



# MONTHLY

*July 2019 Issue #124*



## College News



It was great to commence the second semester of 2019 with several new students, both on-campus and online. Martin Williams opened our Tuesday Devotions with a challenging message on spiritual warfare from 1 Timothy 6. It was also encouraging to see many online students join our Devotions via live-stream.

Besides our regular classes, there will be two one-week intensive classes during 26–30 August. Murray Capill will be teaching *The Principles of Preaching*, and Martin Williams, Andrew Stewart, and Karl Deenick will co-teach *Church, Sacraments, and Ministry*. Through various courses, devotions, small group discussions, and events offered this semester, we hope students have a deeper love of the Bible and a stronger commitment to Christ. Please remember them in your prayers that they may benefit greatly from their studies.

We would also ask you to remember John de Hoog in your prayers. On Friday, 28 June, he was diagnosed with bowel cancer and underwent emergency surgery to have a large tumour removed. While the surgery was successful, they were unable to remove some affected lymph nodes. John has made an excellent recovery from the operation but now faces a challenging journey ahead, with chemotherapy to try to restrain the advance of an aggressive cancer. Please join us in praying that John and his wife, Sallee, experience God's grace in a powerful way and that the Lord may be pleased to heal John.

We are very thankful that the Lord has enabled us to secure replacement lecturers for the two units John was scheduled to teach. Alastair McEwen, John's predecessor as OT lecturer at RTC, will be teaching *The Psalter* unit, and Martin Pakula will teach *Old Testament Prophets and Writings*. Martin is a Jewish Christian who has been involved in church and university ministry, theological College lecturing and Jewish mission.

## Faculty News

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Murray Capill will be speaking at St Jude's UniChurch conference from 16–18 August.

Phillip Scheepers is currently travelling in Europe for his study leave, visiting lots of significant Reformation history sites to gather resources and further equip him for teaching church history.

## Events

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In the remaining part of this year, RTC offers three great, annual events:

### RTC Open Day 2019



RTC Open Day is an opportunity for people thinking about theological study to experience RTC for a day. Attendees will:

- join in RTC devotions | (10 – 10.50am)
- attend a sample lecture | (11 – 11.50am)
- hear about RTC from Principal Murray Capill | (12 – 12.30pm)
- share in fellowship at lunch ([please RSVP for lunch](#)) | (12.30 – 1.30pm)

Throughout the day RTC Registrar Paul Lucas will be available to field questions about full-time and part-time study options.

#### EVENT DETAILS

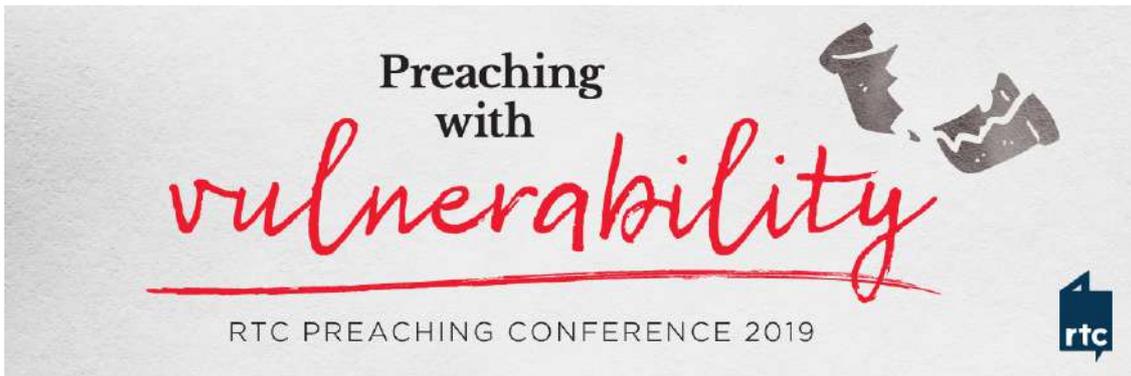
Date: Saturday 14 September

Time: 10am – 2pm

Location: RTC Melbourne Campus; Level 3 221 Queen Street Melbourne.

Cost: FREE

### Preaching Conference: Preaching with Vulnerability



Too many people think their pastor has it all together because that is what it looks like on a Sunday. And too many pastors want to have it all together and be the next evangelical celebrity.

But God has other ideas. He knows that we, as preachers, are frail, vulnerable people, and he has commissioned us to bring good news to other frail, vulnerable people. Only as we accept our own severe limitations can we begin to see God's limitless power at work in the ordinariness of our lives and ministries and the ordinary lives of those we minister to.

This year, the RTC Preaching Conference will explore these confronting but uplifting themes.

We are delighted to welcome Zack Eswine and Peter Adam as our guest speakers. Both men are notable preachers and authors whose depth of thought and richness of experience will ensure two spiritually rich days together.

For more information about *Preaching Conference* please [click here](#).

#### EVENT DETAILS

Dates: Wed 25 – Thurs 26 Sept 2019

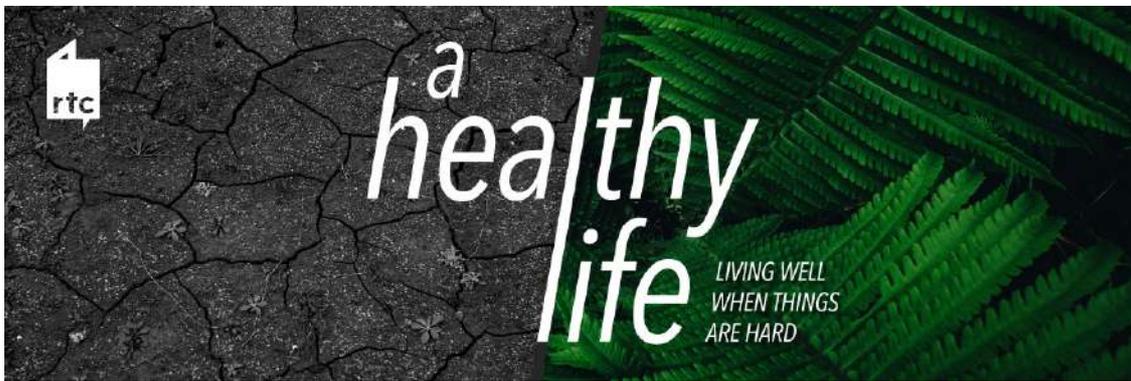
Time: Wed 9.30am – 5.30pm, Thurs 9am – 4pm

Venue: RTC Melbourne Campus; Level 3, 221 Queen Street Melbourne

Cost: \$185 (individual), \$175 (group of 3 or more)

You can also book a package deal with [A Healthy Life: Living Well When Things Are Hard](#) for \$250 per person.

### A Healthy Life: Living Well When Things Are Hard



It would be nice to think that as followers of Jesus we will always lead peaceful, happy, well-ordered and balanced lives. But life is not always like that and the gospel does not actually promise that. Instead, it teaches us how to live healthy lives in the face a thousand challenges. It shows us what it means to live well in the midst of sorrows, temptations and pressures, as well as joys, blessings and hope.

*A Healthy Life* is a one-day conference designed to help us live well, one day at a time. It provides a great opportunity for gospel workers, Christian leaders and active church members to re-focus and recalibrate.

Our guest speaker for the day is author, preacher and teacher Zack Eswine, who brings to this theme a rare mix of wisdom, humility, reality and godly insight.

For more information about *A Healthy Life* please [click here](#).

#### EVENT DETAILS

Date: Friday 27 Sept 2019

Time: 9.30am – 4pm

Venue: RTC Melbourne Campus; Level 3, 221 Queen Street Melbourne

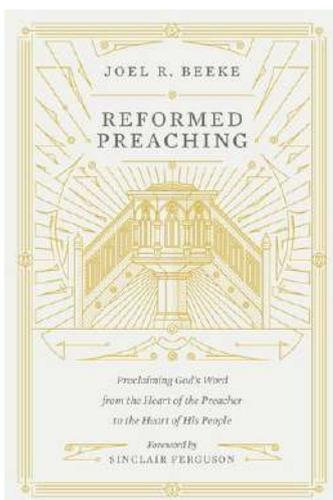
Cost: \$80 (individual), \$75 (group of 3 or more)

You can also book a package deal with the [2019 RTC Preaching Conference](#) for \$250 per person.

For more information about RTC's events, please visit [rtc.edu.au/events](http://rtc.edu.au/events)

## Book Review

by Dr Murray Capill



Joel Beeke, *Reformed Preaching: Proclaiming God's Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People*. Crossway: Wheaton, Ill: 2018. 504pp.

We were privileged to have Dr Joel Beeke speak at an event at the RTC in June. The topic was *Heart to Heart: Preaching that Presses God's Word on People's Lives*. The focus was therefore very similar to his excellent book, *Reformed Preaching*.

In this book, Dr Beeke, President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, provides a tremendously rich resource that draws on a lifetime of reading, research, writing, preaching and lecturing. Beeke's knowledge of

the Reformed experiential tradition is impressive and the book presents readers with a wealth of material on that approach to preaching which, he argues, has been at the heart of Reformed preaching for the last 500 years.

In Part 1, Beeke clarifies what he means by Reformed experiential preaching. It is preaching that “explains how things ought to go in the Christian life (the ideal of Romans 8), how they actually go in Christian struggles (the reality of Romans 7), and the ultimate goal in the kingdom of glory (the optimism of Revelation 21–22)” (25). In these opening chapters he unfolds the essential elements of Reformed experiential preaching, including its Word-focus and Christ-centredness, its concern with the sovereignty of God and the emphases of Reformed spirituality. A further chapter describes the life of the experiential preacher.

In Part 3, Beeke applies what he has written to preaching and preachers today. These final chapters are a fine challenge to preachers to preach biblical truth to the heart. He deals with the need for balance in addressing the objective and the subjective, in speaking of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility, and in holding together the biblical, doctrinal, experiential and practical dimensions of preaching. He again addresses the life of the preacher, as well as diversity in application, preaching the gospel and preaching about both God and man.

The middle section of the book showcases Reformed experiential preaching from history. Beginning with the Reformers and then moving through succeeding centuries, he gives multiple brief sketches of keynote preachers who have modelled various aspects of an experiential approach. His exemplars include sixteenth century Reformers like Zwingli, Calvin and Beza; Puritans like Perkins, Sibbes and Bunyan; Dutch preachers including á Brakel and Frelinghuysen; eighteenth and nineteenth century preachers including Edwards, M’Cheyne and Ryle; and finally two twentieth century preachers, Gerard Wisse and Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

Beeke provides excellent instruction and training in an approach to preaching that is rich and compelling. Preaching that is biblically grounded, doctrinally rich and experientially applied is not merely an historic curiosity but a wonderful way to preach today and a great need of the contemporary church.

As Beeke unfolds this approach to preaching, he necessarily challenges the reader personally. He constantly presses on preachers the great necessity of personal godliness, deep love of the Word, prayerfulness and attentiveness to one’s own heart, as well as pastoral diligence and care for the souls of others.

*Reformed Preaching* also gives a helpful overview of the history of Reformed preaching. Many preachers standing in the Reformed tradition have only a scant knowledge of those who have gone before them, perhaps having had some exposure to the likes of Calvin, Edwards and Spurgeon, but few others. Beeke shows that such men stood in a long line of preachers who adopted not only the same theology but essentially the same approach to preaching. If one has had little exposure to some of the lesser known Reformers, or to the Puritans, or to the Dutch Further Reformation, or the experiential Calvinists of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, this is an excellent brief tour of the history of Reformed preaching. It is also a tour rich in choice quotations from an impressive array of preachers in the Reformed tradition.

Those already familiar with this rich tradition will find this lengthy book warms their hearts, and those new to it will find material that is both instructive and inspiring. The challenge remains, however, to apply the principles of this approach in a contemporary way today. Reformed experiential preaching today should sound contemporary, be highly accessible and interact with the issues of people’s

hearts and lives, here and now. It ought to embody in today's language and culture the principles that drove such preaching in the past. If more preachers learn how to do that today, the church and many individuals will be the richer for it.

## **Ministry Spot: 8 Reasons Why You Should Sing the Psalms**

*by Dr Martin Williams*



When we use the Psalms today, most of us probably only read them and often only a narrow selection of them. But because the Psalms were written not simply to be read but also to be sung, they penetrate the mind and stir the affections as only poetry and music can do.

The Psalms have been the songbook for God's people for some 3,000 years. So saturated in the Psalms were God's people that when Jesus road into Jerusalem the crowds spontaneously greeted him in the words of Psalm 118:26 (Mark 11:9), and when Jesus hung on the cross he burst out in agony using the words of Psalm 22:2 (Mark 15:23; Matt 27:46), and later on when Paul and Silas languished in prison after a severe beating they sang psalms—probably of lament, following the example of the Lord (Acts 16:25). More generally, the Old Testament church or people of God prayed and sang Psalms (1 Chron 16:7; 2 Chron 29:30; cf. Neh 12:24), as did Jesus (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26; cf. Eph 5:1), the early church (Acts 16:25; 1 Cor 15:26), the church throughout history (at least until the 1700s), and many Reformed churches continue this biblical practice today (cf. Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Jas 5:13).

Martin Luther said that “the whole psalter, psalm by psalm, should remain in use.” Of the psalms, Calvin said that “the design of the Holy Spirit, in my judgment, was to deliver to the Church a common form of prayer.” The psalms should be used by every Christian in private, family, and corporate worship. We are not simply to read them but to immerse ourselves in them, meditate on them, pray them, sing them, and allow them to shape the way we relate to God, to one another, and to the world. The Psalms are or great value to the church. Why?

### **8 Reasons for Singing Psalms**

#### **1. The Psalms summarise the whole Bible**

The Book Psalms are a Bible within a Bible, a story within a story. Athanasius (296–373) referred to the Psalms as the “epitome of the whole Scriptures.” Martin Luther called the Psalms “a little Bible, wherein everything contained in the entire Bible is beautifully and briefly comprehended and compacted.” As Tim Keller points out, the Psalms “give an overview of salvation history from creation through the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, the establishment of the tabernacle and temple, the exile due to unfaithfulness, and it points us forward to the coming messianic redemption and the renewal of all things.”

## 2. The Psalms teach good theology

Ambrose (c.339–397) the bishop of Milan said: “The Psalter deserves to be called the praise of God, the glory of man, the voice of the Church, and the most beneficial confession of faith.... In the Psalms delight and instruction vie with each other: we sing for enjoyment and read for instruction.” Basil the Great (330–379) said, “The Book of Psalms is a compendium of all divinity; a common store of medicine for the soul; a universal magazine of good doctrines profitable to everyone in all condition.” Paul writes to the Colossians, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (3:16).

## 3. The Psalms speak to every need

The Psalms are not only a means of doctrinal instruction but are a medicine chest for the soul and a guide for practical living for every situation and emotional condition. John Calvin called the Psalms “an anatomy of all parts of the soul, for no one will discover in himself a single feeling, whereof the image is not reflected in this mirror.” As Carl Trueman points out, “In the psalms, God has given the church a language which allows it to express even the deepest agonies of the human soul in the context of worship.” The Psalms give expression to the depth and breadth of human emotions: loneliness (25:16), love (18:1), depression (42:5); shame (44:15); fear (91:5–6); uncertainty (77:7), anxiety (55:22), awe (18:1), sorrow (31:10), contrition (51:17), regret (38:18), discouragement (42:5), turmoil (42:5), delight (1;2), joy (4:7), gladness (9:2), godly fear (2:11), anger (4:4), peace (4:8), grief (6:7), hope (33:22), brokenness (34:18), gratitude (25:18), zeal (69:9), pain (69:29) and confidence (27:3).

## 4. The Psalms reveal the whole God

“The descriptions of God in the psalter are rich beyond human invention” (Keller). So many worship songs and pastoral prayers offered up in public worship today lack the rich biblical and theological vocabulary that does justice to the God of heaven and earth as he reveals himself to us in Holy Scripture. Compare this with the Psalms, composed by godly men who, carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21 cf. Mk 12:36; Acts 4:25), could not say enough about the majestic God they loved and served. The Psalms speaks of God’s eternity (90:2), immutability (102:26–28), independence (36:7–9), omnipresence (139:7–10), omnipotence (33:9), blessedness (16:11), glory (72:19), majesty (45:3–8; 104:1–2), goodness (136:1), patience (86:15); mercy (25:6–7), justice (7:11–13), wisdom (104:24), holiness (22:3; 96:6–9), faithfulness (33:4), and love (25:7; 103:8).

## 5. The Psalms draw us to God

The Psalms provide us with an excellent pattern showing us how to approach God. The Psalms conduct us into the very presence of the King of kings and bring us before his great throne of majesty and glory and grace (26:6; 43:3–5). The Psalms teach us “to commit ourselves to God through pledges and promises, to depend

on God through petition and expressions of acceptance, to seek comfort in God through lament and complaint, to find mercy from God through confession and repentance, to gain new wisdom and perspective from God through meditation, remembrance, and reflection” (Keller).

## 6. The Psalms bring us to Jesus

The Psalms were not only sung *by* Jesus, but they are also sung *about* Jesus. As someone has said, “they are a heaven-drawn picture of Christ.” The book of Psalms brings our Saviour into clear view that we may see and savour his beauty (27:4). Jerome (347-420) said, “David on the harp and ten-stringed lute, sings throughout of Christ.” George Smeaton wrote, “They depict Christ’s royal reign and His union with His Church; the anointing with the oil of gladness (Ps. 45:7); the receiving of gifts for men (Ps. 68:18); and the supreme dominion with which Christ was to be invested by the Father with a tenderness, unction, and joy to which no other words are equal.”

## 7. The Psalms model communion with God

The Psalms describe in the most intimate terms the experience of communion with our covenant-keeping God. It has been said that “the Psalter is the music of the soul’s friendship with God.” The Psalms show how the church is God’s bride (45:1-17), God’s family (22:22), God’s children (103:13), and God’s flock (95:7). Above all else, the Psalmist desires to be with God, to gaze upon God, and to commune with God in prayer: “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple” (27:4)

## 8. The Psalms promote godly living

Finally, the Psalms stir within believers a deep affection for God’s holy law (see especially Psalms 19 and 119). The psalmist delights in God’s law (1:2), rejoices in it (27:8), treasures it more than fine gold (27:10), discovers it to be sweeter than honey dripping from the honeycomb (27:11), and finds great reward in keeping it (27:11). The true believer loves God’s law and desires to obey it with all his or her heart. The law is a true and faithful expression God’s holy character. God sent his Son to both perfectly keep the law for us and to die under its curse in our place. As a result, we are *set free from* the condemnation of the law and are *set free to* gladly accept it as our guide for pleasing the One who loves us and died for us.

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