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CHURCH LEADER MAGAZINE

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PRE-EDITION



THE MODERN CHURCH LEADER

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CREATED TO CREATE:

HOW IMAGINATION IS REVILITISING CHURCH LEADERS

PSALMS & PINTS:

HOW ONE CHURCH IS REIMAGINING MENS MINISTRY

THE AUTHORS JOURNEY:

DISCOVERING YOUR PURPOSE FIRST AS A CHRISTIAN AUTHOR



WELCOME TO YOUR FIRST EDITION

Welcome to the very first (pre)edition of Church Leader Magazine. We're so glad you're here.

This magazine exists to inspire you in your leadership, equip you to serve more effectively, and help you find support and a sense of community along the way.

Whether you're just beginning to explore leadership, stepping into new responsibilities, or have been leading for many years, this space is for you. From the very beginning, the vision for this magazine has been shaped with you in mind; that you would find encouragement, practical insight, and resources that strengthen your ministry and bring glory to God.

In Matthew 5:13–16, we are reminded of our calling to be salt and light; to bring flavour, to preserve, to be visible, and to live with purpose so that God is glorified. My prayer is that as you read, you would be refreshed, your impact deepened, and your light burn even brighter.

In the pages ahead, we'll share stories from across the UK and beyond. Stories that spark ideas, celebrate what God is doing through His Church, and remind us that we are part of something bigger. We would love for you to journey with us.

This first edition is just a glimpse of what's to come. May it bless you, strengthen you, and encourage you in all that God has called you to.

James

James Baldock
Editor

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CHURCH PLANT- ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE

Written by James Baldock



When I first met Dave (David Scholes) he had long hair, a thick northern accent, and he played guitar quite proficiently. We had both moved from England to attend bible college in Sydney Australia and we spent three of our younger years studying together.

He met his now wife Mel at the same college and while they moved back to Preston, I stayed in Sydney for another 7 years before returning to the motherland (England). We have all been in ministry in different positions and contexts ever since, but in the last year Dave and Mel (along with others) have taken the courageous step to plant Veritas Church in Preston. Church planting is not for the weak, but it's also an incredible opportunity to have a fresh expression of what church can be like; a blank canvas ready to be painted with God-colours.

I recently sat down with Dave over video-chat (when all of our children had gone to bed) and talked about the Bible, the challenges and rewards of church planting, and the advice he would give to anyone considering it.

INTERVIEWING DAVE SCHOLES FROM VERITAS CHURCH IN PRESTON

James: What's your favourite translation of the Bible and why?

Dave: My favourite translation is the English Standard Version (ESV). In terms of why, first of all, I'm a sucker for new products. It was only published for the first time in 2002, so it's a recent translation. The study notes were really extensive and thorough and were written by some great scholars when it first came out in the ESV Study Bible. Initially, it was because of that—the scholarship behind the study Bible side of things. As I've explored more about why you should pick a translation, I prefer a more literal translation.

Every word has come from the mouth of God. I think it's important to know every word and not every thought that proceeds from the mouth of God. Obviously, there are many interpretations of the words and how they're put together, but I want to read the closest translation possible.

James: If you could meet one biblical person, who would it be and what would you ask them?

Dave: It would be Paul for sure – I'm assuming Jesus if off the table on this one? (yes!) There are many people I'd love to meet, including Peter, James the brother of Jesus, or any of the Apostles. But if I had to ask Paul one question, I'd ask him to settle the baptism debate once and for all. Paedobaptism or Credobaptism? Which is right. I'd also want him to weigh in on major debates in church history, like Calvinism versus Arminianism and baptism practices.

James: Why did you plant a church?

Dave: Several reasons, but I think it's helpful to know how we were in the position in the first place to even ask the question; Should we? There were certain positions theologically that we'd come to that were no longer compatible with our old church and denomination. There were certain things we disagreed with and they shifted in one direction and we shifted in the other away from each other. So, we didn't stay still, and they moved, and they didn't stay still, and we moved. We didn't leave with the intention to start a church. I was paid on staff. I was the associate pastor, full-time salary. We left all that behind and then took some time to go, right, what is it that we do believe?

Who are we? What are our convictions? We genuinely explored that for a few months. After maybe four months of having left that church and my role, me and a friend were talking about all this stuff, and we started exploring together who should plant a church and basically, are we qualified?

We thought there was legs to that idea of planting and kept exploring it. We got the commitment of seven adults and six children (the children didn't have a choice to start the church). We explored friendship with the International Presbyterian Church and got some advice and wisdom from them. We discovered there wasn't a single Presbyterian church in Preston, which is the city where we live.

Another major reason for planting was the fight for the restoration of family worship. Genuine household worship and discipleship, catechizing children, teaching children the faith in an intentional and robust way, genuinely worshipping as a family, genuinely praying as a family—not just praying before bed and that's it, but genuinely living like Christians all the time and putting the impetus on parents to take that really seriously. That's what we felt God placed on our hearts to pursue. We felt there was a permission there under God to do these things. We felt that's what obedience required.

James: What's the story behind the name Veritas Church?

Dave: Right. The name is a Latin word. I'm sure you know it means truth. Now, we don't think for one minute that we are the true church or that we have a monopoly on the truth. That's not



what it was about – it sounds like a really arrogant name.

So, why did we go for it? A few reasons. Jesus called himself the truth (John 14:6). We want to be all about Jesus. The Bible is our absolute standard and source of truth, breathed out by our truthful God. That's what we wanted to be about too. Culturally, in our current moment, there's a war over truth. I think most people now grow up being taught that truth is largely subjective—what's true for you can be true for you, and what's true for me can be true for me, particularly when it comes to religious, moral, or aesthetic claims. We wanted to make a prophetic stand, for lack of a better word, against that folly. We wanted to proclaim that there is such a thing as truth. His name is Jesus. It's the truth that sets free, not subjectivism.

Although truth isn't the only thing that's important—Jesus says faith, hope, and love remain, and love is the greatest—we could have called ourselves Love Church. But that's been done in various ways. My question is: how do I know that's true? Without a foundation of truth, and truth claims an authoritative source of truth, we don't know those things are true. We can't trust that they're true—they're just ideas unless you believe in the truth.

Lastly, Trinity Church was already taken. There are a lot of churches in Preston—Trinity Church, Christ Church, Grace Church, Covenant Church, Emmanuel Church. They were all gone. We also needed a website domain that wasn't already taken.

James: What's your vision for the church?

Dave: I'm not a vision statement guy. So we didn't try to come up with a vision statement. We have maybe what could be argued is a mission statement. We used to say, "Oh, the whole gospel for the whole of Preston." Really simple. I would just say we just want to be a biblical church. Done.

Honestly, it's that simple for me. If you genuinely love God, if you genuinely want to follow what He says, you'll do evangelism. You'll worship. You'll disciple. You ought to be an obedient church. And by doing it that way, by just saying, "We just want to be a biblical church," I think it covers everything.

You can ask yourself; What makes you stand out from the other churches and so on? What makes you unique? What's your unique selling point and all that sort of thing? Yeah. I think the danger of that is you end up overemphasizing something that you're passionate about and underemphasizing a whole bunch of stuff that you're not passionate about. So, if someone said, "I need a vision statement." I'd say, go read the Westminster Confession of Faith. That's our vision statement. That's what we believe the church should be and do. That's what we believe Christianity is in a summary.

James: What has surprised you most about planting a church?

Dave: What surprised us about planting a church? That people showed up. Genuinely, God's been really kind. People turned up.

James: Did you think people wouldn't turn up?

Dave: You end up going, this is either going to work or it's not. When you're feeling full of faith and you're confident and you're having a good day, then great, let's do this thing. But that's not the experience all the time. When people actually showed up, and new people showed up, and people turned up from another city and said, "We're thinking of moving over here to join your church," that's something. I was like, I never expected that. But that's what God's been doing. We are not smart enough or interesting enough to make that happen.

"Culturally, in our current moment, there's a war over truth. I think most people now grow up being taught that truth is largely subjective—what's true for you can be true for you, and what's true for me can be true for me, particularly when it comes to religious, moral, or aesthetic claims."

James: What has been the hardest part of planting a church?

Dave: Genuinely, the hardest part for me has been to resist the temptation to control it. That's honestly been the hardest part for me. It's hard when you have a Sunday where seven people turn up. That's hard. But that's been the exception for us. We've not had too many of those things happen like that. That's painful. That's really difficult emotionally. When you've put everything into your sermon that week, you're trying to communicate to the church that week, and then, everyone's on holiday or for various reasons, only a few of you are there.

The first sermon I preached at our church was Psalm 127: "Unless the Lord builds a house, the workers labour in vain." And I said something along the lines of, if we can build this in our own strength, you really shouldn't want to be here. If I can build this, if you can build this, if we can do this without God, you want nothing whatsoever to do with it.

James: What have you enjoyed the most about it?

Dave: I love to preach, so that's been one thing. I've been able to preach every week, which I really enjoy. But I think actually what's been the most enjoyable thing is genuinely seeing people take real steps in their discipleship. I had one couple, they don't have kids, they both work from home, and they are catechizing each other over their lunch breaks. So, they literally have a catechism, and they're teaching each other the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

No one said they should do that or told them to do that. But we just encouraged them and taught them the importance, for example, of



doctrine, discipleship, and catechism, particularly in the context of children. They said, "How are we going to catechize our children if we aren't catechized?" I don't want people to be put off by the word catechism or catechized. That just means learning.

There's nothing shiny or exceptional about what we're doing. We're just doing those things and trusting that God's going to bless the things He's promised to bless. Again, it's early days, but those have been the most enjoyable things I've seen happening.

James: What's it like planting a church in Preston? What's unique about it?

Dave: Yeah, so this is probably an area I'm weaker on—the whole social science behind church planting. The few things that I've observed about Preston, I've lived here more than I've lived anywhere else. It's not a place people go to; it's a place people drive through. Preston was the first place that got a motorway in England. The M6 outside Preston was the first-ever stretch of motorway in the UK. But it's just not a destination. No one comes here. A lot of people live here and work in Manchester or Liverpool or whatever.

Preston, though, is chock-full of churches—loads of churches, lots of bad churches. I don't mind saying that. And by "bad churches," I mean churches that have thrown out what it means to be a church. But because there are lots of churches, there are also lots of decent evangelical churches that preach the Bible, that preach Christ, and hold fast to the evangelical Christian faith. But the church attendance is tiny. I can't remember what it was. About 3%, I think, of the whole city goes to church, but 50% would answer that they're Christians on a census.

So I think the main problem, which is probably the main problem in a lot of British cities is nominalism, nominal Christianity. So we're not here just to reach non-Christians, we're here to reach people who think they're Christians.

James: What advice would you give someone thinking about church planting?

Dave: I think three things. The first thing is to really make sure you're qualified biblically. So, I don't mean you're a great leader; I don't mean you're entrepreneurial. What's interesting biblically is that those things aren't in any list of qualifications. I think it really helps to be a good leader. I also think it probably helps to be entrepreneurial. I'm not sure how good a leader I am. I'm definitely not entrepreneurial. I was sort of forced into this through what I would say is God's providence, but I think people who want to plant a church, the first question they should ask is, am I qualified according to scripture?

I think a deep dive into those qualifications would be beneficial. We don't need any more churches led by unqualified people.

The second one would be, don't do the journey on your own. Don't be a maverick. We were. Although we couldn't formally submit ourselves to a denomination because we obviously weren't a part of one, we did ask godly church leaders, godly men, to advise us, challenge us, and so on. As we grow as a church, we're actively looking at denominational affiliation.

I think the church needs to be accountable. The church leadership needs to be accountable. It's not my church. It's not mine. It's not a business that I'm running. It's Christ's church. Who am I to think that I alone am so qualified to do it? No. God will raise up other people with whom I should steward the church. So don't do it on your own.

Lastly I would say simple commit to the means of grace. . I think God's told us what he wants the church to do. Do those things, right? Don't worry about being clever. I was joking to people even before we said we'd plant the church, maybe this won't get into the edit, but saying, "All you need to do in Preston is preach the gospel and you're already, like, unique."

I think churches should preach the word, administer the sacraments, pray, and follow through on biblical church discipline. I think these are what God has ordained the church to do. Why would we doubt that he wouldn't bless those things?

So, I would say just focus on those things. Yes, do the other stuff, do the events, do the

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activities, but don't skip those steps

James: How have you navigated your relationship with God while you've been doing this?

Dave: I think I've been challenged. There's been times where I've realized I have a new level of responsibility here. I can't be ill-disciplined with my devotions, my prayer life, my scripture reading, and my private devotional life. I can't afford to be ill-disciplined with it. It's certainly something I've grown in and will continue to grow in, but the extra responsibility has driven me to take that area of my life much more seriously. I've never studied more than I have now. That's a good thing—to be in the Word more. I've never prayed more now because, again, I'm having to take my hand off the rudder, not control things, which means I'm saying, "Okay, please, Lord, I'm not controlling it, so You need to do something." But again, because if God isn't doing it, we're toast.

James: That's good. It's faith, isn't it? It's being able to step back and just have faith that God is all over it.

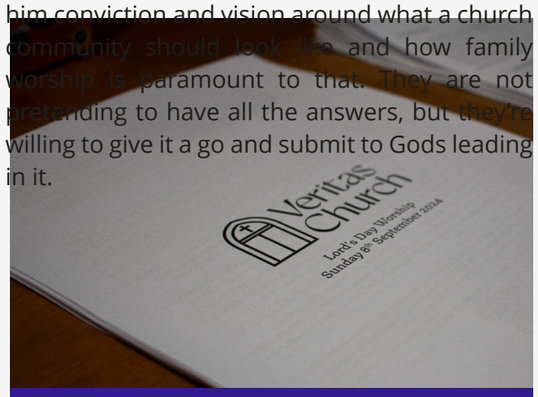
Dave: Yes, absolutely and prayerlessness is faithlessness because prayerlessness is saying I don't need God. Prayerlessness is 'I can control this' but prayer is asking God to work and I'm trusting Him.

James: How can we pray for you and Veritas Church?

Dave: One, that we would be faithful to what we set out to do, which is to be a church of the truth—to be faithful to the Word. Pray that we would stay true to that. Secondly, practically, that God would add to our number. We do want to reach people with the gospel and see more people encounter the truth that sets us free. Thirdly, that God would raise up faithful and qualified elders to help us do that. Fourthly, that we would very practically have wisdom in pursuing denominational membership and affiliation. That's our next big practical step as a church—joining a denomination. We have two or three different options open to us, and we are working through some of the details of belief and practice to figure out which one we best align with going forward long term.

Final Reflections

I hope you'll join me in praying for Dave and Mel, as well as everyone at Veritas Church. They have all embarked on a great journey of starting a new faith community in Preston. What struck me when talking to Dave is that God has given him conviction and vision around what a church community should look like and how family worship is paramount to that. They are not pretending to have all the answers, but they're willing to give it a go and submit to Gods leading in it.



IF YOU'D LIKE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT VERITAS CHURCH AND THEIR JOURNEY, YOU CAN VISIT VERITASCHURCH.CO.UK OR FOLLOW THEM ON INSTAGRAM @VERITASCHURCHUK.



Written by
James Baldock



CREATED TO CREATE:

HOW IMAGINATION IS REVITALISING CHURCH LEADERS



Written by
Liz Jennings

Despite all the known benefits of creative activity, we often feel we need 'permission' to try things, that there are too many obstacles to overcome, and too many risks to face. Liz Jennings speaks to three church leaders to discover how they bring creativity into their daily ministry to learn about the positive effects they experience as a result.

The connection between creativity and mental health is being increasingly understood. Put simply, when we make things, we feel better: when we explore colour, sound, sights, textures, flavours and scents, the world comes alive in ways that excite and inspire us.

Of course, as Christians, this makes perfect sense: we worship a creative God, the designer and inventor of contrast and beauty. He made us in his image, and this fingerprint of creativity set within each of us reflects our maker just as all children carry traits of their parents.

And yet, often, something holds us back. A nasty little voice whispers to us that creativity is a luxury, an indulgence or even a waste of time in the face of overwhelming to-do lists and people in need. Alongside this, the whisper insists, sharing ourselves creatively with others leaves us exposed and vulnerable.

A Risky Business?

I remember my daughter being given a creative writing task in primary school and being instructed by her teacher not to go 'too crazy' with her story.

In the 20 years that I've been facilitating creative groups I've seen how this idea of self-restraint and even suppression of creativity is rife among us and even considered 'proper' and 'normal' behaviour.

This stiff-upper-lip approach to creative curiosity binds our hands, hearts and minds before we even begin. So, how do we begin to overcome the obstacles to a more creative, joy-filled lifestyle?

Balancing Acts

Nick Ash has been a Prison Chaplain on the Isle of Sheppey since 2019, overseeing the ministry team in Britain's fourth largest prison.

> **"For me, expressing these creative parts of myself is an outlet. It helps me balance the stress of work, and it gives me a lot of joy."**

It's a role that sees him involved in a great variety of work from pastoral one-to-ones, dealing with bereavements and sickness, hospital wing and segregation unit visits, caring for his team of 23, keeping rotas going, setting alarms, organising services and much more. In common with many church leaders, he's working more hours than he's contracted for.

'Prison work can eat you up. It's great because you feel fulfilled when you're giving yourself to people in need, but I have to watch myself because I'm a high-energy people-pleaser.

There's a danger of burnout. We come across a lot of needs during a day, which we meet as best we can.

'I've always felt drawn to the edges. Working with young offenders and adult prisoners has opened up opportunities to use my gifts in a completely different field.

'I'm a guitar player and I love to write songs. I wrote one for the Church Mission Society in my early 20s called Aida's Prayer, another called 'The Little Boy Inside' or 'Ashley's song,' (which is on YouTube) as a result of a ministry role I had at the Medway Youth Centre, and I've got lots of other songs written that I need to do something with! These things are a part of who I am: I look at guitars and just want to get my hands on them!'

Nick talks about the value of learning new creative skills for different ministry fields.

'When I began working with young offenders in 2013, I learned magic tricks to help start conversations. I used to play card games under cell doors to build connections. I've used labyrinths and prayer walks to open and enable conversations.'

In a ministry so demanding and bound by safeguarding and procedure, Nick finds creative expression is vital.

'For me, expressing these creative parts of myself is an outlet. It helps me balance the stress of work, and it gives me a lot of joy.'

Breaking New Ground

Ginny Luckett is a vicar with the Golden Cap Benefice in West Dorset, covering an area of 50 square miles, moving between 12 churches with a focussed responsibility for five. It's an understatement to say there's plenty to do, but Ginny approaches life and work with all her creative giftings and curiosity switched on.

'I feel that life is not separated into creative / non-creative activity. Vicars have huge autonomy in their roles: we do have choices and we can decide to do things that help us. And we know that organisations do well when their leaders flourish.

'But flourishing is not an end point in itself, of course: it's growth! It's a pilgrimage, and it contains periods of 'wintering'.'

I ask Ginny what it looks like for her to embrace her day creatively.

'I find joy even in simple tasks like spreadsheets,' she says, and meets my incredulous response with grace. 'It's true! I use colour and find that the task becomes creative and satisfying. I also find writing sermons very creative – reading, thinking, discerning, then choosing methods of communication.'

Ginny describes her family as very creative, and perhaps this is why she is so comfortable taking risks and trying new things, both inside church and out.

'One of the things I do is to sign up for courses, I try about three different courses a year. I like to try things that are quite new to me, and I don't necessarily have any intention to continue the thing after the course – I'm just trying something new, and I always have a great time learning.

'I recently booked myself onto a sculpture course: it will give me a bit of a break from parish duties, and it's something completely different for me, but it will feed me creatively.'

This intentional pursuit means that Ginny's creative muscles are ready for action. I have seen in groups I've run how, once the habit of creativity begins, it takes root and grows, so that more and more ideas come to those open and alert to them.

'One of the services I've curated is entirely music-based, we called it the Soul Soak, and it's a curated DJ set.'

I'm struck by how Ginny approaches risk. Stepping out creatively has the potential to be a great success or a humiliating failure, leaving us feeling vulnerable to criticism and judgement from others. Her response is very practical but reveals a profound humility.

'I just think it's worth giving things a go.

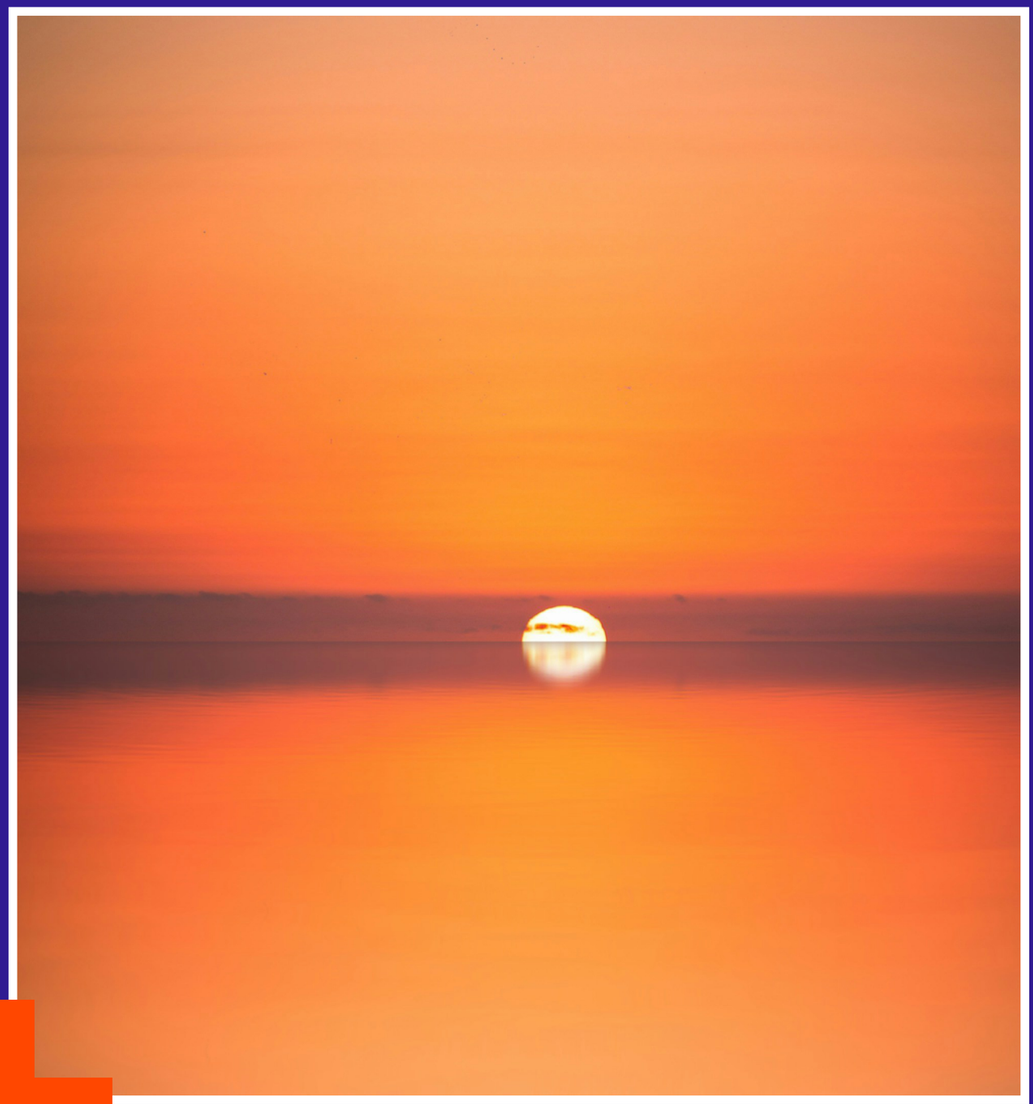
'Pilot things! And, if it's not working, give yourself permission to stop it! Everything won't be for everyone, but what you're doing could be really important to someone. It could open God up for them in a way nothing else could. My job is to hold the door open for others, so I want to give my full self to that.'

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Written by James Baldock

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Written by
James Baldock

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> **“Culturally, in our current moment, there’s a war over truth. I think most people now grow up being taught that truth is largely ”**

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Written by
Emily James



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BREAD OF

OFFICIT A QUATAQUE QUE VOLORERUM, ANT QUE VERRUM ET, QUATIUM QUASPIC TEM DOLUPTA



Written by James Baldock

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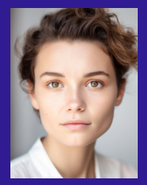
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POSTIS VEST INATIUM QUERE AUCTO RTIAET....



Written by
Emily James



CHURCH LIFE

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