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Downhearted? No!

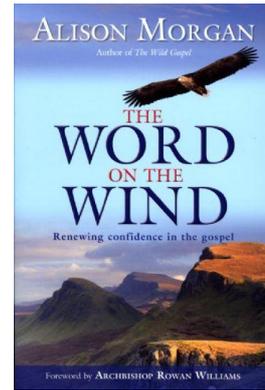
Sarah Meyrick reads a confidence-booster

The Word on the Wind: Renewing confidence in the gospel

Alison Morgan

Monarch £9.99

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The experience of many Christians today is that Britain is not a particularly comfortable place to live. All too easily, the prevailing culture can dent our confidence in our faith. The combination of numerical decline in church attendance and a world that is changing at bewildering speed can often leave Christians feeling unnerved and marginalised.

In *The Word on the Wind*, Alison Morgan sets out to overturn that sense of inadequacy and give Christians back their sense of excitement and confidence in the gospel. Rather than bury our heads in the sand, she argues, we should acknowledge the challenge and equip ourselves to speak with confidence and clarity to contemporary society.

Described in the introduction as the charity's "thinker and writer", Alison Morgan is on the staff of ReSource. Her work with churches of all denominations in Britain and overseas, Africa in particular, mean that she is extremely well placed to reflect on the scale of the task. But it would be wrong to imagine the book is about talking up the numbers or putting on a brave face in defeat. Rather, it is peppered with stories of lives transformed by encounters with the gospel, which came about, largely speaking, because Christians were committed to discipleship and willing to share their faith.

So we read about the bank manager who encounters the gospel through talking to a client, who lent him a book (the author's earlier book, *Wild Gospel*, as it happens) that fired his imagination; the KGB agent who became a Russian Orthodox priest after a conversation on a plane with the Archbishop of York, then a student; the drug addict who came to faith in prison; and the meeting between a street pastor and a hard-looking young man whose faith in God was rooted in his survival of cancer.

Alongside the stories, the author reflects helpfully on what is actually going on in contemporary society, drawing on science and theology, and displaying scholarship lightly worn. At the end of each chapter, there are reflections and questions for discussion, making it an ideal book for exploration in small groups. The book finishes with a useful list of resources, a bibliography, and comprehensive footnotes, backing up the statistics and stories with sources and pointers for further reading.

Overall, it is an accessible read, with plenty to inspire and challenge.

Sarah Meyrick is Communications and Bishops' Press Officer in the diocese of Oxford.

Alison's website is www.alisonmorgan.co.uk

To order visit <http://www.resource-arm.net/pub.html#book>