

## THE ONGOING VISION

MARK GREENE, Executive Director, The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity,  
CHRIS WRIGHT, International Director, The Langham Partnership International

### Chris Wright

Our offering today will be given to the John Stott Memorial Fund, to be shared (as John Stott wished), between the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity and the Langham Partnership International. Between them, these embody so much of the legacy and ongoing vision of John Stott. The leaflet in your hands explains what we do, but we would like to share with you the vision and passion that underlie both. First, Mark Greene, Executive Director of the London Institute. Mark used to work in advertising, so you can trust every word he says...

### Mark Greene

Good afternoon everyone.

It was over six years ago that John expressed his desire to use this wonderful building for his memorial service. Of course, he could have had no inkling of the present economic crisis in the City or indeed the tents outside.

And I've been wondering what he would say about it.

Well, back in 1976, John had invited Malcolm Muggeridge the brilliant, iconoclastic broadcaster to give the London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity on the subject of the media. Muggeridge concluded that nothing truly good could come out of broadcasting. But John would have none of it. You don't blame the meat for going rotten, you blame the salt for not doing its job. "It's *our* fault", he said. It's we Christians who should be in there refining, reforming, rescuing it for Jesus.

John asserted his confidence in the supreme transformative power of the Gospel working through God's people in the world. Jesus is Lord, so no context is beyond the reach of his redemptive love.

John knew that it was primarily the job of lay Christians to change the world and he recognised the reality that overall lay Christians were not being biblically envisioned or equipped for that mission in their day to day contexts.

John's response was to change his preaching and then to change his job.

So, in founding and leading LICC, John deliberately chose to invest his time in personally training and discipling lay people to actually be salt out in their day to day world. He yearned not only for the conversion of medics, lawyers, and factory workers, he yearned for the transformation of medicine, law and manufacturing.

How many other leaders take the mission of lay people on their frontlines so seriously? How many leaders today see the equipping of lay Christians as such a central task?

In John's lifetime very, very few. But John saw the huge daily mission potential of the 98% of Christians who are not clergy.

So, I wonder, does John's emphasis on whole-life disciple-making have any relevance for us today in all the complex situations we face like, for example, the tents outside and our financial centre in moral and directional crisis? After all, there are thousands of committed Christians working in the city ... far, far more than occupy the tents ... But where was our voice, our influence on the City?

The salt has not been doing its job.

"Why?" I asked one of the most senior Christian financiers, a man deeply committed to the Gospel. He humbly confessed, "It is very hard to see the issues when you are in the middle of it all."

We have not been enabling the salt to do its job.

So perhaps now is the time for us all to ponder John's example of humble change and missional disciple-making, and pray:

Lord Jesus, how do you want me to change my working, my teaching, my preaching, our church— so that your people will be able to see their varied daily frontlines with your eyes and be Gospel salt right there?

To the glory of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, may it be so.

### **Chris Wright**

But how can ordinary Christian men and women actually function as salt and light in the world? John saw clearly that it is only when Christians live lives that are being transformed by the gospel that the gospel can work its penetrating and transforming power in the world.

*And what does a gospel-transformed life look like?*

Well, Jesus tells us it means being more like his Father, in exercising love, compassion, and forgiveness, and doing justice for the poor and oppressed.

And Paul tells us it means being more like Christ, in humility, integrity and simplicity, by rejecting pride, hypocrisy and greed, and bearing the beautiful fruit of the Holy Spirit.

*And how do people grow up to such Christlikeness and Christian maturity in practice, so that they can live as salt and light in the world?*

Only as they are fed and taught by the word of God.

Babies grow to adulthood by being fed and then learning to feed themselves. Christians grow up in Christ when they feed on the word of God. That is what makes them strong, equipped for their mission as salt and light on their daily front-line, obeying the gospel in the world, as well as believing the gospel in their hearts.

*And who is responsible to ensure that Christians are well taught, for the sake of such living witness in the world?*

Those whom God gives to the church as pastors and teachers, whose prime function, according to Paul, is 'to equip the saints for works of service.' That is the whole point of biblical preaching – preaching that is done with clarity, with faithfulness to the text of the Bible, and in a way that prophetically challenges listeners to engage their world, with God's word filling their minds and shaping their lives – the very hallmarks of John Stott's own preaching.

If all church members are to be equipped for whole-life discipleship in the world, as Mark has explained in the work of the London Institute, then they need regular and applied Bible teaching by men and women who are trained and resourced for that task, which is Langham's vision.

It is a principle that John enshrined for us in what he himself called 'The Langham Logic' – classically with three biblical convictions and a practical conclusion

1. God wants his church to grow up – to maturity (not just grow bigger in numbers)
  2. The people of God grow through the Word of God
  3. The word of God comes to the people of God mainly through preaching
- So if these three things are true, the logical question to ask is:

*What can we do to raise the standards of applied biblical preaching that actually changes the way people live in the world?*

All the ministries of Langham Partnership share that common aim.

We are about empowering people with passion - passion for greater biblical maturity through better biblical teaching – whether that teaching comes from a pulpit, in a classroom, or between the pages of a book. Our ministries serve not only ordained clergy, but any and all whom God calls to be teachers and preachers of his word to his people.

Your gifts today, then, will bless this combined vision of Langham and LICC. But the greater response that John would want is not just our offering of gifts, but our obedience to the gospel - the gospel as John himself preached it and lived it, that whole gospel that confronts the whole church, and the whole world, and claims both for the Lordship of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Thank you.