

An Update from the Coates Family

June 13, 2023

Dear Friends,

I like metaphors. I find them helpful for thinking about our walk with God in this complex world. So here's one that may be stretching the bounds of the metaphor, but I'm going with it. 😊

Last night we held a dinner for our postgraduate students (more on that in a moment). It was a cold and wintery night here in the Cape of Storms, and as we were preparing I was trying to get one of our gas heaters going when it suddenly turned into a fireball. To say that I got a fright would be a massive understatement! By God's grace everything turned out okay, nobody was injured and nothing was damaged.

The occupational hazard of bringing warmth to our space last night made me think about the Christian call to be salt and light, and the edgy, "unsafe" nature of this call.



It's in the darkest, coldest spaces where the light is most needed; where the warmth of God's love is most needed. But when we use these sorts of phrases, we often conjure up warm, fuzzy images, of reaching out kindly to our neighbour. I'm struck, however, by how often this is dangerous work, in a sense.

The cold and dark places are often not very welcoming of the warmth and light, ironically. I was speaking to a Christian faculty member at the University of Cape Town this week, who has been kindly contributing to our student ministry, and we were talking about the risk that he brings upon himself in doing so. In an utterly secular institution, there are consequences to taking a Christian stance as an academic. His words startled me a little because of their gravity when he said, "this is a hill I'm prepared to die on."

I suppose there is some solace in the fact that in our context he wasn't speaking about literal death. But it did raise an important challenge: In our world of cancel culture, and a myriad of hot button issues, are we brave enough to embrace the dangerous work of being beacons of God's light in the dark places, offering his warmth in the cold, even when it comes at a cost?

Loving God with all our Minds... in Community



obvious.

The University of Cape Town recently did research to try to understand why students with good grades were dropping out. On the face of it, there appeared to be no good reason why a successful and promising student should leave university. The most obvious suggestion in our context would be lack of funding. But this was only the second most common reason. The top motivation for leaving was... loneliness.

As you may recall, over the last year or so (and the past 6 months in particular) I've focussed quite intentionally on ministering to postgraduate students. We've realised in the past few years that this group of bright and hungry students is a very strategic mission field.

Partly, it's for obvious reasons: these young people are deep thinkers, at the coalface of grappling with the challenges of our society, the leaders of tomorrow who will play a pivotal role in shaping how we think of the world, and God's place in it. But there is another reason that is not so





I've mentioned before that I'm running a regular postgraduate forum where students can discuss their research and together grapple with how Christianity relates to their area of studies. These are going well and are incrementally growing in size, and what has become apparent is that they function as an outreach tool to a demographic which supposedly has it all together: intelligent, successful and highly competent.

Yet they are searching for connection, community, and ultimately the love of

Christ. It's been wonderful to see doctoral and post-doctoral students and faculty drawn to engaging questions of faith through these warm and welcoming spaces. Hence our postgraduate dinner last night: a moment for students to connect over a lovely meal, celebrate a semester's worth of research, and pray for those that need it.



Effective ways of engaging rich biblical content

Workshops and reading groups



One of the challenges we face as we come alongside students, challenging them to think Christianly about the world, is that they are saturated with lectures already, and yet another lecture is not always helpful.

We have been focussing more on interactive workshops and reading groups, particularly when there are gaps in their academic calendar. These

are engaging, relational and very effective ways to learn. These images are from a three-day workshop we recently ran on a biblical understanding of vocation.

Our library is about to launch!

You may remember me mentioning our desire to start a library with good quality books which can help students think through what it means to live as a Christian in whichever sector of society God is calling them. Well, through the amazing provision of a donor in the publishing industry we now have our first 400 brand new books.

Most of them are catalogued and we will officially launch our library in the next 6 weeks, which we're very excited about.



On the family front

All is well on the family front, with the homeschoolers very much looking forward to a winter break in the next few weeks. It's Hannah's turn to hog the limelight again. You may remember that last year she was very disappointed to miss an important ballet exam due to illness. One of the perks that the pandemic brought the world was introducing creative ways of using technology, so last month she was able to complete the exam via video recording, and she was delighted to hear that she passed.

Last month also marked a very special day in Hannah's life, and our life as a family, as she was baptised. We're grateful for a vibrant and healthy home church, where she



has been able to have her faith shaped and formed. She's very clearly no longer a little girl, but blossomed into a young lady who loves Jesus.

Prayer Points:

- Join us in thanksgiving as we continue to see improvement in my mom's health. Thank you for praying with us as she journeyed through chemotherapy.
- Please keep our upcoming Winter Conference next month in your prayers. It is our pinnacle outreach event for the year where we hope to reach a large number of students. Please pray for the right students to attend, and for the ongoing preparations to go well.
- Please also pray with us for continued financial provision to enable us to continue in this ministry. It's something of an ongoing challenge. We are deeply grateful for God's faithful provision over so many years.

It's a gift to walk this road with you alongside us as we together seek to be salt and light in our various contexts. I pray that we may be emboldened by the Holy Spirit to continue to shine His light, and offer His warmth to the world, and even as we do so, may we be sustained by our Heavenly Father's grace, strength and love.

Much love & blessings,
Adrian, Michelle, Jude, Hannah & Luke

As missionaries in **Youth With A Mission**,
Adrian & Michelle do not receive any remuneration from YWAM,
but rely on financial support of partners like you to sustain their ministry.
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