture today. We are storied creatures, and there are many competing stories trying to frame and form our identity and our understanding of personhood. These cultural stories give us permission to seek success, family, love and acceptance. These stories offer individuals and groups rights and dignities. These stories show us what justice and fairness can look like.

But often, these stories feel small or fragile because they are so transient. What is believed to be good for people today has changed from what was accepted as

“*God makes the first move and we find ourselves in His story.*”

good 50, 30 or even 10 years ago. Values of duty, diligence and self-sacrifice, popular in previous generations, have given way to the new moral high grounds of authenticity, tolerance and collaborative participation. Absolutes have given way to relative platitudes. We are left bereft of certainty and commonality. All these movable, pliable values and beliefs leave us feeling vulnerable because they are not rooted in an objective understanding of what being human actually is.

### The best story wins

Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, so the story goes, walked into a room to get a bagel. Out of the blue he asked, “Who is the most powerful person in the world?” A few names were nervously put forward. One employee suggests Nelson Mandela. “NO! You are ALL wrong,” said Jobs. “The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller.” You see, the storyteller sets the vision, values and agenda of an entire generation that is to come. Bobette Buster, story consultant, lecturer and top Hollywood screenwriter, puts it this way: “In our culture, he who tells the best story wins.”

So why isn’t the Christian story the most compelling in our culture? Maybe because our story has become small too. Maybe we, too, have shrunk our story, so we have little better to say to this culture. Eugene Peterson comments that, “The Holy Scriptures are story-shaped. Reality is story-shaped. The world is story-shaped. Our lives are story-shaped” (*Eat This Book*).

The Christian message is not so much about inviting Jesus into our hearts, but about God inviting us into His ongoing story of the redemption. We are not the prime mover, and we don’t get to redefine the story on our terms. God makes the first move and we find ourselves in His story, “following the story-making, storytelling Jesus, and spend the rest of our lives exploring the amazing and exquisite details, the words and sentences that go into the making of the story of our creation, salvation and life of blessing”.

This larger story is most simply conveyed in the story arc of creation: fall –



redemption – consummation. What went wrong is that we began to communicate and live into a half-story focused only on fall and redemption. The half-story is simple: we are all sinners, but Christ died and rose again so you can be saved. It's a simple and easy-to-follow story: you have a problem, but I can offer a solution. But, this simpler, shorter gospel led to a more individual view of salvation. The gospel is reduced to saving souls for heaven, but in so doing leaves Christians twiddling their thumbs waiting for death and the after-life.

The problem is that when we start with sin, we don't start where the Bible starts – with creation, blessing and a good world. Without an originally good world, we have no reason to fight for better. Without blessing, we cannot hunger for wholeness. Without creation, we cannot respect all life. The Christianity of Wilberforce and Shaftesbury needed a full gospel; we cannot live a fully human life if the Christian story is limited to an individual salvation.

There are two responses to the half-story. The first strips it back further, because it is awkward to point out that people are sinners. So, we simply declare: God loves you; God accepts you as you are. But that doesn't work; it's too thin. In fact, it is so shallow, it isn't actually the gospel.

The other, and only, response is to embrace, indwell and explore the implications of this fuller, deeper, richer, more hopeful narrative. To rediscover and retell the fullest gospel story. To offer people like that commuter on the train a rooted hope that meets the challenges of being human in our culture today.

## Being human

Strangely, the UN declaration of Human Rights does not define the human being. The secular story is ultimately a thin one that cannot even fully define what it means to be human. It generally reverts to biological terms to separate us from other species or functional capacities – in particular rational thought. As writers like T. S. Eliot, Tom Holland and Larry Siedentop have noted, our equality and human rights framework is, whether its adherents realise it or not, deeply Christian. We live in a society that

*The Christianity of Wilberforce and Shaftesbury needed a full gospel.*

continues to live off the fruits of the Christian story, while simultaneously chopping down the very tree that sustains that fruit.

Over the next two years the Evangelical Alliance will be pulling together theologians, practitioners, artists and musicians to explore and demonstrate to our society something of the fullness of what it means to be human. Sparking conversations, sharing stories, offering perspective and insight, we will be creating space for creativity and resource. We will stretch our imaginations and respond with worship and praise to the one in whose image we are made.

The Being Human Project will explore three big themes: dignity, relationships and purpose. Each one deeply rooted in our biblical story, painting a picture of beauty, truth and goodness that can offer hope in a world wrestling with artificial intelligence (AI), global conflict, beginning and end of life, identity politics and so much more.

Hope because everyone is created. Everyone has dignity. This dignity is not grounded in something humans do or possess but is endowed by our creator. We are then called to be 'in Christ' – to participate in the divine nature of Jesus (2 Peter 1:4). Those who respond to that call have their identity redefined and they are filled with the Holy Spirit and sent out into the world, on mission. This understanding of personhood and dignity impacts how we view life at the margins, biological sex, gender, race, and disability. It challenges

identity politics and the rising influence of tribalism and nationalism. It recognises the inherent value and dignity of every human being and calls us to radical acts of generosity, justice and mercy.

Hope because we have been created as relational beings in the image of a relational God. We are made for relationship with Him, with each other and with creation. The birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ changed history forever. In Christ, reconciliation with God is made possible. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). How do we honour marriage, celebrate singleness, and champion family, teaching that water is thicker than blood! There are tough conversations to be had about sexuality, pornography and commitment, but they form part of a larger narrative about being human. There will also be challenging conversations about freedom (of speech and religion), rights (and responsibilities) and justice in the context of relationships.

Finally, hope because each of us has been made for a purpose. In the beginning God made human beings to steward and to cultivate His creation – the cultural mandate. Paul reminds us that we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Each of us has been commissioned and gifted to serve God in a particular time and place. This raises challenging questions about work, rest and play. What is our role in creation care? How do we find rest and sabbath in an increasingly fast-paced world where technology and AI are expanding rapidly?

The Being Human Project does not lack in ambition. It cannot, because we continually meet people who are trying to work out how to be human. How to follow Jesus in our contested culture. How to live an abundant life. We have the best story. Let's live it. Let's tell it. Let's make it known.

*Peter Lynas is the director of Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland. Jo Frost is the Evangelical Alliance's director of communications and membership.*

*The Being Human Project will explore three big themes: dignity, relationships and purpose.*





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The world needs the real Jesus, who lives in us, so let Him loose, says **Andrew Owen**, senior pastor, Destiny Church, Glasgow.

POWERED  
BY THE

Son

**T**he dazzle was so bright and blinding, I had to stop the car and pull over as we drove past the acres of solar panels laid bare in the fields. Each one capturing the power of the sun, and for that moment and in that angle my line of sight.

Having pulled over, I let my eyes recover and reflected on the massive amount of energy being harnessed all around me. I had never seen so many panels in one place. These panels were not creating the energy, simply conduits of capture, designed to take that which wasn't theirs, something given as a gift of nature, and yet through the simplest of processes were powering up large turbines, towns and cities.

This is how we, the church, are meant to be, each individual vital, just like one of those solar panels, but put together, become the field full of potential. We are empowered and enabled to energise our towns and cities with the awesome life of God. We are image bearers, so Genesis tells us. But there is much confusion over this concept, which then all too often leads to the frequent struggles that follow in our 'light in the darkness' endeavours.

Come back with me 28 years to a busy street in Glasgow. We were on a

*"We are empowered and enabled to energise our towns and cities with the awesome life of God."*

mission, at least eight of us were, plus our children which doubled the number. We had been sent to plant a life-giving church. Having initially been full of zeal, faith and passion, I found myself overwhelmed and daunted by the size of the task. I had just spent hours driving around the city, seen its highs and its lows, and still struggling to tune into the often thick accent of the people around me. Further, we had little resources to get the job done. In utter despair, I sat down on a Buchanan Street bench. I prayed, no I groaned, a deep heartfelt prayer: "God, I have no idea what to do or how to do it." In that exact moment, a well-oiled inebriated gentleman rolled up to me and began to sing lines from Amazing Grace, and I heard these words: "T'was grace that brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead you home." I began to laugh, not at him, but at the thought, if God can speak to Balaam

through a donkey, He can speak to me through a drunk person. And there, in that moment, focuses the biggest key to any 'image-bearing' success – grace.

Since then, that little group has just kept growing – growing across the city, across the nation, and across the world. Destiny is now about 1,250 churches across several continents, with many of them multi-site locations, and with around 120,000 people connected. Many millions more tune into broadcasts or livestream. We focus a great deal on raising up others through our Destiny College programmes, which is a successful SQA centre and open to all. We want everyone with us to be that successful solar panel, and then, when together in churches of all sizes, become the power source of the kingdom of God into their communities.

Yet, I so often discover that any measure of success evades too many Christian communities because they just don't understand who or what they are. They don't know what it means to be an image bearer. These are just a few things I've learned.

### You are not a mirror

Many believers are buried daily under the heavy weight of condemnation. They feel that they are poor reflectors of God – the



great light. They try so hard to be like Jesus and dismally fail. Often, most of their prayer life starts with an apology to God for bad performance, and then usually followed by a promise to be better and try harder the next day.

Here's the good news, you are never required to be like Jesus; He is not actually the role model to be copied. Do we really think that we could be like Him? Yet, we all run around saying, "I want to be like Jesus." When we consider the concept of image bearer, the mirror is a very poor analogy. It would be better to say image carrier. We read "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

The key to making our world different is letting that God inside us loose. We are not the power source – He is. We are to be like the solar panels but powered by the Son. God does amazing things through imperfect people, and as we read "He has placed this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7). The world doesn't want my version of Jesus; it needs the real Jesus, and guess what? That real Jesus lives in me.

When Hebrews teaches us that we should "look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), it's not saying copy Him; it's saying believe in Him, and His work in you. God doesn't only have Alpha programmes; He has Omega programmes – He finishes what He starts. Great things happen when we let Jesus love, live and lead through us.

### You are not alone

I don't think it is intentional, but it definitely happened – a fundamental drift of an essential doctrine. As I came to Christ, I was led to believe that I had to be better for God to be good. They said God could only work through me in proportional measure to my daily efforts. Further, I was informed that since the Holy Spirit is a HOLY Spirit, His presence in my life was conditional to my personal holiness performance indicators, otherwise, He would withdraw.

I so wanted to be a good image bearer. I wanted God to use me. I wanted to let my light shine. But I spent too much



time in the spiritual dry cleaners, recycling sins and begging for forgiveness. I then read the greatest promise God ever made: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). I then realised that the Holy Spirit doesn't come to live and function in me because I am holy, but because I am righteous.

We often think that the forgiveness of our sins is the summation of the gospel. But that is not the amazing gold nugget of the Christian message – far from it. You could have had your sins forgiven in the Old Covenant, but this amazing gift only becomes available in the New Covenant.

We all know Romans 1:16 – "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation...", but how many know Romans 1:17? It is there that we read the startling truth, the awesome message, the greatest gift, "for in it (the gospel) a righteousness from God is revealed from faith to faith". It is this quality and only this that qualifies me for life and for service. And since it is His righteousness and not mine, it is pristine, perfect and always acceptable to God the Father above and God the Holy Spirit within. God will not now, or ever, leave me. Regardless of my good days or bad, He is there and ready to act – ready to move. He just needs my mouth, my hands, my feet.

### You are unique

I once heard a leading genetic scientist say that he had a long list of wealthy people wanting to be cloned, but he hadn't yet met anyone who wanted to be the clone. The one thing we as Christians all have in common is that it's the same Jesus who lives within us, but this Jesus is adaptable.

I love reading, I love learning, I love seeing what God is doing elsewhere.

But I live here, and my city's needs and opportunities may be different from yours. We at Destiny often say, "Find a hurt and heal it; find a need and meet it." In so doing, I often discover exactly what Jesus would have me do in my community. I can't do what you can do, you can't what I can do, but together we can do great things. Let's determine not to leave this world the same way we found it!

“  
*Let's determine  
not to leave this  
world the same way  
we found it!*  
”





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# another PERSPECTIVE

Millennials have been characterised in a number of different ways, and much of it is negative. Come on... isn't it time we changed the narrative? asks **Beulah Olisanekwu**.

**M**illennials seem to get a bad rap. How many times have we been told that we're lazy, entitled and self-obsessed? I'd like to offer another narrative: there are many young adults in their twenties and thirties who love indiscriminately, put the needs of others before their own, and play their part in making this world a better place. And they're not just in the church.

I haven't been in my twenties for very long, and I'm still fairly fresh out of university, but in the last three years of my life, I have actively tried to improve my relationship with God. When I went to university in 2016, I didn't have the intention of going wild and forfeiting all I had been taught while being raised in the church. Rather, I made the decision that I would pursue Christ and strive to grow into the fullness of who He has called me to be – and I wasn't alone in this. I've met many students my age who are willing to answer God's call, follow Him, and be His hands and feet on and around campus. We want to grow in knowledge and wisdom, longing to reflect Christ to our peers, and hungry to serve God and reverence Him in all that we do.

As active members of church, the NOOMA Society and the Evangelical Christian Union whilst at university in Exeter, we sought opportunities to grow into the fullness of Christ and to lead through service – being disciplined and discipling others in Christ. Volunteering in schools and summer camps with Exeter Student Volunteers enabled me to be Christ's hands and feet in places that needed more light, love and hope. My peers in the Just Love Society

— “  
*I made the decision that I would pursue Christ and strive to grow into the fullness of who He has called me to be.*  
” —

would rally together to seek God's justice in areas such as homelessness and slavery – even sacrificing their early Saturday mornings to feed those who went without and invest in the lives of those who had been marginalised and shunned by society.

It's not only Christian millennials who are altruistic. There are countless young adults, of other faiths or no faith, who are entering the teaching profession and working with children in some of the most difficult circumstances. There are those who are campaigning on issues such as climate change, giving money and time to charities, and using social media platforms to empower and restore the confidence of others.

All this paints a picture of millennials who are motivated by love, whether or not they know that God is the source. Right now we may be considered as 'the exception', but my prayer is that this resilience becomes the norm for my generation and the generations to come. The sad truth is that there are many young adults who have been drawn away from the faith or are disillusioned with Christianity and the person of Jesus Christ. And there are those who have no connection with church whatsoever who are making poor life choices or crumbling under

the challenges of their circumstances.

The good news is that Jesus still wants to reach them. So, what can be done to build up the resilience of the young adults in our churches? And how can we reach out to those who are lost? Encourage us and help us young adults to grow in our faith. When we seem to be losing our way, redirect us and remind us whose image we bear.

We can all benefit from intergenerational relationships, so don't be afraid to mentor us and befriend us. We are desperate for the wisdom and guidance of Christians who have faced the same pressures and temptations of growing up in a 'godless generation'. Fervently pray for us – pray that we can endure as we grow up in an increasingly secular society. Don't dismiss or condemn those who are struggling and grappling with their faith – or those who reject church – rather, be there to help them through it.

As brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, we should not stand by and let another fall behind. Be supportive and encouraging. Be a positive example of what it looks like to follow Christ and to strive to bear His image.





I lead an underground movement of tattooed Christians using hardcore metal to bring passionate praise and reach a culture of people who have rejected Jesus, says **Matt McKay**, membership engagement lead, Evangelical Alliance.

In the 1970s a new and revolutionary sound was emerging out of the Midlands. In the smoggy, industrialised Birmingham, bands like Black Sabbath and Judas Priest were creating music that reflected the environment and culture of the aptly named Black Country.

Taking inspiration from the bleak atmosphere and factory sounds around them and the tough drudge of daily life, these young, working-class musicians capitalised on the sound of rock 'n' roll and began adding darker, more eerie melodies to their songs. Cranking up the volume, this new genre tingled the senses of a lifeless and monotonous demographic, providing an outlet to express dissatisfaction and rebel against the status quo. Out of the darkness, heavy metal was born.

Over the years to come, heavy metal and religion would have a turbulent relationship and, at times, would actively oppose one another. Not dissimilar to the origins of punk, heavy metal has been seen traditionally as an anti-establishment movement, whilst the church had previously banned certain 'satanic' chords from being played due to the creepy dissonance the notes made.

In short, heavy metal was dubbed as 'the devil's music', and those on the fringes of society who already felt like 'black

*Yearning after acceptance from other people had got me nowhere and left me unfulfilled.*

sheep', disillusioned by religion, turned to this culture for a sense of belonging and to create and control their identity.

When I was five years old, I discovered the film *Back to the Future* and was captivated by the main character Marty McFly 'rocking out' on his electric guitar. This sparked my passion for music and a love for anything wild, energetic and expressive. As a teenager, I felt like a 'black sheep' in school. I wasn't the best at sports, I wasn't particularly academic, and I certainly wasn't voted as prom king. I found solace in the sound and poetry of heavy metal, and the communities in these subcultures made me feel accepted. I eventually started singing in bands and started to play gigs. In 2010 I 'hit the big time' and did a tour of India with a major record label deal on the horizon.

And then it all came crashing down. The band decided they no longer wanted me and my dreams of being a professional,

full-time musician were over. Sitting on the floor of my bathroom, I vowed there and then that any future musical endeavours would be to make Jesus famous and not myself. Yearning after acceptance from other people had got me nowhere and left me unfulfilled.

### For God's glory

Fast forward to present day and out of the basement of Birmingham's custard factory venue rings a new sound. Voices proclaiming Jesus' name and prophesying His kingdom come echo throughout the multi-storey building for the hordes of passers-by and business owners to hear – except this worship isn't on an acoustic guitar and it isn't on an organ. Distorted amplifiers, screaming vocals, and banging drums usher in a new wave of praise. This is heavy metal worship. This is Revolution Reality Midlands.

A crowd of people covered in tattoos and piercings, mostly dressed in black, gather from around the Midlands to Birmingham's Gallery Church, bringing their most zealous and passionate praise. Revolution Reality Midlands (or Rev for short) provides a safe place for those who have been hurt by the church ("You can't wear those clothes or listen to that music!"), and ensures that those who feel out of place in a mainstream



church setting feel welcomed and free to be themselves with no strings attached.

With the aim of bridging the gap between the church and a culture that has previously rejected Jesus, my wife Sarah and I started Rev as a means of reaching back to the community who previously welcomed me with open arms. Whilst the 'fathers' of heavy metal birthed their sound from the negative environment and identity to which they had affiliated themselves, Rev sees this sonically-charged music as a means of creating the most biblical praise possible, and many people within the Rev community feel that they are most expressive during their worship at Rev events than they are at their own regular Sunday service.

Psalm 98:6 says we should "shout for joy before the Lord", and Psalm 150:5 says "praise Him with the clash of cymbals; praise Him with resounding cymbals". If God's word encourages us to make a loud noise for the Lord, it could be argued that heavy metal is a perfect conduit for God's people to worship Him to their fullest potential.

When Gideon's army overcame their enemies by sounding their trumpets, smashing their jars and shouting loudly, despite the clothes they were wearing and the weapons they were holding, in that moment they were not identifying themselves as soldiers but first and foremost as worshippers of God Most High.

This is who we are as Rev Midlands. We may look scary, but we recognise that our identity is not found in the clothes we wear, the music we listen to, or in our tattoos or piercings. Our identity is found in our relationship with Jesus. We are the

adopted children of God and we believe this deserves our loudest praise.

Like the 12 tribes of Israel, Rev is just another tribe. We look and sound different, but we are in a unique position to be able to reach a group of people that the mainstream church has historically found it difficult to connect with. It has been so encouraging to see people come to Rev for the first time, find healing, and then decide to attend regular Sunday church again.

### One tribe

One of the most beautiful aspects of the church throughout the world is its diversity. There is no other establishment of faith that looks as colourful as the body of Christ. It should be celebrated that God has reached every nation on this earth and not just one type of demographic has been welcomed into the family of God. Yet it is very easy to get caught up in the pride of our own denomination or doctrine, thinking, "Thank goodness I haven't been deceived and don't go to a church like that."

Growing up in a Catholic household, I walked away from the church at 15 years of age. Three years later I walked through the doors of my local pentecostal church. My father was overjoyed that I was starting to walk my own journey of faith and begin a relationship with Jesus of my own accord. There may have been some difficult theological discussions along the way, but neither of us were so patriotic to our tribe that we condemned the other for our differing beliefs. I am grateful that my dad chose to celebrate the prodigal son returning home instead of being upset that I walked into the 'wrong room' of the

house. Our identities were not found in our theological beliefs but as sons of God.

My wife and I have been blessed to receive such amazing support from our home church which recognises the importance of being all things to all men (1 Corinthians 9) and has allowed us to use their space once a month to hold our events. A recent member of the Evangelical Alliance, Gallery Church's tagline is 'Exhibit Him', with its core attributes being love, joy, power, create, ensuring that we do, indeed, exhibit Jesus well with a standard of excellence. It would be fair to say that the DNA of Gallery Church is also within Rev.

The lyrical content of heavy metal, for the most part, tends to be negative, highlighting pain and angst. Rev strives to be an authentic and honest community, encouraging vulnerability and leaving space to acknowledge the pain of life's challenges and struggles. But we don't stop there: we use the sound of heavy metal and flip it on its head, declaring freedom, hope and light in the darkness as an answer to that suffering. We recognise that people can place their identity in empty things such as their image, the tribe of music they're from or their careers. As the image bearers of Christ, we ensure that our community is always seen as a place where pain is acknowledged but victory declared.

We don't shy away from letting people see the joy that we have found in Christ and letting people know that the reason we headbang, mosh, and sing and shout is because of what Jesus has done in our lives.

For more information about Revolution Reality Midlands, please visit [revmidlands.co.uk](http://revmidlands.co.uk)



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God has specifically chosen us to bear His image, so let us go forth and shine His light, says **Stephen Bellottie**, church operations officer, Capstone Church, London.

# Created

## TO REFLECT HIS GLORY

“**Y**ou are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.” In **Matthew 5:14** Jesus reveals the true calling of every Christian.

We are not to be kept hidden; but rather, just as a town built upon a hill shines brightly for all to see, our light is also meant to be seen. Jesus goes on to say in verse 15, “Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl; they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”

If the house spoken of in this verse is the world we experience daily, then God has set us on our stand – or spheres of influence – so that our family, colleagues or even the nice gentleman sitting across from us on the Tube can experience the goodness of God working through us.

We are called to shine forth the brilliance and glory that exudes from the throne of God Almighty. We are often the only light that people see. The Bible says that we are meant to be seen, that the light we carry should direct people to our glorious Father.

Jesus started His ministry stating: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). The Bible also says that the same Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in us (Romans 8:11). Jesus came to change lives forever and releases us to do

“*Jesus came to change lives forever and releases us to do the same.*”

the same. We have been given all authority and even responsibility to positively impact the lives around us.

Many of us have heard the term ambassador before. An ambassador is an important official post, and they are representatives sent by their state to a foreign country. The ruler of the country assigns the post of ambassador to the foreign land. God has chosen us to be His ambassadors here on Earth. “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Knowing our identity and purpose is important; the knowledge that we are selected by God to be His image bearer empowers us to exemplify Jesus by living compassionately, by listening and sympathising, and by stopping for that one person who so desperately needs a touch from heaven. Understanding who we are and where we are from releases the culture of heaven through us.

### Small beginnings

How are we supposed to represent Jesus?

He lived a faultless life. We make mistakes, lose our temper, get upset, or fall into sin. We feel we don't have a voice. How can we possibly make a difference? We can represent Jesus when we understand the saving grace of the cross and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. It's not by our merits we are saved. When we repent, humble ourselves before the Lord and seek God, He implants His destiny into us. Sometimes, it's that simple.

But then we say, “We don't have any platform to shine His light.” Then start with what is right in front of us – shine His light in our immediate environment. Enjoy the day of small beginnings. That's where our story as Capstone Church began here in London. We felt God wanted to use us to reach out to the poor and the hurting. The greatest poverty is not knowing Jesus as saviour. The Lord brought us to east London, and we would pray on the streets and do street evangelism. It wasn't easy, but it was rewarding. People would ridicule us, sometimes spit – the response wasn't great, and our people would feel discouraged.

However, the more we shined His light, the more we realised how much Jesus' light was needed, and that urged us on with a greater zeal. Today, Capstone Church is a passionate body of believers and multi-ethnic cultural community with people from nearly thirty countries and languages represented in the congregation. We are united to experience the power and presence of God. We believe the purpose of the church is for the salvation of the city.

Some of the challenges we face also

come from the testimonies of our community. We love the diversity of our family, but with diversity comes certain challenges. Here is an example: isn't it interesting that different people can understand the same scenario in different ways based on the filter they see it through? We all have filters – it could come from our culture, or family status, the way we were raised, or even when we were saved. Millions of factors could create a filter.

Unless we recognise our filters, we will only hear what we have always heard. Unless we see things through another's view, we will only see what we have always seen. Diversity can be an eye-opener to truths we have long held that need to be challenged. We realise we need to persistently remember that. Although we are many, we are one body and work towards unity. They will know we are Christian when we love and not just because we are the same but also different.

Another challenge we have faced is the fact that we are a relatively new church in London; we have just celebrated our tenth anniversary. It took time for the community

to trust us and what we were doing. We have started many initiatives that have not always worked. We have had to seek the Lord for wisdom and tenacity to continue to do the work He has asked us to do. Nevertheless, being a new church plant also gave us the freedom to try different things and ways to help people. One thing we did was to assess the needs of our community and try to find something to fill the void.

One such project is the Father's Feast, where we have been serving the community quality and healthy hot meals for nearly two and a half years on Monday nights. It is predominantly for rough sleepers and the homeless nearby. We serve it as a buffet and our teams sit and eat with them. We pray that as we spend time with them, they can see Jesus in us, and their lives are transformed. One success story is of a once-homeless man who now has a roof over his head. He is getting free from addictions and had a job but is now in training to upskill himself and go even further than he could before. It is only through Jesus that this is possible.

We also started a toddler group, named Pebbles, for the mothers to bring their children to play with others. We find people of other faiths come into our church premises, who otherwise would not have done so. We are persistently praying for God to give us more ideas so that we can continue to exemplify Christ in our community.

We have met many obstacles in trying to be His light bearers and can 'hand to heart' say we have overcome them with His unrelenting grace and favour. We often go into seasons of prayer and fasting to seek His wisdom. We stand on the word of God; it stirs up our faith and gives us the strength to press in and press on. We believe Jesus is the light of the world and we are called to reflect His glory.

Light dispels darkness. As more and more believers unite together and become aware of their calling as image bearers of Jesus, we will see the church arise to shine forth the glory of Yahweh. This light cannot be contained or hidden. Our light has come.



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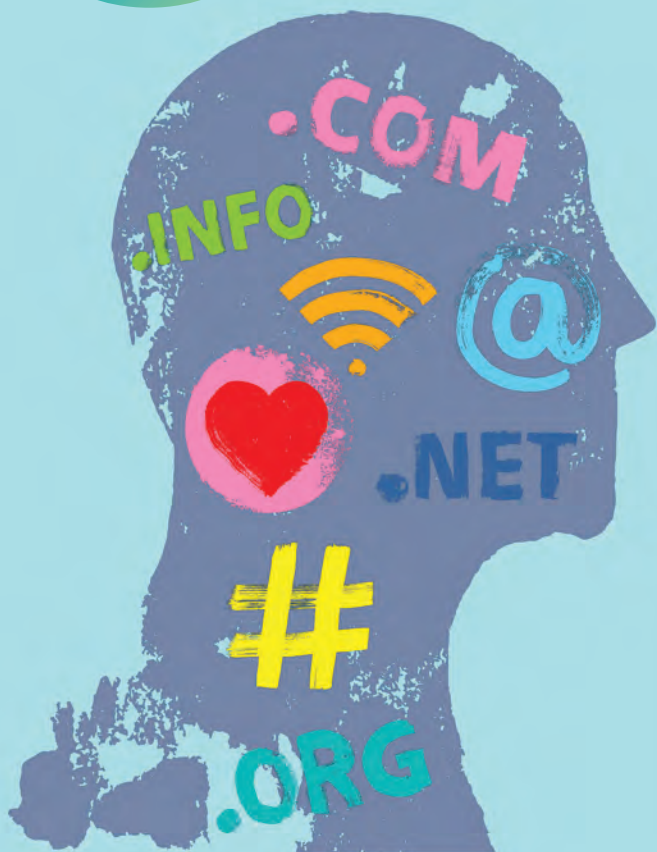
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We asked five millennials, “What does it look like in your everyday life to bear God’s image?” This is what they had to say.

# GOD IN MY DAY TO DAY



## SPIRITUAL DESERT

Daniel Kim,  
media strategy co-ordinator

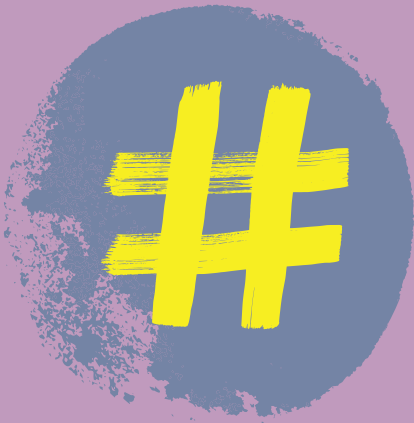
Over the years I’ve heard one too many sermons about how my industry is the cause of the degradation of the attention span and one of the greatest barriers to human flourishing in the way of Jesus. That’s right, I work in advertising.

Working for one of the most influential companies in the world, it’s difficult not to think that I am caught up in the humungous spinning cogs of a 21st-century technocratic empire. But, as a strategist, it’s been an absolute privilege to be in a position where it’s my job to look at the world around me and discern the ebbs and flows of what makes people decide this over that, and the cultural forces at work to shape the minds of citizens across many nations.

The creative industry is a spiritual desert. It’s an industry that has attracted the contrarians and the rebels of society, and it has been the birthplace of much of the reactionary movements against institutional structures including Christianity, motivated by hurt and misunderstanding. Add on top of that the veneer of advertising and a dash of ambition and obsession with radical success; it’s enchanting and mesmerisingly enticing. So much so that it is easy to get sucked into measuring even kingdom success by the measures of the world and not by the measures of Jesus who said: “Blessed are the meek”.

I’ve come to realise that the most important thing to do as a Christian working in a secular workplace is a very simple thing: to be known as a Christian. I urge all in this space to claim that identity as early as they possibly can, and then live in accordance with that conviction. In a context where business and ambition are premium, gentleness and kindness go a long way; where cynicism and complaint reign, sincerity and gratitude are an oasis; and where company politics is the career ladder, prayer is the counterculture.

As we work and seek to do all things for our Lord, we will come to have opportunities to share the hope of what we believe with those who are going through the spiritual crisis wrought by the failed promises of culture. After all, behind every flashy digital advert is not an impersonal super-intelligence pulling the puppet strings of society, but people, who we are called to love and serve, deeply thirsty for meaning and for the living water of Jesus.



## AND PAUSE

**Shantelle Johnson,**  
communications manager,  
London City Mission

**“W**hen thinking about how to reflect the image of God we should start with Jesus” – Trevin Wax, 2006.  
Jesus is perfect, in all of His ways.

During His time walking the earth as a human He perfectly embodied the image of God, so who better to thoroughly study, learn from and devote ourselves to serving and emulating.

When He flipped the tables in righteous anger as people disrespected His Father’s house. When He ‘mingled with sinners’, showing kindness yet not ignoring their sin – offering them a better way. When He fed the thousands of people who were hungry. When He lovingly and patiently spent time and built relationships with His disciples.

As an imperfect human I will never reflect God’s image fully, but as a follower of Christ, what does it look like for me strive to represent Him well on a day to day basis? For me, it’s lots of pausing. I pause to think before I respond so that I can be kind with my words. I pause to tell the truth rather than lie to make myself look better or to protect the other person from what they really need to hear.

I pause to think how best to correct someone who has yet again touched my hair without asking whether it’s acceptable to do so. I pause as I rush about my day to sit and have a conversation with the homeless person I see every day at the station on my way to work. I pause to think if my ‘clapback’ to someone’s comment on my Instagram feed is worth forgoing the opportunity for a healthy dialogue on a difficult subject.

Thankfully I don’t need to pause for as long as I used to! Something that’s helped is reminding myself of who God is each day. God is good, God is kind, God is gracious, God is forgiving and merciful. He is abounding in love and compassionate in all of His ways towards me, and I don’t deserve any of it. As I remind myself of the way God demonstrates these attributes to me in my daily life, it makes it easier to choose to do it for others around me, especially when I feel like they don’t deserve it.

Rather than asking “what would Jesus do?”, in many of the situations I’m faced with, I ask myself, “what has Jesus done?” The ultimate sacrifice that He paid for my sins is a sobering daily reminder to help me choose to reflect Him as much as I can.



## TRUE NORMAL

**Joseff Edwards,**  
Bible Society development  
worker for South Wales

**T**he Bible opens with a picture of what true ‘normal’ really is. Our true ‘normal’ as human beings is to be relational and creative. Why? Because God is relational and creative.

God the Father exists in a perfect divine community of love with the Son and the Spirit. God is also creative: He brought beauty and order out of darkened chaos. So, as His image bearer, we are called to reflect His nature in our everyday lives. The problem is that we often misuse our relationships and creativity for our own ends. But this doesn’t have to be my story. When I turn to the Bible and read Romans 12, I’m filled with hope that I can return to my true normal! God’s mercy (12:1-2) enables me to be creative (12:3-8) and relational (12:9-21) for God’s glory, not my own.

For me, being creative means overcoming fear and having the courage to pursue the gifts, dreams and passions that God has placed within me to serve Him, not self. Theologian Eugene Peterson said: “Creativity is difficult. When you are being creative, you’re living by faith. You don’t know what’s next because the created, by definition, is what’s never been before.” What has God placed within you that you are putting off because you cannot see it yet? To be creative we need faith to see what is not yet there, and God wants to give us that faith.

In my view, being relational means fighting for real, authentic community. Building community comes at a cost. It requires sacrifice. Romans 12:10 says: “Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.” We do this despite the cost. We can be hospitable; we give out to others even when it hurts, because that is the nature of our God.

One way I pursued both creativity and relationships was to start reading the Bible with guys in my rugby team. I had felt that God was stirring within me a vision for a regular slot where they were invited over to my house to enjoy good food and spend the evening looking at a story of Jesus and seeing how it spoke to our lives today. It required a step of faith and ongoing positive relationships. The guys had seen my life before they’d heard my message.

What could it look like for you to embrace creativity and pursue relationship in your life?





## ALL PEOPLE

**Ruth Ofori-Danso,**  
team secretary, PA Consulting;  
founder of TCC

**T**he first chapter of Genesis states that “God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them” (1:27).

It’s God’s word, starting with this scripture in Genesis, that shapes how I see myself as a child of God and underpins how I reflect my Father’s image in my daily life—in relationships, at work, at church, and in other places and spaces.

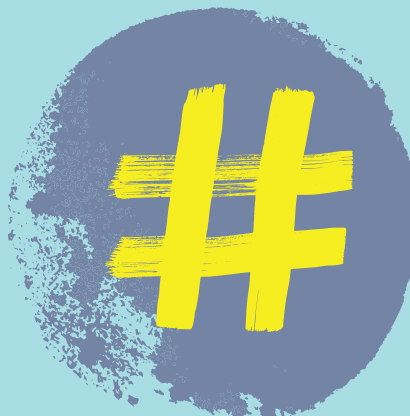
God tells me in Genesis 1:27 that I am, first and foremost, His, for He created me. He is my creator, who knows the best possible purpose and plans for me. This is my identity. Yet, this scripture also tells me that this truth does not apply to me alone, as mankind has been created in the image of God. I, therefore, have the responsibility to cherish all people, to treat every person with respect and Christ-like love: relatives, colleagues, friends, strangers – all people.

I founded The Cultivate Cloud (TCC) to, essentially, help students realise and pursue their potential. When I visited a school in Croydon, south London, I overheard boys saying that they had “fopped their exams” and because of this they wanted to give up on school. I was incredibly disheartened and didn’t want them to lose sight of their hopes and dreams, and who they could be. Through TCC, I and colleagues aim to support young students by empowering them to become well-informed, influential and successful individuals – who I believe God has created them to be.

Paul said: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23-24). This is another scripture that helps me to understand my identity in Christ and how to reflect this in my daily life.

In everything I do, I strive to complete it to the best of my ability. I aim for God’s standard of excellence in all I put my hands to, using the gifts and talents He’s given me, and regardless of whom it is for. This can be seen with TCC and the many other projects I’ve led or been involved with.

Daniel is one of my examples, as when his enemies wanted to taint his name, he stayed true to God, and this could be seen in his character, competence and courage.



## AT WORK

**John Coleby,**  
public policy researcher,  
Evangelical Alliance

**A**t my church in London, we offer a free English class, and I am one of the volunteer teachers. We get a diverse range of people attending, both in background and belief. After the class we eat with them, hear about their experiences, and talk to them about our faith. This ministry has made me think about how we reflect the image of God in different ways.

Of course, as I see people from all nations coming into church, my mind goes to Revelation 7:9: “A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb”. Now those who come to our church will not all be believers, and we see a wide range of attitudes to our faith among those who come. Sometimes the conversations after these classes can be difficult ones, particularly if someone’s had a bad experience of religion in the past. But these people are, without exception, made in the image of God, and we can hope in God’s love for them, and in God’s desire that they come to reflect His image in worship.

Another place where I see this image of God is not simply in those we serve, but in the other volunteers. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

Paul doesn’t just look at his own life to see evidence of the Spirit’s work, but in the lives of his fellow believers. I often find it hard to see growth and sanctification in my own life – self-doubt can take over, after all. But as I see my fellow teachers and volunteers growing in faith and love through this ministry, I can see God more clearly at work, and so I know He is at work in me as well.

We are not just made in the image of God and left to ourselves. Instead, the Father is transforming us into the image of His Son by His Spirit as we serve; and through us God is calling His other image bearers into the same relationship. I may be teaching on those evenings, but God is teaching me too.



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Honouring Jesus must always come before honouring a flag, but this does not mean that nation-states are not important, says **Dr David Landrum**, director of advocacy, Evangelical Alliance.



# ROOTS & FRUITS

**B**rexit. More than three years of debate and discord and the trouble may only just be starting. It seems like the parliamentary logjam following the referendum has now brought the UK into a period of constitutional crisis.

Biologically, a constitution refers to the physical health and strength of a body. Similarly, a political constitution embodies the fundamental principles for government, and expresses the national identity. Unlike the US, the UK doesn't have a written constitution. Ours is uncoded, a blend of law and convention that we have accumulated over centuries.

Historically, this framework for our state has proven to be a relatively successful formula, and its success has been largely attributed to its Christian foundations. This goes some way to explain why the words of Psalm 127, "unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain," are inscribed into the floor of the central lobby in the Palace of Westminster – the very heart of our constitution.

However, after a century of slow secularisation, the UK is experiencing what the former Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks has described as "cultural climate change"

*That's why we have a battle raging today, about yesterday, for tomorrow.*

– a wholesale shift away from Judaeo-Christian ethics but with no idea about what to replace them with. As this shift has progressed it has become clear that our constitution is not as solid as we once thought it was – that it is no longer sustainable.

This is because it all works well when you have a common spiritual rule book to guide politics, government and the law, and to temper the language of public debate. In the absence of such a moral roadmap, Brexit has exposed huge social and political divides in the UK. It has also given us a competing set of visions for our national identity – for who we are and what we value.

As the calls for constitutional reform grow, it is important that evangelicals take an interest. The shape and nature of a written constitution and an accompanying bill of rights would directly affect the civil

liberties and human rights that we all enjoy. The advocacy team at the Evangelical Alliance will certainly be speaking into this debate.

## Dual citizenship

But, wait a minute. Aren't we a Christian country? Technically, with the Queen as both head of state and head of the established church, the UK is a Christian country. In reality though, most people have views, values and beliefs that are inconsistent with the faith that has traditionally provided the things that are taken for granted. Things such as the rule of law, justice, tolerance, equality, freedom, dignity, and a love of one's neighbour.

People are living their lives as if God doesn't exist, but still expecting to receive the benefits as if He does exist. As American theologian Tim Keller observed in his address to our parliamentarians last year: "We [our secular culture] lack the resources for our high ideals". In other words: people want the fruits of Christianity, but not the roots of Christianity. They want the good stuff, but not the God stuff.

As Christians, with a dual citizenship of heaven and of the UK, this situation brings both challenges and opportunities. The

challenges relate to attempts by atheists to redefine our national identity and rewrite our history. The first being seen in the ongoing ‘British values’ debate and the governments integration strategy which seeks to redefine who is to be included and excluded in British life, and who should be deemed an ‘extremist’.

The second being expressed in a myriad of secular misrepresentations of history such as the Abolitionist, Magna Carta, Suffragettes and Chartists commemorations, in which the contribution of Christianity was either diminished or completely disregarded. Clearly, if you can redefine the past you can redirect the future. That’s why we have a battle raging today, about yesterday, for tomorrow.

### The right response

We can meet these challenges by pointing out the glaring deficiencies of secularism – which is not hard to do – and the fact that there is no such thing as secular neutrality. That it is a myth, and while the vast majority of Christians would not support a theocracy, neither should they support a secularocracy.

We can also advocate for a debate about virtues rather than values, and loudly affirm the Christian contribution to our national identity. However, we must always resist the temptation to be swept along by nationalism. In these polarised times, it is dangerous to confuse a love of country (patriotism) with a sense of national superiority. Not only is this an abuse of our primary identity in Christ, as history shows us, nationalism tends to end badly. Honouring Jesus must always come before

“ .....  
*It seems that hearts  
are being softened  
and minds are being  
focused by the crises  
that are unfolding.*  
”

honouring a flag, but this does not mean that nation-states are not important.

The Bible has a consistent focus on ‘nation’ as a bounded identity that is subject to blessings and judgements, and indeed ultimate judgement before the throne of God. Empires etc. do also pepper scripture in the guise of powerful alliances, but in the final reckoning it is nations who are: deceived (Revelation 20); redeemed (chapter 21); and healed (chapter 22). So, moulding a national identity that honours the word of God is an important part of demonstrating the coming kingdom of Jesus. As Proverbs 14:34 says: “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.” This scripture was also written into the floor of the vote lobby in the House of Commons, but after being bombed during World War II it was never replaced. How tragic.

Today, the institutions of UK society are being shaken to the core and at the Evangelical Alliance we are discerning a fresh receptiveness to the gospel. It seems that hearts are being softened and minds are being focused by the crises that are unfolding. What a time to together make Jesus known. As we seize the opportunities to introduce people to the hope of the

nations, it is vitally important that our image-bearing is distinctive. Rather than seek to be relevant or to conform to the pattern of this world, our engagement needs to be biblically rooted and Spirit-led. It needs to be Christian – unambiguously, unapologetically, confidently Christian! This is what it means to be salt and light.

At a time when our culture is warring with itself through victimhood and domination, we should resist choosing sides and instead present the world with a completely different, life-giving, hopeful vision of new life. And we should have faith that God can redeem our country. After all, He’s done it before.

We often romanticise that work of William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect – the renowned group of evangelicals who transformed our society. But we forget that they also lived in times of great shaking – times of extraordinary immorality, with poverty, crime and drunkenness at appalling levels, and times in which the nation was threatened with Napoleonic invasion. The response of evangelicals to this? It was actually quite simple. They just got on with the mission of the gospel, to see Jesus transform people and transform society.

Our attitude should be the same. As our country continues to shake under the weight of the manifold contradictions of secularism, the church should demonstrate “the manifold wisdom of God” distinctively, in both words and deeds. Or to quote the words of the wartime poster that are now common on our fridge magnets and coffee mugs, we should “Keep Calm and Carry On” with the rescue mission of God.

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Through prayer we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to transform the world, as the love of God flows through us, says **Kemi Bamgbose**, communications manager, Thy Kingdom Come.

# OF GOD'S *love*

All the great figures in the Bible enjoyed incredible intimacy with God through prayer. Prayer was essential to their existence, like “oxygen for the soul” in the words of Saint Padre Pio.

It was a place of exchange, where they could pour out their hearts before the King of kings, whatever the circumstances, be it lament or thanksgiving, and in turn, hear from God. And for all these individuals, prayer was necessary for them to receive specific instructions in order to carry out their God-given purposes on the earth. Jesus was in constant communion with God – in His own words: “I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does” (John 5:19).

As Christians, we are also called to fulfil the will of God, to build His kingdom “on earth as it is in Heaven” (Matthew 6:10), and if Jesus needed to be in constant communion with God to know what to do, how much more do we. We can know God’s will by knowing Him, which is primarily through His written word and by being in constant conversation with Him through prayer. Thanks to Jesus, we can know Him through a beautiful intimate relationship with God, our Heavenly Father, who has reconciled us to Himself through the giving of His one and only Son.

We are His children, irrespective of the differences – made in His image and likeness – and now adopted into this family, rooted in love (Ephesians 3:14). We are called into this ministry of reconciliation, to bring the lost back to the arms of the loving Father. We serve God from this place of sonship, not a dictatorial transaction with God as King and we, His subjects.

When we pray to our Father, beholding Him, we become more like Him, whose very nature is love. As we are filled with this love, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to transform the world around us, by loving God, by loving our neighbour (Mark 12:30-31).

One of the ways we are called to do this – to love – is by our prayer ministry for those who do not know Jesus. We are all called to partake in the great commission (Matthew

*Thy Kingdom  
Come has seen  
astronomical growth  
since it began in  
2016.*

28), to see all people come to faith in Christ in whichever sphere of influence we have been assigned to. We are not all be called to be evangelists, but we are all called to pray. We acknowledge that we do not have the power in and of ourselves to bring people to repentance (1 Corinthians 3:6); it is God who turns hearts to Him, and it is by grace we know what to pray and are privileged to participate in this work.

### Awe and wonder

Prayer prepares the ground for God to do the supernatural. It is one of the most loving, precious gifts we can ever offer another human being. Throughout Thy Kingdom Come, an annual, global ecumenical prayer movement for evangelisation, we are privileged to hear numerous stories of how persistent prayer by individuals has led people to faith in Christ.

Whether it is the testimony of those who have come to Christ through the faithful prayers of others, such as Archbishop Justin Welby or Eleanor Mumford, who co-founded Vineyard, or the stories of those praying for others such as the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu – how God works always fills me with awe and wonder.

Most recently I heard a wonderful story of an 82-year-old woman who decided to pray for her neighbours to come to faith during Thy Kingdom Come. She had been in church all her life so didn’t know anyone who wasn’t a Christian until her neighbours were suggested to her. She knew one set of neighbours but not the other despite

*This level of  
unprecedented unity  
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by many to be the  
precursor of revival.*

living next door for a few years. During the 11 days she prayed and, incredibly, one of the neighbours she had never spoken to before said hello to her when they both happened to be in their gardens at the same time.

Through the conversation, it soon emerged that this neighbour was unwell and so this lady, motivated by loving concern, invited them in for prayer for healing, which was accepted. Now this neighbour is not yet a Christian, but a beautiful relationship has blossomed as a result of this. The elderly woman is now more confident in praying for others and in sharing her faith. This is what prayer can do.

I heard of another story of a lay evangelist who said hello every morning to the same person whilst on the way to work, but they never knew each other’s name. Then one morning he decided to ask the man his name, “My name is John,” he responded. From that day, the lay evangelist decided the man should be one of his ‘pray for five’. A few weeks after Thy Kingdom Come the lay evangelist spotted his new friend in town and invited him for coffee and a chat. They chatted and the lay evangelist found out about John’s life and discovered he is lonely.

About a month later, the lay evangelist went out shopping with his wife and spotted a DVD boxset on the Great British Railways, which he knew John would like. He bought it as a gift for John for his birthday, which was fast-approaching. The next morning, he presented the gift to John, who was overwhelmed by this kindness and asked his friend, why? The lay evangelist responded that it is his faith in Christ, motivated by love, which spurred him to do it. John now attends a local church and has joined a Bible study group. John felt loved, he felt known, and this is what led him to Christ. Prayer did this.

### Unified in prayer

When we as the church are unified in prayer, it is such a powerful witness to the world (John 17:20-26). In Jesus’ own words, our unity demonstrates God’s love. We cannot do this in our strength, even with the greatest human will; it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are given the grace to do so.

Each year, from Ascension to Pentecost, Christians from more than 65 different



denominations and traditions, in nearly 90 per cent of countries worldwide, pray for more people to come to faith in Jesus Christ. Thy Kingdom Come has seen astronomical growth since it began in 2016, which, in the words of Archbishop Justin Welby, is “clearly a work of the Holy Spirit”. It is very simple – it is not prescriptive. We invite Christians to pray for five people they know and love to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Many churches, families and individuals commit to pray but experience so much more. By praying for others, often in groups, they have seen deepened discipleship, greater hunger for prayer, renewed sense of community, and strengthened relationships. For many of those who take part, Thy Kingdom Come is not just about prayer, but also about mission. They have felt more emboldened to share their faith and to start various evangelistic initiatives.

Across the world, there are numerous events and prayer movements bringing together different streams, traditions and denominations. This level of unprecedented unity, powered by the Holy Spirit, is often considered by many to be the precursor of revival. We see this in Acts 1 and 2, Thy Kingdom Come’s foundational scripture, which illustrates what happens when believers unite in prayer. It is a landing strip to host the supernatural presence of God. We need not do anything else to witness



“*God’s love did and continues to do this work even today, and we get to partner with Him.*”

to the world, because as we pray in one accord, we create the environment for the Holy Spirit to pour out miracles, signs and wonders.

In an excerpt from a biography (by Craig Borlase) about William Seymour, one of the instigators of the Asuza Street Revival in the US at the turn of the 20th century, and founder of modern-day pentecostalism, revival broke out in a prayer

meeting. Against the backdrop of racism and segregation (slavery had not long been abolished in the Deep South), a black, poor, one-eyed preacher named William Seymour gathered with others, mainly African Americans, to pray. Preceded by much prayer and fasting, these meetings created the atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to come, leading many thousands to faith over the coming months.

As they gathered to pray time after time, the Holy Spirit broke out and miracles occurred including healings, and news of this spread, bringing even unbelievers to see what was happening, and they joined in. The sick were healed, the critics were converted, the racial, class and gender barriers were broken down. God’s love did and continues to do this work even today, and we get to partner with Him in this through prayer. In the words of evangelist John Wesley: “God does nothing except in response to believing prayer.”

As we approach 2020 and go into our fifth year, our hope for the future is to see Thy Kingdom Come take place all over the world. We want to see Christians from all walks of life lay aside their differences and continue to pray for more people to come to know the amazing love of Christ, as we play our part in establishing God’s kingdom on earth – a kingdom rooted in love – love for God and love for others.

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# NLC20 National Leadership Conference 2020



**3-5 March 2020**  
Harrogate Convention Centre  
Keynote speakers:  
**John & Carol Arnott**

## SUPPORTING & INVESTING IN LOCAL CHURCHES

**F**or over 30 years the **New Wine** Leadership Network has sought to bring the good news of Holy Spirit-enabled worship, teaching and ministry into and through the local church to see the nation changed. This has developed into an international ministry with 20 nations developing independent New Wine expressions. We have a lot to be thankful for in the ministry of John Wimber, David & Mary Pytches and many others.

The New Wine Leadership Network in England is seeking to build on the relationship of more than 1,500 churches from all denominations and over 3,000 leaders - senior leaders, assistant leaders, worship leaders, kids' leaders, youth leaders, pastoral leaders, ministry leaders and many others.

With 30 years of helping local churches via local leader gatherings, enabling training

and supporting leadership development; New Wine wants to enable the mentoring programme that has been running in parts of England across all six of our regions. We want to support and invest in local learning communities in the areas of church planting, worship, kids & youth work, and bursaries to help urban churches engage in national events.

Every summer our United national gathering provides an opportunity for the whole church to gain a common vision of 'being church' and experience belonging to something bigger. It is a time when our values are modelled in all we do - whether it's the teaching for adults, kids and youth, passionate worship or life-transforming ministry. But this is only one part of what we do. The National Leadership Conference in Harrogate (3-5 March 2020) is a less visible but key component to helping leaders catch a

bigger vision of the part they play in being local church called by God to transform their communities.

New Wine wants to unite a diverse church in the mission of Kingdom growth with these values:

- ▶ Continuity & Change
- ▶ Cross & Resurrection
- ▶ Gracious & Truthful
- ▶ Leadership & Every-member ministry
- ▶ Mission & Community
- ▶ Natural & Supernatural
- ▶ Now & Not yet of the Kingdom
- ▶ Transcendence & Presence
- ▶ Unity & Diversity
- ▶ Word & Spirit

For more information about the Leadership Network and to see if there is a local group near you visit [new-wine.org/network](http://new-wine.org/network)

Book online at [new-wine.org/nlc20](http://new-wine.org/nlc20)

NewWine





# AGENTS OF LASTING *change*

We believe we have a mandate to stand with the world's most vulnerable in their darkest hour, says **Carey Ellis**, media strategy manager, World Vision.

**A** few days after Cyclone Idai hit southern Africa, killing more than 1,300 people and displacing tens of thousands, I landed in Beira.

On the eastern coast of Mozambique, it was the city worst hit by ferocious winds that went on to rip through Malawi and Zimbabwe last March. The damage was evident in every street, in every community. I met countless people who had lost relatives and had their homes destroyed. Their stories, each unique yet heartbreakingly similar, were devastating to hear.

World Vision was on the ground immediately after the cyclone hit, delivering emergency food, setting up child protection projects, and ensuring access to clean water and healthcare – our staff meeting the needs of the most vulnerable in their time of need.

But aid workers are being stretched to breaking point as extreme disasters become more frequent and severe. More people are living in disaster-prone areas than ever before and climate change is making the threat much worse. Global leaders have grappled with the crisis but so far failed to make real strides. Meanwhile, children in some of the world's poorest communities are already living in fear of its deadly consequences.

Last year saw a record number of people displaced by natural disasters. Climate and weather patterns are changing,

*“But when we decide to follow Jesus, we commit to a different response – a reason to keep hoping and a call to keep loving.”*

becoming more unpredictable, severe and ‘un-natural’. Across the world, the impact of quakes, tsunamis, typhoons, floods and droughts are slowing economic growth, undermining development, and trapping millions of people in poverty. In 2019 alone, devastating floods tore through Asia while in southern Africa, recurrent droughts, floods and cyclones left more than nine million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

Meanwhile, across the Pacific Islands places like Fiji are already relocating villages due to sea level rise. Indonesia is looking to move its highly-populated capital city from Jakarta due to the threat of flooding.

Disasters impact hunger and exacerbate poverty. The World Bank estimates that disasters forced 26 million people into

poverty in 2018. By 2050, an extra 50 million people could be at risk of undernourishment because of climate change.

All of this is making the challenges humanitarian organisations like World Vision face ever greater. Across the world, the communities we work with are on the frontlines of the climate crisis. For them, it isn't merely on the horizon. It's a terrifying reality.

## Sharing God's love

As a Christian organisation, we believe we have a mandate to stand with the world's most vulnerable and reflect God's love. On our own, we cannot make sense of the relentless devastation we see all over the world. It can be easier to look away and not think about the suffering families are facing every single day.

But when we decide to follow Jesus, we commit to a different response – a reason to keep hoping and a call to keep loving. Throughout the Bible we see that God's heart of compassion is with the poor and the outcast. World Vision's founder, Bob Pierce, prayed a simple prayer: “Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God.” That's still our prayer today.

Our faith means we cannot stay silent. We must respond to God's call to care for the vulnerable. Jesus said: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). We are compelled

by God's love to be His hands and His feet in this world. We can make a difference.

Since we serve the God of unimaginable possibilities, we can't give up. By keeping up hope and continuing to reach out in love, we live out the truth that "what is impossible with man is possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

## Give, act, pray

We invite our supporters to join with us on this journey, either through giving, acting or praying. We believe that when individuals, families and churches stand with the forgotten, the lonely, the refugees and the poor, they are agreeing with God's heart that things are not as they should be. No one should be homeless; no child should be hungry; no mother should give birth without medical care. Every person, made in the image of God, deserves dignity and fullness of life.

- **Pray.** Prayer is at the centre of all we do. From Bob Pierce's prayer almost 70 years ago, to now, it's crucial that our work is underpinned by faithful, relentless prayer. God cares deeply about the vulnerable, and wants to step in. We are so grateful for the thousands of Christians around the world who join us in praying for our work every day.
- **Act.** We also advocate alongside and on behalf of people whose voices are not heard enough. We work with the government, encouraging the UK to do all it can to ensure no child is left behind, no matter where they live. We're delighted when our supporters join us in speaking to their MPs or sign up to our campaigns.
- **Give.** The generosity of our supporters, many of whom donate sacrificially, is what keeps us going, and we are incredibly grateful. There are lots of different ways to give. Child sponsorship allows individuals or families to build a relationship with a child in the developing world, while supporting that child's whole community. Donations to Raw Hope help save and protect children living in some of the world's most dangerous places – countries ripped apart by conflict and deadly diseases – while our emergency fund meets the needs of communities that face terrible catastrophes.

*We're putting the power to choose their sponsor into the hands of children.*



## Lives transformed

This support allows us to stand with vulnerable communities day in and day out, impacting the lives of more than 200 million vulnerable children by tackling the root causes of poverty. In 2017 alone, our staff reached more than four million people with clean water, more than 10 million children with education and other services, while 139 million people received support in the wake

of emergencies and natural disasters.

Each child reached is another life transformed, and another future brightened. Children like the now Archbishop of Kenya, Jackson Oti Sapit, who was born into a Maasai community and sponsored through World Vision. He received both simple and life-changing gifts – from his first pair of shoes to access to health care.

World Vision supported his family through the severe drought in 1976, providing food to feed his entire family during that terrible time. When the rains finally came, our staff then helped his family to grow their own crops, making sure they could stand on their own two feet.

Now Archbishop Jackson ministers to five million Anglicans across Kenya, and in his own words: "When I look back at my life, and how far I've come, I am so grateful for every person I've met and every experience I've had along the way – not least my time as a sponsored child. I know first-hand what a difference it makes to children living in some of the world's hardest places."

## How you can get involved

We'd love for you to join us in our mission, whether that's by sponsoring a child, committing to praying for and with us, or adding your voice to our campaigns.

Our latest experience, and one we're really excited about, is Chosen, where we're putting the power to choose their sponsor into the hands of children, flipping the traditional method on its head.

When individuals, churches and families in the UK and around the world sign up, their photo will be sent to a community where World Vision works. The community will then gather for a celebration where children choose from a display of potential sponsors.

This reflects our belief that children have the power to change their own lives and their communities, and to touch the lives of their sponsors. Chosen introduces children to the first of many empowering choices they will now have through child sponsorship, so they can become agents of lasting change.

We are already seeing God move in miraculous ways through Chosen. If your church would like to be involved, find out more at [www.worldvision.org.uk/chosen](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/chosen)





This is more than a good book; it's a heartfelt plea for Christians to commit to each other and hope and pray for renewal, says **Danny Webster**, advocacy and media manager, Evangelical Alliance.

# REAPPEARING CHURCH

A MANIFESTO FOR **HOPE AND RENEWAL**

**M**ark Sayers is one of the most significant commentators on the state of the church in the west today.

A church leader from Melbourne in Australia, he has wrestled for many years through finding ways for the church to thrive in the post-Christian culture endemic in the places he lives, works and travels. From pioneering formats of church to reach those disillusioned with traditional church to realising the paucity of deconstructing faith with nothing left in its wake, his latest book offers a manifesto for hope and renewal in this cultural moment.

Perhaps best known for the podcast *This Cultural Moment* he hosts with US church leader and writer John Mark Comer, Sayers offers insightful analysis threaded through with optimism that the church has suffered a period of decline in the past, and it is in these difficult times that the seeds of renewal are planted.

—“  
*Sayers notes the need for those who are left to work together and commit to each other.*  
”—

And yet nothing can ever be taken for granted – there is no automatic rebound mechanism; what is needed are people who know the times they are in and commit to relentlessly following Jesus and His call.

This call for a remnant is at the heart of his latest book *Reappearing Church*. Sayers' conviction, and one I wholeheartedly share, is that in an era when the influence of the church is declining, and church attendance is falling, what is needed are for those who are committed to following Christ to do four things.

## Understand the times

First, they are to understand the times they are in. It is important to be aware that our society does not privilege religious belief in the way that society may have done in the past, nor is it viewed apathetically as it has for much of the last fifty years with an assumption that these faddish beliefs will die out. For some, religious beliefs are considered harmful and therefore there are conscious efforts to squeeze them out. It is vital to recognise this, but not become distressed at the trend.

Another feature of our times is the unremitting insistence on novelty and progress: the new thing is always better than the old. Whether this is reflected in technological change and consumerist attitudes, or in values that are considered outdated.

## A holy remnant

The second aspect Sayers notes is the need for those who are left to work

together and commit to each other. The remnant is often used in eschatological terms, relating to a particular view of the second coming and the return of Christ. But in this context, Sayers is referring to the minority of Christians who are fuelled by the fire of their faith to be a catalyst for renewal. Even in an era when nominalism is a smaller component of church attendance, it still exists, and the trajectory of those who attend church out of a sense of duty or habit will likely be to a shifting of beliefs and values in line with culture rather than fixed on God and His kingdom.

Sayers quotes Bible teacher Arthur Wallis, saying: "It is time to cease excusing our sins by calling them shortcomings or natural weakness, or by attributing them to temperament or environment. It is time to cease justifying our carnal ways and materialistic outlook by pointing to others who are the same ... we must face our sins honestly in the light of God's word, view them as He does and deal with them as before Him."

This is a call for radical holiness, for those who are committed to Christ to exhibit this in every area of their life. Instead of consuming all that the world has to offer, this community of believers has to contend for the kingdom of God, and this has to affect every area of our lives. Sayers writes: "We are temples of the Holy Spirit individually, but not in isolation; the church (locally and universally) is also a temple of the Holy Spirit, not bound to one location. Through Jesus' sacrificial death upon the cross, He has renewed our mandate to spread the presence of God in the world."

### A prayerful community

The third component necessary is prayer. Quoting Welsh Protestant minister Martyn Lloyd-Jones as writing fifty years ago about the need for prayer in a time of cultural upheaval, the prescient words are as necessary now as they were then. Lloyd-Jones wrote: "I shall see no hope until individual members of the church are praying for revival ... praying with urgency and concentration for a shedding forth of the power of God, such as He shed forth one hundred and two hundred years ago, and in every other period of revival, and of reawakening. There is no hope until we

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*The faithful remnant brings life to the church and the non-anxious agents of renewal bring health to society.*  
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do. But the moment we do, hope enters.”

Sayers notes that as we find seeds of revival within ourselves, as God works transformation in our lives, this spills out and we will gather with others who God is using. These are the cells where revival starts to grow, and this is grounded in prayer: "Our lives are designed to be in intimate relationship and friendship with God," Sayer writes, "When we don't pray, we become spiritually dehydrated."

### Hope for renewal

Hope for renewal is the final component that is essential. We cannot make revival happen. Sayers writes: "Strategies of renewal, which attempt to make revival happen on our terms and timetable, fall back into the error of religiosity ... Such errors, rightly intended, wrongly create kinds of Babelic revival structures, falling into the temptation of using the dynamics of hype, manipulation and image management. As with all religiosity, exhaustion arrives quickly, with disillusionment soon to follow."

But we can hope. The faithful remnant brings life to the church and the non-anxious agents of renewal bring health to society. We can learn from history that this has happened before, and we can trust in the future that it will happen again. Sayers' call to remnants and renewal is not

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*In times of social upheaval and significant personal anxiety, we need the church to be revived and society renewed.*  
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new, but nor is it just ancient history.

I grew up in a church planted by Arthur Wallis, who Sayers quotes and who was at the heart of the restoration house church movement of the 1970s and 1980s. As I grew up, his name was nothing but a name, as he had died in my early years. But as I started to read his books and borrow my parents' collections of his teachings on tape to listen to, he became a formative figure in my own discipleship. Wallis was from a Plymouth Brethren background but had a dramatic encounter with the Holy Spirit in 1951. He became absorbed in the revival that had taken place in the Isle of Lewis two years previously, and in 1956 wrote his classic *In the Day of Thy Power*, drawing on his visits and research.

Wallis was passionate about the need for the church to commit to praying and hoping for revival to come and for the work of the Holy Spirit to fuel that movement. I hear from church leaders today a similar yearning: there is a growing belief that in the challenges of contemporary culture and in the struggles of the church to find its place, there are the seeds of another great awakening. In the 1990s there was excitement about moves of the Holy Spirit, most notable through what was termed 'the Toronto Blessing'. But while it led to excitement within the church, and which was formational for many current leaders, it did not bear the long-term fruit many hoped for.

Sayers quotes Wallis calling for Christians to be "miniature forerunners", preparing the way in our heart and in the hearts of others. In times of social upheaval and significant personal anxiety, we need the church to be revived and society renewed. Our hope can never just be for individual spiritual experience. We have to hope that in Jesus who transformed our lives, our world can and will be made new.

*Reappearing Church* is a good book, but however good it is, that's not enough. It is a passionate call for Christians to commit to each other, to living Christlike lives and hoping and praying for renewal. The value comes not in reading words on a page but in the overflow of God in our lives into the community around us.





How does the number of men and women in our churches affect us all? asks **Annabel Clarke** and **Nathan Blackaby**.

# A BETTER BALANCE

**F**emale or male, we're all created in God's image and equal in worth and significance (Genesis 1:27). The Bible also clearly values singleness and marriage, two other key aspects of identity.

Single people are equally valuable and competent as married people. At the same time, God's desire from the start has been for marriage to reflect His covenant relationship with the church, to be foundational to society, and to be personally experienced by most people.

We are God's image bearers in all our relationships. The church can articulate a clear vision of what healthy Christian singleness, dating and marriage can involve. Christians can speak this out, live it, and model it to the next generation and the rest of society as a witness to God's grace and love.

But think of when you walk into your church – what do you see in reality? Maybe more women than men? (Have you counted?) Maybe men who could encourage each other more in their faith? Maybe children who don't have a Christian (or any) father at home? Maybe single women who'd like to get married one day?

The Engage Network is a group of leading Christian organisations, including Christian Vision for Men, British Youth for

“*But think of when you walk into your church – what do you see in reality?*”

Christ, Ridley Hall Theological College, Care for the Family, Single Friendly Church, and New Wine. Their collaborative work and vision is “to make singleness or marriage a genuine choice for all Christian women and men, through a church which has an equal number of men and women and teaches about healthy Christian singleness, dating and marriage.” (For more information about the Engage Network, visit [www.engage-mcmp.org.uk](http://www.engage-mcmp.org.uk))

## What are the problems?

There's an overall imbalance in our congregations of two men to three women. The majority of the UK church has double the number of single women to single men. This has serious consequences for us all.

### 1. For men

There's a key need for the church to reach

and disciple more men effectively, primarily for their own sake, but also for the health of the whole church and wider society.

### 2. For women

Up to two million Christian women face a choice: marry a non-Christian or remain single and childless. Many are finding that they're sacrificing their marriage and children because of their faith.

### 3. For children and young people

If current trends continue, only about 16 per cent of today's church's grandchildren will have two Christian parents.

### 4. For singleness

A third of adults in church are single; many report that they feel isolated in churches that are overly family-focused, and most want to marry another Christian.

### 5. For dating and relationships

There are often unhealthy psycho-social dynamics between single men and women, with a power balance in men's favour due to the significant over-supply of women in the dating market. More than half (54 per cent) of single Christian adults said that they haven't dated for at least a year, or it is many years since they last went on a date.

## 6. For marriage

Research by the Evangelical Alliance found that more women than men were married to a non-Christian. More than 90 per cent of Christian couples expressed happiness with their marriage, while only 66 per cent of those in a mixed marriage did so.

## 7. For parenting

'Spiritual fatherlessness' is increasing, both within families and within the Christian community.

### What are the reasons?

#### We're in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:14)?

A church with an equal number of men and women would be spiritually stronger. Marriage between Christians can have a powerful intergenerational impact. We know the enemy will seek to destroy Christian marriages, but through the church imbalance, he is preventing them from happening in the first place, and by doing so, also preventing the birth of children to Christians.

#### Male ministers do not perceive the problem when it doesn't affect them?

Most church leaders are men (84 per cent in 2017) who have been able to get married and have children. Many are, therefore, less aware of how church can be experienced by non-Christian men and aren't motivated enough to address the issues causing the pain of Christian women who can't have a family.

#### Male ministers are worried about excluding or offending women?

The key message is probably 'balance' – women are unlikely to mind if the church further encourages men's ministry, as long as it's very clear that the women are equally encouraged.

#### Men's and women's brains are just hard-wired differently?

Actually, they're not – this is what psychologists call a 'neuromyth', and we need to avoid making stereotyped generalisations about men and women or giving these as reasons for the lower levels of men in our churches.

*A gender balanced church would be spiritually stronger.*

### What reasons do people give?

One UK study showed that people also suggest the lack of men is due to romanticisation of the church and its worship, the lack of masculine role models and friendship patterns for men, and church creating a sense of passivity. Men don't always feel that they belong in church, and it's also likely that social issues affecting males more than females (such as suicide) aren't always effectively addressed by the church.

### What are the solutions?

The Engage Network has produced a handbook, *7 Reasons Your Church Needs More Men: How to lead a gender balanced church supporting healthy singleness, dating, marriage and youth*. This blends research, theology and very practical solutions to address all these issues. Steve Clifford, the former general director of the Evangelical Alliance, said the handbook is "a vital subject and a key resource".

If you're male, female, single, dating, married, a parent or youth worker, it shows what you can do to flourish even more fully in your situation, and how you can support others. The vision grids at the end of the chapters have many practical suggestions for every Christian individual and leader. Here are a few:

### How can we create a balanced church?

- For individual men – talk to other men and your church leaders about developing men's ministry in your context. Make use of resources to

grow your relationship with God. Go to Christian events for men.

- For the local church – make men's ministry, evangelism and discipleship central to the church's life and mission. Gather a small strategy group. Discuss with experienced organisations like Christian Vision for Men how to create a long-term evangelistic men's ministry in your setting.

### How can we create healthy singleness, dating and relationships, and marriage?

- For individuals or couples – intentionally develop how you're 'living life to the full' (John 10:10) in each area of life. See dating and relationships as two distinct stages, each with a beginning, middle and end, so that we can create a less pressurised church culture. Consider in more depth what is unique about being married to another Christian, or link with others for support/prayer if your partner is not yet a Christian.
- For parents and youth workers – explicitly disciple children and youth around healthy identity and relationships.
- For local churches – good leaders actively listen to the needs of different groups in the congregation. Make sure everyone is fully included. Provide regular teaching on singleness, dating and relationships, marriage and parenting.

At a national level, we would know things were working well when all theological colleges, denominations, leadership networks and conferences/festivals provided teaching and resourcing on all the issues addressed by Engage.

Can you imagine if the church across our country was baptising an increasing and equal number of men and women, boys and girls? Imagine a time when, with the right balance and relevant teaching, we are more of a relationally-flourishing church?

The solutions are available, so let's each pray and take a step forward in playing our part to change things, for God's glory.

*Annabel Clarke is a chartered psychologist and a co-chair of the Engage Network. Nathan Blackaby is the CEO of Christian Vision for Men and a co-chair of the Engage Network.*

*The solutions are available, so let's each pray and take a step forward.*



By Gavin Calver,  
CEO of the  
Evangelical Alliance

# A *call* TO BE BRAVER

**E**IGHTEEN months ago I was travelling and speaking at a number of summer conferences. There was one specific meeting where I was not ministering and so could sit there and receive.

The preacher spoke powerfully and passionately about the need for the church to rise up in our day and be what the UK requires. At the end of the talk the speaker gave a call for anyone feeling challenged about the need to be distinct for Christ in our secular landscape to make their way to the front. I immediately shot out of my seat and went forward. I knew this call was for me, and as I stood at the front of this large tent I felt the Lord challenge me to be braver for Him in the next chapter of my life.

As I stood there at the front I felt myself slowly facing up to the reality of what it might actually mean to be brave. What might it cost? Where might it take me? How would I keep going? What would it mean for my family? As these thoughts flooded through my mind, I felt myself begin to weep. Not cry a little, really weep. The tears poured freely as I surrendered fully to what the Lord might be calling me into.

So often we assume that bravery involves no fear and is easy for some. It is not. It was the great man Nelson Mandela who said: "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." I wiped my face and went to tell my wife Anne about this encounter.

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*We must stand firm on God’s word in a time of incredible cultural and spiritual challenge.*  
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Some weeks later, on the last night of the summer holidays, we were having a family meal. Once we had finished eating we reflected on the great memories made and prepared ourselves for a return to normality. Our conversation turned into prayer followed by a time of silence to see if the Lord wanted to say anything to us. We try and ‘wait’ regularly because we are desperate for our two children to learn that prayer is a conversation and not a monologue.

After a minute or so in silence our daughter Amelie spoke up, knowing nothing of my encounter at the front of that tent. A little tentatively she said, “Dad, it’s a bit weird but I think Jesus wants you to be braver going forward.” Understandably, I was somewhat taken aback, but I was prepared to hear what the Lord was saying loud and clear to me.

Fast forward to today and I now find myself in this new role leading the Evangelical Alliance. This role is certainly a real privilege, but it also explains why the Lord has been showing me that I need to be braver. For us as the Evangelical Alliance,

this next decade is going to be really significant as we face up to the increasingly choppy waters ahead of us. We must stand firm on God’s word in a time of incredible cultural and spiritual challenge. We need to be prepared to be distinct despite the overwhelming pressure to conform from the secular tsunami taking place in culture. We need to play our part in helping to strengthen the evangelical church at this challenging time.

As I stood at the front during my recent commissioning service alongside my family, my friend Agu Irukwu, senior pastor of Jesus House, London, led the prayers and anointed me with oil for the task ahead. Again, I felt the challenge from the Lord: it’s time to be braver. As well as being braver, we must make sure that we are also kinder, courageous and loving, biblical and compassionate – not treating people as objects but, instead, disagreeing well and without prejudice. We must not be foolhardy in our bravery but treat everyone with the dignity that they deserve and as someone who Jesus died for.

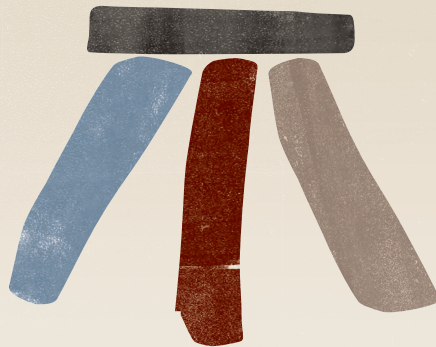
So, as I take on this role, I am so grateful for the support of many. Please do pray for us at the Evangelical Alliance and stand with us as we long to see many people come to faith in Jesus. We want to help the church have a clear and effective voice into every layer of society and to see the UK hugely impacted by a church more confident in the gospel.

Perhaps it’s time for us all to be a little braver.

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