

Grounded: in the Body in Time & Place, in Scripture

Grounded in Australia: Learning from Our First Peoples

Jude Long



Meet the author

Dr. Jude Long is Vice Principal Academic at Melbourne School of Theology and Eastern College Australia. Prior to that, she was the Principal of Nungalinga College in Darwin for eight years. Jude has a passion for facilitating education that will transform the whole person and help learners to grow in their relationship with Christ.

Chapter overview

From 2010 to 2018, I was Principal of Nungalinga College, an Aboriginal Theological College in Darwin. Theoretically I worked as a teacher, but perhaps more accurately I should be described as a learner. While I have only glimpsed the richness of the contributions Aboriginal Christians can make to the Australian Church, I learned about two central concerns for our Aboriginal brothers and sisters – land and kinship. These are key ideas as we explore what it is to be grounded in this country and in relationships of all kinds. However, perhaps even more significant is what we can learn from them about keeping Jesus at the centre and being grounded in Him alone.

General Study Questions

Question 1

What are some of the things you know about Aboriginal peoples and their experiences with the church?

Question 2

Describe any sense of connection you might have had to a particular place? How does that relate to what land means for Aboriginal people? Is there any response that you need to make as a Christian?

Question 3

What does the word kinship mean for you as you think about your church community?

Question 4

How do you feel about the topic of suffering as a part of the Christian life?

Question 5

How can you grow further in your relationship with Aboriginal peoples?

Question 6

How can you build more opportunity into your time with God to connect with the land?

Question 7

What steps might you take to understand the history of the in which you live and to be respectful of the First Peoples of that place?

Question 8

Are there things about your lifestyle that could change in response to these learnings from Aboriginal people?

Question 9

We all need to keep Jesus at the very centre of our lives. Where is he sitting in your life? Are there things you need to deal with to allow him to take his rightful place?

Academic Questions

Question 1

Discuss whether it is possible to be truly “grounded” in Australia without considering the perspectives of First Peoples?

Question 2

What might an alternative approach to theological education that is non-competitive and formational look like?

Question 3

What would be the challenges of adopting Aboriginal spiritual insights and practices regarding the land into the Australian church?

Question 4

What would it look like to be truly grounded in a local church community?

Question 5

How can we, as a part of the wider Australian church, and as a member of a local church, and as an individual, respond to the suffering our Aboriginal sisters and brothers experience and the generational trauma they constantly carry?