

Welcome.

by Garrie-John Barnes

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More or less?

Study figure 1 to the right and answer the following question: "What are we?"

Unlike the post-apocalyptic family in the BBC drama series *The Survivors*, the children of God are classified in scripture as being "more than conquerors". The gospels encourage us to "ask, seek and knock" with the expectation that our Heavenly Father hears us and responds generously; so should we expect more or less from Him? "Please Sir, can I have some less?" doesn't quite ring true. So let's ask for more; in fact why not ask for a double portion?

Whilst abandoning our minds to a naïve prosperity mantra is not

**WE < CONQUERORS?
WE = CONQUERORS?
WE > CONQUERORS?**

called for, the apostle Paul clearly exhorts us to step outside the box of our finite thinking. Perhaps we should respond by moving beyond our neatly maintained borders and boundaries to where divine territory beckons; a dimension where, in Christ alone, we are more than conquerors.

Although called to be so much more than survivors, there are times, of course, when after everything, we are called to "stand firm", dressed with the full armour of God. Perhaps annoyingly, however, standing is

not enough to satisfy the fullness of God's plan for our lives. There is always a 'more than', always more to accomplish on our journey with Him, for by definition we never reach the horizon. So, let's greet our new horizons with the expectation of greater things to come. After all, like it or not, we are more than conquerors.

2017 CST Conference.

Our next conference is 16th-18th February 2017 and plans are well underway at present.

This is always an important gathering for us and never more so than at the moment. The current climate for Christian schools is not an easy one and the pressures on all of our schools

are significant. In the middle of such pressures, God always invites us to keep our eyes fixed firmly on Him to find the help and encouragement that we need. Different situations require different solutions but the source of all hope is always our Father. He will be our focus during our time together in February 2017 and I encourage you to join us.

The calling upon all of us is to be a part of seeing His Kingdom advancing and His church strengthened and we intend to take hold of this so that we can become more fruitful in our local settings as well as on a broader scale. Details of the conference including speakers and costs will be available in September, so please look out for them.

Christian Education in Europe.

I recently had the chance to participate in two events that strengthened our links with other Christians in education across Europe.

The first was in The Netherlands and was an international conference for students, partly organised by Henk van Sorge from Apeldoorn. There were around fifty 16/17 year olds from The Netherlands, Germany and Lithuania. They spent three days together at one of the Dutch schools having talks and seminars designed to help open their eyes to the benefits of learning about different cultures and backgrounds. I was asked to present a plenary session on 'Openness to other Christians' as well as some workshops involving silly games (where I was trying to help them learn more about Jesus and how He works in our lives).

I felt that it had been time really well spent with them. They were seriously engaging with the issues with the

characteristic enthusiasm that you could anticipate from that age-group. I made many new friends and felt as though there was great freedom to pass on some of the lessons that we have learned in CST schools over the years.

The second trip was to the EurECA (European Educators Christian Association) conference in Lisbon, Portugal. We have sent representatives to this from CST for many years and many of the European contacts that we have made have flowed from these gatherings.

They hold a conference in a different location each year. Every second year, instead of having a main speaker, they invite delegates to submit seminar titles so that everyone can draw from each other's expertise. I was asked to present the opening and closing plenary sessions.

Any Christian working in education in any European nation is welcome to attend, so as you can imagine this presents an interesting mixture of personalities and perspectives.

There were around 200 delegates from over 20 nations, including Australia, Israel and the USA. Very European! What I always find a blessing is the openness to one another and how they value the friendship and encouragement of other Christian educators.

I was also there to follow through on an invitation that I had received to join the Board of EurECA. Initially I was unsure how I should respond but after spending some time with them I came to the decision that I should accept the invitation. I see this as a further opportunity for us to work with God's family across the continent and to strengthen each other in our calling.

At the time of writing this, our nation is focussed on our relationship with Europe and how that will look in the future. Whatever the outcome of that process (and we will no doubt know by now) it is clear to me that God intends us to build stronger links for the sake of His Kingdom. Let's not miss opportunities to do so.

The Essential Christian Teacher Course.

I have recently finished my first year on the Christian Schools' Trust (CST) teacher training course and have really enjoyed the sessions that I have done so far.

First, I would like to share a bit about myself to put into context the impact and the journey that I have been on though the last seven years of my teaching practice. The reason I went into teaching was to help people out of poverty so that education could equip people and provide a platform to get a better quality of life.

My teaching specialism is in Science, which I did at Southampton University. After this I taught in a state school for two years, and then felt God leading me and my wife, Kerry, to Zambia where I taught science and religious studies in a small Christian school. I have now returned to the UK and am in my third year of working at The River School in Worcester.

A reflection on how my understanding of what education is and what is its purpose...

Whilst I was in Zambia I visited a teacher training centre in a very remote and rural setting and was astounded to say the least by what I experienced. The whole philosophy was completely different to my own understanding of how to train teachers. For a start the class size was only 12 pupils a year and before you could do any teacher training you needed to complete a year devoted to reading and studying the bible (discipleship training) a phrase that I had not heard before as I was not teaching from a Christ-centred approach.

continued...

'CST Teacher Training Course', continued...

I was really intrigued by what this meant and how I could apply this to myself.

When I returned back from Zambia I felt that I really wanted to learn more in the whole area of teaching from a Christ-centred approach. When I heard about the CST Essential Christian Teacher course I was very eager to go.

So far I have done 5 workshops and have come away from each session feeling really encouraged, with a renewed perspective and new ideas to try in my teaching practice. It is also a great platform to network and have fellowship with other people from the different CST schools. I am always amazed by the innovative and creative ideas that other people have had.

The sessions on discipline and the purpose of curriculum I have found particularly fascinating. These sessions have already helped me in my day to day interactions and to consider problems and solutions from a more spiritual perspective. I am really looking forward to the next year and feel that I still have loads more to learn and to consider in how to apply what I have learnt.

Emmaus School...

...and the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).

by Miriam Wiltshire
Head Teacher
Emmaus School

God's timing may not be our timing, but His time is always the right time! Initially, an ISI inspection in the last week of the spring term was not what any of us would have wanted, but within days of 'the phone call' it was evident that this was God's perfect will for Emmaus School.

Even as I write, the inspection process that we went through is already out of date and the four inspectors over four days Integrated Inspection (followed by a fourteen, yes fourteen page report) has been replaced by shorter, more frequent 'Compliance Inspections' which award a pass or fail for each of the Independent Schools Standards but no evaluative grades. However, I am optimistic that, despite all the government driven changes, the ethos and manner in which ISI inspections are conducted will remain the same, as will the impressive support by ISI to ensure schools are well prepared for inspections. The comprehensive Handbook for Inspections and the wealth of courses available for governors, Head teachers and teaching staff completely take away the guesswork and the 'let's hope we're doing this right' feeling.

As for the actual inspection, the inspectors were rigorous and forensic, but they were also very supportive, working with us to ensure that we were as compliant as possible by the end of the inspection. Although at times the inspectors were unnervingly inscrutable, they were friendly, courteous and professional. Overall, the staff and I were extremely satisfied with the inspection and the final report.

The primary concern from the school's point of view was that the inspectors would quickly understand the unique character of our school and, for the most part, this was our experience. Certainly the inspection report clearly celebrates the Christian ethos which infuses all that we do at Emmaus School, and makes it abundantly clear that the school is not a hotbed of radical extremism.

Another aspect of the inspection process that was greatly appreciated was the facility to upload policies and academic results onto the ISI portal in the days leading up to the inspection, which meant that most of the paper work side was dealt with before the inspectors arrived, and time allowed for any necessary revisions to be made. This will still be the case for the new Compliance Inspections, although the lead in time will only be two days.

Following the inspection, The Independent Schools Association (ISA) requests feedback about ISI inspections and it is evident that ISA represents member schools well, which is very reassuring in the present climate of constant change and uncertainty. Is this Head teacher relieved to be inspected by ISI? Oh yes! It's worth every extra penny.

Book Review...

'Diamonds Lost in the Sand'

by David Freeman.

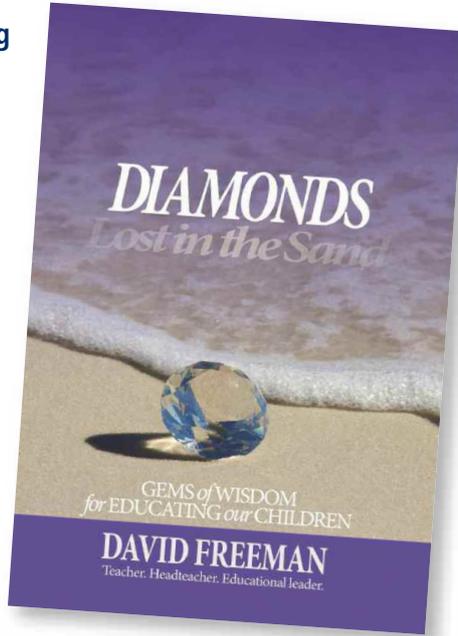
**Diamonds Lost in the Sand
– Gems of Wisdom for Educating
our Children, by David Freeman,
endorsed by Graham Coyle.**

Do we need another book about education? A fair question, but having read David Freeman's 'Diamonds Lost in the Sand' I would have to say that we need this one.

This is not simply another trendy take on the education process that leaves us crying out, 'The Emperor's got no clothes on'. No, what distinguishes the contents of this book from many others is that David has taken a view of life shaped by his Christian faith and asked the question, how does this inform my practice as an educator?

If that were all that he had done it would be interesting enough but David's experiences over many years as a teacher, Head teacher and trainer of teachers across four continents give practical rigour to the conclusions that he has drawn.

In this book there is a lot packed into a small space. Not so tightly packed as to be indecipherable, but undoubtedly thought-provoking. Principles are expounded and examples offered



where those principles have been successfully applied. I have known David for many years, I have watched him live out these lessons in his work and along with many others I have been a beneficiary of his wisdom.

My suggestion is this; enjoy this book as you would a good meal. Savour the contents, consider the flavour, chew it thoroughly and digest it slowly. When that is done, the goodness contained within it will begin to be evident in your own life and work, then both you and your pupils will reap the benefits.

Prayer.

- Continue to pray for each other as our schools face very challenging times.
- That school leavers will hear clearly God's strategy for their situations.
- That all staff will be able to know His peace and abundance at this time.

Praise.

- Despite pressures, many schools are thriving.
- That our conference in February 2017 will be a greatly significant and blessed time.
- For the opportunity to rest and recuperate over the summer break.

Diary dates.

September 2016

- Start of The Essential Christian Teacher Training Courses Year 1 & 2 in Bradford and Witney. 15th-16th September.

October 2016

- CST Leadership Day at The River School, Worcester. Saturday 22nd October.

February 2017

- CST Biannual Conference at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. 16th-18th February 2017.