

WARNING



**DO NOT
ENTER**

DOWN TO EARTH GOD

HOW TO REACH THE MARGINALIZED IN OUR CITIES

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE IN THE MARGINS



A VIEW FROM THE EAST END OF
GLASGOW

A VIEW FROM THE MARGINS



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WRITTEN FOR THE SCOTTISH NETWORK CHURCHES

www.networkonline.org.uk/

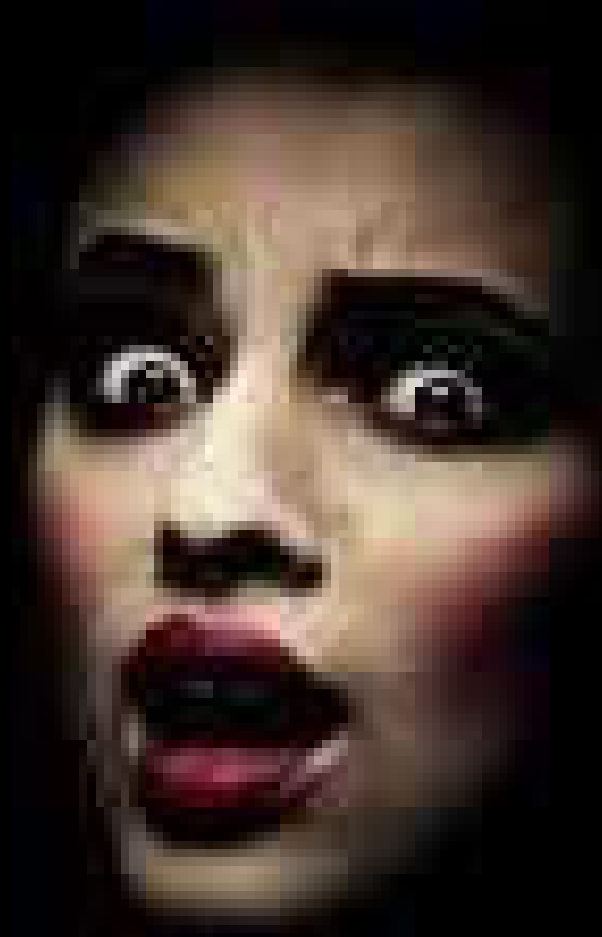


ALTHOUGH I WROTE THIS AT
THE REQUEST OF THE
SCOTTISH NETWORK
CHURCHES THIS IS ALL MY
OWN WORK. SO THERE!!!



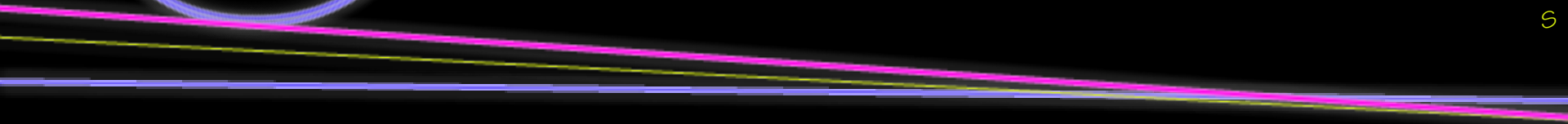
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WRITING A PAPER IS NOT MY THING



WHAT'S
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BUT HERE WE GO ANYWAY



That God is down to earth is for me as the yanks would say a no brainer. In making his choice about how and where he would enter this world, Jesus makes a very clear statement without saying a word. A statement that we need to come back to if we want the church in our nation to be able to meet the challenge of a ministry that is true to the roots of the good news.



BORN



WHAT'S
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The fact that Jesus was born into this world poor and homeless speaks very clearly to me about his intention. His intention to be with the people who were forgotten and marginalized in his time. It was to those on the outside that Jesus came and it was with those very same people that he spent the vast majority of his time. Jesus was brought up in a very down to earth family where by all accounts he learned his trade. And as you know if you have ever dealt with tradesmen they are a very down to earth bunch. Working every day with your hands creating objects for others to use is a very down to earth profession it somehow keeps you in touch with the value of work.



"down to earth bunch"



WHAT'S
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During what we would call his ministry he spent nearly all of his time with a group of very down to earth people. He placed great value in them and entrusted the future of his kingdom into their hands. He rejected the establishment both political and religious, in fact on more than one occasion he condemned them for the way in which they excluded the poor. Jesus placed little value on the learned people of his time, he instead preferred the simple folk and their simple faith. Praising them for the faith they showed in him. His whole life was a very clear signal to the establishment of his time that they would not be allowed ownership of his good news about the kingdom of God.





OOPS

He avoided anything that smacked of power or status, preferring to stay with the down to earth people he had been sent to serve. In serving us, he again demonstrates his willingness to be the down to earth God that we need. When he washed the feet of his followers they became his friends, and he showed just how down-to-earth he was with this act of humility. This was again a very clear signal that the way of the kingdom involves getting down to earth. There was nothing Jesus could have said that would have meant more than cleaning the very earth of the feet of this group of people. If that is not down to earth, I do not know what is.





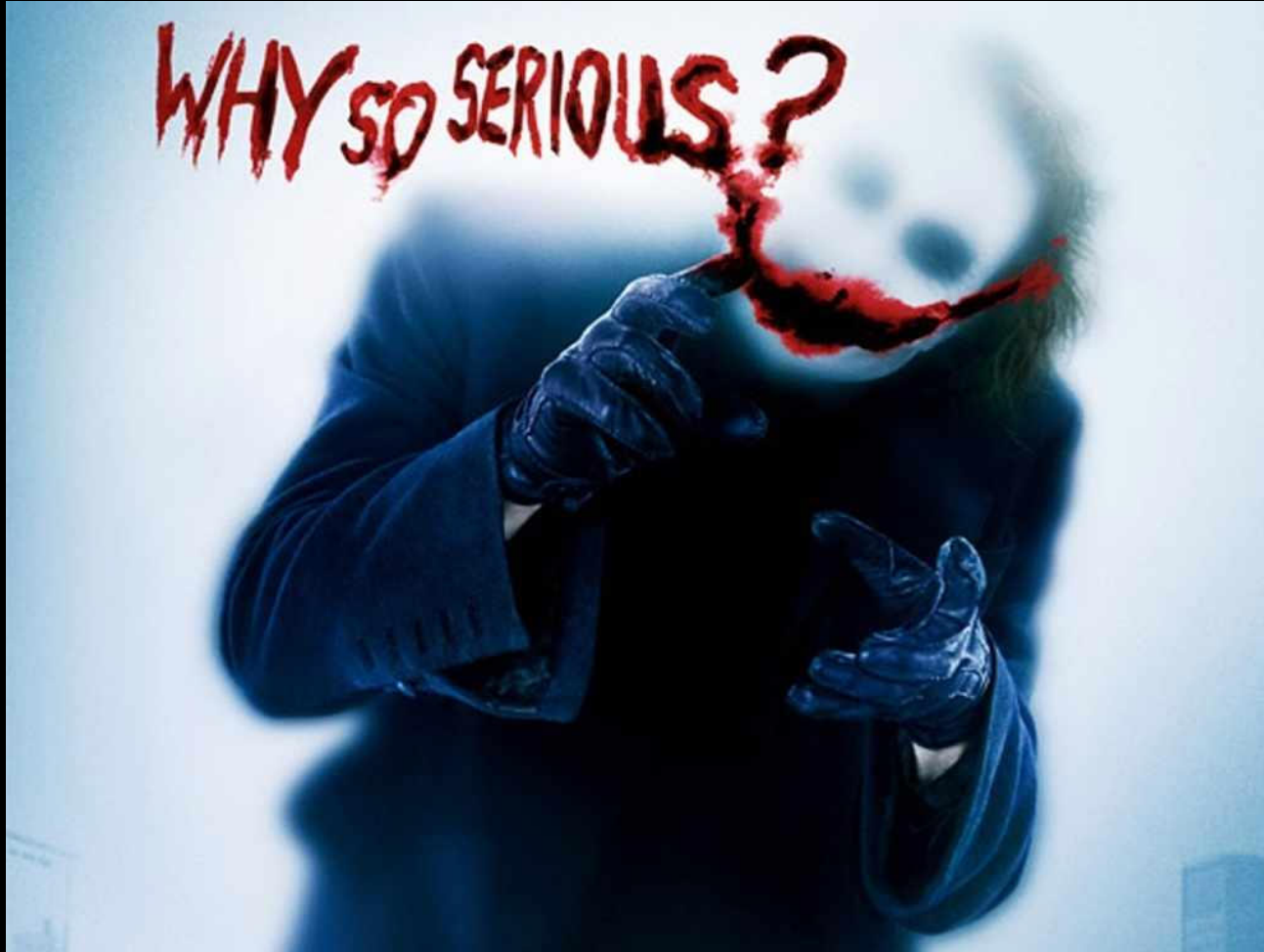
WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE IN THE MARGINS

Perhaps one of the things we need to be willing to do for the marginalized is to serve them in simple humble ways. Servant evangelism is a phrase you may have heard of but I want to suggest that maybe we just need to serve. People are not stupid and will soon figure out our motives. So let us start out with pure motives and maybe they will find God in the very act of serving.

**I'M WITH
STUPID**



THE SERIOUS BIT



REFORMATION

I believe that whenever the establishment take over the helm of the kingdom of God we are in need of reformation. And at this moment in time we need such a reformation: a reformation that will place the type of people that Jesus believed in ,back at the centre of his church and kingdom. As we stand today the church is the domain of the middle class ,educated of our country. Not only middle class educated, but middle class white educated males and they as a group have become the establishment. I would not say they are an establishment that deliberately seek to exclude others but over the years there seems to be a willingness to write many down to earth people off because they don't fit. There has also been a drift from the fact that the good news of the gospel is primarily for the poor. . In addition, at times the poor have been patronised.



WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE IN THE MARGINS



This manifests itself in very subtle ways ,the poor are not up to the task because they are not educated, because they do not have the maturity or because they don't do things the way we want them to .This results in the down to earth having a limited **say in how things are shaped.**



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WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE IN THE MARGINS



If we truly want to reach the marginalized we need to be prepared to **listen** and be ready for church to take on new shapes that are both unfamiliar and maybe even uncomfortable for us. The church that was born out of the ministry of Jesus made the Jews very **uncomfortable**. It even made its new leaders uncomfortable at times, like when they wanted to allow gentiles to remain uncircumcised. The down to earth do not need to be told how to do things they need to be ~~listened to and encouraged.~~ They need a place at the table that treats them as **equal**. They need to have their thoughts, ideas and visions valued not remoulded into versions of our own.

**SEPAR
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IS NOT
EQUAL**

**I'M NOT A
TARGET
MARKET**

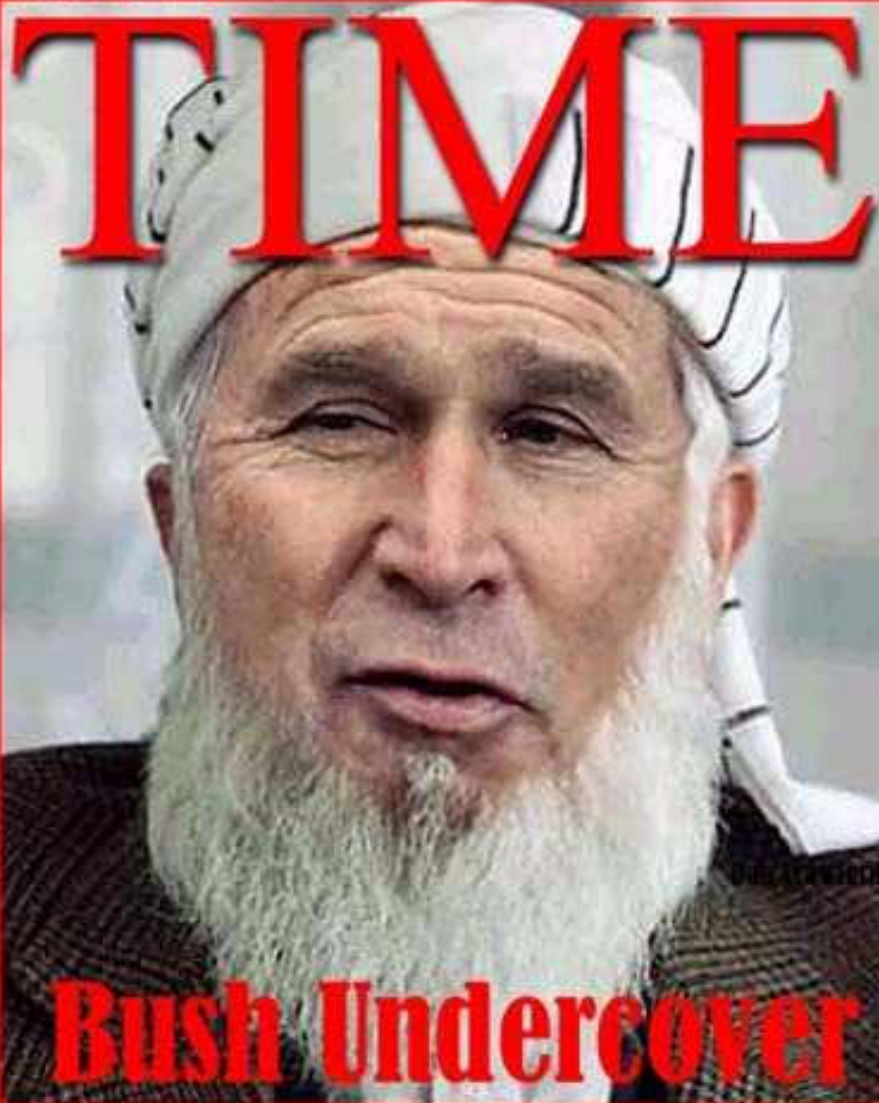


To reach the marginalized we need to show them a church that will not keep them on the margins but invite them into the centre. And celebrate who they are as well as what they can become. A down to earth God made the choice two thousand years ago, we must make it now. In order to reach the marginalized we must live in the margins. On the edges of society, these are often strange and foreign places to us. Places where we would feel uncomfortable, places where we would not understand the language or the values. Jesus lived in the margins. That is why he took so much stick from those in the centre. He not only lived in the margins he told all his stories to those in the margins. And he rescued those who were on the very edge of the margins (like the man with the legion of demons).



UNCOMFORTABLE

October 5, 2001



WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE IN THE MARGINS

Perhaps what we need to do is to be able to listen as much as we talk. Listening helps us to understand. listening to peoples stories helps us to learn there language and understand their values. Then we can begin to share the good news ,that it is possible for people to have a new story. Jesus spent most of his life here on earth hidden. Perhaps he was listening to the people around him to the people on the edges. Perhaps he was gaining an understanding of their language and values so he could communicate the new story to them.

He was hidden until the time was right.



where are you



Alvaro Leiva/Panos Pictures

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE IN THE MARGINS

Reaching the marginalized in our city is not difficult they are all around us all we have to do is make the choice to engage with them in a way that places all the value on who they are and not on what we can do to fix their problems. As any aid worker will tell you its better to teach people how to grow food rather than just hand it out. But we cannot prescribe any of this we must learn to see and listen to what is going on. To discover that in fact the kingdom of God is alive and well among the poor and marginalized of our cities. Perhaps we just need to point it out

I suspect that we have as much to learn, as we have to give, if not more.



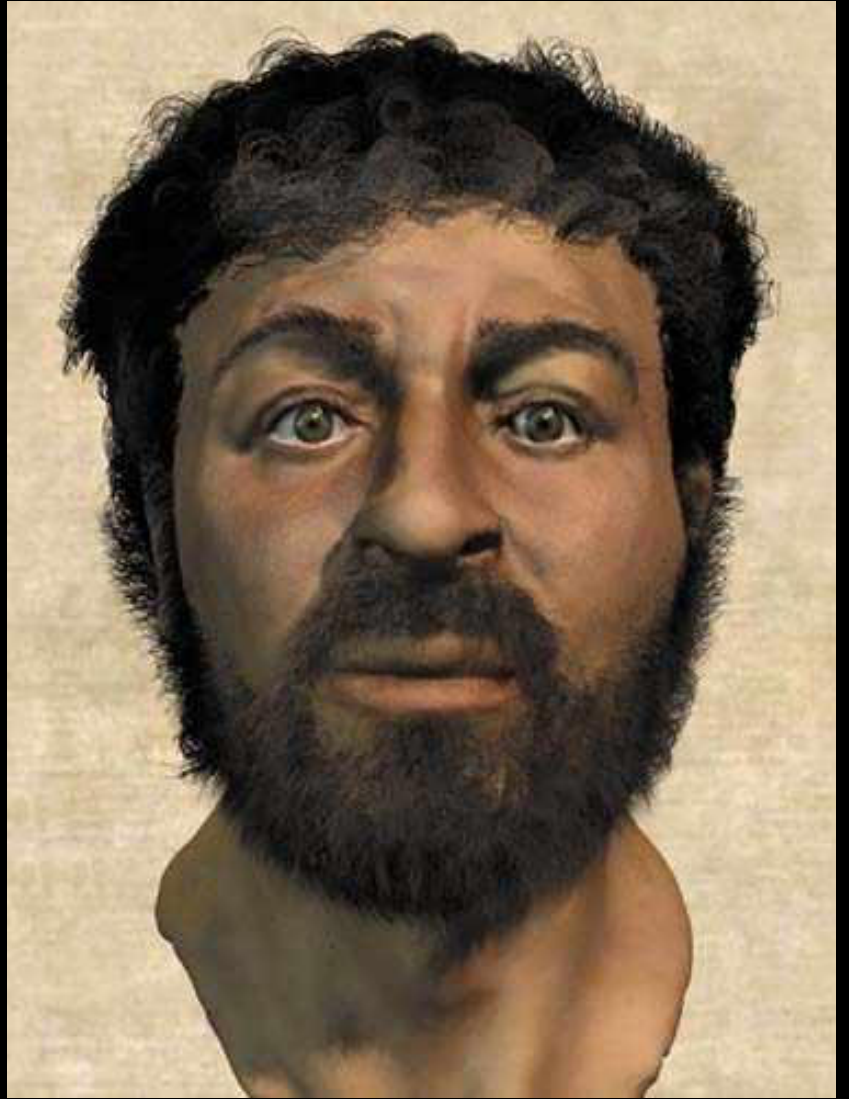
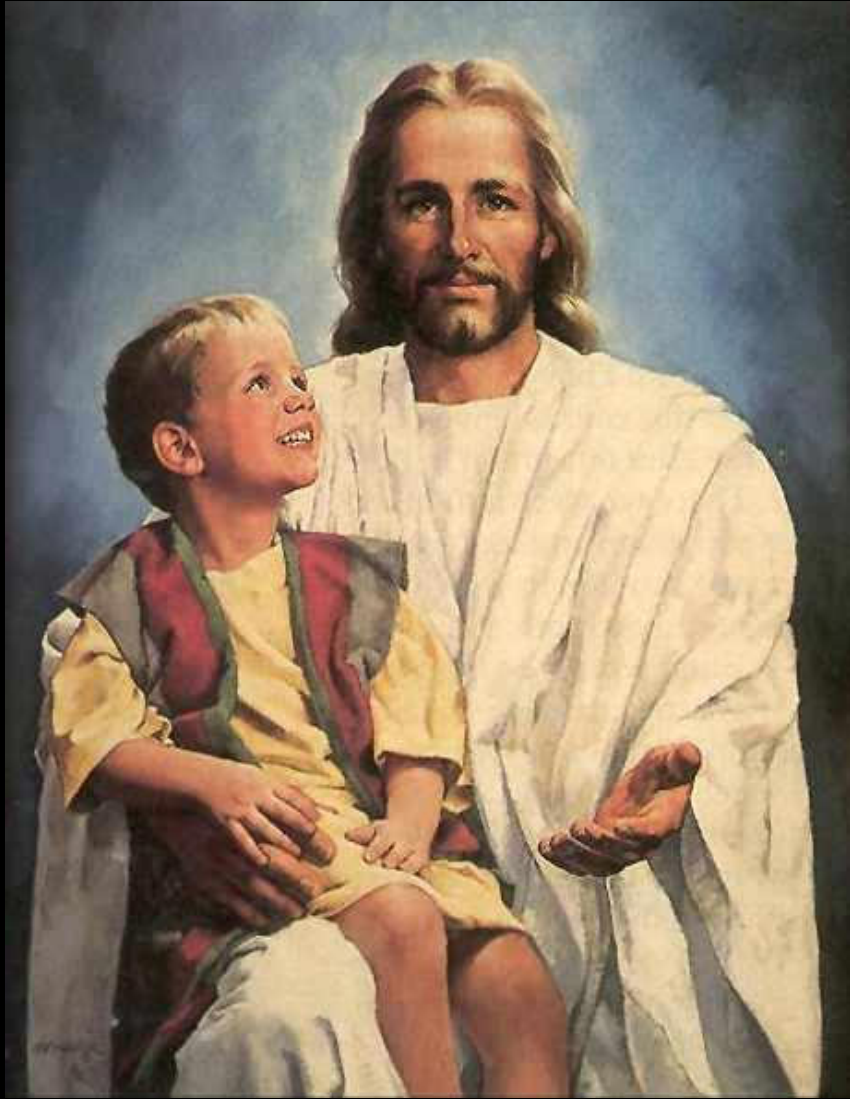
more harm than good

- give to the poor
- live with the poor



Jesus led the way for us by choosing to be a down to earth God. It is now time for a reformation that makes the very real choice to be a down to earth church. A down to earth church that represents a down to earth God. If you have ever seen some of the religious paintings of Jesus that depict him as being tall blonde and handsome then you will know that they do not represent a true likeness of what a man of Jesus time would have looked like. We are in danger of the marginalized of this country thinking that Jesus is white, educated , and a middle class male and that will not do.





WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE IN THE MARGINS

Therefore, if we want to reach the marginalized we must be willing to put the resources we have into that great adventure. We need to be willing to invest in what is a foreign land for many of us and when new believers emerge they must be given a place at the table that places as much value on who they are and what they have to say as we do on anybody else.





WHAT'S
IT
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MARGINS

have you ever walked by? I know I have



WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE IN THE MARGINS

AT THE HEART OF THE STORY.

Jesus put the marginalized at the heart of his story. He placed them in a central role in the kingdom of God. They were no longer the ones on the edge they were right at the heart of Gods purpose for being here. Is it time for us to be radical enough to say, like Jesus did, that this Gospel message is for the poor.





The Least Of These...

SO THERE YOU HAVE
IT HOPE YOU ENJ _____

I WAS GOING TO SAY ENJOYED
BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT I WAS
AIMING FOR





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