

Some Positive stories from Phase I

BOOKLET HIGHLY VISIBLE IN THE COMMUNITY

An area overseer in the Anglican movement reported that in his travels the booklets had been highly visible. He had seen them on shop counters and in GPs waiting rooms. 500 booklets he personally ordered were quickly used at different functions in the region, and one of the churches frequented by tourists gave many out also.

NON-CHURCH PEOPLE ARE READING IT

A Wesleyan Pastor, who had 'rallied the troops' to utilise the opportunity, has four members who do street witnessing and home visitation. They confirmed that from their contacts with the un-churched, the project was doing more good than people realized.

THE EQUIPPING WORKED

A Salvation Army Officer told how they had made good use of the teaching resources. Their active encouragement, and request for testimonies produced results. It helped a lot of people work out how to share their faith, and resulted in many testimonies of people being engaged in conversations in the community. Examples included faith conversations on buses and tennis courts.

IT ENCOURAGED ME TO GO BACK TO CHURCH

A Pastor of a Methodist-Presbyterian Union Parish used the booklets in various ways, including at community events and their op-shop. They also used the training videos. They found that Maori people especially responded favourably to the booklets. Their eyes lit up when they read some of the content. One guy said "I haven't been to church in a long time but my wife goes. This has encouraged me to go back."

PEOPLE CAME BACK TO CHURCH

A New Life Pastor who was only able to engage with the opportunity at a basic level showing 1 or 2 of the equipping videos, had members become very motivated to share faith. Extra booklets left on their front desk were all taken and while they didn't have any new Christians from it, a number of people who used to attend church decided to come back.

I LED FOUR PEOPLE TO FAITH IN CHRIST

A lady in New Plymouth started watching the 'Because we care' video series a year prior to the first of the Hope Project's media effort. She contacted us to encourage us that before the media effort was even beginning - the project was already bearing fruit. With the perspectives and skills she gained she was blessed to share that she had 'the awesome privilege of introducing four people to Christ' already.

10 DAY CHALLENGE DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCE WAS A SURPRISE

An Anglican Vicar who mobilized her congregation to help deliver booklets was encouraged by positive comments at doors when delivering to no-circulars houses. They sat down to trial the 10 Day Challenge resource as a group of three, one being a seeker and the other a new Christian. She was pleasantly surprised by how much discussion was provoked by just the first video. It opened engaging conversation for the seeker, for the new Christian and for herself – and she has been a Christian for 74 years! They thought they might get through two videos each time they met, but one was definitely enough.

THE BOOKLET WAS ON THE DINING ROOM TABLE IN EVERY HOME I VISITED

A part time Pastor told us about his job visiting homes around the region to do health checks on people. He found the 'Hope for all' booklet on the dining room table in house after house. They were being read and this provided an easy conversation point. [Comment: Non-Church people are reading the booklets. It's just that they aren't going to come up to a Christian and say they did. This is what our culture is like. The gospel is being heard – but if conversations are going to happen, more often than not it is we 'church people' who will need to ask the first question].

VIDEOS GAVE ME HOPE

Someone contacted one of our team members to say they had gone online from a place of fear and phobias and after viewing a number of stories from the 'Unpacking life' series, had come away more hope-filled. The quality of these videos was applauded by them, and a number of others – including someone in the media industry who labeled them a powerful tool. Numerous people have requested copies of them on DVD so they can show them to friends. We are now putting 16 of the online stories on a DVD for use by those who are not web-savvy.

EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FAITH ENABLED

An Anglican Vicar relayed the story of an older lady who walked home after hearing her sermon on conversations. She stopped to chat with a woman who was gardening. The fact that they used the same kneeler had opened the conversation naturally. When asked why she was so dressed up the member explained she'd been to church, extended an invitation – and the lady gardening came. Another lady who was staying in a motel due to the earthquake talked with a man in similar circumstances who was feeling stressed. During the conversation she invited him to church also, and he has since reconnected with his faith.

OUR MAORI PEOPLE ESPECIALLY LOVED IT

A Baptist Pastor who fully utilized the opportunity afforded by the booklets to engage conversations, commented positively on the way the booklet had also impressed and encouraged their Maori and Pacific Island members.

EQUIPPING VIDEO LEADS TO NEW FAITH

A non-believer was attending a church that showed one of the equipping videos. Due to what he heard he came up after the service and asked what he needed to do to become a Christian – and responded on the spot when it was explained.

IT DEEPENED OUR MEMBERS' UNDERSTANDING OF OUR CHRISTIAN CONTEXT WITHIN NZ

A Presbyterian Pastor said that for a lot of their older Pakeha people it was really helpful, deepening their understanding of their Christian context within New Zealand. He felt it would likewise positively help perceptions in the secular world towards the Church.

NEW PEOPLE AT CHURCH

A Brethren leader found the personal connections and teaching on starting conversations to be a big positive for their church. They also had a couple of enquirers come to their Sunday Services in response to the TV ads and booklet.

MANY INDIVIDUALS REQUEST ADDITIONAL BOOKLETS TO GIVE AWAY

Countless church people have contacted us requesting spare booklets. We have fulfilled every request. All booklets are given without charge. Some who are in retirement villages or private apartment buildings that circulars cannot get to had the insight to request them to give out personally. [Comment: Some Christians are reserved about witnessing not because they don't want to or don't believe in it, but because they don't have confidence in methods and resources. But when given the right opportunity, and shown an approach that their intuition says is realistic for our culture, we discover that there are *many more* people in our churches who want to share faith].

BOOKLETS VALUED BY THE UN-CHURCHED

A Church of Christ Pastor told us about a young Indian girl who carries the booklet in her bag so she can re-read and refer to it at any time. The neighbor of one of our team members said she had kept the booklet for future reference.

THE UNCHURCHED TAKING UP THE 10 DAY CHALLENGE

A Salvation Army Officer told us about a couple of members who spoke to their neighbours about the booklet and then took them through the 10 Day Challenge – with discussions ongoing.

BOOKLET USED TO WITH THE SICK

An Elim Pastor prayed in a shop for a man from another religion who had particular sickness. The next time they met the man's sickness was healed. He showed him a booklet – and the man was interested. It was a conversation tool. Rapport continued to build, and conversations continue.

YOUTH WORKER SEES THE YOUNG COME TO FAITH

A youth worker ran a holiday program that used the Hope Project materials. He saw three young people become Christians through this. He was pleased to report that their church also held a Christmas display in their city centre, talking with many people while handing out 'Hope for all' booklets.

GROUNDSWELL OF CONVERSATIONS – LOOKING FORWARD TO MORE

A Baptist Pastor commented that there seemed to be a movement of people having conversations. He quoted Wayne Cordeiro's phrase, 'Count the conversations, not the conversions', and is looking forward to updates on what is coming next.

BOOKLET A DISCUSSION POINT WITH MY CLIENT

A New Life Pastor who had utilized the opportunity, commented how the booklet provided an easy discussion point with her Christians Against Poverty (CAP) clients. They had a lot of feedback from the community about the booklets. Their community is mostly Maori. It created an opportunity to talk with them about Jesus.

BOOKLETS A FEATURE AT CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Many Christmas and bicentenary events around the country included the giving away of the booklets – some giving away 20 and some as many as 5000. In a few places churches combined to create floats for street parades with the bicentenary as a theme, booklets being given out and the Hope Project as a visual ‘brand’ – thus providing a website to refer people to at which they could learn more about the Christian faith and the gospel in our history.

AN 80 YEAR OLD MAN DISCOVERED THAT HE COULD SPEAK TO PEOPLE

A Presbyterian Pastor who actively promoted the project among his elderly congregations, and who also actively encourages giving to overseas missions and prayer for outreach, commented that a number of people who thought they couldn’t have conversations found that they could. One was an 80-year old gentleman. More people are hearing of Christ as a result.

IT LED TO AN ALPHA COURSE

An Anglican Vicar who used the training resource, including doing a preaching series prior to Phase I, commented that it led to greater enthusiasm, including some leading an Alpha course.

IT IS INFLUENCING OUR PLANNING

A Brethren church leader says he really resonated with the vision of project. They have been using the resources in both their services and small groups as a result and it is feeding their faith and vision.

POSITIVE CHANGE IN ATTITUDES TOWARD EVANGELISM

An Assemblies of God Pastor who has used all the video training resources with the church, commented on how it was influencing his congregation. While some still clung to ‘past’ methods, a broader positive change in attitude toward evangelism was noticeable.

CONVERSATIONS CAME ABOUT NATURALLY IN THE COURSE OF THE DAY

A Baptist Pastor shared how she had visited her uncle just after the booklet arrive, and he asked her what it was all about. Another gentleman had a half hour discussion with his booklet deliverer. Her own involvement in delivering booklets led to some great discussions about Jesus with Buddhists and others.

FOR MAORI, CONNECTING WITH THE PAST HELPS WITH THE FUTURE

A Wesleyan Pastor with a moderate percentage of Maori in the congregation commented how Maori appreciated the material. Helping them connect with the past in a way that encouraged them to go forwards.

TOURISTS HEAR OF CHRIST

We have heard reports of Hope Project booklets being placed in a few churches frequented by tourists running out fast. Some tourist guides who show people through churches have expressed interest in having these booklets to give away because of the relevance of its historical content. We are investigating ways to provide an ongoing supply of booklets for churches frequented by tourists.

I WASN'T SURE ABOUT THIS – BUT NOW IT'S A YES!

A Baptist Pastor commented honestly that he was late getting on board because he was unsure what the project was going to offer. Now that he has seen it, the answer is 'Yes!'

IT LEAD TO THE CHRISTIANITY EXPLAINED COURSE

One Baptist Pastor ended up in a discussion with a young man who had read the booklet. They ended up meeting to do the Christianity Explained course. He didn't finish the course – but it was forward steps.

CHURCH MEMBER CHANGED

A church member was personally impacted by the project – and people noticed something was different about him. He took spare booklets to give out at work.

WE ARE RELATING TO THE UNCHURCHED WITH INCREASING CONFIDENCE

Another Baptist Pastor commented that she felt the equipping and outreach materials had given people a great way of relating to people. It was producing confidence. She can see that people are slowly taking the teaching on board.

THE FAITH AND VISION ARE INFLUENCING MORE THAN YOU THINK

A pastor of an independent Pentecostal church, with significant community involvement, and a high Maori population explained that even though many in his church may not recognise it – the faith and vision of this corporate effort influenced their personal faith and vision. They are now going door-to-door throughout their entire community, praying for people, with a plan to then re-visit each home to strengthen connections.

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO MY NEW FUTURE

Via email a man contacted us in thanks. He told how he had picked the booklet out of his mail box that evening and it had had an amazing impact on him. He desired to go further and was looking forward to his new future. We referred him to the 10 Day Challenge to learn more, also giving a direct link to the 'find a church near you' webpage, while offering to personally help him find a church also.

FROM PRISONER TO PASTOR

We have received numerous letters from people asking for a copy of the Gospel of Luke as promoted on the 10 Day Challenge website. One came from an inmate who wrote that he was changing and wanted a Bible so he could know more. Letters continued and in his final writing he shared that he was looking into doing Bible studies so that one day he could be a pastor. God was changing him and he wanted to help others with the same.

LONG-TIME CHRISTIANS FINDING CONFIDENCE IN WITNESSING FOR FIRST TIME

An Assemblies of God Pastor illustrated a story of a woman in their church who was very excited after having tried to share her faith for many years. With the equipping resources provided she found it freeing that she could now just bring up her faith in ordinary conversation, without having to 'clinch the deal' every time. She could take conversations only as far as they naturally go – knowing she is a link in the chain, and that relaxed conversations can be ongoing with the people she sees regularly.

THREE NEW FAMILIES CAME TO CHURCH

The Minister of a Methodist-Presbyterian Cooperating Parish who had gone door-to-door with booklets to 300 houses, said that awareness of the gospel in New Zealand had increased due to the campaign. Immediately after the booklet delivery three families came to church who had never been before. He believed this was due to the impact of the project.

THE CAMPAIGN FAR EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS

A Salvation Army Officer commented that the campaign was tremendous. The booklet was still being used in food parcels. People engaged really well with the materials. Older people at church found it a lovely tool for sharing faith – finding a confidence they had not even had in their youth. It far exceeded expectations.

MY NEIGHBOURS READ IT, ENJOYED IT, AND ARE COMING FOR COFFEE

A letter from one lady (a retired missionary) told us how she had asked her neighbours about the booklet, and two said they read it and liked it. It provided an opportunity to arrange a gathering over coffee at her house to which she was inviting all her neighbours.

I WAS SCEPTICAL – BUT THEN I SAW THE VIDEOS

A Baptist Pastor shared how he had been sceptical of this effort until he saw the equipping videos just before the first media project went to air. He rallied his congregation, and they volunteered to personally deliver booklets to 'no circulars' homes part of their city. Arriving at his first door he was nervous – but was greeted by a young man he had once met, and 'who desperately wanted to come to church. He was really grateful for the booklet, and took an extra one to give to his friend.'

OUR OP-SHOP HAS A GREATER PURPOSE

One Pastor contacted us to encourage us that the project was having an effect on his small and elderly congregation. Not only was confidence to engage spiritual conversations increasing, those who ran the op shop now had booklets to give away, and saw the shop as a place from which to apply this new-found confidence.

TOO MANY STORIES TO TELL

When asking a Baptist Pastor how the project had gone for them, he sidestepped the request for stories because he was busy, and there were too many of them. Their church had delivered booklets to 'no circulars' homes in half of their sizable city. Members had left notes with some – going back to visit later, engaging conversations. 30 to 40 people were involved in this part of the effort. People who had never knocked on a door before were doing it. The previous week he'd been asked by a non-Church person to sit down for a conversation, and was asked a whole lot of questions about faith. He said it had been really good for their church and there was not enough time to tell of all the good stories.