



## Wholehearted Disciples...

"You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly." **Joshua 14:6b-9**

Last week, Steve was back in Norway to attend the thanksgiving service for our dear friend, Brit Bolstad who went to be with Jesus last month. The day was particularly striking because it clearly testified to how she had followed Jesus wholeheartedly throughout her life. The same of course might be said of the late Queen Elizabeth II who also passed away this Autumn. Both funerals got us thinking about the theme of wholeheartedness in the Bible and there are plenty of good examples of those who did, and didn't, follow God wholeheartedly!

First a negative example! Solomon at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8 praises God for His faithfulness in keeping His promises to his father David. These promises were part of God's covenant with His people – a covenant that Solomon says required the people's wholehearted obedience to God. However, Solomon himself was not someone who could be described as having served God wholeheartedly throughout his life. Sure, he started well enough, but in time he was led astray by the accumulation of wives, wealth and horses just as God had warned would happen in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Starting well it seems does not guarantee that we will finish well!

However, there are also many in the Bible who we might describe as having been wholehearted in following God. Caleb is explicitly described in this manner. He was one of the twelve spies that Moses sent to explore the land of Canaan (Numbers 13-14). He and Joshua brought back a positive and favourable report of the land and they urged the people to go forth and take possession of it. The report was honest about what they were up against, but they were also expectant that God would deliver them. But they were outvoted by the remaining spies who had come back feeling afraid and inadequate by the task that lay ahead of them. As a result, the people of God spent the next 40 years in the wilderness! Forty-five years later only Caleb and Joshua enter the promised land and Caleb (aged 85) reflects to Joshua about how he had followed the LORD His God wholeheartedly (Joshua 14:9). God had promised him the hill country of Hebron and Joshua is only too willing to make good on this promise. Caleb wholeheartedly and passionately followed the Lord, not only for a period, but over a lifetime.

As we reflect once more on the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ let us also reflect on the challenge presented by the wholeheartedness display by Caleb. 1 Timothy 4:7, Hebrews 12:1-3 and 1 Cor 15:58 all speak passionately about the kind of characteristics required to walk wholeheartedly with God over the whole of our lives.

# Highlights from our ministry

Much has happened since our last newsletter, below is an overview of some aspects of our ministry and some ideas on how you can be praying:

- **Formation School's** was future far from certain following big changes in the leadership at Above Bar Church. Recruitment was particularly slow right up until the 11<sup>th</sup> hour and yet God came through for us and provided a fantastic and very culturally diverse group of 15 students (see photo). *What an encouragement this has been, and we would ask you to pray for the group as relationships continue to deepen and we continue to work through the motivating and challenging content across the Tracks. Please pray too as we begin to talk about recruitment again in the New Year.*



- Our three-week trip to **Norway** this summer was, as ever, a huge highlight for the whole family. It had been three years since our last visit, and we were so blessed with a fabulous international group which at its peak totalled 33 people. It has been particularly encouraging to see how the participants have been meeting up in various countries since the programme. *Please pray for fruit that will last and that we would be able to continue helping and encouraging some of these folk over the years to come. Pray too as we begin to plan and shape content for Norway 2023!*
- We've been encouraged by the continued development of the **Building-to-Last** ministry. We organised another well received **REFUEL II Day conference** in October. Phil Boydell was our key-note speaker and shared on the theme of hope from Isaiah 40. The monthly gatherings have also begun well as we've been interacting on our theme of *Breaking the Mould* based on Matthew 4-11. *Please pray for continued contact with new faces and that we would see continued momentum as we plan towards REFUEL III on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March.*
- Debs' work with mums and families continues to be very fruitful. She would particularly value your prayers for an event called **Christmas Adventure** that she is running on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December for 0-7s and their families. Debbie continues to be busily involved with the **NavMums network**, her **Sunday morning children's group** and the Friday morning **Families Together** events. *Please give thanks for ongoing encouragements from these opportunities to be involved in helping families to live as wholehearted disciples of Jesus Christ.*

## Highlights from the family...

- Ben (~14) is enjoying Year 9 and always seems busy with football or youth activities. Our trip to Norway and his West Runton camp in Norfolk were highlights for him this year. Next Spring he will be choosing his GCSE's.
- Naomi (12) has had a great start to her time at secondary school and has developed some great friends both in and out of school. Naomi has a hamster (Poppy) and a fish tank full of fish.
- Samuel (10) is also crazy about football and all things Tottenham Hotspur. He plays for a team at the same club as Ben. He is now in Year 5 and has some close friends both in school and at church.
- Jacob (8.5) thinks he has just become a local celebrity having starred in the Saints Christmas video alongside James Ward Prowse! Jacob is in Year 4 and has a very active mind but sometimes this keeps him awake at night, and therefore up to mischief!
- Aaron (6.5) is in Year 2 and is desperate to keep up with all his older siblings. Aaron has been developing his skills on the family laptop and we are amazed at times by the things he can do on it at times!



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