

Researching the God Market: Factors Influencing Belief and Unbelief in God in One Rich, Educated Postcode

- What do educated urban people think about God, and why?
- What factors – logical, emotional, experiential, intuitive - incline them towards belief and what towards unbelief? How do they balance these factors?
- Why do many seem to be ‘swing voters’, comfortable sitting on the fence, unmotivated to move far either way? What common ground do they share with Christianity? What are their objections to Christian belief and practice, and their misunderstandings?
- Why do many people describe intuitive and emotional attraction to believing in God, but resist it intellectually? What apologetic approaches would make most sense?

Grenville Kent asked these questions in Australia – which is a long way from Europe, but a lot like Western Europe spiritually and culturally. This research will not directly apply to your ministry area, but the findings may offer insights about post-Christian societies and the market research method may provoke you to try something similar.

Grenville Kent has lectured in Old Testament and Arts at Wesley Institute in Sydney, Australia, for a decade, and has spoken at evangelical meetings in 25+ countries, particularly for young adults on campus. He co-edited the recent IVP book *‘He Began with Moses...’: Preaching the Old Testament Today*. His PhD (Manchester) analyses Old Testament narrative and his DMin (ACT) is in Apologetics. Grenville also holds a BA and MA in Film and is producing an apologetics film series found at www.bigquestions.com.

N.B. This presentation is based on Powerpoint slides which will be shown on screen, and a soft copy will be offered to participants via my USB drive. Anyone without a computer with them can email grenville@rema.tv to request a copy.

The Eight Tribes:

1. The North Shore Tribe: Achieving

- A. The ambitious, hard-working, heavily-mortgaged inhabitants of the great suburban jungle for whom looking good and keeping up appearances are fundamentally important. They survive in the jungle by constantly moving ahead, up through the ranks of job, car, house, street and suburb.
- B. Found in: Commuter suburbs, gathering in offices, gyms and shopping malls.
- C. Distinguishing Characteristics: New cars, new toys, long commutes, tropical resort holidays, stress-related health issues.

2. The Toowoomba Tribe: Staunch

- A. The tribe of the Aussie heartland, the provincial conservatives, who see themselves as a source of stability and common sense, bearers of on-going connection with the land –

solid, reliable and down to earth, but also deceptively smart.

- B. Found in: Towns with a single main street and muddy utes. Gather in clubrooms and memorial halls.
- C. Distinguishing Characteristics: down-to-earth-ness, talks of weather, moans about the government.

3. The Bankstown Tribe: Unpretentious

- A. Urban working people who disdain “wankers” and define themselves by their unwillingness to think of themselves as better than their mates – the classic “housing commission and keg” Aussies.
- B. Found in: Suburbs and towns with concentrations of car-yards, supermarkets and sports grounds.
- C. Distinguishing Characteristics: shift work, blue overalls, budgets.

4. The Cabramatta/ Campbelltown Tribe: Community

- A. Urban, often immigrant, usually Asian or Polynesian, community-minded people where family is paramount and church is likely to play a central social role, or if not church then another club-based group. The sense of belonging and support structures are very strong as is the pressure to ‘do the right thing’ and uphold appearances.
- B. Found in: Areas with concentrations of state housing.
- C. Distinguishing Characteristics: large social gatherings, infectious laughter, wearing of flowers, men in skirts.

5. The Newtown Tribe: Avant-Garde

- A. A transitional Tribe for young alternative Aussies on the cutting edge of cool, where ‘new’ is the greatest virtue, being labelled mainstream the greatest fear and self-expression the great preoccupation. The Cuba Street tribe is the edge from which many trends and fashions emerge – in the 80’s it was the vanguard of espresso, in the 90’s of body piercing and tattoos.
- B. Found in: Bohemian zones in central areas of main cities, at the coolest gigs, at art schools and universities.
- C. Distinguishing Characteristics: looks weird, likes looking weird.

6. The Byron Bay Tribe: Free spirited

- A. The independent spirits who value the ability to live a life according to their own priorities, not the consumerist pressures for material aggrandizement. They tend to be highly sensate and internally focussed – hedonists, or spiritual journeyers, fitness fanatics or adrenaline junkies. Many Aussies join the Byron Bay tribe for three weeks at Christmas.
- B. Found in: Laid-back suburbs on the wild side of town, or small settlements in beautiful places.
- C. Distinguishing Characteristics: old station wagons, stacks of firewood, mismatched possessions.

7. The Balmain Tribe: Intellectual

- A. The highly educated intelligentsia who value ideas above material things and intellectualise every element of their lives. Their most prized possession is a painting by the artist of the moment, they frequent film festivals, secretly wish they had more gay, Muslim and aboriginal friends, feel guilty about discussing property values and deep down are uneasy about their passion for Rugby.
- B. Found in: Suddenly fashionable ex-working class suburbs. Large groups will gather at bohemian inner city cafes, intellectual bookshops, ethnic cultural events and film festivals.
- C. Distinguishing Characteristics: Prefers to be “challenged” than entertained, seeks out authentic experiences, blushes when talking about property values.

8. The Vacluse Tribe: Entitled

- A. The round-vowelled children of privilege for whom breeding is the greatest virtue, manners really do make a difference, money is great if it’s old but crass if it’s new, and the school you went to defines the rest of your life.
- B. Found in: Leafy enclaves of the elite old city suburbs and in leafy corners of provincial towns with old sheep-grazier traditions.
- C. Distinguishing Characteristics: Rounded vowels, meticulous manners.

Adapted with permission from Caldwell and Brown, *Eight Tribes*, and from www.8tribes.co.nz

Suggested Readings:

Grenville J.R. Kent, *Asking Big Questions: Factors Affecting Belief in God in One Sydney Postcode*, Wipf and Stock, forthcoming 2014.

Jill Caldwell and Christopher Brown, *Eight Tribes: The Hidden Classes of New Zealand*. (Auckland: Wicked Little Books, 2009).