



College News

- The RTC's 2009 Preaching Workshop is just one week away. It's not too late to register, so if you would like two days of great input on some of the Old Testament prophets, sign up quickly! The conference will provide plenty of fuel for preaching ministries, personal bible and small group study and also a context for plenty of fellowship and networking.
- This week Dr Johann Joubert is visiting the College from Tasmania in order to lead an intensive week of lectures on counselling. Dr Joubert has extensive training and experience in counselling and his input is always a great help to students.

New Faculty Member

The big news of the last month has been the RTC Board's appointment of Dr Phillip Scheepers as lecturer in missions. Dr Scheepers has accepted the position and has begun making plans to move to Geelong with his wife, Chanel, and their two young boys. Lord willing they will be here in January. Dr Scheepers will bring to the position a wealth of experience. For the past 10 years he has been working for Veritas College, first in London and more recently in Perth, providing church-based training for church leaders in the Middle East and North Africa. Prior to that he was engaged in mission work in South Africa which is where he grew up and undertook his theological study through to doctoral level.

Please remember the Scheepers in prayer as they make this big move, and pray that Phillip would be a real blessing to the College in the years ahead.

Book Corner...

Steve Voorwinde has contributed a chapter to a useful book entitled, *Perspectives on Eternal Security* (Ed. Kirk R. Macgregor and Kevauhn Mattis; Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2009). The book pulls together biblical, historical and philosophical reflections on the issue of assurance. Contributions are made by a range of reformed and evangelical scholars. Given the pastoral significance of the issue of personal assurance, this book is a useful resource for people thinking through the issue or helping others to do so.

TASK3 – Coming Soon

TASK3, the RTC's new ministry training pathway, is being developed for the start of next year. CRCA churches will receive promotional brochures in the next week or two and more detailed information will be put up on the RTC website.

Students training for the ministry in TASK3 will spend the first two years of their training in their own local church focusing on three things: ministry apprenticeship, church-based theology courses shaped around readings, group discussions and projects, and distance education courses (or study at a local college). These two years will be followed by two years at the RTC.

We hope to see a number of churches adopt TASK3 as a strategic way of raising leaders for the future. Churches in an area will also be able to work together in providing a TASK3 program. For more information, contact the RTC.

Ministry Spot...

(by Dr Murray Capill)

We observed last time that as humans we readily turn to idols. We turn to God-substitutes and look for joy, pleasure, satisfaction, purpose, identity and delight in them rather than in God himself. Food, sex, children, possessions, work, sport, music, ministry – almost anything can become an idol.

In ministering God's Word to people how do we address the issue of idolatry? How do we speak to this most entrenched sin of the human heart? It is not enough for us to simply throw the word idolatry around a few times. We need to do more to help people understand, face and dispense with their God-substitutes.

First, we should speak often about what people desire, love, serve, chase after, treasure, enjoy and delight in. The most powerful forces of the human heart are our affections. We should therefore constantly probe the passions of people's hearts. What excites them? What motivates them? What gives them a reason to live? What would break their heart if it were to be taken from them? We live in a world that constantly appeals to our affections. The

advertising industry, for example, seldom presents factual, rational appeals for us to buy a given product, but sells to us a lifestyle, a dream, a passion, a desire. People need to learn to sift rigorously their own desires and passions and take an honest look at what is driving them.

Once people are thinking about their deepest affections, we need to expose the imminent danger of idolatry. We will often point out the kind of truths I wrote of last time. We will show that things that are not wrong in and of themselves easily assume a wrongful place in our lives. We will remind people that the joy of sex, or food, or material gain, or fame or anything else in this world is temporary and fleeting. We will warn people about the grip such things can gain in our lives. We will show how easily they rob God of his place in our lives. We will demonstrate that idols always leave us short-changed, never delivering what they promise.

The point of such teaching is to bring conviction of sin. People must see idolatry for what it is. Without such conviction there will be no incentive to change. With such conviction, the call to repentance gains traction. This is our third great task in ministering the Word to idolaters. We must urge true repentance which consists of both confession and change.

Confession of the sin of idolatry is not merely the acknowledgement that something has become an idol in our life. It is owning up fully to the fact that this thing has a grip on us and has effectively dethroned God. Confession must not be compromised by minimization or blame-shifting, by self-justification or denial. Nor should it be confined to private confession only. Idolatry thrives in secrecy and very often the only way to address it is to tell someone else the idol of our heart and seek help in dealing with it. Confession must also focus on the heart impact of idolatry. We must admit that because of this idolatry we have not loved God as we should but have allowed something else to grab our affections and begin to rule us. We must confess that we have looked elsewhere for love, security, joy, hope and purpose.

We must tell people, however, that even such full and free confession as this is only one half of true repentance. Repentance demands change and that is the hardest part of all. The idolater must turn from the idol back to the true and living God. Worship of the idol must be replaced with worship of God. The idolater needs help to cultivate renewed dependence on the Lord, renewed love and passion for him, renewed vigour in serving him and putting

him first. Idolaters must be trained to focus on him, rejoice in him, treasure him, delight in him. He must reassume the place the idol has stolen. One of our key tasks, then, is to present a compelling view of the beauty and excellence of God. We need to help idolaters see there is something more precious than what they currently cling to. They need to see not only their own sin but the surpassing greatness of Christ Jesus our Lord. Without leading people to see the supremacy of God and the joy and hope found in him alone, we will leave them not merely convicted but condemned.

As we help people to reinstate God as King, we must also help them to smash their idols. That will mean different things in different situations. For some it will mean decisive and radical change as they cut off an idol completely. For others it will mean changed priorities, new accountabilities or rigorous self-monitoring. We should reassure them that this is seldom quick or easy. It is a journey on a difficult road. But the road leads to life.

It should be clear that addressing idolatry requires a serious heart-searching ministry, whether in preaching, evangelism, counselling, bible studies or personal conversation. But it should also be clear that this is true gospel ministry. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, to search out sinners, to find those who had turned from God and given themselves over to a thousand other pleasures and treasures. Christ came and bore in himself the punishment for the sin of idolatry so that all who turn to him can be set free not only from the guilt but also the power of idolatry. Christ is in the business of setting people free from idols that bind so that they can serve the living and true God with all their heart. The end goal of a ministry that exposes and addresses idolatry is to see many people, both within and outside the church, freed to serve God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength. No one can serve two masters. The idols of our hearts must go in order that we might set apart Christ as Lord and live all-out for him.