



# Q&A for Rev Dr Ben Thompson on his appointment to OT Faculty of ETCAsia

Ben has been in the gospel ministry for more than 20 years. After completing a BA in mathematics at Cambridge University, he started in 2001 as a student worker also at Cambridge. And after theological study at Oak Hill, Ben worked as the Curate and then pioneer Minister at St David's Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucester. His PhD is in 1-2 Samuel.

## **1. How did you become a Christian?**

I was privileged to grow up in a Christian home and would have called myself a Christian from my childhood, but I had what I would call a second-hand faith. I had no real sense of a relationship with the Lord Jesus and little desire to live my life for him. That all began to change when I was eighteen. The Lord used a number of experiences to begin to show me the depth of my sinfulness – he exposed my self-righteousness by showing me that if it suited me I was capable of treating even my friends in a way that was pretty despicable, and he showed me that even the good things that I was doing weren't being done for him but rather to serve myself. In the following year the Lord brought me to meet Christian students at university who knew the Lord and invited me to read the Bible with them. Over the course of a number of months I came to realise that as I read the Scriptures I was hearing the voice of the Living God, who knew me better than I knew myself, but who wanted a relationship with me. A key moment occurred when someone explained grace to me, and that even faith had to be a gift, because we naturally are hostile to the Lord. It felt like my eyes were opened and I knew at that moment that I did believe, and that my confidence before the Lord could only be because of him, and the atoning death of his Son.

## **2. How did you end up in Gospel Ministry?**

In my second year at University I was encouraged to spend a week doing work experience with a vicar in a deprived parish in north London, whilst also attending some talks about the nature of Gospel Ministry. I don't know quite why I went, because at that point I thought I was heading to a career in the city, either in finance or in law. But I went. Over the course of that week I came to see that the power of God was at work through this humble man who simply sought to explain the Bible and love the people entrusted to his care. It wasn't an impressive ministry, but I realised that God was at work in him in a way that exposed my ambition to be wealthy and successful for the empty idolatry that it was. I decided at that point to give myself to any opportunity for gospel ministry that I might be offered. I had many chances through student Christian meetings and youth summer camps to lead studies and give talks and found myself thrilled to see the Lord working in the hearts of people as I simply tried to explain the gospel. After graduating I spent a few years as a student worker for a church, and then as a pastoral associate in a church that was being revitalised. By this time I was persuaded that I wanted to spend my life teaching people about Jesus and so I enquired about ordination and was selected to be trained for Gospel Ministry within the Church of England.

## **3. How will your experience in pastoral ministry help you as an OT lecturer at ETCAsia?**

I have had the privilege of serving on three different church staff teams over the last twenty years and have had the opportunity of opening up the Bible with people in a wide range of different contexts and life situations. This has continually persuaded me that the Word of God truly is living and active and speaks to people with a transforming power. Our goal is not to master the Bible but to be mastered by the God of the Bible. The purpose of theology is not to become experts in an academic discipline but to be available for the Lord Jesus to minister his gracious truth into the lives of suffering, struggling, sinful people. The job of a gospel minister is therefore a thrilling and a

humbling task, and I trust that as I teach at ETCAsia I will do so in a way that is shaped by this sense of awe at our God who has spoken to us.

My pastoral ministry has perhaps given me a deeper insight into the struggles facing 'normal' Christians, and the questions they are wrestling with as I've sought to apply the gospel of grace to their lives. I trust that I'll be able to share in my teaching something of the things that the Lord has taught me.

**4. In what way will your past theological studies, not least your PhD, help in training men and women for the gospel ministry in ETCAsia?**

I have been able to spend the last four years studying the books of 1 and 2 Samuel for a PhD alongside my pastoral ministry. It has thrilled me to discover that as I've worked hard at this particular part of the Old Testament it speaks a message that points clearly and powerfully towards the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am excited about helping men and women understand how the Scriptures as a whole, and perhaps especially the Old Testament prepare for the Lord Jesus and so illuminate aspects of his person and his work. My particular study has been looking at how the ideal pattern of kingship within Israel was one shaped by a humility that submits to God and waits patiently upon him. It is my prayer that my teaching will help us to grow in our love for this perfect king whom we have been given in Christ, that we would joyfully submit to his leadership, and that we would then seek to emulate him in our own lives.

**5. Tell us about your wife and three kids. In what way are they looking forward to life in Singapore?**

Suzy and I have been married for fifteen years. We actually got engaged on our first proper date, and were married eight months after we first met! Suzy was trained as a primary school teacher but has spent the last twelve years mixing raising our children with church ministry. The last year in the UK has been dominated by home schooling, as the pandemic has caused a huge disruption to life, so she has been able to use her skills to educate our children! Molly is currently 12, she loves baking, Dylan is 11 and loves reading and Finlay is 8. He loves pretty much any sport and recently beat me on a run which was a little humiliating! It will be a massive change for us to come to Singapore – we currently live in a town of about four thousand people, and on top of that, the last twelve months have involved lots of time in lockdown where we spend most of our time together. We are really looking forward to the mix of cultures and the vibrancy of Singapore. Lots of people have told us how friendly the city is. The boys and I are massive animal fans so we can't wait to visit the zoo – in fact the boys have already spent lots of time viewing it on Google earth. Our biggest excitement of course is to come and be part of what the Lord is doing among you as we seek to bring the gospel to the people of Singapore and beyond.

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If you have any question, please contact,

Wilson OON

General Manager

Email: [wilson.oon@etcasia.edu.sg](mailto:wilson.oon@etcasia.edu.sg)



15<sup>th</sup> March 2021