

# InterSections

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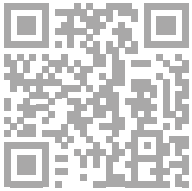
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## Editorial

Welcome to the May issue of *InterSections*!

Many local churches have been struggling in recent years. Church attendance in the Western world has been falling for decades. The Covid pandemic created new challenges – some members never returned once churches resumed after lockdowns. In this environment we can be tempted to feel gloomy or fatalistic about the state of the church, so it's important for us to be reminded about what the church is and why church matters.

In our *Feature*, Nathan Holyoak considers whether it's possible to follow Jesus without the church. In our *Food for Thought* Dale Christensen reflects on important things to contemplate when deciding which church we join. Peter Horne reviews the book *Why We Stayed* which shares several writer's perspectives on why they remain a part of Churches of Christ.

In a new column, *LifeFocus*, Benny Tabalujan tells about the life of Michael Faraday, a famous scientist whose strong faith is perhaps less well-known. We also interview Roger and Sally Tyers – Roger is a shepherd of the Malaga Church of Christ in Perth. And in our *News*, we hear about a community Trash & Treasure fundraising event in Brisbane, and also the recent Autumn Lectureship held in Victoria.

We pray that this issue will help to build your love for Jesus and his church.

*The InterSections team.*

## Feature

Nathan Holyoak

## Can I have Jesus without the Church?

Have you ever interacted with people who are warm to the idea of Jesus, but resist any involvement in the church? Do you have friends or family members who claim a sincere belief in Jesus, but reject organised religion? If yes, this raises a the question: Is it possible to have Jesus without the church?

In 2017 the Barna Group compared the beliefs of those who 'love Jesus but not the church' with those who are regular churchgoers.<sup>1</sup> The Barna research revealed that both groups held strong views on orthodox beliefs such as 'there is only one God'. Both groups also had an 'active prayer life'.

But the differences are more telling. The first group was less than half as likely to read Scripture (let alone other spiritual books). They also tended not to participate in group events or retreats (let alone attend a church). Instead, they preferred to experience God in nature or through meditation. They were also much less likely to talk to their friends about spiritual matters or to feel a responsibility to share their faith with others.

There are many reasons why the first group might demonstrate such behaviour. It often arises from an individual's personal experiences of the church. Did they experience poor behaviour from a Christian? Did they experience abuse or disillusionment with certain moral teachings? Perhaps they simply dislike authority, including an external authority such as a church?

According to the Barna report, 'The critical message that churches need to offer this group is a reason for churches to exist at all. What is it that the church can offer their faith that they can't get on their own?'

If that's so, then it highlights the need for Christians to have a solid understanding of what the church is, and of her purpose. If Christianity is all about Jesus, isn't he enough? Why is the church important?

The biblical answer is that, in a profound way, Jesus is the church. The church is Jesus' body (Ephesians 1:22–23; 5:23). Likened to the physical body of a human, the church is an integral part of Jesus and can't be separated from him.

In fact, Paul compares Jesus' relationship to the church with the relationship between a husband and wife (Ephesians 5:25–27).

Jesus so loved the church that he gave himself for the church, cleansed the church, and made her radiant and spotless. What tender love and care! How precious is the church to Jesus!

Whatever flaws exist in your congregation, full as it is with sinful people, this doesn't preclude the presence of Jesus in the church. Indeed, Jesus' work in, through, and for the church is the biggest story in the universe:

*'His [God's] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.'*  
(Ephesians 3:10–11, NIV)

The church isn't just an afterthought. The church is the whole point – a signature accomplishment – of Jesus' ministry and central to God's eternal purpose. And we get to be a part of that! Why would we walk away from the church?

But what about the local church? Isn't that what people really are turning their backs on? To answer these questions, let's consider the attitude that Jesus himself had towards the local gathering of God's people. In Jesus' day, that was the local synagogue.

We're told that it was Jesus' custom to attend the synagogue every Sabbath day (Luke 4:16). Often Jesus used these occasions to teach people. But this wouldn't have always been the case—especially before he began his public ministry.

So why did Jesus attend the synagogue weekly? Did he need these occasions to feed his own spiritual life and maintain his connection to the Father? If anyone could remain faithful on their own, surely that was Jesus. Yet, spending time with faithful (albeit imperfect) believers, gathered under the authority of the Word, was clearly important to Jesus. This was not just because of what he could gain from them, but also because of what he could share with them.

It's this give-and-take of communal life, in all of its messiness and complexity, that shapes and changes people as God, through his Spirit, works among them. Jesus' mission for the universal church is intimately connected with the mission of the local church. This life in a faith community is the great blessing that we reject if we turn our back on the church.

It's a wonderful thing that each of us can have a relationship with Jesus without the mediation of a third-party priest, or institution. No matter our circumstances we can love Jesus, worship him, and pray to him. But we shouldn't make that the limit of what God has planned for us as we follow Christ.

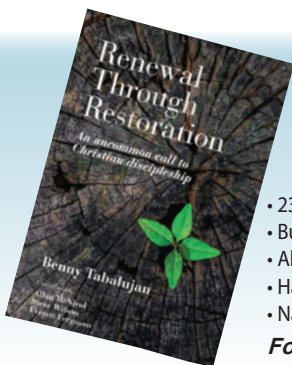
More than the saving of individuals, God is preparing a body of people—the Body of Christ—formed together with each member in place just as he has purposed (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). As that Body, our churches should be communities where people can see Jesus at work more clearly than anywhere else. We should demonstrate God's love in action. We should show the joy and peace that comes from submitting to the authority of his Word. That's another reason for the church's existence today.

Without the church we will only have a fraction of Jesus. Of course, a fraction of Jesus is better than nothing. But Jesus offers us so much more. And when this life is over, the church will take on an even greater significance. That's because it is through the church that the manifold wisdom of God will be made known in the heavenly realms! ◇

1 <https://www.barna.com/research/meet-love-jesus-not-church/>



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Enquiries: Klesis Institute, PO Box 700, Glen Waverley, Victoria 3150, Australia.

Art & Design: Gekko Graphics / Heather M. Cox

Publisher: Klesis Institute [intersections.com.au](http://intersections.com.au)

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## Which Church?

Congratulations! You've read the Bible your grandmother left you and recently been baptised into Christ. The angels are rejoicing! Now it's time to find a church to join.

Or perhaps you've been part of a church, but you feel that they aren't following God's will faithfully, and you're looking for another church to join.

Or maybe you've just relocated and now have to find a church you can meet with on Sundays.

All three scenarios raise a common question: which church?

When we discuss this difficult issue, sometimes two questions are conflated. First, are believers in all churches saved? Second, which church(es) would God be pleased for me to join? When these two questions are treated as if they are one, the answer to the former can be mistakenly treated as a simple answer to the latter. So let's address each question in turn as we seek to discern God's will.

When putting together various New Testament passages on salvation, we can be confident that God *has promised* to save those who believe, repent, confess, are baptised, and live faithfully thereafter. I trust you are familiar with these promises in Scripture, so we won't explore them here in depth. Suffice to say that when we speak to others on God's behalf, we can biblically assure them that God will honour his promises.

However, we can't *promise* others something on God's behalf when God himself *hasn't promised* it. Sure, we may hope and pray that God will grant mercy to those who believe they are serving him with good conscience – whatever misunderstandings they might have concerning God's will and how they obey it. I certainly pray that God would have mercy on me when I don't understand or don't obey his will; and I think it's unwise to ask that for myself and not for others.

I think there are biblical grounds to seek God's mercy in this kind of situation. Once, King Hezekiah attempted to restore Judah's worship of God. He decided to celebrate Passover in the second month instead of the first (as the Law required). 2 Chronicles 30:3 tells us why: 'They had not been able to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem.' The reasoning, so it seems, was that a late Passover was better than no Passover at all.

Additionally, many of those who assembled for Passover weren't purified as they should've been. Still, they ate the Passover, in a way 'contrary to what was written' (30:18). But Hezekiah prayed on behalf of his people, 'May the Lord, who is good, pardon everyone who sets their heart on seeking God – the Lord, the God of their ancestors – even if they are not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary.'

Note God's response: he 'heard Hezekiah and healed the people' (30:20). God wasn't obliged to forgive them – they had disobeyed clear instructions! Yet he did, and he may again where he sees fit.

All this suggests that two genuine Christians who agree on every doctrine may yet disagree on who they expect to see when they get to heaven. After all, the decision on who enters heaven is God's, not ours. For now, we can be confident that God will fulfill his promises, and that he'll judge with perfect justice. The final decision is in his hands.

This brings us to the second question. Even if I expect to see (for example) my sincere Anglican or Roman Catholic neighbours in Paradise, does that mean I should join their church? What if they have a better children's program? Or their preaching is better? Would this outweigh the fact that they may not be obeying God's will as I believe it should be obeyed?

I'd say no – for two reasons. First, saying yes presumes that I know the decision that God has reached about the hearts of believers in that denomination. As I stated earlier, we have no authority to make promises for God that he hasn't made himself.

But the more significant reason is that, God's mercy aside, *obedience matters*. 'If you love me, keep my commands,' said Jesus to his disciples (John 14:15). Moreover, 'whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin' (James 4:17).

As contemporary society flees further from God, it can feel as if anyone who professes belief in Christ – even any monotheist! – is more or less 'with us'. And it's true there are large overlaps in belief among religious people, especially when it comes to personal morality. For example, believers in many churches can unite around the command, 'Do not commit adultery.'

But this shouldn't obscure the significant differences in faith and practice among churches. Specifically, it seems unwise for me to join a church that I believe is less obedient to the instructions of God, *even if I expect that God's mercy will cover their misunderstanding*. This is true in matters of morality and public worship, but it's particularly potent when it comes to disagreements about *how we are saved*.

Put simply, I remain part of Churches of Christ because I believe that (despite our imperfections) our fundamental teachings and practices are faithful to God's will as revealed in Scripture. So let's commit to following where God leads us, even while we pray the prayer of Hezekiah over ourselves and all those who genuinely seek to follow Christ and his Spirit. ◇



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## Lessons from a Life: Michael Faraday

Michael Faraday (1791–1867) was an English scientist of the Victorian era. Among other fields, his research straddled chemistry, electricity, electromagnetism, and what is now called physics. Today, he's known as one of the greatest experimentalists in the history of science. There are dozens of books about him. The farad (a measure of capacitance) is named in his honour. The Faraday Institute at Cambridge University continues his legacy.

Yet Faraday's early background wasn't promising. He came from a poor family. His father was a blacksmith. Partly due to inadequate family finances, Faraday left school early. At 14, he began an apprenticeship with a London bookbinder.

But instead of just binding books, young Faraday also read them. Intrigued by the chemistry books that came his way, he learnt to replicate scientific experiments. Pursuing his interest, he attended lectures at the Royal Institution – a charity set up to disseminate science for public benefit. He impressed Sir Humphry Davy, the famed chemist who lectured at the Royal Institution. Not long thereafter Faraday was hired as a laboratory assistant.

Faraday's subsequent work flourished. Among other things, he discovered benzene. He experimented with liquefying gases such as chlorine. He outlined the laws of electrolysis. Using electromagnetism, he helped design the prototype of today's electric motors.

At his career peak, Faraday was offered a knighthood; he declined. In 1857, he also declined the presidency of the Royal Society, the pre-eminent scientific academy in Britain. Later, in 1864, he declined an offer to be president of the Royal Institution, preferring instead a time of quiet rest and the affection of friends rather than earthly honours.

When Faraday died, a burial place was offered at Westminster Abbey, near where Sir Isaac Newton was laid. However, in compliance with Faraday's wishes, his family arranged for a standard private burial in Highgate Cemetery, London. Today, Faraday's grave is marked by a traditional tombstone.

Amidst the contemporary applause for Faraday's scientific achievements, what is sometimes glossed over is his deep Christian faith. Following in his father's footsteps, Faraday, and his wife, Sarah, were longtime members of a small London church which was aligned with the Glasites and Sandemanians, a non-conformist offshoot of Presbyterianism. During his life, Faraday was at times a deacon and an elder in a congregation that met in various places, including a simple meeting house in Paul's Alley, not far from St Paul's Cathedral, London.

The Glasites and Sandemanians hark back to 18th-century Scotland. There, John Glas and his son-in-law, Robert Sandeman, led a small movement of believers who sought a return to New Testament faith and practice. They were devout restorationists. They took the Lord's Supper each Sunday and greeted members with a holy kiss. They sang psalms *acappella*. They baptised for remission of sins. Their churches had a plurality of local elders. These were often called 'Churches of Christ'.<sup>1</sup>

As an elder in his congregation, Faraday gave regular 'exhortations' (sermons). One sermon on Christian obedience delivered in 1863 was based on Mark 8:34–38. Faraday's words offer an insight into his understanding of the nature of the church and the importance of obeying Christ:

*Think for a moment, brethren, of the Church of Christ, what it means and what it ought to be. Where the Word of God has sounded, there His people are drawn together; in small companies (and we may consider there are many such scattered over the world of whom we know nothing), gathered out of the world, to the obedience of all things that Christ has commanded.<sup>2</sup>*

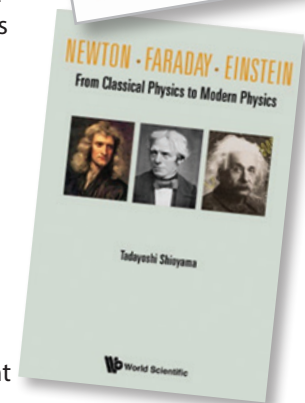
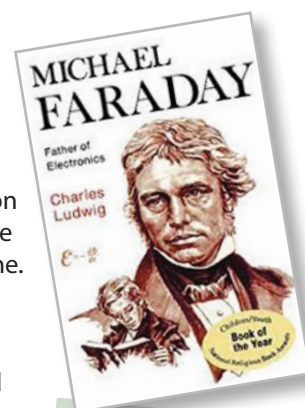
Incidentally, the strictness demanded by some churches in Faraday's orbit may raise eyebrows today. On one occasion, Faraday received a request from Queen Victoria to join her for Sunday lunch. He agreed to the lunch, but in so doing had to miss the church's love-feast (fellowship meal). He was chided by some members and later had to step aside as an elder! Yet Faraday continued to be part of the church, serving in his own quiet way. Eventually, he was reinstated to the eldership – but only after many years had passed.<sup>3</sup>

Upon reflection, it's clear that Faraday's story is that of a largely self-educated boy from a disadvantaged family who rose to the peak of the scientific world of his time. He was a man of profound faith who sought to honour and obey God to the best of his understanding – even if it meant serving humbly in a rather unremarkable dissenting church.

What other lessons can we glean today from Faraday's life? ◇

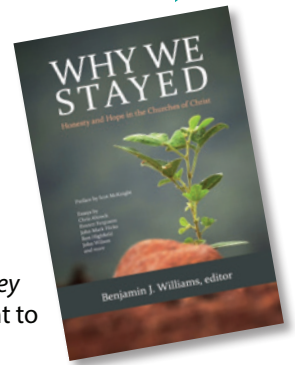
- 1 Herbert Pratt, "Brother Faraday", (1989) 31(4) *Restoration Quarterly* 219–229.
- 2 James Rorie (ed.), *Selected Exhortations Delivered to Various Churches of Christ by the Late Michael Faraday, Wm. Buchanan, John M. Baxter, and Alex Moir* (John Leng and Co Ltd, 1910) 26, as quoted by Philip Eichman, "The Christian Character of Michael Faraday as Revealed in His Personal Life and Recorded Sermons", (June 1993) 43 *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 92–95.
- 3 Silvanus P. Thompson, *Michael Faraday: His Life and Work* (Macmillan, 1898) 297–298.

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## Why We Stayed: Honesty and Hope in the Churches of Christ

### Benjamin J. Williams (editor)



**Editorial note:** This book review examines a 2018 book about Churches of Christ in America. While significant events (including a pandemic) have occurred since then, there may still be lessons to be gleaned by members of Churches of Christ in Australia.

Attendance at Churches of Christ in the United States have been declining since the 1960s. In 2012, Flavil Yeakley, then director of the Harding Center for Church Growth, published a book titled *Why They Left: Listening to Those Who Have Left Churches of Christ* (Gospel Advocate, 2012). Yeakley's book sought to understand the various reasons why people had left Churches of Christ.

Fast forward to 2018, *Why We Stayed: Honesty and Hope in the Churches of Christ* (Keledei Publications, 2018), by Benjamin J. Williams, provides a different, and perhaps more positive, response from twelve Church of Christ ministers and academics.

Seven of the contributors have doctoral degrees, with some working as faculty at Lipscomb University, Abilene Christian University, and Pepperdine University. The remaining authors have master's degrees and were serving in congregational ministry at the time of writing. As a result, the reader may at times need a dictionary close by to decipher some of the academic terms used.

Churches of Christ provide some unique challenges for a project like this. Even the initial task of identifying the target raises questions for a network of congregations without the typical denominational structure or a unifying creed. With increasing diversity of belief and practice among American Churches of Christ, some described in these essays may at first seem unfamiliar to readers from Australian Churches of Christ.

While some may expect a work like this to revolve around the plea of being the 'one true church', in reality this book doesn't compare Churches of Christ to other church traditions. It doesn't seek to criticise the beliefs and practices of other fellowships. Instead, the contributors appear content to find value in their own church experience without tearing down others. Each chapter identifies a trait or practice from congregational life that the author then digs into.

Historically, Churches of Christ emerged from the American Restoration Movement, and Everett Ferguson provides the opening essay that argues for the value of the movement's restoration plea. He suggests that different definitions have confused the focus of restoration and seeks to provide a unifying explanation of the term.

The next three chapters highlight core values of virtually all Churches of Christ. Jeremie Beller reminds us of our commitment to Scripture. As the world becomes increasingly skeptical that an ancient book can have any relevance for life today, we continue to cling to Scripture as God's Word to us.

Then, in perhaps the most controversial chapter, Matthew Dowling proposes the value of congregations working through their list of core beliefs. He proposes three tiers of doctrines: those essential to our Christian faith (e.g. the full deity and humanity of Jesus); those that form boundaries between believers (e.g. congregational leadership models, Calvinism and Arminianism); and differences which nevertheless still allow close fellowship (e.g. the interpretation of the book of Revelation). Appropriately, Steven Hunter then writes about the importance of the love and acceptance that he has received within Churches of Christ – even when disagreements have existed over doctrinal matters.

From here, three subsequent chapters discuss familiar Church of Christ practices: baptism, the Lord's Supper, and *acappella* singing. Again, these chapters provide thoughtful discussions while avoiding glib dismissals of other views. All three contributors acknowledge that, while these historic Church of Christ practices have biblical foundations, other perspectives can broaden our understanding and appreciation of these practices. Although the topics appear familiar, the essays promise to help the reader think more deeply about them.

The remaining five chapters describe more about each contributor's personal experience of walking with God and a congregation of his people. Australian readers may not always relate to the experience of being part of a multi-generational or large church described here. Yet the insights from these chapters will hopefully find value as contributors sketch different aspects of a healthy church.

I have no hesitation in recommending this book. But I do offer three qualifiers. First, don't expect a traditional defence of traditional topics often associated with Churches of Christ. Instead, readers should expect to be challenged by the essays while growing in appreciation for some aspects of church life which we often take for granted.

Second, some aspects of this book may require background understanding for Australian readers. For example, the frequent references to Alexander Campbell or other historical leaders of the American Restoration Movement may be unfamiliar to first-generation Christians as well as some members of Australian Churches of Christ.

Finally, my greatest critique of the book is that while the authors are very qualified for the task they've undertaken, they represent a resoundingly white, male, and American perspective. I believe that the missing voices of women and other ethnic groups have much to contribute to this conversation. This is especially so given that, from a global perspective, Churches of Christ are growing most rapidly beyond American shores. ◇

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# News 2024 Autumn Lectureship, Victoria

Having had the privilege to attend the Autumn Lectureship for the past 17 years (except for that one year when no-one was allowed to go), it's an event that we greatly look forward to each year. It gives us a taste of what heaven is going to be like! Maybe not the flies or the mud or the heat or the cold ... but a time to spend with our church family, our brothers and sisters in Christ – singing, praying, teaching, and learning about our mighty God and Saviour.

It's also a time to catch up on the past year and its joys and struggles, to see the growth of our children, to touch the soft downy hair of the babies, to taste the wonderful food being prepared for all, to smell the lovely country air, and to hear the laughter as we learn new card games.

This year at Charnwood Forest was no exception. We looked at the ways to train our senses, always looking to God and his Word for our guidance as we traverse this minefield of life on earth. Our teachers came from eight congregations, with the campers representing 12 congregations in five states. What we thought would be a small camp (since only Victorians were heading into school holidays) turned out to be a glorious group of 59 people staying on site, plus two visiting on Sunday. How blessed! ◇

Liz Kirkpatrick, Canberra Church of Christ, ACT



## Trash & Treasure, Queensland

On Saturday, 3 February 2024, The Point Church in Brisbane held a community Trash & Treasure event at the Thorneside community hall where we meet each Sunday. Funds raised went to assist with chaplaincy at Alexandra Hills State High School, which some of our members are involved with. It was also an opportunity for the congregation to reach out to the local community.

Six months prior to the event members of the church started putting aside second-hand items that could be sold. The church family letterboxed all of the neighbourhood around where we meet, inviting people to attend.

In addition to the bric-a-brac and second-hand goods, there were also cakes, hot and cold drinks, an all-day sausage sizzle, and face painting for children. Some ladies in our congregation are artists and were able to sell their artworks with a commission payable for their sales. The majority of the church family was involved in the day in some way, attending to the various tables and generally helping out with selling of items.


When guests exited to pay for their goods, the cashiers asked each person how they came to know about the Trash & Treasure day. A large majority of the people who visited were from the community and had read the flyer.


The hall might not have been packed by visitors the following Sunday, however many seeds were planted. A great effort overall! ◇

Peter Searson, The Point Church, Brisbane, QLD.



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**AUGUST 2024** Benny Tabalujan

# Interview *Roger & Sally Tyers, cont.*

**What challenges do you see facing God's people in contemporary Australia? Are there any concerns specifically for churches in Perth and Western Australia?**

*Roger:* So many things have changed from my youth in the 1960s and 1970s. Things we have now that we couldn't imagine then. Technology that provides 24-hour access to 'content', as my children call it. The tragedies, injustice, and evil that we experience or now see on our screens can be overwhelming. For many, a working week of Monday to Friday has disappeared. Today people seem overly busy – we find life is full of things that have to be done.

Satan would like us to think that to believe in Jesus today is just a waste of time, that his teachings are not relevant or that they are laughable and perverse.

But I remember hearing lessons in my youth which assert that things change, but people don't. People still need saving. People need Jesus who doesn't change – there is salvation in no one else.

This year at Malaga we've been focusing on the early church in Acts. Based on that, we look at how we're to worship God. We're about to look at how we should share our faith and hope and joy in this world.

God is still at work in this world and we need to help and support each other so that all people have an opportunity to believe in him.

**At a personal level, what advice would you give to younger Christians who wish to remain faithful to the Lord? And in your case, how have you kept growing in your faith over the years?**

*Roger:* My prayer for all my brothers and sisters – new, young, and old – is that you remain faithful to Jesus. There are times when we may feel alone. But Jesus is always with us. We may be in despair, but Jesus is there. We may have denied him, but he's waiting for us.

Believe in God. Spend time with God in prayer. Seek to understand his love and grace. Spend time reading and thinking about the Word of God – how can my faith be strengthened? How should I grow in love? What can I do to help others? Spend time with all your brothers and sisters (not just those who are your age) and learn from their faith and love. Know that God's Spirit is in you – that he understands you and is helping you to grow. ◇

*Roger and Sally Tyers were interviewed by Benny Tabalujan. b.tabalujan@gmail.com*



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## Roger & Sally Tyers, Malaga Church of Christ, Perth, WA

**Roger and Sally, can you please begin by sharing with us how you each came to Christ?**

*Sally:* I was raised in a family where my mother, grandmother, and aunts were Christians. I was brought along to church services and Bible studies from when I was a toddler. Although I don't believe that being raised in a Christian family guarantees that children will go on to become Christians, I do consider that I was blessed to be exposed to the church and God's Word from infancy. My mother tells the story that I would sit and listen to lessons and take notes. I responded to the Gospel when I was young and became a Christian.

*Roger:* I was two when my parents came to Jesus. Strangely, to cope with boredom and sitting still in church, I would listen to the speaker to try and see signs that hopefully they would soon stop speaking. I always knew that the Gospel was true. But, unlike Sally, I put off being baptised into Christ until I was 18. God's mercy and patience saved me. He made sure that I heard the Good News from my family and the church. And although I could see the message of Jesus was not popular and often rejected (sadly also by those who had been saved), I saw God continuing to save people, and at work in his church.

**Can you also give us a snapshot of the Malaga church – including a brief history and how the congregation is currently faring?**

*Roger:* Early in the 2000s, two congregations, Darling Range in the east of Perth and City Beach in the west, discussed how they could become one congregation. We talked of how the Lord could bless us in doing so and also the concerns others had about the change. As a result, we commenced meeting as one congregation in 2005, eventually moving to Malaga.

The congregation has been blessed by God adding to the saved, the arrival of brothers and sisters from all around the world, and the appointment of shepherds and deacons. One challenge for us is distance. Some in the south can live 100km from others in the north, and we're also spread east to west. God's people need to spend time together and to encourage one another in Jesus, so twice a month we try to eat together after our Sunday meeting assemblies.

I'm also thankful for my brothers and sisters who do what they can to encourage. Local meetings are held (including online study). We keep in contact by phone and cards. We also try to arrange activities together, to help each other, and to help the community and share our faith.

**Roger, not everyone is called to serve as a shepherd of God's people. What led to your appointment to the eldership of the Malaga congregation last year?**

I think the short answer is Jesus.

I was a quiet youth. In the meetings of the church the most I felt I could do was Scripture reading. Then, I was once asked in public – in the middle of the Lord's Supper – to give thanks.

At university I started to become less interested in my studies and more in the words of God. With the gentle prodding of God through my brothers and sisters, I started to teach. I was also challenged to learn about love, kindness, and hospitality, and to grow through God's Spirit.

When I married Sally I also received gentle and firm encouragement from her faith and loyalty to Jesus and the church. It was only when we had children that it seemed that



God's purpose for me could include serving as a deacon, and then a shepherd.

I thank God for the way he works in us – for how he has used each one of my brothers and sisters in Perth, Australia, and around the world to encourage me and help me grow. Through their love and faithfulness, I grew in devotion to God's Word and my desire for people to be saved.

**Sally, what thoughts and feelings did you have as you contemplated the prospect of being the wife of a shepherd? How have those thoughts and feelings changed (if any) since Roger joined the eldership last year?**

I've been aware from observing other men who have served as elders that such service comes with an outpouring of love to the congregation. These examples include my father-in-law, Des Tyers, and my brother-in-law, Paul Tyers, and many other men over the years.

I've known the time and dedication that an elder has to put into the role he's called to, and how this impacts his family. I've seen elders rejoice and grieve with members of the congregation. I've observed the emotional toll on men who are dedicated to serving the flock of Christ.

I also believe that if a man is qualified to serve as an elder and aspires to be an elder, it's a good thing for him to do. I've also observed over the years how Roger has lived as a husband and as a father to our children and how he loves and interacts with brothers and sisters. In all his relationships, I've seen his gentleness, humility, and the way he shows his love to all people, valuing every member of God's family. Given he was demonstrating the qualities of an elder, and having served as a deacon for many years, it seemed a natural progression to me that he would step up to serve as an elder when the time was right.

I've not really had any change in thoughts or feelings since Roger joined the eldership. We're blessed at Malaga to be surrounded and supported by many faithful men and women. Some serve tirelessly in recognised roles and others serve quietly and faithfully behind the scenes, using the gifts they have been blessed with.

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