

Things I've learned over the last few years

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Old people. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14. I like old people, and am rapidly becoming an old people! Old people have a lot going for them. Ministry to old people is specialised (and it's just as important and valuable as ministry to young people). Dementia is horrible. Our attitude to aging, ailments and heaven is all important.

The Bible. Psalm 109:105. I love studying the Bible (and teaching from it). The two series I did on "How to interpret the Bible" and "What is truth?" were really significant. Poor interpretation of the Bible is one of the greatest threats to the Kingdom of God and the future of the Church. e.g. use of verses out of context to validate our thinking and actions, or to manipulate or control others. Mark 7:9-13. Poor interpretation of the Bible underpins all "Christian" religion. Systematic study of the Bible using valid interpretation is wonderful because it enables us to have glimpses into the logos (word) of God.

Church. Matthew 16:18. Our understanding of the meaning of "church" comes from the time when Christianity was forcibly taken over by Rome under Constantine (325 AD.). "The church" became a Roman organisation with a powerful leadership hierarchy; providing "services"; requiring staff and buildings; and demanding attendance, obedience, and funding. The original Greek word for church *ekklesiá* (called out ones) was given the new meaning "church" in the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible (400 AD) based on *kyriake doma* – the house of the Lord. Over time this became *kirken* (German), *Kirk* (Scottish), and *Church* (English). Nowadays our understanding of "Church" is culturally determined, but is still based on the Roman model. The organised "Church" is becoming increasingly irrelevant (except within its own limited sub-cultures) and could easily die out within a century. Even though most of the activities of the organised "Church" are not relevant for the Kingdom of God, God uses anything to bring about His purposes. We have tried to make "Church" interesting and relevant to counter the widespread boredom that many Christians have after "going to" Church for years. There is a strong worldwide movement where Christians are seeking to become "church" as it really is, i.e. *ekklesiá* (called out ones focused on bringing in the Kingdom of God). God is still working within the church! . Ephesians 5:25-27.

Life. Galatians 6:7-10. As you get older you realise the importance of the foundations you established for your life in the past: health, attitudes, priorities, finances, relationship with God, relationship with others, relationship with yourself. We really do reap what we sow! Life moves through phases and retirement is a great phase! One phase for us is now finishing, and a new phase is beginning. Life is truly meaningful if we are in right relationship with the Lord and with people, and we are fulfilling the purposes that God has for us for this time. Philippians 3:7-14.

December 2013