

Parenting and Christian schooling

# nurture

*Managing the  
mental health  
and well-being  
of our teens*

*Navigating the  
vaping maze*

*Growing  
responsible  
disciples in  
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# Editorial

NICOLE NYHOUSE

Above all, we encourage  
you to pray for your teens,  
and for yourself, your  
spouse, and family.



## Welcome to the March edition of *Nurture*.

I trust the year has started well for you, I hope you found some space over summer to rest and prepare for the new year and have settled into a new rhythm for 2023.

The editorial team has planned the 2023 editions of *Nurture* and we are excited to see them come together and reach our audience this year.

This edition we have a great selection of articles aimed at parents of teenagers. This is a challenging and complicated time of life for our children, and also for us as parents! We pray these articles meet you where you are at on your parenting journey, provide you with practical tips, and encourage you.

Above all, we encourage you to pray for your teens, and for yourself, your spouse, and family as you navigate the highs and lows of the teen years together.

## Nicole

Nicole is passionate about all things Christian education: particularly parent partnership and the importance of healthy associations and boards that maintain the vision of our schools. Nicole has been involved in Christian schools most of her life: as the daughter of a founding family, a student, a parent, and a staff member. She is currently serving on the Mount Evelyn Christian School (MECS) board. Nicole is married to Richard, they have three adult daughters and live in the outer east of Melbourne. Nicole is the Communications Coordinator and the Editor of *Nurture* at CEN.



# Managing the mental health and well-being of our teens

SHARON WITT

Mental health is best described as our psychological, social, and emotional well-being.





Over the past few years, the mental health and well-being of young people, particularly teens, have been significantly impacted. The most recent survey results from Mission Australia's Youth Survey, found that 49.9 % of young people were *extremely* or *very concerned* about their mental health. Significantly, 51.5% also reported that their mental health impacted their studies.

Adolescence can be a time of increased pressures: coping with puberty, fluctuating emotions, as well as managing the increased rigour of secondary school. In addition, Covid has significantly impacted the mental health and well-being of not just our teens, but many children and adults.

There is a range of things we can put in place to help our young people develop robust well-being and hopefully help them build their resilience muscle.

### Connection

We have been created for connection. God doesn't want or expect us to manage life on our own. Galatians 6:2 reminds us to "carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ". Despite many of our teens gravitating towards their social networks during adolescence, the connection with family members and other significant adults is equally important. Seeking opportunities to connect with your teen can assist in helping keep track of how your young person is managing with their well-being.

This might include:

- Catching up for a hot chocolate after school one day
- Using the opportunity of travelling in the car to chat
- Sharing about your day around the dinner table
- Completing activities together, e.g., cooking, gardening, playing sport, or walking

### Be present

In our ever-busy lives, it can be challenging to manage it all as parents. And it's easy to be distracted by life and work commitments. However, our teenagers need our presence. Even if

their behaviour and body language may suggest otherwise, they need us to be around. When they know we are around and available, this gives them a sense of well-being and the knowledge that we care.

### Keep the lines of communication open

Our teenagers communicate in several ways. Sometimes this may be in the form of a grunt as you pick them up from the school gate. Let your young person know that you are always available to listen and, more so, there is nothing so terrible that can happen to them or they can do that cannot be worked out together. Many young people struggle with their mental health alone before they reach out for help. Reassure and remind your teen that they can talk with you anytime: day or night.

**Our teenagers need our presence. Even if their behaviour and body language may suggest otherwise, they need us to be around.**

### Talents and interests

God has created us all with many gifts and talents. When we are spending time investing in these activities that bring us joy, it has the added benefit of positively impacting our well-being. Encourage your teen to pursue a range of interests and pursuits that interest them—whether that be sports, arts, or other activities. This exposes young people to varied interests and social settings which can promote positive mental health.

### Communication is key

As your teen moves through secondary school, it's important to keep the lines of communication open with your child's school and their teachers. Chances are, if you are noticing any issues with your teen's well-being at home, it is impacting their school life and studies. At the earliest signs of any issues, communicate with the relevant teachers and school counsellor. Working together to support your young person through any struggles gives them the best chance at coming through the other side with greater resilience.

Other ways to support your teen during secondary school:

- Be interested. Ask questions and engage with your teen when they choose to tell you about their day.
- Try and be present (not hovering) when your teen is completing homework. Offer support when they ask.
- Ensure they eat regular, healthy meals.
- Encourage regular exercise. Even a 20-minute brisk walk will release endorphins—our body's natural "feel good" hormones.
- Be present when your teen is going through a tough time.
- Pray with, and for, your teen regularly.

Finally, put clear and firm boundaries in place with regards to device use and online privileges. It is no coincidence that the mental health of so many teens has declined since the Internet was introduced. Being exposed to thousands of messages and content each day, as well as being "available" can have detrimental effects on our children.

If your child has access to a device, ensure you have limits in place and enforce these.

Enforce regular screen-free time and model this in your home.

Raising our next generation of young people can be challenging as we navigate this season in supporting their mental health and well-being. Yet God does not require us to do this in isolation. We are called to live in community and support one another in our role. May we all work together to raise strong, confident, and resilient teens.

Sharon has been a secondary teacher at MECS for 30 years and is a highly sought-after media commentator on issues impacting young people, parenting, and educational issues. She is a best-selling author of 18 books including the best-selling *Girlwise* and *Wiseguys* series, *Teen Talk*, and *Starting Secondary School* (co-written with Dr Michael Carr-Gregg). Sharon is the founder of *Resilient Kids Conference*, a one-day national event that brings together leading parenting and education experts.





# Navigating the vaping maze

TIM ARGALL

Seeing a group of teens in a haze of thick, yet quickly disappearing, “smoke” (while holding devices that look like small cans of deodorant) is increasingly commonplace. They are vaping, using an e-cigarette. The name of this apparatus immediately evokes a thought that vaping must be a recent phenomenon. In fact, the first e-cigarette was invented almost two decades ago, in 2003, in China. E-cigarettes entered the U.S. marketplace around 2007, and since 2014, they have been the most

used tobacco product among U.S. youth. E-cigarette use by Australians aged 14 or older, more than doubled from 2016 to 2019 and was most common among smokers aged 18–24 at 18.7% in 2020.

Alarmingly, statistics from North America since the beginning of the pandemic suggest that over a quarter of high school students have used e-cigarettes each month (not the same quarter month-by-month—suggesting a lot of casual use) and it’s likely their parents don’t even know. Vaping is easy to hide.

Unlike traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes don’t leave the tell-tale scent of tobacco. Some clues include:

- changes in a teenager’s behaviour
- cutting back on caffeine or getting frequent nosebleeds
- vape pens (they look like markers or USB flash drives), disposable flavour (JUUL)<sup>1</sup> pods lying around the house or in the garbage
- any new sweet scents in their rooms or on their clothes (since vape pods come in lots of flavours)

It prompts the question: how do we, as Christians, respond to this emergent technology? As is the case when we encounter technologies invented since the Scriptures finished being written, we find ourselves looking for practical hints and guidance from more generally principled passages in the Bible as a way of maturely acting as people of faith. When we add the responsibility of guiding children and young adults in our households towards appropriate responses, we realise how much we don't know.

Here are a couple of Scriptures to frame our thinking as we engage with some current information about vaping. They highlight how we honour God as parents and encourage the maintenance of godly habits as non-negotiables in our households.

Proverbs 22:6: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies."

It is always helpful to engage our teenagers and young adults by applying a broader context to the conversation. One of the first issues for parents to understand is exactly what an individual is taking into their body when they are vaping.

- Many vapes contain nicotine, making them very addictive.
- The nicotine in one vape can (the commonly used term for the container that the liquid comes in) = 50 cigarettes.
- If you vape you are three times as likely to take up smoking cigarettes.
- Vape aerosol is not water vapour and can contain the same harmful chemicals found in cleaning products, nail polish remover, weed killer, and bug spray.
- There are other pieces of research information that are worth noting.

Vaping is potentially less harmful to the body than cigarette smoking—smoking cigarettes involves inhaling over 700 toxic chemicals in the smoke; vaping involves inhaling a fraction of this number of toxic chemicals in vapourised form.

Those who produce vaping solutions often are not transparent about what they are selling. Sometimes they say it is nicotine-free, when there are still significant amounts of nicotine detectable upon testing. The e-cigarette industry is much less regulated than the cigarette industry (although this is likely to change with time).

The biggest risks of vaping are the unknown risks—vaping hasn't been around long enough to know the risks of long-term use. Breathing any product into your lungs unnecessarily is not ideal. Lungs have delicate tissue that is easily damaged—it's a very compelling reason not to vape. Vaping has been linked in scientific studies to serious lung disease.

Currently in most jurisdictions, it is unlawful to vape in schools and unlawful to sell e-cigarette products to minors. One of the reasons for this has to do with the effects of nicotine, which is a usual constituent of most vaping solutions. Nicotine is highly addictive for young brains, and it can cause long-lasting negative effects on brain development. Nicotine changes the way brain synapses are formed in young people. This can harm your ability to pay attention and learn and affect your mood and memory—none of which we want for our children.

Tips for a healthy discussion:

- Choose the right time and place—don't just stumble into it when you find something or are annoyed.
- Teenagers and young adults respond better when you appeal to their better judgement; they can be independent thinkers and need not be influenced by their peer group.
- Ask open-ended questions that encourage participation. If you're genuinely curious, your child will be less likely to get defensive.

Key messages when talking with your children about vaping:

- Vaping is potentially less harmful than smoking, but only for smokers who want to quit.
- Vaping is not for non-smokers, especially children and young people.
- Some vapes contain nicotine (often in large amounts) and nicotine is a highly addictive substance which is very hard to stop using once you've started.
- Vaping can have an adverse effect on your physical activity and sports, intellectual capacity, health, and wellness.
- Some of the flavours may be very harmful because they are being directly applied to developing lung tissue. With so many flavours on the market, we may not know what effect some will have until it is way too late.
- Take the opportunity to reiterate what it is that you wish them not to put at risk (long-term brain development, memory ability, and mood stability), rather than just highlighting the negative aspects.

In the end, in Christian households, we are seeking to bring up young followers of Jesus. We are seeking to ensure that their developing discipleship includes skilling in how to make wise, sensible, and (for their life-long well-being) sustainable decisions that help them rather than hinder them long-term.

1. JUUL is the trademarked name of the flavour pods produced by Marlboro, the multinational tobacco cigarette producer. Marlboro's worldwide brand value was estimated at \$100 million Australian dollars in 2019.

Tim has been the Executive Principal at Donvale Christian College since 2016. He's held senior leadership roles in five schools across two states over almost three decades. He's married to Kris and they have three adult children. Chatting, writing, and imagining are three of his favourite things to do; the fact these intersect with his role at Donvale makes Tim incredibly thankful for the way God works!





# GROWING RESPONSIBLE DISCIPLES IN OUR HOMES

ANDREW MANNING



“It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don’t use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that’s how freedom grows.”

(Galatians 5:13-14 MSG)



**A**t Bayside Christian College, we believe that to have learned something means that the concepts, abilities, and understandings gained through the learning process become readily available to us in new situations. To have learned means that the way we see the world has changed and that we have been transformed by our learning. Thus, the foundational and inalterable truth is that education is fundamentally about transformation.

One of the foundational learning journeys for students at the College is the Bayside Way. The Bayside Way was developed in response to an interesting problem: how to write a code of conduct for a community where 99% of its people consistently do the right thing. It is a strengths-based approach that seeks to acknowledge the great work of the community majority rather than acquiesce to a minority. The Bayside Way is an adaptation of a body of work that began at Marrara Christian College many years ago. While its presentation has been adapted to reflect the Bayside community, it remains faithful to the biblical foundation and essential learnings that the original concept was based on.

The Bayside Way provides a common language and framework that staff and parents can use to help students develop and mature. This learning journey has its genesis with parents, who have been instilling these expectations in their children from a very early age. The scriptural foundation stems from the great commandment to love, this being fundamental to the integrity of the Bayside Way in its application at the College.

The Bayside Way consists of four expectations:

- Respect: Called to be in a loving relationship with others.
- Responsibility: As God's image-bearers, we are responsible before Him.
- Maximising Your Learning: Whatever you do, glorify Him.
- Kindness: We serve the Lord by serving others.

These four expectations are things that we, as a Christian learning community, expect every member to do at all times, including staff as they model these

**We choose to place our focus on identifying opportunities to bless and encourage students who do the right thing in being respectful, responsible, maximising learning, and being kind ...**

expectations. They are intentionally chosen to be recognisable and broadly acceptable, thereby enabling all members of the community to comfortably adhere to them. The Bayside Way acknowledges the fact that these expectations may not necessarily be expected in all situations beyond the College but ensures that every member of the community knows and understands the way they are expected to conduct themselves at the College.

As it is a strengths-based approach, the Bayside Way aims to recognise that by far the majority of our community are respectful, responsible, maximising learning, and kind most of the time. By acknowledging this, we can affirm and encourage positive expressions of conduct amongst the majority. We choose to place our focus on identifying opportunities to bless and encourage students who do the right thing in being respectful, responsible, maximising learning, and being kind while simultaneously using the language of the four expectations to help students understand what the root concern is when something inappropriate happens. Being able to provide a language and help students articulate that a particular behaviour wasn't demonstrating RESPECT (or any of the four expectations) enables them to reframe their thinking and the behaviour they are choosing.

The long-term goal of the Bayside Way is to nurture students so that they choose, motivated by their relationship with Christ, to interact and engage with others from a posture of love. The deep hope is that, over time, as students grow in their relationship with Christ, they desire to deeply care for others, their surroundings, and themselves.

This is a long-term investment into the character of students in the recognition that self-discipline does not spring from fear or a promise of reward, but rather a recognition of what is right and a desire to make right choices as a response to the call to become God's person in this

cultural and historical moment, equipped and willing to actively engage in the world.

The deep hope is that students will grow and be transformed, developing a character that reflects God's image. Thus, the Bayside Way seeks to assist students to identify the right actions and motivations, recognise them privately or publicly, and encourage consistency in those behaviours as individuals and the community as a collective.

This lofty vision is underpinned by a number of assumptions. Firstly, that students are intelligent and capable individuals who, in the main, know what the right thing to do is, but might not yet have the self-discipline to enact it. Secondly, that we all have deep longings that we thirst after and, in the pursuit of these things, at times we make wrong decisions and resort to wrong behaviours. And thirdly, we can learn to make the right choices and exhibit appropriate behaviours by practising them in a context where we are able to safely make mistakes and be held accountable for them in a nurturing way.

All this happens in a learning environment in which students have freedom within boundaries. This freedom enables students to develop, grow and experience the joys and frustrations of living as part of a community while at the same time protecting the individual and the group. It is our hope that by providing this space all students will grow in their awareness of, and care for, others and themselves as children of God, valued and loved, and that this awareness and care will manifest in actions motivated by a love for others and for God.

Andrew was a passionate primary teacher before becoming a principal. Beginning his teaching career in Queensland, Andrew took his first principal posting with NT Christian Schools where he served for 16 years. Andrew is currently the Principal at Bayside Christian College in Victoria.



# CEN *news*



MICHELLE DEMPSEY  
CEO, CEN

**What does it look like for us in 2023 to be followers of Christ? What does it look like in communities that are messy and complex?**

Over the summer break, my family and I went camping at the mouth of the Glenelg river, on the border of Victoria and SA. Further along the coast into SA, is where many shipwrecks have occurred over the years. Many in the 1800-1900s. We visited a small museum which pays tribute to the shipwrecks and I enjoyed reading the stories, many of which were great stories of survival. There was one shipwreck where tonnes of potatoes were washed ashore and local villagers came out to collect the spuds, but there were so many that the potatoes rotted on the shoreline for weeks. Not a great smell for the coastline.

One of the stories was particularly tragic, the SS Admella, a passenger steamship that collided with a submerged reef in the early hours of the morning on the 6th August, 1859. In this disaster, 89 people lost their lives and 14 of those were children. It's known as the worst maritime disaster in Australian history. I found it quite sobering upon our return home to find ourselves singing the classic hymn; "It Is Well With My Soul" in church. This song, of course, was written after the loss of Spafford's five children: his son in a fire and his four daughters in a shipwreck. Despite the tragedy in his life, he was able to say "it is well, with my soul". His love for Jesus, his faith, held him through the darkest days of his life.

We all have a story, don't we? And all of our stories are different. Some are stories of great hope and joy, others are of painful loss, brokenness, tragedy, failed relationships, and despair. Whatever our story, there is a story that is entwined with ours, which offers us strength, hope, redemption, and transformation, that we can say, "it is well with my soul".

This year at CEN, we are focusing on God's story and the way that it impacts our personal story, and the story of Christian education. Our world continues to change, to the point that it can seem quite unfamiliar at times. This is a challenge for us as individuals but also for us as communities which make up Christian schools. What does it look like for us in 2023 to be followers of Christ? What does it look like in communities that are messy and complex? What does it mean to be those mandated to love Christ and love others in the midst of the challenges? Perhaps it's by simply starting with knowing, deeply, that because of your relationship with Jesus, it is well with your soul.

Cheers,

*Michelle*

P.S. Just before this *Nurture* has gone to print, I've discovered that Torrens Valley Christian School in Adelaide actually has one of the original three bells of the shipwrecked SS Admella housed in the school! I find that amazing!

## New Principals

We would love to welcome the following principals into their new roles at the start of 2023:

- Damien Gainsford, Araluen Christian School, NT
- Joshua McEwan, Covenant College, Vic
- Paul Arundell, Dubbo Christian School, NSW
- Stuart Kent, Launceston Christian School, Tas
- Rachel Richardson, Mid North Christian College, SA
- Mark Twine, Nhulunbuy Christian College, NT
- Luke Willsmore, Palmerston Christian School, NT
- Meg Story, Southern Highlands Christian School, NSW
- Emily Brookes, Torrens Valley Christian School, SA



# Thinking GOD'S THOUGHTS after Him

PETER SPENCE

Many people believe that education is values-neutral; that if education is just about teaching facts and skills, then it isn't promoting any particular view. This could not be further from the truth. Every education system is based on a belief system: a way of seeing the world.

In our Christian schools, we believe that what learning is really about is discovering God's world, and so all learning needs to point students to Jesus Christ. With this being the case, teaching and learning must have a Christian perspective.

Johannes Kepler, a famous scientist, said that human ideas and discoveries were just thinking God's thoughts after Him, since all knowledge comes from God (Proverbs 2:6-8).

Scripture puts it this way: "For from Him and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen" (Romans 11:36). The purpose of Christian education, then, is to "guide each student to discover and understand the God-given meaning and structure of the world and their place in it" (NICE, 2015, p. 7).

This question, "Where does knowledge come from?" is a big one in education. It's a heart question that's important for good Christian schooling, because if all knowledge comes from God, then the world can't be rightly understood without God. It is Jesus who gives meaning and purpose to learning and life. All knowledge and understanding that doesn't lead to Jesus is inherently flawed.

Knowing that all learning should point to Jesus, Christian schools aim to weave this Christian perspective into the whole flavour of their education programmes. This doesn't mean that every single lesson has a specific Christian perspective, but many do and the overarching reason for learning is grounded in a Christian worldview.

When children learn to write, for example, they are discovering God's world. Teachers talk about the why, when, and how to write, along with the importance of careful use of the written word. The importance of

writing is seen by the fact that writing is primarily how God has chosen to communicate with us through the Bible. As teachers read and study stories with children, the motives and actions of characters are examined from a Christian perspective of right and wrong. Children are discovering God's world.

The logic, order, and beauty of mathematics and science are a reflection of God's own character and part of the very fabric of God's world. Every subject is, at its core, discovering God's world.

Understanding that all knowledge comes from God, and that learning is thinking God's thoughts after Him, provides a solid foundation for serving God and others. It isn't about squeezing a Bible verse into a lesson, but understanding the patterns of His creation, His big picture. Our schools, as learning communities, seek to discover God's world in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, not competition. It's a spirit that seeks to be a useful member of society, pursuing academic excellence whilst being intellectually humble. By learning to discover God's world, our children are given a great basis for thinking and acting Christianly. They will be learning for understanding, learning for appreciation, and learning for responsibility, moving towards "a real and thoughtful response as to how they can serve God as life-long learners and responsive disciples" (NICE, 2015, p. 9).

## Reference

National Institute for Christian Education. (2015). *Transformation by design: A curriculum development resource for Christian schools*. National Institute for Christian Education.

Peter has over 25 years of experience as a classroom teacher—primary and secondary—and in educational leadership. Peter and his wife live in Tamworth, NSW. Developing, maintaining, and growing Christian schools where Christ is the centre of all learning has been a passion since he was introduced to the movement of Christian schooling by Dr Noel Weeks at university.





# Having careers conversations with our children

AMELIA KOOLE

Adults love to ask children “What do you want to do when you grow up?”. Their hope-filled, optimistic visions and the way that God creates each child uniquely and for a purpose can fill us with delight.



I've noticed that for many students this question sometimes becomes one that they would rather avoid, largely because they think they need to know the answer and feel anxious that they don't. I would estimate that by Year 10, roughly 30% of students know what occupation they wish to pursue after they leave school, and by the start of Year 12 it may have increased to 60%.

It is important for students to know that they don't need it all sorted. In fact, we often joke that many people their parents' age still don't know "what they want to do".

So how can we walk with our young adults at this time in their lives as they face decisions around what to do when they leave school?

Firstly, I like to emphasise the word *informed* in my practice and teaching. It's important to make an informed choice about the next steps, with a view to a specific future career, or simply to the very next step in front of them such as which secondary pathway to take.

What information do they need before making these decisions?

**1. Information about themselves.** In Year 10 careers, one of the first things I have students doing is a Myers Briggs-based personality profiling quiz. There are many excellent personality theories, but this one is relatively easy for students of this age to engage with. It is emphasised that the aim is not to put people in boxes but that the test results provide useful signposts to understanding ourselves better and the types of jobs that might be a better fit for our personality. Also, as Jesus would have us do, they can help us understand, and have compassion for, one another's differences. We *need* each other's different strengths and qualities to function as a team in the workplace and as a community. Through personality profiling students start to think about whether they might be energised by working with many people or would prefer to work on their own. One student might identify that they are an "ideas" person who likes to discuss possibilities and theories, while another realises that they prefer to be

given a clear directive and do that job with great attention to detail.

## **2. Information about their interests.**

Students may struggle to decisively say they would be interested in a particular job when they don't know anything about it. This is where work experience can be invaluable. Talking to family and friends who may be employed in a profession of interest can be of great benefit: we call this an informational interview. The Internet is a rich source of information with many excellent careers websites that include videos of interviews with a wide range of people from different industries. If students are still undecided as to a career interest in their final year of school, much of the conversation can be around focusing on their next step. What do they enjoy learning about? Be careful of asking them what they "love", it is often too strong a word for a subject at school! However, if students can identify a subject that they find engaging—the content is easy to remember, and they catch themselves talking animatedly about it—this can be a signpost to possible further study options.

**3. Information about their values.** What do they value in a job? Is it helping people rather than making lots of money? Is it status in the community? Is it the ability to work independently, or have a stable, secure job? Do they want to be free to share their Christian faith with those around them? Rather than asking the question, "What do you want to do?", you could ask, "Who do you want to be?" or "What sort of person do you want to be?". What do they value in themselves? Do they want to be someone who is caring, welcoming, problem solving? Most people would contend that seeing their job as making others' lives better in some way is a significant source of motivation and brings a sense of purpose and fulfillment to their lives. At MECS we are privileged to be able to freely share with our young people that real fulfillment comes through loving God and loving our neighbour (Mark 12:30–31). It seems that no matter one's faith perspective, there is general consensus in this regard.

**Our conversations are important; ideas are bounced around, rejected, and sparks ignited. Our young people need older, experienced people to have these career conversations with.**

**4. Information about the workforce and future job growth.** Students should know what the predicted job growth will be for their chosen industry, particularly if they value job security. Which jobs will be most in demand in the future? While it is important that students follow their interests and passions, these pragmatic discussions are just as vital. The websites at the end of this article contain useful information around job outlook.

Our conversations are important; ideas are bounced around, rejected, and sparks ignited. Our young people need older, experienced people to have these career conversations with. They need to hear our life stories; how we got to where we are now; how we may have started on one path and by a chance encounter with someone, we ended up on another. They need to know that they don't have to have it all sorted, and it is never too early or too late to think about what "we want to do when we grow up".

## **Careers website suggestions:**

<https://joboutlook.gov.au/>  
<https://www.yourcareer.gov.au/>

Amelia has served at MECS for 24 years where she also attended as a student (along with her husband, Jerome). Their three children also go/went to MECS. She is currently the Senior School and Careers Coordinator. She has a passion for helping students find solutions when they are feeling stuck, and enjoys conversations that allow for deeper digging. She and her family attend Discovery Church in Mount Evelyn and enjoy the gift of being part of a strongly connected school/church/family community.



# Good subject choices

CARLY BROUWER





Remember at the end of the day, God has a plan for your children. If the path takes a little longer, or it's a bit bumpy, that's another chance for them to learn and grow. Enjoy this chance to help them explore their pathway, but don't just watch as they naively try to navigate the road themselves.



There's a long-running joke in my family that if you want to know how to do something, search WikiHow. So when faced with guiding students into good subject choices, I thought "Why not?". Lo and behold, there IS actually a page dedicated to choosing your subjects in senior schooling and the advice it gives is logical, helpful, and aligned with what I know to be true, both from theory and experience. Advice that you can gently use when chatting with your child about their pathway through schooling. You can read the full wikiHow article here: [www.wikihow.com/Choose-the-Right-Subjects-at-School](http://www.wikihow.com/Choose-the-Right-Subjects-at-School) Here is a brief summary.

- 1. Set your goals.** Students should think about where they want to be going after school, and use the subjects as pathways to accomplish that goal.
- 2. Goldilocks rules.** Subject too hard? They will give up. Subject too easy? They will be bored. Find that subject that is a stretch, but in their grasp.
- 3. Do what you like.** No, literally. Students should do the subjects they enjoy. They will find their motivation and outcomes will be higher.
- 4. Meet the requirements.** ATAR? Numeracy, literacy, and ICT ticks? University or TAFE prerequisites? Make sure they do the subjects that are essential for gaining different qualifications. Can you do a blended mix in Years 11 & 12—some academic/uni-style and some technical/TAFE-style coursework (some states have this option)?
- 5. Do your research.** How many assignments? How much work? Is there an exam? What's the course about?

Find out what they are signing up to so there are no nasty surprises.

- 6. Talk it over.** Choosing subjects can be overwhelming and daunting. Encourage your child to chat to someone they trust and listen to advice from respected sources.

Remember at the end of the day, God has a plan for your children. If the path takes a little longer, or it's a bit bumpy, that's another chance for them to learn and grow. Enjoy this chance to help them explore their pathway, but don't just watch as they naively try to navigate the road themselves. Talk to them, encourage them to knock on doors, urge them to take steps into unknown territory, and venture out of their comfort zone. Walk with them on this road as much as you are able, and above all, pray with them and for them. It's a big, scary world out there, but they don't walk it alone. God hasn't designed it to be like that. He's made a community and collective village of wisdom to impart and nurture and encourage. The future generation is in our hands desperately needing our learned wisdom, experience, and encouragement. Chat to your child today, about the destination tomorrow!

Carly is a Science Teacher and the Pathways Coordinator at Calvin Christian School. She is passionate about helping young people find and use their God-given gifts to actively engage in community with purpose. Having recently returned to university to study career development, Carly is keen to share her understanding and motivate others to grow so they feel equipped to enter, adapt, and flourish in the ever-changing world of work.



# Where are they now?



## NICHOLAS MCLEAN CLASS OF 2001 CHAIRO CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Since I was a young boy, I have known that Jesus is my Lord and Saviour. I have had many questions and worries throughout my life, but I am thankful that even when I didn't receive the answers I desired, I didn't doubt that our Sovereign God had everything in control. There are many people who played a part in building my faith, including my incredible family, but one of the biggest factors was experiencing 13 years of education at Chairo. This school taught me many truths, the greatest being that absolute truth is a pronoun.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

I still fondly remember so many experiences from my time at Chairo. These include: regular praise and worship throughout primary school (I loved singing), weekly "tank time" prayer sessions with some classmates in a Bren Gun Carrier (a story for another time), staff who genuinely cared for me and taught me the gospel (too many to name), and classmates who encouraged me in my faith (a real blessing).

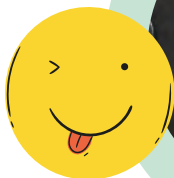
Each of these experiences, and many more, played a part in moulding me into who I am today. So, I shouldn't be surprised that, despite it not being a profession I considered while at school, I would become a teacher myself and return to Christian education. It is my prayer that God can use me to help grow the faith of my students, the way that my teachers did for me.

This year my son started Prep at Chairo and if his experience is half as good as mine, I know he will be set up well for his future.

Nicholas is currently serving at Chairo Christian School, Pakenham campus, as Head of Senior School.



*Nick at Chairo.*



*Nick's son Walt at Chairo.*



# BOOK REVIEW

PETER WEARY

Answer some really big questions that people ask in a way that is clear, thoughtful, and easy to read with Chris Morphew's books: *How Do We Know That Christianity Is Really True?*, *What Happens When We Die?*, *Why Does God Let Bad Things Happen?*, *Who Am I and Why Do I Matter?*

There are lots of questions people ask where the answer doesn't really matter. (What is for dinner? Should I buy the red shirt or the blue shirt?) But there are other questions where the answers really do matter. (What happens when we die? Is Christianity really true? Do I matter?) Chris Morphew is an Australian author and a school chaplain who seeks to answer some really big questions that people ask in a way that is clear, thoughtful, and easy to read. (He has also authored some of the *Zac Power* books). Chris has written books that help answer these really important questions. The books are: *How Do We Know That Christianity Is Really True?*, *What Happens When We Die?*, and *Why Does God Let Bad Things Happen?*. He

takes these questions seriously and gives winsome, sensitive, and theologically-sound answers that people will find engaging as he helps readers think through these serious, difficult, and important questions. Chris works through the questions that people ask and then explains what the Bible has to say about these and many other questions. He covers topics like:

- Does God actually care about my suffering?
- Will the world be this way forever?
- Investigating the empty tomb
- How do I get eternal life with God?

These books are written for a teenage audience and are approximately 80 pages and 10 chapters in length. They would be

appropriate to give to children to read by themselves, to work through with a parent, or to use as a family devotion. They are also good for adults to read. Chris has a new book out called *Who Am I and Why Do I Matter?*. These are questions that teenagers (and others) ask all the time, and if this book is as good and helpful as his previous books, the reader will be well "fed", with solid answers to these significant questions. At Carinya we want to say to students over and over that they are personal creations of a purposeful God, and therefore we matter because we are made in the image of God: we are made by Jesus and for Him. This gives our lives meaning and purpose as we seek to live for Jesus in our lives and learning. I would recommend these books to teenagers and families who want good answers to big questions.

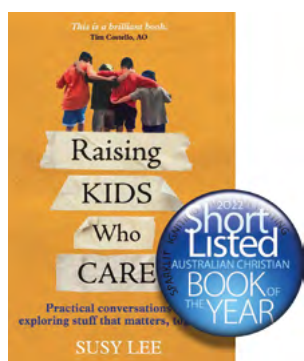
Peter is the Deputy Principal at Carinya Christian School, Tamworth, where he has served in various roles for 19 years. He started as a primary teacher and has taught in many upper primary and lower high school classes.





# a few things ...

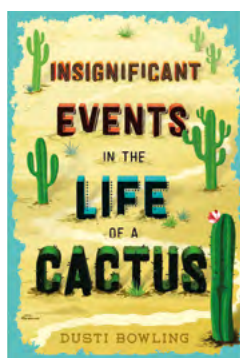
A selection of books for teens.



## Raising Kids Who Care

by Susy Lee

How do we encourage kids to talk with us about even the trickiest issues? Talking about the stuff that matters with your kids is not easy, but communication is the best tool we have for life and love.



## Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus

by Dusti Bowling

Told in a funny and light-hearted tone, the story tells the life of a 13-year-old special girl who was raised to believe that she is no less capable than any other girl her age. It deals with more than one difficult topic with grace and humour.



## When We Are Invisible

by Claire Zorn

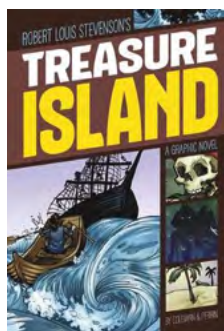
This sequel to *The Sky So Heavy* details the struggles of Aussie life in the midst of a nuclear winter. *When We Are Invisible* is a fast-paced dystopia with high stakes and big questions about much more than just face-value danger.



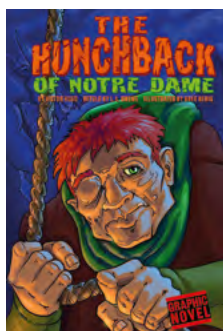
## Graphic Novels

Graphic novels can attract and motivate kids to read, particularly reluctant readers (especially boys—a group traditionally difficult to reach). Many of the classics are now published in this format.

### Treasure Island



### The Hunchback of Notre Dame



### The Secret Garden



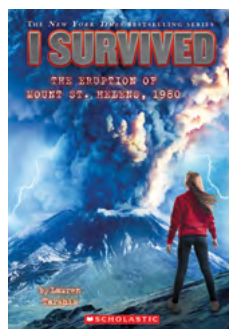
### Death on the Nile



This article gives information to understand the concept of graphic novels. It will also help in knowing which graphic novels are worth investing in. [www.scool.scholastic.com.au/schoolzone/toolkit/assets/pdfs/Using\\_Graphic\\_Novels\\_Children\\_Teens.pdf](http://www.scool.scholastic.com.au/schoolzone/toolkit/assets/pdfs/Using_Graphic_Novels_Children_Teens.pdf)

## Series

### I Survived



### Ted Dekker



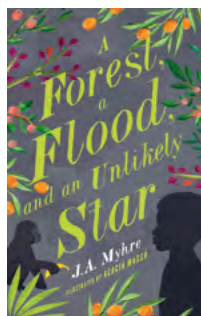
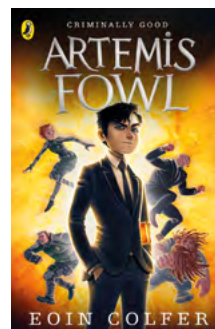
### Nancy Drew



### Alex Rider



### Artemis Fowl



### The Rwendigo Tales by J. A. Myhre

These are written for children and teens who love reading and learning about faraway and different parts of the world, while relating to characters and issues that seem much closer to home.

Margaret has been the Teacher Librarian at Tyndale Christian School for many years. She is always eager to promote the importance of the library in every school community and she is passionate about encouraging a love of reading for all ages.







# WELLINGTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

## 40th Anniversary

The story of WCS has journeyed through seasons of growth and seasons of struggle. One thing has remained throughout; this is a school where every child has learned about God's world and their place in His story. As an open enrolment school, we know how very important this is.



The small rural town of Wellington in NSW is celebrating 40 years of Christian education this year. Since 1982 Wellington Christian School has been a place of nurture, love, and safety for students growing up in the shadow of Mt Arthur, beside the mighty Macquarie-Wambul River.

Our heritage is a common story within the CEN family. A passionate and committed group of Christian parents gathered together and moved mountains to build a unique school for their town. Their vision was for children to learn about the world with a deep understanding of the Creator and His plan for them. They wanted a school that allowed them to continue their God-given mandate to train up their children in God's ways. They literally built the school with their own hands, brick by 1980s blonde brick, sacrificing financially to do so. And so, it began.

The story of WCS has journeyed through seasons of growth and seasons of struggle. One thing has remained throughout; this is a school where every child has learned about God's world and their place in His story. As an open enrolment school, we know how very important this is.

In 2022 we celebrated not only our anniversary but God's work in rebuilding the school in more ways than one. In 2013 the board of Dubbo Christian School, now known as Berakah Christian Education, agreed to take over Wellington Christian School. Enrolments had dropped significantly over the previous few years and in 2014 classes began with 14 primary students. Today we have 80 students and climbing! Our school community of staff and parents have once again become a hub of support and care for many families. Our buildings are gradually

being refurbished to become cutting-edge learning spaces for 21st century education.

WCS is a place where children are seen, known, valued, and supported. Staff and parents work together to help children grow and flourish. There are many children here today whose parents attended the school. And so, God's story continues!

We will celebrate our 40th anniversary in May 2023 when our new learning hub and community spaces are complete. We give God the glory for His provision of a school that is a beacon of light in this town. It will be wonderful to celebrate together next year!

Jo Blatch,  
Principal at Wellington  
Christian School



### Anniversary Events:

- 19 May - Open day tours at WCS
- 20 May - Reunion high tea/gathering
- 21 May - Thanksgiving service/lunch





# Mount Evelyn Christian School

## 50th Anniversary



**50** years! Fifty years is a good chunk of time. To keep a school growing and expanding for fifty years is no easy feat. MECS has done just that!

I enjoy painting; putting that final coat of paint on a room and then looking back at how fresh it looks is particularly satisfying. My poor husband groans when I bring out the paint brushes, as he knows he has to go over the foundation of the walls first. I know that without his excellent work preparing the foundation, my paintwork would not look half as good. I know the same can be said about our founding members here at MECS, we are reaping the benefits of their hard work.

In the mid-1950s some Christian parents dreamed of an education built on Christian values with a Christian perspective for their children. In the 1960s they started to actively raise funds for this massive task. In 1964, the pioneers formed the association for Christian Education Mount Evelyn Inc. and from there the work really accelerated. In 1970 they purchased a beautiful six-hectare property and finally on February 3rd 1973 after 19 years of hard work, fundraising, and many prayers, MECS opened with three teachers and 80 students from Prep to Year 6.

Today MECS is still striving to deliver Christ-centred learning which has Jesus Christ at the centre of all that we do. In 2023, we have over 700 students to love and educate across Kindergarten to Year 12 at our Mount Evelyn campus. Our school is beautifully maintained with facilities and resources our founding families would have only dreamed of! We also have responsibility for Ranges TEC, our Lilydale campus, which offers

quality vocational education and has over 80 students. Ranges TEC has just celebrated 10 years of operation in 2022 and is a testament to our desire to see all students flourishing in their giftedness. Our great God has been faithful to this school community over the years.

We have been blessed with Narelle Sketcher's leadership over the past 10 years as she has guided us with her love and grace that only God can give through building extensions, staff changes, lockdowns, and much more. As we say goodbye to Narelle at the end of 2023, I know that God already has our next principal hand-picked.

As we will be celebrating fifty years of God's faithfulness this year, we will have many opportunities for you to come and join us. If you are a past student or staff member of MECS, we would like to personally invite you to come along to our Open Day on Saturday May 6th, from 10am to 1pm. Come and have a

look through our beautiful grounds and classrooms, and enjoy the activities and food available.

We thank God for the vision He gave our founding families many years ago. More recently, this has been expressed as "Seeking the Kingdom of God in Education"—a vision that God has blessed and seen fit to grow. May we always continue to give God the glory in all that we do here at MECS and elsewhere as we serve Him faithfully in Christian education.

### Anniversary Events

- 30 Mar - Student Celebration Fun Day
- 6 May - Alumni invited to our Open Day to catch up with old friends
- 13 Aug - Celebration afternoon tea (past and present principals/board members and association members)
- 25 Nov - Celebration Evening (whole school community)

Jenny Taylor,  
Community Relations Officer



# ALIENS and digital worship

DANIEL SIH

Imagine this scenario.

Aliens come to earth. We can't see them but they can observe us. They make conclusions about what we believe by observing what we do. How do we spend our time and what does this say about who or what we care about most?

When I think about this scenario in my own life, I find it somewhat confronting, for my habits do not always align with my religious beliefs—particularly my digital habits. Like many of us, I spend a lot of time online, some days more than I spend eating, sleeping, and exercising combined. If an extra-terrestrial were to observe our digital habits (as unlikely as that might be), I imagine they would find them perplexing:

**I was busy and reactive. My outer life was so busy that my inner life couldn't catch up. I realised that my relationship with the online world was out of whack and that my phone had spiritual power over me. Like an idol, it was demanding more and giving less, leaving me somewhat diminished.**

"These humans are obsessed by their glowing rectangles. They start each day affectionately stroking bright objects and continue gazing at them day and night. What are these objects and why do humans get so much pleasure from them? They must somehow be their gods."

A few years ago, I became uncomfortable with how much time I was spending online and the cost it was having on my life. I was online for work and online for pleasure. I was busy and reactive. My outer life was so busy that my inner life couldn't catch up. I realised that my relationship with the online world was out of whack and that my phone had spiritual power over me. Like an idol, it was demanding more and giving less, leaving me somewhat diminished.

As a pastor, I realised that my theology was sound but my habits were increasingly pagan. Rather than begin each day with the Bible, I was starting and ending with Google—giving the gods of the Internet the first fruits of my time. Rod Dreyer summarised my conundrum succinctly:

Technology itself is a kind of liturgy that teaches us to frame our experiences in the world in certain ways and that, if we aren't careful, profoundly distorts our relationship

to God, to other people, and to the material world — and even our self-understanding. (p.220)

In other words, the tech-choices we make for ourselves and our families are a discipleship issue because our behaviours shape our beliefs. Technology, in its right place, is wonderful, necessary, and of great value, but let's be aware of the digital liturgy of our lives. Let's pay attention to what we do with our eyes, how we use our bodies, and shape our time. Then if aliens do arrive, they might see something different in the way we live our lives—how we casually unplug from our glowing rectangles to make space to be still, to love others, and lift our eyes to the heavens in the worship of the one true God.

Daniel is the award-winning author of *Spacemaker: How to Unplug, Unwind and Think Clearly in the Digital Age*. He also writes and speaks about kids and technology. See [www.spacemakers.com.au](http://www.spacemakers.com.au) and [www.raisinghumans.au](http://www.raisinghumans.au).



Quote: Dreher, R. (2019). *The benedict option: A strategy for Christians in a post-Christian nation*. Sentinel.





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