

Generate

Department of Youth and Children's Ministry Newsletter **Issue 3 • June 2011**

STOP THE TRAFFIK
PEOPLE SHOULDN'T BE BOUGHT & SOLD

Stuart Hawthorne, Youth Leader in Woodlands, Carrickfergus, tells **GENERATE** about his passion for his young people. Stuart writes:

It is God's will that you should be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honourable... (1 Thessalonians 4: 3-4)

'Early in 2011 our youth programme took up the challenge to look at the issues of sexual purity and sexual injustice, and to stand



young people and often very deliberate action being taken by them to put things right.

We live in a sex-fuelled world. Young people today are growing up in a culture saturated with sexual messages and content - they are and they will be repeatedly exposed to this cultural reality.

It would be easy to think of concepts like purity and injustice as separate issues.

alongside a cause - the fight for justice for those caught up in the child sex trafficking industry (a major global problem), while also challenging them to strive for sexual purity in their own lives.

We worship a God who is totally pure and totally just. In terms of how a human body is used sexually, when we look at the atrocity that is the child sex trafficking industry we can't help but be totally broken by the absolute injustice of what these children and young people are facing every day. This industry breaks God's heart.

When we help our young people move from looking out at the sexual injustice in our world to look inwards at the sexual impurity that hides itself in our own lives, an incredible connection becomes apparent. Our own sexual impurity breaks God's heart too. I've witnessed deep stirrings in the lives of our

In the middle of the 'sexual mess' that prevails all around us God longs to see a generation of young people who will 'avoid sexual immorality' and learn to control their bodies 'in a way that is holy and honourable...' (1 Thessalonians 4: 3-4) and who will stand alongside those fighting for their peers, held in slavery with no freedom to choose purity.'

Stuart Hawthorne

Some useful websites for slavery and sex trafficking:

<http://www.notforsalecampaign.org/>

<http://www.stophetraffik.org/>

<http://www.standoutinternational.co.uk/>

AMANDA'S RESCUE MISSION



Amanda Cotter

Fairytales are great aren't they? Beat the bad guy, rescue the damsel in distress, and live happily ever after. If only 'happily ever afters' were really that easy to come by...

Watching an episode of 'Banged up Abroad' one day, I was challenged by numerous stories with not one happily ever after in sight. The subject of human trafficking was there, in my face, and I could not ignore it. As I witnessed girl after girl being kidnapped and forced to prostitute themselves, I became very unsettled. Each girl was sold a story of false hope, a promise of a better future, only to be stolen into the human trafficking industry with no hope of escape. The more I heard, the more uncomfortable I became; and whilst the easiest thing would have been to assume somebody else would help these girls, the reality was that if I didn't do something to help them, then who would?

God very quickly revealed to me that doing nothing was not an option. I had to introduce these girls to Jesus, the true happily ever after they were desperate for.

And so I will be going to Cambodia on 1st June 2011 for 6 months to volunteer in the She Rescue Home (set up by Citipointe Church in Brisbane, Australia) to work with young girls aged between 5 and 15 who have been rescued from the human trafficking industry. Please pray for me as I embark on this new and exciting journey with God. For more information please visit www.amandacotter.co.uk.



Being the People of God before we do the Work of God

Roz Stirling, Director of Youth and Children's Ministry.

In a recent conversation with a youth worker I asked him how he would describe his relationship with God. There was a very long pause. He didn't have a clue what to say. He was struggling and then it became apparent that he was trying to find an answer that would prevent me from searching any further into this personal matter.

As we search the pages of the New Testament, and peer in on Jesus' relationship with his disciples, we see clearly that they knew him, intimately, as people in a close relationship with him. Furthermore, when they ministered with Jesus they drew deeply from this place of intimacy with him.

Those of us in Christian ministry need to be people who walk in close intimacy with Jesus, drawing everything from our relationship with him. If we wait in silence with him we get the chance to discern his heart for every moment of that day in ministry. As we learn to be still, to listen, to set aside our own discernment, we have the wonderful privilege of catching sight of his work and then the opportunity to step into that with him as his co-worker. What an amazing calling.

Maggie Robbins, spiritual writer and retreat leader gives us some help. She and her husband Duffy have ministered with youth workers for many years. Their passion to care for the spiritual well being of youth leaders and pastors led to the writing of a great resource 'Enjoy the Silence'. Maggie shares one of the meditations with us.

WARNING

Do not even begin to start reading this article until you have the time to **STOP, BREATHE DEEPLY, ENTER IN SLOWLY AND PRAYERFULLY!** Listening for what God may desire for you to hear!

Text: Matthew 15: 23 [Matthew 15:22-28]

22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."

23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

27 "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

28 Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have

great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Meditation: That's a remarkable phrase isn't it? "Jesus did not answer a word" (v.23). There is no silence so silent as the silence of God.

Have you ever been there? Have you ever experienced that depth of silence when there has been a need or desire you have brought before God and you hear... NOTHING? There is no comfort... no reassuring answer... no miraculous intervention. Just silence.

What do you do when the One you have called upon answers not a word? Think about when you've known such a time. As you recall this time of silence, how are you feeling? Angry? Sad? Insignificant? Forgotten? Do you feel sorry for yourself? What is your sense of God

in that place of silence?

For crying out loud (literally?), you've tried to live a life of faith! How is it fair that God seems to be ignoring you? Look at all you've done for Him and this is how He responds!

Do you just turn your back, not to ask again? Do you hear the voices of those disciples saying "Send her away" (v. 23b)? Do you feel rejected, unheard, unwanted, unloved, betrayed? Maybe it's better to just walk away from the whole thing? Sometimes surrender doesn't hurt as much as outright rejection.

But, look what the woman actually did. She didn't walk away. She didn't surrender to despair and cynicism. "She kept crying out after them" (v. 23b).

Go back and begin reading in verse 24.

After the silence... "Jesus answered."

Yes, He was silent, He spoke not a word to her. But then, the silence ended. It didn't end the way she thought it would, or even the way she hoped it would. It must have felt like an answer that ignored her questions.

But she was persistent... not because of who she was (see v. 26), a lowly Canaanite woman; but because of who He was (v. 27), the Master. She dropped to her knees in faith and said, "Lord, help me!"

Then, Jesus spoke again, and this time, after the silence, it was with a volume that echoed all the way back to the sickbed of a little girl in a distant Canaanite village. "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour" (v.e 28).

Don't hide from the silence of God.

Sit with it.

Ponder it.

Challenge it.

Question it.

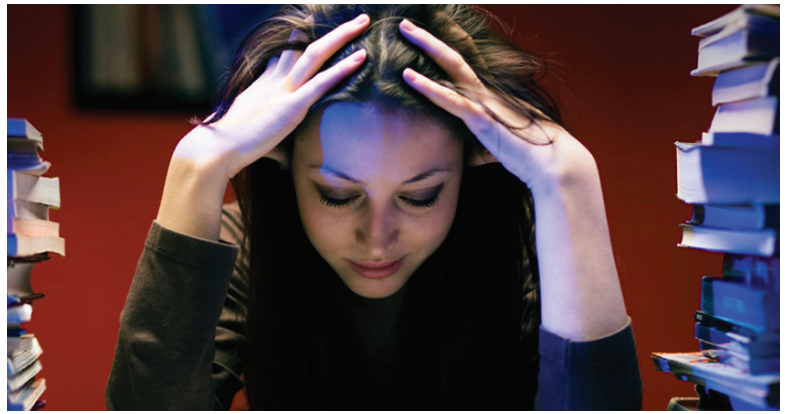
But whatever you do, don't mistake it for lack of compassion or lack of hearing.

Instead, consider this: The silence you hear may be the silence of a God who, more than He wants to meet our needs, wants us to understand our need to meet Him, to fall before Him, and to trust Him - even in those times when there is no word.



Maggie Robbins

Research & Education Committee



Research and Education sits on the margins of the work of the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry, the least visible and least practical of all of the committees in its remit and the work that comes from it; yet I believe it has a vital role to play in the overall work of the Board. As the newest Convener of the committee I see it acting as a compass in that the work of the group has the potential to serve as a navigational instrument, determining direction relative to the beliefs and values of the Christian faith and the prevailing culture, and in particular youth culture. Taking our lead from SPUD's resolution...



That the Research and Education Committee of the Board of Youth and Children's Ministry be asked to raise awareness about the pressures and issues affecting young people, both among young people themselves and the wider church.



...we initiated a survey to assess the impact of culture on young people from a variety of backgrounds and church settings. The questions were designed to gather information about key pressures or stresses and to uncover the support mechanisms young people rely on to mitigate the negative impacts of those pressure points in their lives. The findings have been very illuminating and I am grateful for the commitment of the VIP Interns who have engaged with the young people. Lindsay Robinson and Peter Gray have been invaluable to the committee and we are now extending the survey to cover congregations in the Republic of Ireland and additional socio-economic groups. The purpose of the research is educational; we aim to raise awareness and inform the wider church of the issues that affect young people so we will be producing a resource in the future when all of the surveys are collated.

Two other research ideas are being tabled and will help us understand changes that are happening and hopefully will provide an

analysis of what these changes mean. One proposal considers the importance of SPUD and the idea of a Youth Assembly where we will be considering ways in which church discipleship programmes can contribute to young people's participation. The second is reviewing the long term impact of individual congregational mission trips on YAC mission engagement and perhaps exploring the ways in which definitions of mission are being shaped by practical engagement as much as by what we believe from the scriptures.

Our aim is to hold the tension between the information we gather and the meaning of what we uncover, so that we might truly distil our findings into relevant educational formats. We want to produce resources that are valuable to leaders, ministers and those who shape ministry to children and young people within Presbyterianism.

On the surface I am convening a very stimulating group of people who are addressing challenging issues. However I have this knowing feeling in the pit of my stomach that tells me we may have a hard road ahead as the analysis of our findings points to the shortcomings in our ministry practice and we try to set a new direction for the work of the Board and denomination in the coming days.

Some of the key issues that have arisen from research so far are already potentially controversial.

In relation to 'Education' we are finding that...

- Stress is crippling our young people
- Young people need to be supported through their school careers in different ways to previous generations
- We are uncertain if the way that we are 'doing' church is helping or hurting young people
- Are there ways in which we have inadvertently colluded with the prevailing culture by overvaluing achievement?
- Have we unconsciously culturally conditioned young people to believe that life is about qualifications, jobs, cars, houses, husbands or wives and children?
- How have we supported parents through this difficult life transition?

In relation to the emerging culture of busyness in our churches, some questions arise...

- Are we shaping the next generation to be as busy as we are – and is this a good thing?
- Would we have the courage to 'blow the whistle' and try to start over again?

A key issue for young people is 'Identity'...

- What are we teaching our children about themselves?
- How can we create more open conversations in our programming and ministry to young people?
- Sex and sexuality unsurprisingly remains a perplexing concern but today the issue is complicated by access to pornography unavailable to previous generations – have we adjusted our teachings to take cognisance of this? Are we having meaningful conversations in our churches about difficult issues?

In relation to youth involvement in church life and across the denomination...

- Do we really believe in children and youth participation – when we 'exclude' children from communion are we unconsciously giving out mixed messages about who is important?

These are difficult questions which you may even now be having a negative reaction to; if so I am pleased, for we need to connect to these issues as issues that matter. New conversations are emerging from YAC and I hope that you might want to join in – email me directly at lynda.gould@ntlworld.com or through the YAC team.



Lynda Gould

Convener, Research & Education Committee

Please pray...

Give thanks for team members and leaders who are willing to offer their time to sharing the gospel message this summer.

Pray that team leaders would know God's leading and wisdom as they prepare for the teams and as they encourage team members not just to 'do the work' but to grow as disciples.

SUMMER OUTREACH

- Pray for the work that Summer Outreach teams will be engaged in during July and August. Pray that they will present the gospel message in a clear way.
- Pray for the children, teenagers and families who will come and be part of the outreach initiatives. Pray that they will want to know more about Jesus and follow him.
- Pray for the host congregations (where our teams serve) as they continue to engage with their communities and develop follow-up work throughout the autumn and winter months.

TECH CAMP

- Tech camp this year will see some changes – camp will be slightly shorter but more intense. We have some new leaders on board and have made some changes to the programme! Please pray for all aspects of the programme but most importantly for the impact it will have on our campers.

OVERSEAS TEAMS

- Pray that, through projects carried out by our teams travelling to Romania, London, Italy and Ukraine, the host church or mission project would be strengthened and encouraged and that God would be glorified.
- Pray that there would be good relationships between our teams and overseas partners and that each party would have a sense of being both a 'giver and a receiver'.
- Pray that, through their overseas experience, team members would grow in their understanding of God's mission in the world and the role he wants them to play in it – both this summer and beyond.

THE WORD

- Pray that God will work in the hearts of 18 to 30s in our churches, guiding them towards the weekend and preparing them to be

challenged and changed by the Word.

- Pray for wisdom and guidance for the main speaker Andy Hickford and all the seminar facilitators as they prepare for the event.

Coming Up...

TECH CAMP

11-14 August
Derryvolgie Hall
Ages 13-16
Cost £/€110

Download an application form from the pciyac.org website

SUMMER MISSION TRAINING DAY

Saturday 18 June 2011 at 10am – 4pm
Carnmoney Presbyterian Church
Training will be available for all those taking part in summer mission this year.

THE WORD

26-28 August 2011
Castlewellan Castle
Cost £/€85

Download an application form from pciyac.org

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY COURSE

Commencing Monday 19 September for 10 weeks
Union Theological College | 7.30pm-9.30pm
Cost - £/€80

YOUTH MINISTRY COURSE

Commencing Monday 19 September for 16 weeks
Union Theological College | 7.30pm-9.30pm
Cost - £/€150

YAC ROAD TRIP

Road Trip brings training to you! It aims to provide accessible, quality training for all youth and children's leaders at different

venues – we travel so you don't have to!

Saintfield Road

Thursday 6 October 2011

Dundrod

Tuesday 25 October 2011

Richhill

Thursday 10 November 2011

Trinity Ballymoney

Tuesday 29 November 2011

Edengrove

Thursday 19 January 2012

Whiteabbey

Thursday 2 February 2012

Cookstown

Thursday 16 February 2012

1st Holywood

Tuesday 28 February 2012

Glendermott

Thursday 15 March 2012

Ballyloughan

Tuesday 20 March 2012



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