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## STUMBLING INTO CHRISTIAN MISSION

**By Dr Jason Atkinson,**BST Old Testament and Hebrew lecturer  
(English/Chinese program)

**In my second year of university I was disillusioned by the answers I was getting from studying psychology. I was an unbeliever but had a desire to respond to humanitarian needs and so looked around for opportunities to help. Inadvertently, I signed up to go on a short-term trip to Asia with a Christian group.**

They accepted my application. To fund the trip I ended up selling my car. I was the only unbeliever in the group! As I experienced the group's genuine concern for people, I wanted what they had. On that trip I was so convicted by their faith

and love for Jesus that I gave my heart to the Lord. I remember writing a letter to my mum telling her about my experience. She thought I had joined a cult! From that point on, I began to see the world differently, acknowledging God as this moral force and living accordingly.

When I finished university, I worked for the Salvation Army as an alcohol and other drug rehabilitation counsellor. This experience instilled in me a heart for service, to look for the needs in the world and respond to them. I thought about China and the opportunity to go opened up. In 1995, at 23 years of age, I headed to China to learn their culture and language. This was a long-term commitment for me. I spent two years learning the language and also studied my Master of Sociology, all in Mandarin! My Chinese improved immensely as my classmates did not stop to slow down for me (I was the only non-Chinese person in the class). I was forced to adapt and learn very quickly.

The more time I spent with Chinese friends, the more I realised their hunger for God and desire to know His word. They had questions I didn't have the answers to. I felt this growing need to prepare theologically. By my eighth year in Asia I felt I had reached my capacity to disciple believers and so I asked around for suitable Bible colleges where I could get training. My missionary friends told me about Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, Illinois.

At the same time my friend Rebecca, who was a Chinese national studying a doctorate in Political Science, had started to think more about Bible college. She

would return to China a few times a year to visit family and was deeply impacted by her experience of rural outreach. Rebecca wanted to serve the Lord and also felt the need to prepare theologically. In God's perfect timing we started our Master of Divinity at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School at the same time and eventually realised we liked each other!

Two years into our MDiv we got married and sensed the Lord's leading to do more theological training. By the time we finished the MDiv we returned to Asia and prayed about what was next. We both have a passion for quality theological education and the importance of making that available to people in Asia. We said to God that if it was His will for us, He would provide the finances to allow us to study.

As we searched around for universities, we had our hearts set on the UK. We were accepted at all the colleges we applied to, but it was going to be very expensive! Thankfully, Rebecca was awarded several scholarships, including a Langham Scholarship. With these we had the finances to pay for her doctorate tuition and our living expenses, but we just needed to cover, by faith, my tuition which was about £10,000. Amazingly, I was awarded a British government scholarship in my second year.

We moved to Scotland and studied at University of Edinburgh. It took us just over five years to complete our doctorates. Rebecca specialised in biblical studies in the New Testament and I focused on the Old Testament. During that time my super-wife also gave birth to our two sons, Kereb (four years) and Nahum (13 months).

# NEW BEGINNINGS

Rev Dr Richard Gibson,  
BST Principal

**“The gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace” (Col 1:6).**



In June I stepped into the role of principal and CEO of BST. At the time, I was very conscious of a long tradition (71 years) of delivering theological training for those preparing to lead God’s people here and overseas. Dedicated board members, principals, faculty and staff have all contributed to that vision.

In just six months I have been confronted by the challenges and excited by the opportunities. A number of my limitations have been exposed, and reminded me of how grateful I am that God entrusts the treasure of the gospel to clay pots. In all of this, we have been reminded of God’s compassion and provision. We long for BST to grow, not as an end in itself, but to play our part in the gospel, “bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world.” There are many stories of what God is doing to bring people to faith in Christ overseas and here in Brisbane. Our passion at BST is to see future leaders trained to serve Christ’s mission.

With this in mind I am delighted to welcome Drs Jason and Rebecca Atkinson to the faculty, along with their two young sons. Other appointments have also better set us up for meeting the demands of a growing college. Ivan Kirk brings a wealth of experience and wisdom to the role of Operations Manager. Terry Wong continues to serve BST tirelessly as Finance Officer, and Witali Klein brings his special gifts and efficiency to the roles of IT Manager and Registrar. Kylie Brown will also join us as the new women’s mentor.

We are very conscious of our dependence on God. As Paul reminds us, we may be involved in planting the seed or watering it, but God gives the growth: “So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:7). We are also very aware of our need of partners: local churches, mission agencies, alumni, volunteers and donors. I am keen to see these partnerships grow, so that the college will grow, so that the gospel will grow. With all this in mind, would you please join us in praying for BST. For all our planning and busyness we know that nothing of lasting value will come without God’s grace and power at work. We plant or water, but only God gives the growth. Our desperate world urgently needs the gospel growing and bearing fruit. Please ask God to enable us to play our part.

To hear a sample of Richard’s chapel sermons online visit [bst.qld.edu.au/model-makers](http://bst.qld.edu.au/model-makers)

If you would like to invite Richard to guest speak at your church or special event please contact us on **(07) 3870 8355** or email [info@bst.qld.edu.au](mailto:info@bst.qld.edu.au)

## STUMBLING INTO CHRISTIAN MISSION

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Since returning to Australia it has been wonderful to catch up with family. We wanted to come back for preparation and also for the sake of our family. We couldn’t believe the privileged opportunity that God opened up for us at BST. Prior to coming to BST we were scoping out evangelical theological colleges in Queensland and New South Wales and were pleasantly surprised when we

came across BST; it was interdenominational, had a broad student population, and a program that was relevant to Chinese believers – it is impressive!

I’m excited to be on full-time faculty next year, teaching Old Testament subjects including Hebrew, for the English and Chinese programs. Rebecca will be a part-time faculty member, teaching New Testament subjects for the Chinese program. We are thankful for the loving support of our colleagues and friends at BST. God has been very kind and generous in so many ways.

### DID YOU KNOW...



**GIFTS OVER \$2 TO THE  
BST LIBRARY AND BUILDING  
FUNDS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE?**

To ensure that our students are equipped with up-to-date resources, modern lecture facilities and suitable accommodation, we need the support of people like you to pray with us and to give to the ministry of the college. In 2015 our goal is to raise \$100,000 to go toward the following projects:

- New library system
  - Installation of solar system to help the college save on its electricity costs
  - Renovation of accommodation facilities.
- You can make a donation online [bst.qld.edu.au/supportYourBST](http://bst.qld.edu.au/supportYourBST), use the attached donation slip or contact us on **(07) 3870 8355**.

# BST MENTOR PROGRAM



**We caught up with Sally McCall, one of our women's mentors who has supported**

**30 students over the past three years. Sally completed her Master of Divinity at BST in 2011 and previously served on the BST Board. She leaves BST at the end of 2014 and hopes to pursue a Clinical Pastoral Education Course at the PA hospital in 2015. Sally will continue to work as the Member Services Officer for CMS QNSW.**

## **What have you enjoyed about mentoring?**

It is a privileged opportunity to be involved in the lives of these godly women. They are keen to study the Scriptures at depth as they prepare themselves for part or

full-time ministry/mission, and to grow in spiritual maturity. This includes growing to know God better, growing in humility as they grapple with God's word, and being challenged beyond their comfort zones.

## **How do you think mentoring impacts on a student's learning experience at college?**

The intimate, face-to-face conversations are rare between younger and older Christians because mentoring is not common systematic practice. When you are given time to develop mentoring relationships, build trust and ensure total discretion, I've found that no topic is taboo. I have been able to listen (without judgment) and discuss with students topics ranging from sexuality, eating disorders, perfectionism, the need to maintain power and control, stress and work/study overload, dating or marriage, deep theological issues and so much more. I believe these conversations, followed up by prayer, can share the emotional load with students and allow them to re-focus on their studies so they worry less about these distracting challenges.

## **Sadly, you're leaving us at the end of the year. Do you have any advice for past and current students you**

## **have mentored?**

Having had this opportunity to study God's word at depth to know Him better is one of the most profound and life-changing experiences you'll ever have. Thank you to the students I have mentored for so openly sharing your study and life journey with me while at BST. As Thomas Merton says, "no man is an island", so please keep praying about finding discreet Christian friends who will keep you accountable for your life, as well as prayerfully seeking an older Christian mentor who can provide you with long-term and godly wisdom, who will pray with/for you.

Lastly, please don't worry if you still don't know what you're going to do with your theological qualifications. God brought you to BST for a reason. Be encouraged that He will use your deeper knowledge of Him for His glory and in His kingdom purposes, so people can come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

*We're thankful to the Lord for Sally's ministry at BST and we pray that God will continue to use her gifts and skills as she serves at CMS and in hospital, palliative and/or aged care chaplaincy in the future.*

## **NEW WOMEN'S MENTOR**

In 2015 Kylie Brown will take on the role of women's mentor at BST. Originally trained as an occupational therapist, Kylie has worked with children with disabilities. She recently completed her Master of Divinity at Sydney Missionary Bible College, including a project that focused on women in ministry. Kylie has also been involved with

the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (her husband Andrew is the AFES Director).

Andrew and Kylie have two children under the age of six. They have attended Kenmore Presbyterian Church since 2008, where Kylie has served in the music team and in the children's ministry. We look forward to Kylie joining us in 2015.



## **END OF YEAR CELEBRATION**

Our Greek-themed annual dinner was held on Wednesday 12 November 2014 with 122 people in attendance at the Riverglenn function centre, Indooroopilly. We celebrated with our students, staff/faculty, board members and other volunteers, alumni and of course, our families.

The evening gave us an opportunity to celebrate the highlights of the year and to congratulate our students for making it through their studies, especially the graduating students. The smiling faces of our students, and particularly those who have finished their course, reflect the sense of joy and relief that exams and assessments are now all over for the year.

Congratulations and well done!

Alan Shanks, our longest-serving volunteer, was also honoured with a commemorative plaque celebrating 35 years of faithful service to BST as a member of the board and library volunteer.

Read more online: [bst.qld.edu.au/blog](http://bst.qld.edu.au/blog)

## SPIRITUAL MATURITY



In 2011 the US based Barna Research group conducted a study on how Christians defined spiritual maturity. The study found that "Most Christians...four out of five (81% in fact)...equate spiritual maturity with following the rules" - things like reading the Bible, prayer, going to church, being moral. I can identify with this. For a good part of my Christian life I would have said the same, although I would not have said rule keeping, I would have said "holiness".

Holiness sounds more biblical. But it may come as a surprise—at least to eighty-one percent of us—that rule keeping, or even holiness, is not God's highest goal for us. Jesus is clear about this: God "seeks... worshippers" (John 4:23). What this means is that God is not first and foremost after our obedience but our hearts...

Visit [bst.qld.edu.au/blog](http://bst.qld.edu.au/blog) to read more of Dr Alan Stanley's blog.

## EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS	SPEAKER
January 19 - 23 8am - 5.20pm	Ministry in Culturally Diverse Contexts	Intensive week of teachings (Undergraduate/graduate, anyone can audit)	Rev Mike Wilson
January 19 - 23 8.30am-3pm	Church Systems and Congregational Health	Intensive week of teachings (Master of Arts unit, anyone can audit)	Dr Jeff Pugh
February 16 - 20 8.30am-3pm	Biblical Theology	Intensive week of teachings (Master of Arts unit, anyone can audit)	Dr Graeme Goldsworthy
February 17 6.45pm for 7pm start	Commencement and Graduation Ceremony	City North Baptist Church <b>52 Yiada Street, Kedron</b>	Dr Graeme Goldsworthy
February 25 10am-2pm	Chinese Pastors and Leaders Meeting	Hear from the former principal of Chong Chi Divinity School, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.	Rev Dr Lo Lung Kwong
May 6 6pm	BST Open Night	Find out more about studying at BST and meet the lecturers	Lecturers
May 11 6.30pm	Chinese Program Open Night	Find out more about our Chinese program	Lecturers

Visit [bst.qld.edu.au/events](http://bst.qld.edu.au/events) for more information on upcoming events or contact us on **(07) 3870 8355**.

**BST** | BRISBANE  
SCHOOL OF  
THEOLOGY

1 Cross Street  
Toowong  
QLD 4066  
Australia

(07) 3870 8355  
[info@bst.qld.edu.au](mailto:info@bst.qld.edu.au)  
[bst.qld.edu.au](http://bst.qld.edu.au)  
[facebook.com/yourBST](https://facebook.com/yourBST)