

Ascend

The True Freedom Trust Newsletter

Winter 2017/18



Haven't you read?

The Word is powerful

Over 1,600 years ago, a loose living, pleasure-seeking man heard what seemed like a child singing, “Pick it up and read it. Pick it up and read it.” Later realising it wasn’t a line from a song that simply got stuck in his head, Augustine wondered if God was speaking to him. He located a Bible, flipped it open, and landed on Romans 13:13-14:

“Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarrelling

and jealousy. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.”

Such is the power of God’s word, Augustine was never the same again. After reading this scripture, he felt as if his heart was flooded with light. He turned from his life of sin and followed Christ.

I think it’s always encouraging to see how God has transformed people in years gone by through the power of His Word. This year, for example, we have



celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. A time when the Word of God worked powerfully in the heart of a little-known monk called Martin Luther. Luther, a flawed man, put anything good that came from that time down to one cause:

“I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my [friends], the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The Word did it all.”

What a great encouragement for us to rely on the power of God’s Word...(and drink beer?!).

The Word of God is powerful. It has been breathed out. It cannot lose its inspiration. It is still profitable. It still fully equips us: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).


The Word doesn’t change

Today, of course, we face different challenges to those of the Reformers. But we have the same Scriptures - that are more precious than gold and sweeter than honey - they had. It is especially good to remember that the Word remains the same during this time when True Freedom Trust (TFT) is going through change.

Recently, for example, we looked back and celebrated 40 years of TFT. We are so thankful for those who have faithfully led and stewarded the ministry over those years. But, like Luther, I dare say that anything good has come about because of God’s Word. Therefore, as TFT experiences a change of leadership, it’s a great time to once again reaffirm that Scripture is the authority behind TFT. We don’t rely on individual leaders (as good as they have been). No, we simply rely on the power of God’s Word.



... if God's Word stays central, I believe TFT will stand firm and flourish.



Scripture has such authority that Jesus replied to a question by saying, "Have you not read...?" (Matthew 19:4). Why would we ever wander from His example? After all, doesn't false teaching on sexual ethics simply highlight that so many functionally reject Scripture's authority?

Despite the temptation to ask, "Did God really say?", despite rampant false teaching, despite a growing cultural hostility to biblical truth, if God's Word stays central, I believe TFT will stand firm and flourish. As the leadership of TFT changes (see Jonathan's article on the next page), we can rejoice that God's Word never will.

The Word points us to Christ

It is the written Word which points us to Jesus, the living Word. Jesus rebuked those who didn't see that "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39).

Keeping Scripture central will help us point people to Christ. He is the One we all need. It's a relationship with Him that, like Augustine before, empowers us to flee the temporary pleasures of sin, and feel as if our hearts are flooded with light.

The Word never changes. And the Word points us to Christ. I think Tyndale put it better than I can, "The Scriptures sprang out of God, and flow unto Christ, and were given to lead us to Christ." Therefore, during this period of change, like Luther before, let us allow the Word of God to do the work of God. Who knows what we will see as a result?

by Rob



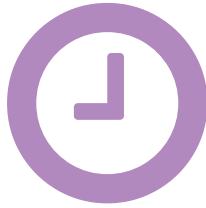
As a staff team we would like to thank all our members for your support during 2017. We are grateful for your prayers, gifts, service and contact throughout the year. We wish you a joyful Christmas and may 2018 be a new year full of hope and blessing.

Alison, Jonathan, Martin, Paul, Phil, Rob, Ruth and Stuart

Our days are in His hands

At our recent National Conference, I announced that after eight enjoyable and rewarding years serving as TFT Director I am now stepping down from this role. For some time, I've been conscious of the Lord cultivating in my heart a growing desire to return to local church ministry. I shared this with the Trustees last year and, in September this year, formally gave notice of my resignation.

I want to place on record my heartfelt thanks to all my colleagues, to the Trustees, to TFT members and to our many supporters and Partnership churches for the countless ways in which you have encouraged and supported me in my leadership of this ministry. I thank God for all of you and assure you of my continued prayers and passionate support for TFT and everyone associated with it.



The Lord's plans for my future

As many of you know, I came to faith 25 years ago at which time I left a long-term same-sex relationship. I was converted when a church minister read these words to me from Jeremiah's prophecy:

'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and will bring you back from captivity ...' (Jeremiah 29:11-14, NIV)

I had no idea at that time, of course, that the Lord's plans would include me being appointed as TFT Director 16 years later. And at the time of writing, I have no idea where I'll be serving the Lord next! But I'm holding on to those verses in Jeremiah, which have always proved a source of great encouragement at significant periods in my Christian walk.

The Lord's plans for TFT's future

Over the last year, I've been working closely with the Trustees to prepare the ministry for transition to new leadership. TFT is a team ministry and God has richly blessed us with a godly and gifted team of staff, Trustees and volunteers. So, my departure as Director doesn't have quite the same sense of significance as when my predecessor stepped down, after founding the ministry and leading it for 30 years!

By God's grace TFT is also growing, thriving and more in demand than ever before. So, from my perspective it certainly feels like I'm just someone leaving early with the party in full swing, rather than a captain leaving the proverbial sinking ship!

As the Ascend Magazine goes to press, the Trustees are scheduled to conduct interviews in London for some key roles. Please do pray for the Lord's clear leading and for the Trustees





to be given wisdom to discern what is best. We hope to be able to announce appointments within the next few weeks.

The Lord's plans for our eternal future

In my final conference message as TFT Director, I spoke from Ruth 2 and focussed on the thought of taking refuge under the wings of the LORD (verse 12). I shared that in my 25 years of Christian faith, I have taken refuge at various times in all kinds of different places. Not all of them inherently bad. But some distinctly ungodly. Including going down the path of seeking refuge in that one exclusive and ever-elusive special friend.

But I have only ever found one place of complete safety, security and satisfaction. One person who is constantly available and who has not even once let me down. Only one who fully accepts me just as I am with all my weaknesses. And who loves me with an unfailing love and complete

faithfulness, even at those times when I have been unfaithful to him.

So, with all my heart I urge and encourage every one of you, please continue to seek refuge in the everlasting arms of the beautiful Lord Jesus Christ. "The eternal God, [Jesus], is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27). Don't make any other person the ultimate person. Jesus Christ is the ultimate person. He is the all-sufficient satisfier of souls.

Please make him your safe place. The path of holding to orthodox biblical teaching on sex and relationships is a narrow one indeed. "But", says Jesus, "small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:14). I will pray for you all to stick to that narrow path. Please pray likewise for me. We will be richly rewarded by the LORD. Now, only in part. But later with eternal pleasures at His right hand (Psalm 16:11).

by Jonathan

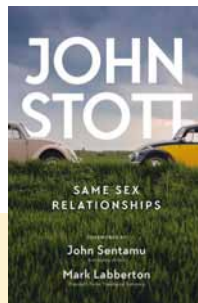


Book Review

Same Sex Relationships by John Stott

The Good Book Company, July 2017

£4.99 paperback (80 pages) Kindle £4.99



This book is a 2017 re-publication (under the same title) of chapter 16 of Stott's 1987 book *Issues Facing Christians Today*. Hence it is very short and to the point, while thoroughly examining a wide range of sources and considering differing viewpoints on same-sex relationships very carefully. It is edited by Sean Doherty (of Living Out) who is very faithful to the original text, while also updating it with reference to new studies and to significant events of the past 30 years.

Sean has added contemporary testimonies of Christians living with same-sex attraction and a discussion and study guide which could be used for individual or group reflection. In the main Sean is in full agreement with Stott's views, but his Editor's notes clearly identify where he differs, for example regarding the sin of Sodom (p47), or why he thinks the argument does not hold up - and quotes evidence for this.

Of course a re-publication (even with Sean's editing) breaks no new ground and there have been many more extensive and specialist works written since 1987, but it readily stands the test of time and is a clear and concise synopsis of Stott's Biblical stance on the issue. This book is from the pen of that great writer and Christian leader, one who was not same-sex attracted, but lived a long, single, celibate life. John Stott's reputation endures through this work.

He gets off to a great start in his introduction:

"...as far as the Bible is concerned, there is no such phenomenon as "a homosexual" or "a heterosexual": there are only people made in the image of God" (p16). The text is as clear and punchy as this throughout.

After some brief background, he raises his key question "Are same-sex partnerships a Christian option?" and uses most of the text to answer this with reference to sexuality in the Bible, the Biblical prohibitions on same-sex practice and a very balanced consideration of contemporary arguments for same-sex partnerships which may differ from the Biblical view. Along the way are some interesting and helpful insights (especially as they come from 30 years ago on this issue). He says that Eve being created from Adam's flesh and then "a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2) teaches that sexual intercourse is not just a union of alien persons who cannot become one flesh, but of two people who were originally one and now come together again in marriage. Stott later uses this affirmation of heterosexual marriage to counter the claims that the Bible has so few references to homosexuality as to make its position on the matter unclear.

Towards the end of the book Stott makes some very positive comments about the founder of TFT, Martin Hallett. He commends his “personal journey to wholeness in Christ”, the basis of his autobiography *I Am Learning to Love*, and the ground breaking work of TFT. This was seen to be a thorough endorsement of the ongoing ministry of TFT and, forty years later, would still hold true. I recommend this book to a wide readership due to its comprehensive and accessible exploration of biblical truth.

by Paul



FINDING *intimacy*

LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL
THROUGH CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

23 JUNE 2018 CENTRAL LONDON

A world that says all intimacy is sexual intimacy is consigning same-sex attracted believers to lives of loneliness. But Jesus offers real intimacy to all of us - eternally united to him and each other - and so we are never truly alone.

Join us to find out how such intimacy can be enjoyed in the here and now - with Christ and his church.

Saturday 23rd June 2018

Central London

£25

**[www.truefreedomtrust.co.uk/
finding-intimacy-2018](http://www.truefreedomtrust.co.uk/finding-intimacy-2018)**

Accountability Apps

This is an edited article from Ed and Jonny, who answer questions on the subject of accountability apps. The full interview can be found on our website: truefreedomtrust.co.uk/accountability-apps

What are the dangers of Smartphones for those who experience same-sex temptations?

Ed: A smartphone gives almost immediate access to damaging material. Dating apps can be installed, offensive photos can be shared and multiple conversations can be had at once. A smartphone is portable and has a constant power source. This means that when someone with same-sex attraction is struggling, they will have to fight the urge to feed temptation.

Jonny: I think the biggest danger of Smartphones is the degree of privacy. Often what's on your screen is only seen by you. We can kid ourselves that what we're looking at doesn't matter because nobody else can see it.

Why is an accountability app necessary for you?

Ed: My on-going battle with SSA can cause a deep sense of loneliness. I used to spend a lot of time in anonymous online chat rooms for validation and acceptance, which eventually led to a short-lived relationship. The internet is my default behaviour when I want to avoid doing something productive or am at a loose end. My concentration at work and my friendships were suffering.

Jonny: It means I have to use my phone in a similar way I would use my laptop in the shared kitchen of my busy house. An accountability app means that there are people around to make me think "Is what I want to look at really helping me to live as God would want?" It forces me to have to be able to justify my actions out loud to someone else.

We can kid ourselves
that what we're looking
at doesn't matter
because nobody else
can see it.

How do you go about installing an accountability app and how does it work?

Ed: I use Covenant Eyes, but the process will be similar for any accountability app. First, you make an account on the CE website with the email address of your accountability partner (you can have multiple accountability partners and they don't have to be current users of CE). You install the app which is designed to look and function as an internet browser. Every month, your accountability partner will receive a report of your browsing history and will flag report entries that it





finds in its database of known sites containing explicit content. The accountability report will never include the explicit content of these flagged entries. If you install the app on more than one device, then all the usage information is collected into one monthly report.

Jonny: I signed up on the CE website and installed the app on all the devices I had. It works by making a note of everything you've seen on the internet. It then periodically sends a report summarising what you've been viewing to you and at least one person you've chosen. Accountability apps don't block any pages on the internet - that's what internet filters do. Some services provide both in one package.

What do they cost?

Ed: Covenant Eyes currently costs \$10.99 per month. For almost the same price as a burger meal and a McFlurry, I can use a service that has become my most powerful defence against temptations that threaten to significantly damage my Christian walk.

Jonny: The one I use costs \$10.99 per month. Slightly painfully, this usually works out to be more than I pay for my actual phone contract - but it's worth it.

Have you tried various apps and which one would you recommend?

Ed: No, Covenant Eyes was specifically recommended to me by a fellow user who became one of the recipients of

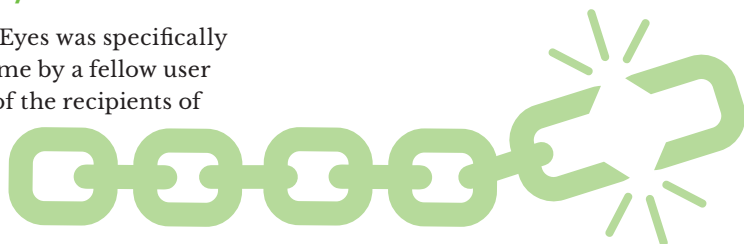
my monthly accountability reports. CE has the features that are useful for me, has never failed and would need drastic measures to circumnavigate.

Jonny: I tried a few free internet filters on my computer and I got what I paid for - they varied from doing everything to doing nothing whatsoever, to blocking the internet entirely. I ended up paying for Covenant Eyes and, in comparison, it has worked like a dream.

How has the app helped you to remain sexually pure?

Ed: Knowing that somebody can see what I've been doing online is a huge blocker to the temptation to let myself be drawn back into my old online habits, which are highly likely to cause behaviours that would damage my sexual purity. It's also helped to foster a close friendship with another Christian, with whom I share accountability. I'm far less likely to reach for my smartphone for false solutions.

Jonny: It's not a magic wand: I've still clicked on things I wish I hadn't and dwelt on ideas that I shouldn't. Nevertheless, it has very often stopped me from searching and/or clicking on things which would not be helpful. It's also provided a reason to talk about my internet use with friends who receive my reports.



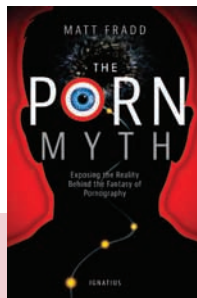


Book Review

The Porn Myth by Matt Fradd

Ignatius Press, March 2017

£13.55 paperback (280 pages) Kindle £9.88



Porn is having a devastating impact on many Christians. Statistics vary, of course, but figures like 64% of Christian men and 15% of Christian women say they watch porn at least once a month¹ make for sombre reading. To grasp the full impact of porn and fight against the devastation it causes, we need all the help we can get. This book goes a long way to providing that help.

The Porn Myth is written by Catholic apologist and speaker Matt Fradd, who I first came across through his *Pints with Aquinas* podcast. I disagree with Fradd on many important theological doctrines, however, this book is written from a non-religious perspective and delivers a devastating response to many pro-pornography arguments.

The author expertly highlights the damaging effect that porn has on society, on those within the porn industry and on those who consume the content produced. Therefore, although written from a non-religious perspective, the horrific impact pornography has really strikes home.

Fradd is a talented writer, who communicates in a concise and compelling way. Due to the short chapters, the book is easily digestible and can be dipped in and out of. The five sections covered are porn culture, the porn industry, porn and our sexuality, porn and our relationships and the struggle

with porn. Each section contains bite-size chapters which debunk a common myth used to argue for, or which is associated with, pornography. Myths such as, “porn isn’t addictive” or “not masturbating is unhealthy for a guy.” The strength of this approach is that the book covers a lot of ground, but I did feel that so much more could have been written in every chapter.

For me, the best part of the book was the introduction. Here Fradd sets out his arguments in a convincing way and offers many nuggets of wisdom. The fundamental presupposition that he outlines here is, “If you want something to flourish, you need to use it in accordance with its nature... don’t rip sex out of its obvious relational context, turn it into a commodity, and then expect individuals, families, and society to flourish”. Amen! Fradd goes on to say that porn doesn’t show too much, but too little. It reduces people and uses them as a mere means to an end. So, “as a result, it cannot offer the experience of real intimacy that we long for”.

Something else that I really appreciated about this book was the light it shed on the impact that porn has on the brain. Although using the word ‘addiction’ as it relates to pornography is debated, Fradd claims that “pornography can make us

Donate to TFT

We depend on the gifts of Christians, churches and other charitable trusts who share our vision for promoting biblical sexuality. As we make no formal charge for providing pastoral support or teaching, we rely on donations to be able provide services to individuals and the church in the UK and beyond. These include biblical teaching, pastoral guidance, support groups and conferences.



Your gift will help us to continue this valuable work.

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addicted to our own neurochemistry” (meaning the chemicals released in the brain cause addiction to the behaviours which cause them). Whether we use that word or not, we should be aware that this does not excuse sinful behaviour. We also know, of course, that Christians can, and indeed are, commanded to control our own bodies in holiness and honour, “not in passionate lust...” (1 Thessalonians 4:5). But that said, being aware of the impact that porn has on our brains should motivate us to live holy lives.

I fully recommend this book. It would be a useful resource for those who are looking to tackle this subject in churches or small groups. *The Porn Myth* gives useful information and insights, however, as it is written from a secular vantage point, it offers no answers to those struggling with lust and pornography. The book does its job in shedding light on this topic, but it doesn't provide the foundational Christian teaching that believers need. That's why I think it would be best to read this book as a supplement to one which is written from a clear Christian perspective, like Tim Chester's *Captured by a Better Vision*.

by Rob

¹<http://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/>

Thank you!

True
Freedom
Trust

Shame

Shame is no respecter of person. Shame cares little if you develop into someone who goes on to achieve a successful career or into someone who endures a life-long struggle to hold down any form of gainful employment. Shame isn't interested in how you present to the world; for its kingdom and dominion is within. Shame is the ever-present voice that reminds you of your 'real' state, that of being unlovable, unworthy and inherently flawed. Shame is the voice that terrifies you into silence. *If people really knew me, you conclude, they would hate and reject me.* Shame is the voice that causes you to hide from others and, eventually, even from yourself so that your sense of self is swallowed up in perfectionism, blame-shifting, role-playing and, oftentimes, addictive behaviour.

“Who told you that you were naked?” God asks Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:11. Disobedience, guilt, and then feelings of shame had resulted in our first parents taking cover in nearby shrubbery in a futile attempt to hide from their beloved Father. Shame is one aspect of our natural inheritance that has been handed down throughout the centuries but thankfully, along with everything else that separates us from God, it has been addressed and destroyed by Christ on the cross.

I experienced the weight
of God's own garment
of righteousness.



During my childhood and teenage years, feelings of shame far outweighed any other emotion. Encouraged not to show negative sentiments as that was considered to be a sign of weakness, I soon learned to be happy or nothing. In hindsight, therefore, it is not surprising that I experienced depression from a very early age and had my first major episode at the age of ten resulting in long term absence from school. *If the option is happy or nothing, I concluded, then I choose nothing.* Long before that time I had put labels on my forehead, invisible to others, that read *overlooked, uncared for* and *unloved*. They didn't have to be true statements for them to be real to me.

Gender Dysphoria was present from my toddler days. Although I knew I wasn't a boy, I found it impossible to relate to or embrace my femaleness. During puberty, in addition to seeing myself as some third gender, I also began to experience same-sex attraction. These persistent desires encouraged a gay-centric identity resulting in three long-term relationships spanning a seven-year period. Interestingly these relationships, despite their intensity, never



removed the seemingly ingrained belief that I was unloved and unlovable.

Conversion to Christ interrupted my life. Believing that homosexual behaviour was incongruent with God’s creational intent meant that I no longer spent my energies seeking out potential partners, but in devoting myself to all things Christian. Initially, however, my new-found faith had little bearing on my enduring shame. Even though I knew categorically that God loved me, I could deflect its impact by reasoning that He *had* to love me. *After all*, I rationalised, *it was in His job description. He has no choice.* However, challenging my deep-seated self-beliefs with the truth of God’s Word has always been at the core of my Christian journey and tackling the topic of shame has been no different.

...our dear Lord Jesus holds us in the highest of esteem.



If I told you it has been a wonderful waltz from one level of glory onto the next, it would be to offer a bare-faced lie. Over the years in exposing the long-term lies I believed and internalised, God stripped me of the fig-leaves that I once clung onto and left me exposed, vulnerable and in need. All the feelings that I had either dodged or covered over were now laid bare. It was then, whilst crumpled in that unprotected place, I experienced the weight of God’s own garment of righteousness.

Jesus states quite simply, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31b-32).

By living in my identity as God intends, that is living within His framework of truth and in the liberty offered by His grace, I can respond to Him more fully. I have the opportunity, whatever the immediate or ongoing challenge, to experience the abundance of life that Jesus offers in John 10:10. This is true for all believers. Shame tells you that you are inherently worthless and irredeemably defective, but God tells you that you are made in His image (Genesis 1:27) and are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

Although shame is no respecter of person, our dear Lord Jesus holds us in the highest of esteem. Paul writes that “In Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21b). Removing the core of shame does not bring automatic release from our struggles, but does allow Truth to infiltrate and challenge that which keeps us from experiencing the abundant life.


by Jeanette



National Conference Report

TFT is 40 years old. Happy Birthday! It is said that “Life begins at 40”. We know that life really begins when, by God’s grace, He draws us to Himself and we trust in Him. TFT was birthed through the same mercy and goodness of the Lord. How grateful we are to those brave men and women who first established and pioneered the Trust and also to our present day Staff Team and volunteers.

A weekend of celebration, care, challenge and yes tears, all centred in Christ lay ahead.

 May I encourage any members, who up to now have been reluctant to book for the National Conference to do so. No-one could have been more apprehensive than I was when I attended for the first time two years ago. My feelings of fear and vulnerability were soon calmed by the warm welcome I



received from others. The previous year I had met Jonathan and learned of the work of TFT for the first time. This had a massive impact on my life. TFT isn’t just an organisation, but a family of God’s people seeking to follow the Lord’s will for their lives and strengthen each other in faith.

Three of us, having just left our train, were put at ease immediately by Paul waiting to drive us to the centre. We heard that twenty new people were attending this year. What a birthday present and a blessing for the rest of us! Grace and her team, who were the new caterers, were introduced to us at the evening meal. Their food was delicious and plentiful. Meal times were marked by fun and laughter, as well as by more serious conversations.

It does take some effort to make it to the early morning prayer meeting, but it was an inspiration to hear so many people partaking in praise and supplication to the Lord. The worship led by Tony and team was excellent and helped me so much to focus on our faithful God.

Jonathan Berry and Rob Wood shared the teaching ministry on the theme *Jars of Clay - the God of surprising choices*. They emphasised that God does choose the worst of sinners, the most unlikely of candidates, the weakest of vessels and the most distant of enemies. Two key



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challenges for me were “How do I respond to God’s great mercy and immense patience in my life?” and “Where do I run to in times of difficulty?” Often we don’t like to think about

the Lord’s discipline in our lives but it was emphasised that it is proof that we are genuinely His. We were taught an important Hebrew word ‘hesed’ that is used in the Bible to describe God’s grace, kindness, mercy and steadfast love.

It was a blessing to be given deep, clearly presented Bible-based teaching by all our speakers over the weekend.

There was a choice of seminars led by Jeanette Howard and Stuart Parker. I wanted to hear both, but finally decided on *Abundant Life* by Jeanette. She likened our commitment to the Lord to the vows in marriage. We are to obey, serve, love and honour our Lord, forsaking everything that we can put before God. What a challenge! I hope I can hear Stuart’s *Embracing Truth Amidst Itching Ears* at some future time. It was a blessing to be given deep, clearly presented Bible-based teaching by all our speakers over the weekend.

Saturday afternoon’s free time began at the same time as the rain. Undaunted,

Chris’s Frisbee golf teams and Timothy’s walking group set out with enthusiasm and waterproofs. As usual Frank’s trip to a fascinating but unpronounceable place of interest was a treat and so was the cream tea. The evening celebration included an enormous cake, Stefan talking about the history of TFT, an interview with Jonathan and an encouraging and inspirational address by Keith Sinclair, Bishop of Birkenhead.

As Sunday morning dawned it was time to pack and tidy rooms. Surely not!



How can a weekend fly by so quickly? A TFT week wouldn’t be long enough. After breakfast we met in small groups, where we

were able to trust one another enough to share some of the ups and downs of our lives and discuss questions coming out of the teaching. In our final meeting, after Jonathan’s teaching, two members gave moving testimonies to the Lord’s care and provision during the year. Finally Martin led us through the Communion Service. There we were - every last one of us a jar of clay remembering how the sinless Saviour was made sin for us, died and rose again and now graciously chooses to live in us by His Spirit.

I have taken so many memories, ideas and challenges home with me. Thank you TFT and members for being there for me during the year too. Many Happy Returns! May the Lord’s grace, guidance and protection be with TFT in the future as it has been in the past.

by Vicki

MESSAGE FROM MARTIN HALLETT

Martin Hallett sent this card to the members of TFT on the occasion of our 40th Anniversary. We are delighted to publish it here.



I will be eternally grateful to God for all the wonderful people I have met through TFT and the lives and experiences it has been my privilege to know. I am also thankful for all I learnt from others and about myself.

I wish you all a Richly Blessed Conference with Jesus and each other

Love, as ever, f Martin



NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2018

The TFT National Conference
2018 is being held from:

5th - 7th October



Please put this date
in your diary.

NEW!

New Barnabas group in Leeds

A Barnabas Group in Leeds has very recently been set up. If there are any members in that area who are interested in joining please email Paul: paul@truefreedomtrust.co.uk or ring the office.

JONATHAN'S LEAVING GIFTS

We will be making a financial gift to Jonathan in recognition of his Godly and gracious leadership of TFT over the last 8 years. If you would like to contribute to this collection please give via the methods of donation on page 11, making reference that the gift is for Jonathan. We will also be giving Jonathan a book of personal messages. If you would like to send an email or letter expressing your thanks please send it to: info@truefreedomtrust.co.uk or write to our PO Box address. Many thanks.

Single, old and alone?

“Being single sucks!” That was the mantra I had for a long time. I’m in my early thirties with 2 brothers, 1 niece and 5 nephews. Everyone in my immediate family was happily married by the age of 22. I am the black sheep. Your thirties is that time of life when everyone seems to be getting married and you seem to be waving goodbye to them all from your dusty shelf. What do I have to look forward to?

Well, it turns out, a lot. As I’ve got older I’ve seen more and more of the wonderful opportunities that singleness presents. It’s the alternative that no-one is talking about, **but** it’s so much better than I used to think. Now, I’d be lying if I said I never get lonely. The desire for intimacy and affection can be overwhelming at times. And, truthfully, sometimes I can lie awake at night and worry about my future, asking questions such as “Who will look after me when I’m older?”, “Where will I live?” and “Who will keep me company?” When this happens I always need to remind myself of 3 things:

God provides

God has given me a biological family who provide some of the love that my heart craves. I left my family in the North of England to move to the South for work. When I moved to my local area I felt alone, but by His grace God placed me in a great church (where I now work) and has introduced me to some of the best people I’ve ever met.

One of the most important things with family is the need to be open and honest. I confided with my church family a

number of years ago about my struggles with same-sex attraction and all I have received is love and acceptance. I think it’s such a valuable thing to be able to do (even if not to the whole church, at least to some people that you trust). Christians can feel so saturated by the gay agenda in society. One of the blessings of hearing of a Christian with SSA trying to be faithful to the Bible’s teaching on sexuality is that this news is often met with warmth and encouragement, rather than the hostility and the rejection we often fear.

God uses

Singleness provides opportunities that I wouldn’t otherwise have - I mean quite apart from being able to indulge my selfish desires of boxset bingeing, getting out of bed when I choose or returning home at whatever time suits me! I can serve my church family in many ways.



... continued on page 18 >>



God has given me time, money and energy so that I can share it with others.

I am able to visit friends, babysit for families, go on mission trips, organise social events, volunteer in different ministries, have time to read and learn and invest more in friendships. My life has something that many of my married friends envy - flexibility. And that's a gift I can easily take for granted, but an amazing privilege. God has given me time, money and energy so that I can share it with others.

God promises

My eternal hope can never be taken from me and that has nothing to do with my single status. Christ died to break the dividing wall between people in His church. There are now no barriers between us, male or female, Northern or Southern, heterosexual or homosexual – we're all deeply loved by God. And we're promised an eternal inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, all aspects of loss that can happen with relationships here on earth. Christ Jesus has forgiven

me for my failures and promised me a brighter future than any earthly relationship could *ever* promise!

So will I be lonely? Yes, I expect so, at times. But God is with me, and loves me deeply. One of the greatest things I have got from my (relatively short) time as a TFT member are some brilliant friends who I hope and pray will be lifelong lifelines. They are people I can be accountable to and share my struggles, failures and heartaches with as well as my joys and hopes. It's helped me to realise *I am not in this alone*. God in His wisdom and providence has put people around me who can remind me that we are connected, in ways far deeper and more intimate than any earthly relationships. Together we are the children of God and will be sharing eternity, side by side. So I can use the relatively short time I have here on earth to start building what I'm going to be enjoying for all eternity.

The future may seem uncertain to me - but with God, there's nothing more certain. So bring it on!

by Nic

This article is the second of two, one looking back over a life of God's provision in the Autumn magazine, and this one from a single young person believing in Him for future care.

Pen Pictures



Jonathan Berry is Director of TFT and regularly speaks on same-sex attraction and related subjects at churches, conferences and Bible colleges throughout the UK and Ireland. He dreams of owning a Husky dog one day and loves eating Gü desserts.

Rob is Head of Speaking and Teaching at TFT and regularly speaks on same-sex attraction at churches, conferences and youth groups throughout the UK and Ireland. He is an avid supporter of Manchester United.



Paul is a VW and also helps with some admin in the TFT office. He was formerly a teacher for over 30 years and likes red wine and white cats.

Jonny has finally got round to getting a “boring office job” doing a mixture of admin, marketing and events management. Whilst he still doesn’t quite know what his company does exactly, he does know that he’s having a blast getting to know a fab bunch of colleagues.



Ed is a member of TFT who lives in Scotland and works as a software developer. He can usually be found writing Java code while listening to Britney Spears, and hopes to start learning to play the flute soon.

Nic is a youth worker in South West London. When he’s not playing ridiculous games with his youth, he’s probably planning his next fancy dress costume.



Vicki is a retired teacher, who became a Christian as a teenager. Amongst her interests are history, nature and gardening, but she isn’t quite up to Monty Don’s standard yet! She enjoys spending time with friends and her favourite meal is roast chicken.

Jeanette is a Christian author, speaker and non-cook. She loves good food and willingly trades her gardening skills for tasty offerings. Jeanette also house and pet sits for friends in lieu of wif, a full fridge and accompanying microwave. She is currently looking after three gardens and is putting on weight.





Prayer & Praise

Please thank God for ...

A great time of teaching, fellowship and encouragement at the TFT National Conference - and this despite our main speaker having to pull out due to ill health with just two week's notice!

The twenty people or so who attended the conference for the very first time and seemed to be greatly encouraged and blessed

The Lord's goodness in providing recent gifts of £10,000 and £3,500 from Christian Trusts

The launch of our newly revamped website and for all the encouraging feedback received

Please pray for ...

Jonathan as he steps down from his role of Director in the coming weeks and seeks to return to local church ministry - for clarity regarding his future

Wisdom for the Trustees as they finalise a leadership transition plan that we have been working on over the past year

The Lord's protection over and continuing provision for the ministry during this significant period of transition and change

Wisdom for the planning team for our joint conference with Living Out on 23 June 2018.

Please pray for Jonathan (JB), Rob (RW), Stuart (SP) and others as they speak on behalf of TFT.

If you are interested in attending one of these meetings, please contact us on info@truefreedomtrust.co.uk for further information about which are public.

November

25th Dagenham Parish Church (JB and RW)
York Young Life (Anne and Graham)

December

17th DNA Training, London (RW)

January

21st Sawbridgeworth (RW)
27th Harold Wood (RW)
28th Romsey (RW)

February

11th Lindow (RW)

March

3rd Pilgrims Hall Training (RW and SP)