

ENGAGE

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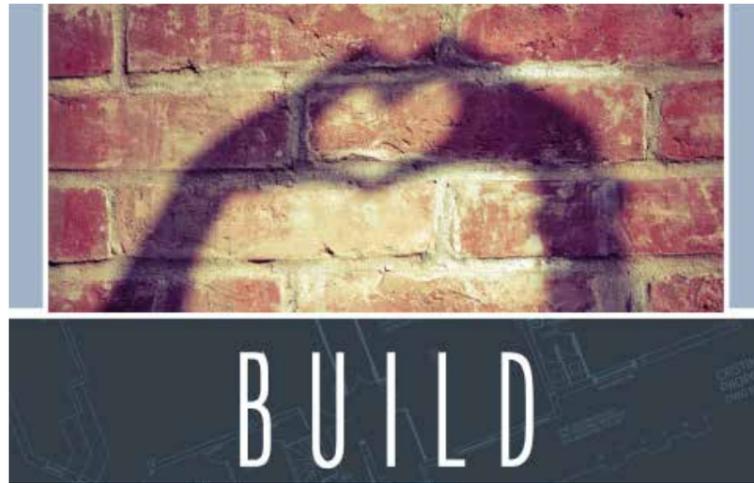
MAY - JULY '19

PASTORS LETTER
'UNLOCKED'

CONNECT
A REMARKABLE
YEAR

MISSION
GREECE





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“Unlocked”

Search me, God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

This is a prayer of David in Psalm 139 and it's such a vulnerable and powerful prayer.

In my experience of having mobile phones and seeing many others use theirs, no one likes their phone in the hands of someone else. It is a very nervous moment for many people when they hand their phone over to someone... unlocked.

There are so many reasons for that nervous moment, the uncertainty of what someone may do with your phone. They may look at texts that are only meant for you and someone else, they may go through private photos, they may see something that shouldn't be on there.

Often our phones are an extension of our hearts. There is vulnerability about offering someone your phone and unlocking it... you are in essence passing over a part of your heart.

I love how David was so passionate about God that he gave God full access to his heart. He wanted God's opinion and he wanted God's examination. How many of us like exams? How many of us like waiting for the doctors assessment?... it's not comfortable.

The assessment from God though is always... "I love you." Whatever is in and on our hearts, it doesn't change the fact God loves us.

I wonder how many of us hold back our heart for fear of the assessment? We are nervous to unlock our heart and say "Search me" because perhaps God will say "I can't believe you still struggle with this", ... "you're not worth my love", ... "you're not good enough", ... they are all untrue thoughts.

We have so many thoughts like that, anxious thoughts. Life can hit hard and it can feel very choppy at times. We cling on to things we know, habits we have, thoughts that have plagued us. Fear and insecurity tell us lies about who we are and what we need to do.

Suddenly we realise we have 'locked' our hearts up.

And for many we can continue in that place, doing things in our strength. Probably because if we were to ask God to search our hearts we would know that there are things we need to give over to him, things we need to put down and leave behind.

The more vulnerable we can be with God the more we recognise our need for Him. Not only to deal with the things we don't want others to see but also because to be led in the way everlasting we cannot do that in our own strength, we need the power of the Spirit to do that.

We have to hand our heart over to God unlocked in order to be led.

A locked heart means we are leading an unlocked heart means God is leading.

As we begin to nervously return to God with our hearts and ask Him to search them we give access to the Holy Spirit to shape us, to move us on, to strengthen us.

It starts with "Search me, God".

~ Jim Privett



Due to preparations to move sites and establish ourselves in the new building, the next edition of ENGAGE magazine will be the February 2020 edition.



BUILD

I recently needed to have a load of eye tests relating to my eye condition. Some of these tests involved incredibly sophisticated devices that measured and photographed retina sensitivity, but one of the tests was one most people will be familiar with - reading letters from an eye chart.

I was sat in a chair and was asked to read the letters on a chart opposite me. The chart starts easy with a large letter at the top, but then as you work your way down, the letters get smaller and smaller. For those with perfect eyesight this must seem a simple task - right down to the bottom line which reads 'M A D E I N E N G L A N D'. However for others, as you move down the chart you discover that the clear letters at the beginning are followed by smaller rows of blurry splodges.

For those in the latter category, the optician then steps in and takes you through a series of lenses. After a very short time, miraculously the blurs are transformed into letters, glasses are ordered and everything becomes clear.

Unfortunately my eye condition is not as straightforward. For me, the letters on the chart don't simply shift between blurry and clear as the optician switches lenses - letters actually disappear! One moment I can make out a shape, but then suddenly all I see is a white space. The result of the 'coming and

going' of letters and shapes is that much patience and perseverance is required when testing my eyes.

What does this have to do with the BUILD project? I wonder what you see when you look at the new building taking shape next to our present building?

Do you see God's promise and provision?
Do you see the result of a huge amount of time, prayer, money and work?
Do you see the outstanding need to raise further funds to complete and fully pay for this facility?
Do you see a great opportunity for what God wants to do?

Do you see everything clearly or are some things a little blurry? Or perhaps like with my sight condition different aspects shift, blur and even disappear at times?

Here is the truth, when we look with faith, patience and perseverance, what we will see is not a building but a church family with a heart that want to connect our community with Jesus.

God's plan is good. Together, let's be part of that plan.

~ Mark Madavan



'Encounter' PM is an evening worship event with no other agenda except for worshipping and lifting up our incredible God in praise. As we come together to worship God, He consistently shapes us and transforms us and our circumstances.

As a Church we have been on a clear journey of deepening our knowledge and also our experience of worshipping God over the last few months.

It's so encouraging to see many at both the AM services engaging with God through worship. Seeing the freedom and the singing out that has followed our Encounter services has helped with the shaping of worship and the culture of expectancy.

Worshipping God creates proximity with Him. When God is in close proximity so is His presence and power. We want to encounter more of God in our lives, in our situations, in our troubles and pain. We need to declare God as our strength and hope. 'Encounter' is a great place to do all those things as we worship God for who He is and what He has done. We can be expectant that He will move among his people.

The next 'Encounter' PM worship event will be on Sunday 9th June.

~ Jim Privett



God has designed us to be connected. Connected to Him, connected to people we know and connected to people who are our 'neighbours' – UP, IN and OUT. That's why belonging to a small group is so important – meeting with 8 -10 people regularly to support, encourage, learn, grow and serve together.

But what if you just can't all meet together in the same place at the same time? One group has come up with a solution! Here's how Nathan and Hannah Mountney's small group make it happen.

PLUGGING IN WHEN YOU'VE T-APPED OUT!

"Sleepless night. Crying baby. Early start. Missed breakfast. Cleaning. Washing. Long commute. Chaos at the crèche. 8 nappies in the morning! Tough boss. Even tougher colleagues. Mucky children. Argumentative/ Quiet teens. No lunch. Unfinished DIY project. Listening to spouse. Hungry baby.

Encouraging spouse. Traffic jam. Ill again... and now getting to small group.

This is just a small taste of the many things that can keep us from being in the one place we need to be at our time of need. Small groups are a wonderful oasis in the middle (beginning or end) of an embattled and busy day. Yet getting there can often seem one step too far. Another task too many. However, with tech as savvy as ours we no longer need be estranged from our small groups, unable to receive all that God can offer through His people, our friends, and siblings in Christ.

We will all be familiar with conference calling through jobs, or seen others doing it (mainly on TV!). Our small group have decided to make use of these features through WhatsApp – a simple messaging app with a call option, able to include the whole group in the same call.

There have been many occasions where, through childcare or ill health, we've simply been unable to get to a house, but still been able to call in to the group, catch up with the week, share the Word, pray, holding ground or taking another step forward and growing together. Prayer requests are sent out during the meeting so we have those requests for the rest of the week and then people can update the whole group before the next meeting, which then stays recorded on the group chat. A group prayer diary if you will.

A simple and yet very effective tool to keep growth alive and well.

If you've not yet used tech in your groups, we wholeheartedly recommend taking some measures to keep in touch and stay plugged in to what God is doing. While not a replacement to real FaceTime, we've found a way of keeping going in the midst of what can be a busy life. Have a go and stay connected."
~ Nathan & Hannah

If you would like to find out more, take the next step and join a group or have an idea for a new group, please contact me and we can help. Get connected and stay connected, that's when we are at our very best.

~ Tim Hancock
smallgroups@lhfc.org.uk



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A REMARKABLE YEAR John Tindal

This is a story of what happened to me in 2014, and now I'm ready to share it.

A little background information to put this story in context.

My mother passed away in April 2013. Also, I think I should make it clear, I am not a person (and never have been) who seeks and must have 'experiences' of a spiritual kind. The knowledge of and the promises in the Bible, with a daily walk by faith in Jesus Christ, trusting in God, is totally sufficient. For me, 'experiences' are not needed. I never, ever thought that I would have an 'experience' because I am not that sort and I am far too small and too ordinary.

THE DREAM

In my dream, I am down the bottom of our previous garden. Our neighbour, Mr. Light, comes walking down his garden and steps over the very low part of the hedge towards me. I think, 'Oh, this is good, it'll be nice to see him again!' However, as he comes closer he is joined by approximately 7-8 other 'men' and he disappears. These 'men', who are more humanoid, spirit-like creatures, line up in front of me and are clearly out to cause me some harm. One of them steps forward and stands about 3-4 feet away from me.

He stretches out his arms towards me and begins attempting to pull out the 'inner me', my soul and spirit, and to replace it with his own evil spirit. I say to myself, 'No way mate, you're not having me!'

So I use all of my strength to resist him (I actually felt this physically). As this struggle went on I realise he is too strong for me and is going to win. At this critical point I say, 'In the name of Jesus Christ, GO AWAY!'

Instantly the dream vanishes and I wake up. I realise this was no ordinary dream at all. It was too vivid, too real. However, as you will see (I must be slow), it's a few days before I grasp its true meaning and purpose.

On Sunday 23rd February 2014, Jackie Whitehead is speaking at the church and during her sermon she talks quite a bit about dreams, which makes me remember mine. So, later, I reflect on it a great deal, thinking it through. Then I understand it!

- It is a warning, telling me I am about to go through a tough time.
- I should take great encouragement from the fact that, even in a dream, as soon as I knew I was in great trouble I called upon Jesus Christ and in the power of His name. ('...the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.' 1 John 4:4)
- Jesus answered my cry and removed the trouble instantly. So this is how I can and will go forward through the impending trial, in confidence and in His strength.
- The very simple and obvious fact that God, having kindly given me this dream/warning, shows that He knows all about it and it is under His control. Therefore I have no need to fear or worry. All I have to do is pray, call on His name, and it will be sorted.

THE TRIAL

Having had the flu, I returned to work on 31st March and at 5.00pm the boss (and owner) told me he was withdrawing my driving job, changing my hours and giving me menial tasks only. I had worked for him for 17 years as a driver. He knew me very well. This was unacceptable.

I got advice from trusted friends and on 1st April I handed my notice in – after praying about it. The General Manager heard of this, found me and talked it through for an hour and a half. He then saw the boss. At 3.00pm the three of us were in his office and the boss rescinded everything. I had my job back.

On 4th April, the works fork-lift truck hit the front of my car.

On 17th April I returned to my car in a local car park to find that the rear had been 'bashed in'.

On 21st May, driving the works lorry on a narrow country road, a van going too fast, came around the bend ahead, on the wrong side of the road, tried to squeeze past me, but there was no room. We were jammed side by side. It was quite a shock! The Police came, it was sorted out, but I was shaken up more than I would have expected.

During July and August I became aware that my health and strength had become much lower than ever before. So much so, I knew I could not do a full and proper job through the coming winter. So on 12th September I advised the boss that I wished to retire early. I did so on 31st October. The company gave me a very fine watch that I still wear. The staff gave me membership at the Ageas Bowl (Hampshire County Cricket Club) for the 2015 season.

THE VISION

On Sunday 7th December at the 9.00am service at church, I am sat at the end of a

row half way up on the left hand side. Mark has begun Communion and as he is praying I suddenly feel and think, 'Wow! He is praying in the Spirit.' It seems very special. It is the first time I had ever felt that.

Suddenly I see Jesus! He is behind me, both at the back of the aisle and simultaneously walking along a dusty road, exactly as he was 2000 years ago. He is approaching me. (I assure you this was real, even though of course I was just sat there with my eyes closed.)

I am totally stunned by the fact that He is literally here. ('Where two or three are gathered...') He comes alongside me; He stops and leans fairly heavily against me, on my left side. And then it's all over and we start Communion. I can feel the impact down my side (shoulder and left arm) where He has leant on me.

You would expect that feeling to soon subside but, strangely, it stays there all day, and of course, I was recalling this and remembering the experience throughout the whole day, full of wonder that this had happened to me!

The next morning the feeling in my side had finally gone but the memory was very vivid and remains so. That evening I continued my slow progress of reading through the New Testament when suddenly, I was struck with the words of a verse that said, 'But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.' (2 Timothy 4:17) This is exactly what He had done, incredible. What a wonderful confirmation of my experience.

Later I realised this also meant that my period of trial was over and time has proved that.

A truly remarkable year.

I would like to think that you would see in this story the strength, depth and tenderness of God's great love for even the least of His children, and in doing so, be encouraged.



Why I keep going back to Greece

My first visit to Greece to meet Malc and Trish Morgan and to see the work of Elpitha Hope was as part of a strategic team from LHFC in May 2017. I went back again leading a small team the following May and am preparing to lead another team visit this May.

Going on a mission trip is always a time of personal challenge, stretching and growth – each time different and in unexpected ways. Every time I go to Chalkida I leave another small part of my heart there.

It is so humbling to be welcomed into the temporary homes of refugees (Ritsona) – many professional people who had no choice but to flee their homes, facing dangerous and expensive journeys to reach Greece – to listen to their stories – to their hopes. A few special refugees I've met:

K – who fled from Syria just months before qualifying as a Doctor. He invited us to his Isobox (where his stethoscope hung on the wall) for a Syrian meal during Ramadan. He mentioned the one thing he'd wanted more than anything was a pillow - we bought him one the next day.

A&N – an Iranian family who have been on the camp since early 2018. Their asylum interview isn't until Nov 2019! I am looking forward to seeing them again but sad they will still be living on Ritsona when I do.

A – a precious 4 year old who I had the privilege of dedicating after her parents had been baptised in the sea.

I was "prepared" for the sad, tough stories I would hear from the refugees but I wasn't prepared for the state of the Greek

nation. I remember driving past a school – I wouldn't have been surprised to see a building looking that run down in Africa – but to see it in a mainland Greek city was a big shock. There is graffiti everywhere - more so each time I visit. As part of my second visit I was invited to lead a day of seminars in Effective Kids Ministry & Safeguarding. It was a privilege to be able to input into local churches in this way. A memorable evening was sitting in Chillbox eating delicious frozen yoghurt sundaes with a group of Greek Young People chatting about their hopes and dreams to become dentists, travel agents, teachers, doctors – with most planning to leave Greece to study in Europe. Part of each trip is praying big prayers up at the fort with the most amazing views of Chalkida and the surrounding area which has stretched and challenged my own praying back here.

Both trips have included a day in Athens – an amazing historical and modern city. 2 significant memories:

- Visiting the Areopagus and standing on Mars Hill where Paul preached to Athenians (Acts 17: 16-34) – my first time at a Biblical site.
- The original Olympic Stadium - which is also where the first ever marathon run ended. This mad British woman ran round the track – in blazing sun and temperatures in the high 30s – and then stood on the podium! This was particularly special just 4 weeks after completing my first marathon.

Talking of marathons, I ran my second in Belfast on 5 May raising money for Elpitha Hope.

Please pray for Malc & Trish as they lead Elpitha Hope and work with Greeks and refugees. Pray for the team as they prepare to go out to visit in May. And speak to me if you would like to know more about the amazing work Elpitha Hope are involved with bringing much needed hope in Greece.

~ Claire Johnson



Sponsor Claire via: www.give.net/run4greece

60 SECONDS WITH: BEV ASHTON

Bev is an 'Essex Girl' having been born in Harlow, with a twin brother and was brought up in a Christian family, being taken to a Baptist Church as a child. At the age of ten, the family moved to Farnborough where Bev eventually moved from secondary school sixth-form to Cardiff University where she studied and gained a degree in Maths and Statistics.

Whilst at school, Bev gained work experience at Farnborough Airport in the Air Traffic Control tower which stimulated an interest in her to gain employment in that field. Eyesight restrictions prevented her from working with radar screens but as part of her degree course was able to do a year work placement with NATS at the College of Air Traffic Control in Bournemouth in the Research and Development Department. Following her degree she then secured employment back there as a Research Analyst.

During her time at university Bev really grew in her faith and became involved in both the Christian Union and a church. She was baptised in her first year at university and became a small group leader. Throughout her time at uni Bev had a growing passion to study the Bible and to help others grow in their faith. Whilst on her placement year in Bournemouth, Bev attended a local Baptist Church where she met students studying at Moorlands Bible College. It was through getting to know the Moorlands Students that Bev formed an intention to go to a Bible College in the future. It was 9 years later, when a part-time job came up at NATS Scottish site in Prestwick, that Bev was able to realise this dream of going to Bible College. Bev moved up to Scotland reducing her working time to two and a half days per week leaving the other two and a half days available to study at the

International Christian College in Glasgow which was affiliated to Aberdeen University and was known for its evangelical tradition. As a result in 2012 Bev secured a BA in Theology with the emphasis on practical theology.

During this period Bev was attending Woodhill Evangelical Church in Glasgow and increasingly she found herself drawn towards discipleship and exploring ways of helping other Christians to grow in their faith. Convinced that small groups have a big part to play towards such growth, after finishing her degree in theology, Bev worked on a voluntary basis at Woodhill as the Small Groups Co-ordinator whilst continuing to work part time for NATS in Prestwick.

After 11 years at Prestwick, Bev moved south again when she got a full-time job at the Air Traffic Control Centre in Swanwick. After some research on local churches she decided to make LHFC her church family and then bought a house in the area.

Having grown up in the church Bev has always been exposed to mission and heard from those who have been called to be full time missionaries but Bev never felt this was her calling. However whilst at Woodhill, the church did a small group series based on Isaiah 58 and Bev felt challenged to step out of her comfort zone and to do something to

help those in poverty. So in April 2017 she joined a team from her Glasgow church on a mission to Uganda with Rock Projects Uganda. She is hoping to return with a team from LHFC in 2020, with possible help from our Grand 5 charity provision.

Bev is keen on cycling having cycled with her father as a child and later joining a cycle club as a teenager. In recent years she has competed in time trials, taken part in non-competitive long distance rides and joined a New Forest club for weekly club rides. Last year she took part in a two-day event around London – 'London Revolution'. This inspired her to want to attempt the Lands' End to John O'Groats cycle route this year. She will be riding this over two weeks in May/June to raise money for 'Rock Projects Uganda' in anticipation of the mission trip in 2020. If you wish to sponsor her on the ride then you can do so. Her first practice for this challenge was to ride 109 miles from Romsey to Swanage and back on a recent very hot day.

On her journey to faith Bev remembers making her first commitment at the age of ten. She admits that the Christian Union at university was a major influence in bringing her to faith. In particular she remembers being challenged by the faith of her friends and how central their faith was to their whole lives.



Now Bev is leading an LHFC small group on Thursday evenings studying the Prayer Course.

Favourite holiday destination

Lake District UK - as a youngster she remembers looking out for Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit.

Favourite food

Roast Lamb

Favourite music

Contemporary Christian music
'Casting Crowns'

Favourite TV shows

'Casualty'

Favourite film

'Toy Story'

Bad Habits

Drinking too much tea and not enough water.



Sponsor Bev via: <https://wonderful.org/fundraiser/bevsbikechallenge-e1480665>.

RECEIVE

ACTS 1:8

POWER

FROM THE

HOLY SPIRIT

AND BE MY

WITNESSES

LHFC Motto Text 2019

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