

September 25, 2012

Dear Friends

I am surrounded by train-spotters, people who just love their *chuff-chuffs*. Having crossed hot African deserts by train, I must confess that my interest is more nostalgia than romance. With a plane to catch this evening, travel has little more excitement than a daily commute. But what are the virtues of such means?



Trains are associated with linear rails, they go up the line or down it. We talk about staying ‘on track’ when conducting a debate or implementing a project. We see our destination as a straight line from where we are to where we want to be. We take arguments as forward or backward, people are with us or against us. We like to line up elements of strategy as if they are stopping off points along the way – you can only go from A to C via B! There is little wonder we end up looking out of the window not quite knowing whether our train is moving, or the one next to us.

Maths gives us the liberty to escape to more dimensions, to think about – up and down and across. The desire to ask what happens when we speak of ‘*and*’, ‘*both*’ and ‘*together*’ in our blue sky flight. Multi-dimensional thinking gives many fields of structured thought instead of two, conflict is not inevitable.

In my conversation with North England members we spoke about ‘reaching up, out and across’ by which we examined our reach to God through worship, our passion for the lost through witness, and our care for each other – across the aisle as it were. While we are well schooled in the means of worship and witness, our technologies for ‘reaching across’ seem to be less well refined. The ‘W’ we lack is wisdom. We need to be continually asking ourselves: ‘*what is the wise way*’ to approach our differences and facilitate our togetherness. James the brother of Jesus ever practical suggests: *Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to everyone generously without a rebuke, and it will be given to him.*

For eight hours last week, I had the privilege of listening to thirty people answer the question, how do we go about doing these – ‘plain’ things better. How do we make our prayer and praise more meaningful? How do we read our Bible to hear what God is saying to us, rather than in rebuke of others? How is God calling us to service and sacrifice? How are we to witnesses here in Judea, and then to outermost parts of the earth? How do we reach to each other in love such that our worship and witness is affirmed?

No doubt you have asked these questions for some time, no doubt you will ask them again. No doubt you may want to use them again in conversations with those you serve.

Thank you for your commitment to travel train and plane, and to enjoy the journey.

Best regards

Victor

PS: One of the best things I watched last week was [“Liturgy and Culture: The joy of holy restlessness and the theological art of cultural engagement”](#) – It was attached to NAD’s Best Ministries blog last week, broadcast from Andrews University. It is where I latched on to the wisdom theme.

Our Commission

