



## Preaching for First Generation Christians: Nothing dumb about it *Pastor Paul Aasman, Missionary*

“Dumb down” can be a dumb expression. It is used occasionally in relation to preaching at Streetlight Christian Church, and to me, it communicates two things (which the speaker does not necessarily intend): arrogance and contempt. Maybe I’m just too sensitive.

Preaching at Streetlight adapts to the people who are being addressed. The biblical authors also wrote in a style and at a level that matched the people they were writing for. At Streetlight, we want to bring the gospel simply, yet deeply, personally and powerfully.

There are three special features about preaching at Streetlight that come to mind. First, many people have very little biblical literacy - they don’t know the story of the Bible well. One can make a casual reference to David and Goliath (because most people know that story), but you cannot refer to Jacob and Esau, Saul and Samuel, or David and Bathsheba without telling the story. So preaching tends to stick to the text and illustrations come from known stories outside the Bible and there is not much cross-referencing within the Bible.

Closely related to this is that people have limited doctrinal literacy. Now, all members have been carefully instructed in the teachings of the Bible, and after becoming members, catechism classes continue. We are witnessing a growing biblical and reformed discernment among members, that is, a natural screening of ideas and behaviour through doctrinal filters, but it takes time. Being renewed in the thinking of your mind doesn’t just happen. It develops. Consequently, preaching needs to shed technical language, and when doctrine is touched on in a sermon, it is carefully and thoroughly grounded on the text. We are cautious about beginning catechism preaching too because for many people, that is raising human ideas over the Bible. So we preach doctrinal series without reading the Heidelberg Catechism.

A third special feature about preaching at Streetlight is obvious for a mission church: The preaching includes an open call to conversion. Of course, there should be a call to conversion for all churches, in the sense that people who are living in a relationship with God still need to be called to daily conversion. But while I address the congregation as brothers and sisters, I also address friends who are visiting the congregation and who openly speak of their struggles to come to faith and who have not yet developed a trust relationship with Jesus Christ and the triune God. The preaching is a tremendous opportunity to offer them the comfort of grace and press on them the need to turn their lives around.

I’ve been preaching for five years at Streetlight. It has been a great adventure for me to learn and adapt my preaching. Bringing the message to a congregation of new Christians mixed with visitors who are not Christians has meant that my preaching has to adapt. And there’s nothing dumb about it.

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# NEWSLETTER

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“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven.”

*Matthew 5: 14 - 16*

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## BOARD REPORT *Henry Nienhuis, Vice-Chair*

One is a lonely number especially if you see in front of you a crowd of people and you have some misgivings about going in alone. Not so when you enter the Streetlight Community Church. On any Sunday evening there will be around 70 people in attendance and the overall atmosphere is one of warmth, even though the weather may be cool and cloudy. The greeters at the door welcome all who enter into the assembly hall. There is a fairly noisy chatter in the room prior to the beginning of the service. Anyone who is new or newer will receive a special welcome that is heartfelt and meaningful. The fellowship of believers is felt by all. If you haven’t been to a Streetlight worship service you are encouraged to see and experience for yourself. One is a lonely number, but remember one and one makes two and you will surely feel a part of the communion at Streetlight in a very short time.

The Board has been busy with various matters pertaining to the SCC. Especially the evening services have been quite full and there is a growing need for a larger assembly hall. Furthermore, there is also a need for more rooms for the various clubs and other gatherings. As a result, the board has an ongoing agenda item regarding expansion. The present facilities are quite old but well centered within the Beasley neighbourhood. However, there is little room for expansion, little room for parking, and little room for outdoor activities. A number of options are being looked at so keep posted.

The board continues to solicit your prayers for the future of Streetlight. Not only are their physical needs (bricks and mortar) but also other needs not to mention financial ones. One of the biggest concerns is leadership...or at least, the need for future leaders, particularly future elders and deacons. There is also ongoing needs for volunteers, e.g., in musical accompaniment, in bus driving, in leadership for some of the clubs and other activities.

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There is a need for both material and spiritual growth. Streetlight is a vibrant mission church and there is much evidence of zeal and dedication by the members and by the supporting communities. We would be neglectful if we did not recognize the great support that is there internally. And we are very thankful that the Lord has blessed SCC with many people who come regularly, and faithfully and who make the worship service a pleasure to witness and participate in. One is a lonely number, but not at Streetlight: "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Matt. 18: 20.



### **Bert Hills Missing** *Hilco de Haan, Mission Worker*

For those who come to Streetlight frequently, Bert Hills was a well known man. He was an active member at Streetlight and Bert and his wife Lisa are an important part of the Streetlight fellowship. On Sunday, January 30, he kissed his wife goodbye to go to the variety store around the corner. As he was used to he would say to his wife: "I'll be right back". Bert, however, did not come back and the next day (after 24 hours) his wife Lisa filed a missing persons report.

On the following Tuesday the Hamilton police launched a full scale search. Search parties with dog teams checked the downtown area. The investigation was very thorough. Everybody who is involved with Streetlight had been contacted for information. The investigation and search, however, did not bring any leads as to where Bert might be. He was last seen in a Tim Hortons on the Corner of King and Caroline in Hamilton.

On April 09 2011 Bert's body was found in the area where he grew up as a child. After a thorough investigation it became clear that our beloved Bert had taken his own life. This news gave relief in some ways. The time of insecurity and second guessing was over. Bert's children and the Streetlight fellowship had been living in suspense for quite some time. On the other hand the funeral was very emotional and a difficult event for Lisa and many other people. Everybody was puzzled by the fact that Bert took his own life, nobody had seen it coming.

Around Bert's period as a missing person and at the time of the funeral, the Streetlight community was a great support to Lisa, Bert's children and also the larger group of family. Many of Bert's family commented on the great love which they encountered not only for Lisa but also for themselves. Bert was a well liked and well loved brother in our Streetlight community and that came out loud and clear in the days of the visitation and the funeral.

We still miss Bert but it is a great comfort to know that Bert is in God's hands. Bert loved the Lord and always witnessed to this fact. It was also one of Bert's biggest wishes that his children might come and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Recently one of his sons made a huge commitment to join a Christian addiction treatment program. We hope and pray that Bert's wish may come true and that the love which Bert always showed may continue to live in the hearts of his children and family. In the end may this all work to serve the glory and honour of our great God and Father. The Lord has given Bert to us for a time which we will remember with fond memories. The Lord now has taken our Bert to himself; let the name of the Lord be praised!



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We also want to thank all of you who have been praying for Bert and Lisa and all the people who have been involved in other ways while Bert was missing and during the visitation and funeral. Please continue to pray for Lisa and Bert's children. Let us hope and pray that Bert's children may come to love the Lord just as much as Bert himself did.

### **Street Beat** *Mieke Zwaan, Youth Worker*



These are sunny days. The neighbourhood has come alive, embracing the warm weather. The sounds of children playing echoes through the streets. People pass by squinty and smiling.

Our Kingdom Seekers program has ended for the summer. Every week a group of eager and energetic teenage girls would come together to sing, to read the Bible, to talk, reflect, and to have a lot of fun. We are thankful that there are so many girls that were part of this program. With their stories, their honest questions and laughter they form a beautiful group.

Kids Club is also taking a break for the summer. Each week we had the great opportunity to share the good news with kids from the neighbourhood! The unique curriculum we use at Streetlight has the message of salvation weaved through every Bible story, and considering that many of the children come from Muslim families this would often lead to conversations about salvation through Christ alone.

As we reflect on the past season we see God's love and grace for His people. We are so thankful for the volunteers that give so much of their time and gifts. We can't do this work without you.

Now that most programs have ended for the summer you might wonder what we do during that time. During the summer we have many exciting events that require a lot of preparation. Many of the youth are going to Campfire! Bible camp; we register the kids and teens and make sure they go on the bus and also (reluctantly) get off the bus again. Plans are also on the way for Kids Club Summer Camp, which is on the calendar for July 11-15. We also look forward to once again having a group come down from the Campfire! Service week.

Besides events and programs our biggest task is to seek mission as part of regular daily, weekly and monthly activities. It is great to see how God works to use our lives to impact people for the gospel in unforeseen ways. This means for instance that we assist youth in finding housing and reach out to them when they are dealing with depression and conflict. But it also means that we celebrate blessings like graduations and birthdays, good days at school and new friendships. And sometimes it simply means we sit down and listen, together searching for the answers that always point to Christ. Just this week a fifteen-year-old girl whose dad had recently died of cancer came to me lost and confused because a friend had told her that bad things were happening to her because she was letting Satan work in her life instead of God. Feeling like she failed she was now trying to figure out how she could become deserving of having God in her life. Those are moments that I am nearly overwhelmed with the hurt that some carry, but more so I feel my heart could explode with excitement because I get to tell her about Jesus Christ.

May many come to know the story of salvation. We ask that you continue to pray for this church, this community, and this city.