

# *Coutryserue Newsletter, December, 2009*

## *from Neil and June Pratt*



A 1st Century sower



and a 21st Century air-seeder

Jesus Christ has commissioned His Church to sow “the seed which is the Word of God.” In this case the harvest is assured. How well are we doing? Paul said: “I have planted, Apollos watered, God has given the increase.” The seed is all-important – Jesus says: “The seed is the Word of God.” For Him, the meaning was, and is, unambiguous. He is referring to the Word of God written, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments which have been brought into being by divine intervention. They are the unique and sufficient revelation from God and tell us all we need to know in order to receive His forgiveness and salvation. They equip us to live fruitful, God-honouring lives. They are the standard by which we can test all our personal and group activity, our motives and behaviour, our thoughts and relationships.



Wherever the Bible is faithfully explained and properly applied there is spiritual life and faithful service. As people begin to understand God’s great salvation-plan, and embrace it for themselves, they are likely to share it with others. People are excited to go to church on Sundays. They expect God to speak to them personally every time they go. To them, nothing is more important than their personal relationship with God the Father through His Son Jesus.

### THANKS and REQUESTS

Join with us in thanking God for His mercy and compassion for a fallen world. Although humanity has rebelled against the Creator, He has not given us what we deserved, but sent His Son as Saviour of the world. Throughout this year the Lord’s people have been sharing the gospel with those around them and many have come to know the Lord. It is a high privilege to know God as “Our Father”, and to realise that we are His children by adoption and grace. Thank the Lord for the assurance that nothing can separate us from His love (Rom 8).



Men’s Breakfast

There is continuing, full drought in three quarters of NSW. Most country folk take it in their stride and regard “global warming” as a result of burning fossil fuels, etc etc as mythology. Widespread crop failures and diminishing supplies of water and grass have had severe effects. Some have realised that they needed to turn to the Lord in repentance and faith. Faithful Christians have been taking opportunities to reach out to those around them and share their faith.

Serious thought must be given to the future of churches in rural areas, esp. those in towns of less than 10,000 population. New initiatives are needed . . . and working. Independent evangelical churches are reaching many people who have no church background. Men who never go to church are regulars at shed meetings and men’s breakfasts, Migrants of various cultures and religions are being introduced to Jesus in home meetings. University chaplaincies are sharing the gospel with young men and women studying for their degrees. Churches with trained preachers are sending them out to smaller struggling congregations. Some do many miles on a Sunday to ensure that Word ministry continues. Much more can be done. Thank the Lord for the

expanding mission and the changing of lives. Ask Him to open our eyes to the opportunities that exist, and for wisdom and strength to share the love of Christ with those around us. Are you and your church able to give (extra?) support to those who need help?

Many rural congregations are small in number. Some city Christians might think that is a disadvantage, but it can actually prove to be a blessing. If its leaders are wise the small church will concentrate on doing one thing well. In services and Bible Studies the living Word of God will be accurately explained and carefully applied. The benefits of such ministry are incalculable. Many a person has come to faith in such a congregation. Like the Thessalonians of old, the Christians have excelled in faith, hope, and love, and had a marked influence on those who have joined their ranks. Thank the Lord for the small Christ-centred fellowships that teach the Word.

You, our supporters, are mission-minded. For that, we thank you, and we thank the God of the harvest. One of our main tasks is to encourage pastors and others to keep sowing “the good seed.” There are many distractions and alternatives.

The Lord shows mercy and compassion to those who are lost, and continues to send out messengers of salvation. In recent years, hundreds of keen young men and women have been trained and equipped in Australian Bible colleges and ministry training initiatives to go out into the world sowing the seed. Already the harvest is being gathered in. Established congregations are growing and new congregations are starting from scratch, as they continue Jesus’ mission (Mt 16;18). Across Australia, and around the world, thousands are preparing to be pastors of new churches. Thank our great God for what he is doing ! Please pray that the Lord will raise up many more (Mt 9;37-38). Ask Him to keep them faithful to His written Word in their personal and family life, and in their ministries. Pray for the people in their churches that they will have discernment and understanding, a “can-do” mentality, and be committed to the right kind of change as a matter of principle.

June and I very much appreciate your support for us, whether through interest, prayer, finance. The three recent trips have been good ones with new contacts made and many worthwhile conversations. After listening and discussion, I always make a point of sharing the Scriptures, and spending time in prayer. The Lord continues His work out there and we look to Him for the great and final harvest (Mt 24;30-31). He must have all the glory and the praise!

## THE FUTURE

As Christmas approaches, we are again reminded of the miracle of God’s mercy. The Father sent His Son to save us from our sins and grant us eternal life. Born in Bethlehem, an obscure village, He grew up in Nazareth another tiny rural settlement. Much of His ministry was spent in the towns and villages, the hills and plains of Palestine. He had no “official” recognition. Indeed, the very religious leaders who should have welcomed His appearing, opposed Him from the outset. But the Saviour encouraged His followers to look to the future. On the eve of His crucifixion our Lord shared with His disciples the bread and the cup. He had in mind his coming death. But that was not all. He said: “I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.” (Mt 26;29). The Lord’s return was signalled in Paul’s reference to the Lord’s Supper: “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” (1Cor 11;26). At this Christmas time as we celebrate His first coming into the world, let us draw strength and inspiration from the certain promise that He will come again.

We look forward to the New Year and continuing in our ministry. We pray that the Lord will bless you in your service for Him, and would like to leave you with that great statement in 1Cor 15;57-58 . . .

*“. . . thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”*

Neil and June