



Newsletter

everyone in the world . . . in the word

DECEMBER 2008

on the Grapevine...

How often do you read your Bible? This was the first thing we asked in the questionnaire that we used to engage people in conversation on our CBSI stand, and it really did help us to do just that.

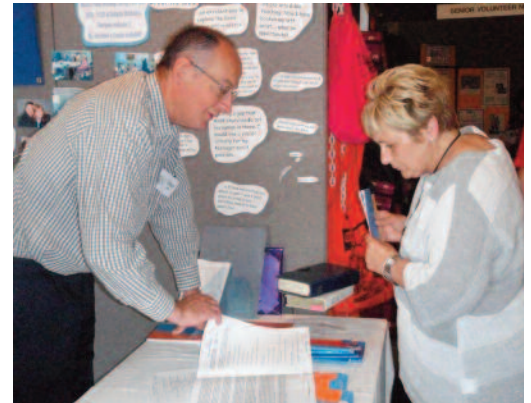


The team decided that we would have a stand again this year at Grapevine, our local celebration event. The evening class which started October 2007 was started partly as a result of contacts made at Grapevine last year, so we felt it would be worth doing again. We did not want to miss the opportunity to encourage some of the 15000 people who come to Grapevine.

We had learnt from having the stand for the first time last year. One of the main



problems we had was how to interest people as they went from stand to stand. We had the idea of a very simple questionnaire to find out how much people read their Bibles. It was a fantastic way to start off the initial conversation and more often than not we were able to share how CBSI worked. Those of us who spent time on the stand really enjoyed talking to people and it was amazing what people shared about themselves and their situations. It was a privilege to be able to share in people's lives and encourage them in their walk with God. We talked to about 400 people over the course of the weekend. Some took booklets to have a further look at the study, others took a sample lesson and a brochure and others perhaps were challenged to think about how often they read and studied the Bible.



We were just glad to be part of what God is doing and we trust the Holy Spirit to lead people to get involved in CBSI because we believe it is one of the best ways of helping us to read the Bible regularly and seriously.

It was hard work but we were glad to serve. We had a dedicated team of people who took turns to be on the stand and it was great to work together. The work will continue as we follow up those who expressed an interest.

*Ann Baker
CBSI Lincoln*

Visit to Malawi



Gillian and David Mason led a team of six (including two other CBSI'ers) to Malawi in June to do Bible teaching, encouraging and to see the completed Project Malawi - Madalitso projects.

The latter half of the visit was spent accompanied by the National Director of CBSI Malawi, Rutherford Banda and his wife Tsahai. They had organised four, one day seminars with leaders of CBSI classes, at four venues in the Central and Northern regions of the country. In all 99

Prison Ministry Opportunities

'Are prisons warehouses to store the incorrigible or are prisons greenhouses to restore the redeemable?' The Bishop of Liverpool.

40% of adult prisoners reoffend; 80% of young offenders reoffend. It costs £50,000 per adult per year in the prison system and £175,000 per year per 16 young offender. Staggering statistics!

Veronica and I attended a Prison Ministry conference in London where Helen Ball, Virginia Water Leader, was in attendance as well. A really amazing God coincidence!

The day was stimulating & envisioning as we heard from people such as the Bishop of Liverpool, a London Superintendent of Police who is a committed Christian, leadership from Prison Fellowship International and many ex-offenders who gave testimonies of God's love and power at work in their lives.

CBSI UK is looking to join forces with the many organisations caring for prison related needs. There is a vacuum existing in this current economic state for serving prisoners. Taking the message of God's love and power to restore the downtrodden and bring life to them is of utmost significance.

If you are interested in being involved in a CBSI programme for a prison near you, please begin by making this a matter of regular prayer. At our March Conference, we will have a session to tease out how to approach chaplains and present the idea of a CBSI class. Please come to this session!! Do some homework now by finding out what the prison near you has going on: ie. Alpha, any volunteer programmes, any Chaplain who is open to Bible study programmes? Bring this sort of information to conference. GOD IS AT WORK and we want to join Him!

Grace Wort
CBSI National Training Director

leaders attended, David taught from the early chapters of Nehemiah on leadership and Gillian taught on the importance of having a servant heart. This was particularly challenging in a country where people crave status. Bibles are being made available on loan to those who need them, this approach devised by the National Director stops short term membership just to get a free Bible!

The number of CBSI classes is growing and it is pleasing to report new classes in the southern part of the country around Blantyre for the first time. There is now a National Servants Team and the four regional seminars gave an opportunity for them to be introduced.

CBSI members in Malawi are often accused of being "super-spiritual" and to resist this criticism the members in the village of Chombo near Lake Malawi are looking for ways of blessing their community and want to start an orphan feeding programme in their village.

Gillian and David were so encouraged to see the enthusiasm of everyone for the studies and the way in which the organisation is developing with leaders taking responsibility in different parts of the country. Heartfelt thanks were expressed to all the members of CBSI UK who support this work which has brought so many blessings. (madalitso - Chichewa for blessings).

June 2008
CBSI Malawi

Dartmoor Prison

Our class remains about the same size, with up to 10 men attending each week. Of course, the faces change as different men are released or transferred so our group cannot have the same continuity as others. We recently 'lost' 15 minutes study time due to a national change of timetable but the Holy Spirit still allows things to be covered! Our prayer for the men is that they will be blessed by the study - as are we. At this time of year, travelling to and from the prison is not the best fun as it's dark and often misty. Prayers to be kept safe on the road, for the chaplain and the team, are always appreciated.

Janet Clifford
CBSI Dartmoor Prison

Testimonies

I came to CBSI after drifting for several years away from God. I saw an advert and telephoned the number. My parents who were Church Leaders had divorced and left me feeling angry and confused. I found the class easily from the directions given, once there I found the directions back to God easy as well!

We had a man arrive, determined to disprove Christianity, very argumentative. He is now a Christian and a really valuable member of our group

We have had two members from other faith backgrounds come to know Jesus this year.

We have seen people flourishing, developing and gaining confidence in their Christian life

God's Love in a Group

For quite some time now, I have been very aware that I don't know the Bible as much as I feel I should. Yes, I read it, but not often enough, and recently it came to me that in order to further my journey with Jesus, I really must get down to more detailed learning of His word. This is to be along with my worship in the church family, and with my house group. So I joined Community Bible study in September, not knowing what to expect, and hoping I would cope with it all. I have to say that I felt at ease my first week, and have continued to do so since. It is very enlightening to hear all the different views on the word we are studying. I still very much take the written words in the Bible at face value, as answers to the given questions each week. This is not enough - we have to learn to interpret the words to be meaningful in our lives, and understand what they really mean for us. This will take time, and I look forward to learning the art.

I feel I am among friends who can, and do, teach me so much, and I thank God for - His love in a group.

Before coming to my CBSI class, I had very few friends and didn't see my parents. Now my class are my family and my life has changed

Dot Dee

I was abused as a child and felt worthless. Although I knew God in my life it was during discussion group time that I understood the Fatherhood of God and was healed from years of depression

Our class loves the warmth generated through looking into God's word together

Two of our members met at class and are now married!

We have many different churches represented in our group, but due to the presence of the Holy Spirit we are enriched by each other - Praise God!

Caleb news

WALES

Janet Phillips returned in October from a busy trip to Wales where she met many contacts. Please pray for the two classes in Wales, one is on hold as two leaders are having babies!

Pray for Church leaders to take on board the concept of CBSI and for God to provide a permanent travelling partner.

SCOTLAND

Not long after a busy and fruitful trip to Scotland where classes are being established using the new study booklets and 'If you will Pray', The Peters were faced with the devastation of a house fire on Nov. 22nd. The house next door was burnt to the ground and The Peter's home seriously damaged. Pete and Helen Jane are now in temporary accommodation. The firemen were able to save some precious family items and pieces of furniture. Please pray.

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Wales

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TRAINING...

...the excellent way to be equipped to lead

Start thinking now who will need to be attending training next year!! Do you have any new Leadership Team members in Class Leader, Assistant Class Leader, Coordinator? These individuals need training and the dates for this are: 20th June in the SOUTH and 27th June in the NORTH. Both are Saturdays to allow those who work to attend. Come and join in on the FUN!

Grace Wort
CBSI National Training Director



Book Review

The Shack by William P Young

Mack, an ordinary man, loses his youngest daughter to a serial child killer- her body is not discovered but the police find the scene of her death, a small wooden shack hidden deep in the countryside. Mack lives with the shadow of the 'great sadness' until a year later he receives an invitation to return to the shack to meet with 'Papa' (his wife's name for God). He secretly goes to the shack believing that he has been lured there by his daughter's

killer and that he will either kill him or die but instead finds himself in a transformed 'shack' and enjoying the hospitality of God the father, the God-man Jesus and God the Spirit. He then spends a weekend talking through the deepest issues of life as a human and our relationship with the trinity God.

This book challenges our vision of God and asks theological questions that we may never have dared to asked -God the father appears as a black African woman for most of the book in order to confront Mack's preconceptions that God is a grey bearded Gandolph type figure. Don't expect easy neat answers, but do expect to be challenged, uplifted and refreshed in your relationship with God. We've all got our own shack to go to, it's the place of our darkest days and questioning and the place that we meet God in His deepest compassion.

This is a great Book club/discussion book, some of the theological issues need discussion and scrutiny against the word. The internet is alive with love it/ hate it forums- our book club dubbed it a 'Marmite book'. The point of discussion is to support what is helpful and builds up and to reject what doesn't line up with truth and thereby destroys faith - a familiar practice to CBS'ers everywhere!

*Karen Nolloth,
CBSI Letchworth*



Veronica's Voice

Genealogy is often skim read in the Scriptures, particularly at Christmastime. When included in the narrative it seems an unnecessary part of the Christmas story and not as important as the situation surrounding the birth of Jesus. Matthew and Luke both trace Jesus' ancestors through different routes, using knowledge of his adoptive father Jacob and it is also thought, of his mother Mary. In each case the line runs through King David. What an immediate threat this must have seemed to Herod if he knew, perhaps via the census and of course compounded later on by the visit of the Magi.

Later, Satan tried to tempt Jesus into immediate earthly kingly authority, which was not his to offer. During Jesus' Ministry, people clamoured for Him, eventually claiming Him as their King and laying palm leaves as He rode to Jerusalem on a donkey, desperate for an answer to their national situation at that time in history. When He died, a sign proclaimed Him 'King of the Jews'. Thankfully for us He is so much more than that. Breaking the power of death and sin, He reigns for ever as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Not just a historic figure, He reigns over a Kingdom which will last for ever!

2000 years later we face crumbling institutions, jobs being lost and our traditional security being eroded. Who can we trust?

We are subjects of a Kingdom which is everlasting, where our investments can't fail, where we have total security and there will always be work! We can trust the one who offers salvation to every generation, but who was born into this world as a vulnerable baby in a less than ideal situation. He is our King and in Him we can have absolute trust.

Have a Peaceful and Restful Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

*Veronica Alvarez,
CBSI National Director*

Diary Dates

National Training

North: 27th June South: 20th June

Area Visitors Day:

North: 13th June South: 6th June

Community Bible Study International UK
Leaders Conference
20th - 22nd March 2009
Guest Speaker:
Reverend Dr Martyn Atkins
Hayes Conference Centre,
Swanwick, Derbyshire