3 Tips for Bible College  
If You’re Heading to Africa  

By Tamie Davis

Tamie and Arthur Davis are Ridley Alumni living in Tanzania. They blog at meetjesusatuni.com

We’re coming up to 18 months here in Tanzania which is giving us cause for reflection on some of the preparation we did before leaving Australia. We can’t recommend CMS’ 5 month training course highly enough and there were some general things we were glad we did at Bible college. For example, if a ‘mission-y’ essay question was offered in our exegesis courses, one of us did it. That helped us to learn to read the Bible missionally rather than seeing mission as a subset of Biblical themes. Those things are good for anyone who’s heading into overseas missions to do (and I would argue those staying in Australia as well!) but there were three things that we did during our time at college that prepared us well for Africa in particular.

First, we did an Old Testament course called Wisdom Literature. That’s books like Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs – the sorts of books that are a bit more ahistorical, and are harder to fit into an overarching biblical narrative. However, Proverbs in particular is pretty well the bread and butter of Tanzanian preaching, and we’ve found this course in Wisdom Literature to be instrumental in helping us interpret and process the talk of prosperity that is prevalent in Africa more generally. We did stacks of great courses at college that we’ve continued to draw on but this has been by far and away the most relevant and particular to Tanzania.

Second, we spent time with African people. Arthur in particular was involved with Sudanese people. There are things common to African peoples which mean that exposure to one means meeting others is less of a shock. But being involved with the Sudanese community taught us the huge cultural range that exists in that one community — Arthur remembers praying with a group of them with 6 different languages used! We also had a bit to do with an Ethiopian Pentecostal Church and learned that they saw Ethiopia as the country that stopped the spread

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of Islam further south into Africa for many years. From them we started to see particular identities within Africa and how the countries self-identify and interact with one another. It meant we came to Africa already with a strong sense of the diversity that exists both in the continent at large and within each country and community.

Third, we spent time with non-African people. We were part of an international Bible study and got to know Iranians and Nepalese in particular and appreciate something of their cultures. We think that broader cultural exposure has helped us to work against falling into binaries. It’s easy in cross-cultural work for your host country to become the only horizon, and to constantly compare it to your passport country. In a system like that, one is rich and the other poor, one is this and the other is that. They’re either similar or different. However, having more cultural experience in the mix brings greater opportunity to sit with the diversity rather than trying to classify it. I’ve found it good in speaking to Tanzanians as well. When I speak to Tanzanian women, I mention some of the experiences a friend has related to me about the lives of women in Central Asia. All of a sudden, it’s not about the privileged white woman telling the oppressed black women about life, but about us sharing together in sympathy for our sisters elsewhere.
Meet the Faculty:
Scott Harrower

Which are you favourite cities other than Melbourne?

I really enjoy being with friends, so my favouring cities are tend to wherever my friends are. These include Marburg in Germany and Deerfield in Illinois, USA. Both are small towns, have rivers closely, full rich green trees and are dramatically pretty as the seasons change. Deerfield also has snow for about five months of the year which is very beautiful. I also really like Santa Barbara in California from an aesthetic point of view. The oceans and the hills are really close to each other so at sunset and sunrise both the sea and the rocky knolls change colours. The reds, yellows and oranges compliment the greens and blues in the hills and water.

What are you listening to at the moment?

I have a pre-game or pre-running dance/trance mix I listen to. When I am not in “go” mode, I enjoy the “daytime disco” genre. In particular, a Danish/American dup of producers who release work under the name Poolside. Their tacks, such as “Slow Down” and “Do you believe?” make for great remix material, so the fun never ends ….

What do you like about your teaching this semester?

I especially like the fact that I am teaching on history, theology and ethics because they flow together so nicely. History deals with origins, so where we come from and where our beliefs come from. Theology in turn clarifies what our beliefs are, how they relate to each other and what they mean, and ethics on the other hand applies our beliefs (and our identity) to our present situation.

How would you mash up your existence if you could pick and chose realities and characters from TV and movies?

I would live with the guys from the Regular Show, but in the Adventure Time world. We would hang out with Bubblegum Princess and Marceline in the Candy Kingdom. For fun we’d play Lacrosse with the Guardians of the Galaxy and Mario Cart crews. Oh, and we’d visit “lumpy space” with the casts of Community and Moonshiners ….
The first time I read Naomi Reed’s *My Seventh Monsoon* and *No Ordinary View* we were in Tanzania and I spent the whole time laughing and crying just because I could relate so closely with her stories of missionary life, language mishaps and trying to buy toilet paper. At the time these books motivated and inspired me, reminding me why we were there in Tanzania and drawing me back to seeking God’s leading in terms of our future.

*My Seventh Monsoon* traces Naomi’s story from a young girl in Sydney through her journey of university, marriage, physiotherapist missionary in Nepal, back to Sydney, having children, life threatening illnesses and returning to Nepal with her husband and three children. It takes us through some of the season’s in Naomi’s life and points the reader to the knowledge that although there are different seasons in all our lives, God uses them all for his purposes and for his glory. We may not be able to see how or why or what the season is at the time, but God is present all the way through and will make things clear later on.

In *No Ordinary View* Naomi journals the story of life in Nepal during the civil war. Here she finds herself home schooling her children, something she never anticipated she would be doing, with the backdrop of civil war.

With her magnificent story telling, Naomi shares how she learnt to gain perspective on her situation by looking above the everyday circumstances and finding that her hope can rest in God alone, rather than her home, a peaceful country, her family or her identity. This too is an encouraging read and really challenged me to consider what it is that I have been seeking after, and where I find my rest.

If Naomi had left her story here, that would have been enough. These two books take us through the journey of her life, the highs and lows and the challenge of seeking after God throughout. Although they are about Naomi, they left me looking to God, almost as if I had been walking along a journey in a friendship with Naomi and through journeying with her I have been left challenged to walk in the ways of the Lord in my own life.

It was a privilege a few years ago to meet Naomi at a summer conference and spend a few long car trips talking with her. Although I’m sure she wouldn’t remember me, it was really encouraging to meet her, hear her speak and know that there are no pretences in Naomi’s writings. Her books really reflect herself, her own personality.

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So, this week when I saw the sequel to this series *Heading Home* on the shelf at Koorong, I just knew I had to buy it. I took the opportunity to re-read the first two books and then moved onto *Heading Home*.

*Heading Home* re-counts the transition in Naomi’s life from Nepal to Australia. In particular she explores what it means to have a home and to be at home. Although in this book she writes about familiar, everyday life (a contrast to the exciting and foreign scenes in her previous books), Naomi’s reflective and personable style draws the reader in and helps us to relate to her. Not only did this book challenge me in how I relate to my cross-cultural worker friends in their transitions, but as someone who grew up in one house until I was 18 and yet has moved regularly since then, it also pushed me to consider where my hope is and whether I find my home and rest in God.

*Heading Home* also explores Naomi’s journey of beginning as an author and speaker. Her discovery of her gifts and pleasure in telling stories was inspiring and demonstrated that her writing is a natural extension of who she is. It is a joy to read her book and feel as though you are joining with her on the journey of self-discovery in a sense. Learning how God uses all things for His purposes and even in Naomi’s self-doubts (something that I have a constant battle with), God is working.

I am now reading another of Naomi’s books *The Promise*. This book traces the storyline of the Bible through the eyes of women. I have read this before, but after reading about the journey Naomi took as she wrote the book, I decided to read it again as my eyes have been opened to follow the journey through the writer’s heart and eyes. Somehow this has made all the difference (although I may have also been influenced by my recent study of Intro to the Old Testament). This novel, based on God’s promises to His people throughout the Old and New Testaments has just been fun, and a great reminder that God really does keep His promises.

Naomi has published one other book *Over My Shoulder*. I haven’t read this book but as I understand it, it considers how our different personalities impact our work in mission and ministry as we try to ensure that we don’t spend all our time comparing ourselves with those around us. After reading all of these other books, I think I will read this next. I suspect it might be a particularly helpful read for me as I go into a new workplace next year.

So, this week has been soaked in the voice of Naomi Reed, and it has been a joy. I would recommend all her books to everyone, but especially if you love reading stories of people’s lives and seeing how God is working in and through everyday, ordinary people.
Operation World: Mission Maps

Sourced from http://www.gmi.org/files/PrayerMap_OW2010.jpg
I don’t watch many films, but this is my favourite at the moment. Tim Winton’s *The Turning* features 17 short films that each explore the extraordinary turning points in ordinary people’s lives. It is authentically Australian, displaying its coast, community and land. The central episode, titled *The Turning*, is my favourite as a woman turns to Christ. ‘He’s bigger than you Max,’ Rae appeals to her husband. ‘You don’t know him, but he knows you.’ Max beats her worse than before. Akin to our own Passion story, this climax is both repugnant and beautiful. The moment of turning, an indescribable scene, brings hope when everything else seems hollow. This story ends with a faithful embrace.

Some of the short films are excellent, some I don’t get, and some are quite dull. No words are required for much of the film, with the striking scenes and emotions saying enough. The short stories are loaded with meaning and rarely tedious (except for a choreography one). Part of their power is that they leave you wanting for more. Like all good stories the layers are unfolding, inviting many a re-viewing.

The whole film runs for just under 3 hours, so a planned intermission is called for. Each short film has a different cast and director, portraying a different story threaded along similar lines. Apparently it’s easier to notice when reading the book that one character (Vic Lang) is in several of the stories.

This film is human, revealing human-brokenness. It displays the typical grittiness you’d expect of Tim Winton. Redemption is a dominant motif, although never sentimental. Cruelty, regret, innocence and tragedy are all on display amongst the vortex of human relationships.
Lindsay Brown Interview: An Excerpt
By Charlie Foster

In 2012, Lindsay Brown, former General Secretary of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, currently Director of FEUER—a network of university evangelists in Europe—visited Australia in January. Charlie Fletcher interviewed him for Essentials. Here is an excerpt from that interview—see Essentials, Autumn 2012 edition, for full interview.

Lindsay, you’ve been involved in student ministry with IFES for thirty five years in Wales, in Europe, as General Secretary for the worldwide movement, and now in a new evangelism role. What keeps you going in student ministry?

First, it’s the wonder of the gospel. Very early in my Christian experience I came to the conclusion that the gospel was the most wonderful story in the history of the world. I can’t think of anything better. I feel a deep sense of privilege that I’ve been able to give the best years of my life to serving the cause of the gospel.

I think there are three things about the gospel that it’s important for us to keep in mind. First, the gospel is true and defensible. Second, it’s wonderful, and that drives out cynicism and negativism. Third, it’s powerful, and through the gospel lives can be completely transformed.

The third thing that keeps me going is that I love student ministry. Students forgive you easily. In relative terms they’re less cynical than those of us who are older. They’re more open to ideas. Many, especially believers, are teachable. And if God gives you a long life, you can see the impact of the gospel in lives over thirty of forty years, and that’s a great privilege.

The third thing that keeps me going is my understanding of the character of God. He’s sovereign; he’s in control of history and of my personal life. He’s gracious; he comes alongside us and helps us, particularly in times of trial. And he’s good; he has the best intentions for us. I believed those things objectively before the most traumatic event in my life, which was the death of my daughter twenty-five years ago. They came home to me existentially then. I didn’t know why God had allowed this to happen, but I understood that God was in control. I understood that he was not distant, but the gracious giver of every help. And I knew that he was good, even though I couldn’t understand his goodness in the context of losing a child. The Scripture tells me that God is good and that he is a loving heavenly Father who has the best of intentions towards us and has the hope of heaven stored up for us.

What do you regard as the major challenges for student ministry around the world today?

One, ideologically, is pluralism and relativism. I don’t think this will ever go away. Hostility to the uniqueness of Christ will remain with us and we’ll be accused or arrogance, racism and stubborn-mindedness because of our commitment to the uniqueness of Christ.

I think the second challenge will always be to forget to engage in the main thing, which is to communicate the gospel. It would be very easy to concentrate on a wide variety of other ministries. Oliver Barclay told me that university Christian ministry is the only student organization that exists for the benefit of non-members. In other words, we exist for the purpose of communicating the gospel to non-Christians.

You’ve had the opportunity to see student ministry all over the world. From that vantage point, do you think there are lessons in student ministry that the West needs to learn from the rest of the world?

Let me start by saying that I’m impressed by many students I meet who are committed Christians in Australia and in Europe. Sometimes the strongest movements have small numbers but are spiritually stronger. When I ask students from the non-Western world what they have to offer that is missing in Western theology, one of the things they constantly mention is that in the West we have an inadequate understanding of spiritual warfare.

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The second thing that many folk in the non-Western world, especially Africa, can teach us is tremendous commitment to intercessory prayer. Prayer is hard work, and there’s a tremendous dynamism that I’ve observed among many African students particularly, crying out to God. One of the dangers of Western culture in general is that we tend to be highly individualistic and play down the importance of the community. The non-Western world also highlights for us the importance of the community. You see this in Asia and in Latin America particularly. Maybe we need to reflect on how we can form attractive communities. I asked John Stott shortly before he died what he thought were the three greatest issues that people grapple with in the Western world today. He replied that they were engaged in a search for something transcendent, a search for personal significance and a search for community.

The [Third Lausanne World Congress on World Evangelization in Cape Town, 2010] highlighted the massive demographic shift that has taken place in global Christianity. What does that shift mean for the participation of western churches in global mission now and in coming years?

We still have a part to play. The Great Commission is not rescinded. We cannot say there’s no room for us anymore. When we go, we need to work in a spirit of partnership, not in a spirit of colonialism as the task-masters, not in any sense superior. But there is unlimited opportunity for people who love the gospel, have a servant spirit, love people, are humble, and have a desire to see the gospel go forward. We don’t have enough people with those five characteristics available to fulfill the mandate to take to the gospel to the ends of the earth, so there will always be need for those kinds of people.

At the same time, as leaders emerge in the non-Western world in the church, it may be that many of our missionaries will be working alongside or answerable to these leaders rather than taking the initiative as much as we did in the past.

I think it is wise for the church in the West to ask what its peculiar strengths are. It seems to me that Australia has a particularly high level of quality training in theological and missionary institutions, perhaps amongst the best in the world.

Many missionaries from Australia are very well trained theologically, biblically, missiologically. Superficiality is a common characteristic of fast-growing churches in many parts of the world. I think there is great need for Australians particularly, but Americans also, and folk from some parts of Europe, to help in the contribution of training in the global church. That should not mean there’s no room for those who have gifts in evangelism, in pioneering, or other ministries. All I’m saying is that it would be good to concentrate on where the church has particular, obvious discernible strengths at this time, while leaving space for people with particular gifts to exercise them. So I think the area of equipping and training is certainly where the Australian evangelical church has much to contribute globally.
Men, Mateship, Marriage: Exploring Macho Myths and the Way Forward
By Jeremy Watson

Not since Bob Hawke has Australia had a Prime Minister as 'blokey' as Tony Abbott. Both enjoy(ed) publicly displaying their masculinity: the way they walk, talk, joke, yell, drink, play sport and, especially, swim is no 'little thing'! These two men typify this 'macho', 'blokey', 'man's-man' culture (although, the latter has reigned it in since campaigning for PM).

You may not guess it by looking at me, but I identify with this archetype. While most male students at Ridley may be well-cultured, self-aware, sensitive and utterly genteel, not all have attained this position. Some of us come from mono-cultured, less gentle environments where macho-masculinity is celebrated in all sorts of subversive ways.

Yet one of the things I've loved about my time at Ridley is being amongst community - a community that has different values to society. However, for better or worse, Ridley remains a male dominated college. Occasionally someone will comment that all the scholars and experts we read, "Are men!" The majority of faculty, and to a lesser extent the students, are male. The 'agentic' focus on completing assignments individually and the drive required to persevere favours historical masculinity. Even the term ending 'booze-up' or the courtyard nicknames (and mischievous insults) play out this stereotype.

Don Edgar's *Men, mateship, marriage* provides a helpful sociological critique, ultimately arguing that the male-monopoly on power has got to go. Yet, Edgar doesn't suggest a kind of reverse-discrimination. If we realise that many of our gender roles are constructs of socialisation, then we can be aware of the implications if we try to break from the mould. Some changes may be in order, but a college (or church) is never isolated from its surrounding culture. While an organisation may articulate particular goals to undermine traditional male dominance, Australian masculinity is still very much associated with power.

However, I believe its incumbent upon Christians to be especially careful about perpetuating sinful power mechanisms. A theological position isn’t a excuse to not think carefully about existing structures. Where male power is reinforced, masculinity is kept safe in its superiority. Such mechanisms are still apparent within other domains (sport, business, politics, military etc) and have historically been prevalent in the church.

The powerful expressions of 'macho' culture: "be a man," or "stop being a woman" remain endemic. Yet such language or attitudes are insulting and abusive. In contrast, women and men are equally gifted interdependent partners. The goal should be growth and maturity according to how we're made and gifted, focusing on genuine character and personhood. Yet if we’re serious about pursuing empowerment and mutual upbuilding, remember that this will be very different to the structures that surround.
Seen Around Campus…

Kai explores the Library…

Got a photo you’d like to see in the Log? Send it to miriam.dale@gmail.com

CONTRIBUTING TO THE LOG:

The Ridley Student Newspaper is made up of reflections, articles, poems, photos, essays, cartoons, and much more – all contributed by the Ridley Community or its friends. If you have something you would like to write about, an announcement you would like to make, or a picture you would like to draw, please get in touch with Miriam Dale at <miriam.dale@gmail.com> - she would love to hear from you!

Honest to Blog

We are also compiling a list of blogs from among the student body - so if you would like a link to your blog on the Log website or paper editions, get in touch with your details!

EDITOR’S PICK:

Tamie and Arthur Davis’s Blog: http://meetjesusatuni.com/
Elizabeth Culhane’s Blog: http://lizziethinks.wordpress.com/
Chris and Gillian Porter’s Blog: http://www.porterblepeople.com
Student Lounge Lockers

A limited release of spaces in the student lounge lockers is now available for semester two. Rental is $5 per semester, plus a key deposit of $5.

Contact Ben Soderlund for more information: benjamin.soderlund@gmail.com