

The strategic role of Theological and Bible Colleges in God's global mission

Peter Adam
Ridley Melbourne

1. Foundations

- God wants to call, create, and form his own people, who will be saved by the death and resurrection of his Son, indwelt by his Spirit, taught and shaped by his grace in the words of the Bible, and who will serve him in his world. [‘I will make of you a great nation’ Genesis 12:2; ‘I will build my church’ Matthew 16:18; ‘You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may declare the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’ 1 Peter 2:9].
- God wants his people to grow to maturity in Christ, to the obedience of faith, to bring glory to him, and to do good works of service and ministry. [‘until all of us come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity’ Ephesians 4:13; ‘that we might live for the praise of his glory’ Ephesians 1:12; ‘a people of his own who are zealous for good works’ Titus 2:14].
- God trains up ministers, evangelists, preachers and teachers for four vital ministries:
 - i. To teach, evangelise, preach;
 - ii. To preserve the true and sound gospel;
 - iii. To train up God’s people to be godly in life and mature in faith, and servant-hearted in attitude;
 - iv. To train church members to teach, evangelise, and proclaim the gospel. [‘make disciples of all nations’ Matthew 28:19; ‘give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching’ 1 Timothy 4:13; ‘Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus’ 2 Timothy 1:14; ‘that in everything they may be an adornment to the doctrine of God our saviour’ Titus 2:10; ‘What you heard from me...entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well,’ 2 Timothy 2:2].
- God honours his messengers, and unbelievers and believers alike should welcome them and their ministry. [‘Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.’ Matthew 10:40; ‘Let elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching.’ 1 Timothy 5:17; ‘Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls...’ Hebrews 13:17].

2. Responsibilities and privileges

- Pray that God will raise up many gospel workers to serve in Australia and also overseas. [‘When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore

ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.” [Matthew 9:36-38].

- Encourage people who have the necessary character and gifts to begin preparing themselves, plan to go to College, and set their hearts on being useful servants of Christ and his gospel. [‘Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.’ 1 Peter 4:10,11; ‘provoke one another to love and good deeds’ Hebrews 10:24].
- Share in their ministry by praying and paying for them. [‘Pray also for me, that I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness and mystery of the gospel.’ Ephesians 6: 18; ‘We ought to support such people, so that we may become co-workers with the truth.’ 3 John 8].

3. Obstacles to overcome

- Christianity is simple enough for anyone to explain, and more study only complicates things...
- We don’t need well trained people, so Theological and Bible Colleges are not worth it...
- We need more people doing ordinary jobs in our community, not more people removed from the community...
- We want people to do worthwhile and profitable work...
- We want to make more money, and have a good career structure...

4. Features of our global mission

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is for the whole world. People’s greatest need is to know God in Christ.
- People today are well educated, so we need teachers who know what those people need to know and can answer their questions.
- Engaging with a variety of cultures means that gospel workers need to know what is essential to Christianity, and also how to communicate to people of other cultures.
- English is a common world language.
- Australians make good missionaries.
- We want to take part in God’s gospel plan for the world.
- Jesus trained his disciples for three years to prepare them for their ministry. Gospel workers in Australia and overseas also need to be well-trained and equipped.