Living within your *metron*

Dear brothers and sisters in our glorious Lord Jesus,

Welcome to 2021.

I do hope your soul will be deeply refreshed over the summer break – metaphorically made by the Lord to “lay down in pastures green and by waters still”.

At this time, I am finding myself in a ‘transition within transitions’ as I move towards my new role as EMD, which officially starts on February 1, 2021.

A few things have coalesced in this transition season to powerfully remind me that words have immense power. Words can create. Words can also destroy. The tongue can bring death or life[[1]](#footnote-1). We all experience this daily. As we lift to the macro and cosmic of this idea, we know the world was created through the Word. And the Word became flesh. This is something we have just celebrated as the people of God. I do again marvel at this idea of a limitless God taking on limits and becoming human on behalf of those He loves. The immovable God braced in a cradle, to be bound to a cross. This moves me.

As part of the creative act, a word in season unlocks ideas that change the way you live. During the COVID pandemic, something that was transformative for me was the idea that if we create space (*yesha* in Hebrew; the same root word as Yeshua[[2]](#footnote-2)) for God, He will fill it. Another word I want to share with you as I begin this season – which has been already so very helpful for me and hope it is likewise for you – is the word *metron*, meaning ‘a measure’. The apostle Paul used it: “*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure (metron) of faith that God has assigned*”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Here is what fascinates me about this word: Each person has a *metron* and our job as leaders and as a community of faith is to help one another discover it and live to ‘the full’ within it. Two things to highlight:

Firstly, our *metron* is given. This measurement is purposefully given by God to a person and this at least includes their gifts (as per Ephesians 4, where this word is used), their faith (as per Romans 12 above) and their sphere of influence (2 Corinthians 10, where this word is used again). Each person is given gifts, faith and influence that is purposefully measured out by the Giver. A key point: they are not all the same!

Secondly, knowing this will greatly affect how you will lead and disciple people. By its nature, a *metron* has limits or boundaries. We often think of breaking through limits. But what if limits turn out to be a gift? I would like to suggest they are, and the goal in discipleship is to grow into and stay within them. We are meant to stay within them because they have a specific purpose. A little random (and all analogies fall down somewhere) but here is picture of what I mean. Imagine being on an operating table, and your appendix is about to burst. In your dreary state, you see on the table next to you both a sword and a scalpel. You are about to pass into induced unconsciousness. Which one do you hope the surgeon picks up while you are under? The scalpel, of course. But switch the scene. Imagine you are in a dream in your induced state, lining up in battle alongside the Scottish warrior William Wallace. What blade do you want William holding? To state the obvious, both blades are powerful according to purpose and you would not say one is ‘less than’ or ‘greater than’ the other. Both can save your life in very different ways. They have limits in their design, for which you are thankful. We would not want to mistakenly equate size or extent with worth or value. This is what the world does.

I do not know if this is your experience, but it does not seem we so easily apply this idea of limits within design towards ourselves and each other. I would like to highlight two challenges here if we do not.

Firstly, if someone ‘lives under’ their *metron,* they are not being a good steward of their gifts, faith and influence, and the fullness of their measure does not therefore bless all those it potentially could. It is underused. Think of the parable of the talents. A leader’s task in love is to call them up and invite them into all they can be. After all, gifts are ‘given’ and given for ‘the other’ (God and His glory, and those around them for their good). They are not given for self; and yet the exercising of them produces great joy in the one giving. Jesus said it is more blessed to give than receive[[4]](#footnote-4).

The second challenge is the very opposite. If someone attempts to ‘live beyond’ their *metron,* such a move that pushes outside limits will create a pressure whereby their gift ends up being more a shadow of the gift, causing harm. This will eventually fracture the given boundary and lead to performance anxiety, interior and exterior disharmony with bitterness and a whole host of bad fruit. It will become more about proving and validation (for self) than blessing and honour (for the other). A leader’s task here becomes equally challenging as the discipleship call takes a downward shape.

You can see how these two challenges advance, or otherwise, discipleship. And because I have not defined the words ‘church’ or ‘discipleship’ or ‘disciples’ as I have come to understand them, let me say I agree with author/pastors Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Mike Breen: the church is a group of people among whom Jesus Christ is being formed[[5]](#footnote-5). If the church is the fruit or outcome of discipleship[[6]](#footnote-6); disciples are then people who are apprenticed under Jesus with others so doing, and in so doing become like Him (Romans 8:29); growing together into the fullness of the measure of Christ (Ephesians 4). For our purposes here, the church therefore becomes the ‘people’ among and the ‘primary place’ where we safely and bravely discern, experiment and review our gifts, faith and influence to discover their measure. And we discover how our measure fits with the other measures, as God builds His spiritual house out of living stones[[7]](#footnote-7). And the purpose of this spiritual house, this royal priesthood, is to be a blessing to the nations proclaiming His excellencies. Part of me wonders (this is outside of scriptural detail here) if churches and ministries themselves have a ‘corporate *metron*’. I’ll leave that with you.

Given these ideas about living in your *metron*, one-on-one discipleship is absolutely critical in church life. We cannot discover a *metron* from gatherings only, and these cannot be the only place gifts, faith and influence are experimented with. After all, there is a hurting world out there – a world for whom Jesus died that desperately needs these exercised among! If the gathering is a primary place within a church’s life stage, I would encourage diversity to intentionally be displayed: *metrons,* small and large and everything in between, need to be accessible so that all peoples might be encouraged and find their *metron* to be equally valid to another. Andrew Ball has been saying this for years. In the economy of God’s Kingdom, one is not more valuable than another; we just have different responsibilities (or functions; again, like the blade analogy above).

I suspect many of those we lead are more on the side of ‘living under’ rather than ‘living beyond’ their *metron*. This is almost part of Aussie culture.

I was sharing this idea of *metron* as my first in-person devotion in the EMD-Designate role. One of those gathered texted me afterwards and shared further with me his ruminations: this is the origins of the metronome; a device to keep musicians within their appropriate tempo. And he asked, “What is our metronome that keeps us within our *metron?”* [This published with his consent]. What a great discipleship question! I offer that to you. What might be the ‘devices’ (practices, tools) you use to help discern and stay within measurement; both yours and those you love and lead?

So much more could be explored here, but I hope this is a taste of this idea of ‘living within’ your *metron*. I hope this idea is freeing; after all, it is for freedom that Jesus set us free (Galatians 5). I mention this as my first written piece, as I see this idea as helpful in the current season and foundational for some future thinking around faith, gifting and influence. For those who heard my talk at Collective last year, it was this idea that I was rebuked on. I was living in a smaller story and consigning myself to live under in my faith, gifts and influence *metron* out of fear and false narratives. My yes was to Jesus and what He was giving, and essentially repenting for my self-selected *metron* as though I could give to or earn it myself. I do believe the maturity of the church is bound up in this idea (Ephesians 4). And as I think releasing the saints into their unique calling is also attached, I therefore think our public witness and perhaps even revival is linked to this idea. As we learn to celebrate and honour one another in our various and diverse measurements, let us be aware of the Enemy’s schemes here – envy, jealousy, discord, division. In fact, he would like to invite us not to honour certain parts of the body, and to be worldly in what we do honour. My deep prayer is that we would outdo one another in honour (Romans 12), champion each other wholeheartedly with genuine love (Romans 9), and give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for us in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

1. Proverbs 18:21, NLT [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Peter Steinke [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. (Romans 12:3, ESV, bracketed word *metron* added for clarity). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Acts 20:35 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Bonhoeffer [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Mike Breen [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 1 Peter 2:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)