



Ridley Log

MINISTRY COMPETITIVENESS

Shebu John

I'm not sure if you have heard of the name Joseph Hachem. In 2005 he became the first Australian to win the 2005 Poker World Series. Up till then, poker probably was not something that was shown in the sport's highlights each week. But when an Australian was in the finals, and might even become the world champion, everyone was interested. It was like Australia VS the world.

We as Aussies are competitive at heart. We can't help it.

A few years ago- okay *many* years ago - when I was young and a bit more athletic - okay tried really hard and they needed a sub - I loved to play basketball. We played in a 'Christian league'. We had great dreams, to build a team both for fitness, social and relational needs, or, as it was hipster back then, do the whole 'incarnational evangelism' thing. That lasted about 4 weeks.

It soon became about winning. We even planned to pray before every game. Then, it was like we asked Jesus to leave the building once the whistle blew, as we played against other 'Christian teams'. The competitiveness came out and before we knew it we were arguing, playing aggressive, the wrong kind of aggressive, and playing to win. When the last whistle blew each team would go and give the token handshake. In reality we were either jealous because they won, or prideful because we won.

Sadly I see this in ministry, in particular in our Australian context. On the surface we do the handshake at the end of the game, all nice and cordial but when the game is on, competitiveness seeps out. This has even come into my heart. It's terrible. It's destructive and it is against the Gospel. Let me clarify. In Philippians 1:27-28 (ESV) it says, "[27] *Only let your manner of life **be worthy of the gospel of Christ**, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are **standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel**, [28] and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.*" These verses reminds me that in ministry my life needs to reflect the Gospel and one of the best ways to reflect that is in standing firm in ONE spirit with ONE mind striving SIDE BY SIDE (NOT THE COLLINGWOOD FOOTY TYPE SIDE BY SIDE). It's a beautiful picture and a reminder that our enemy is not each other but those against the Gospel.

I have noticed ministry competitiveness can show its ugly head in some of these ways:

- 1: Not sharing of resources, or being unwilling to use good resources from other Christian tribes because we would rather do it on our own. It becomes about building our own kingdom, not God's.
- 2: We are cynical when brothers and sisters are doing well. We questioning their methods, trying to look for a chink in their armour, so we can drive the arrow and dart of jealousy

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further in.

3: We keep to our own. We find ourselves not engaging with other evangelical tribes to learn from them and serve alongside.

4: We openly attack via Facebook, twitter or blogs, or in those conversations with 'like minded' people.

5: Everything we do is a secret for the wrong reasons, driven by fear that someone else might 'steal' our idea.

6: Pride drives our entire ministry rather than the Glory of God.

7: We find it hard to recommend or suggest ministries that are better than ours.

Why

I think one of the main reasons we let competitiveness come into our ministries is because we have lost sight of Jesus heart for his followers. It's not to build our Kingdom, but His. In John 17, one of my favourite prayers of the Bible, Jesus prays for his disciples and for us. The key term, ONE. United. In unity we glorify God, in unity we display Christ work, in unity we display God and in unity we show God's heartbeat.

I think that when we view ministry in light of Jesus and his prayer, there is no room for us to

be competitive. We are forced to seek humility and look for ways to be one and see God glorified.

How

Some questions to consider:

1: Are you competitive when it comes to ministry? Ask God to forgive and change your heart.

2: Bless ministries that are better than yours. If you are lead a ministry, maybe pray for the other ministries by name when you gather with your team. Maybe even during your prayer time on a Sunday. This models a big picture of God's kingdom.

3: Ask God to remind you it's not about your kingdom but about His.

4: Ask God to change your heart to celebrate the victories of fellow co-labours.

5: If opportunity comes pray with those who are from different evangelical tribes.

6: If you are training people expose them to ministries better than yours.

7: Ask God to remind you of your identity in Him, so you learn to kill the false identity found in ministry.



MEET THE FACULTY:

Ken Barnes

1) How would you describe yourself in five words?

Getting old but still useful

2) How would you describe your role at Ridley?

My role as Dean of the Marketplace Institute is to help create a Ridley “centre of excellence” devoted to “bridging the Sunday / Monday divide”

3) How did you “get into the God stuff” (i.e. become a Christian)?

I became a Christian due to the influence of three women. The first was my mother who was a devout Christian and prayer-warrior. The second was Pricilla Pearce. At age 12 I had a crush on her and attended a Bible camp in order to be near her. I came back from the camp without Pricilla but with a Bible. Reading it faithfully every night changed my life. The last is my wife Debby whose love for Christ inspired me to study theology. The rest as they say is history.

4) What has been a challenging experience in the past year?

“Commuting” between Oxford and Melbourne hasn’t been easy, but believing that God has called me to do this work has helped me cope with the “tyranny of distance”.

5) What has been a life-giving experience in the past year?

The rhythm of life here at the college. Regular chapel services, meals with students, quality time with faculty, are all things I miss at Oxford University and things that I cherish here.

6) What is the one thing you would want Ridley students to graduate knowing?

As a Jewish friend once taught me: “if you want to make God laugh, tell him YOUR plans!” We all think we know what God is calling us to, but God has a way of revealing new opportunities that we never thought possible. Keep watch for those opportunities. Ours is a God of surprises!

7) Which fictional literary character would you most like to meet?

Rhett Butler

8) What was the best decision you ever made? (Aside from becoming a Christ follower, of course).

Proposing to my wife. Whether saying “yes” was her best decision however, remains to be seen.



Logos & Accordance

Electronic Bible Software

Kevin Vo

(Based upon the Logos & Accordance Seminar presented on Ridley Launch Camp)

What is Logos and Accordance?

They are currently the two most popular electronic Bible software (the third is Bibleworks). They allow you to have your Bibles, dictionaries, commentaries, original language aids, and other Christian books on your computer, tablets, and smart phones.

Do you need it?

Logos and Accordance usually involves a significant financial element, and thus one needs to ask if there are other resources out there which are free. A few things to consider:

- ☒ Bible Web App (<http://biblewebapp.com/reader>)
 - Free English and Greek text which allows instant parsing. You can also make it so that the verbs show up a different colour to the nouns, to help beginning Greek students practice their reading.
- ☒ Bible Gateway (<http://www.biblegateway.com>)
 - A massive online source of resources, from Bible translations to commentaries.
- ☒ Ridley Library:
 - Has all the books that you need!! Might as well make use of it as part of your college fees probably go towards maintaining it and buying new books anyway.

Benefits of Accordance & Logos:

The biggest and main benefit is convenience. All of your library is in digital form, available on your laptop, or your iPad (or even smartphone!). Even one theology textbook is big and heavy, but is small and light in digital form. Thus you can have your whole library with you everywhere you go. Furthermore you can never lose these books. Even if you lose your laptop, you can just redownload these books when you get a new one (the books are tagged to your account).

The second biggest advantage is speed. For original language work, electronic resources hands down win. Instant parsing, instant lexicon word look-up, even instant concordances! If you want to be using original language in your ministry (or even personal devotions), then I strongly suggest you invest in electronic software.

One extra thing I want to add, is that I really like how the bible verses or referencing are hyperlinked in the books, and thus you just have to hover your mouse over it (or touch it if you're on tablets/smartphones) and it'll show up instantly. This means you don't have to constantly switch from your book to your bible every time it cites a bible verse. Nor do you have to turn to the back of the book to see every reference. These features alone make it easier to read than in real paper form.

Disadvantages of Accordance & Logos:

Many people cannot stand reading on computer screen. However I will say that with the retina-screens of modern tablets, reading is much much easier. Yet it will never match the ease of reading an actual book on real paper.



Another big disadvantage is that you cannot lend your books to people, unless you give them your whole iPad. Just something to consider when buying books. At the moment, for the books which I think I would lend to people in the future, I buy in paper form. Otherwise everything else goes digital.

Logos or Accordance?

The short answer is that either will work well (both are available on Mac and PC now). They are slightly different, so whichever you choose you will have to spend time learning how to use it. And that is the key. Many people buy these products but spend no time learning how to use it. Then they just can't be bothered using it anymore, and thus waste their money.

For me, I believe that Accordance is so much faster, and thus is much better for original language work. Logos, on the other hand, is a much better reader. Furthermore Logos does not require you to buy any package, and thus you can just download their free program, and then buy the books you want. Therefore I use both Logos and Accordance, and just buy the books I need when they're on sale, whether on Logos or Accordance. This allows me to have the best of both worlds.

A Book Review: *Facing Leviathan* by Mark Sayers

**Tim
Collison**

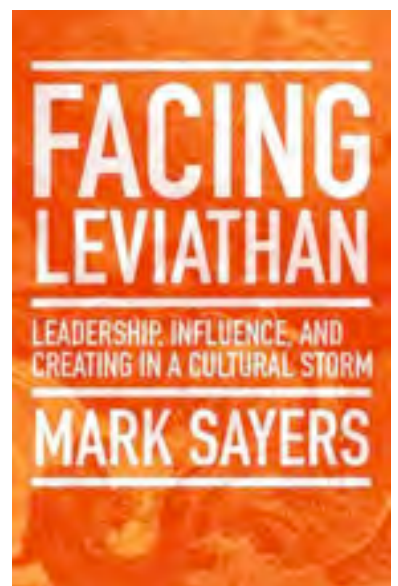
I could happily listen to Mark Sayers talk for hours. He is a thinker who engages well both with culture and how Christians should be interacting with it. His new book, 'Facing Leviathan' is an examination of leadership, and particularly Christian leadership in today's culture.

In 'Facing Leviathan' Mr. Sayers is attempting to show a way forward for Christian leadership. He examines Christian leadership and finds it tends to fall into two categories, which he divides into 'Mechanical' and 'Organic.'

As is usual to his method Mr. Sayers uses historical events and Biblical narratives as motifs to structure his argument around; in this case 19th century Paris and the story of Jonah form his primary structure around which he builds his case. It is an effective method and seems to have captured the zeitgeist of many people in our culture wishing to "...influence, but not many of us wish to lead...We shy away from calling ourselves leaders, or even worse: managers..." (Sayers, 2014). Eventually Mr. Sayers seeks to show the battle is not between two different styles of leadership but between two worldviews, the Christian and the Pagan (Sayers, 2014). He uses his motifs to good effect to demonstrate this, but also to illustrate how to respond to the situation. In a sense 'Facing Leviathan' is meant less as an analysis of the situation but as a clarion call to trust in the one who is Lord even in the storm.

I think Mr. Sayers has certainly captured how many people in leadership feel. Much of what he wrote certainly resonated with me. The book is worth buying both for its insights and the information Mr. Sayers brings to the reader about 19th Century Paris and his examination of Jonah, and the truths he draws from this story. I found his personal testimony about how he came to be in the place where he could write this book, particularly affecting. I was encouraged by his reminder that great Christian leadership should be less about us and more about the Lord of all.

Mr. Sayers writing style parallels his speaking. Often this means the text is engaging and draws the reader in, but sometimes what is engaging in person is less so in the written word. Occasionally it means his argument can become hard to follow as he quickly switches from topic to topic. His last book 'The Road Trip that Changed the World,' I felt, suffered more from this. As a writer Mr. Sayers seems to mature with each outing, both in insight and in readability. I find myself wishing he had spent more time on the solution, however, rather than the analysis. Overall, though, 'Facing Leviathan,' is worth reading.





DEVAN FOSTER:

Reflections on Ministry and the Post-Ridley Years

Hi. I'm Devan. Married to Liz with two boys: Joseph & Oliver. I finished at Ridley in 2012 and appointed to St James' Anglican Church in Dandenong where I'll be till January 2015, before doing another curacy (unless God has other plans) elsewhere in Melbourne. I enjoy hiking in the Cathedral Ranges, photography, coffee, alone time and quality time with friends.

1. How would you sum up your first two years out of Ridley in 5 words?

- i) Insightful
- ii) Daunting
- iii) Exhilarating
- iv) Stretching
- v) Prayerful

2. Did you feel well prepared by your time at Ridley?

Yes, as much as Ridley could prepare me. I was certainly equipped and ready to put my skills into practise / develop them further. Some skills, however, will have to wait to be used in the right circumstances. For example, because I'm a curate I'm not able to use all the leadership skills I've learnt, but I can remind myself they are there so that I'm ready if and when the time comes.

3. What has been a challenge in the past year?

I found it hard to be further away from friends and family. Dandenong isn't the ends of the earth, but I can't call in to see friends on my way home, or meet them at the local café. This has also been a strain on us as a family, but we've found ways to respond well, connecting well with a couple at church and other families near by who's husbands are also ministers.

4. What has been a comfort and/or joy in the past year?

It's been of immense comfort knowing my boss has my back. He supports me in what I do and I'm constantly seeing all the different ways in which he encourages, prays for, and supports me in the short time (2 years) that I'm there. It is a big investment of his time (and financially for the church) which St James' won't really benefit from but God's church will in the long-term.

5. What is one way you've been stretched in leading church services?

I've had to come to terms and realise that I cannot please everyone with what I do in services. I find it difficult to respond respectfully to parishioners twice my age who have never experienced anything different until I've done it. I've been asked: 1) Why don't you do the sign of the cross, because how else will people know you believe in the Trinity? 2) Why do you call us 'friends in Christ' or 'brothers and sisters in Christ'?

or 'beloved'? 3) Why did you preach a hellfire sermon?

For each question my responses have not seemed to satisfy them fully. Conversations have been insightful for me showing me how I can helpfully and not helpfully communicate / respond to their genuine concern which often is never mine. I have to listen carefully and take myself out of the picture to hear what they're saying in order to respond helpfully. It is challenging and exhausting.

6. What have you learnt about yourself, which you haven't been impressed by?

I'm actually not that organised and I find it really hard to motivate myself! And this gets me frustrated... which doesn't help respond to not being organised and being motivated. At least now that I've identified this growth-area, I've begun to pray about it and make positive changes to me.

7. What has been the greatest surprise of your post-Ridley experience so far?

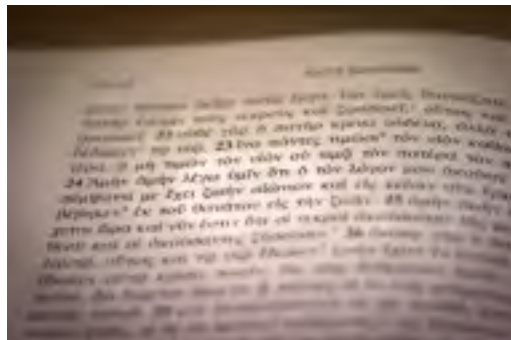
I've noticed that I thrive when I'm given a big workload. Because time is limited, I'm forced to think more clearly, be more organised and I can express my ideas more clearly and confidently. I'm not sure how long I could handle such heightened workloads, but so far when they've happened I've been energised rather than drained and I haven't had to compromise on family time or my time alone.

8. What difference has your new role made to your family?

We've had to adapt together to being in a new place. Not always easy, but it is exciting at the ways we're growing together.

9. What have you learned about God?

God's Word never returns empty. Even when I think I've done a rubbish job of speaking about Him to others (I think of when I preach), someone has come to thank me for reminding them of a certain truth or that my words about Him have encouraged them in some way. The people I've least expected to comment on the sermon have almost had me in tears when they've shared



*"If fluted or
squat, it
belongs to
hot.
If it's
coloured;
student
lounge
cupboard!"*



Ridley Life...



My Bible is Bigger Than Yours

Lessons learnt from children's ministry



Nicola Chandra

I've discovered that the most beautiful and scariest thing about 'doing church ministry' is the opportunity to change lives forever. However, before I morphed into adult form, the only experience I had of church ministry involved sitting cross-legged on the floor in my pink corduroys. Whilst there's much to be learnt from teaching children's ministry, the most prominent lessons learnt were from my participation as a child.

What impacted me the most probably wasn't in the lesson plan...

1. Your short-term memory has a much larger capacity than you originally gave it credit for

Look. You snatched half a piece of vegemite toast before rushing out in the morning and you've realized that you're wearing old toe socks, and that's not cool anymore. However, hope is on the horizon when there's chocolate up for grabs if you can hold a couple of sentences in your head and recite last week's memory verse on cue. I'm pretty sure this ability got me through a science degree.

2. Personalities can be determined by the location of the nametag

Best friends can be made on the premise that you've both placed your nametag on the bottom right hand corner of your t-shirt, or on your forehead. Fifteen years later, I've noticed that this principle still exists.

3. Alphabet soup doesn't have all the letters

Someone thought it would be a good idea one day to write out scripture using alphabet soup. It turns out that apparently not all the letters are available in a can, and breaking bits off the 'E' to form other letters incurs a penalty of 10 points.

4. The size of your Bible determines your faithfulness

It was a commonly known fact that the bigger you Bible was the more dedicated you were to reading it. Bonus points if the Bible had gilt sides, or you owned

a cover. Exceptions included Bibles that were given at special occasions, that had more highlighted parts than plain, or that were a picture Bible.

5. There is no such thing as winners, only tiebreakers



Existential crises can be birthed out of statements such as "Everyone is a winner" grappling with the complex paradox held in discrepancies between what I perceive to be 'reality' and 'what my teacher tells me'. As someone who is highly competitive, the concept of equality when *clearly* my team has won three out of five games is quite baffling.

6. The answer usually is 'God', 'Jesus' or 'The Bible'

The overwhelming majority of difficult questions I've encountered in life so far tend to have 'God', 'Jesus' or 'The Bible' as the answer.

7. Lions are always created from paper plates

Enough said.

THIS 'NOAH' SINKS... AND STINKS

Ben McMaster

The precept of this film version of 'Noah' is that it is set in a mythologised world; the kind of world where Tolkien's conceits of the history of our planet revolve around "middle earth", only taking the Bible itself as being this myth. Despite obvious Christian misgivings about "Biblical accuracy", this could have worked if director Darren Aronofsky had elevated the material to levels of metaphor and archetype and humane relatability. But instead, Aronofsky uses the Bible much the same way Peter Jackson uses 'The Lord Of The Rings', expounding on spiritual elements hinted at in the text as an excuse to make a CGI/horror/monster/war movie for the current nihilist generation.

In his concern to make his movie commercial and dark, Aronofsky misses the great point of the Noah story. A man who seems to be going crazy building an ark off an order from God is replaced with a dumb, contrived war between factions. Were there bloodthirsty, mindless sinners (as depicted in this film) at the time? Probably. But does this movie do justice to that

“For a movie wanting so desperately to express the nature of what it’s like for a man to be obedient to God, I saw no Godly character in any person”

conception of sin? Or does it simply – as I would argue – use it as an excuse for Peter Jackson style CGI sequences of mass armies, strange creatures and twisted human faces; actors like Russell Crowe and Ray Winstone thinking they're expressing emotion when really they're just straining their faces for the camera.

For a movie wanting so desperately to express the nature of what it's like for a man to be obedient to God, I saw no Godly character in any person. It's a psychodrama that uses Noah's Ark as an insane asylum in order for the director to play out his bloodlust fantasies. The first half lets modern audiences off the hook; humans sure were sinful then, but hey we're much better now. The ending confirms this as its mantra. The second half is a death wish movie, full of suicidal, misanthropic ideals. The changes to the text of Noah in Genesis simply exist to allow for modern, trendily "dark" plot conventions to exist. Such contrasts in tone betray the director's lack of conviction. This movie doesn't know what to believe.

What, then, is any audience – Christian or otherwise – to take from this movie? It essentially says, "Become like Noah, a man who has faith in and trusts God. And just so you know, to have faith in and trust God is to become a total recluse, succumb to cabin fever and desire to kill your grandchildren because that's what he believes God wants. Even though it wasn't." What kind of message does *that* send to people who already question Christians' desire to "carry out God's will"?

I hated this movie. I hated every fear-inducing, paranoid, maniacal, sepulchrous, underlit, manipulative, exploitative moment of it. The exploration of Biblical themes is naive, childish and fatalistic. It's all designed to make one fear and dread life, only to cop out at the end. The murkiness in the now trademark "modern dark blockbuster" visual style doesn't lend more impact to the story. It obscures it. In altering the text, Aronofsky has misplaced the key verse concerning Noah, "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation." He was actually the hope in the face of evil. In what sick person's mind is Noah this generation's Hannibal Lecter?

