

GOOD LIFE MAGAZINE

**THE
FILLING
STATION**

A PUBLICATION
OF THE
FILLING STATION
ISSUE 03
FEBRUARY 2013

INSIDE



FILLING STATION NEWS

What's happening at your Filling Station



FOOD HABITS?

Fuzz Kitto thinks food



ALSO INSIDE

Recipes, Stories, Jokes and more...

SPICE UP YOUR LIFE?

Bob Grace talks God,
Girls and Guitars...

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THE FILLING STATION

Hello & welcome to GOODLIFE MAGAZINE!

'Where is God when I need Him?' A question asked by many of us at various times, particularly when life is hard going. Something we at Goodlife have certainly asked when faced with the harder chapters of life. In this issue, church planter and thinker, Hugo Anson tries to answer this age-old question and give us some 'light for the road'.

We also have the powerful story of how leading rock producer, Bob Grace, had his world 'turned upside down' by God. He wasn't looking in that direction but the Almighty moved in and changed how he views everything – himself, his work, his attitudes, his future. For an encouraging story of how God really is there in all situations turn to page 8.

We are delighted to report so many positive developments happening across the Filling Station network. The view that God seems distant and uninvolved with our lives is not the experience of hundreds of you who attend these monthly celebration meetings. With 31 meetings now taking place each month in three countries (UK, France & South Africa) some 2000+ people are taking up regular opportunities to draw closer to God and reporting back on how much they are encouraged and enjoying the worship, talks and new friendships. You have told us about healings, relationships restored, lives challenged and hope rekindled. Do keep us informed of any stories about what God has done for you and email us on fothers@talktalk.net.

Lets hope 2013 continues in this exciting vein!
Yours,

Richard Fothergill
(Director – The Filling Station)



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Latest News



NICK CRAWLEY APPOINTED SOUTH WEST ENGLAND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Church leader & Bible teacher, Nick Crawley, has been appointed as the FS South West England Associate Director. He will be supporting the 12 FS meetings with guidance, prayer, teaching and encouragement. Nick has led churches in Twickenham, Zimbabwe, Sheffield & Bristol and is a speaker at New Wine.



FILLING STATION SOUTH AFRICA TO OPEN

The first FS on the continent of Africa will open in March 2013. A group from several church backgrounds has joined together to host a once a month Saturday morning meeting at a local cafe called the 'Bush Stop Café' in Vaalwater, Waterberg, Limpopo Province. One team member says: *'We are really excited that we can put on a Filling Station here in the Waterburg. Many people have to travel a long distance to come to church so it's great that we can offer an additional place where they can enjoy worship, prayer, teaching & developing new friendships.'*



PRAYER ACTIVITY GROWING

Over 140 people are now on our monthly prayer network and are involved through regular emails about ways to pray for the nation as well as prayer needs for the FS network. Prayer is one of the key ways in which God influences things for good. We at FS are committed to praying for our neighbours and our country. If you would like to join us in revival prayer please contact one of the FS Directors (see other GL pages for their details).



BISHOP COLIN AT HENLEY FILLING STATION

The Bishop of Dorchester (Oxfordshire) was a guest speaker at the Henley-on-Thames FS in December 2012. The FS is non-denominational but Bishop Colin, as an Anglican, has been very supportive of the network of Filling Stations around the country. More local meetings are planned for Oxfordshire in the year ahead.



WALES JOINS THE FILLING STATION NETWORK

The first FS in Wales opened in November 2012 in the Llandago village hall in the Wye valley, Monmouthshire. People are travelling from all around the area to this new meeting. Leaders from several local churches attend and see it as a really useful addition to the local Christian scene.



NEIL BENNETTS GIVES WORSHIP SUPPORT FOR THE FILLING STATION NETWORK

The leader of worship at New Wine UK, Neil Bennetts, has agreed to help the network of FS meetings in the area of sung worship. Worship is such a key part of every FS meeting so being able to draw on Neil's experience & wisdom is a great boost to the FS network.



WHAT IS THE FILLING STATION?

The Filling Station is a contemporary vehicle for bringing Christian renewal and evangelism to the UK.

Our Biblical mandate is from Psalm 114: 8 'Who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into springs of water.' We see the 'pools' described here as places of deep spiritual refreshment for the existing church bringing water into the hard dry areas. The 'hard rock into springs' represents the new spiritual life that occurs through evangelism.

HOW DOES THE FILLING STATION WORK?

Using monthly mid-week evening 'celebration' meetings held in non-church venues we have seen Christian communities grow in depth and numbers where a Filling Station has been opened. We offer high quality speakers and teachers, contemporary worship and powerful, accessible prayer ministry. Within meetings personal testimonies, led group prayer and networking also takes place.

Our mid-week meetings are designed to be overtly spiritual but presented in a manner that those outside the existing church would feel comfortable in experiencing. Meetings are held on a monthly basis and aim to be short, sharp and focussed in character. We find many people meet God through them and their faith is built up.

The Filling Station is not a new independent church movement, rather a model of how existing churches can work together to bring new spiritual life to their areas and in the process bring many people to faith in Jesus Christ. One of our fundamental principles is to promote Christian unity. As it says in Psalm 133: 1 'How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! ... for there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life for evermore.'

The Filling Station Trust has been set up to facilitate any local group wishing to start a meeting in their part of the world. We can provide human and practical resources, guidance on how to establish a successful local meeting, liaison with your local clergy, background prayer support, prayer ministry training workshops plus tried & tested speakers for meetings.



All a revelation to my taste buds

Tasty, satisfying and enriching.

★ EATING ★ A CELEBRATION OF LIFE



Following the Christmas season when many of us overindulge, we then try to detox at the beginning of the year.... but all too soon... the Easter eggs and chocolate abundance are upon us. Fuzz Kitto gives us another way to look at the joys and values of food and fellowship.

Fuzz is a youth worker, minister, trainer, speaker, writer and coach from Australia, who travels the world collecting recipes and stories. He is writing a cookbook based on food and the conversations that go with particular dishes. He works with churches, youth centers and aid and development groups. He can be contacted on fuzz.kitto@spirited.net.au or www.fuzzkitto.com.au.

I sometimes think that Christmas and Easter celebrations are “eating seasons”! Life is a gift and how we celebrate it is an acknowledgement and affirmation of life. There is an old Jewish Rabbinic School that says, “Eating is a celebration of life”. There is good wisdom in that.

I was 3 when my Grandmother started to teach me to cook. When I was 5 we made a radical move and built a house next door to her and for the first 16 years of my life she was a great influence on me and also one of my best friends. She was a fantastic cook and taught me the basics of traditional Anglo-Celtic food. It was basic but it was well cooked and was an integrated part of the culture I was brought up in. Food was seasonal and dependent on the harvests and we would preserve, pickle and store for the future.

However deep inside me was a belief – even a hope – that there was more than a great boiled vegetable! At high school I made friends with the children of Greek and Italian migrants who invited me home and I would

eat with their families. Their “mummas” were my culinary saviours! They opened my taste buds, imagination and even my spirit to a new world of flavours, styles and possibilities. This was what I had subconsciously dreamt of when I was younger as I had eaten my meat and two vegetables, stews and stewed fruit.

Lamb took on a whole new meaning. Chicken and beef were complemented with herbs and spices, tomatoes and pastas, with lemon and with textures that all seemed exotic and imaginative. I was introduced to new vegetables like courgettes and aubergines which were not just boiled but tossed in garlic and onions and had sauces just for them! The soups were tangy and flavoursome and rich in depth and texture. And that was just the beginning. As Asians from the Indian Continent and the Far East moved in and people from the Middle East and the Caribbean joined our community, my taste world exploded. Curries and cumin, sweet and sour, chillies and peppers were all a revelation to my taste buds. Then South East Asians arrived and I visited their countries and an even wider world of balance of saltiness, sweetness, tangy and sour, crunchy and smooth, hot and cold opened new spectrums of flavours. Now with more and more Africans and South Americans also influencing our cuisine there is a new world of cooking styles that makes me feel like a small child in a toy warehouse. I am excited!

The richer the culture the more special foods are linked to particular celebrations. It is the



My taste world exploded!



RECIPE

Rhubarb & Orange Cake

One of our budding cooks, Charlotte Grant, suggests a delicious tasty cake for the gloomy winter afternoons. Charlotte is studying to be a midwife in London and loves to cook when given the chance!

250g rhubarb cut into 4cm lengths
200g caster sugar
finely grated zest and juice of 1/2 orange
150g unsalted butter
2 eggs
75g self raising flour
1/2 tsp baking powder
100g ground almonds

TOPPING
25g butter
25g light muscovado sugar
50g-slivered almonds
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

INGREDIENTS

Mix rhubarb with 50g sugar and half the orange zest. Cover and leave to stand for 2-3 hours. Grease a 20cm spring form cake tin. Preheat oven to 190 degrees C.

Cream 150g unsalted butter and beat in the rest of the sugar, eggs, flour, baking powder and ground almonds. When smooth (do not over beat) stir in the remaining orange zest and orange juice. Spoon into cake tin and smooth down.

Drain the rhubarb thoroughly then spoon it evenly over the cake mixture. Bake for 25 minutes. For the topping melt the butter in a small pan and then stir in the muscovado, almonds and cinnamon. Spread the topping over the cake once cooked. Reduce oven to 180 degrees C and bake for a further 20 minutes until just firm in the centre. Cool in the tin before turning out. Serve with Greek yoghurt or double cream (or both if you're feeling naughty!)

same with most of the world religions and faiths. Muslims have special food that they only prepare and eat at Ramadan and at Eid Jewish people have foods that remind them of their story in the Passover Meal. Buddhists and Hindus have particular food for the seasons. Jesus takes bread and wine and uses them as symbols of his body and blood and told his followers to eat these when they gathered to remember Him. In fact 'eating' or 'eat' is mentioned 400 times in the Bible; it is a key part to being human and appreciating what has been created.

Food in all cultures has been an integral part of celebrations - births, marriages and deaths, parties and festival

I am interested that we were created with appetites. In fact we have appetites for all the essential things of life. We have appetites for food, for drink, for friendship, for community, for sex and for learning. At the core of us, we have a spiritual appetite that yearns for faith and belief for meaning and identity, for community and hope.

We are stimulated with our senses – seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting. Food entices and stimulates all of these. The creative presentation of great food that invites a “wow!” as it is served, the smell of fresh bread baking as you enter a house in the morning, the sound of meat sizzling on a barbecue and the “glug, glug” of wine being poured, the sticky sensation of holding chicken wings as you eat the tasty sweet meat or the juice of a perfectly ripe mango. Every time I have that first sip of a beautiful rich cup of coffee or the refreshment of a fine tea I think there must be a God to make something so beautiful, tasty, satisfying and enriching.

Of course, at the heart of food and meals is the opportunity for people to sit down and share together. To talk, laugh, discuss, question. Eating together builds relationships. A family meal provides cohesiveness for that family unit. Eating with friends gives a chance for sharing thoughts and experiences and problems. When we provide a meal that people enjoy we serve not only their appetites for food but also their hunger for connection and belonging.

The more we appreciate and celebrate life the more food will be drawn into the activity. The more we eat well and wisely the richer our lives. The richer our lives the more we can appreciate and serve other people. The more we serve other people the more our spirit is enriched and the more our spirit is enriched the more likely we are to discover the meaning of life and the creator of life.

Kids letters to God

HUMOUR



Dear God,
If you let the dinosaurs not be extinct we
would not have a country. You did the right
thing.

Jonathan



Dear God,
We read that Thomas Edison made light. But in Sunday School they
said you did it. So I bet he stole your idea. Sincerely,

Donna

Dear God,
Maybe Cain & Abel wouldn't kill each other so much if
they had their own rooms. It works with my brother.

Larry



Dear God,
Please put another holiday between Christmas &
Easter. There is nothing good in there now.

Ginny



dear god,
if you watch in church on
sunday i will show you my
new shoes.

wickey



DEAR GOD,
I BET IT IS VERY HARD FOR YOU TO LOVE
ALL OF EVERYBODY IN THE WHOLE WORLD.
THERE ARE ONLY FOUR PEOPLE IN OUR
FAMILY AND I CAN NEVER DO IT.

NAN

Dear God,
I went to this wedding
and they kissed right in
church. Is that OK?

Neil

CENSORED

Dear God,
Instead of letting people die and having to
make new ones, why don't you just keep the
ones you've got already?

Jane



Dear God,
I think the stapler is one of
your greatest inventions.

Ruth

Dear God,
Thank you for the baby brother, but
what I really prayed for was a puppy.

Joyce



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Grace Turner on +44 (0)1225 840054

or email: info@treasuresofdarkness.org.uk



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Testimony of healing. Chef Boutonne, France.

I have had a chronic back complaint for a long time. Nearly 40 years my wife thinks. It came in the form of 'freezing up' my lower back and made rotation and standing for periods of time very painful.

I was helping lead worship at the Filling Station in June when I really sensed God was doing something 'physical' with me. One of the team at the meeting prayed for my back injury. I said at the time that this was the first time I had noticed a difference immediately after prayer. That continues to be the case. The healing continues, my spine is now much straighter and I'm able to stand for much longer periods of time than before. I can even bend over in a way I've not done for years!



I praise God for this and thank Him. Also, until that Filling Station meeting, my voice used to 'give out' after, or during sung worship so that often I would have almost lost it by the end of a meeting. Suddenly it is stronger, and I have sung for successive nights, heartily, with no problem at all. Isn't God good!?'

Chris Taylor. July 2012



UNI LIFE

In our last issue, May Clark was getting ready, hopefully, to go to University. Her results went her way and now we catch up with her and find out how she is finding life away from home...

I would be lying if I said that the transition from living at home and doing my A-levels to living independently and studying at university was easy. It really wasn't. All at once I was forced to live with these people who I had never met before and expected to live with them for a whole year. It was scary - leaving the comfort of what I knew to enter a world of new beginnings and new encounters.

I was so excited about starting university; my hard work had paid off and I was going to the university that I had really wanted to go to. I began to count down the days and started packing as soon as I could. I never really thought about the fact that I was leaving behind my parents, my little brother and my friends. It all seemed like a dream, I couldn't believe that I was now old enough to live on my own and have a life for myself. Although as the day came for me to finally move out it suddenly dawned that this

was it, university was now my life for the next four years.

I now live in a flat with sixteen other people whom are all from varied walks of life, all studying for different degrees and all absolutely loving it in their own unique ways. For me, having these people around is vital. Although not all my flat mates are Christian they are all open to it and have asked questions which has led to discussions about my faith, allowing me to share the Bible with them. I have also settled into an amazing Church with a lively student body and with an active Christian Union that supports and encourages each and every student.

But of course it isn't all plain sailing. In fact there have been times when I've really wondered whether university is right for me. That may sound silly, given the fact that I am only in my first semester of my first year but the massive shock of such a big change in managing the academic demands and totally different lifestyle change has been challenging. I found myself getting stressed over assignments and choices I had to make. The amount of coursework I have to do took me by surprise. At times I felt very wobbly and was convinced that I would have to leave university within the first few months. I really needed to hold tightly onto my faith. It wasn't just the work that had me stressed. University students are renowned to be 'party animals' and spending their nights drinking and their mornings hung-over. I found it a real struggle to strike the right balance, personally and academically. To start off with, as the university year began, I went out quite a bit. I wanted to make friends as well as attempting to create an identity for myself.

I have now been able to settle down with a good group of friends and have managed to pass my first semester. It has given me a new perspective on life as well as strengthening my faith, friendships and life choices.



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BOB GRACE

David Bowie. The Spice Girls. Dusty Springfield. What do they all have in common? Answer: Bob Grace. As promotion man and music publisher, Bob worked with many music legends during his 40 years in the music industry.

He helped promote some of the most influential rock albums of all time – including The Beatles' "Revolver" and The Beach Boy's "Pet Sounds". But while he built up other people's careers, Bob's own life was falling apart. The excesses of the industry left a trail of broken relationships and alcoholism. Then Bob found the key signature for his life's symphony when he made Jesus the rock of his life over 25 years ago.

Bob gives talks on discipleship training and is a leader with H.O.T.S. [Healing On the Streets, Bath]. With his wife, Yvonne, he is part of a team of facilitators who run a parenting course in schools and churches in the Bath area called "Love and Logic". He has recently written a book 'Rock Solid' about his life in the music industry.

GL: So Bob, you are well known throughout the creative industry, tell us; how did you get into the music industry?

BG: Well I was a music publisher. This meant involving myself with the business issues and creative concerns of songwriters, who so often are recording artists as well. My father was a very successful agent, and he was my inspiration, followed by my first boss in Music Publishing, Roger Welch (Vera Lynn's brother).

GL: What was it like to work with some of the biggest names in the industry? Was it exciting or more stressful?

BG: It was very rewarding and exciting to work with an unknown or has-been, and share in their success, acts like Dire Straits, Spice Girls and David Bowie. It's the same with all acts, finding someone unknown and then you are with them for a long time before they make it or don't make it. I don't play the lottery but I imagine it's almost like winning the lottery! It's hard to explain, for example seeing Dire Straits in a pub at their tenth gig in a row while they were semi-pro and then it went mad and a few years later seeing them at Wembley. Being involved with that, from nobody wanting to know to everybody clamoring, was exciting. My role was to be a talent scout and find the unknowns and there is a huge amount of satisfaction I

guess in being right but also investing in that relationship.

GL: The music industry is known for being volatile. As a young man how did you cope with that?

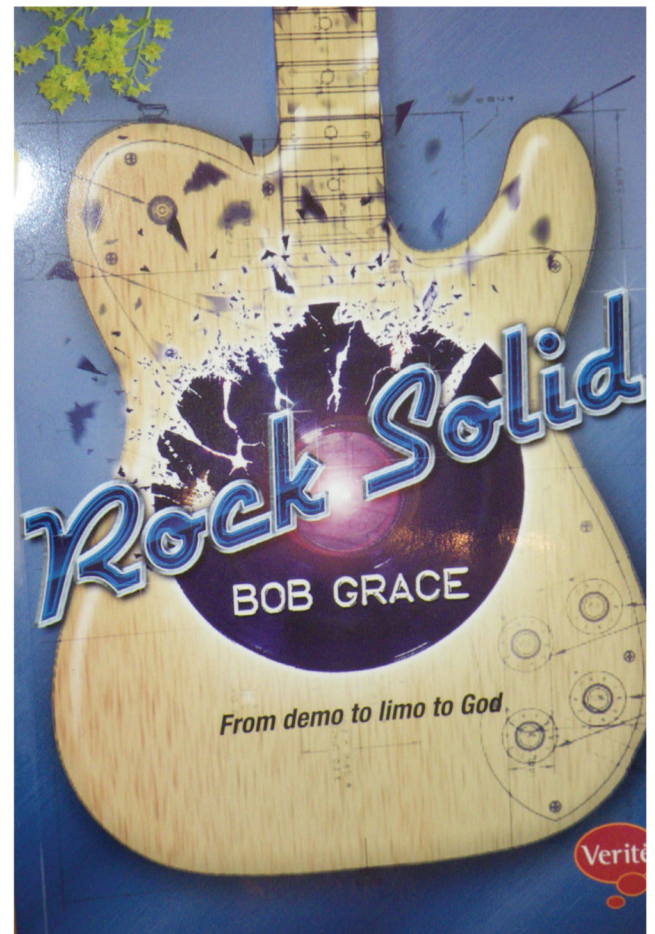
BG: Sadly, I coped in the early years through getting addicted to drink and soft drugs, although it would be inaccurate to blame the music industry for my shortcomings. I later coped with the help of a 12 Step programme to get rid of my addictions and maintain sobriety, and after 1988, when I became a Christian, my whole life changed radically.

GL: When and how did you come to faith?

BG: A fellow musician, Bryn Haworth, talked to me after I decided to try and dissuade him from writing all these Jesus songs. He was signed as a rock 'n' roller, and he walked into what he thought was a circus tent but it was in fact a gospel meeting and he walked out saved! Then all his songs started reflecting that. Then ten years later a good friend of mine knocked on my door and told me how exciting it was being a Christian, and I was like 'Oh, no! I'd rather join the Samaritans'. She said 'no, no! It's really brilliant, I've joined a movement called the Vineyard, come along!' So I went. It was the very early stages of Vineyard and it was actually at John Mumford's house, (whose son is Marcus of



"Within six months I'd met Simon Fuller and he had this act called Spice"



'Mumford and Sons'), in his tiny front room with all these really enthusiastic Christians who were playing badly constructed songs on cheap guitars while wearing socks and sandals. I just couldn't wait to leave! But something obviously happened and I had heard about HTB (Holy Trinity Brompton Church, London) so I thought 'I'll go and give them a go' because apparently their Sunday nights were quite good and there were some pretty girls there and I was single at the time! You didn't want to go out with girls in the music business as they just wanted to meet Rock 'n' Rollers. So I turned up and Rev Sandy Miller, the leader, was just captivating. But I still didn't want people to see me even being in a building like that. Then I found on the Tuesday that I was looking forward to the next Sunday and within a month I was going to the morning and the evening services. Then Rev Nicky Gumbel announced something called the Alpha course. One evening at home I got down on my knees and said "Jesus, come in if you are who you say you are" and at that moment I discovered what it felt like to be in a spiritual tsunami, a wave of the Holy Spirit knocked me from one side of the room to the other, completely overpowering me for what seemed like hours with his presence and love. He cleansed me of any unbelief and doubt. From then on everybody could see the difference. I'd read the Bible and it made sense. Right royally saved.

GL: How did your new found faith change the way you approached your job?

BG: It really helped. I'd stepped aside from the company that I co-owned called China Records and we were doing pretty well with a band called The Levellers. It was very Rock 'n' Roll but my values had changed. I wasn't comfortable with negative marketing campaigns and the music business was a tough world to be a Christian in. I took a new job and hired a second in command, Nick Battle, who was also Christian. We just thought there is no Christian Union for this industry. We started one, called Lamplighters and trawled about twenty people. It was tough because their god was the god of rock 'n' roll, which is rooted in rebellion. After that we both decided we would start praying for the prosperity of our business and praying for the industry. Within six months I'd met Simon Fuller and he had this act called 'Spice'. To cut a long story short, we managed to beat out all the other major companies to sign their exclusive song writing services and ended up signing one of the biggest selling acts of all time in the form of the 'Spice Girls'. Within two years we were number one in thirty five countries with 'Wannabe'. My job was then to stay truthful to my faith in the world of sudden success.

"He walked into what he thought was a circus tent but it was in fact a gospel meeting and he walked out saved!"

QUICK FIRE QUESTIONS

Favourite Film: Gladiator
 Favourite Book: The Bible
 Favourite Food: Ribeye Steak
 Favourite Song: Nothin's Gonna Stop Us Now
 Favourite Worship Song:
 Blessed Be The Name Of The Lord
 Favourite Memory: Birth of my children
 Favourite Quote: Any part of the Lost Glory book

GASSIN' CORNER

More updates as to what is happening around some of the Filling Station meetings. Send us your news as to what is happening down your way!

South Vendee, France

Living and ministering in France for 8 years, 'The Filling Station' is the breakthrough we needed to draw Christians, who had never met each other, together.

We had our first meeting in our barn in October, and it was a great success. Nick Crawley's talk was greatly appreciated by everyone who came as we were very keen to hear God speak. Which He did in abundance!

It became clear that we needed bigger premises. After the meeting, we were offered the use of a very much larger, warmer, and 'homelier' place to meet. One of the guests who came sent us this email:

'After several failed attempts we finally met Chris and Julie on Wednesday and attended our first Filling Station gathering. It was all we had hoped for and more. We have been ministering in western France for 13 years and have longed for 'something more'. On Wednesday we found it. Friendship, family, support, faith, encouragement.'

At our second meeting on November 7th, Don Latham spoke and we saw God moving powerfully. Quite simply, lives were changed. A couple became Christians and people were given new hope. Many received prayer for healing. Some started to exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the first time. We continue to grow in number. Lives are being changed. All we can say is, 'Thank God for the Filling Station!'



Cranking it up at Lossiemouth FS

Teign Filling Station, Shaldon, Devon

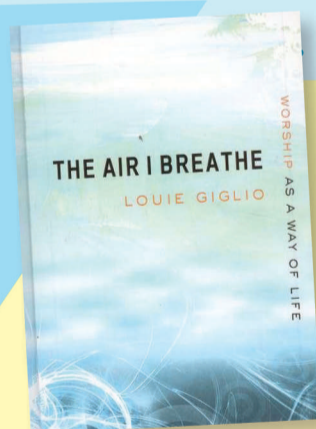
A new meeting has starting on the coast at Shaldon, near Teignmouth, Devon. Meeting in a local primary school a team from the area have come together to offer this monthly FS. They will be holding their meetings on the 2nd Friday of each month. Paul Cloke, one of the host team said this: "We've been praying and thinking about doing some sort of fresh renewal type meeting locally for some months. We heard about the Filling Station at the New Wine Conference in July and just knew this was the thing for us! We hope it will be a regular place of encouragement and support to all Christians in the area." Over 65 people attended the opening night and reported back on how much they had enjoyed it.

Lossiemouth, Morayshire

The Filling Station in Lossiemouth got off to a great start in September with Paul Davies, head of Alpha Scotland, speaking. The evening kicked off with worship led by the local FS team and the event was rounded off with coffee, tea and homemade cakes and speciality shortbread (themed for each month, Christmas saw sparkled shortbread!). Starbucks joined us to serve coffee at the start of the evening. The Lossiemouth FS takes place in a small theatre that has an upstairs café area, making it ideal for an intimate relaxed atmosphere.

We have also had the pleasure recently of welcoming Don Latham, Grant Cumming and, most recently, the Christian comedian Denis Bundy. All the speakers have been excellent although very different in content and style. Denis gave us a stimulating evening of stand-up comedy followed by his challenging testimony that was an inspiration and provoked much discussion among those attending. Each event has been followed by a time of prayer ministry that has become a much-anticipated part of the meeting.

BOOK REVIEW



The Air I Breathe; Worship as a way of life

by Louie Giglio

"Worship is the activity of the Human soul"

Louie Giglio is the founder of the 'Passion' Movement in Atlanta, America and is well known for his ability to communicate and transcend boundaries, making all things theological accessible.

In this short book, he does not disappoint. Giglio approaches a subject matter that divides people up into a plethora of differing opinions with humility and honesty. He discusses the definitions of worship and how it is natural to want to worship as a human. He challenges with quips such as "Everybody Worships something, what captures your attention?".

This book is a fantastic little read, and very easy to return to for reference. His friendly style

of writing, which is very similar to his talking style, is accessible, readable and somewhat comforting and in turn it makes this book very endearing. However, it is important to note this is not an in-depth study, it is more of an exercise in re-positioning, at least it was for me. I would recommend this book to anyone who is looking for a 'refresher' and wants something to engage in without having to set hours aside each night!

Reviewer: Editor Laurence Fry

Multnomah Books
Paperback and hardback
editions available
(also available electronically)

OUCH!

A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT SUFFERING AND GOD

Suffering. What does it mean? It's a word we hear thrown around a lot, but surely there is some rhyme and reason to it? Hugo Anson explores the different types of suffering we can encounter...



Hugo Anson is one of the directors of Grassroots (grassroots.org.uk) – a family of Christian projects in the UK, Africa, India, Eastern Europe and the Canaries. He is a church planter, evangelist and Bible teacher. He has been working to see prayer rekindled across the UK and this year is the Prayer Coordinator for “Crossing London – Mission 2013” (crossinglondon.co.uk). He is married to Sharon. They have 3 children and live in Farnham, Surrey, where Hugo also leads Signposts - a team of local Christians who take assemblies and lead lessons in thirteen of the town's primary schools.

Ouch! A child has just fallen while running across the playground. They have scratched their knee. "Wail!" In their small world the wheels have come off, disaster has struck, life is terrible, and they are yelling "Mummy!"

Each time I see something like this I marvel at the human tendency to see ourselves as the centre of the universe and, as a result, be subject to self-pity. It may be reasonable for a child to feel this way, since they don't have a wider perspective, but many adults behave in a similar way. The moment something goes wrong they cry out, "What are you doing to me God?" I wonder if God thinks this is a reasonable question. Here are a few thoughts:

Suffering is normal

To a greater or lesser degree all human beings suffer. We are mortal and vulnerable. Even though this world has great beauty it is also hostile. Most of us do everything we can to control things around us so that we can be happy and healthy but all of us have to face the fact that this journey will involve some pain. As Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take courage. I have overcome the world!" Everyone suffers. Some more than others but still everyone will suffer.

Most Suffering is unfair

It's important not to overstate this. There is a principle that some suffering is fair and, even if the world isn't fair yet, one day God will make everything fair - assuming his overwhelming grace does not supersede that principle. You will reap what you sow, eventually. But for now, it is often the innocent and weak who are most likely to suffer. Even wonderful, gentle people seem to suffer horrendous diseases. It would even seem they are more likely to - although that is probably more an impression we all get because we are so shocked

when someone we admire is struck by one of these evil sicknesses. Is there something behind this bias to the "good" suffering more than the "bad"? A malevolent, unseen force twisting the way the world should be? Is this God? Is this some other force who wants God to be blamed? Or is it just random?

Suffering has many causes

1. It can be your own fault. Drive too fast and get caught on a camera, and you'll deserve your fine and the three points on your license. Whether careless or deliberate, there is a suffering that is just a reasonable consequence of your behaviour.
2. It can be caused by another person. A person has done something and the consequence is your suffering. In this case the big question is whether what they have done to you is forgivable, or should be punished, or both?
3. It can be a more general "somebody else". Many Societies seem set up in such a way that people



"I marvel at the human tendency to see ourselves as the centre of the universe and, as a result, be subject to self-pity."

do experience injustice or pain. The vast majority of human suffering seems to fall into this category. The big question - often unasked - is whether there is some force behind the scenes that is orchestrating society to be so cruel to so many?

4. If so, should we be blaming Satan, demons, evil invisible forces or what Ephesians 6 calls the "principalities and powers"? Christians may have a habit of blaming too much on this cause, but those who are not Christian almost certainly blame it too little.
5. Ultimately we also have to ask whether God is the cause - whether directly or indirectly. And if God is behind some (or all) suffering is he justified in being so? After all if God is making someone suffer who deserves to suffer that could be thought of as a good thing. But undeserved suffering, surely God wouldn't make that happen?

Suffering is affected by theology

A few years ago Sharon (my wife) was speaking to some theological students and told them the story of our middle child's history of serious sickness since he was born. One student asked her, "Don't you think God may have given you this hard situation in order to teach you something?" Sharon said, "No. I don't believe that our God, as revealed in Jesus, would torture my child to make me a better person. A good father wouldn't do that kind of thing." Sharon's theology was impacting how she dealt with the situation and how she related to God. I've always wondered how anyone could relate to a God who they understood to be loving but who they believe would also torture us or our children in order to improve us. Apart from being a contradiction in terms I think it would feel like having to hug a parent who was continually abusing you!

Another example of how theology affects suffering is found in the Christmas story. Joseph is told that his fiancée, Mary, is pregnant. He feels betrayed! He seems to go calm and start working to minimise the impact and find a way to continue life. His was a classic response to suffering. But then he has a dream. In the dream he is told that Mary is pregnant "by the Holy Spirit". After the dream his theology has changed. Not just academically but in a very practical and specific way. He now believes that the baby inside Mary is God become human. He doesn't just believe God could do such a thing - which is merely theoretical theology. He believed God had done it! In his family! In his wife! Not just in history, but NOW! He is still suffering - because his family and neighbours are rejecting him - but now it is all worth it.

It is interesting that Joseph, prior to the dream, was asking, "What should I do?" In response he came up with two answers: (1) do what the law (i.e. The Bible) says, and (2) be as loving as possible. He set out to be good and generous. But if he had acted on those principles alone he would have done completely the wrong thing!

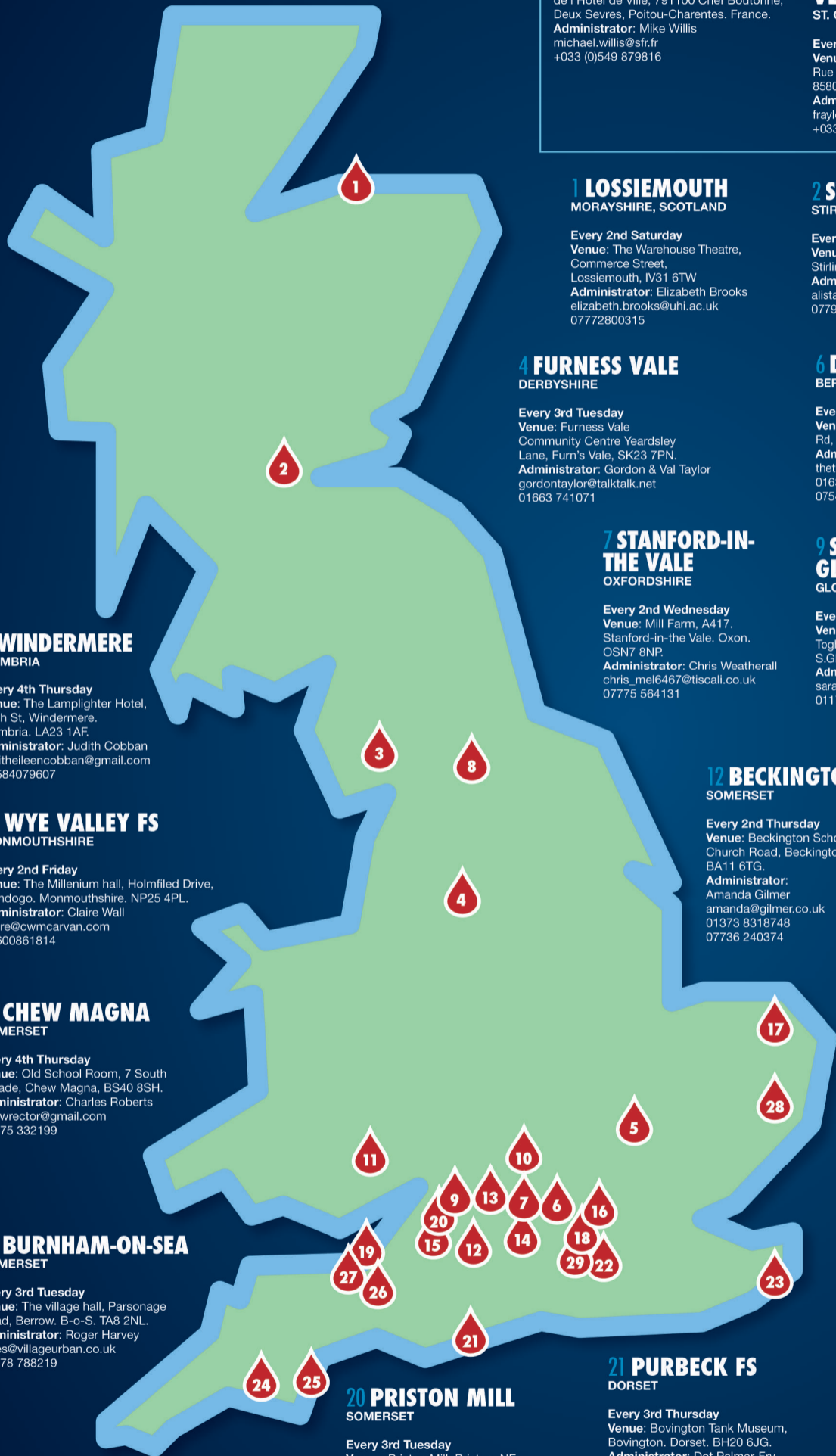
Instead, he should have been asking, "What's going on here?" Once he found out what was going on, his theology changed, his suffering felt worth it, self-pity fell away and he was free to act with purpose and destiny.

Maybe there's a lesson there for all of us?



THE FILLING STATION

LOCATIONS



INTERNATIONAL FILLING STATIONS

CHEF BOUTONNE DEUX SEVRES, FRANCE

Every 2nd Thursday
Venue: The Little Stone Church, 14b Ave de l'Hotel de Ville, 791100 Chef Boutonne, Deux Sevres, Poitou-Charentes. France.
Administrator: Mike Willis
michael.willis@sfr.fr
+033 (0)549 879816

VENDEE NORTH ST.PIERRE DU CHEMIN, FRANCE

Every 2nd Wednesday
Venue: St.Pierre du Chemin. Vendée, France.
Administrator: Chris Taylor
christopher.taylor85@orange.fr
+033 (0)251 507559

VENDEE SOUTH ST. GILLES CROIX DE VIE, FRANCE

Every 2nd Tuesday from April 2013
Venue: Espace de Notre Dame de la Vie, Rue Gautté, St. Gilles Croix de Vie, 85800. Vendée. France.
Administrator: Roger & Beri Fray
fraylesnot@sfr.fr
+033 (0)2513 32781

VAAIWATER LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

Every 3rd Saturday Mornings
Venue: various locations around Vaalwater, Waterberg. Limpopo.
Administrator: Shane Dowinton
horizonranch.shane@yahoo.co.uk
+027 (0)734302827

Several other locations are at various stages of enquiry about setting up a Filling Station meeting. Look at the website: thefillingstation.org.uk for the latest updates.

1 LOSSIEMOUTH MORAYSHIRE, SCOTLAND

Every 2nd Saturday
Venue: The Warehouse Theatre, Commerce Street, Lossiemouth, IV31 6TW
Administrator: Elizabeth Brooks
elizabeth.brooks@uhi.ac.uk
07772800315

2 STIRLING STIRLINGSHIRE, SCOTLAND

Every 3rd Tuesday
Venue: Café Nero, King Street, Stirling, FK8 1AY
Administrator: Alistair Cowper
alistaircowper@talktalk.net
07791524504

5 GREAT OUSE BEDFORDSHIRE

Every 3rd Monday
Venue: Moggerhanger Pk, Moggerhanger, Bedfordshire, MK44 3RW
Administrator: Jo George
jojogeorge@btinternet.com
07840540271

4 FURNESS VALE DERBYSHIRE

Every 3rd Tuesday
Venue: Furness Vale Community Centre Yeardsley Lane, Furn's Vale, SK23 7PN.
Administrator: Gordon & Val Taylor
gordontaylor@talktalk.net
01663 741071

6 DOWNLAND FS BERKSHIRE

Every 2nd Thursday
Venue: The village hall, Newbury Rd, Hampstead Norreys, W.Berks.
Administrator: Gilly Hudson
thetwiglets@yahoo.com
01635 578 525
07544 306 888

8 WENSLEYDALE FS YORKSHIRE

Every 2nd Friday
Venue: Thornborough Hall, Moor Road, Leyburn, N.Yorks. DL8 5AB.
Administrator: Mike Hirst
mikehirst3@gmail.com
01969 667841

7 STANFORD-IN- THE VALE OXFORDSHIRE

Every 2nd Wednesday
Venue: Mill Farm, A417, Stanford-in-the Vale, Oxon. OSN7 8NP.
Administrator: Chris Weatherall
chris_mel6467@tiscali.co.uk
07775 564131

9 SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Every 4th Wednesday
Venue: The village hall, Toghill Lane, Doynton, S.Gloucestershire. BS30 5SY
Administrator: Sara Layen
sara@layenread.myzen.co.uk
0117 303 9095

10 WITNEY OXFORDSHIRE

Every 2nd Wednesday
Venue: 'Open Doors', Cotswold Business Park, Range Road, Witney, OX29 0YB.
Administrator: John Hughes
johnandannie@gmail.com
07817465996

3 WINDERMERE CUMBRIA

Every 4th Thursday
Venue: The Lamplighter Hotel, High St, Windermere, Cumbria. LA23 1AF.
Administrator: Judith Cobban
judithleencobban@gmail.com
07584079607

11 WYE VALLEY FS MONMOUTHSHIRE

Every 2nd Friday
Venue: The Millenium hall, Holmfild Drive, Llandogo, Monmouthshire. NP25 4PL.
Administrator: Claire Wall
claire@cwmcavan.com
01600861814

12 BECKINGTON SOMERSET

Every 2nd Thursday
Venue: Beckington School, Church Road, Beckington, BA11 6TG.
Administrator: Amanda Gilmer
amanda@gilmer.co.uk
01373 8318748
07736 240374

13 CIRENCESTER GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Every 4th Wednesday
starting April 2013
Venue: Royal Agricultural College, Stroud Road, Cirencester. G17 6JS.
Administrator: Jill Kingston
kingsjill50@gmail.com
07798830287

14 MARLBOROUGH WILTSHIRE

Every 3rd Wednesday
Venue: St Peter's Primary School, The Parade, Marlborough, SN8 1LQ
Administrator: Helen Stokes
hcestokes@gmail.com
01672 516592

15 CHEW MAGNA SOMERSET

Every 4th Thursday
Venue: Old School Room, 7 South Parade, Chew Magna, BS40 8SH.
Administrator: Charles Roberts
chewrector@gmail.com
01275 332199

16 HENLEY-ON- THAMES OXFORDSHIRE

Every 1st Wednesday
Venue: Badgemore Golf Club, Badgemore, Henley on Thames, Oxon. RG9 4NR.
Administrator: Sarah Moberly
(ask for 'Maggie')
sarah@moberlys.net
07875203409

17 NORTH COAST NORFOLK

Every 4th Monday
Venue: Swanton Novers village hall, Near Holt, Norfolk, NR24 2RB.
Administrator: John Pugh-Smith
john.pugh-smith@39essex.com
07785 716272

19 BURNHAM-ON-SEA SOMERSET

Every 3rd Tuesday
Venue: The village hall, Parsonage Road, Berrow, B-o-S. TA8 2NL.
Administrator: Roger Harvey
sales@villageurban.co.uk
01278 788219

22 GODALMING SURREY

TBA
Venue: The Barn, Borough Farm, Milford, Surrey. GU8 5JY.
Administrator: Caroline Chrispin
carolinechrispin@googlemail.com
01483 810585

18 BASINGSTOKE HAMPSHIRE

Every 4th Wednesday
Venue: The URC Hall, London St, Basingstoke. RG21 7NU.
Administrator: Mark Bedford
mdwbedford@gmail.com
01256 320193

20 PRISTON MILL SOMERSET

Every 3rd Tuesday
Venue: Priston Mill, Priston, NE Somerset, BA2 9QE.
Administrator: Debbie Pow
debbie.pow@btconnect.com
01225 421985

21 PURBECK FS DORSET

Every 3rd Thursday
Venue: Bovington Tank Museum, Bovington, Dorset. BH20 6JG.
Administrator: Dot Palmer-Fry
mikendot10@gmail.com
01305 853158

23 STELLING MINNIS KENT

Every 3rd Tuesday
Venue: Stelling Minnis Primary School, Stelling Minnis, Kent, CT4 6DU.
Administrator: Nick & Heather Ratcliffe
ratcliffe.owl@btinternet.com
01227 738537

24 HORRABRIDGE DEVON

Every 4th Friday
Venue: The village hall. Station Rd, Horrbridge, Devon, PL20 7SS.
Administrator: Diana & Les Wood
woodonthemoors@googlemail.com
01822 854877

25 TEIGN FS DEVON

Every 2nd Friday
Venue: Shaldon Primary School, Shaldon, Nr Teignmouth, TQ14 0DD.
Administrator: Mary & Jim Townsend
townsend@madasafish.com
01626 770986

26 MIDDLEZOY SOMERSET

Every 4th Sunday
Venue: The Methodist Chapel, Church Road, Middlezoy TA7 0PA.
Administrator: Keith Powell
jill.powell3@googlemail.com
01823 698999

27 WIVELISCOMBE SOMERSET

Every 4th Tuesday
Venue: Wiveliscombe school, North Street, Wiveliscombe. TA4 2LA.
Administrator: John Osborne
john@choice2.net
0753577809

28 WAVENEY VALLEY FS SUFFOLK

Every 3rd Thursday
Venue: Various locations in the Waveney valley area. See website.
Administrator: Raphe Palmer
enquiries@gablesfarm.co.uk
01379 586355

29 FARNHAM SURREY

Every 3rd Friday
Venue: 'Farnham Working Men's Conservative Club Company', Ivy House, Ivy Lane, Downing Street, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7PQ.
Administrator: Raphe Palmer
raphe_palmer@tiscali.co.uk
07770833772