



# InterSections

May/June 2026

An Australian Journal for Christian encounter & encouragement



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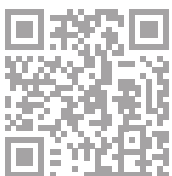
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## Editorial

Welcome to the May/June 2026 Issue of *InterSections*.

In May we typically cover a topic on the broad theme of restoration. What is restoration? It's the simple idea that as Christians we need to always be returning to the faith that was 'once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 1:3). No matter how the world changes, how we grow and learn and – this is the compass bearing that we need to keep looking back to in order to check our course. Of course, we can't do this without a sound understanding of that faith as it was recorded in the Scriptures. There is no shortage of 'authorities' these days, each trying to tell us which way to go, but do we keep God's Word in the central place it deserves in our lives?

In our *Feature*, Les Totman discusses why it's important that we keep going back to the Bible as our standard rather than our own opinions. As *Food for Thought*, Nancy Wu Won considers the ways in which we can engage with the scriptures more deeply in our everyday lives. We also asked a few different Christians about what the Bible has meant to them in their lives.

In our *International Letter*, Hannah Diles introduces us to the Global Christian Studies programme at Harding University, an opportunity for Christians around the world to benefit from training in ministry without leaving home. John Atchley reviews the book *A Voice in the Wilderness*, a collection of essays covering a wide variety of issues relating to the church and culture. And in our *News* section we hear about the recent Fifty-N-Over retreat, plus The Point's annual retreat over Easter.

May God bless us richly through his Word dwelling in our hearts, and convicting us anew each time we encounter it.

The *InterSections* team.

## Feature Why insist on the Bible as our standard?

The history of Christian churches over the last two millennia has been plagued with division. What is it that has been so divisive? One example to consider: a schism between what we now know as the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches occurred in 1054 A.D. But the process leading to that division was long and detailed. Among such factors were matters relating to the date of Easter.

F.W. Mattox (*The Eternal Kingdom*, p. 121) wrote:

*The church in Asia Minor wanted to keep Easter at the same time as the Jews observed the Passover.... This made Easter fall on different days of the week.... The Western church under the leadership of Rome said that Peter and Paul taught them to observe Easter day always on the first day of the week. About the close of the second century, Victor, bishop of Rome, excommunicated the church of Asia because they would not agree with the Western custom in always celebrating Easter on Sunday.*

Though there are two dates on which Easter is celebrated, this division is based upon matters which are not even Biblical. I strongly affirm the historical reality of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, but the Bible says nothing about an annual commemoration of these events. (The word 'Easter' appears in Acts 12:4 in the King James Version of the Bible, but the Greek word used there refers to the Passover.) They have sacrificed unity on the basis of their opinions.

Churches described as 'Christian' recognise (to varying degrees) the significance of the Bible and make regular reference to it. So, what does the Bible have to say in regard to unity (as opposed to division)? The problem-plagued church in the Greek city of Corinth received this message:

*'Now I urge you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.'* (1 Corinthians 1:10).

The divided Corinthian church led the inspired apostle Paul to describe it as being 'fleshly' and immature rather than 'spiritual' (1 Corinthians 3:1 – 4.) We should also pay attention to the words addressed to the church in the city of Ephesus:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:4–6).

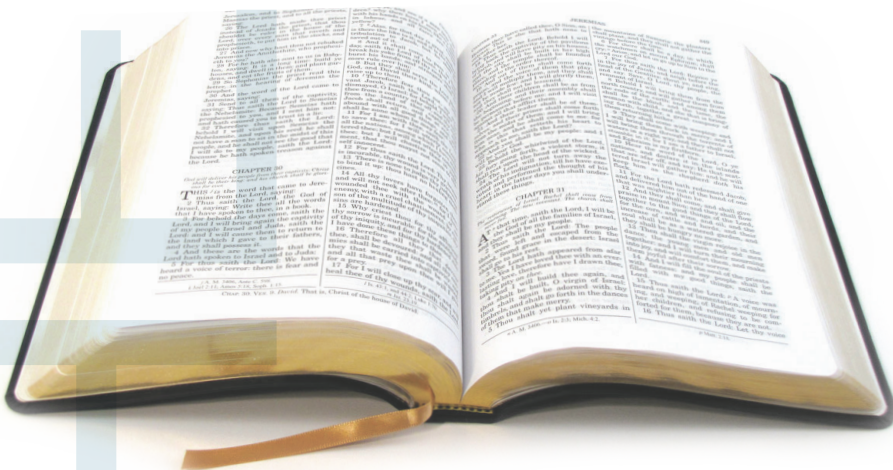
Note the repetitive 'one ... one ... one ... one ... one ... one ... one ... one ... one ...' 'Body' here refers to the Church (Ephesians 1:22–23; Colossians 1:18).

But why place such emphasis upon what the Bible says? As we read in 2 Timothy 3:16, 'All Scripture is inspired by God.' The detailed nature of that inspiration is indicated in 2 Corinthians 2:6–13. Jesus promised that His apostles would be guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14–16). The Old and New Testament prophets were similarly guided (Ephesians 3:1–5; 1 Peter 1:10–12; 2 Peter 1:20–21). All this being so, the Bible states repeatedly that we should neither add to it nor subtract from it (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18–19). This divine certainty is much more solid ground than unconfirmed reports of what Peter told a bishop more than a century earlier!

Can we believe that the Bible really is inspired by God in all its detail? It is filled with historical, geographical and biographical details which are factual in nature. Even the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, when studied closely, are indicated to be factual rather than mythical. As others have noted: real people; real places; real events.

In regard to a topic which is of such vital importance, I wish I could say so much more. In a world full of subjectivism, irrationality and religious division, it is so important that we let God guide us through His word, and His word alone. Through it we know that God created the world; God so loved the world that He sent Christ; God will judge the world through Christ; and that God purchased the Church through His own blood. All Scripture comes from God. Is that not reason to look to God and to follow His word?

We as churches of Christ need to stick to that – just as should everyone else. As has been said before: we should not bind upon others what God has not bound; nor should we loose what God has not loosed. Churches built upon mere opinion are churches destined for division. ◇



*Les Totman is a member  
of the non denominational  
Church of Christ, Bankstown.  
lestotman@yahoo.com.au*

*For more information go to:  
<https://biblebytes.org.au>*



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Enquiries: Klesis Limited, Australia.  
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**Regular Contributors:** Christian Bargholz, Craig Holyoak, Nancy Wu Won, Graham Wall.

## Food For Thought *Incorporating Scripture into our daily lives.*

Nancy Wu Won

If you've ever been on the go all day and it's suddenly mid-afternoon. You sit in a comfy chair and sigh. It's so good to sit and you realize how tired you were. We all get tired. The busy-ness of life can crowd out the invisible God's presence and eat into time spent becoming the Psalm one man who meditates on God's law day and night or the Proverbs 31 woman who personifies wisdom.<sup>1</sup> Life brings its competing affections.

Perhaps we can all take a leaf out of Israel's history and hear God's words from Deuteronomy 6:1–12 where God knew what family life would be like. In Deuteronomy 6, God integrates His teachings into the ordinary rhythms of life: when they walk, sit, lie down, and rise up. The presence of the law was as close as their skin and written on everyday objects like doorposts. Perhaps God knew that it would be easy for His people to forget that their inheritance was not of their own doing. The sin of ingratitude and forgetting the Giver of every perfect gift is an ever-present danger. For us, we can learn from the past (Romans 15:4). Scripture could be part of the home décor, written on bits of paper blu-tacked to walls, or a Bible verse on a keychain. In a busy day whilst looking after the family, a glance at a conveniently placed Bible verse centres and grounds our thoughts so that we can be reminded to carry God's essence into our day.

If you are stuck in traffic on a long commute, Bible apps like Bible.is or websites like Biblegateway.com have audio options for hearing God's Word. Gospel music could be played throughout one's day whilst performing menial tasks. The ordinary is converted to extraordinary moments for hearing God's voice on the run (Romans 10:17).

Devotional books, like *Living God's Love*, outline a schedule for regular, personal Bible readings; demarcating specific daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly practices.<sup>2</sup> Other options show how to read the Bible in a year. Holloway and Lavender note that their suggested routine for spending time with God may be very difficult for parents of small children. For those in demanding situations, Holloway and Lavender suggest prioritizing fifteen minutes a day for the breath prayer and the Jesus prayer to maintain an awareness of God's presence.

However, can anything surpass Jesus' example of getting up early whilst it is still dark and finding a lonely place to commune with His Father (Mark 1:35)? We may look longingly at His example, bemoan our situation and inability to emulate our Lord. The dishes are piled up, laundry is yet to be folded, deadlines from school vie for our attention. Nouwen warns that "Somewhere we know that without a lonely place our lives are in danger."<sup>3</sup> Our attempts to consistently incorporate Scripture into everyday life can easily be sabotaged by using our own strength. Like Paul we know what it's like to do the things we don't want to do and don't do the things we want to do (Romans 7:21–25).

Through all the din and obstructions, how can we hear and see God more clearly? Powell expounds a powerful argument on the familiar refrain, "...God has made Himself known to us through the Son and by the Holy Spirit."<sup>4</sup> We are reminded of our true vision of God (2 Corinthians 13:14). Our goal of incorporating Scripture into everyday life may start with small faltering steps and with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit on our side and within us, we can take heart that the struggles we face, are not a path unfamiliar to Him (Hebrews 4:14–15).

We live somewhere between working out our salvation and having God work in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12–13). It's a calling and a tension in which we learn to discern. For a mother with a newborn, incorporating Scripture in her day will look different to a student at a Bible college. He calls each of us to lean not on our own understanding and strength but to let go and let God show us the way (Proverbs 3:5,6). As you and I seek Him, may we find the good works that He has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). ◇

1 Dave Bland, *Proverbs and the Formation of Character*, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 171–72.

2 Gary Holloway and Earl Lavender, *Living God's Love: An Invitation to Christian Spirituality*, (Leafwood Publishers, 2004), 112–14.

3 Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life*, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Marie Press, 1998), 14.

4 Mark E. Powell, *Centered in God: The Trinity and Christian Spirituality*, (Abilene Christian University Press: TX, 2014), 78–79.

Nancy Wu Won is a member of the Belmore Road Church of Christ in Melbourne.  
tranquillilly@gmail.com



## Global Christian Studies

When Jesus walked along the shore of Galilee with his disciples, he often spoke of the kingdom of heaven, comparing it to things they could understand. To them, he entrusted the secrets of the kingdom.

On one such day, he described the kingdom through a parable of growth and flourishing: 'And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'" (Mark 4:30–32, ESV)

The smallest seed, the most unexpected source of a great harvest, grows strong and provides blessings to many. This parable reveals the surprising nature of the kingdom: it may seem small but can become something expansive and life-giving. Even one person, though seemingly insignificant, can help bring light and growth to unfamiliar places. The image is one of deep roots and flourishing branches: a living, growing thing that multiplies and spreads.

This parable also carries implications for us as Christians, who are ultimately physical beings. For a plant to grow, a seed must first fall and be buried. Seeds, though small, need only to be scattered to take root in new soil. These truths reflect the apostle Paul's call to 'be transformed' (Romans 12:2) by allowing God to work through us, both for personal transformation and kingdom growth. Missiologist Andrew Walls described Christianity not as a religion of steady, linear expansion, but of 'serial growth.' Unlike many other world religions, Christianity takes root within diverse cultural contexts, often experiencing rapid growth in particular regions. The church, therefore, is not tied to one place but is found wherever God's people gather.

Research from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity reflects this shift. Over the past century, the centre of Christianity has moved from the Global North – North America and Europe – to the Global South, including regions of Asia, South America, Africa and Oceania. By 2017, an estimated 42% of the world's Protestants were African, reflecting both growth and global movement.

As Christianity continues to expand in the Global South, the need for theological training and spiritually mature believers has become even more urgent. In many places, the number of Christians far exceeds the available resources to train leaders and thinkers equipped to address the questions and challenges within their cultural contexts.

This is where Global Christian Studies (GCS) comes in.

GCS provides a pathway for members of churches of Christ around the world to pursue graduate-level theological education without leaving their homes, families or ministries. By offering accessible training, GCS strengthens both individual believers and the broader church, supporting the kind of deep-rooted, sustainable growth reflected in Jesus' parable.

Currently, GCS partners with three institutions: Harding School of Theology in Searcy, Arkansas; Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama; and Heritage Christian University in Accra, Ghana. Together, these partnerships help equip students for ministry, further academic study and service in their local contexts.

At present, GCS includes four graduates and 24 active students representing 16 countries across six continents.

Each student is pursuing training designed to support real-world ministry and leadership.

While GCS is global in scope, it is also meaningfully connected to the Australian church. Currently, five students within the program have Australian ties, reflecting the same desire for growth, training and deeper theological formation present within congregations across Australia. Additionally, one of GCS's overseeing congregations is based in Melbourne, further rooting this work in the life and mission of the Australian church. In this way, the story of GCS is not only happening abroad; it is one in which Australian Christians are active participants.

The GCS graduates are already bearing fruit. The first graduate, Kizito Jasper, serves in ministry while pursuing doctoral studies in Nigeria. Nancy Wu Won of Melbourne, Australia, serves in her local congregation's women's ministry while working full time. Ubong Okorie, also in Nigeria, is engaged in full-time preaching and missions, with plans for further study. The most recent graduate, Ndongesit Effeh, serves as a professor at Nigerian Bible College while continuing doctoral work.

Current student John Lim of Singapore reflects on the impact of the program:

*'The greatest reward has been being able to incorporate my learning and spiritual formation into everyday ministry. I feel both more confident and humbler when I go about my ministry, more equipped to respond to ministry issues or theological questions, and more sensitive and more loving of people. It has also been an oasis—a time away from the concerns of ministry to engage with the best minds of the Christian tradition and remember why I serve Christ in the first place.'*

Looking ahead, GCS is encouraged by continued growth and the opportunity to invest in regions where the church is flourishing. The program seeks prospective students who live outside the United States, hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited university and desire to serve their local church communities. It also invites individuals and congregations to partner through prayer and financial support.

As Walls observed, 'We live now at a time when the church is multicultural. I think that the fullness of the stature of Christ will emerge only when Christians from all these cultures come together.'

Together, we have this wonderful opportunity to participate in the ongoing growth of the global church. If you feel called to encourage a student to apply or to support the work of GCS, you can learn more at [GCSpathway.org](http://GCSpathway.org) or contact [gcspathways@gmail.com](mailto:gcspathways@gmail.com). ◇



Hannah Diles is Director of Marketing for Global Christian Studies, and is based in Searcy, Arkansas. [hdiles1@harding.edu](mailto:hdiles1@harding.edu)

## *A Voice in the Wilderness: An Anthology in Honor of Michael and Libby Weed.* Ed. Keith Stanglin & Todd Hall, Center for Christian Studies, 2005

*A Voice in the Wilderness* is a collection of essays gathered in honour of Michael and Libby Weed, a recently-deceased husband-wife scholarly duo connected to the Austin Graduate School of Theology. The school's faculty authored these essays across a 36-year period, covering a great variety of topics in culture and Christian ethics, including the rise of secularism, steps in spiritual formation, principles of the Restoration Movement, and the issue of worship as entertainment. This book was intended to be both 'academic and ecclesial,' but I'll focus my attention on whether it achieves the goal of helping church leaders.

While I mostly enjoyed *A Voice in the Wilderness*, I have to cautiously admit that reading it felt like getting whiplash. Several of the essays felt inaccessible at first, giving the impression of a niche topic in a scholarly debate rather than material for church leaders. Then suddenly they would turn a corner and become relevant to anyone with a heart for God's people. To give an example, Michael Weed's essay *Ressentiment* opens with a deep introduction to a psychological theory about suppressed negative feelings by the 20th century German philosopher Max Scheler. Just by reading that sentence, you can probably imagine how taxing that was to get through. But Weed follows that up with an application of *ressentiment* to people in Christian leadership. Suddenly he opens a door for people to be 'seen' and to develop better tools for dealing with negative self-talk. He suggests that having unresolved negative thoughts about your own congregation or ministry can lead to depression or even self-sabotage, but if you can develop better self-awareness through knowing about the possibility of *ressentiment* within you, you have a much better chance of resisting it. This is genuinely useful information that many of us would benefit from hearing.

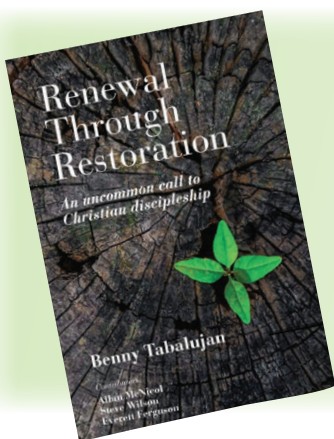
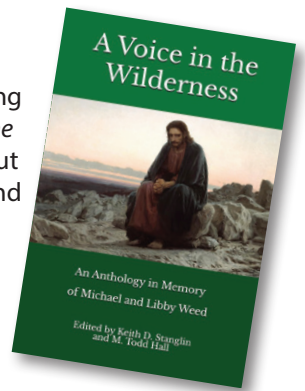
This pattern of a rocky start followed by a more accessible interior repeated itself several times throughout the book. It would be easy to imagine someone opening one of these essays and getting discouraged, thinking it's not for them. But this would be a shame because there's some good content here. To counteract this, my recommendation would be 1) to be aware that first impressions don't always last, and 2) to work through this book in community with other Christians. A group of elders, ministry members, or a small group could come together to treat this like a book club,

starting their meeting by discussing one of the chapters in *A Voice in the Wilderness*. This would help iron out some of the rougher edges and find applications.

That said, there are several other essays here that are much easier to understand. Being mindful of time, I'll mention just one: Keith Stanglin's '*Restorationism and Church History: Strange Bedfellows?*' This was a confronting but tactfully written piece about the bad reputation that church history has in Christian circles, most especially our fellowship. We can be deeply suspicious (or even outright dismissive) of anything past the New Testament, as if no one has anything to teach us but ourselves. But Stanglin questions the wisdom of ignoring 1900 years of church history and acting as if we were the first people to ever actually read their Bibles: 'just as none of us would seek to interpret and apply Scripture on our own...let us remember that the community of Christians includes those who are now dead.' He recommends holding fast to your convictions about prioritising the Bible over church traditions and authorities, but to also recognise that for millennia Christians have been grappling with the same questions we have today. It may pay to give them a chance rather than to simply write them off.

*A Voice in the Wilderness* isn't perfect, but it is rewarding. Some of its audience will be academics looking for stimulation, and they won't need much convincing to give it a try. But some of its audience should also be eager Christian leaders interested in broadening their horizons and thinking through issues from another perspective. If you survive the initial whiplash, this book will help you grow in Christian knowledge and maturity. ◇

*John Atchley is a Programme Manager at South Pacific Bible College in Tauranga, NZ.*



## **Renewal Through Restoration: An Uncommon Call to Christian Discipleship**

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# News Point Church Family Camp, QLD

April 2026 saw us gathering at Bribie Island's House of Happiness for the Point church family camp. It spanned Friday lunchtime to Sunday lunchtime, with lots of free time between physical food and spiritual food – including a Saturday afternoon game of soccer in which, this year, there were no significant injuries. Larry and Paula Harms visited from the US, and Larry shared a series of lessons from the writings of 1 John.

Our family has attended the Point family camp almost every year since beginning meeting with The Point church in 2000. Now we're living in Gympie, with adult children living in Brisbane. The Point camp continues to be our family's annual camp.

One of the great blessings of this camp to our family is the opportunity to reconnect with brothers and sisters in Jesus' family, to share where we are at on our journeys. We value the reminder that we are not alone, although far from those with whom we share a common faith. We value the advice and encouragement we have received and look forward to sharing updates since conversations at the previous camp.

I consider the camp to also be an opportunity for the Point church to remember the great reach they have had, and those they have influenced. We are not the only family that has moved on from the Point that continues to return year after year.

Remember to keep in contact with those who you once loved in your midst. We continue to need you in our lives. ◇

*Eileen Hauber, Gympie, QLD*



## Fifty-N-Over Retreat, NSW 2026



This year's annual Fifty-N-Over Retreat, held on the first weekend in May, marked the 42nd gathering for those aged 50 and over. Set against the beautiful backdrop of the Mt Carmel Retreat Centre at Varroville, just south of Sydney, the retreat brought together just under 50 participants from across the east coast of Australia.

The theme, 'We Are Family', focused on both our physical families and the spiritual family of the Lord's church. Lessons explored brotherly love, mentoring, belonging to God's household, and caring for one another.

The retreat included enthusiastic singing of favourite hymns and spiritual songs, prayer, personal reflections, games, craft sessions, trivia, early morning exercise, and a final-night 80s dress-up celebration, along with another enjoyable Barbershop Quartet performance.

It was encouraging to welcome some who had been unable to attend last year due to illness, as well as several new faces.

Special thanks go to the dedicated board who work throughout the year to organise this very special time of fellowship, encouragement, and inspiration.

*Bob Marks, Warringah Church of Christ, NSW*





## Windsor Lectures, NSW 2026

From the 13th to the 15th of March, the Windsor Church of Christ in Sydney hosted its 7th annual Bible lectureship. The theme this year was 'What the World Needs Now.' The lectureship had six in-depth lessons from the Bible, and plenty of time for fellowship. The event was especially encouraging for the many young people who attended. The church at Windsor has a very strong and well-connected youth group, and there were several visiting youths and young adults from around the Sydney area.

While the lessons were in-depth, and applicable for anyone, there was certainly a focus on the struggles that are common with young people today. The lessons were on the topics of Truth, Love, Identity, Community, Purpose, and Hope. Each lesson dealt specifically with a problem that exists in the world today, and how God's word helps us find exactly what we need in a world that is struggling for answers. The choice of speakers also demonstrated Windsor's attention in appealing to the youth, with no speaker above the age of 35.

On top of the greatly encouraging lessons, Windsor also hosted an evening at 'The Farm' which is a chance for the brethren to fellowship with one another and enjoy games and activities, and often some healthy inter-congregational competition. With activities like soccer, volleyball, ping-pong, suction archery, and more, the attendees of the lectureship were given plenty of time to meet with one another and get to know each other better.

Attending the Windsor Church of Christ lectureship was an overwhelmingly positive and encouraging experience.

*Andrew Young, Gipps Street Church of Christ, QLD*



## Interviews

## What is the importance of Scripture to you? How has the Bible changed your life?

### Martyn Wolstenholme, The Point Church, QLD

How has the Bible changed my life? Wow! I am a selfish person. I believe that Scripture has influenced me to look out for others more and try to help and serve. (John 13:15) Jesus spent his whole life on earth doing that. What a great example to follow! (1 Peter 2:21) I stumble and fall, but my wonderful Lord always picks me up. I was baptized 54 years ago in Brazil, and examples of living for Christ have really influenced me since. Won't you be an example too?



### Clifford Snell, The Point Church, QLD

*'For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south.'* (Psalm 75:6)

I was fortunate to be born in a Christian family and had God-fearing parents. However, they always reminded me that while we are a family serving God with a single will and goal, I needed to have my own personal relationship with God.

I entered the corporate world, and in particular the IT industry, at a very young age, and have been blessed to grow in that same industry – but there were many opportunities to take a U-turn from my faith, and attribute all the success and opportunities to my own efforts, talent, creativity, and handwork. This feeling of a self-made career was the common string, and there were many people who operated on their own merits. But very early on in life, the scripture verse above was taught to me, and at every level of success I was taken back to this scripture verse.

In perspective, while there is an element of one putting in the effort, taking hold of every opportunity – it is God who has given us life and the ability to fulfill the purpose he created for in this world.

Finally, that verse above mentions every direction, east, west and south – it does not mention north. As it is very clear, all our blessing come from God above. Let's us fix our eyes and hearts on God above.



### Brett Christensen, South East Church of Christ, VIC

I went 'looking for a more scriptural church', and God brought me to a group which was determined to be totally scriptural – a lot more so than I had in mind. Their commitment to look closely and carefully at biblical texts was extraordinary, but refreshing and enlivening, taking passages like 2 Peter 1:3 seriously. I had wrong ideas about lots of things, religious and otherwise. Some were fairly easy to change, but others...well, God's still working on (and in) me. Scripture has guided my decisions about marriage, parenting, work, use of time and resources, all for the better. ◇



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