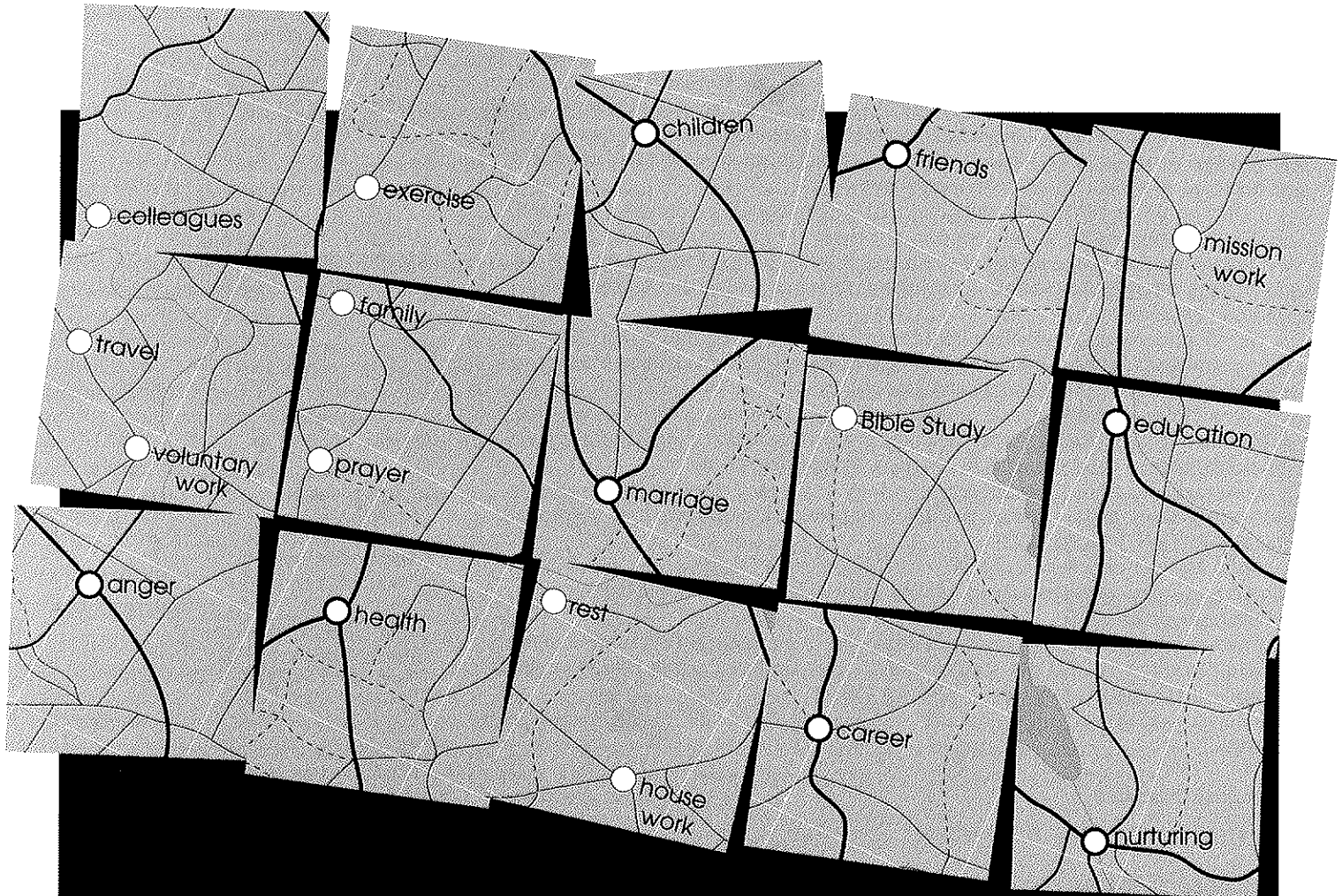


# ishah

Issue 1 / winter 2001



# living intentionally

THE IMPORTANCE OF  
LIVING INTENTIONALLY  
Deb Sugars

FILM REVIEW: TRAFFIC  
Anne Messer

PANEL INTERVIEW ON  
INTENTIONAL LIVING  
Fiona McLean  
Susan Bradbeer

BOOK REVIEW:  
THE SEED HANDBOOK  
Heather Patacca



Woman (Hebrew: *ishah*). Woman, with man, was made in the image of God. 'Male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27)

## welcome...

Welcome to the first issue of *Ishah*, a magazine for Christian women who wish to use a biblical framework to think about contemporary issues. *Ishah*, which means woman in Hebrew, aims to challenge readers to engage in thoughtful discussion about social, political, cultural and religious issues from an explicitly Christian point of view. The editorial team is committed to presenting relevant material in innovative ways, sourcing highly skilled and gifted Christian writers and offering a diversity of opinions about issues that matter.

In this issue we explore the notion of 'Living Intentionally'; examining what the Bible says about being intentional with our lives, our relationships and our faith. As women we are urged by society to be successful, fulfilled and independent. As Christians we must then determine what our priorities and values should be, and this can be a challenge.

Deb Sugars provides a Biblical framework for thinking about this notion of being intentional and examines some of the tensions women encounter when attempting to live out their faith in the twenty first century.

Fiona McLean and Susan Bradbeer facilitate a discussion with four diverse Christian women to discover how they honour God by making intentional decisions about education, career and family, through different life stages.

In her review of *The Seed Handbook*, Heather Patacca provides a provocative critique of the female world of business success and examines Lynne Franks' underpinning philosophies of life.

Anne Messer offers us a critical reading of Steven Soderbergh's latest film *Traffic* and juxtaposes this with a Christian commentary on one of the hottest topics of the year, drugs.

*Starting Point* is a regular column designed to encourage Christian thinking about a current issue in the media. In this issue Denise Cooper-Clarke poses some interesting questions about Designer Babies.

Enjoy.

Editorial Committee

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## [NEXT ISSUE] : THE 'F' WORD

>> is it possible to be a Christian and a feminist?

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## CONTRIBUTE

You are invited to submit articles or letters to the editor for publication in *Ishah*. Writers are strongly encouraged to discuss their potential contribution with the editors before submitting. All material should be in electronic format and be submitted with a covering letter detailing the writer's name and contact details, requesting their consideration for publication. Material will be published at the discretion of the editorial committee.

## OUR AIMS

1. To value the Bible as God's inspired Word to us and the ultimate authority on matters of faith and practice, through thinking hard about how the Bible applies to our everyday lives.
2. To encourage women to grow in godliness and maturity in Christ.
3. To equip Christian women to be creative, confident and effective in communicating the gospel.
4. To give women in a variety of roles and situations the forum to think about contemporary issues from a framework of Biblical theology and to articulate their thinking in a manner that stimulates themselves and others to live lives that are more faithful to God's Word.

*Ishah* is produced in association with Women and the Word, a part of The Timothy Institute.

# the importance of Living Intentionally

## What makes living intentionally difficult?

Women today are faced with a multitude of choices - which is what we want - but we have to live with the complexities this brings. Choice is a privilege and would seem to be good, but too many choices can confuse and paralyse people. As Christian women, we want to live intentionally, making wise choices that please God and seeking to live godly and obedient lives.

The choices we make depend on variables such as the demands on our time; our interests, passions and abilities; whether we have children and, if so, their ages and specific needs; whether we have paid employment; and our involvement in formal Christian ministry. Inevitably, our choices also have to take into account others' needs. How do we negotiate our way through life and not head either towards overdrive, where we lose sight of who God is and who we are, or to laziness and drifting because it is all too hard? In other words, how do we live intentionally, being purposeful, having our minds and hearts engrossed in God, such that He is at the centre of our plans, goals and directions in life when there are myriad choices to make? How do we live as God's agents?

## Issues particular to women

Christians are all members of a covenant community and of the priesthood of all believers: however there are some issues particular to women because there are innate differences between men and women. Mary Stewart van Leeuwen, in 'Gender and Grace', examines the impact of the Fall in Genesis 3 and the different consequences this has had for men and women. Male and female are created in God's image as social beings and given dominion over the rest of creation, to open up the possibilities latent in creation. We are to make good decisions in all realms of human activity. But both men and women have, as a result of sin, distorted these mandates. Van Leeuwen suggests that, for men, the consequence of the Fall has been to exert dominion over the creation at the expense of relationships; in contrast, women allow relationships to take unhelpful priority over exercising dominion.

Living intentionally for women is further complicated by stress contagion. Arch Hart suggests that 'because women are culturally the providers of nurturance and caretaking, they, far more than men, suffer the particular strains of stress contagion. Ever ready to listen and be understanding, many women feel their husbands', boyfriends', children's, colleagues' stress rubs off on them'. As a result, women may experience conflict and guilt daily and find their own needs become their last priority.

To some extent, biology accounts for core differences between the sexes and determines the roles and relationships that we have. The potential to be partners and parents, for example, affects our ability to live intentionally. Elaine Storkey argues that women often have two or more roles and relationships (for example daughter, sister, aunt, mother and employee) whereas men often have one much more clearly defined role and relationship. Differences between men and women are highlighted by the fact that men tend to seek success mainly in the public arena, whereas women seek and define success both in the

public and the personal arenas. Women want to perform well in the workplace, have good family relationships and have households that are at least functional and harmonious.

Further differences between men and women are exacerbated by frequent and major life changes in identity, roles and relationships for women. Women experience significant change moving from the role of employee to parent, even if paid work continues. New and competing demands change the expectations for work, relationships and family life. On a conceptual and emotional level, women are forced to be strategic, creative, flexible and resourceful. These demands can be daunting and, at times, debilitating.

Changes in role, identity and relationships for women complicate our choices and provide great challenges to living as God's person. We may experience paralysis, where we stop making godly and healthy choices, fearful of mistakes, failure or rejection; or avoid decisions altogether by dealing only with urgent issues, at the expense of more important ones. Living intentionally as God's person requires us to be willing to constantly assess which are the important issues so that we maintain a relationship with God.

Stress leads us to believe we are struggling (and suffering) and are of lesser or no value. According to McGrath, self-devaluation 'is one of the most effective ways of preventing God from doing anything through us. Insisting that we be of no value is not simply false modesty; it is an insult to God.... It amounts to a radical denial of His generosity'. Constantly looking to God for His view of our value and praying through these issues helps us to reassess and grow through change and struggle.

## Developing a Biblical Framework

Throughout the Bible we see God has a plan and purpose for the world and that he wants our lives to be purposeful also. In fact, one of the amazing things about God's creation and his dealings with his people is that every one of us is important to him and we have important and worthwhile roles and contributions to make. God wants us honour him, live in a relationship with him and be involved in his kingdom. Graeme Goldsworthy gives a helpful summary of the sweeping story of the Bible, drawn from Genesis 12:1-3, that we are God's people, living in God's place (his kingdom), and living out God's purposes.

Relating to God and understanding His purposes should radically inform our values, priorities, and outlook on life. God's big purpose for us is eternal life and joyful relationship with him now (John 17:3). Our lives should reflect this in that our decision making should be shaped by our knowledge that our lives now, and for the whole of eternity, will be spent with God. Colossians 3:23 is helpful in understanding how this relationship with God affects the choices we make. The issue is not so much what we do as how we do it - we serve the Lord not ourselves.

Furthermore, we are called to participate in God's purposes for the world - that people come to know him and grow in relationship with him. Peter shows us that God's intentions for us as his people is 'to declare the deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (1 Peter 2:9). Peter challenges us to 'honour all people, employ our gifts for one another, serve

each other' (1 Peter 2:16-17) so that we grow in relationship with God and in maturity. Peter models respect and reverence for others and this should be our aim as we seek to live intentionally and honour God.

In the same way, Paul told the Thessalonians the good news, and helped establish them in their faith. His intentions were very clear: 'We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God and we were gentle among you like a mother caring for her little children' (1 Thess. 2:7-11).

### **Principles for intentional decision-making**

Instead of being driven by the complex and conflicting demands of society, our decision making, that is being intentional, should be driven by our relationship with God. The biblical basis for intentional decision making is characterised by seeking to honour God, to live in a relationship with Him and be involved in His kingdom. Within this framework, other principles can be helpful in enabling us to live intentionally.

■ **Our identity** - Who we are should be distinguishable from what we do. This requires us to reflect upon God's value of us and apply biblical principles to notions of identity and self-esteem. It is not uncommon to adopt unrealistic expectations for ourselves and allow others to influence us in an unhelpful way. Many Christian women suffer terrible guilt as a consequence and it is helpful to recognise the different types of guilt which drive us: for example, a false guilt which says, 'I should be able to do eight hours work in four' or guilt stemming from family rules, such as 'You should never get angry.'

Our conscience is part of our moral makeup and is like the warning light on the dashboard. However, feeling guilty is not always an indication that we are doing something wrong. Our conscience needs to be educated and nurtured in the truth of God. We can do this by praying through issues where choices and decision-making are difficult. Work hard to reflect and reason clearly through choices. Keep learning to filter what we see or hear and learn to engage in healthy self-talk. Counter the tapes in our head which tell us, 'I just have to cope', 'I always have to ...' or 'I must never make a mistake.'

■ **Use of time** - We should never agree to an ongoing responsibility without praying and thinking through how it fits in with the rest of life. There will always be things we could take on but shouldn't. Learning to say no is very difficult and can take practice. McDonald encourages us to be strategic in how we delegate tasks and to clarify roles, goals and values in our workplaces and our homes. Part of this involves planning ahead and using a diary as a tool. Ask which items are non-essentials and eliminate them. This allows room in life for flexibility to respond to the unexpected.

We also need to intentionally rest and recreate. We need to be clear in what we want to do. Consistent effort over a long time is much more productive than spurts of effort, then collapse. It is important to seek help from others to hold us accountable in these areas.

How do we maintain the balance between being strategic and being flexible? Doesn't God want us to relax in His love and care,

and be responsive to Him? What is the place of strategy in our lives? How goal-oriented should we be? God enables us through his spirit to be intentional, which should include being open to God's work in our lives and being flexible in the way we live out our relationships.

■ **Developing a godly character** - In Romans 5:3-5, Paul addresses the issue of a godly character. He talks of suffering leading to perseverance and perseverance leading to character. The decisions we make reflect whether we value the importance of developing godly character as much as doing godly tasks. Reflecting on the long-term impact of our decisions helps us develop godly character.

■ **Keep learning and growing in godly wisdom** - Learning involves asking good questions of both others and ourselves. For ourselves, we need to self evaluate and reflect. For example, if I am working in a very demanding and difficult environment, what are some ways I can seek to establish supports for myself, to keep me accountable to God? Have I thought through and prayed about ways God might use me in the coming year or in the next five years? Some of us are prone to wanting to do everything now. We think we should be studying to upgrade workskills, leading home groups, reading, mentoring new Christians, evangelising and so on. There will be many things we want to do now, and cannot, but may be able to in the future. We need to keep seeking the delicate balance between keeping a godly long-term perspective and living God's way now.

For others it means asking questions that help us understand people, such as: 'What are your challenges? What does it take to do a job like yours well? How do you confront ethical and moral questions in your workplace and the rest of life? What excites you about your relationship with God? How do you keep your relationship with God in good shape?'

We must discipline ourselves to think Christianly. We need to train our minds to learn and pursue information, ideas and insights so we can serve people. There is an important distinction between accumulating facts and developing godly wisdom. The latter involves applying the facts in God's world, to God's people, in God's place for His purposes. By soaking myself in the Bible my attitudes and character are shaped. We are to take responsibility for putting ourselves in places of grace, that is, ensuring we read the Bible, pray and meet with other Christians. We also need to be open to others, willing to accept help and allow God's grace in our lives.

### **An encouragement to persevere**

It is not easy being intentional when there are so many competing demands made of our time and energy, but starting with God is fundamental. We are seeking to deal with issues surrounding our role, responsibility and identity as women in a way that honours God and reflects his purposes for us. Our great God wants us all to contribute in a worthwhile way to His kingdom, both in who we are as well as what we do. God is continuing to work in us, shaping us to be the people he wants us to be. We need to welcome and relish Jesus' work in our lives as we face the constant challenges of living God's way, as his people, in God's world.

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# real conversations

A panel discussion on intentionality (that is, being intentional in how we live our lives as Christian women), which was facilitated by Susan Bradbeer and Fiona McLean, forms the basis of this edited transcript. We thank these women for their honesty in sharing with us some aspects of what it means to be a Christian woman in today's context. The four women interviewed were:

Barb Deutschmann and her husband Peter, a doctor, worked in India for a number of years with Interserve. Barb now works part-time with Tear Australia as a Project Manager. She and Peter have three young adult children.

Carmel Ieraci is married to Peter and they have two teenage children. Carmel is a Teaching Leader with Bible Study Fellowship.

Alison Hunter works full-time as a project manager at National Australia Bank. She is married to John.

Rae Watson-Jones is studying fourth year Medicine. She moved to Melbourne from Bendigo to start university.

## ▣ What does it mean to be intentional in the context of our complex society?

**Barb:** There's lots in our society about being intentional - experts talking about getting ahead, getting more qualifications or more money, talking about getting direction. The question is, is it worth doing?

**Rae:** I think we are under pressure to be ruthless in the pursuit of self-happiness and fulfillment; it doesn't matter what you knock down along the way, or whether you go through bad means to get to your goal.

**Alison:** We are encouraged to be intentional about ourselves and our happiness; success. I think my family would prefer me not to be so purpose-driven so they don't have to fit into a two-hour slot on my calendar! We can be intentional about God's activities, and we can be intentional about our own: rather than listening to what God wants us to do, we can sometimes run our own agendas.

**Carmel:** Being intentional also means being purpose-driven; for us as Christian women, I take that to mean that we're God-driven... Our culture says you are the centre. It's all about what you want, so it's self-driven, not God-driven.

## ▣ How do you decide what to be intentional about?

**Barb:** Looking back from my vantage point, in my fifties, I think what becomes a bit clearer as you become older is where your passions lie. I feel a lot more relaxed about following my passions now than I did when I was an earnest young Christian of 25, anxious to tick all the right boxes and do all the right things. Now I'm a lot more accommodating of other people's differences - and I think God is too, just quietly - and I am thankful that God has given us different passions. I think there's lots of scope for following your passions.

**Alison:** I've realised that I don't have a whole lot of time so why waste it doing things I don't really like doing? I'm able to say no to things that I don't want to do, where that doesn't hurt others. I want to put my time where it's going to please God or please me or both. I think God's at work in us in the things we are passionate about - energy flows out of that much better than being dragged along to do things that you think you probably should but that are not your natural gift.

**Rae:** I think that you realise that you have gifts or talents for certain things and it seems a shame to waste them if you can develop them and they can be useful - rather than putting your finger in every pie and trying to do everything.

**Carmel:** A very basic principle in being intentional and making decisions as Christians is praying, seeking God's will for each day, committing each day to God and living moment by moment in Christ. I think the passions, the desires that each person here is sharing are there because they're God-given, and he's given us these incredible desires for his work, different gifts and skills, ultimately to glorify him, and you can do that shopping, or looking after a baby, or writing a fifty-page document, or wherever it is that God leads.

## ▣ What experiences and role models have influenced you as Christian women?

**Barb:** I can identify several influences, but I think it's more a matter of directions. Obviously being in India has been a huge thing for me, particularly in making me aware of justice and poverty issues that I may not have had a passion about if I hadn't gone. That passion is partly due to my Western suburbs origin, too; that was formative. So there's not any one event, but the areas that God has led me into have shaped my passions.

I think another factor too is that we've all been shaped by the Christian community we're a part of. People have influenced us on the way - perhaps you can't necessarily identify any one particular person, but it's just the general shaping of a Christian life through others.

**Carmel:** One person who has had a significant influence has been my Italian great-grandmother. When she was dying, she said, 'I have nothing to give you of earthly value' but she called my husband and myself over and she prayed for us. And she encouraged us to look at God's values over materialism.

Ultimately, though, it has been through studying the word of God and applying it to my life that I've been changed completely. God's Word has shaped who I am.

**Rae:** My church youth group was a significant influence. Now, looking back, I realise how important it is to have a youth group, because when you're a teenager, you're trying to get away from what your parents have taught you, and you're looking at what your peers are doing. The youth group encouraged us to talk about the Bible and to ask questions. If you don't have that direction as a Christian you feel free to experiment with anything, because there are no boundaries. But when you read the Bible and become a Christian, there are answers to the things you're searching for. The youth group was great in opening that up for me and supporting us.

## ▣ What are some specific examples of intentional decisions and choices you have made that reflect your status as a Christian woman?

**Barb:** Going to India was an example for us of making a decision that went against what people expected, away from a natural career path. That was a big right-hook in our lives. Peter had just become a surgeon and so there was the expectation that we would settle somewhere comfortable and live a very comfortable life. However, as Christians, our intention has been to use our gifts in a way that maximises our usefulness to society. As Peter was a medico, going to India was an obviously useful thing to do, and going with a Christian organisation was part of our intention to do something worthwhile in terms of the church in India.

In the same way, working with Tear for me is a deliberate choice to try and use some of my gifts to help people get out there into the hard places in the world.



**Carmel:** A major one for me that goes against the grain for most people was leaving a paid position, stepping out, knowing that there was something that the Lord wanted me to do but not knowing exactly what he was calling me to do. I had six months of waiting on the Lord, and the family pressures were incredible, because we had two young children and a mortgage, so why would I leave work? It just wasn't done. And as I was praying and seeking God's will, two opportunities arose, and I prayed about both, and believed that God was calling me to teach the Bible, so I've taken that path.

#### ❑ Why are you working where you are?

**Alison:** Well, I could tell you I prayed about that, and I sort of did, but I prayed that I would get one offer when I was on campus, and I only ever did get one offer and that was NAB. And I prayed that I wouldn't get into the Masters programme to do marketing, and I said if I didn't get into that I would go to Ridley at night-time, but I did get into the Masters and did it. So I'm not sure I'm as intentional as I would like to believe.

Being intentional at work for me means trying to make godly decisions about the people whom I manage and trying to explain to them non-verbally what it means to be a Christian as well as trying to demonstrate Christian character. When you're in charge of people, you can't just shove Christianity down their throats, so it's all second-hand and indirect. You never know what effect you have and what they actually see of your character as opposed to what you would like them to see.

**Rae:** I was really convicted about studying Medicine, but I don't know if that makes me stand out as being a Christian woman. In the Med course, I seem just like everyone else - same kind of background, same high marks in school - but all the time I'm thinking in a different direction, because I want to practise medicine overseas, so I'm always thinking along the lines of "How would I do this without such-and-such technology?" or coming at it from a Christian perspective.

#### ❑ How are you intentional in your relationships with friends, husbands and parents?

**Carmel:** My husband and I choose to pray together for ourselves, our children, church and community. We are intentional when we go out, praying that the Lord would give us opportunities to share the gospel. At my husband's work functions and at Christmas parties we look for opportunities to share the gospel or just listen to where people are at, and we deliberately don't drink alcohol, so that we can be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting.

**Alison:** In terms of my relationship with my husband I'm trying to be intentional in the way that I love John at the moment. I think that the way people naturally love and the way they receive love can miss by a long shot, so I'm trying to love him in his language of love. So I'm being intentional about being heard rather than getting my own way.

And with my friends I think I'm intentional in terms of trying to give Christian books as presents to Christian friends. Things I've read that I thought were good - not to change them, but because I thought, 'Hey, this is good stuff' - not material stuff, but the treasures of the kingdom of heaven, so let's enjoy and share those.

**Barb:** Being intentional in my relationship with Peter means from God's point of view the first question God will ask me is, 'How well have you looked after this marriage that I've given you?' So it's the Number One relationship in my life that I really have to work at - and Peter makes that very easy, it's not hard work. That means praying for him regularly, helping him make decisions about his work, helping him tease out whether there's any kind of ambition in it, and what he's really trying to achieve by doing something.

Kids - that's a whole different story. Maintaining a positive relationship with them has been a very high priority for us, and we have managed to achieve that, although it has been hard at times. Peter and I pray for them and take what opportunities

arise, for instance around the dinner table, to talk about Christianity. I know they've had loads of terrific Christian exposure in the past and lots of good role models, so I'm not worried that they haven't covered the basics.

#### ❑ In what ways are you intentional about how you use money?

**Alison:** John and I share a ten year old Ford Laser because there's no reason to have a newer car. We have second-hand furniture in the house. That's not the lifestyle of the people who are at my level in the bank - a guy on my level has just bought himself a Saab convertible.

Having said that, I still live rather well. We do go on our overseas holidays, and spend money on clothes!

**Barb:** Peter no longer works as a surgeon: our time in India made him realise that surgery was much less useful, so he retrained in order to move into primary health care. So that has meant huge income changes for us.

I have sort of disappointed myself in a way: we lived all those years in India in a very simple way on a very basic income, but it was easy to do it because everyone else was doing it and most people were doing it much harder than we were. I always had the intention of continuing to live in a very simple way and I don't feel we've done that - but still, having said that, we've made some hard choices about the use of money in the past few years, which is encouraging to me.

#### ❑ To what extent have different life stages put constraints on decisions you have made about how to use your time?

**Alison:** I think I'm naturally intentional and I'm learning to be less controlling, less concerned with my agendas, and a bit more go with the flow, more open to God - and I think that's a good thing. I now realise that I can't take on everything! It's been an enormous encouragement and weight off my shoulders not to feel that I have to do everything.

**Barb:** I think there are a lot of constraints based on the stage you're at, and you do just have to go with the flow. At my stage now, where we have young adult children, Peter and I have a very different load than in the past. The other issue now is that my mother is ill and needing care. It seems to me that as my life has progressed there have always been people to be cared for and it has been my role to care for them. I haven't resented that, it's just one of the constraints you live within. So it's meant for me, for example, working part-time instead of full-time, to allow a couple of days to care for others.

#### ❑ How does the feminist movement impact on how you feel about your role as women, and the decisions you make?

**Barb:** I think of myself as a feminist, but I'm also a child of my age who got married in the 60s, and therefore I have adopted by choice a carer role and have felt comfortable in it. I think these are choices I've made without feeling that Peter or the kids have forced me into them. In fact, I think I have a privileged lifestyle now where I can dress up like a business woman part of the week and the other part of the week I can slob around and do other things. That's a lovely balance of formal and informal, of people and isolation. It's a choice I've got that Peter doesn't have, for instance, because he's got to go out and earn the bucks.

In contrast with women in other parts of the world, we are privileged to be able to choose how we work, and we have enough money to make that choice, and it is also a function of being educated - that we think about and make that kind of choice. The range of choices we have as women is just incredible - there are countries where women can make perhaps only two choices their whole lives.

#### ❑ What advice might you offer to other women about being intentional, about how to make godly decisions?

**Barb:** I hope what would mark us as Christians is a willingness to forgo income or whatever in favour of healthy relationships

with others.

**Carmel:** Set time aside daily to personally study God's Word, to pray for a vibrant relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to grow in spiritual maturity in order to know and obey His Word in every aspect of their life.

**Alison:** Don't worry too much; do your best; give thanks to God; pray and trust that it will be OK. There's a verse in Proverbs 19:21 that I like: 'The human mind may devise many plans, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.'

At 21, Lynne Franks began her own Public Relations company which grew to be one of the most successful PR companies in the world. In the ten years since selling her company, she has been involved in enterprises to further responsible business practices and women's issues. She is currently developing the SEED project - Sustainable Enterprise Empowerment Dynamics - of which *The Seed Handbook* is part. It aims to provide a network to empower and train those interested in enterprises based on sustainability (i.e. businesses concerned with contributing to the community as well as deriving opportunity from it). She is also founder of Globalfusion, a communications consultancy which aims to positively influence society through 'new marketing'.

At the centre of Franks book is an exhortation to women to work in a way that is feminine. She argues that many in the corporate world are jaded by the traditional patriarchal way of doing business. The feminine way in her opinion is the sustainable way both in personal relationships, by ethical and responsible business practices based on love and integrity, as well as environmentally. When work is part of a properly integrated life, it provides opportunity for self-expression consistent with one's self-image. Thus, Franks stresses the importance for women of furthering business conducted in a feminine way, and providing an option other than the masculine way, which she implies puts others down to elevate oneself. She encourages women to build economic enterprises that create value for themselves, both personally and economically, 'to serve society rather than exploit it'.

Franks discusses the implications of her thesis for all areas of women's lives, with particular attention given to those areas where women have historically had a diminished role. On a personal level she encourages women to overcome lack of self confidence by taking responsibility for their own lives and valuing their contribution to society. She exhorts women to be proactive and thoughtful in the way they approach life as a whole, particularly by working out what they value, and living and working in a way that is consistent with this. On a professional level, she encourages her readers to develop confidence in making business decisions, to value financial empowerment and to establish mentoring relationships, first to learn, then to pass on what they know. Alongside all this, Franks gives much practical advice about building and growing businesses, her emphasis always on the need for women to be clear-sighted, professional and thorough in every venture.

Included in her holistic approach to business is a call to 'return to spiritual values'. The book is full of suggestions and practical tasks to promote well-being, whether emotional, physical, relational or financial, through the deliberate exploration of spirituality. Amongst other things, the reader is invited to engage in such activities as praying to the universe, setting up shrines to their business and getting in touch with the goddess inside. Positive influences for Franks own business life and, by implication, philosophies readers should consider are feng shui, Buddhist meditation, astrology and good and bad karma.

Does Franks' philosophy make sense for good business? There is practical and helpful advice in this book, clearly presented and easy to understand. The emphasis on the importance of good relationships and learning from others' successes and failures is sage advice. Topics covered include good preparation, planning, goal setting, self-assessment, finances and employing others. The book is also helpful in assessing personal strengths to exploit, and thinking systematically about how to be intentional and keep focus on the business.

From a Christian perspective, Franks' encouragement to live in an integrated and consistent way has many things in common with our own values. The underlying idea of basing our whole life on what we hold dear is a good one. Not being swayed to live or work in a way that contradicts the beliefs we base our lives on makes sense to us as Christians. However, her pluralist outlook and reflection of our society's current trends in popular thought and ethics are clearly at odds with Christianity. The pot-luck approach, dabbling in as many different ideas as possible, is contrary to what Jesus teaches us about living in a relationship with God (John 14:6). Franks takes an all roads lead to God approach and has no doubt that there is someone up there who is interested in our well being and personal development, although what or who that is remains undefined. Most of her recommended exercises to help your business grow, such as her encouragement to set up a shrine to your business or to pray to the universe, are not acceptable within a Christian framework.

Is there something we can glean from the idea of feminine business practices? Working in a sustainable way that treats others and the world with respect cannot be argued with. Where we are at variance with Franks' ideas is that these values are not ones that come out of us because we are women, but through God's grace to us in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lynne Franks. *The Seed Handbook*. Harper Collins: London, 2000.

HEATHER PATACCA

*Traffic* (MA), directed by Steven Soderbergh is an unique expression of some of the values, idiom and myths of contemporary society. It is a wildly successful film, which won a total of four Oscars, including Best Director and Best Screenplay.

Essentially, *Traffic* is a compelling but disturbing compilation of three stories about the warped power structures which result from the tyranny of drugs. At the nuclear family level, mistrust and soft corruption warp filial love and affection - Laura, a privileged girl from an upper-class family, manipulates and deceives her parents, steals from them to fund her habit and hides heroin in secret bathroom nooks. Her mother knows about Laura's habit but does not tell her father, the newly-appointed "Drug Czar" of the American Federal administration who has vowed to win the war on drugs. The mother is a tragically powerless character, trapped by her daughter's destructive choice and her fear of her husband's anger and potential political recriminations. The film depicts Laura's agonising descent into addiction, and in one tragic scene she sells her body to a heroin dealer for another shot.

Soft corruption and mistrust are magnified at the community level in Tijuana, Mexico. A tainted but ultimately principled policeman discovers links between two key drug cartels and the highest police officials, through which people are mercilessly devalued, tortured and destroyed. The drugs are sold into the United States, where a multi-millionaire Californian drug-running executive adroitly escapes the law because he has more powerful resources at his fingertips than the Federal justice department and the DEA. In one example, his wife (played by Catherine Zeta-Jones) displays the latest in cocaine smuggling technology - an apparently hard plastic doll (such as one would purchase at Toys'R'Us) which, in a chemical substance, dissolves into the purest cocaine, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars on the street.

*Traffic* is a provocative film because it doesn't let its viewers escape the ugliness, evil and seduction of drugs. One downside is that we also can't escape its somewhat typical Hollywood-esque aspects - its final conclusion has a somewhat cliched, restored nuclear family committed to "listening", and Michael Douglas plays a fairly standard, speechifying *paterfamilias*. Also, the beguiling and suggestive cinematography in which all Mexico-

based scenes are shot through a slightly shimmery, sepia lens compelled me to conclude that, for all its attempts not to lay blame for the "drugs problem", the film wants us to believe that Mexico is "other" - outside, different, and ultimately responsible for the pollution of clean, sunlit America and its rosy-cheeked teenagers.

Elements of *Traffic* mirror the tragic reality Australia faces with its own drug problem, and Soderbergh gently suggests that solutions may best be found at the more localised level of neighbourhood and family. I live in an inner suburb of Melbourne, and my local rag has produced pictures from time to time of local squatters' nests which are, in reality, dungeons of drug abuse. These real-life scenes of abuse involve death and depravity for those who depend on each hit as a means of coping with their meagre existences.

I am also a city worker who is often approached by poverty-stricken drug abusers for hand-outs. Sometimes I respond with pity and, in my personal helplessness to solve the problem, I hand over spare cash. Other times I refuse, angry at a system that gobbles up my taxes but doesn't seem capable of solving this ever-present despair.

I believe that *Traffic* is a genuine representation of a system of evil that is currently spiralling out of control within the western world. Transgressing national boundaries, it attacks all levels of society and will not capitulate to a single method of regulation or control. While I know that Christ has "overcome the world" (Jn 16.33) and we, as his redeemed children, have "overcome evil" (1 Jn 2.13), I grieve that we seem impotent to defeat this particular system of evil.

Yet, I take heart because I know that no sparrow, and therefore no dejected and cast-out drug abuser, falls to the ground without God's knowledge and grief at the despair and death wrought by the fall on all of his precious creation (Mt 10.29). Like the Good Samaritan (in Luke 10), I pray that I might have the courage and selfless energy to obey my Lord's command to love my neighbour drug addict (and those affected by his or her addiction) as myself. May I not walk by in disgust or disassociation on the other side of the road, but may I see God's image stamped on each valuable and vulnerable life - such as those depicted in *Traffic*.

ANNE MESSER

## Designer babies - a *Sophie's Choice* for women?

It was recently announced (*The Age*, June 5, 2001) that IVF technology may soon be available for fertile couples. This would enable pre-implantation screening of embryos for genes which may predispose to disease, including breast and ovarian cancer. At this stage, selection of characteristics such as height, intelligence, colour of eyes or hair is not envisaged. So called "designer babies" raise all sorts of ethical alarm bells. But what about simply screening for genetic disease?

Conventional ethical argument about this focuses on abstract universal principles - what is the moral status of the early (less than two weeks) human embryo? How do we balance the principle of respect for individual autonomy (allowing people to make their own choices) with the principle of respect for human life, even or perhaps especially the life of the defenceless or the disadvantaged? From a Christian perspective, what are the limits of the stewardship mandate and the healing mandate which underpin the enterprise of scientific medicine?

By contrast, feminist ethics focuses on the experience of women and the nature of their responsibilities in relationship. What does it mean to accept children as a gift of God rather than as a commodity, something we select to satisfy our own preferences? The experience of women with artificial reproductive technologies is of their bodies and indeed very selves (because we can't separate our body from our self) being objectified. Procreation, an activity of loving relationship, becomes scientific technological reproduction - literally removed from a woman's body to a laboratory. Should a woman be expected to bear this burden for the sake of decreasing the likelihood of her child contracting a particular disease in the future? There are, of course, no guarantees that this disease will not occur, or perhaps one much worse. Further, as more and more genes associated with diseases are identified, how will we choose between the embryo predisposed to breast cancer and that predisposed to heart disease or diabetes?

Deliberately creating a number of embryos with the aim of selecting only one forces a woman to make *Sophie's Choice*. In this movie a woman had to choose between her two children - one would die and one would live. This is a choice no mother should ever have to make.

DENISE COOPER-CLARKE