



Schools of Biblical Training

Serbia

In April Rev. Eddie Coulter and I travelled to Serbia, to link up with mission partners, Chris and Lotta Strajnic, to conduct a School of Biblical Training (SBT). The specific aim of these SBTs is to help equip pastors and church workers with the necessary skills to preach expository sermons from Scripture in the understanding that when God's Word is taught faithfully, God's voice is heard.

The Serbian SBT itself was held over five days in the Hub Bible School in Opodo, north of the capital Belgrade. Around twenty-five students, pastors and church workers attended, mostly from Serbia, but a few from Croatia and Macedonia. Many of these had little or no theological training and their reading resources were meagre.

TEACHING THE BIBLE

In the course of the week we gave about

twenty talks and workshops on teaching the Bible. Each morning Eddie gave an exposition from 2 Timothy, and then I gave the main morning talk from Mark's Gospel. The hope was that we would not only teach the message of the Bible passage, but that we would model good practice in how that message could be communicated. We were not coming to them as 'experts' in preaching, by no means! Rather as ministers who had benefited from the training and experience available to us in this country, we wanted to pass that on to them.

We were also greatly challenged by the commitment and passion of those who served in Serbia, in some cases developing new churches in areas where there had been none, and their experience of being an insignificant minority as Evangelical Protestants in overwhelmingly Orthodox Serbia. We were also extremely thankful for those working to translate the Bible into their own language. There is a pressing need for Serbs with expertise in Hebrew to provide a

modern, accurate Old Testament translation. Each afternoon in the SBT was spent looking at a passage from Mark's gospel. These practical workshops looked at issues of what the text actually meant and the importance of context. In the course of these workshops we also looked at how to shape a sermon by identifying the main thrust of the passage and how the sermon is then to be applied to hearers.

BIBLE OVERVIEW

The final session each day was an overview, firstly of the Gospel according to Mark, then of the entire Bible, developing our understanding of how the Old Testament provides a blueprint for God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. These sessions reinforced the importance of context in understanding a passage.

In the course of the week we got to know those attending and something of their life and ministry. We also found that the Serbs and the Irish share a similar sense of

humour! Many students spoke warmly of the week's teaching and workshops and several told us that this would be the pattern they would seek to follow in their preaching preparation.

The college principal, Sladjan, was warm in his welcome to us and appreciative of our work, even inviting us back next year. We had the opportunity to present some books to the college library. Even though they were in English, some of the students would nevertheless be able to use them. Most of the library's resources were in English; however, some books have been translated into Serbian or Croatian already and Chris and Brada are working on translating others.

Chris and Lotta, along with Brada will also be involved in setting up smaller preaching groups amongst the students over the next few months.

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