



# conneXions

...growing God's family...

**Issue 48**

## Where to with our MAP\*?

| Paul Frost and Ian Touzel

\* Mission Action Planning

### So far...

Around 50 people took the opportunity to take part in the MAP workshop on Sunday 27th September.

We workshopped the reasons why MGPC has never had a culture of effective small groups. We explored the four inhibiting factors in people's lives and in the church which stopped involvement in small groups.

These were:

1. People not seeing involvement in a growth group as a priority for their spiritual growth and as necessary for the church's well being.
2. Leadership was seen as critical. There was uncertainty as to who would lead growth groups and how they could be trained. People wanted to be assured that high quality Biblical teaching would be a key feature of the groups.
3. Some legitimate physical and social barriers to participation were identified, such as age, health



and family life. Ways to overcome these barriers were discussed.

4. People's fear of the unknown, that is not understanding what it means to participate in a growth group nor the benefits.

For each of these four factors small working groups identified the blessings and gifts God has given us and the challenges he has set before us and the dangers we need to be alert to.

### Where to next?

The next step is to have representatives from the church's IDEA groups and Session formulate strategies that will help us as a church address the four inhibiting factors. These will be the best ways forward given our present circum-

stances.

These findings will then be published and input sought from the church as a whole.

The final step will be for the IDEA groups to develop action plans. The plans will be the time based specific commitments that we as a church will use to turn our vision into action.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

From the Pastor's Desk	2
Financial Report for September	3
Before the Throne of God Above	3
Church Calendar for November	4
Book Review: <i>The Walk</i> - Stephen Smallman	5
Faith of Our Fathers - John Chrysostom	5
Mission News	6
Glorifying God in our Christmas Shopping - Tony Reinke	7

### Our Mission Statement

— why do we exist? —

**Glorifying God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit by growing His family through Biblical teaching, prayer and loving relationships locally, nationally, and internationally.**

### Our Vision Statement

— where are we heading? —

**As a Gospel driven church we aspire to establish 15 self-replicating growth groups across the church by 2012.**

### THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

- Monday 9th 7:30pm Board of Management
- Sunday 8th 10.00am Lord's Supper
- Monday 23rd 7.30pm Elders' Meeting (Session)



## From the Pastor's Desk

### Providence and Unexpected Blessing

As you know one of our church family was recently afflicted with a serious illness that required acute medical care.

As Jonathan Murcott recovers, and before it fades from our minds, what have we learned from our shared experience?

Firstly, we've learned something about prayer.

Our mission statement identifies us as a people committed to prayer. As with most churches this statement is more aspiration than actual. While we know that a lot of prayer is raised up individually and among friends, our group meeting is not strongly attended.

We pray in our small groups, we pray at our Sunday evening meeting. The one meeting where we simply pray is the smallest of them all.

Except for when we have a need. Our brokenness and powerlessness in the face of Jonathan's illness meant that we didn't have to entice anyone to prayer. People came.

We experienced God's power. At the conclusion of one meeting the prayers had all been said, but no

one wanted to acknowledge an end. We sat in silence, the Holy Spirit conveying the unvoiced desires of our hearts to God. We were on holy ground.

Faith in God was testified. Whether it was from those who have walked with the Lord for long seasons, or even, preciously, from one who publicly testified their faith for the first time, we were encouraged and strengthened by this mutual profession.

As the urgency of the situation has abated, so has the frequency of our gathering together. But a deposit has been left that has strengthened our faith and drawn us closer together.

I don't think that we need to feel remorse over our varying feelings of urgency about gathering for prayer.

But perhaps we can cultivate a greater sense of God's power and involvement in life.

We call folk to come and pray before worship on Sunday because if there is to be any fruit from our activities it flows from God's gracious provision.

It is not the skill of the musicians, the choice of songs or the ability of the preacher that bring conversion and growth in faith. It is the working of the Holy Spirit. We pray with urgency and faith because we want to see God's power at work.

A second lesson can be found as we

reflect on God's purpose in these situations.

Truth be told, we don't know God's purpose until we look back in hindsight and see what it was.

Trying to think about what He wants to have happen will just give us a head-ache. Better to recognize that God tells us what to do in His Word and then we are presented with a wide array of choices to make about what to do and where to do it.

We can be tempted to place greater meaning on some situations and less on others, but, in reality, the question is 'have we walked humbly and obediently with our Lord?' whatever the season and circumstance.

A third point for reflection is related to this. Our expectation for our future may not be God's plan for us. We should not presume that we will be here, or in a certain degree of health or have particular capacities.

Rather than promoting a fearful uncertainty, this reality should compel us to take the present opportunities before us with gladness and vigour.

We should not live as those deferring service or obedience to a future time, because that time may not come. Today is your day of fruitful service. Use it wisely and well.

*All thanks to God in preserving Jonathan and sustaining Robyn and the boys through this season.*

### A Word from the Lord?



### Book this Date!

February 19-22, 2010

Church Camp

at Karakendi, Nelson

Speaker: **David Schulz**

Pastor of Hamilton PC.

Theme: The Spirit's fullness for worship, family and work

## Financial Update & Board News

### Income - September:

\$10,851.69

#### *Includes:*

Allison St per week: \$2,471.42  
(budget -\$1,960.00)

Allendale: \$451.00 (\$416.00)

Nelson: \$ 160.10 (\$250.00)

### Expenditure - September:

\$11,370.72

#### *Includes:*

Pastors' remuneration & superannuation \$7,785.68

Allison St utilities \$1,241.23

PIM (C.&C. McKenzie) \$1,200.00

City council rates \$745.95

Internet - quarterly fee \$134.85

Pitt Bequest expenses nil



## Before the Throne of God Above

Please pray for:  
James Davidson;  
Noel Cusack; Jim  
Stafford; Pearl Hel-

lyer, Hannah Thompson, Frank Mitchell, Fred Nash, Margaret Ware, Ina Earl; Mary Jeffrey; Brian & Betty Clayfield; Albert & Perle Harvey, Gladys Jones, Elaine Harfull, Jayne Pritchard, Vi Fraser, Blake Vause, Emmie Thompson, Jonathan Murcott.

Continue to uphold our church mission partners:

- Matthew, serving in west Asia..
- Cameron & Carmel Mackenzie, Flynn Patrol (SA), Presbyterian Inland Mission.
- School Christian Pastoral Support

Workers: especially Matt Eudy (Yahl Primary School).

- Mission Partners/APWM national office: Bill & Jenny Lutton.

Also intercede for:

- Commonwealth Government: Prime Minister Kevin Rudd; Leader of the Opposition: Malcolm Turnbull.
- City of Mount Gambier: Mayor Steve Perryman; District Council of Grant: Mayor Don Pegler.
- Converge International chaplains: Heather Baker, John Deer and Ian Touzel.
- Suttontown Christian Brethren Assembly.

### Direct Giving

If you wish to give using direct crediting from your bank account rather than cash, this church's account details are:

Mount Gambier Presbyterian Charge  
Account no: 00900574  
Bank: Commonwealth Bank  
Branch: Mount Gambier  
BSB: 065 504

Remember this church in your will.

Your bequest will assist advance gospel ministry in the years ahead.

### Check out our website

[www.mgpc.org.au](http://www.mgpc.org.au)

Regular updates are posted including the Sunday notes and Connexions.

Gary Ware's blog:

[mgpcpastor.wordpress.com](http://mgpcpastor.wordpress.com)

Presbyterian Church of SA website:  
[www.pcsa.org.au](http://www.pcsa.org.au)

### Christmas Choir Service

Practice Times

12.00-1.00pm

Sunday 6th & 13th December

## Ladies Fellowship Fashion Parade

The annual Fashion Parade, put on by the Ladies Fellowship with fashions supplied from Dizzy Lizzy's and Crocs was held on Wednesday 14th October. After the parade, a lavish afternoon tea was provided. \$1099.50 was raised for mission support from ticket sales and the trading table. Grateful thanks go to all who came and supported the day, the models (many being our own ladies) and Liz and staff from Dizzy Lizzy's for their clothes and support.



Enjoying the lavish afternoon tea



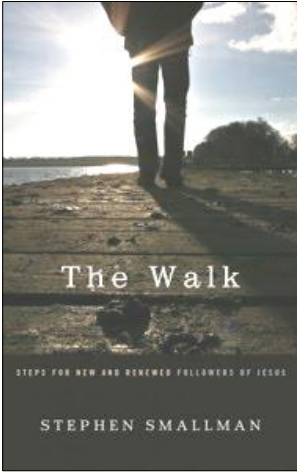
Models on the catwalk!



Colorful flower displays supplied by Clare Staskevicius and Elizabeth Wilson brightened up the Allison St. hall.

# CHURCH CALENDAR - November 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>1</b> NE, AL - Roger Ban- ister	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 9pm Women's Growth Group	<b>4</b> 10am Coffee & Craft	<b>5</b> 1pm PWA AGM	<b>6</b> 10.30am Bible Study	<b>7</b> Visit by C.&C. Mckenzie (PIM) 7.30pm Youth Group
<b>8</b> 10am Lord's Sup- per Visit by C.&C. Mckenzie (PIM)	<b>9</b> 7.30pm Board of Management	<b>10</b> 9pm Women's Growth Group 1.30pm Care & Concern AGM	<b>11</b> 12noon Coffee & Craft lunch	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 10.30am Bible Study	<b>14</b> 7.30pm Youth Group
<b>15</b> Preacher: Ian Touzel NE, AL - Gary Ware	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 9pm Women's Growth Group	<b>18</b> 6.30pm Ladies Fel- lowsip AGM	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 10.30am Bible Study	<b>21</b> 7.30pm Youth Group
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 7.30pm Session	<b>24</b> 9pm Women's Growth Group	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 10.30am Bible Study	<b>28</b> 7.30pm Youth Group
<b>29</b> 10am Family Service & lunch 6.30pm Citywide service	<b>30</b>					



Book of the Month

**The Walk** | Stephen Smallman

**The Walk** is a book written to those who have expressed a desire to follow Christ as his disciple. It assumes no prior understanding of what that

means, nor does it assume that the person has actually come to a point of professing faith. It uses as a starting point someone who is simply wondering, "what next?". Stephen also addresses those who have grown up "Christian" and may be wondering how to step out in their own faith. The Walk is designed to be used as much as read. It will be helpful to someone who wants to read on their own, but also includes readings and projects that will make it useful as a workbook for that individual, in a mentor relationship, or for use in groups.

The Walk comes warmly recommended by leading preachers and teachers such as: " *This is the fruit of a lifetime of experience*

*in ministry. I recommend this warm, practical, gospel-centered and very useful manual on discipleship."*

– **Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, NY, USA.**

*"A gem of a book which, while aimed specifically at the unbeliever and the new Christian, will yet benefit even those older in the faith who take time to read it and be reminded of, and refreshed by, the great, simple truths of the life-changing gospel."*

– **Carl Trueman, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, USA.**



**Stephen Smallman**

served for over forty years in pastoral ministry and has served as executive director of World Harvest Mission. He currently teaches for CityNet Ministries of Philadelphia., PA, USA.

Available from: Koorong Books for \$14.95 plus postage or [www.monergismbooks.com](http://www.monergismbooks.com) for US\$7.49 plus international postage.

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**Church Office**

Hours:

Monday: 1:30pm - 4:30pm  
Thursday: 9.30 am – 12.30 pm;  
Friday 11.00 am – 12.30 pm &  
1.30 pm – 3.00 pm.

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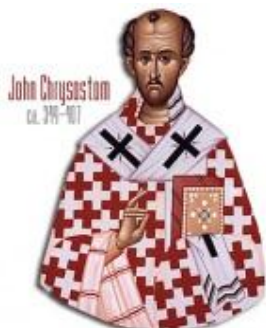
Ian Touzel

**Editorial deadline:** 3rd Sunday of the preceding month.

**This Church seeks to comply with the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 at all times. A copy of the Church's Privacy Policy is available on request. If you do not wish to consent to being identified in this or any other Church publication please advise the church office accordingly.**

**Faith of our Fathers**

| words from John Chrysostom



[God] himself took on him the burden of our iniquities, he gave his own Son as a ransom for us, the Holy One for transgressors, the blameless one for the wicked, the right-

eous one for the unrighteous, the incorruptible one for the corruptible, the immortal one for them that are mortal. For what other thing was capable of covering our sins than his righteousness? By what other one was it possible that we, the wicked and ungodly, could be justified, than by the only Son of God? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O

benefits surpassing all expectation! — that the wickedness of many should be hid in a single Righteous One, and that the righteousness of one should justify many transgressors!

John Chrysostom(c.349-407),  
*Epistle to Diognetus, 9*

**John Chrysostom** (c.349-407), Archbishop of Constantinople, was an important early Church father. He was known for his powerful expository preaching of the Scriptures and his denunciation of abuse of authority by both church and political leaders. He died on the way to exile after denouncing the lifestyle of the Empress Eudoxia. His final words were, "Glory to God for all things".

**Sunday Services**

Mount Gambier, Allison St.  
10am—including Sunday School and crèche during school term.

5:30pm—Evening worship

**1st and 3rd Sundays:**

9:30am (EST)—Nelson

11am —Allendale

**5th Sunday**

10am—Family Service at Mount Gambier



# Mission News local | national | international

## East Timor (Timor Leste) Update with Rob Duncanson

It was good to have Rob Duncanson, pastor of Darwin Presbyterian Church visit on Sunday 18th October. He had much to tell us about the work of the Gospel in East Timor. As well he highlighted there is much to pray about and be done there.

You may be thinking, "Where do we start?" I am glad you asked! Hudson Taylor is recorded as saying "pray as if everything depended on prayer and work as if everything depended on work"

Rob was quick to emphasize with us the crucial need for the Church in Timor Leste to have a solid foundation as to how the Church there understands the Scriptures. To this end a three day teaching program will take place during the first week of December. The focus will be on the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). Why the WCF? Because it is widely adopted and accepted as an excellent statement of how we understand the doctrines of Scripture.



**Rob Duncanson**

Also if we, as a denomination, wish to have ongoing fruitful relationship and partnership with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in East Timor unity at this foundational level of understanding and practice is paramount in these early days. It will serve to both shape the Church in Timor Leste and determine our involvement in the years to come.

The teaching program will be lead by David Burke (Orchard Road Presbyterian Church, Singapore) and Rob who will teach in English. Their teaching will be translated into Indonesian, the main language of the current church leaders.

**PRAYER:** *keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.*

- Pray God will grant safe travel to and from the venue in Dili.
- Pray that God will send skilled translators/communicators to this teaching program.
- Pray the Holy Spirit will teach the pastors in their inner being, scriptural doctrines.
- Pray that this will strengthen them in their local ministries.
- Pray for David Burke and Rob Duncanson's patient endurance in communication.
- Give thanks to God who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work in us.

– Roger Bannister



**Matt Bannister**, son of Elder Roger Bannister and Jayne Pritchard, and currently studying at the Bible College of South Australia,

has been appointed part-time assistant to Damien Carson, pastor of Para Hills PC in Adelaide.

## WHY EVANGELIZE?

If we believe there is a real heaven and a real hell, we should be moved to evangelize and to reach out in the name of Jesus. If we love people, our hearts should propel us. I heard one of the most convincing arguments for this from an atheist. His name is Penn, the well-known illusionist in the duo Penn and Teller. On his video blog, Penn Says, he tells about a man who came to him after a show and gave him a Bible and tried to proselytize him [Note: you can watch the video on YouTube, but the embedding was disabled so I couldn't post it]. Here is a portion of his response to that encounter [the rest is Penn telling the story]:

He said, "I'm a businessman. I'm sane; I'm not crazy." And he looked me right in the eye and did all this. And it was really wonderful. I believe he knew that I was an atheist.

But he was not defensive and he looked me right in the eyes and he was truly complimentary. It did not seem like empty flattery. He was really kind, and nice, and sane, and looked me in the eyes and talked to me. Then he gave me this Bible.

I've always said that I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life, and you think that it's not really worth telling them this

because it would make it socially awkward—and atheists who think people shouldn't proselytize and who say just leave me along and keep your religion to yourself—how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?

I mean, if I believed, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, and you didn't believe that truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that.

– Kevin Harney, *Organic Outreach: Sharing Good News Naturally* (pages 54-55).



As I write, I'm enjoying the warmth of fresh coffee and the cozy atmosphere of a local Starbucks. The Christmas theme decorates my cup, colors the barista's wardrobe, and streams through the speakers.

So it may be odd that I've been reading a technical book on the social and theological contours of "worldliness." No, wait a minute, the guy in the corner reading the sports page is wrinkling his nose when he sees the title of my book. Okay, so it is verifiably odd. The truth is that I'm as comfortable reading my book as he looks reading his newspaper.

Neither of us is disturbed.

As I sip and read, I am learning from a PhD about this impersonal Mordor-like dark force of worldliness that is behind the emerging postmodern sociological phenomena evidenced by the mechanical-technological secularization of society. Sip. These abstract concepts are not hard to read, and really fun to paraphrase (because it appears I know what I'm talking about).

So I can sit here and read theologian/sociologists all day long. The problem of worldliness remains nothing more than the tug of a theory. No problem. Then life intrudes.

Not long from now I will be silhouetted by a wall of cover art in the Blockbuster Video "New Releases" section, scanning for an appropriate DVD rental. In this moment my theory of worldliness must act. In this moment—like in hundreds of experiences in the past—I will hear in my soul the crackling sound of a rope tightening. This tension is the tug-of-war between what I know I should do to glorify God on the one side, and the surprisingly strong tug of what my flesh wants me to do. It's in front of the DVDs, not

# Glorifying God in Our Christmas Shopping

| Tony Reinke

sitting here in Starbucks, that I feel the tension of worldliness.

No, here in Starbucks my technical book on "worldliness" remains in the realm of abstract sociological theory. But there in front of the movies, the struggle with worldliness is alive. And in those moments I'm faced with a decision that will either prove consistent with a God-centered worldview or reveal a God-ignoring heart. That is my struggle with worldliness.

And while these personal battles against worldliness are active in my soul, these battles are often won or lost at the checkout counter.

**We give gifts in love because God first loved us by giving the greatest gift of His Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 4:19). Does my gift and/or the language of my card reflect this?**

## Every Decision

The decisions we make in life touch our souls. The "huge modern heresy," G.K. Chesterton once wrote, is that of "altering the human soul to fit its social conditions, instead of altering human social conditions to fit the human soul" (*What's Wrong with the World?*). Which is to say that we too frequently attempt to force our souls into what we choose, instead of first asking what will serve our souls and choosing that. This is worldliness.

C.S. Lewis took this to a more serious level by writing that every decision we make will transform us "into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow-

creatures, and with itself" (*Mere Christianity*).

Both Chesterton and Lewis understood the dangers of worldliness. Much different from the technical book I'm reading at Starbucks is the wonderfully helpful and discerning book *Worldliness: Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World* (Crossway, 2008). In it my friend C.J. Mahaney defines worldliness as any act, thought, or attitude that originates apart from an awareness of God's authority, presence, and glory. It is "loving the values and pursuits of the world that stand opposed to God" (p. 27).

This book helps me discern the exposure of worldliness I experience during the day and the worldliness lurking within my heart.

And notice how Mahaney connects worldliness to our decisions: "Every moment of every day we're making choices—whether we realize it or not—between love for a world that opposes God and love for the risen Christ" (pp. 26–27).

See, the victory over worldliness cannot be won by conforming to a list of rules. The battle is won through the power of the gospel applied to our daily choices. Asking the right questions—not following the right rules—is critical.

No matter how abstract we keep our definitions of worldliness, the reality is that our personal battle against worldliness is won through battle-by-battle victories in our everyday decisions. And these everyday decisions flow all the way down to our selection of "things" (1 John 2:15).

And that, oddly enough, brings us to Christmas shopping.

## Christmas Gifts

Choices. Ah, choices. Like why did I order this now-empty venti 6-shot

*Continued on page 8*

## Continued from page 7... **Glorifying God in our Christmas Shopping**

Americano? Well I didn't think about it, I chose it because it's "my drink." Probably because of my laziness, I just don't like making choices. Yet here I am, plunged into the most choice-intensive season of the year. Is there any time of the year like Christmas to require us to make a list and check it twice? Where do we travel? Where do we stay? How do we travel? What presents do we buy the kids? What to get my wife? What, if any, movies do we watch? Ah! As I make decisions this Christmas season about the gifts to buy, I want to evaluate my thinking behind each decision. Do my "things" highlight the God of all grace, or do my "things" encourage a God-forgetful worldliness?

Here are the three questions I'm asking myself as I shop for, and wrap, Christmas gifts:

### **1. Does my gift serve the soul of the recipient?**

Not every gift needs to have a direct spiritual purpose or explicitly communicate the gospel. Be mindful of the relationship you have with the individual and his or her spiritual condition. Our gifts should communicate our love for them. We give gifts in love because God first loved us by giving the greatest gift of His Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 4:19). Does my gift and/or the language of my card reflect this?

And please keep in mind that each media gift—books, movies, games, music—communicates a worldview. Is that worldview hurtful to the soul because of the faulty presentation of God and sin and the gospel? Will it prove helpful to my friend's soul? A la Chesterton: What am I requiring of the recipient's soul? Does my gift serve his soul or does it compress his soul like a jack-in-the-box? These questions will help us think beyond the typical: "Will she like it?"

### **2. Does my gift promise life transformation?**

One of my favorite gifts was an iPhone. After a year with it I know

that it has helped me in my planning, productivity, and communication. However, I've also found that the iPhone and other technological advancements tempt me to self-sufficiency. When the iPhone crashes, my day teeters on disruption. The problem here is not the device, but the sin in my heart. Have you noticed that during the Christmas season technology dominates the commercials? Technological gizmos make attractive gifts because they promise us the power to better control our lives. But this promise of control is rooted in worldliness, not Scripture (Proverbs 16:9).



**Think of creative ways to direct your friends and family toward the gospel.**

So if you are planning to give an iPhone, Blackberry, new computer, iPod, whatever—consider using words that do not promise too much. A temptation for the giver is to say things like: "This gift will change your life!" Instead, find a creative way to point the recipient back towards God. iPhones are nice gifts (are they ever!), but we should encourage our friends to base their unwavering daily dependence in God alone. Enduring life-transformation is the fruit of God's active grace.

Let's be careful we don't oversell our gifts and unwittingly glorify ourselves, and our gizmo gift, as a functional redeemer.

### **3. Does my gift encourage faith?**

Anxiety and impatience are the footprints of worldliness. And we live in anxious times. Magazine cover articles like "Where'd My Retirement Go?" are reminders that the financial security of many people has evaporated into a cloud of electronic numbers and simply floated into the sky and disappeared. For many, once the money has evapo-

rated, there remains only the residue of anxiousness.

This Christmas, more than any I've experienced, Christians could use a God-glorifying boost of faith and hope. Think of creative ways to direct your friends and family toward the gospel. Gospel-centered music albums are great for this. I'm currently listening to three Cross-centered albums: *Songs for the Cross Centred Life* (contemporary), *Together for the Gospel Live* (hymns), and even Shai Linne's *The Atonement* (rap). Three excellent books come to mind: *The Gospel for Real Life* by Jerry Bridges, *White Than Snow: Meditations on Sin and Mercy* by Paul David Tripp, and Charles Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening* devotional.

It doesn't need to be books, but we should work towards purchasing gifts that will direct our friends' affections away from the unsteady economy of this world and toward the unwavering promises of God.

### **Conclusion**

The dangers of worldliness are present even down to the choosing of "things." For good or ill, each gift we buy holds the potential for spiritual consequence. This fact should humble us, caution us, and encourage us to take a little extra time planning. Because by investing a little thought into our shopping we can give gifts this year that will encourage faith and hope in God



**Tony Reinke** lives in Gaithersburg, Maryland, USA, with his wife and three children and serves as the editorial and research assistant to C.J. Mahaney, President of Sovereign Grace Ministries. He publishes regularly at his blog: [spurgeon.wordpress.com](http://spurgeon.wordpress.com)