

Because we care!

A motivational, practical and *strategic* book that could revolutionise the way your Church approaches evangelism and the mobilisation of your members toward it.

BY DAVE MANN

"Dave Mann is a man who is passionate about the church being re-inspired to fulfil it's mandate of discipling our nation. He brings something many evangelists lack — the experience of pastoring. Dave's materials are well presented, theologically accurate and inspiring, and matched by another too commonly missing element — a life of integrity. God has provided men like this as a gift to the church. We must accept them and listen to them, and as appropriate, use the resources they bring"

Lew Meyer
Director, OAC New Zealand.

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 See www.meeknessandtruth.org

Regarding the apologetics and conversational quotient surveys (in appendices 3 and 4):
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PART I

*Establishing
our direction*



Introduction

You are going to love this book! Having been invited by a friend to contribute to the writing of an evangelism book, that project was cancelled. I felt really disappointed — until I looked at what I'd written. I realised *this had happened for a purpose*.

To give you some background, I'm an evangelist at heart — but God played a trick on me. I was absolutely committed to outreaching work in New Zealand, but ended up a pastor in a Church in Singapore. It was a great experience being a pastor — but the shoes were really on the other feet. Having had a full-time focus on both sharing the gospel and encouraging pastors to equip and mobilise their members for this (as Ephesians 4 teaches), now I was the pastor. What would I do? Ideals were put to the test, ideas tried and things discovered. But it wasn't until I was asked to write those chapters that I realised exactly what.

I really do think you're going to love this book! It's a passionate book — but also comprehensive. It covers a range of areas for a reason. Success in outreach will come because of a number of things working together — not just because of one thing. The heart, the hands, the team and the culture all need to be in synch. The most exciting part of the book to me is the final few chapters where everything is brought together. Words fail to express how important I believe the contents of those chapters to be.

Many of our Churches and denominations are very weak in gospel outreach. What this book could show you is how this could change!

BUILDING A NEW CULTURE

“Scientists... have found that when just 10 percent of the population holds an unshakable belief, their belief will always be adopted by the majority of the society.”¹

Culture can change, and churches can change! What is lacking is enough people who believe this is both possible and necessary. Consider:

Knowledge can be learnt;
perspectives gained;
skills acquired;
convictions caught;
and yet the Church can still remain
largely unmobilised!

Why?

It is because, while these things are important,
it is not until they are combined with
leadership and love
that they become sustainable!

This book provides a simple, practical and achievable approach for doing something we’ve all been talking about for decades: developing a *sustainable culture* of evangelism in our Churches that is *suited to our times*. Please read through to the last few chapters. A picture is being painted, and it will be worth it!

In His service, and yours
Dave Mann

1

Knowing you can

Andy was riding his bicycle down his suburban street. It was no different to any other day. That is, until that car came around the corner and lost control. It hit Andy. He flew through the air, and crashed down upon the ground. He was unconscious when the ambulance arrived, and this is not a made up story. It was suggested to his parents that an operation was needed to release pressure that was on his brain from the bleeding, but this was a country where the government would not pay for the operation. The expenses would be exorbitant, but there was no hesitation in Andy’s parents reply when they told the doctors to do all they could to save their son’s life.

Andy did not recover as quickly as was hoped. The medical bills soon reached into the tens of thousands of dollars. But if he did recover he would want to walk, and this meant that further operations were needed to repair damaged bones. Without hesitation his parents encouraged the doctors to do all they could. By the time Andy returned home to continue his recovery from there, the medical bills had well exceeded one hundred thousand dollars — *and his parents didn’t regret spending that money one bit!*

What are the limits of love?

¹ Science Daily, July 26, 2011. See <http://scnarc.rpi.edu/content/minority-rules-scientists-discover-tipping-point-spread-ideas> and <http://news.rpi.edu/update.do?artcenterkey=2902>

Consider parents who spend these same amounts of money on the medical needs of their prematurely born child. It happens often around the world. That unbelievably small 600 gram ‘fetus’ in the incubator is their beloved baby, and they desire more than anything that she will survive and have a normal life.

We place such a great value upon human life, and rightly so, for every life is precious. But how much value do we place upon the human soul?

This isn’t intended as a cheesy question. Seriously, how much value do you place upon it? Every day Christians live among their unbelieving relatives, and do nothing. Every day Christians work and study alongside unbelieving friends, and do nothing. Every day Christians enjoy casual conversation with neighbours and friends, and — that’s right — do nothing. Even more scary, many feel nothing either — no concern, no grief, no agony in the soul causing them to pray and plead before God. What is wrong with this picture?

The story is told of the Reverend John Harper of Glasgow, Scotland. He pushed his way through toward the upper deck of a ship he was on, holding in his arms his only daughter, Nan, with his sister-in-law, Miss Jessie Leitch, clinging to his coat. It was the Titanic. It wasn’t a dream. This ship was really going to sink, and this is a true story. “Get the women, children, and the unsaved into the lifeboats!” he cried out. Along with 1,500 others he was left, with no lifeboat, to die in the cold waters.

Beneath the clear night sky could be heard the cries of the teeming masses of dying people in the cold waters. He had been on his way to Chicago where he was to preach an extended series of revival sermons at the Moody Tabernacle. He would never preach from a pulpit again.

With his last strength, and last breaths he began swimming to the dying souls, crying out for them to be saved. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved!”

He called to a young man clinging to a piece of timber, “Man are you saved?” “No, I am not”, replied the young Scotsman, named Anguilla Webb. Harper took off his life jacket and gave it to Webb. “Here then. You need this more than me.” Webb protested, but Harper replied, “Don’t worry about me. I’m not going down, I’m going up!”

As they were pulled apart by the current, Harper called back to Webb, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved!”

A few moments later Harper and Webb came into contact again. Weakened by hypothermia and struggling to keep his head above water, Harper gasped yet again, “Are you saved now? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved!”

Of the more than 1500 people who went into the cold waters that night, only six were rescued from the waters by the lifeboats. Anguilla Webb was one of them. Four

years later, at a reunion of *Titanic* survivors, he testified that he had been saved twice that night: once by the lifeboats, but the other time by John Harper. “There, alone in the night, with two miles of water under me, I believed. I am John Harper's last convert.”²

Why do I relay this story to you? It’s because a cold sea surrounds us too, and in it are millions upon millions of perishing souls — this is the *spiritual* reality if our Bibles are true. It is not our physical lives that matter the most — it is our eternal souls. But it seems to take extreme circumstances before many of us realise this.

And just as John Harper became that man's hero, you could become someone’s hero too. In fact, this is exactly what God has called you to be.

While a great many of us would admit to being largely ineffective as witnesses for Jesus, it doesn’t have to stay this way!

This book exists to tell you that our Churches *can* be mobilised. Christians *can* be equipped, and we can be made bold so that we could go on to make a difference in the spiritual destinies of our friends and family.

A ship doesn’t have to sink beneath you before you act. What you need to work out is what value you will place upon the human soul. This is the all-critical question.

If you really believe that the human soul is of great value then in the pages that follow you will find hope. Through this book’s content your faith can be encouraged, your hands can be equipped, and you can set your life on a path that can actually strengthen you for the truly great work that God is calling you to.

God is calling you to be someone’s hero!

² Ryun, Jim, & Sons. *Heroes Among Us*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 2002: P275-279. Used by permission of Destiny Image Publishers, 167 Walnut Bottom Road, Shippensburg, PA 17257 www.destinyimage.com

STUDY 1: Whose job is it?

GETTING STARTED

1. What is the first thing that pops into your mind when you hear the word 'evangelism'?
2. On a scale of 1 — 10, how strong would you say you are in the area of evangelism, and why?
3. Share some of your greatest and worst experiences in reaching out to others.

DISCUSSION

1. **Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-4**
 - a. What is spiritual blindness?
 - b. What is the state of those who are spiritually blind?
 - c. Who is behind the spiritual blindness of unbelievers?
 - d. Logically, what action steps could we take to help spiritually blind people?*
2. **Read Philippians 2:3-4.** What are the implications of these instructions for you in the context of your conversations with other people?

3. **Read both Matthew 28:18-20 and Matthew 22:36-40**
 - a. What would this look like, lived out in your life?
 - b. Can you say you are honestly living out these commands? How much might you be?
4. **Read Romans 10:14-15**
 - a. Whose responsibility is it to take the good news of the gospel to the world?
 - b. What will happen if they do not?
5. Do you think it is hard to become strong in the area of evangelism? Why or why not?

What do you think the key challenges or obstacles are?
6. Considering the story of the Reverend John Harper, how would you do things differently if you knew that the next time you saw a non-Christian friend would be the last time?

APPLICATION

1. On a scale of 1 — 10, share how motivated you feel you are to learn and grow so as to better reach out to those around you?

2. Share what your learning goal might be from this series.

Prayer: Commit together as a group to make the most of this study series that you are doing together, making a sincere effort to learn new things, and then to apply them in your life. Confess any feelings of inadequacy, and ask for God's help.

Homework: Read chapter 2, then you could do the Evangelistic Quotient survey in Appendix two, just for your own interest.

* Refer to notes in the Discussion Guide at the back of this book.

PART II: Evangelism in the new world*Today vs Yesterday*

2

A world that has changed

You may find this hard to believe. Did you know that we only started to buy televisions for our homes in the 1950s,³ and coloured television only entered our homes in the 1970s?⁴ What on earth did people used to do with their evenings? In fact, until 1963 we could not even record what was on our televisions⁵, that being the year the videocassette recorder was invented. And we used those videocassettes for nearly 30 years, because the DVD player didn't come until the 1990s!⁶

The younger ones may be thinking, *'This is irrelevant — if you can remember things like this you must be ancient!'* However, consider that mobile phones only entered the market at the end of the 1980s⁷ — and that there have been thousands of years of history before this. Few carried a mobile phone with them before the early 1990s, and they were called shoe phones for a reason back then (they were so big). I send five hundred text messages a month, but even this technology only took off in the

3 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invention_of_television#cite_note-60TH_ANNIVERSARY_OF_625-42

4 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_television

5 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_cassette_recorder#cite_note-3

6 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dvd>

7 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobile_phones#cite_note-11

late 1990s.⁸ In fact, it is only since the 21st Century began that mobile phone carriers became the majority in the developed world. This small thing we carry with us is actually new technology! And we no longer just use it as a phone — we use it to surf the internet, watch television and videos, read books, play games and music, take and share photos, make and edit videos, and pay bills and do our banking!

However, in as much as technology has changed, the real revolution has been in the changes to our culture. Cultural changes have given us, as Christians, some mighty challenges!

In the 1970s young people serving with organisations like ‘Youth for Christ’ or ‘Campus Crusade for Christ’ would go on the streets to share Christ, *and see many people responding to the gospel*. Before that time, preachers like Billy Graham held mass rallies in city after city with packed-out stadiums, seeing many hundreds, and thousands, coming to faith. Today, the same methods do not yield the same results.

The changes have been so dramatic that many evangelistic organisations have had to entirely remake themselves. Some who haven’t no longer exist, and others continue as struggling smaller versions of their once glorious pasts.

What worked in evangelism just twenty years ago does not work so well today.

So, what is it that has changed, and why have people become so seemingly closed to spiritual things?

The change in the way we think is often called ‘postmodernism’, and it’s important that we understand it. Postmodernism simply means we are over modernism (we’re past it)! So the first question to ask is, what was modernism?

WHAT WAS MODERNISM?

Modernism was the hope-filled belief that there were human answers to human problems, and that we humans would find and achieve them. It was the belief that scientists would find cures for health problems; that social scientists would come up with social schemes that would get rid of poverty, lessen crime, and empty our prisons; that religious and political leaders were honest men and women whom we could trust, and who would make the world a better place...

...but then everyone failed us. Leaders didn’t deliver on their promises. Dishonesty, immorality and corruption were found in every sector, and we became sceptical!

Three tenets of postmodernism — as they relate to our Christian witness — are as follows:⁹

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text_messaging#cite_note-0

⁹ This section is a summary of points from *Conversational Evangelism*, Norman Geisler and David Geisler, Harvest House Publishers, 2009, p 18-28. Used with permission.

1. THERE IS A SCEPTICISM TOWARD TRUTH

As previously explained, today our culture has all-but rejected the idea of ‘truth’. It is now commonly said that, ‘every person has their own truth’. If a person claims to have the truth, or the answer to a problem, people don’t jump up and down with excitement anymore. It is simply seen as ‘their truth.’

If a Christian shares their faith, the person listening might well thank the Christian for sharing about their beliefs. However, as they walk away they are thinking, ‘I’m so glad that Christian has found something *that works for them*.’ Many non-believers’ worldviews exclude the possibility that any religion could actually be *true*.

Dennis McCallum, who wrote a book titled *The Death of Truth*, says, “During the past thirty years, society has progressively thrown off every moral constraint... Yet today... people are casting off even the final constraints of reality, truth and reason itself.”¹⁰

The implications are wide-reaching. On the streets, a good number of people still believe there is ‘truth’ that can be proven by scientific method. However, few believe truth exists in the area of religion — and that is the challenge for us!

Consider the recent onslaught of books, movies, and documentaries such as *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Gospel of Judas*, and *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*. These reflect the changing way truth and religion are seen in our culture. The Christian claim is considered to be one amongst many equally valid claims, and beliefs that do not fit this view are disregarded and criticised — and often with little reasoned evaluation.

Regarding the Christian faith, scepticism is at an all time high!

2. THERE IS A REJECTION OF MORAL ABSOLUTES

It follows that, if there is no real truth, there are no *real* moral values. The idea that a God might tell us what is right and wrong has been thrown out. As a result, communities and individuals now define ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ for themselves.

As an example of the change, premarital sex was a clear ‘sin’ in Western nations in the past, but today it is considered perfectly acceptable. Marriage was an ‘institution’ in the past, but today many co-habit, and no one blinks an eyelid.

However, this change has brought significant consequences. The breakdown in the traditional family has triggered a breakdown in our culture. Statistics on crime, drug-dependency, depression and other mental illnesses, truancy and educational levels, and even health and longevity in life... can all be *directly* linked to family dysfunction in early childhood and teenage years.

¹⁰ Dennis McCallum, ed., *The Death of Truth* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996), p235.

The belief that morality is relative to the individual is... “...resulting in more harm to the society in general than anything else in my lifetime. It is unutterably destructive. How’s that working for you?”¹¹

— Glenn Sunshine, Professor of History

“...one of the great myths of our day is that we are islands — that our decisions are personal and that no one has a right to tell us what to do in our private lives. We easily forget that every private decision contributes to the moral and cultural climate in which we live, rippling out in ever widening circles — first in our personal and family lives, and then in the broader society.”¹²

— Chuck Colson, Cultural commentator

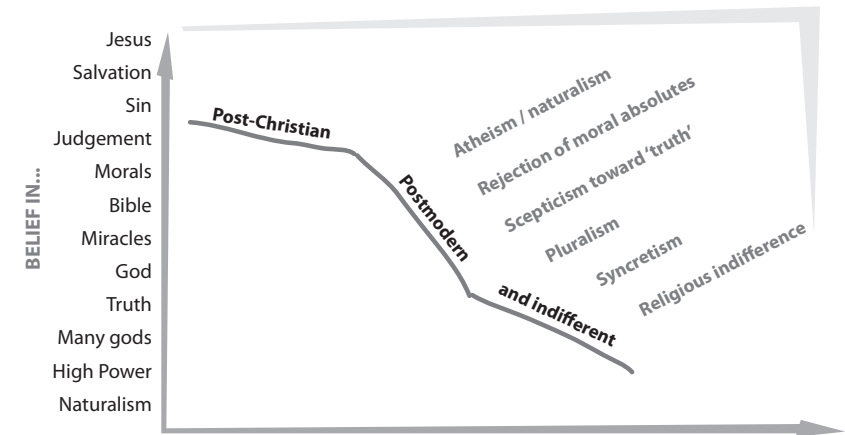
The primary implication of this moral breakdown for our evangelism is summarised well by cultural anthropologist, Gene Veith. “It is hard to proclaim the forgiveness of sins to people who believe that, since morality is relative, they have no sins to forgive...”

With regard to who it is who is rejecting fixed morality he points out, “It is not the lunatic fringe rejecting the very concept of (absolute) truth, but two-thirds of the American people.”¹³ It is also a significant portion of those who are in our Churches — as we will demonstrate shortly.

The gospel only makes sense when we recognise that evil is within us. The Christian belief that we are naturally inclined toward sin and selfishness does match reality — as the popular novel, *Lord of the Flies*, illustrates so well.

As J.P. Moreland put it, ‘...it does not take a rocket scientist to recognise that our entire culture is in trouble. We are staring down the barrel of a loaded gun, and we can no longer afford to act like it’s loaded with blanks.’¹⁴

A WORLD THAT HAS CHANGED



CONSIDERING A FEW STATISTICS

A 2007 survey revealed that 46% of New Zealanders believe in a God, 31% believe in a 'higher power', and 19% believe in neither a God nor a Higher Power.¹⁵

However this does not reveal how many of those who believe in a God might believe all religions lead to God (which would reflect a postmodern worldview).

If we look to American studies for a comparison, 78% of Americans believed in a God, 14% in a higher power, and just 7% in neither.¹⁶ However, while many Americans believe in a God, only about 6% believe moral truth is absolute¹⁷ — which says a lot. Additionally, more than half of all Church-attending, evangelical Christians (57%) say they believe many religions can lead to eternal life!¹⁸

The significant majority of those in our western cultures are now pluralistic (meaning they believe there are many roads that lead to God) — including those inside our Churches. Recognising this is key to our motivation to do something about it.

For a study closer to home, in January 2012 the Sydney Morning Herald published results of a study that revealed that 25% of Church attendees in Australia were not convinced of the existence of a personal God.¹⁹ In

11 *Doing The Right Thing* (6 part exploration of ethics), The Chuck Colson Center, 2011.

12 *How Now Shall We Live*, Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1999), p294.

13 Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), p16. As quoted in a *Conversational Evangelism* resource by Dr David Geisler. See www.meeeknessandtruth.org

14 J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997), p21. As quoted in a *Conversational Evangelism* resource by Dr David Geisler. See www.meeeknessandtruth.org

15 Gallop poll, May 2007 as cited in Ian Wishart, *The Divinity Code* (Howling at the Moon Publishing Ltd, 2007) P.18.

16 UMR research poll in NZ Sept 2007 www.umar.co.nz/Media/FinalMorality-Religion-Evolution-NZ_USComparison-Sept07.pdf

17 While 83% identified themselves as Christians, only 6% believed moral truth was absolute. The Barna Update 2002

18 One survey found that 57% of evangelical Church attendees believed many religions could lead to eternal life. [Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life <http://pewforum.org/news/display.php?NewsID=15915>]

19 McKenny, L., Churchgoers keen to take a pew despite their disbelief, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, www.smh.com.au/nsw/churchgoers-keen-to-take-a-pew-despite-their-disbelief-20120106-1posf.html, 7 January 2012]

other words, they were atheists or suspected that the reality might be more akin to a 'Higher Power' than the God described in the Bible. Now, imagine if we were to ask the 75% who did believe in a personal God whether they believed many religions could lead to eternal life. How many more might not actually believe Biblical Christianity? Could it be as high as the American statistic above?

Could it be that a postmodern scepticism of truth has not only become the majority view in our culture, but has also found its way into our Churches more than we realise or yet admit?

3. A RESULTING INDIFFERENCE TOWARD TRUTH

The end result is that, if there is no truth, there is no reason to give time and effort to considering what is true. Our culture has thus become indifferent toward religion. People believe whatever they want to believe, and no one is considered right or wrong.

As a result, it's difficult to engage many people in an intelligent conversation about religion, because they no longer believe logic and reason apply to the realm of religion.

Quoting Nick Pollock (author of *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult*), there are an '*...ever-increasing number of people who are simply not interested in hearing about Jesus because they are quite happy with their own views.*'²⁰

When we share Jesus with such people they say, 'It's nice for you to believe in that truth,' or 'I'm glad that it works for you, but it doesn't work for me or mean anything to me,' or 'I've got my own beliefs!'

Regarding the scope of this change in worldview, it is fast becoming a global worldview, fuelled by global media, migration, and the ease of travel. Ravi Zacharias says, '*You are living in a time when the West is looking more like the East, and the East is quietly imitating the West.*'²¹ As a result, evangelism is becoming more difficult everywhere!

Our task is made even more difficult by the growing *resistance* to Christian influences in our Western cultures. For example, the Christmas story is no longer taught in many Western Schools, as it is considered an unfair promotion of one group's view over another. For the same reason, a growing number of communities no longer allow inclusion of the Christmas story in their public Christmas celebrations, and sing only Christmas carols that have no reference to religion, like *Jingle Bells*. Our desire to be inclusive of all people is leading to a rejection of even our most basic Christian traditions.

20 Nick Pollard, *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p31. As quoted in a *Conversational Evangelism* resource by Dr David Geisler. See www.meeeknessandtruth.org

21 Ravi Zacharias and Kevin Johnson, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: W. Publishing Group, 2000), p11. As quoted in a *Conversational Evangelism* resource by Dr David Geisler. See www.meeeknessandtruth.org

Indeed, we are facing some significant challenges!

WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE?

Firstly, we note that we cannot retreat from seeking to share the gospel with people, for the gospel remains the power of God for the salvation of all who would believe (Romans 1:16). God still works miracles in people's hearts. Even though the gospel may not be fully understood due to differing worldviews (belief that there is no real truth), the Holy Spirit can still convict the heart (John 16:8).

However, we do need to be wise. In 1 Corinthians 9:22 the Apostle Paul said he 'became all things to all men so that by all possible means he might save some'. While the message didn't change, *the way he communicated and represented it did*. His approach and wording changed so that the gospel would make sense to the different audiences he spoke to.

In the same way we need to find the approaches that can best connect with the people around us, engaging a faith-conversation from *within* their own cultural worldview.

To consider the challenge before us, our culture is truly post-Christian. There are various layers of belief and scepticism that hinder people from considering faith in Jesus — let alone doubt, hurt and confusion. While we will still need to share a clear message, reaching people today is maybe more like peeling away the layers of an onion. We need approaches that can achieve this.

Imagine that 10% of the non-believers you know are in a place where the gospel might make some sense to them, were they to hear it shared in a clear and authentic manner. That leaves a staggering 90% for whom the message does not make great sense!

The situation is made worse when we consider that there are many who may not even have a Christian friend. An Australian study in 2002²² found that as many as six out of ten Australians did not have a friend who went to Church. So, even if all the Christians were sharing their faith with their friends, family and neighbours (which we know is not the case), 60% would still not hear.

What are we going to do? We are not only failing to share the gospel with everyone in Western 'Christian' nations — 90% of the people have a worldview that stops them even considering that the gospel message could be true!

Answering this, and showing us a way through, is the purpose of this book!

22 A 2002 Australian study by CLS titled "Why People Don't Go to Church" revealed that 80% of Church-goers said they had friends who did not go to Church, and 60% of non-believers said they had no Church-going friends. As quoted in a booklet published by 'Love Your Neighbour' and CVIC NZ (Church Volunteers in Communities).

We cannot hide behind the programmes we are familiar with, because we already know that these connect us with but a small portion of those in our communities.

We cannot hide behind the methods we are familiar with, because they are proving insufficient.

We need to embrace the challenge, learn new things, and take the journey that is longer!

3

The journey that is longer

Reaching the 90% is not impossible. It's just that we're going to need to adjust our approach. One key word that needs introducing is 'pre-evangelism'. If evangelism is planting the seed of the gospel, pre-evangelism is tilling the soil of people's minds and hearts to help them become more readied for that seed (1 Corinthians 3:6).

There is still a hunger for spiritual reality in people's hearts. For example, a significant number of people believe in astrology and the predictions of psychics. However, because there is so much scepticism toward the idea of religious truth, we may not be able to plant the seed of the gospel if we have not first worked the soil of their minds. Without preparation, the roots of the gospel may not penetrate the hardened soil of the heart.

Successive preaching of the gospel might also serve to reinforce scepticism toward the message's relevance, because from within their worldview they can not understand what we are trying to say. If pushed, our preaching sounds like crazy, repetitive, religious babble. It's just our view that we are — for some unknown reason — trying to force upon everyone else as if only we had the truth about God and religion.

So, while we must share the gospel without apology, if we are to really engage the discussion that is needed with many of our friends, we may need to learn how to take the journey that is longer.

OUR EVANGELISTIC GOAL

How about our goal being that we would, every day and in every way, help our non-believing friends *take one step closer* to Jesus Christ?²³ People are already known to come to faith after multiple interactions with believers. While salvation in a culture like ours is a longer journey, if that journey is taken, it can still reach the same destination!

“ The goal is that we would, every day and in every way, help people *take one step closer* to Jesus Christ. ”

UNDERSTANDING THE LONGER JOURNEY

A very useful diagram, which illustrates this, is commonly known of as the ‘Engle Scale’.²⁴ Various versions of it have been made over the years. The key principle is that if we could better understand where people were at in their spiritual journey we could better meet them at their point of need. For example, while our friends might not be ready to believe the full gospel we might be able to help them move forward from not believing there is a supreme God, to believing that one might possibly exist. This would be to move them from negative eight to negative seven on the scale below.

THE JOURNEY TOWARD FAITH

- 12 Born with a God-Vacuum
- 11 Aware of higher Power or powers
- 10 Senses personal spiritual emptiness
- 9 Seeks to fill personal spiritual void
- 8 Vulnerable to false religious beliefs
- 7 Realises there is only one true God
- 6 Exposed to other Christian concepts
- 5 Interested in Jesus and the gospel

- 4 Understands some gospel concepts
- 3 Senses personal spiritual conviction
- 2 Confronted with a faith response
- 1 Counts cost of a faith response
- 0 Repents and trusts Jesus

A QUICK EXPLANATION OF THIS SCALE

From negative twelve through to negative eight the goal is to **‘till the soil’** of their hearts and minds, so they can be more readied for the ‘seed’ of the gospel. In doing this we might pray for them, set a good example of Christian life, discuss religious matters with them in a broad sense, and seek to show practical love and concern.

Negative seven through negative five is where we seek to **‘plant the seed’** of the gospel. While our prayer, good example and love continue throughout, this is where we establish the uniqueness of the Christian faith, and of Jesus. We share what Christ has done for humanity, discuss obstacles to their faith, and tell of the reality and benefits of such faith in our own experience.

Negative four through to negative one is where we seek to encourage them on the truth of this matter. We share more of our testimonies, encourage faith, and invite them to a decision. We are seeking to **‘bring in the harvest’!**

THE CULTURAL CHANGE ILLUSTRATED

Twenty years ago the average person may have been at around negative four to seven on this scale (being at least exposed to Christian concepts). This is why methods such as street evangelism found a level of immediate success. However, today, the average person is maybe at about a negative eight to eleven (they are aware of Higher Powers, or sense a spiritual emptiness, but do not know or believe the Christian concept of a single, loving, good, knowable God).

By understanding the kind of journey they may have in front of them we are better positioned to help them take those steps forward. This isn’t to say we avoid sharing the gospel — but is to say that we’d do well to add a few other weapons to our arsenal. We use the new, as well as the old.

For example, the gospel may not make too much sense to a person if they don’t yet even believe in the existence of a personal God, or that religious truth exists. So, if we could help them take *one step closer* to Christ by considering whether a single God might exist — that is a forward step.

Certainly God can bring people to faith miraculously, but He more often works with us and through us. Prayer and faith is not enough! The gospel needs communicating

23 This definition was developed by Dr David Geisler when he started Meekness and Truth Ministries. See www.meeknessandtruth.org

24 Named after the man who made the concept popular, James F. Engle.

in the language of the hearer — and that now requires discussion about the existence of God, and why we believe God is good, etc... Salvation is more often the product of a longer period of time, and if we are willing to learn and take that longer journey, we can still see people coming to faith in Christ!

Here are a couple of recent examples of the longer journey, to illustrate:

STORIES: A JOURNEY THAT TOOK TIME

Joanne was active in reaching out to her friends right throughout her school years. Now a fourth year university student, she can remember right back to when she first witnessed (shared about Jesus) to her close friend, when in Secondary 1 / Year 9. This friend recently came to faith, but it had taken a decade to happen. In the early years she talked with this friend about faith a number of times, but the friend felt all religions were the same, so long as we did good works. But where her conversations left off with that friend at that time, others picked them up. This friend, somehow, ended up having many Christian friends through school, and then in university. So conversations about faith continued, as also did prayers for her, and various invitations to Churches and events.

Ten years later that this friend was ready to surrender her life to Christ. She did so at a Christmas service, and had a joy in her heart so intense that she looked as if she was glowing. Joanne wrote of her experience, *“Prior to last Christmas, I had many times been discouraged, asking God why so many of my friends still had not come to know Him. God aptly reminded me that every moment and interaction is valuable — we each play a role as one of the links in the chain.”*

Sometimes it takes a person many years to journey in their beliefs to a place of readiness to follow Christ. We need to persevere not only in our prayers, but also in our efforts, for our encouragements can bring about turning points on their journey and God is still at work with us in this. Consider this next example.

STORY: WHAT GOD DOES IN THE ‘SILENCES’

One year ago Zed attended an Easter outreach service at the invitation of a friend. He enjoyed the programme, and was amazed at the great faith those present seemed to have. He didn’t feel he could make such a commitment to follow God. As he observed the way his friend lived, one thing that amazed him was how that friend managed to balance his busy life with so many Church commitments. He recalled that his friend had replied, *“God is always*

the first priority, and as long as I have faith in Him, other things will fall nicely in place.”

Zed used his studies as an excuse to put religion aside for the rest of that year, but at the end of the year his friend invited him to the Church’s Christmas service. The Pastor shared his personal testimony. He too had come from a non-Christian family, but after attending Church for a while had come to a place where he could see no reason not to accept Christ. Zed talked with some other Christians over dinner, and noted how glad they all were that they had chosen to follow Christ at some point in their lives. He realised that he now somehow felt ready, and so prayed to receive Jesus for himself. He said it was as if some of life’s uncertainty was wiped aside. In the months that followed, God continued to work in his life, confirming that He was with Zed, touching him by His Spirit, reassuring Him that he was loved, and giving him an inner sense of security from the knowledge that God had plans for his life.

The question to consider is what happened in the time between that Easter and Christmas. Firstly, while Zed attended no Church services or meetings, the Holy Spirit was still at work! Secondly, we could assume that the witness of his Christian friends through their example, and through various conversations, was used by God to continue to soften his heart and challenge his worldview. In God’s timing, Zed was ready, and came to faith the very next time he attended an outreach. This is what ‘pre-evangelism’ is all about — working with God through the ‘silences’. This is how the journey to faith often takes place in today’s world. There seem to be many ‘silences’, but God is still at work — and especially so if we are still at work also!

We will have many friends, family and colleagues amongst this “90%” who need someone to reach out to them, and while they need the gospel, if we are to see them come to faith it’s probably going to take a bit more than just that.

Many will need time and conversation so as to think through ideas and assumptions before they are able to really understand the message, let alone accept it. Our challenge is thus to learn how to engage them in such conversations, meeting them at their point of need or question, while still loving them, encouraging them and praying for them. Then, in time, we shall see the fruit.

In summary, effective evangelism is still possible in today’s world, but we will need to learn more than just how to share the gospel if we are to be effective!

STUDY 2:

Responding to a changing world

(THE NEED FOR PRE-EVANGELISM)

GETTING STARTED

1. Share a time when you were caught unprepared for something, and it caused embarrassment.
2. How important is preparation to you, and why?

DISCUSSION

1. In what three ways was it said that culture had changed?
 - a. Can you recognise these aspects of post-modernism in the attitudes and beliefs of your friends, family and colleagues? How so?
2. Considering the Engle Scale, how does this help our understanding of the journey toward faith?
 - a. Can you see where some of your friends or colleagues might be on this scale?
 - b. Can any of you see your own journey toward faith explained in this scale?
3. **Read: 1 Corinthians 3:6**
 - a. What does this verse teach us about how the word of God takes root in our lives?*

- b. Have you ever felt discouraged after making evangelistic attempts?
- c. How are we best to define 'success' in evangelism?

4. **Study:** 2 Timothy 4:1-4 (While this message is given to a Pastor in a Church, the principles are relevant to the ministry we all have to our non-Christian friends).
 - a. Do you think verses 3 and 4 describe people today, and why? To what teachers and myths might they have turned?
 - b. Paul says more about people in the last times in 2 Timothy 3:1-7. Do you think this describes people today? How so? Do you think it was any different one hundred years ago?
 - c. In the context of the passage, what point do you think Paul might be trying to make in verse 1? (How might you reword this verse, to help clarify its message?)
 - d. When are we supposed to be ready to preach the word? Regarding the gospel, do you think it is realistic to expect a person to be ready to share it at anytime? How could this become realistic?
 - e. What is the difference between correcting, rebuking and encouraging? If a leader were actively doing these things for their members, what does it tell us about the leader? *
 - f. What attitude are we supposed to have in doing this? (v2c) Why is it important that we have this attitude? (v3-4). *

APPLICATION

Individually: Make a list of people you know you could reach out to (see appendix nine).

- a. Under their names list what might be hindering them from coming to faith in Christ.

- b. Then list interests they have, which could provide bridges for friendship or communication.

As a group: Share about one or two of your friends, and a couple of ideas as to how you could begin to reach out to them.

Prayer: Spend time in prayer for these people.

Homework: Read chapters 4 and 5.

* Refer to notes in the Discussion Guide at the back of this book.

4

The unprecedented missionary motivation

As we finish the introductory section I desire to stir your hearts. The need for the gospel has *never* been as great as it is today. There has never been a time more important for Christians to be ‘woken up’, and never a time when it has been more imperative for the Christian Church to arise and stand for the cause of Christ.

1. THE WORLD POPULATION IS EXPLODING

The world population is about to hit seven billion, and is expected to reach a staggering 9.2 billion by 2050.²⁵ Compare this to the year 1900 when there were only 1.8 billion people on earth.²⁶ In the year 300 there were just 55 million people in the entire Eastern and Western Roman Empire!²⁷

It has even been said that there might be as many people alive today as have lived in all preceding history. While maybe overstated, it paints a picture of just how many

²⁵ <http://esa.un.org/unpp/>

²⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_population#cite_note-64

²⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_population

people are alive right now as compared to any other point in known history. It's staggering!

The demographics of these unreached millions are changing also. People are moving into cities. Where the focus of much missions work was on minorities in the past, these mega-cities are the mission fields of the future. In a country like Thailand, 34% of the population now live in the cities. In consideration of how 'unreached' these growing cities are, only about 0.47% of the Thailand's entire population are evangelical Christian, but because this population is not evenly spread, the percentage of Christians in the cities is even less than this. Among the tribal people (who live in rural areas) about 13.2% are Christian, while amongst the Thai themselves as few as 0.28% are Christian.²⁸ There is a lot of work that needs doing!

This great need should stir our hearts. However, if we have great faith, this great need could also stir hope within us, for we have a great God and He *sincerely* wants these people in heaven! If indeed more people need the gospel than ever before *then the resources of God must exist for that mission to be accomplished*. It is God who told us to give our lives to this mission (Matthew 28:18-20), and He would not call us to something that is impossible! God is willing that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Nothing is impossible with Him (Matthew 19:26). A mighty outpouring of the Spirit may be yet to come. By faith — trusting the nature and character of God — we could bank on that! Where preachers in the past have seen hundreds come to faith, in our lifetimes we might yet see salvations in their hundreds of thousands, millions, and even greater. We live in an age of unprecedented opportunity, serving an incomparable God!

But God seeks men and women through whom to work!

Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke has been a trailblazer for previously unprecedented ventures of faith. He opened the door for greater visions in the twenty-first century. As an example, in the year A.D.2000 his ministry saw more than one million salvation response cards collected in a single meeting. Crowds of such sizes, let alone the responses, could not have been even *imagined* a decade before that. Only the newest in technological advances, combined with an audacious faith that dared to believe, made it possible at that time!

We must start with reaching our friends, family and colleagues, one person at a time. In our hearts let us never stop praying and believing for God to do new — and bigger — things! He can and will reach the millions. It is just a matter of time — and He will use people just like you and me to do it. However, we must all become faithful in the small things first. In other words, we must start where we are!

²⁸ Thailand Evangelism and Church Growth Committee — results of a survey presented in 2006. When including all with a Christian 'affiliation', some suggest as high as 1.6% total might be Christian. <http://www.operationworld.org/country/thai/owtext.html> For evangelical see <http://www.joshua-project.net/countries.php?rog3=TH>

Look at the numbers while also looking at God. It is an unprecedented missionary motivation, and a picture of hope.

2. ONCE REACHED REGIONS ARE BECOMING UNREACHED

It seems unbelievable to many of us, but Europe — the 'homeland' of the Christian faith throughout the middle ages — is becoming a mission field. The Muslim population is growing significantly due to a combination of immigration and higher birth rates. Countries like France, once Christian strongholds, are now less than 1% Christian. Churches are shutting their doors. Their buildings are being converted into Museums, Temples and Mosques.

A similar spiritual decline is true of most western nations, and a similar decline is also possible for the Church in Africa, Asia and South America if believers are not diligent to live whole-heartedly, sacrificially loving others and sharing Christ. Every generation must reach its generation.

However, this decline is not without reason. The changes in culture, as discussed in the previous chapter, are significant. The challenge is that we need to learn how to effectively evangelise in this 'new world.' This is not the first time in history that the Christian Church has lost its influence in a society. It has come back before, and can do so again! However, as it stands, there is an almost unprecedented need for the gospel to be preached again through the so-called 'Christian' nations!

Look at the spiritual condition of the once-Christian parts of the world. Doing such can only motivate you to meet the missionary need right where you are.

3. TIME IS RUNNING OUT

This third point is perhaps the most motivating of all. If we dare to read prophecy regarding what the 'times of the end' will look like, and then read a newspaper, we cannot help but be stirred. At one time people thought the book of Revelation must be entirely symbolic, with no literal historical realities ever being expected. Its pictures seemed too far beyond anything known in reality or that could then be imagined to be plausible. Today the picture has changed, and dramatically!

As some examples: Israel now exists again as a nation on its own land, with a myriad of prophecies having been fulfilled in the process (for example, Luke 21:24, Isaiah 27:6, 35:1-2, 41:18-17, Ezekiel 36:35-36, 38:12-13, Jeremiah 23:7-8, Joel 3:8, Amos 9:13-15, Zephaniah 3:9-11). Israel stands as a 'cup of trembling' to the surrounding nations (Zechariah 12:2), and a peace covenant with her is one of most pressing needs in the international relations of our day (Daniel 9:26-27). As further examples, an army of two hundred million could not exist — until now (Revelation 9:16). Strange metallic beasts, described as being like large locusts with the 'sound of seven thunders in their wings' and which 'spew fire and sulphur from their mouths to kill many,' can find easy possible fulfilment in modern military machines such as

military helicopters and tanks (Revelation 9:7-10, 17-19). Not until our times had these Biblical pictures made any sense at all. A European super power now again exists, and global governance is the assumed direction of current international economics, and therefore of many other areas also once this foundation is established (Revelation 13:7b). See also Daniel 2:32-33, 7:8, 7:24-25, 9:26-27, 11:36-45, 12:7, 12:11-12). It's surprisingly biblical! A global cashless financial system all-but exists (eg credit cards, with phone technologies in development — Revelation 13:17), and the technology now exists to fulfil the Revelation 13:16-18 prophecy that specifically predicts a time when people could not buy or sell without receiving a mark on their right hand or forehead (one example being the RFID chip implant). Weapons now exist that can wipe out millions, fitting Biblical descriptions that made no sense until recent times (Revelation 9:15, Zechariah 14:12). A rebuilt Jerusalem temple, while seeming a ridiculous improbability given Muslim interests, is only more recently a topic of discussion — with construction plans completed (research the 'Temple Institute' in Jerusalem. cf Daniel 9:27 as an example). This list really could go on. How long we have is anybody's guess, but it is clear that the time remaining for sharing Christ with the lost millions is running out!

The prophecies in the Bible were not given so we would endlessly speculate on various theories. While containing real information on future events, the purpose was firstly to motivate us toward personal *holiness* (e.g. 2 Peter 3:11) — for we would not know when Christ would return, and secondly to the *proclamation of the gospel* (e.g. Matthew 24:14). The scene for the end-times' drama is certainly set. It is only a matter of time before the curtains open. When we reflect upon what exists beyond the grave there is only one thing that really matters — Jesus!

There are, at the point of writing, about 2000 people groups, representing some 350 million people, who are yet to have the Scriptures in their language, and who are believed to need the Scriptures if there is to ever be a self-sustaining Christian community amongst them.²⁹ These people groups need reaching — and countless millions of others need to hear as well. Where previous generations had their entire lives to share Christ with those they knew and loved, the Bible indicates that a final generation will exist in which this will not be the case. The opportunity really will be less for that generation!

CONCLUDING CHALLENGE:

There is an unprecedented need for the gospel. There are more people needing to hear it than ever before, and the time left to share it might actually be running out. We could be the last runner in this relay race. The saints through all the ages are sitting in the stadium, cheering us on (Hebrews 12:1-2). The baton of the gospel has been passed to us. What are we going to do?

²⁹ <http://www.wycliffe.org/About/Statistics.aspx>

The Bible teaches that when Christ returns many people will be left behind. It is clear that the last generation will not get to wait until their death beds to decide to turn to Christ. They will need reaching for Christ *while they are still in their prime!*

Like never before, we must work with all our strength for the cause of Christ! We can not sit back and do nothing because the needs overwhelm us. We must not make excuses, giving up because people are no longer receptive to the message. Millions of people are genuinely still seeking spiritual truth, and millions are 'blinded' by their worldviews, and we are still God's mouthpieces — every one of us!

Consider the perspective William Booth held, as reflected in this quote. While we live in a world of beauty, from the perspective of eternity, it is also a 'region of death.' He said, *"What is your duty here? Oh that you realized your true business in this region of death! Having eyes, oh that you could see! Having ears, oh that you could hear! Having hearts, oh that you could feel! What are you going to do with this graveyard? Walk about it in heart-less unconcern, or with no higher feeling than gratitude for having been made alive yourselves! Or will you content yourselves with strolling through it, taxing its poor occupants for your living while leaving them quietly in their tombs as hopeless as you found them? Heaven forbid!*

God has sent you into this dark valley for nothing less than to raise these doom-struck creatures from the dead. That is your mission ... Go and do it again..."³⁰

Bible teacher, Derek Prince, summarised the Church's mission — which is also the mission of every believer — as follows:

"The supreme purpose of every true Christian church, the chief duty of every Christian minister, the main responsibility of every Christian layman, is to present to all who may be reached, in the clearest and most forceful way, the basic facts of the gospel of Christ, and to urge all who hear to make the definite personal response to these facts which God requires. To this, the supreme task, every other duty and activity of the church, must be secondary and subsidiary."³¹

Christ has called us to follow Him, and His chief work and mission is the reaching of the lost. If we do not respond to this need we ignore the call of the very God we claim to be following (Mark 1:17, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8).

Like never before, we must work with all our strength for the cause of Christ!

Reflection: How could you restructure your life so as to give yourself more actively to loving and reaching those without Christ?

³⁰ William Booth as quoted in "William and Catherine—the life and legacy of the Booths." By Trevor Yaxley with Carol Vanderwal.

³¹ Derek Prince, Foundation Series, Volume 1. Sovereign World Books. 1986. p134

PART III

*The greatest
hindrances to evangelism*



5

The need for motivation

In this chapter we will consider what I believe to be the greatest hindrance to evangelism.

Reaching the 'lost' (those without Christ) is our mission, and it's our mission *singular*. There is no other mission. This is it! This mission is the sole reason we all continue to exist on this imperfect planet (2 Peter 3:9, 15). God wants more people in heaven! Yet, this priority is not reflected in many believers' lives and local Christian Church's programmes.

In our favour, many of us have experienced God's goodness, so we understand something of what those without Christ are missing out on. We are not ignorant of the benefits. Yet we are still slow to share.

Beyond this we are also aware of the longer-term implications. We know the Bible's teaching about the coming judgement, and in particular about the fate awaiting those who die without having received forgiveness through Christ. We cannot claim ignorance of what is at stake. Yet we still remain largely immobilised.

What is missing from this equation? What is wrong? We know the goodness of God. Many know the reality of God. We know what is at stake.

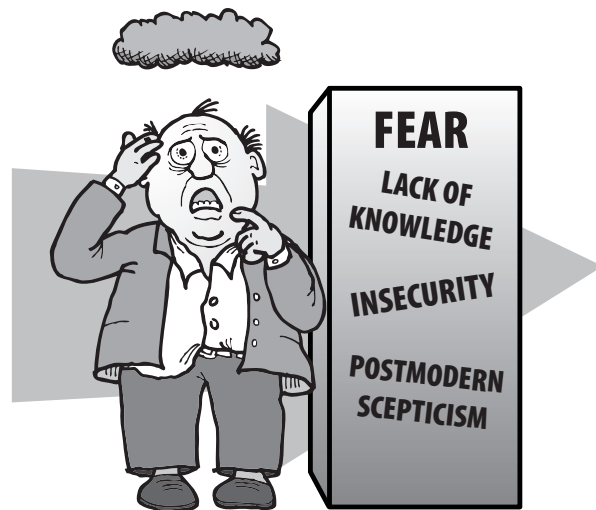
WHAT IS THE REAL OBSTACLE TO A MOBILISED CHURCH?

Some might suggest the problem is that the world has changed so much in recent decades. They suggest we are not mobilised because we are no longer effective — but we could learn to be effective, couldn't we? While this cultural change is true to an extent, there are also still many who are seeing fruit in evangelism. We could learn from them!

Some suggest it is a lack of knowledge. We don't know what the gospel is, or how to share it. They suggest the primary need is practical equipping — but many practical resources and training courses are available, such as can be found in the latter parts of this book and at many websites! There is plenty of training available — although not used as often as it could be. Could there be another reason?

Some suggest it is the fear of rejection. We've had experiences in the past (or have heard of others having them) where people responded negatively to a sharing of the gospel or said no to an invitation to visit a Church. This is certainly the most felt hindrance as far as our emotions are concerned — but isn't love more powerful than fear?

A REAL PROBLEM...



To consider a different point of view, here are some things that stand in our favour: The gospel message still has the power to bring salvation; God still works through prayer; God's Word remains unchanged; the Holy Spirit is still with us; we even have the internet, whereby we can find training courses and sermon series from thousands of Churches around the planet. We can download some at the click of a button, and can choose between the pdf, mp3 and video versions. Practically any person could find training and resources to help them become a more effective witness! What on earth is the hindrance?

Here it is: The greatest hindrance is in our hearts. It's in our motivations. It's in our desires. This is what is stopping us from overcoming the above obstacles.

Specifically, I put to you that the problem is a lack of God's love in us. We don't really understand God's love for us or for others! It may sound harsh, but let's consider.

Our Churches are full of people with every resource and opportunity to be effective servants in the Great Commission, and yet the majority remain unmoved and therefore unchanged. It seems that the heart of the matter, as with many things, is in fact a matter of the heart.

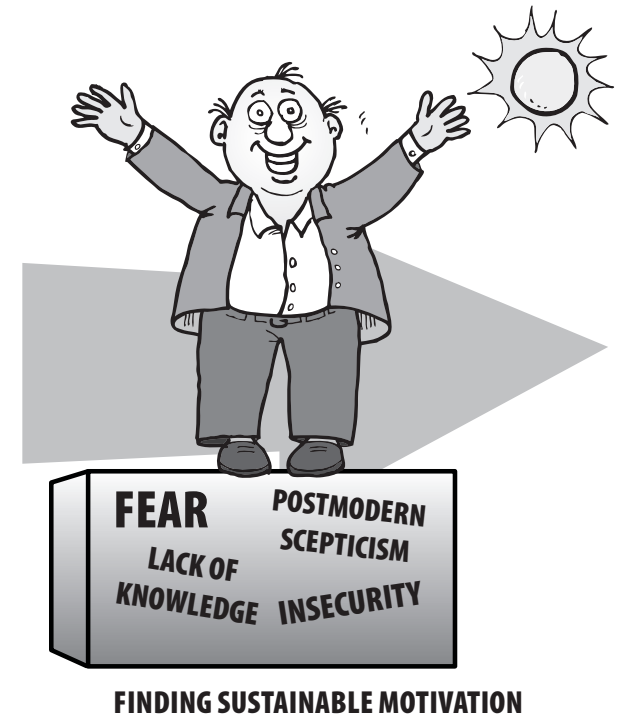
...WITH A REAL SOLUTION

(A) GOD'S LOVE IN US — THE KEY TO SECURITY AND STRENGTH

Do you remember when you first understood the great love God has for you? I was eleven years old when I did. I had somehow developed this idea that everyone else was better than me. Then God helped me understand that He loved me personally. I remember realising my perspective of the world was wrong, because God loved everyone equally. This completely changed the way I saw myself, and others. I immediately began to gain confidence.

Then I remember a couple of years later when God personally touched my life by His Spirit. I *felt* the love God had for me. This reassuring touch helped anchor my sense of security more firmly in who God is, and my confidence and boldness increased greatly.

I'm sure you will have your story too. God's love makes all the difference! If we could truly understand it we would have *nothing* to fear in life, and that would result in some pretty impressive inner strength! However, it is because of doubts in this that we struggle to find sustainable inner strength and security so as to stand boldly for Christ. This is the battle of belief that is going on in our minds each day. We are struggling with doubt in God's Word! Every one of us is insecure at some level. Every one of us is prone to self-doubt. Every one of us wants others to like us and talk well of us. It is only as we grow to trust God's love and sovereignty in our lives that our fear of what others think diminishes, and our eternally sustainable confidence grows.



This is the same confidence that enabled our heroes from both Scripture and Christian history to stand so courageously, such as those who faced martyrdom. When we trust God's love we won't be so scared of other peoples' opinions anymore. We will be able to stand firm against the crowd. We will have discovered the secret of true inner-strength — like Christ!

How do we grow to better understand God's love? By better understanding and knowing God! How do we do that? Through time spent in God's Word, we are helped to see just what God is like. Through time spent in reflection, prayer and worship we internalise what we read, and faith grows in our hearts. *Getting this to happen is the true hurdle!* The frontline of the battle for evangelism is, ironically, in our bedrooms and living rooms, for this is where we either do, or do not, spend real and quality time with God, coming to know Him, and thus finding the needed strength!

“ The frontline of the battle for evangelism is, ironically, in our bedrooms and living rooms, for this is where we either do, or do not, spend real and quality time with God. ”

THE OTHER POSSIBLE HINDRANCE

However, there is another possible reason we may not be able to overcome our fears so as to share Christ — and that is a lack of fundamental belief. As was discussed earlier in this book, a surprising number of people in our Churches are struggling with questions about basic Christian beliefs such as the existence of God, the goodness of God, the reliability of the Bible, and the divinity and resurrection of Jesus. If we are not fully convinced that there is a hell and a judgement, and that Jesus is God's only means of forgiveness... we will lack strength to overcome our fears of evangelising, because our motivation to do this has been undermined. Why would we promote something that we are not convinced is actually true?

Many good websites, DVDs and books exist that could help. I have also written an easy-to-read series of booklets on reasons for belief to help. Many Church-goers are struggling to find the strength needed to stand for Christ in our world, and this will continue until we are again convinced of the fundamental beliefs of Christianity, and sourcing our confidence from faith in God's love.

(B) GOD'S LOVE THROUGH US — THE KEY TO MOTIVATION

While knowing God's love *for us* gives us strength to overcome fears and serve Him, it is our empathy with God's love *for others* that gives us the motivation to act.

In Matthew 9:36 we see how Jesus was moved by love when He looked at the people around Him. *“When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”* ‘Compassion’ is the key word. Compassion has a connotation of being ‘moved’. Jesus was *moved* to action. The various actions that Jesus was ‘moved’ to do in helping these *‘harassed and helpless’* people can be seen in the preceding and following verses — but they were ultimately demonstrated at the cross! To Jesus, no sacrifice was too great to help the people in this world. Could the same be said of us? It is because Jesus loved the people that He was motivated to *do* something about it. Until we really love people as He did we will not be moved to action!

We often talk about the ‘lost’ in our Churches. We also talk about various strategies for reaching out to them. We hear sermons, and sometimes attend seminars and training conferences. However, if we believed the solution was equipping, it is possible to go further. We could gain theological educations, and could even do doctoral level studies in evangelism if we so desired, so as to be able to answer many questions... *and yet none of this might actually help us!* Why? Because, if we are to be moved to action in reaching out to the lost what we really need is love! The Church will not be mobilised as a result of equipping — as much as that is needed. It will be mobilised because our hearts have become connected to God's heart! As the apostle Paul said *“... Christ's love compels us...”* (2 Corinthians 5:14). True love *moves* us to action.

A great benefit awaits us if we are willing to be moved. We will grow closer to God — because God is also at this same work! This is His Mission, and there is no other!

TURNING THE HEART — SEEING THE NEED

In summary, I am suggesting that the central hindrance to a mobilised Church is found, firstly, at the core of our spirituality, and then in our choice to love. While there are other hindrances such as our fear of rejection from others, the only reason we struggle to overcome this fear is because we doubt God's love for us. A firm trust in God's love could give us the strength needed to overcome our insecurities. An empathy with God's love for others could then give us motivation to then move beyond our fears to action.

Salvation Army founder, William Booth, had a vision that reflects well the true need of the people in this world. He saw a great, dark, stormy ocean in which the world's multitudes were drowning. In this vision he saw a great rock, representing the Church. Many had climbed onto it, escaping the peril of the ocean. Some were at the water's edges helping rescue some of the drowning, and a few were even diving back into the waters to save the drowning a little off shore. But most on the rock had no concern for the drowning. They were consumed in their various pursuits and pleasures.

He commented on the incomprehensibility of these saved ones having no compassion for those who were drowning before their very eyes. He also commented on how some gazed toward the ‘mainland’ from where they believed their Saviour would one day come to rescue them from this rock, when all the while their Saviour was behind them *in the stormy ocean* and calling to them to come help Him help the people! He said, *“Look for yourselves. The surging sea of perishing souls rolls up to the very spot on which you stand.”*³²

Could it be that we have lost sight of the true condition of those without Christ? Might we have become somehow blinded to their need of a Saviour, and to the limited opportunity that exists in this brief life for them to find Him?

When we can see people as Jesus sees them we will have no problem finding motivation to initiate conversations about faith. People are in *desperate* need of God’s gift of love and of salvation — and we are His only messengers!

Indeed, *“...Look for yourselves. The surging sea of perishing souls rolls up to the very spot on which you stand.”*

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TO THE GREAT COMMISSION

I am always stirred by the courage and focus of Peter and John when they were being tried by the religious leaders of their day, as recorded in Acts chapter four. They were commanded to stop speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus. Those who had arrested them were powerful men in their day. Yet their response was this: *“Judge for yourself whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard”*.³³

This is the kind of no-compromise commitment we need in our service to God. Consider how unyielding they were to the pressure placed upon them. They did not change their minds. They were not going to give up because of difficulty or opposition. They had determined that they would serve Jesus irrespective of the consequences. They were so convinced of the reality of Christ’s resurrection and divinity that there was no cost they would not embrace in the course of making Him known. Can you see the state of their motivation? They were like crazed men! They did not need urging toward a life of preaching, as if it were some duty to be performed. Quite the opposite — they were unable to stop! They *‘could not help but speak’* about Christ.

Notice then what they did next. When they left that prison they didn’t go and hide away in a secure room. They went straight to do the very thing that had landed them in prison in the first place — speaking and healing in the name of Jesus. They continued this way, boldly proclaiming Christ, for the rest of their lives. Peter was

³² William and Catherine — the life and legacy of the Booths’ by Trevor Yaxley, Bethany House Publishers, 2003. Pg 26, (the whole vision is on Pg 21-26). The paragraph is summarised as quoted in *That Leaders Might Last*, by Dave Mann. Imprint Media, 2010. Chapter 10.

³³ Acts 4:19-20

eventually crucified, and John died from old age (a rarity among the disciples), after having been a prisoner on the Island of Patmos. They suffered like this only because they continued to stand for Jesus!³⁴

Friends, *this* is what true followers of Jesus are supposed to be like. We are not called to sit comfortably in the membership of a Church, while serving in the ‘safe’ ministries of that Church, with our entire Christian ministry thus being expressed within the confines of the local Church. We are called to ‘go’ into the entire world to tell of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20)!

You might be thinking, “I could never be bold like that!” It is comforting to know that the apostles were nothing like that either! Remember how they fled at Jesus’ arrest. They changed when they saw Jesus risen, and were then empowered by His Spirit!

Consider how a parent might sacrificially dive in front of a car to save their child. The true obstacle to courage is not fear. It is the finding of a reason to overcome the fear.

Love is the most powerful reason in the world!

SUMMARY:

Knowing God’s love *for us* is the key to our confidence and sense of security, and knowing Christ’s love *for others* is the key to our motivation.

Get these sorted out, and you might find everything else coming more naturally.

It worked for Jesus, and it worked for His disciples! It can for you too!

³⁴ See <http://www.ichthus.info/Disciples/intro.html> Source: Hippolytus and Eusebius.

STUDY 3:

The heart of the matter

GETTING STARTED

1. Have a few members share a most embarrassing moment.
2. On a scale of 1 — 10, how secure and confident do you feel you are as a person, and why?
3. What does chapter five summarise as being the greatest hindrance to evangelism? Do you agree, and why?
4. Where does this chapter suggest the 'frontlines' in the battle for evangelism are being fought (see the end of section A)? Do you agree, and why?

DISCUSSION

1. **Luke 8:22-25** (Jesus' confidence)
 - a. Where was Jesus during the storm?
 - b. Where did Jesus' confidence come from (why did He have no fear of the storm)?*
 - c. On what were the disciples supposed to have based their confidence?*
2. If we are secure in Christ's love, why do we sometimes not feel that way?

3. **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** (the battle for the mind)
 - a. What is the nature of the true battle we are engaged in as Christians? *
 - b. Where is our true battle waged as Christians?
 - c. How do you demolish 'arguments and pretensions'?*
 - d. How do we win the battle in our own minds?
 - e. What does it mean to 'take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ'?
 - f. What does it mean to renew your mind? (Romans 12:2)
 - g. Have someone share an example of how God has truly changed the way they thought and felt in an area as a result of 'renewing their mind' with God's truth.
4. **Read Colossians 1:9-13**
 - a. What (see Colossians 1:5-8) do the words 'For this reason' refer to?
 - b. Write the name of a person who needs to know about the 'inheritance.'
 - c. What should you be doing to 'grow in the knowledge of God'?

- d. How will growing in your knowledge of God help you in evangelism?

5. **Read 2 Peter 1:5-8**

- a. List the qualities in these verses that will make you an effective servant.
- b. Do you think that attaining these qualities comes immediately or is a process?
- c. What qualities do you still need to work on to be effective?
- d. How will having these qualities make you more effective in evangelism?

APPLICATION

Illustration: If I have a cup of coffee and you bump me, what spills out? If it were a cup of water what would spill out? And so, if you are reading God's word every day, praying and studying Scripture, and a person tells you they are having difficulties in their life, work or family, whose wisdom is likely to 'spill out' — your own or Gods'?

Comment: 2 Corinthians 3:2-3. Our witness to the world reflects something of what our relationship with God is truly like!

DISCUSSION

1. What things can you do (or habits can you establish) to begin to strengthen your relationship with God this week?
2. Can you see any lies you might have somehow believed about what God is like (or regarding who you are in relation to Him), believing Him to be anything less than all-powerful, loving, good and present with us? What are some Scriptures you could reflect upon to re-establish truth in your thinking?
3. On a scale of 1 — 10, how motivated are you to do something about the lost state of the people around you? What could you do to strengthen that motivation? What will you do?

Prayer: Pray for one another, that you would apply God's word to your lives.

If you have time, you could also then pray for the friends you have listed in discussion two.

Homework: Read chapter 6, then you could do your apologetic quotient survey in Appendix 3 before coming to the next study.

* Refer to notes in the Discussion Guide at the back of this book.

6

The need for equipping

There is no hiding it — effectiveness in evangelism in today's changing world requires a bit of learning. While the single greatest hindrance to an evangelised world is in our hearts and motivation, the second greatest is in the equipping of our hands — but not just any equipping. We need equipping that is geared to our times.

There is an overwhelming and humbling need for training in evangelism. A great many believers do not even know how to share the gospel, let alone possess many other skills that could be learnt, all of which would make them effective for evangelism in the world *today*.

It is an irony that our Churches are so well resourced, and our Church programmes are so busy, yet our evangelism so weak. What this says of the focus of our hearts is humbling, indeed.

FIVE BROAD AREAS FOR EQUIPPING

Let us now consider five areas in which we could become equipped. Most Churches, if they train their members at all, only train them in how to share the gospel itself. There is, however, much more we could learn. Consider the areas included here, and the reasons for these.

With better equipping we could unquestionably be more effective, and if a Pastor wanted to see his or her members being trained in these things, each Pastor has a captive audience for an hour or more every week during their service. The Pastor surely has freedom to determine what content is given through his or her sermon each week. With a little thought given to considering how to accomplish it, *all* the members of a local Church could be equipped in *all* of the areas listed below rather than through the pulpit alone! (Chapter fourteen is about this).

(A) KNOWING THE REASONS FOR OUR FAITH

To give an ‘apology’ for something means to give a reasoned argument for it. The word ‘apologetics’ refers to the study of the reasons for the Christian faith. However, a general disinterest in apologetics has developed in today’s Church. Some dislike the area of study because they associate it with debate — which doesn’t work as well as it used to in convincing people of the faith. Others don’t think knowing the reasons for our faith is important anymore, because people are generally disinterested in discussing this. They feel we are all fine without this particular knowledge. However, they are mistaken!

“We cannot deny that our fruitfulness in evangelism has been affected by the kind of world we live in today. Yet many of us may be unaware that this crisis in how the world thinks has had a devastating influence on the thinking of the average Christian as well.”³⁵ — Dr David Geisler

To Paul, knowing the reasons for our faith was such an important thing that one of his ‘qualifications for an elder in the Church’ (Titus 1:9) was their ability to ‘refute those who contradict’.

A major problem for many in reaching out to others is that they don’t know the reasons behind their faith — even though they believe in Jesus *for themselves*. Their lack of knowledge results in a lack of confidence, because, if they were somehow to draw out the sorts of questions their friends (and our culture) have about our Christian faith, such as regarding the unreliability of the Bible documents, and the supposed contradiction between the creation account in the Bible and what science has proven... they would not know what to say!

I plead with all individuals, and Christian leaders, to consider just how important it is to address this deficit in knowledge, if for no other reason than that of *giving believers good reason to believe their own faith!* There have been so many intellectual attacks on our faith in recent decades, loudly broadcast in the media and magazines.

A person can not live something with conviction if they are not convinced it is true! This is a hindrance to evangelism because many Church-goers are already convinced our faith is not ultimately true!

“ A person cannot live something with conviction if they are not convinced it is true! This is a hindrance to evangelism because many Church-goers are already convinced our faith is not ultimately true! ”

With regard to outreach, if believers knew more of the amazing discoveries that support their faith, it would give a significant **confidence** boost to their witnessing.

The question then arises as to how we pass this knowledge on to non-believers, because debating and arguing does not actually serve to convince many in our culture. The reason is that their founding assumption is that religious truth does not exist. Until they can see past this perspective we may be only further entrenching them in their own worldview — not winning them over to ours!

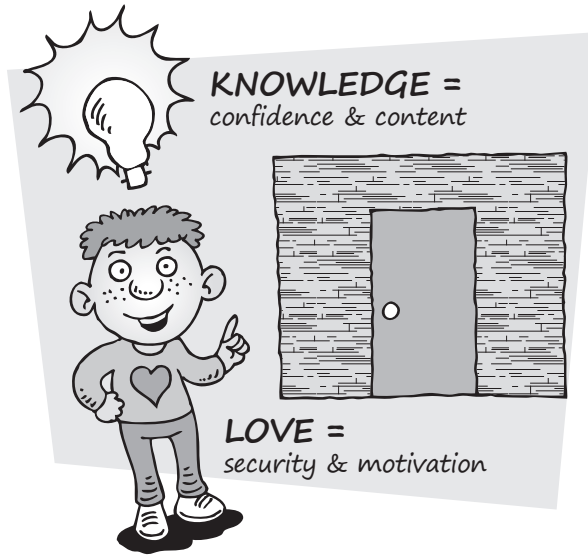
While this knowledge is greatly needed, in our culture it is to be used gently. How? Specifically, it **resources us for our conversations**, as will be discussed later in this book. For example, when challenged on the reliability of the Bible one could defend their view — which might achieve little in our culture, or one could reply by saying, ‘What do you mean by unreliable? Did you know the New Testament is actually the world’s most reliable ancient document? Have you ever wondered why these people are always attacking the Bible like this?’ The matter is turned back to the critic. Questions are less threatening than statements, so it’s not so intense. Debate can be avoided — though a different view still suggested, and potentially coming from their mouths through our use of questions).

We don’t all need to be scholars, but we do need knowledge. If we would start a habit of learning a few things at a time, our knowledge would soon grow.

ABOUT FAITH AND REASON

The Christian faith is, without a doubt, the most logical and well-reasoned faith on the planet. This is not a statement made from arrogance, ignorance, or blind faith. On a purely intellectual basis, if you investigate both sides of the matter without bias, I believe you will likely recognise the incomparable logic inherent in the faith — even if you choose not to believe it for yourself. Christianity has a reasoned philosophical basis for truth, reason, morality, significance, purpose and hope that atheism (and most other religions) can not match.

However, no other religion has been attacked as much as Christianity, although this too has worked in our favour. In two hundred years of 'criticism', every possible question has been raised, resulting in much research, which has resulted in the discovery of innumerable things that now stand to further support the belief (much to the dismay of sceptics). Our faith stacks up historically, textually, archaeologically and experientially, and we are left with the greatest of confidence. While people are free to believe anything they want in this life, there is no other belief system that comes anywhere close in terms of having a credible and reasoned foundation for claiming their beliefs are actually true. Christians, therefore, need not linger in doubt. A philosophical revolution has been taking place in the world around us, and Christianity is left looking *embarrassingly* good! The question is how do we communicate this without appearing biased or arrogant, because the evidence exists!



This is why it is a tragedy that understanding the reasons for faith is not considered important in most Churches. If we consider the example of the Apostle Paul, he spoke so *effectively* that many believed (Acts 14:1). He *reasoned* from general revelation with the pagans at Lystra (Acts 14:17). He *reasoned* with Greek Philosophers on Mars Hill (Acts 17:26-29). He *reasoned* from the Scriptures with Jews (Acts 17:2). Our ignorance is to our detriment!

Summary: Knowing the **reasons** for our faith gives us **confidence** and **content!**

All we need is to be willing to learn, which brings us back to our motivational question: Will we choose to love?

(B) KNOWING HOW TO SHOW CARE AND CONCERN

While this book will not teach much on this area, it is worthy of note. People skills are a significant factor in our witness. Things can be learnt such as conversational skills, knowing how to put people at ease, knowing how to make people feel great, and even knowing how to show love to others in ways they can receive... and it all makes a difference.

Consider that practically all parents love their children. How many people have you heard talk about how they didn't *feel* loved by their parents? What went wrong? Often the problem is one of miscommunication. Even in the area of expressing love there are things we can learn.

The Apostle Paul said, "...I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Paul was, in part, talking about people skills (he was also talking about adaption for cross-cultural communication). If we don't learn these skills we'll only ever be able to relate to people like ourselves — but *everyone* around us needs reaching. As our people skills increase, our ability to influence others for Christ increases also!

One great book on this area is, *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. In it he shares five primary ways in which people express their love.

1. Words of affirmation
2. Physical touch (like hugs)
3. Gift giving
4. Quality time
5. Acts of service

It has been discovered that we are each inclined toward one or two of these areas in the way we express and receive love. Thus, a man might feel most loved when he is encouraged with words, and given quality time. His wife, however, might feel loved when he helps her around the house (acts of service) or remembers her during the day by buying a small gift. The irony is that if they fail to speak each other's languages they may both feel unloved, even when their love is sincere. Being aware we can thus learn how to speak all the languages, discerning how to best show love to others so that they can *feel* loved. The way we encourage one person could be different to another.

The part love plays in evangelism can not be underestimated. Our actions and attitudes are supposed to *reflect* God's love to others. Jesus said of His Church, "*By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*" When we are living as God calls us to, love is our defining mark!

We can learn how to show love. We can learn how to diffuse tension. We can learn how to relate so that others will like being around us. All these can enable us to relate to a wider variety of people, thus positioning us for greater influence in their lives.

The secular world understands this. I have talked with people in higher financial roles that have even undergone 'personality training'. The things they have been

taught have been both remarkable and effective in making them more likable and 'personable'. How much more important is our Christian witness?

If our love is genuine, then it is with love that we learn how to better communicate! It's no different to the way many guys have learnt to buy flowers for their wives. It's about learning to speak other's 'languages' so they *feel* loved and cared for!

Summary: Knowing **how to show care and concern** will *open the doors* to evangelism for us.

(C) KNOWING HOW TO LEAD A SIMPLE CONVERSATION

Did you know that conversational skills are also learnt? We learn our conversational skills mostly through our observation of our parents and significant others. It's just that our role models are not always great conversationalists. Many people struggle to initiate and sustain good conversations, especially with people they don't know. But this could be changed if we were willing to learn!

The key to good conversations is good questions. Our next chapter is on this very topic. The two chapters that follow will then help resource us to be confident in initiating and holding effective spiritual conversations with people we meet.



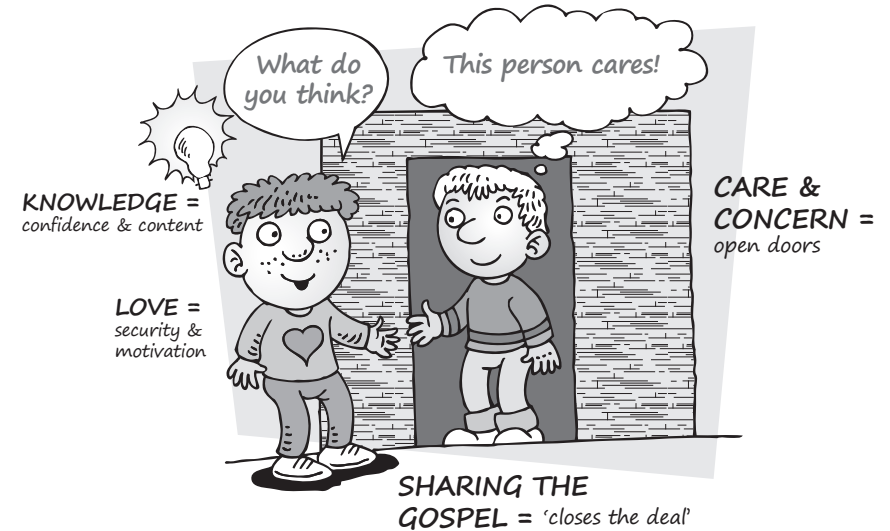
If you were willing to learn in this area, you could find yourselves having relaxed and non-threatening conversations with people all over the place. It's not about becoming an extrovert, or talking a lot. It's about developing a habit of asking caring and thoughtful questions, so that others can talk. The skills can be learnt!

Our conversations are where our apologetic knowledge can be best applied in our culture. (Conversation is the new apologetic).

Summary: Knowing **how to lead a simple conversation** *keeps the doors open*

(D) KNOWING HOW TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

If you survey an average Church, a staggering number of people do not know how to share a simple gospel message. I heard of a recent survey in England of 1017 Churches. Of these, only 36 had given any form of evangelism training in the previous ten years.³⁶ I have observed this same pattern in various Churches, including some that talk regularly about the importance of outreach, and stand amazed.



It enables THEIR win!

The irony is that a twelve year old can learn such a thing.

A pastor recently relayed to me how, as a pastor, he one day realised that he could not clearly articulate the gospel — or what it was. Realising how serious this was he asked his Church leaders if they could — and discovered they could not either. He felt greatly humbled as he realised the significance of this. Sharing the gospel message is the Mission of the Church! How could others hear of Christ through the Christians around them if even their Church leaders could not clearly define and share the gospel message?

As a result he decided to begin to *intentionally* lead his Church so that the Mission of God's Church would genuinely be the mission of his local Church. I note that he is a particularly good leader, but also that the result of his decision was some significant growth! He built a contextualised, gentle, evangelistic culture, and they began to see a stream of people coming to faith.

Every believer should both understand and be able to articulate the fundamentals of their faith! It is always a surprise to learn that so few do.

However, the problem (which we can fix) is bigger than this. Knowing how to articulate our faith is but one of a number of areas we could have training in. The other areas are also *needed* if we are to be effective in *our* culture (as in all the other points in this chapter). It would appear that there is a problem with our priorities — and a problem of the gravest sort!

J.P Moreland spoke more broadly of this problem, putting it this way:

“How is it possible for a person to be an active member of an evangelical church for twenty or thirty years and still know next to nothing about the history and theology of the Christian religion, the methods and tools required for serious Bible study, and the skills and information necessary to preach and defend Christianity in a post-Christian, neopagan culture?”³⁷

The good news is that this can change. Knowledge grows incrementally. While most believers can not yet define the fundamentals of their faith (the gospel content), let alone articulate this to others, with a choice to learn in this area the tide can turn.

I do believe that failure to equip believers in this area is one of the greatest negligences in the spiritual leadership of our age. When Christ has returned, we will then realise that very little in this life actually mattered in comparison to this message!

However, I also believe most Christians are sincere — and therefore that a willingness to learn new ways of doing things exists. By the way, chapter ten of this book will equip you with knowledge of what the gospel is and a few ideas for how you could clearly share it.

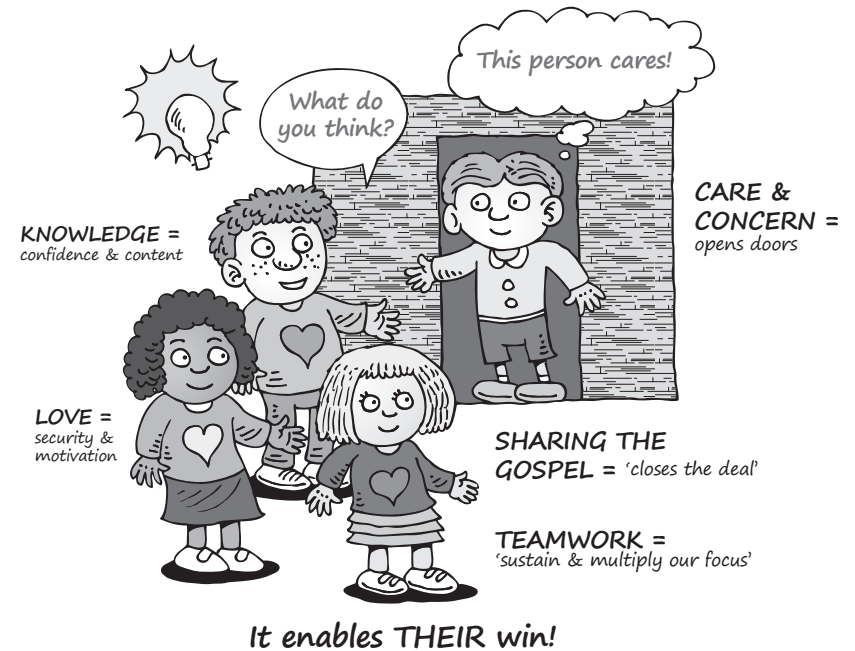
Knowing how to share the gospel enables us to help where it counts!

(E) TEAMWORK

A final general skill area is teamwork. *It is my conviction that if we stopped training people to work as individuals, and started training them to work in team, we would become more effective!*

Chapters twelve and thirteen discuss this in more detail, but suffice to say, most of us are not able to sustain a focus on evangelism by ourselves. Even if our pastor does try to motivate us through weekly services, without personal encouragement

and accountability such as is found in a small group, we are likely to do very little. We can ‘hide’ in a service! Nod and smile and the pastor will never know you weren’t listening! However, do the same in a small group and you may get caught out, because in the context of personal relationships it’s hard to hide. There is greater transparency and accountability. We can encourage each other, pray for each other — and pray for our friends, *and even help each other reach out to them!*



Courses like Alpha have ‘packaged’ a set of principles that work in our culture. This is why they are so effective. While we don’t need to recreate the wheel (please do use those programmes), if we could understand and apply the principles behind them we could be more fruitful in other contexts also!

God gifted us each differently for a reason! This is an area of learning that could yield *great fruit*, if we were to apply the knowledge to our small groups.

Knowing how to work in teams helps us **sustain** and **multiply** our focus.

IN CONCLUSION:

The greatest hindrance to the spread of the gospel is us! It’s not someone else, and it’s not something else. We must accept responsibility! However, we can grow and change — and God has provided all that we need!

37 J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, p 188. As found in a Conversational Evangelism resource by Dr David Geisler. Please see www.meeknessandtruth.org

Regarding motivation:

- a. Knowing God's love gives us inner security and strength
- b. Knowing God's love for others gives us motivation

Action step:

We each need to develop a truly meaningful relationship with God.

Regarding equipping:

- a. Knowing the reasons for our faith gives us *confidence* and *content*
- b. Knowing how to show care and concern *opens the doors* for us
- c. Knowing how to lead a simple conversation *keeps those doors open*
- d. Knowing how to share the gospel enables us to *help where it counts*
- e. Knowing how to work in teams helps us *sustain* and *multiply* our focus

Action step:

Reading and applying the rest of this book would be a good start. Beyond this we could find books, seminars, websites and preachers who could help us develop a higher 'speciality' in the areas we feel we need additional growth in.

If we are willing to learn and grow, sharing our faith can become natural. We can lead people every day, in every way, one step closer to Christ.

What is your response? Will you choose to learn and grow?

THE SIN OF SILENCE

The famine in the city was severe. The Arameans had besieged the city of Samaria, the capital city of Israel at that time. All hope of survival was fading.

But then, on what seemed like any other day, God worked a miracle. The Arameans were caused to hear the sound of a great army. Rumours spread. Panic set in. They fled for their lives!

However, those in the city were, as yet, blissfully unaware. Well, as blissful as they could be when starving slowly to death.

At the city gate were some lepers. They became so desperately hungry that they decided to go and surrender to the merciless Arameans. They reasoned that even if the Arameans were to kill them they were facing certain death from starvation anyway.

Upon arrival at the Aramean camp they discovered it deserted. It was not that the camp had gone — it was still there. It was only the soldiers who had gone.

It was the opportunity of a lifetime. They ate and they drank. They scavenged through the tents, and gathered silver, gold and valuable clothing for themselves. But then they had a thought.

...they said to each other, "We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace." (Kings 7:9)

That is, of course, what they did, and all Israel rejoiced that day in the miracle that God had done.

Many of us are guilty of the sin of silence, just like those lepers. This brief lifetime is our only opportunity to tell others about Christ, for when life is ended it will be too late.

Most of us give diligence to our career development. We spend ten to fifteen years as *full time* students being educated (age five through to ages fifteen or twenty). Then during our working lives many of us pursue additional education and training so as to be well-equipped for whatever it is that we do. Should we not give the same effort to our growth and service as believers, *that we might be effective?*

In fact, in the light of our certain deaths and the coming judgment, should we not give *more* effort to this?

Surely nothing is more important!

THE CHOICE TO SHARE BEGINS WITH THE CHOICE TO CARE.

Love, and love alone, can motivate us to become effective witnesses in our changing world!

Will you choose to care?

We pray your answer will be yes!

We will now turn our discussion towards learning that will help us, specifically, in reaching people in today's world.

STUDY 4:

The need for knowledge

GETTING STARTED

1. Reviewing the chapter, what were the five areas of learning, and which do you feel you are strongest and weakest in.
2. Individually do the 'Your Apologetics Quotient' (Appendix three). Share your total score, and what you feel this tells you about your current knowledge

DISCUSSION

1. How important have you considered having a basic knowledge of evidence that support the accuracy of the Biblical accounts to be?
2. **Read: 1 Corinthians 15:14.**
 - a. What does this tell us about the Christian faith as compared to some other faiths? *
 - b. Can you come to a consensus as a group on how important you believe having this knowledge is? How would you measure its importance?

Comment: This verse means that our faith is only as valid as the object in which it is placed. If Christ didn't really rise from the dead then it doesn't matter how much faith we have. It is not the sincerity and fervency of one's beliefs that is important. Rather, it is the substance (truth and trustworthiness) of what is being believed in that ultimately counts. The fact is that you can take Buddha out of Buddhism, and still have Buddhism. You can take Muhammad out of Islam and still have Islam, but you can't take Christ (and specifically His resurrection) out of Christianity and still have Christianity. It is a historically rooted faith that invites all to investigate it's truth.

3. How important do you believe it is for a Christian to have basic apologetic knowledge so they could answers general questions their friends might have about faith, and why?
4. **Read: 1 Peter 3:15**
 - a. What might we need to do or know to be always 'ready to give an answer' for the hope that is in us, as we are instructed to in this verse?
 - b. Do you think the great hope you have because of Christ can be seen by others in the way you live and speak? How so?
 - c. How ready are you to give an answer to those who ask you why you believe what you do?
 - d. Do you think this verse justifies a person who says they don't need to take *initiative* in talking about faith with others because we are only instructed to share the reason for our faith when it is in answer to someone's question? *
 - e. Regarding how we share, what might it mean to give an account 'with gentleness and respect'?
5. **Read 2 Timothy 2:23-26**
 - a. How does Paul describe arguments that he had heard were happening about the faith?
 - b. What are the desired qualities of the Lord's servant?
 - c. How does God use these qualities?

- d. While the 'those who opposed' of verse twenty five in this passage shows this is referring to debate with members of the Churches, the principles are surely the same for dealing with unbelievers who oppose Christian belief. How does the passage say we should deal with and regard those who oppose God?

6. **Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-6.**

- a. Some people have a negative reaction to the word 'apologetics'. What does the word refer to (for the benefit of those who don't know)? Why do you think some have this negative reaction?
- b. In the light of the verses we have considered, what might be the real issues behind this? *

- 7. Regarding 1 Peter 3:15, what is at stake if we are not ready to give an answer?

APPLICATION

- 1. Which of the five areas discussed in this chapter do you most need to learn in?
- 2. What can you do this year to learn and grow in that area?
- 3. What step can you take this week to journey toward being a more effective witness for Christ?

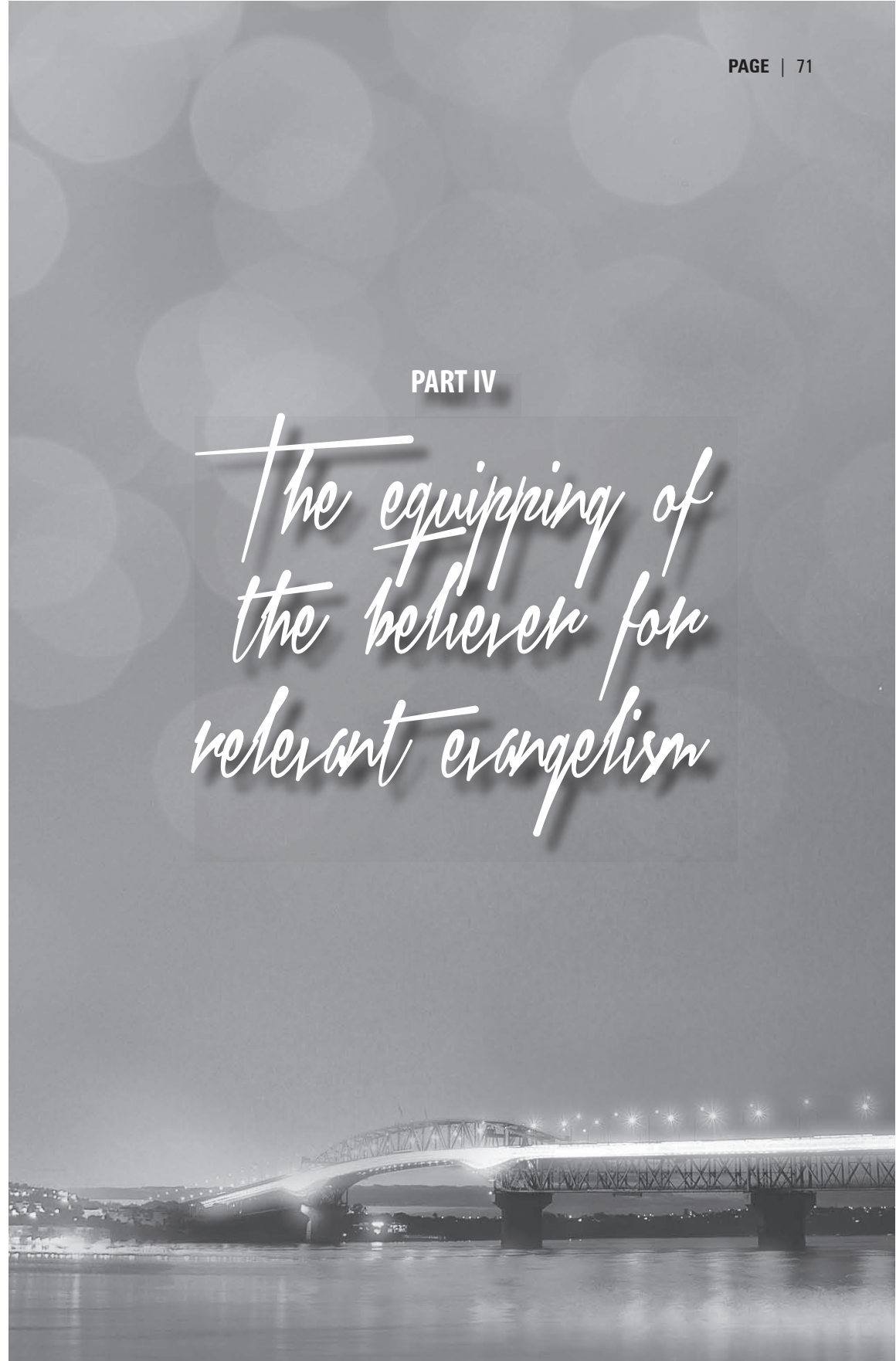
Prayer: Pray that God will continue to stir deeper passion for the lost and commitment to their cause as you do this series together.

Homework: Read chapter 7, then you could do the conversational quotient survey in appendix 4 before coming to your next study.

* Refer to notes in the Discussion Guide at the back of this book.

PART IV

*The equipping of
the believer for
relevant evangelism*



7

Mastering the art of conversation

Later in this book we shall look at how we might share the gospel, but because a conversation would naturally precede doing so, we shall look at conversational skills first.

IS THERE A CORRECT *METHOD* FOR EVANGELISM?

I put it to you that there is. It is not a tool. It is not a particular presentation. Instead it is the method Jesus used, and which Christians have used through history ever since. It's called conversation — and it's the best method there is!

While various articles have been written on conversational skills, a book that has taught me much is *Conversational Evangelism*, co-authored by Dr. David Geisler and Dr. Norman Geisler. Dr. David's ministry, 'Meekness and Truth Ministries'³⁸ specialises specifically in this field of *conversational* pre-evangelism. Much of the content in the next three chapters is learnt or borrowed, with permission, from his materials and teaching.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, knowledge grows incrementally. It is my hope that what is contained in these three chapters will cause excitement among believers, because this area is not often talked about — but is *core content* if we are to become effective witnesses in our pluralistic (many roads lead to ‘God’) culture. I invite you to consider this as you continue to read this book.

WHY CONVERSATION SKILLS ARE *REALLY* NEEDED IN TODAY’S WORLD

Why they are *really* needed is because, in outreach, we have to relate well to people — *and this is especially true when they are indifferent toward our message*. We have to understand *their* way of thinking so as to translate Jesus’ teachings into language they can understand, and that can feel relevant to them so that their interest is sparked.

Today, a great many believe that truth is relative. If we seek to *argue* the ‘truth’ as we believe it to be, it simply isn’t going to work because, to them, it is merely ‘our version’ of the truth. If we just preach it, we may have engaged their felt needs, but have still not addressed their fundamental disbelief in our message — and may even have offended them if we have not been careful, because truth-claims are sometimes seen as being disrespectful of other religions’ viewpoints in a postmodern world. We are a culture that respects people irrespective of race, irrespective of culture, irrespective of gender, irrespective of sexual orientation, and irrespective of religion. To speak against anyone’s race, gender, sexual preference or religious worldview is considered to be prejudicial, judgemental, arrogant and intolerant. It is true that religion is a completely different category to the others, and foundational to all things — but it remains that if we are to win people over, we are going to need to proceed with *wisdom!*

People are not offended when we ask sincere questions, and *knowledge can be communicated through questions*. There is thus a way to *non-offensively* cause those we love to reevaluate some of their beliefs and assumptions. Questions can guide conversations, subtly challenge beliefs, and gently lead people toward a greater openness to spiritual things, and to a reasoned consideration of them. Conversation (question asking) is thus a method particularly suited to *our* modern culture and times!

As an example, while a great many Christians do *not* know how to share their faith, let’s consider someone who does. Consider Sally, a young woman who attends a Church’s evangelism-training course and then goes on to *actively share her faith* with her family, friends and colleagues. However, being postmodern in worldview (many roads lead to ‘God’), very few of them show any interest. To them it is merely *her* belief. What is she to do next, for she has done all her evangelism class told her to do?

Imagine Sally goes on to *pray* faithfully for her friends and family, *inviting them* to Church outreaches, and seeks to personally share the gospel message and *her own testimony* with them a second time, and even a third. At the same time she *shows love, selflessly seeking to help and encourage* her friends in their areas of need. Several years of this pass (or even a decade) — and while such actions do sometimes bring fruit — in her case (as is the case with many diligent Christians in our day) there are still few ‘results’. To repeat the same gospel message yet again would only be awkward.

She realises they are actually closed to her beliefs *because their own religions beliefs are in direct conflict with them*. Specifically, they believe religious truth does not exist, and that all religions are therefore equally ‘true.’ So, she seeks to share *good reasons for believing Christianity* (apologetics), explaining how we might know the faith is true or the Bible reliable. She stands boldly for her beliefs, reasoning why theirs are false — but her friends and family express their *disinterest* a little more firmly. They are glad *she has found something that works for her — but it’s not for them, and they want that boundary respected*.

She has said it all. They have no interest. What can she do next?

While there are exceptions to the above, this ‘entrenched resilience’ is the real scenario that many sincere believers are in with their friends and family. This scenario is not uncommon in our day! Our worldview of our culture really has changed! With evangelism skills alone we can but share with a person one or two times, and then we are out of ammunition. Armed with apologetic knowledge (reason), we might even inadvertently entrench them in their views through causing them to defend themselves. This is where a conversational evangelism approach is needed. Her family members already have an established religious worldview. That view is what needs discussing — and gently. Assumptions need questioning — but gently!³⁹

What is being suggested here is a different approach.

Conversational skills can be learnt. Instead of talking we can *listen, and show care and concern*. People will *feel* cared for, and will like us for it! Instead of giving reasons for the faith as truth statements *we can ask questions, allowing them to surface the truth for themselves*. We help people journey, one step at a time, through barriers or assumptions in their lives and thinking, toward readiness for saving faith.

Let’s start the journey together.

³⁹ Very gracefully written booklets can also help a conversation when our knowledge is limited. I have, with great care, written a series of booklets that gives reasons for Christian faith in gentle language, such that a pluralist would feel all religions have been respected — and yet which still presents a reasoned case for faith in Christ. Of note, to raise reasonable doubt can be as effective as convincing a person — as it opens a door for genuine conversation and investigation.

CONVERSATIONAL BASICS:

1. LEARNING TO LISTEN

‘Listening’ does not merely mean ‘not talking too much’. Listening is not the same as silence!

Listening is about **hearing** what the other person is saying. It’s about giving them undivided attention while seeking to understand them.

Consider, while with their words they say they feel fine, in their emotions they may actually be feeling broken. They may be laughing loudly, making jokes about everything — yet inwardly be feeling that there is no point to their life, and looking for someone who cares. Their argument might be to accuse God of injustice, while their real need could be for encouragement because of trials they are facing.

Active listening helps us **to better connect** with others. They feel appreciated when we remember their name, understand their concerns, and are patient enough to listen to what they have to say.

Active listening helps **to put the other person at ease** when talking with us. In fact, they will love us for it, because so few people in this world listen. (Most people prefer to talk!)

Active listening then helps us **to uncover the nature of their barrier to Christ**, whether it is an intellectual, emotional, or spiritual barrier.⁴⁰

He who answers before listening, that is his folly and his shame. Proverbs 18:13

2. PUTTING PEOPLE AT EASE

Putting people at ease is a skill we can learn, just as we can learn how to express love in ways people can receive. It is about our disposition and attitude toward them.

For example, if people feel we are in a rush, they will never open up to really share or converse with us. We thus need to be **ready to give people time**, and to carry ourselves in a manner that somehow lets them know this. Taking the time to **listen** to what they are saying then further puts them at ease.

If people feel we have an agenda, and are trying to convince them of our belief, this will also make them feel uncomfortable. We thus need a **gentle and graceful approach** toward discussing their views and our own — being careful with our words. Our words come from the heart. If we see them as a ‘target’ this will naturally produce confrontational words that seek to challenge their worldview — and they will pick this

up. Note that this will close the conversation! If we see them as someone we love and want to encourage toward faith, and accept that this may take time, this will *naturally* generate a more patient and grace-filled tone to our conversation, making an open conversation more likely. It’s about being willing to take the small wins, rather than feeling obliged to always ‘do the whole deed’ (share the whole gospel) in one go every time! Sometimes we might even be more effective if we removed the goal of sharing the gospel from the first few conversations, because people can feel when we have an agenda, and it puts them on guard.

Regarding attitude, a **positive** one can go a long way toward helping people feel comfortable around us. For one, it lessens their fear that we will start talking at length about our own problems. Positivity is attractive!

An appropriate **compliment** can also have a person feeling immediately encouraged. I have observed various chauffeurs collecting businessmen from airports. Their most common first sentence (when in English) is, ‘You’re looking good!’ The immediate positive impact upon their tired, jet-lagged guest is easy to see. I have then watched with amusement as an unwise chauffeur said, ‘You’re looking tired’. The effect on the travel-weary businessman was immediate and clear. Our words are really powerful!

I have seen educators who have been trained to respond to *every* question asked of them with the words, “*That is a great question! Now, ...*” (after which they give their best answer). With compliments being dished out like that, who wouldn’t want to ask a question?

You can compliment a person’s appearance (‘that colour suits you’), and it can have an effect. In a conversation you can compliment the intelligence of what the other person says, or the thoughtfulness reflected in what they have said. Such affirmations, although a seemingly small thing, can make a big difference to a person’s willingness to talk with you.

However, the compliments must be sincere! We are not ‘salesmen’ — and those we talk with are not targets! We are servants of Jesus, called to love them and represent Him to them, because He is longing that they would return to Him, accepting His offer to adopt them as His children!

By the way, one good communication skill is to sandwich comments with compliments. This is a particularly important skill if you are trying to communicate that you disagree with something, and why. For example, “*That is a great thought, but have you ever thought about.... But I like the way you think so deeply.*”

⁴⁰ These three points are taken from a Christian Apologetic Workbook, p 41, that is based off Dr David’s conversational evangelism teachings. See www.meeknessandtruth.org

3. LEARNING TO ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

Now that a conversation is started and the other person is feeling both listened to and affirmed, *good questions* are the key to making the conversation valuable for greater purposes. Good questions both begin conversations, and bring direction to them. Without good questions we might only show care through listening. While that is a good thing, it is not all that we are hoping for!

“ The key to great conversations is great questions. ”

Many of us struggle to turn conversations with loved ones toward meaningful content. Talking too much, and giving our own opinions, will often end a conversation. However, good questions can open the conversation up! Good questions come with practise, come through thought and study, and also come with the help of the Holy Spirit.

“ Aggressive approaches close doors today. We may need to become good conversationalists if we are to be effective witnesses to those we love! ”

Ravi Zacharias says this: “...there is just enough of the modern worldview left so that reason still has a point of entry. But we have to use this knowledge wisely. We cannot give an overdose of argumentation.”⁴¹

Put differently, while the 10% might be ready to hear the gospel *truth* and respond, to the other 90% this is merely your version of the *truth*. But, with them, *there is still a remnant of openness to reason. The door is not entirely closed — though it would quickly become so if we were too ‘abrupt’!*

The longer journey is needed!

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IN A CONVERSATION IS...

1. ...to help raise **doubts** regarding their view of the world (where legitimate doubts can be raised).
2. ...to put them at ease in conversation with us so as to lessen **defensiveness**, thus enabling the conversation to be fruitful, and future follow up conversations to be possible.

41 Ravi Zacharias, *An Ancient Message, Through Modern Means To the Postmodern Mind in Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*, p 27, as quoted in a *Conversational Apologetics Workbook* by Dr David Geisler, p P73

3. ...to stir within them a **desire** to learn more, that they would become curious to hear about things they have previously been disinterested in.

These three D’s are the heart of what Dr David Geisler’s conversational pre-evangelism model is all about, and are worthy of reflection.⁴²

We will finish this chapter by introducing you to a simple conversational technique, which will give you a great kick-start toward more meaningful conversations. Then, in the next chapter, we shall begin to study four different areas in which we can initiate conversations with non-believers.

THE ‘COLUMBO TACTIC’ (THREE GREAT QUESTIONS)

This conversational technique was popularised in Christian circles by Gregory Koukl, who has a passion for training believers in conversational skills for the purpose of Christian witness. It is named after an inept TV detective (Lieutenant Columbo) whose great success was based on innocent enquiry.⁴³

These questions assume a conversation has already started, and can be useful in a number of situations. For example, someone makes a statement that you might disagree with, or maybe asks a loaded question. How might you respond?

QUESTION ONE: ‘WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY...?’

This question seeks to CLARIFY WHAT the person is saying.

The greatest benefit of such a simple question is that it moves the onus of proof back to the person asking the question (or making the accusation). This is extremely useful when discussing religious matters, where we prefer an ongoing conversation rather than to merely state our own view.

For example, John says as a part of a conversation that he ‘...feels the Bible is unreliable!’ Or as a question, he asks ‘How can you trust the Bible when it’s so unreliable?’ Instead of replying by answering his question, you could reply by asking, ‘What do you mean by unreliable?’

It is possible that his knowledge on the matter is not great, and notable that he could be referring to any one of a dozen popular criticisms that are commonly levelled against the Bible. Even if you are to give an answer later on, you are wise to understand what he is thinking first.

So, the first question is about *clarifying what* they are saying. You want to check you really understand first.

42 See *Conversational Evangelism*, Norman Geisler and David Geisler, Harvest House Publishers, 2009, p 81-83 for more details. www.meeknessandtruth.org

43 Gergory Koukl has written a book, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*. I benefitted from an article, written by him, titled, *The Tactical Approach: Take a Tip from Lt. Columbo*.

QUESTION TWO: 'WHAT LED YOU TO THAT CONCLUSION?'

This question seeks to CLARIFY WHY the person believes what they are saying. Where did they get that information? What led them to think that way?

By asking a second question instead of answering theirs you have created an opportunity to further understand. Why are they asking this question? What is motivating them? What is their real need? How might you best help them?

You will not be able to impact their life for God if your answers fail to address the real issue. It could be a doubt, an objection, a hurt, or a personal need.

For example, if we imagine the above objection to the reliability of the Bible, having listened to John's answer to question one we could ask, 'What led you to that conclusion?' or, 'What led you to believe that?' In so doing you have (1) delayed giving an answer that might be irrelevant to his need and (2) created an opportunity to identify what might be the real, and deeper, issue.

It could be that he had watched the 'Da Vinci Code' movie, in which case at least you now know the source of his doubts (a historical fiction book/movie). It could be that he had read a book by a famous sceptic, in which case he might need some more detailed answers. Or it could simply be a 'smoke screen'. He might have said it to actually avoid a conversation about spiritual things, assuming you would give a 'pat' answer, or give no reply at all.

The point is that by asking, you now know the reason for the belief! By not dismissing his comment — or arguing with it — you have thus created an opportunity to address one of his obstacles to faith in God. Such opportunities don't come very often with some people.

What could you say next?

QUESTION THREE: 'HAVE YOU CONSIDERED...'

The third question seeks to REDIRECT a person's thoughts in a direction that might be helpful to them.

By this time they have spoken two or three times, and you have not yet spoken at all (other than to ask questions). This has given you additional time to listen to what the Spirit might be saying to you, and to consider what you could say that may be of benefit to them.

Now, suppose you have an answer to a person's question, here is a suggestion: why not turn it into another question? The reason is because 'truth statements' will sometimes close conversations these days — so we 'repackage' what we say.

For example, let's say that you actually know a bit about the Bible, and that the New Testament is actually the most reliable ancient document in existence on the entire planet, and the criticisms against it from atheists and liberal Christians actually come from an anti-supernaturalist bias (in other words — some people don't believe miracles happen, and that is the starting place from which they begin their 'open investigation' of the Bible's reliability. All actual evidence suggest the opposite to their criticism).

Your third question to John could thus be, 'Did you realise the New Testament is actually the most reliable ancient document in existence on our planet? Given this, why do you think it is that people keep attacking the Bible?'⁴⁴

THE RESULTS:

Returning the onus of proof: In the example above, the three questions successfully returned the onus of proof to the person doing the talking — saving you from any squirming while trying to think how to answer to a criticising question. The use of questions stopped you going on the defensive, and enabled you to bring direction to the conversation.

Buying time: The questions also bought you time to listen more carefully to what they believed, and why — and to think through (with the Holy Spirit's help) how you could best encourage them a step closer to Jesus.

Raising a doubt: Your suggestion, where you asked if John realised the New Testament was actually the most reliable ancient document on our planet, raised a doubt in his mind about the criticisms he had heard. It challenged his worldview, which likely had not been challenged until that time.

Keeping the door open: Yet because you did this through questions, you never actually said you disagreed. You didn't go on the offensive, attacking his beliefs. He hopefully felt comfortable, and thus would not be put off having future conversations like this with you, or with other Christians he meets.

If he were to ask something that you didn't know an answer to, note that all you need to do is admit that you don't know. There are great answers to questions available online, so you could check it out later and email or text a weblink to him, if desired. We don't need to know everything to be effective — just a little, like how to find answers for people when we don't know the answer ourselves.

⁴⁴ (The answer, by the way, could be that they don't want to have to believe its claims because that would be a real inconvenience to their lives, or alternately that their life experience has led them to believe that miracles can not happen. While the documents can be proven to have unequalled reliability, many simply cannot accept the kinds of miracles claimed could have ever happened. They thus establish their arguments against it all because of a beginning assumption. Their assumption could be wrong! But you don't need to know all that — just that the New Testament documents are the most reliable ancient document in existence. That's a fact! See appendix 6, question 2.).

Through your conversation another obstacle on John's journey toward faith in Christ could have been overcome. As a witness for Jesus you have been a success — and all you did was ask a few questions!

SUMMARY: THE SIX BENEFITS OF A CONVERSATIONAL APPROACH ARE THESE...

1. It creates space for us to *listen to others* before we speak.
2. It creates space for us to *listen to God* before we speak.
3. It potentially opens an *ongoing conversation*.
4. It returns the *onus of proof* to the other person if they have criticised.
5. It is non-threatening, as we can even disagree without ever disagreeing.
6. It can *cause the other person to reevaluate* their beliefs — which is the goal.

A conversational approach is thus both *easier* and also *more effective* than trying to convince a person with an argument. Educational theorists tell us that people remember only about 10% of what they are told, but about 40% of what they say. As such, a conversational approach is significantly more memorable — not to mention impacting.

While conversation is a method for all times, it is one that definitely suits our own times! Why not try the three questions out in a couple of conversations this week?

EXTRA THOUGHT: SMALL TALK AND JESUS

Some people think '*small talk*' is a waste of time, small talk being those little conversations that take place with strangers in a shop aisle, at the checkout counter, or while waiting at a pedestrian crossing. But, is this the case?

Jesus had time for people. An 'annoying' blind man called out loudly for Jesus' attention. He was pushed aside by the busy disciples. To them Jesus was important; too important to be stopped. Jesus had places to be, and didn't need such interruptions — but Jesus stopped to talk with this blind beggar anyway. His name turned out to be Bartimaeus, and the small interaction that followed changed his life.⁴⁵

A short, dishonest and disliked tax-collector thought he was an invisible bystander to the large crowd that was passing by with Jesus — but Jesus had the time to stop and talk with him too. Jesus invited himself for dinner at the unpopular man's house. His name turned out to be Zacchaeus, and the interaction changed his life.⁴⁶

45 Mark 10:46-52

46 Luke 19:1-10

"People start conversations for five reasons — to help, to learn, to relate, to influence and to play."⁴⁷ Through small talk you could enter into a person's life, and change it forever!

NOTE TO READER

The following two chapters take these basic conversational skills to their next level. If you are not a strong reader, and this content is new to you, you may find these chapters harder to read. While the content is great, if you feel you have read sufficient on conversational skills for now, after study five skip chapters eight, nine and study six.

You can always come back to them later. I would hate for you to miss the bigger picture this book is painting because you became bogged down in these two chapters.

For the lost.

Dave

47 *Why Can't I Start a Conversation With You?* Article by Scott Ginsberg. Printed in a *Conversational Apologetics Workbook*, Dr David Geisler, p 36. See www.meeknessandtruth.org

STUDY 5:

Starting the conversation

GETTING STARTED

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how strongly would you rate your conversational skills?
 - How good are you at keeping the other person talking?
 - What percentage of the talking do you do in an average conversation?
2. Individually, do the 'Your Conversational Quotient' survey (appendix four). Share your total score, and what you feel this tells you about yourself.
3. The Question Game: Begin a conversation in your group in which members are only allowed to use questions. The moment a person makes a statement they are out. (See an example in Appendix 8)
4. Can someone share of a great conversation they had with a non-believer that, while not being about the gospel, was about spiritual matters? What led to the conversation? What good might it have achieved for them?

DISCUSSION

Introduction: Jesus, the question asker

If we look closely we will see Jesus was a skillful question-asker. His first words were often in the form of a question. His provocative questions raised their desire to discover more, enabling Him

to then share with them. At other times His questions simply caused them to think more deeply about a matter, without giving the full answer at that time. When attacked, we have some great examples in the Scriptures of Jesus shifting the burden of proof back to the accuser with a reply question.

1. Three D's
 - a. Have someone summarise the three D's outlined in this chapter, and explain briefly why they are important.
 - b. Why is asking questions a wiser approach than stating your own view?*
 - c. **Read John 3:1-3.**
 - i. Why do you think Jesus responded as He did in verse 3?
 - ii. What did this achieve? *
 - iii. Did Jesus resolve the question for Nicodemus? *
 - d. **Read John 9:35.**
 - i. What was the context of this conversation?
 - ii. How does Jesus turn the conversation? (What 'technique' does He use?) *

e. **Read John 4:7-10.**

Jesus speaks twice. In each case, what did He do, and what did He achieve?
(Which of the three D's did He achieve in each case?)*

2. Three Great Questions (The 'Columbo Tactic')

a. What are the 'three great questions'?

b. What is the purpose of each question? *

c. These are a reasonably well-known conversation tool. Can anyone recognise a time when someone might have knowingly asked these of you?

d. What is the benefit of these questions when someone is 'attacking' you in conversation? *

e. **Read Luke 20:1-8.** What basic conversation skill does Jesus demonstrate?f. **Read Luke 12:13-14.**

i. Was Jesus correctly the one to judge between them?

ii. What did His reply achieve? *

g. **Read Matthew 20:29-34.**i. Which of our three great questions is this most like
(clarify what, clarify why, or redirect)?

ii. Why do you think Jesus asked this, because wasn't it already obvious?

iii. What attitude does asking such questions demonstrate? *
(See John 5:1-5 for a similar occasion)h. **Read Luke 14:1-6.**

i. What did Jesus' first question (v3) achieve? *

ii. Considering the three 'Columbo' questions, which was His second question in v5 like?

iii. What did this question in v5 achieve? *

3. Practise as a group:

What three questions could you ask in response to the following questions to put the onus of proof back on the question-asker, as well as helping them to re-evaluate their assumptions?

(1) How can you have any faith in the Bible when it's so full of inaccuracies?

(2) How can you claim there is only one-way to God? Aren't you being a bit arrogant and exclusive? *

4. Practice in pairs:

In pairs identify together the 'sour note' in the statements below, then take turns having a conversation that aims to illuminate the sour note and encourage a different way of thinking — but only through the use of questions.

(1) God knows I don't measure up. I just do the best I can. Isn't that good enough? *

- (2) It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere and you don't hurt anyone.

APPLICATION

1. With whom will you initiate conversation this week, with the goal being to practice these conversational skills?

Homework: Initiate the above conversations.

Listen intently in your conversations with others this week. Next week we will ask you to share what potential opportunities you identified for greater spiritual interaction.

Read chapters eight and nine

Please note that the next two chapters are the largest requested reading in this book. See the note at the end of chapter seven. They have important content. Please set aside time to read them thoughtfully.

Quote:

"The purpose in a mans' mind is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out."

— *Proverbs 20:5*

* Refer to notes in the Discussion Guide at the back of this book.

8

The power of conversation, Part I

What is a 'win' in a conversation? Let's define it as helping a person to take a step closer to Jesus. While we may occasionally have the privilege of leading a person to saving faith, their decision is the culmination of *a longer journey during which their heart was turned toward the Lord*. Given that many are far from the Christian view of things, our best goal each day is simply to encourage people to take another 'forward' step!

We thus help those we love *at every point along the journey*, whether atheist, sceptic or seeker. This is what a conversational approach to evangelism is about.

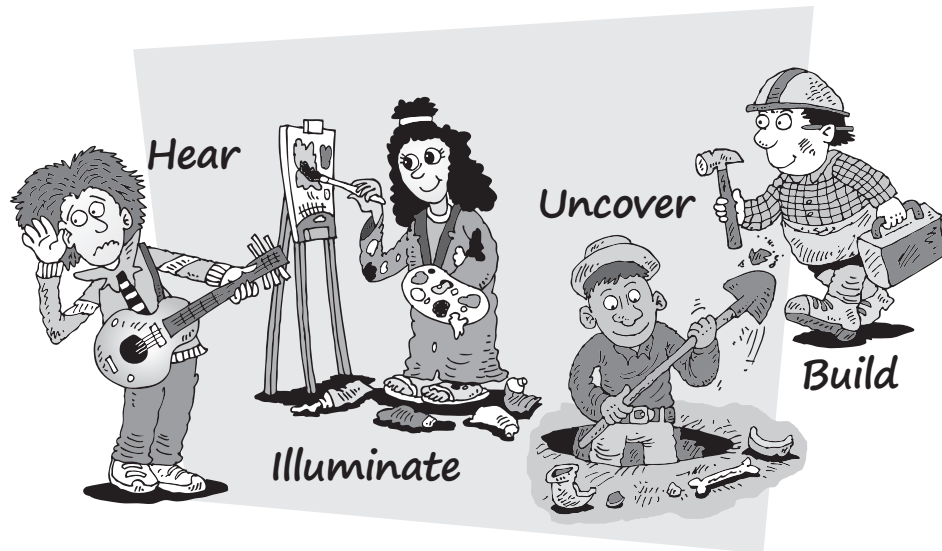
REVISION

In the previous chapter you learnt some basic conversational skills. In this chapter you will learn how to *directionally guide your conversations* so as to help people take their next step toward Christ.

Specifically, we will look at four types of conversation we could have with non-believers, each giving us a different direction in which we could ask helpful questions.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this teaching is adapted with permission from Dr. David Geisler's ministry, as detailed in the book *Conversational Evangelism*,⁴⁸ which he co-authored with his father, Dr. Norman Geisler. The following four types of conversations come from their conversational pre-evangelism model.

Our purpose here is to introduce an area of learning that few have been exposed to. Our greater hope is that much of the 'evangelism training' in our Churches might begin to go further than it currently does — beyond learning only the gospel content, to studying the broader picture of how we might better help people journey toward faith in Christ in a postmodern world.



Thanks for illustrations by Richard Gunther. <http://mightymag.org/>

FOUR DIRECTIONS FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH NON-BELIEVERS:

1. HEARING CONVERSATIONS

— In which we seek to clarify what others are saying, seeking to hear the 'sour notes'.

2. ILLUMINATING CONVERSATIONS

— In which we seek to reveal the 'sour notes', and to help them understand how things could be seen from a different perspective.

48 *Conversational Evangelism*, Norman Geisler and David Geisler, Harvest House Publishers, 2009. See www.meeknessandtruth.org

3. UNCOVERING CONVERSATIONS

— In which we seek to uncover the real barriers to the gospel.

4. BUILDING CONVERSATIONS

— In which we seek to spark their interest in hearing the gospel, building bridges to its understanding and sharing.

OUR OVERARCHING GOALS, IN SUMMARY:

1. REGARDING OURSELVES AS 'EVANGELISTIC CONVERSATIONALISTS'

We want to help people, every day, and in every way, to take one step closer to Jesus! That is our 'win'.

2. REGARDING EACH PERSON

We want to help them move along on their journey toward faith. As such we want to **hear** their thoughts, possibly identifying some discrepancies. To then **illuminate** these by asking questions that will *clarify* their religious terminology and gently *expose* legitimate weaknesses of their perspectives. We then want to **uncover** any real barriers to the gospel, whether *intellectual*, *emotional* or *spiritual*, and to **build** a bridge to the gospel so that they might both hear and understand its offer, and thus be in a position to respond to it, if they wish. That decision is — from our perspective — their win!

As the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:5, "*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*"

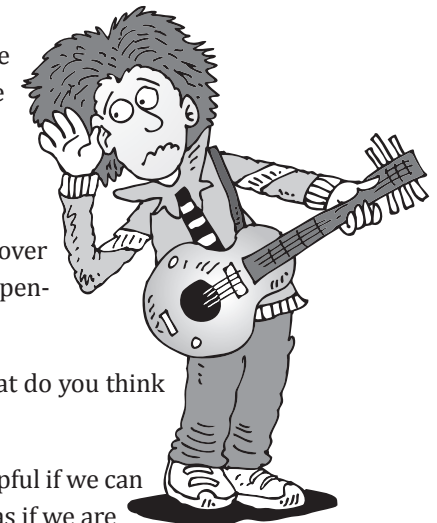
We use the old and the new, the left and the right. We must be honest, but we must also be wise. And that is what this is about!

1. HEARING CONVERSATIONS

In 'hearing conversations' our goal is to discover a little of what they believe through asking open-ended questions.

For example, what do you like about...? What do you think about...?

To encourage a person toward faith, it is helpful if we can identify any '**sour notes**' in their thinking. It is as if we are



listening to a vocal quartet, and then someone sings out of pitch. Sometimes what people say does not really make sense. Sometimes their words say one thing, but the way they live says another. Sometimes two of their beliefs directly contradict each other. These ‘sour notes’ can be turned into opportunities for encouraging faith!

At the hearing stage of a conversation the first goal is simply **to listen**, so as to enable a conversation to actually take place. The second is **to care and encourage**, because this is the way of Christ. And the third is to **discover** things that could become natural doorways for encouraging them toward Christ.

Example 1: Doreen says in the course of the conversation that she believes there are no absolutes. Does that statement make sense? Are you *absolutely* sure there are no absolutes? It’s actually a self-contradicting statement!

Example 2: Dave says God is so far away from us that we can’t know anything about Him. It is again self-contradictory, for he is already claiming to know something about God (that He is so far away from us). Given God’s great diligence in making this planet so amazingly, isn’t it at least possible He might want to be more than a bystander?

Example 3: A common example today is when people say all religious views are essentially the same. This logically cannot be the case, for they all point in different directions. If I ask someone for directions to a specific place, the answer cannot be in all directions at the same time. That would make no sense! It will be one way or the other. It is a fact that the various religions have contradictory claims and instructions, and that these differences are in the big things — not just the small things!

As an example of this, consider these contradictory truth claims regarding ‘salvation’:

- In *Islam* it comes by **belief** in Allah, Muhammad his prophet, and **good works**.
- In *Hinduism* it comes by overcoming karma and incarnations by **good works**.
- In *Buddhism* it comes by **getting rid of all desires** through the eight-fold path.
- In *Christianity* it comes by **faith alone** in Christ alone.

Beyond getting a healthy conversation happening, and showing Christian love and care, recognising these contradictions (or sour notes) is the goal at the **hearing** stage of a conversation.

Example 4: For example, your friend says, ‘It doesn’t matter what you believe, so long as it makes you a better person.’ What is the sour note? What do they mean by better person? By whose standard is that determined? What if I believe something terrible like German leaders did when they sought to rid their world of Jews, blacks, gypsies and disabled people? What we believe does matter, doesn’t it?

Consider even the belief that all humans are reincarnated after death, which includes the belief that if we are bad we might come back as an animal. How does that work if the human population in the world is getting bigger and there is an increase in crime at the same time?⁴⁹ The idea of reincarnation might sound pleasant to some in the West (noting that in India it is called the wheel of suffering), but makes little logical sense.

Example 5: As a final example; Marcus claims (following the views of scientists who are atheists) that the universe and everything in it evolved *all by itself* from energy and matter. While this is packaged as acceptable in our culture, it is more than fair to see this as a sour note for conversation. No one in their right mind would believe that a motor vehicle came into existence by chance — much less a biological entity (like a human) that is an almost infinite number of times more complicated. However, while many points could be made, the point of this chapter is that questions are the method. So ask ‘Why do you believe that? What led you to that conclusion? Do you really think the kind of complexity found in our DNA came about by chance? (Why? Where did you get that idea from? Have you considered...?) Do you really believe accidents can make things better — and consistently — until you have a near-perfect created thing?’

Consider just one aspect of what exists — life. Both life and the universe had a beginning point — Christians and atheists agree on this. The question is how they came about. Regarding life, *is it really reasonable to say that life came from non-life by itself?* Today, even atheistic scientists agree that the answer is no! The simplest bacteria contain *so much information* that they *could not* have come about by chance. Even Sir Francis Crick, one of the co-discoverers of DNA’s molecular structure, recognising the immensely complex information that exists ‘inside’ of life, suggested it was put there by aliens billions of years ago.⁵⁰ That is to say — it is clear to most that life on our planet was ‘designed’, or ‘put there’. The question Crick seeks to answer is who designed it. We could say ‘God made life’ — or we could delay that discussion by claiming ‘aliens put it there.’⁵¹ However, the outcome is the same, because who made the aliens? It takes intelligence to produce intelligence, so we still eventually come back to the need for a first intelligent cause. The claim of aliens merely delays the still inevitable question of how life came into existence from non-life. A growing number of atheistic scientists agree it’s all too complex to have happened by chance alone!

Could it be that the real issue behind naturalistic (no God) evolution is a *desire* to not believe in God? Could it be that, rather than being about science, it’s actually about being able to live life with the belief that there are no fixed morals, no ultimate accountability, and that there is no one who can tell us what to do? Simple questions could reveal what motivations and thoughts led a guy like Marcus to believe no God

49 An example from Dr David Geislers seminar notes.

50 Bates, G., *Designed by aliens?* Creation 25(4):54–55, 2003, as cited at <http://creation.com/off-the-planet>

51 For more on Aliens see Appendix 6, question 14.

exists. But the starting point is recognising the sour note — the thing that we hear that may not be logical.

IN SUMMARY (HEARING CONVERSATIONS)

Hearing conversations, then, are our initiating of *very general conversations* in which we listen attentively, *showing care and giving encouragement*, while hoping to also *discover* sour notes — these becoming our opportunities to have a conversation about that person's worldview as compared to what the Bible teaches.

For awareness, sometimes the 'sour note' is not only in what the person says they believe. Sometimes it is in their behaviour, such as when the way they live is contradictory to what they say. For example, a person believes there is no truth (and therefore no fixed morals) and *yet they live a moral life* (having strong convictions on what is right and wrong). Imagine they feel angry with others who behave *badly*. That is a *moral* judgment, and there is no sustainable basis for saying fixed morals exist if there is no God! Their moral living and judgments of others are thus made on the basis of their own (subjective) opinion of what is right and wrong. Their claimed beliefs and stated judgements are in conflict.

2. ILLUMINATING CONVERSATIONS

Having identified a 'sour note' in a person's worldview, the illuminating conversation seeks to illuminate this through the use of open-ended questions. The goal is that a person might be helped to *recognise the discrepancies (sour notes) for themselves*, maybe enabling them to see these things from a new perspective.

Again, we are doing this with questions because people don't like being confronted about what they believe. Many people consider their personal beliefs to be personal and sacred. They are their own business, and no one else's. Our goal is to win the person — not a debate — and a conversational approach can achieve this.

The questions in the 'Columbo tactic', as in the previous chapter, are illuminating questions. We will recap these later on. In the content that follows the goal is to demonstrate *the kind of 'thinking' involved in leading such conversations*. Our hope is that you would 'catch' it, so it can become natural to you.



Examples of possible first and second questions

Here are a few of the sorts of questions we could ask to turn a *conversation* toward spiritual things.

In each example, the second question is just an example of the direction a conversation could take. Any second question in a real conversation would depend on what was said in response to the first question.

After some examples of questions I include additional explanations to equip perspectives and readiness for such discussions.

Example 1: Doreen says the major world religions all basically say the same thing

- Q1: Do you think it matters what we believe, or is religion just there to help us become better people?
- Q2: How is it possible for all religions to be the same when some of them contradict each other's key beliefs?

Example 2: She then says that all religious teachers are equally valid in what they say

- Q1: Do you think all of the world's religious teachers have the 'truth'?
- Q2: How do you tell which parts are 'true'? Where do you fit Jesus into your religious beliefs (noting His exclusive claims)?

Note that comparing Jesus with other world religions' leaders is not like comparing apples with apples. Buddha merely claimed to point the way, and Muhammad to be a prophet of God, but Jesus claimed to actually be God, to fulfil prophecy, to live a sinless life, and then died on a cross and rose from the dead to prove it.

The 'gambling odds' are also worth consideration. If you followed Jesus, but it turned out that reincarnation was actually the case, you'd have lost nothing much as you'd have lived a good life, would come back as something better, and would also have many more reincarnations in which to get it 'right' (if that was, for some reason, considered necessary).

Imagine you followed Jesus, but Darwin's 'evolutionism' turned out to be true. Again, you'd have lost nothing, for we'd all become nothing but dust after this life — and we'd have lived with a feeling of significance, purpose and hope during our brief life, because of our belief in a loving and good God.

But suppose Jesus turned out to actually have been God's attempt to reach out to humanity. What then? If we had ignored His call for all to follow Him we would then spend an eternity separated from God, which is called hell.

So, there is a logic to religion, isn't there? As a gambling person, where would your safest bet be?

The religions, their teachers, and their teachings, are not equal and do not say the same things!

Example 3: You realise Marcus is struggling to find a meaningful purpose in life

Q1: Do you think life has a purpose? What do you think that is?

Q2: How do you know? Or, where do you think our sense of purpose comes from? What basis is there for believing a purpose actually exists? Is it just a nice idea? How is it possible for there to be meaning and purpose in our lives and at the same time believe there is no God?

The point in this conversation is that, if naturalistic evolution is true, there is, in fact, no purpose for our lives other than for the strongest of us to pass on our genes. If reincarnation is true, there is no purpose other than to live a generally good life (although 'good' is subjectively defined because the existence of fixed morals is logically denied), and hopefully to one day escape the 'wheel of suffering' (reincarnations) so as to become one with the universe (at which point we'd be blessed to cease to exist as an individually-conscious entity). The kind of purpose that faith in God brings to life has no comparison in other worldviews — and your questions could reveal this.

To reflect upon it further

Many things around us point toward the existence of a creator-God. For example, not only are our bodies unimaginably complex, our emotional 'software' is too. In addition, many of our emotions don't make sense unless we accept there really is a God who made the world a good place. For example, it is actually a strange thing that we have this inbuilt desire for something more in life — whether it is our *desire* for purpose, our *disappointment* with aspects of life on earth, or our constant *surprise* at the beauty of creation. Such thoughts are both complex as well as *contrary to earth-bound reason*. Why? Because, in each case, *we are comparing to an invisible standard that the current world does not meet*. We feel things should be different — or better, but where did this 'other' standard come from? To what are we comparing our experience? Would a fish marvel at how wet the water was? It would not — but a lizard that was supposed to walk on land might.⁵² Our design consistently reflects a desire for this thing we call 'good'. We also desire significance, purpose, and seem to need hope to live! Our psychology is like a machine that — in the right conditions — is well oiled, and runs perfectly. But in the wrong conditions, it crashes and we feel anxious, fearful, angry and even depressed to the extent that we no longer want to live. So, where does that invisible standard come from? Where does this ability to

think so deeply come from? Where does the capacity to love come from? What wired these things into us? What enabled our feelings to become so real that we are each convinced they are real? (Are your feelings of love a real thing— or are they just a chemical reaction, as some evolutionists would suggest?) If we evolved through the survival of the fittest, how did we ever come to *naturally* esteem love, selflessness and self-sacrifice? It seems to me that our thinking (our psychological make-up) was programmed for a better world than this. Would you agree?

Example 4: Jeanne is a nurse, and believes every human life should be treated as valuable

Q1: Do you think human lives are valuable?

Q2: How is it possible for human life to be valuable and yet believe that life is just a random by-product of nature? How do you decide which lives are valuable? Are babies valuable? Are unborn babies? What about disabled babies? Are old people? What about those with dementia? What gives a human value over an animal?

And regarding her thoughts...

Do you think a standard actually exists, or is this just your own opinion? If we kill disabled animals, why not disabled humans (noting that some studies on disabled people have shown that they are more likely to say they are happy than non-disabled people). What makes human life valuable?

You see, Jeanne, it is only because of the belief that God created us special that we have a basis for really believing human lives are special. Without this belief, our values are just personal opinions, and so there is nothing to stop others have different values, which might include hurting the very humans you work to protect and help. Are we special, or not? Should human life be protected, or not? Is this morally true — or just our opinion? (Our questions and conversation could communicate the content of these above two paragraphs).

Example 5: John is watching a news article about shoplifting, and feels strongly that right and wrong exist

Q1: Do you believe that some things are either right or wrong?

Q2: Where does that definition of right and wrong come from? What's to say that's not just your opinion?

The point is that the only way to say something is genuinely 'wrong' is through accepting that a God exists who defines what is right and wrong, and who somehow enforces these standards so that they are 'real'. Without that acceptance, our

52 This is an example of Ravi Zacharias', which I heard on a radio programme.

definitions are merely subjective (personal or group opinion) — and our universal moral inclination (to believe in ‘right’ and ‘wrong’) is illogical at best.

To reflect upon it further

If there is no God, the most logical basis for defining ‘right’ would be to define it by what is most beneficial for the species. Killing biological imperfections would benefit the genes of the species. Killing unproductive people who consume limited food resources but don’t contribute, etc. (such as Nazi Germany killing off all disabled people) would be logical too. On exactly what basis can we say this is ‘wrong’? We can out-law it as *undesirable*, but — if we are by-products of nature — there is no actual basis from which we can condemn it outright!

It is of note that it is not just atheism that has this problem — it’s the eastern religions too. Without belief in a single God who defines right and wrong, we are morally handicapped! A study of morality and suffering in the history of many Eastern religions is disturbing, because — outside of God — there really is no basis from which to objectively establish a fixed morality that protects justice, dignity and human life!⁵³ Without belief in a God who defines evil, and promises to call us to account, there is nothing to restrain evil — and this is reflected in the history books of the various religions. With regard to atheism, it was N.T. Wright who said “Religion has killed its thousands, and secularisation its tens of thousands.” With regard to other religions, consider that all the various inquisitions of the middle ages, added together killed less than 30,000 people,⁵⁴ while the human sacrifices of the Incan Indians may have killed more than 3 million, and the atrocities of atheism in the 20th Century (as referred to above) killed nearly 100 million!

While there have been abuses, the moral foundations of Christianity have held evil back. Also the abuses of Christian faith have been just that — acts done in the name of Christianity that were blatantly in contradiction to Christian teachings. The same cannot be said of the ‘evils’ of many other worldviews! Because they provide no fixed basis for defining evil, there is no basis for saying their ‘evils’ were even wrong.

It is of note that even those who claim there are no fixed moral standards — like atheistic John — still believe in certain moral standards, live by those standards, and at times judge other people by them. It’s a sour note, and our questions can illuminate it.

53 It is often considered ‘politically incorrect’ to say anything that criticizes another religion in our times — but many criticisms of Eastern religions (which are unrealistically idealised in the West) are more than valid. Practices that have come naturally out of Hinduism and Buddhism in the last century (all being in-synch with the beliefs — rather than contrary to them) are terrifying! Their moderation has been influenced by international perspectives on killing and maiming and abandoning... which — in all truth — are reflective of the Christian heritage of the western nations. A good chapter I recently read on this was Ian Wishart, *The Divinity Code* (Howling at the Moon Publishing Ltd, 2007), chapter 7 “Are all religions equal?”

54 Some histories blow the figures into the millions. A search online discovers historians recognise the numbers to be small — though the fear created is strong. All said, these deaths were still completely unacceptable. John Paul II prayed, “Forgive us Lord, never again.” Our point is that they are unfairly highlighted in Western culture in criticism of Christianity, but without fair perspective, or recognition that Christianity has been less violent than almost all worldviews. These were contradictions to Christian teaching (not applications of it), and that Christianity has brought about incomparable good on a global scale.

Example 6: Jeanne is upset by crime. She feels there must somehow be justice in life

- Q1: Do you think all people will be held accountable for the way they live?
- Q2: If so, what do you think the standard will be? (Where does that standard come from? How do you know you will measure up?)

“[As an atheist] ...my argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?”⁵⁵

— C.S. Lewis

Example 7: John, as in the previous chapter, is still questioning the reliability of the Bible

- Q1: Do you think the Bible gives us a reliable picture of what Jesus said or did?
- Q2: How can you say the Bible is unreliable when other ancient historical documents are accepted?

As further examples: Did you know the New Testament is the most reliable ancient document on our planet? Did you know there are more copies of it, and closer to the events, than for any other ancient historical event/writing? Did you know that the four gospels and the Apostle Paul's letters were *never* questioned as being authentic scripture? (i.e., certain stories from history that claim the books of the Bible came together through great debate and power struggle... are misrepresentations, not giving the full picture). Did you know that the preservation of these Scriptures has been proven to be more accurate than for any other book? (Do you know of any other book where the letters and words were counted as a measure to help check copying was accurate?) Regarding the few words that remain uncertain, did you know that not a single doctrine or belief is affected? It is valid to say that the accounts have been miraculously preserved!

Our posture

Given the strength of our Christian position in terms of its inherent logic, our posture in the above conversations is important. If we are too assertive (direct), our friends may feel awkward. Our gracious manner is thus important. We are merely

55 Mere Christianity, CS Lewis, HarperSanFrancisco, P 38. As quoted in a *Christian Apologetic Handbook*, by Dr D Geisler, p89. See www.meeknessandtruth.org

asking questions — not arguing or judging. We are also seeking to understand them, and taking an interest in them as people.

Nothing will turn people off quicker than a feeling that we have an agenda, and are about to push our own point of view. With wisdom and skill, we seek to put people at ease when around us — thus minimising their defensiveness, while raising doubts through our questions, yet stirring desire for more conversation through our manner and encouragements.

We are seeking authentic conversations, and we seek them because of love — and because it is important. Western media are consistent in their support of scepticism toward Christian viewpoints. If we do not speak up, people will not know of Christ!

But ‘arguing’ won’t work!

Conversation is our method!

Through it, we can help those we love journey toward Jesus, one step at a time.

Revising the questions that help us get started

The three great questions given in the previous chapter (the ‘Columbo Tactic’) are applicable here. These can be used in the *illuminating* process, and release us toward a greater mastery of the art of conversation.

For revision purposes, the three questions are as follows.

- (1) To *clarify what* they mean we can ask questions like, ‘What do you mean by...?’ or ‘What do you mean when you say...?’
- (2) To *clarifying why* they believe that with a questions like, ‘What led you to that conclusion?’ ‘Why do you think that?’ or ‘Where did you hear that from?’
- (3) To point them toward a possible new perspective we could ask a question like, ‘Have you considered that...?’ or ‘Were you aware that...?’

A final example that takes it further

We have considered (1) hearing conversations and (2) illuminating conversations. Let’s finish this chapter by considering a final example that is relevant today. In the next chapter we will then continue by looking at two further objectives we can have in our conversations: (3) *uncovering* deeper hindrances, and (4) *building* bridges to the gospel. We will then have covered four stages that conversations may go through on the journey from scepticism to belief.

Example 8: Doreen suggests that she believes all good people go to heaven.

Hearing: What do you mean by good? Where did you get this idea?

Illuminating: Do you think Hitler could be in heaven? By what standard is that decided? Where does that standard come from? How can you actually know that?

If she think Hitler will *not* be in heaven she has revealed that she thinks *a standard of morality does exist* (even if her words might elsewhere claim there is no absolute truth, or that all religions are essentially the same).

Building: How could we now build a bridge to the gospel on the basis of what she believes? Consider these questions.

- (a) Do you think God’s standard is higher or lower than your own standard?
- (b) Do you always live up to your own standard of right and wrong? For example, if we consider the ‘golden rule’, do you always do to others what you would want them to do to you?
- (c) If God’s standards are higher than your own, and you don’t even live up to your own standards, on what basis do you think you will get into heaven?

At this point you have a bridge to the gospel (namely that you both agree we fall short of God’s standards), and could ask permission to explain to her how the Bible resolves this problem.

Your questions have helped Doreen to understand the problem that our faith addresses *from within her own current worldview!* A reasonable doubt has been raised in her worldview (that she is good enough), and hopefully a reasonable enough desire to consider some possible solutions. It is possible she might even be ready to believe the gospel, because she can now see why ‘good’ people might actually *not* all go to heaven, and why Jesus is thus needed!

We note that:

- (a) She has come to this conclusion *from within her own worldview*, before hearing any explanation of the Bible’s high standards.

This is important, because non-believers do not yet accept the Bible’s authority. While there is nothing wrong with explaining what Christians believe by using the Bible, if you can get a person agreeing with what the Bible says first that is a big step forward!

(b) Because you have only asked questions, you've not actually told her anything yet.

You could never be accused of 'preaching'! If you have been actively seeking to put her at ease in conversation, encouraging her along the way, she would have had no reason to feel defensive or 'got at' either.

(c) A significant change in belief could have come about through this *simple conversation*.

Through learning to ask good questions we can help people, every day, to take steps closer to Jesus.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: ILLUMINATING DISHONESTY

illuminating questions have other good uses. One is that they can bring honesty to a conversation. For example, a person claims that 'the scientists' say something. Which scientists? In some matters (such as belief in naturalistic evolution, life from non-life, man from apes) it is *unlikely* that all scientists do say it. In fact, a significant number of *atheistic* scientists (noting many scientists are not atheists) are admitting the inadequacies of the claimed atheistic models. This is worth bringing to light!

In a similar example, Dr. David Geisler shares about a young man who claimed to be a Buddhist, but who — when questioned — admitted to being agnostic (not knowing). His initial claim was a smoke screen. By asking the question, 'What do you mean by Buddhist?' a genuine conversation was opened up in which the reasons for his resistance to Christian faith were then freely discussed.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: CONFUSED TERMINOLOGY

Asking people what they mean by the things they say is increasingly important in our day, because the meaning of many religious words is being changed. A prime example is the modern liberal Christian use of 'Christian' words, giving them completely different meanings to their real (original, common, intended) meaning. (We note for the benefit

of those not understanding liberalism in Christianity, that this refers to those who still love the Christian tradition, but who no longer believe in things such as the divinity of Jesus, the miracles, the resurrection, God's creating life, or the reliability of Scripture). As an example of how the meaning of words can be changed, a liberal might say Jesus has *risen*, but by 'risen' they might mean He has risen from amongst His contemporaries to become one of the greatest examples of good living. They do not actually believe He has risen from the dead — yet this will be masked by their dishonest use of such words. They might say they believe in Jesus' miracles — but don't actually think they happened. The miracle (to them) is in the way Jesus gave hope to those who needed it. They see the story as a metaphor (illustration). Today a person might say Jesus is their Saviour, but have no real commitment to Him, and may concurrently believe all religions lead to 'God' — who they actually believe to be more of a 'higher power' than a personal God!

So asking questions is important! And listening before talking is important.

In fact, until we make a habit of this, our effectiveness in encouraging people toward Christ may be very limited!

IN SUMMARY

The first type of questions — *Hearing* questions — are asked (a) to get a healthy and enjoyable conversation started, and because we desire to (b) show love and care, and (c) find a doorway to encourage them toward faith in Christ. Through asking questions we can hear their thoughts and feelings, find opportunity to love and encourage, and identify *sour notes* we could further discuss.

We then seek to *illuminate* these sour notes to them through the use of questions. We desire that they discover *for themselves* any contradictions that exist. But we also desire an ongoing conversation, so our approach is gentle, and our manner affirming.

Let's look at where these conversations could go next.

9

The power of conversation, Part II

IN REVISION:

We have discussed hearing and illuminating conversations (see the summary in the previous chapter). We now turn to the third of the four conversation objectives.

3. UNCOVERING CONVERSATIONS

The third type of conversation is the *uncovering conversation*. In this we desire to dig down to uncover deeper barriers that might exist to the gospel message.

Sometimes claimed beliefs are merely 'smoke screens'. People are avoiding talking about the real matters of faith. To quote Dr. David Geisler, in a post-modern world, many "... have lived comfortably with discrepancies in their beliefs for a long time and often prefer to



live with distorted beliefs rather than change how they live. It may not matter what the evidence shows. Some may actually say, "It doesn't matter how much evidence you present to me for the truth of Christianity because I don't want to believe."⁵⁶

Our next act of love is thus to help uncover the emotional and spiritual barriers that are motivating this resistance to change, and their indifference toward certain spiritual questions or truths.

As an example, imagine John's initial intellectual objections have been addressed. If the world were logical it would be reasonable to expect him to now choose to follow Jesus. (This is how it often worked fifty years ago). So the question is, why is he not now following the logical direction of the conversations? Now that his objections are answered, why is he still disinterested in a relationship with God? The initial intellectual reasons are not the only reasons for his resistance!

Stated reasons and real reasons can differ considerably. Indeed, a longer journey is needed before many will face the clear implications of the evidence and truths that might be presented (and which they might have already even intellectually recognised).

"The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out." Proverbs 20:5.

(A) WE CAN INVESTIGATE THE SINCERITY OF GIVEN REASONS

Having heard intellectual reasons given for not believing in Christian faith, *but recognising that their sincerity in the conversation is not heart-felt*, instead of becoming engrossed in 'debate' on that matter we could ask...

- If all your question could be answered, do you think that would help you more seriously consider a belief in God and Christianity? Or...
- If you could know the truth about religious issues (though not suggesting I have all the answers), would you want to know it? Or...
- It seems to me that your barriers may not be intellectual, but maybe more emotional, spiritual, or some other kind of barrier. Am I right?

Example: I've got my own beliefs

As an example, in New Zealand when discussing religion, if asked what they believe, some will simply say, 'I've got my own beliefs.' This is sometimes a smoke screen (avoiding discussion), sometimes a defensive statement (because they feel uncomfortable with our approach), and is sometimes sincere. As is in the previous chapter, we should not assume we understand what a person means until we have

asked a few questions. And we should not shy away from investigating their sincerity either — which is our point here. For example, we could ask

- (1) **'Oh really! What do you believe?'** If they replied, 'It's a personal thing' we could ask with a smile,
- (2) **'John, are you just trying to avoid talking about religion?'** As such, we may have called his bluff — *and have opened the conversation for a discussion on the real issues!*

I recall a discussion with a man who really didn't want to discuss his religious beliefs, whose wife then indicated to me that this was because his beliefs were unique and quite strange. His resistance was not indifference to religion. It was embarrassment! He was actually quite open to discussing religion in general. He just didn't want to yet talk about what he believed.

If a person admits they are indifferent, *an opportunity has been created to talk about why!* We could investigate by asking...

- (3) **'Why are you indifferent toward religion? Don't you think it is at least possible there could be a God?'**

You could ask if they feel religion is unimportant, and why. You could ask if they feel uncomfortable talking about religion, and again enquire as to why that is.

Of course, if they really don't want to talk about it we respect that boundary. The point here is that we don't actually know until we have asked!

(B) WE CAN SEEK TO DISCERN DEEPER ISSUES

Investigating the sincerity of their given reasons is one thing, but uncovering the reasons for insincerity in them is another altogether. This will take a combination of natural intuition and Divine help.

In terms of natural discernment, God has given us intelligence and relational skills. Discerning whether someone has an emotional, spiritual or intellectual barrier is more of an art than a science — but with practice and exposure to how different people think (through both reading and conversing with people) we can become more discerning, and be more effective.

One of the best ways to identify deeper issues is to let people tell their story, and to listen. Through this we might discover the real reasons for their resistance to faith conversations.

Secondly, in terms of spiritual discernment, we often underestimate the importance of listening to the Spirit. The quiet whispers of God's Spirit are powerful and effective, and at times are necessary. Sometimes we will not get a breakthrough without them!

Consider when Jesus first met Nathanael (John 1:47-51). He said *'Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.'* These words so fitted Nathanael that he responded *'How do you know me?'* Jesus then gave a reply that demonstrated He had received further Divine help, saying, *'I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.'* This revelation was sufficient to convince Nathanael — a passionate Jew — that Jesus was the Messiah, his response being, *'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.'* While Jesus was a skilled conversationalist, His greater effectiveness came through listening to the Spirit.

While we may desire to be good witnesses for Jesus, I suspect His actual desire is that we become witnesses *with* Him. Just as the Apostles said in Acts 15:28, *'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to...'* The very nature of this statement reflects their understanding of the relational partnership that God intends we have with Him. We are not working *for* God — we are working *with* Him. Learning to listen — which comes from the belief that He is speaking — is key to this.

If there was ever a key to getting results in evangelism, it would be listening to the Spirit's whispers!

A few examples

Let's consider a few examples of how the real reasons for resistance or indifference can be different to the stated ones.

1. When Jeanne asks about the problem of evil and suffering, consider that she may not actually want an answer. She may be expressing the pain she feels because of something that happened to her. The real hindrance is that she is overwhelmed by her **personal struggles**.

2. A surprising number of people feel **bitter toward God** as the result of sufferings they have experienced. They specifically struggle to reconcile these experiences with the Bible's claim of a loving God. Their experiences speak louder to them than the claims of Scripture! John asks, 'Why did my parents have to separate when I was young?' Doreen asks, 'Why didn't God stop my step-dad from abusing me?' Marcus asks, 'Why did God make me look funny, so that I was always picked on at school?' And Jean asks, 'Why did my sister have to die of cancer when so young?'

3. Many people are angry at God because they perceive that He has not helped them, or protected them (or others), when He could have. **Our empathy and concern is needed!** Through showing love the door may open for us to help them see things from a different perspective. God's heart breaks *with ours* when we suffer, and as we feel grief and despair when looking upon the many sufferings and injustices of this world. *These things are the very reason Jesus came, suffered and died!*

4. As an example, a Darwinian advocate once stated at a scientific conference that one of his problems with Intelligent Design was that he could not reconcile it with **the**

problem of evil. What on earth has the *philosophical question* of the problem of evil got to do with the *scientific question* of origins? The reason is not really logical, and we can only wonder whether he or a loved one had suffered through some painful experience.⁵⁷ He thus revealed that part of his reason for rejecting a scientific viewpoint (Intelligent Design) was actually his theology — or emotional pain, not scientific reason. (Note that an evil God could have created the world — thus explaining why evil is here. The existence of evil is irrelevant to the question of the existence of a God — though is very relevant to the question of a *good* God). How could we respond?

It is possible that a large dose of love and compassion would be more effective than an argument — for he is already outside of the boundaries of sound reason! While argument might help him see the incongruity of his beliefs⁵⁸, his resistance has a deeper motive.

5. I have spoken to people who have struggled with the idea of a fixed **morality**, only to discover they are 'back-slidden' Christians who are living with their partners. The real issue was not intellectual — it was the avoidance of feelings of guilt! They knew that their lifestyles were 'sinful' by Biblical standards, and so they avoided the tension by denying their belief in God. Again, the real reason was not the stated reason. Their views were driven by emotion (they'd have to change), possible selfishness (wanting to defend their pursuit of sex without commitment) and guilt.

6. Another common hindrance is when a person carries hurt that came *from a Christian*. Imagine Dave, who is **bitter at a hypocrite**. He is emotionally unable to consider saving faith. He may support his conclusion of agnosticism (believing God is far from us and that we cannot really find answers) through all manner of unspoken intellectual arguments, but at the root of it all his hindrance is *emotional* in nature. A wall of bitterness is blocking his view because he was hurt by a Christian earlier in life.

In such a scenario we have an important role to play. If it was a 'Christian' who hurt him, we — as Christians — can acknowledge his pain, and this might help him get past it. We could even apologise on behalf of that person, seeking to demonstrate the kind of humility that should have existed.

A point of reason that might help could be to help him see that we are all guilty of doing wrong in life, and that this is the very reason we need Christ. Who is without sin?

⁵⁷ *Conversational Evangelism*, Norman Geisler and David Geisler, Harvest House Publishers, 2009, p 91.

⁵⁸ It is useful to note that, while even our Christian answer to this problem of suffering and evil can still feel somehow deficient when faced with great suffering, no other religion offers any better solution to the problem. In fact, most religions deny the existence of truth, and therefore 'evil' does not actually exist either. Some, like Buddhism, even deny the reality of suffering itself! These beliefs do not, thus, line up with reality as we know it. We can further reflect that, even if God were unjust, that does not impinge upon His reality. It would certainly be a shame for us if He were unjust — but this would not make Him any less real. To not believe in the *existence* of a God because of suffering and evil is rather faulty logic! Consider again that, if God doesn't exist and there is therefore no basis to even define evil, our instinctive recognition of 'evil' is evidence in favour of God's existence. For more, see Appendix 6, question 8.

The caution: If such a person does take a risk, and open up to us, if we turn around to quickly and share the gospel with them, depending on our manner, it may look to them as if we were fulfilling some religious duty. We may reinforce a negative stereo-type, and completely miss the opportunity for a real discussion on the real issues. The goal in our Christian witness in a postmodern (multi-religious) culture is to encourage people toward faith in Jesus. Sometimes this will involve sharing the gospel — but many times it will not. Some people feel they need to share the gospel in every conversation. Sometimes this is unwise.

By all means share the gospel whenever possible, but there is a reason God gave us two ears, and one mouth!

If our 'auto pilot' mode were to 'ask questions and listen first', we would be better at establishing trust, removing hindrances to faith, and building bridges to the gospel. It is an approach that is non-threatening, and that we could all use — and we'd all be more effective as a result!

(C) WE CAN ASK FOR GOD'S HELP

For the purpose of reiteration (and because we do not want to understate it), Christian life is supposed to be lived in partnership with the Holy Spirit. This is the key to true fruitfulness in ministry.

We need the Holy Spirit's help in identifying various hindrances, and sometimes we need His literal help in removing them, because some are purely spiritual.

Sometimes a hurt, when allowed to 'fester', can result in a root of bitterness that is spiritually connected. For example, a person may have become deeply bitter toward Christian faith because of 'some hypocrite' who hurt them in the past. Through your quiet prayer something might be moved in the spiritual realm bringing a release from that bitterness sufficient to enable them to think clearly again about spiritual things. A person's disposition toward spiritual things can be changed through prayer!

I recall being offended as a teenager with some compulsive blasphemers in our school. A friend and I prayed that, if their continual blaspheming of Jesus were *spiritually* connected, God would interrupt the spiritual influence to their words. On more than one occasion when 'experimenting' in such things a person became visibly

uncomfortable, and noticeably stopped blaspheming. As young teenagers we began to be aware that there can be spiritual things happening around us — not behind everything, but behind some things.

A prayer spoken silently to the Lord can sometimes change the tone or direction of a conversation. A word of knowledge or wisdom can do the same. We need look no further than Jesus to see how — with Divine help — He was able to get straight to the real issue when in conversation with those around Him.

We do well to not underestimate the reality of the spiritual battle, the power of prayer, and the help the Holy Spirit can give as we talk with those around us.

Summary: *Uncovering* conversations come into play when we realise that deeper emotional or spiritual matters must be hindering people from taking a conversation regarding faith to its logical conclusions.

As it says in the scriptures, the god of this age has *blinded the minds of unbelievers* so they *cannot* see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ... (2 Corinthians 4:4). Patterns of thinking — which are sometimes spiritually connected, can disable people from being able to discuss religion in a way that is logically sound. They are blinded. They struggle to understand, and are often not interested in understanding.

Our listening ears and discerning hearts could be used by God to help.

We ask, "You seem to be generally disinterested in spiritual things. Why do you think that is?" The honest conversation that follows could change their life!

4. BUILDING CONVERSATIONS

All that remains now is to build a direct bridge to the gospel.

The goal here is to **find common ground**, so we can explain the message of the gospel on the basis of things they already believe or understand. We also want to **spark their interest** in understanding God's offer, so that when we do share more we have their full attention.

By way of clarification, this is not to say that we avoid sharing the gospel until this point in a series of conversations. We 'make the most of every opportunity'⁵⁹ The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe (Romans 1:16). God's Spirit can cause the gospel message to 'cut to the heart', even though a person's worldview may logically exclude it.



The point here is that it will benefit our purpose if we can build a connection between the gospel and what they already know and believe. This will make the gospel message not only *more memorable*, but *more understandable*, and *more believable* to them. Building a bridge is about using God-given wisdom, and not assuming that they will think like we do.

HOW MIGHT WE BUILD BRIDGES TO THE GOSPEL?

1. The benefits of a personal story

One of the easiest ways to communicate gospel truths within a postmodern culture is through telling one's own story (testimony), with the gospel truths incorporated along the way.

There are many benefits to sharing personal stories. Such stories are:

- i. Difficult to disagree with — because they are our experience.
- ii. Socially acceptable in a postmodern world — because everyone's story is considered valid.
- iii. Interesting.
- iv. Memorable.
- v. Create a relational connection through sharing real-life experiences.

*In today's world both objective and subjective experiences are important to communicate in our witness to others...*⁶⁰

— Dr. David Geisler

As important as intellectual reasoning is (through conversation), for some, a subjective approach will be more effective.

For example, if Marcus did not believe in miracles we could reason with his mind, recognising that this is probably because he doesn't believe a God exists. ('Marcus, if a God exists, isn't it only logical that miracles could therefore exist? Don't you believe in a God? Why?')

However, depending on his personality, the matter might be better addressed by sharing a few stories of miracles we have witnessed, or prayers we have seen answered. Sharing our experiences would call his assumptions into question.

2. The platform of common ground

In conversations, *things we agree on* are the foundation on which we can discuss what we disagree on. For example, if we agree with non-believing Jeanne that there has to be justice for rapists and murderers in the afterlife, we have a common ground: God will see that justice is somehow upheld in the afterlife. From this basis we have easy opportunity to share the gospel, for it is a message that tells of how those whom she feels deserve punishment will get punished.

Common ground thus becomes the 'bridge' across which we share the uncommon ground. It also helps us gain a level of trust and credibility, because there is a connection point in shared perspectives or experiences.

The Apostle Paul said, *'I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some'* (1 Corinthians 9:22). To the Jews Paul reasoned like a Jew, but to the Greeks he reasoned and spoke like a Greek. To the 'weak' he maybe related with humility, sitting with them on the ground, telling stories of his sufferings. To the 'strong' he maybe dressed in his best clothes, sharing his past credentials, and reasoning with clarity and authority. In each case he used the things he had in common with those around him to build a bridge of trust.

Some examples of viewpoints that could become common ground might be,⁶¹

1. We will be judged for committing serious crimes in the afterlife.
2. Beliefs do matter, because they affect how you live.
3. Not all religious viewpoints can be right, because they contradict each other.
4. Faith must have an object to have merit.
5. Jesus' claims are unique compared to any other religious leader.⁶²
6. The proof of Christ's claims has no parallel amongst major religious leaders.
7. Without God, some people find it difficult to find meaning in their life.
8. 'Right' and 'wrong' do exist

Most non-believers would probably readily agree with more than half of these points — if not all of them.

Through asking questions we can establish such common viewpoints, thus creating a platform on which we can discuss the gospel.

⁶¹ Some of these points come from *Conversational Evangelism*, Norman Geisler and David Geisler, Harvest House Publishers, 2009, p 112-113.

⁶² John 10:30; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5

3. Making the transition to the sharing of the gospel message

Creating an opportunity to share faith is not difficult. For example, having established some common ground in a conversation with John you could ask, 'Out of interest John, do you know what Christians actually believe?' If he responded 'no', you have your opportunity.

However, as in the coming chapter on sharing the gospel, a key to gaining a person's response is our ability to turn this back to a conversation that seeks to clarify their response. Having shared the gospel you could ask, 'Have you heard that before? Where do you feel you are at in relation to God? Where would you like to be?' etc. The goal is again to hear what they are saying, illuminating logical fallacies, uncovering background hindrances, and encouraging faith.

We should not assume to know what a person thinks or wants or believes. We should ask — and will sometimes be pleasantly surprised, finding that God has been at work in their heart already, and that they are actually ready to accept Christ. All they needed was for someone to tell them about Christ!

An easy way to share faith: Do vs Done

Creating an opportunity to share faith can be as simple as asking, 'Has anyone ever explained to you the difference between Christianity and all the other religions?' We then explain the difference as summarised by the words 'Do' and 'Done'.

All the religions in the world, except for Christianity, say 'do this' to get to heaven (or their equivalent of heaven). Muslims say, 'Your good deeds have to outweigh your bad deeds.' Hindus say, 'You have to overcome karma and reincarnations by doing good works.' Buddhists say, 'You need to get rid of desire through an eight-fold path.' All the religions of the world say you have to do something.

Christianity, on the other hand, is not about doing something, but about what has already been 'done'. The Bible teaches us that there is nothing we can do to earn a relationship with God. No matter how good I am... I am not good enough. Jesus provided the sacrifice for my sin. He paid for my forgiveness and 'salvation.' He made them possible. My part is to accept what He has done for me and to allow Christ to come into my life...⁶³

Were they interested in a fuller explanation — and had we memorised an outline of the gospel — we could then elaborate further.

Belief that vs Belief in

What if they say, 'I believe in God. Isn't that enough?' We could explain the difference between 'belief that' and 'belief in'. As James explains in James 2:19, even demons 'believe that' God exists, but do not 'believe in' Him. We can then encourage our friends to take that step, placing their trust in Him.

How to answer when we don't know what to say

Everyone gets 'stuck for words' at some point. Then, day later, we think of what we wish we had said. What are we to do? Consider this approach:

1. **Admit** we don't know how to answer right now.
2. **Affirm** what we do know.
3. **Ask** if we could bring an answer back to them later on.

For example, Marcus asks, 'How do you reconcile the differences between science and faith?' At that very moment your brain short-circuits, and you have no idea what to say (even though the three simple questions from the 'Columbo tactic' are not hard to remember — 'What differences are you referring to? What led you to that conclusion? Have you considered that...').

You could say, 'I'm sorry Marcus. I really can't think how to explain it to you, but I know it must be possible to reconcile them, because a growing number of scientists are Christians! Could I e-mail you something on it later? It's a great question!'

For example, Doreen asks, 'If God is loving, how can there be a hell?' Feeling lost for words you say, 'I'm sorry Doreen, I can't think how to answer that right now, but what I do know is that God is loving. Why else would He have sent Jesus? Could I email you something that might answer it later on? Great question!'

Admitt what you don't know; affirm what you do know; and ask for a later opportunity!

People respect honesty — and your subjective (personal) affirmation of what you do know may prove more significant than you think.

CONCLUDING OUR SECTION ON CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS

A great many people have lost momentum in their search for spiritual truth in our times because of the belief that there is no such thing as religious truth! However, it is possible for us to help them get back on that journey.

STEP ONE: By taking the time to talk with people, and to listen to them, we can **hear** their stories. By showing empathy and care, and by giving encouragement, they can become comfortable enough to talk with us. As we discover ‘sour notes’ we can...

STEP TWO: ...gently **illuminate** these through the use of non-offensive questions.

STEP THREE: Beyond this we can seek to **uncover** deeper hindrances that might be motivating an indifference or resistance to spiritual things. *Emotional* barriers can be broken down and healed through showing love and expressing care. *Spiritual* barriers can be identified and broken through with prayer. Deeper heart-felt, *intellectual* questions can be answered gracefully with sound reason.

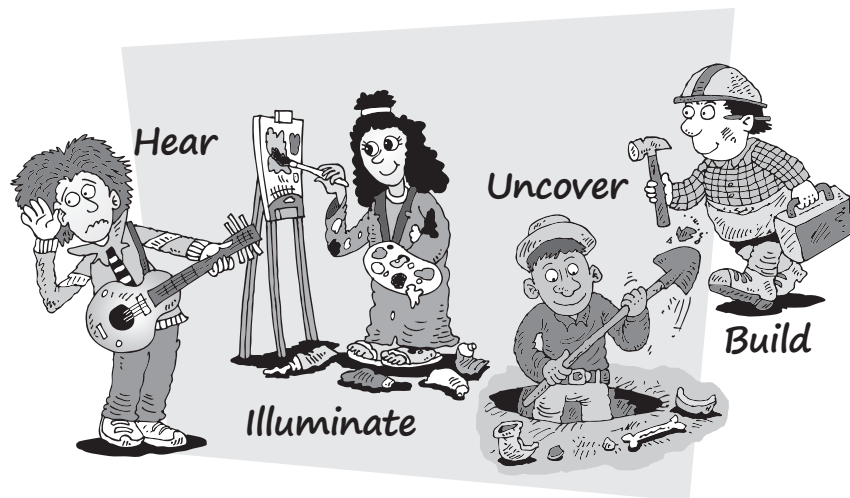
STEP FOUR: We can then **build** a bridge of common understandings to the gospel, thus aiding their understanding, their interest, and their faith.

While it is a longer journey it is a journey none-the-less, and the destination is the same — Jesus!

Do you want to make a difference in somebody’s spiritual life?

Follow the example of Jesus — love them fully, and start a conversation!

However, during such conversations opportunities will arise for you to share what you believe. What do you believe? What is the gospel? This is what we are going to look at next!



Thanks for illustrations by Richard Gunther. <http://mightyimg.org/>

STUDY 6:

Leading the conversation

GETTING STARTED

1. Play the same question game as last week. (Start a conversation in your group in which only questions are allowed. The moment a person makes a statement they are out. See Appendix 8 for an example).
2. Did you talk with any people using the conversational skills we looked at last week? How did it go?
3. What opportunities for greater spiritual interaction did you identify through listening more intently in your conversations?

DISCUSSION

1. **Revision**
 - a. How do we measure our ‘win’ in a conversation with an unbeliever?
 - b. What are the four types of conversation we might have with non-believers? *
 - c. What are the different goals or objectives of these conversations?
 - d. Why is each one important? *
 - e. When we don’t know the answer to a question that is asked, what can we do?

2. God's Word**a. Read 1 Corinthians 13:12.**

How might the truths of this verse affect our attitude in sharing with others? *

b. In considering the balance between natural and spiritual discernment, read Mark 10:17-21.

- i. Do you think Jesus' question and response in verses 18-19 were spiritually discerned, or do you think these came from His use of natural wisdom (and that He was therefore asking these because He was still in the process of discerning the real issue)?
- ii. Do you think His statement in v21 was spiritually discerned, or a bold assessment /judgment?
- iii. If God were speaking to you or leading your thoughts, would you always know it?
- iv. Do you think Jesus was always dependent on the Spirit's leading, or did He sometimes just walk in confidence in the gifts and abilities God had given Him?
- v. Reading James 1:5, how would you know that God had answered your prayer and given you the wisdom you needed? (The answer is in James 1:6-7).
- vi. How significant was the spiritual dynamic in the witness and ministry of Jesus? How clear thinking do you think Jesus was? Did He use His mind? What do you think the right understanding is of the balance between natural and spiritual things?

c. Read Mark 12:18-27

- i. What were the Sadducees' motives for asking this question? *
- ii. Is this an intellectual or emotional objection?
- iii. The Sadducees only accepted the authority of the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament). Knowing this, from where did Jesus quote so as to refute them (look at your Bible's cross references or footnotes)?

3. Practise as a group:

As a group, consider how you might respond to the following two questions, seeking to create a meaningful conversation. Begin by considering what the real issue might be, whether intellectual, emotional or spiritual. Then put together a small series of questions, potentially including hearing, illuminating, uncovering and building questions, aiming to help them take one step closer to Jesus.

- (1) If God is so loving, how can there be a hell? *
- (2) Is it possible to reconcile science and faith? *

4. Practise in pairs:

Repeat the exercise in pairs. Firstly identify the 'sour note' in the question, note whether it is more intellectual or emotionally driven. Then take turns at asking the question — with the other then seeking to lead the conversation. Members could look at the four words *Hear, Illuminate, Uncover, Build*, during the discussions, making attempts to lead the conversation in these directions.

- (1) What is so special about Christianity, because I thought that all religions basically taught the same thing?
- (2) How can I choose Christ when my spouse is probably in hell? Or, Why would I want to go to heaven when all my mates are in hell? *

APPLICATION

1. Look at appendix nine, and then reflect on the 'sour notes' you have heard in the lives of those you have identified in study one. Are there any additional 'hindrances' you could add to those you identified in study one?

2. Transfer their names to a worksheet, as at appendix ten. Then write down a good **hearing** question you could ask in response to these sour notes. This could include any terms you might like those in your 'top three list' to clarify for you.

3. Then write down some suitable **illuminating**, **uncovering** and **building** questions you could use.

4. Would you benefit from growing more in knowledge of your faith, and the reasons for it? What could you do, or read, in the coming two months to begin to actually address this need?

Prayer: Spend time together in prayer for each other, and for those you wish to reach.

Homework: Initiate some of these conversations.

Read chapter 10.

* Refer to notes in the Discussion Guide at the back of this book.

10

How to lead your friends to Christ

As stated earlier, a remarkable number of believers don't know how to share a clear gospel message with their friends or colleagues. Yet there is no message more important than this one. The eternal salvation of unbelieving friends hangs in the balance!

God's vehicle for reaching the world is His Church. Nothing short of every believer mobilised to reach those around them will be adequate for accomplishing the task at hand. This is God's plan. We are His strategy, and He has not given up on us! There is probably no negligence as serious in our Churches as the failure to equip believers in this area.

So, the goal here is to equip you with not only a few skills, but with a certain breadth of perspective. To make this chapter easier reading, some of the content has been placed in text boxes, so reading it is optional.

We hope your goal will be that, if asked, you and every believer under your care could share the gospel clearly and simply — because God really does love those around us, and they need His hope!

It is probable that every one of us has one or two easy opportunities to share our faith each year. A conversation happens. A question is asked, and all we need to say is, 'Could I share with you what I believe as a Christian?'

Sometimes others directly ask us, 'What do you believe?'

If believers could take just these opportunities — even if they remained passive toward evangelism the rest of the time — it would make a big difference!

In this chapter we will discuss

- (A) The gospel content,
- (B) The gospel tone, and
- (C) Some gospel methods and skills.

Section (C) will bring some important understandings to the table, considering three areas we do well to be equipped for, these being

1. How to share the gospel (you sharing with them)
2. How to transition to a response (conversation between you)
3. How to lead them in a prayer (them making their response)

Other factors are involved that we shall not discuss in this chapter, such as prayer beforehand and necessary follow-up afterward, should they respond favourably on that occasion. Here we deal with a framework for knowing what the gospel is, and how to lead a person toward a response.

A. THE GOSPEL CONTENT

"But when he comes (the Holy Spirit) he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment." John 16:8

The Holy Spirit can only convict people of the truth of the gospel if we first fulfil our responsibility to share it. While there are various ways the gospel can be summarised, if we reflect on the above verse, the gospel could be summarised as follows:

1. A message of love
 - a. Sin
 - b. Righteousness
 - c. Judgement
 - d. Jesus as Saviour
 - e. Jesus as Lord

2. Then give some evidence (because this is beneficial to communication).

1. A MESSAGE OF LOVE

A danger in some methods of presenting the gospel is that the evangelist is so eager to see the other person convinced of their sinfulness (so that they can recognise their need of God's grace and forgiveness) *that they fail to clearly communicate how much God loves the person.*

The gospel is first and foremost a message of love. *"For God so loved the world..."* (John 3:16). Good communication begins where it will end. First words paint a picture of where we are going. The gospel is a positive story of God's love and salvation, and so this is the first thing to say (as compared to starting by immediately talking about sin, which is negative in tone).

We can say something like, 'God loves us and has good plans for us.' It clarifies where you are going: This isn't a message about sin — it is a message about salvation!

a. Establishing our Sinfulness

The most basic definition of sin is breaking God's laws.

Scripture:

The Bible says, *"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rom 3:23), and that, *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8).

Illustration:

As an illustration, you could ask a person if they have ever stolen anything. It doesn't have to be a big thing. A biscuit from the cookie jar, or a paper clip from a desk is enough. This would make them a thief!

You could then ask if they have ever told a lie, no matter how small. This would make them a liar (and you could admit your own guilt in these at the same time to help put them at ease).

You could then give an example Jesus gave of murder. They hopefully have not murdered, and yet Jesus said that if we hold anger or hatred toward someone, this is the same sin in God's view.

At this point *you* and your friend are already lying, thieving murderers. There is no question that we are all guilty before a *perfect* God!

b. Establishing God's Righteousness

In simple terms, righteousness means perfection. God is holy and cannot tolerate sin.

Scripture:

Romans 3:23, as quoted above communicates it well. The Scriptures tell us clearly of the high standard of God's righteousness. Consider also, *"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin"* (Romans 3:20).

Illustration:

Imagine you were thirsty and about to drink a glass of cool, clear water. Then I reach over and put a small bit of sewage into your glass. Would you drink it? Of course not! And, would you be upset? Of course! While the amount of sewage may be small, it remains a big deal to us. In the same way our sin may not seem a big deal to us, but it is to a *perfect* God. He is holy, and cannot let anything imperfect into heaven.

Or, consider a woman about to arrive at her wedding. A man, covered in grease, walks past and bumps into her. Her wedding dress is visibly smeared with black grease, and in several places. Would she want to walk down the aisle looking like that? In the same way, when we understand our sinfulness in comparison to God we realise we can not enter heaven (Isaiah 64:6 *'...all our righteous acts are like filthy rags...'*).

c. The resulting Judgement

Simply defined, judgement is the *just* consequences of our wrongdoing, and hell is the place of punishment for all who have broken God's laws.

Scripture:

Romans 3:23 again fits well here. Another simple verse is found in Hebrews 9:27. It says, *"...man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."*

Illustration:

Imagine a judge was ruling on a murder case. The accused admits that he did the murder, but then says sorry, promises to never do it again, and asks to be let off. How would you react if the judge let him off? Would he be a *good* judge? In the same way God must see that our wrongs are punished.

d. Jesus as Saviour

It is at this point that we come to good news. The word 'Saviour' simply means someone who saves us. Because God is just He must punish our sin, but because God

loves us He has provided a way out. The way God saves us is by providing forgiveness for our sins through Jesus.

Scripture:

Romans 6:23 says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* In this verse our guilt is established, and our means of salvation revealed. It is a gift! Why did God have to *give* this to us? It is because we could not gain it for ourselves. We could not 'earn' it by our righteous works. So, He provided it for us, because of His love!

The most well known verse in the Bible describes it well. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). Jesus' death on the cross was to take the punishment for our sin, in our place. It is also clear from the Bible that Jesus is the only adequate sacrifice for sin. He is the *only* way to the Father. *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'"* (John 14:6).

Illustration:

Imagine you are on a plane that is about to crash, and the air hostess offers you a parachute which, when used, can save you. This is what Jesus is like — He is the parachute — our only means of salvation. If we put our faith in Him we can be saved. If we do not, the Bible says the fate that awaits us is sure.

Note, that it is not the belief that saves us, but the object of our belief. We could believe that our well-cushioned seats will protect us in the event of a crash, but we would be mistaken! To put it differently, God is the one with whom our relationship was broken, and so God is the one with whom it needs restoring. The Bible is clear that Jesus is the means He has provided.

Many people might try to sell you tickets for a movie — but only a 'real' (authentic) ticket will get you into it. The important thing in religion is not political correctness (as much as we must speak respectfully of all people) — it is truth!

e. Jesus as Lord

The word 'Lord' simply means boss, or master.

The need for God to become the 'Lord' of our lives is one of the most misunderstood aspects of the gospel in the modern western Church. Many misunderstand salvation to be found in a prayer of faith alone, without having any real commitment to turn their lives around so as to follow Christ. The call to follow Christ is a call to 'repentance'. More than saying sorry, this means to change!

Scripture:

“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). It is assumed in this verse that such a confession is sincere. Jesus said, “If you love me you will obey what I command” (John 14:15). The pursuit of obedient actions will be the natural by-product of a sincere profession of faith.

Illustration:

Jesus told a story: “What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ ‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted? (Matthew 21:28-31)

In the same way it is not just the words of our mouth that matter, but the actions of our lives. Our lives will reflect the sincerity of our profession, for they reflect what is in our hearts!

2. THEN GIVE SOME EVIDENCE

In Acts 2 and 3 we have two examples of Peter preaching the gospel. Of note — apart from his passion with which he ‘warned’ his audiences and ‘pleaded’ with them, giving evidence featured significantly in the content of his message. In a study of Peter’s preaching Acts 3, while he calls them to “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out...” (verse 19), he includes no less than three additional areas of evidence for his claims:

1. The evidence of miracles
(a crippled beggar had just been healed)
2. The evidence of their testimony
(what they had seen and heard of Jesus, including His resurrection)
3. The evidence of fulfilled prophecy
(this being found in verses 18, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 of the message, as summarised in Acts 3 — a significant portion).

The Apostle Paul likewise reinforced his messages with such evidences, reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue (e.g. Acts 17:17), and also with God-fearing Greeks, and — in addition — in the market place with others, such as the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers as found in Acts 17:18f. He *reasoned* with them!

If you were to remember the above simple outline, along with a few verses and illustrations, you would be well-resourced to share and illustrate the gospel!

A DIFFERENT WAY TO SUMMARISE THE GOSPEL

As an alternate way of remembering the content, at the 2011 Willow Creek Leadership Summit Pastor Bill Hybels encouraged believers to summarise the gospel in five words that make sense to them. The idea was that, if we could come up with a summary we were each happy with (as a true representation of Scripture), this would help us remember what to say when sharing faith.

His own five words were:

1. Love (A message of love)
2. Evil (Sin)
3. Rescue (Righteousness, Judgement, Jesus as Saviour)
4. Choice (The response, which we will discuss below)
5. Restoration (Jesus as Lord)

In reading the brackets you will see that it could summarise the same content.

Which five words would you choose?

B. THE GOSPEL TONE**THE HEAVEN PARADIGM VS THE RELATIONSHIP PARADIGM**

We have already discussed the importance of presenting the gospel as a message of love. Another important ‘background’ perspective that affects the tone of our presentation is what the goal of the gospel is for a person. Is it heaven?

Unfortunately this is the way many presentations of the gospel communicate. While it is true that the end result is that we get to go to heaven, the real purpose is surely a *restored relationship with God!* Heaven is one result of that restored relationship — and while it is a significant result, it is not the only result.

I suggest that there is a significant difference between these two paradigms (presenting the primary target as getting to heaven rather than as a restored relationship with God). If you present Jesus as my potential Saviour, I may see no

reason to make Him Lord. I may say your prayer to get the ‘free ticket,’ and mistakenly think this is all there is to it.

Many methods for sharing the gospel do not clearly communicate the need for Jesus to be Lord. Some communicate it as if it were an ‘add-on.’ This miscommunication is one of the reasons why we sometimes see many respond in altar-calls, but only a few following through on their supposed decision. *We miscommunicated!*

(When communicating from within this paradigm I often explain the need for accepting Jesus as Lord by saying, “...but there is a catch...” ...the catch being that it’s not just a ticket. God is actually calling us to follow Him and serve Him *in this world*. And — of note — this is a big catch!)

However, why not change our lingo and present salvation as *a restoration to a relationship with God* from the outset? Not only does this bring together the ideas of Jesus as Saviour and Lord in a natural way, it is also surely a better representation of the gospel, because a restored relationship with us is God’s goal!

When talking with a non-believer I think about four results of salvation:

1. Restored relationship with God

The gospel is about restored relationship with God. This is the goal.

2. Restored purpose on earth (for us)

God then desires to work both in our lives, and through our lives. God has purposes for us here on earth. He has created us with purpose. He has gifted us for purpose. He has given us opportunities with purpose. These beliefs give *real* meaning to every part of our lives!

3. A restored earth

God’s vision for earth, however, goes beyond just us. It does include justice and racial equality. It also includes integrity in government, and honesty and wisdom in economics. But it also includes the environment. Add to that welfare, education, employment and health, and we’re getting a more holistic picture.

The Bible gives instructions or encouragements in all of these areas. These are also important things to people today — so noting them helps the gospel message to *feel* more relevant to people. God has called us to bring His Kingdom on earth!

4. A restored entry to heaven

This is the natural result of the restored relationship.

SUMMARY

A gospel communicated in this way is not only more holistic and theologically correct, but also more appealing to our culture. Western culture has become cynical of the ‘fire and brimstone’ approach that ‘scares’ people into becoming Christians. While it is wise to fear hell, it would also be wise for us to preach a more holistic gospel in our day! This is the ‘now’ generation. People want more from religion than future promises. They want something that affects their lives now (as well as in the future) — and the true gospel does this!

C. GOSPEL METHODS AND SKILLS

Today there are many great resources and tools that can help us condense the gospel message into clear, concise and powerful presentations. We suggest you plug into your local Church’s evangelism training and learn whatever method for communication they teach. It is not the method of sharing that is important, rather *that the content is the true gospel message*, as in the Bible.

However, to help you, here are :

1. Two ‘methods’ for remembering the gospel.
2. How to transition to a response (turning a presentation back to a conversation)
3. How to lead them in a prayer if they are ready.

We will include various other useful tips along the way, including a summary of first steps to encourage a new believers’ growth .

1. TWO ‘METHODS’ FOR REMEMBERING THE GOSPEL

GOSPEL ILLUSTRATION #1: BRIDGE TO LIFE

1. GOD’S PLAN FOR US IS PEACE AND LIFE

We start with the positive: God loves you and wants you to experience His peace and life.

The Bible says... “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

2. OUR WRONG CAUSES A SEPARATION

We have all disobeyed God by choosing to do wrong things. This results in separation from God because God is so just that He cannot let anything imperfect into heaven. We might try to build a bridge across the gap that exists with our good deeds, but the gap is too large.

The Bible says... *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

3. GOD’S REMEDY WAS THE CROSS

The good news is that, because of love, God made our ‘perfection’ possible. Jesus *paid the penalty for our sins* when He died on the cross and rose from the grave. Through Him justice was satisfied, and our forgiveness made possible.

The Bible says... *“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

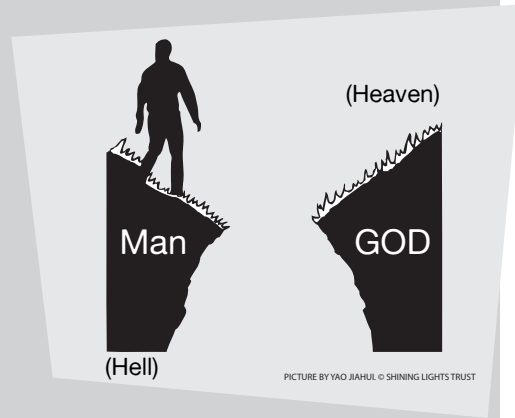
4. OUR CHOICE: RECEIVE CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOUR

We are left with a choice: We could prayerfully ask God’s forgiveness, and place the rest of our lives in His hands.

The Bible says... *“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God”* (John 1:12).

HOW TO RECEIVE CHRIST

- A — Admit you are a sinner.
- B — Believe in Jesus as your Saviour
(the only one who can save you)
- C — Commit to follow Jesus as your Lord
(your boss, teacher and leader)

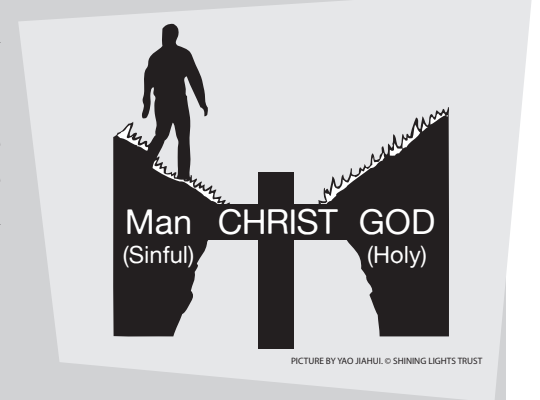


PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

Dear Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins. I ask your forgiveness. I give the remainder of my life to you. I choose to trust and follow You as Lord and Saviour. Because of Jesus. Amen.

YOUR NEXT STEPS:

1. **Read the Bible:** We read the Bible to understand what God is like and how God wants us to live.
2. **Pray to God:** We talk to God in prayer because He is our friend and master. He can help us, and those we pray for, through prayer.
3. **Make friends at a Church:** We attend a Church to learn about God from others and to have Christian friends so we can encourage each other in our commitment to love and serve God on earth.
4. **Serve God in the world:** We then seek to show God’s love to those around us through our actions, and share His love through our words.



COMMUNICATION SKILLS

In communicating such a message a little practice makes a big difference. The goal is to be both concise and clear. Using pictures is useful because they are more memorable. They can also become visual prompts for us, reminding us of what to say. This is the point of sharing these two methods — you can become *memorably* equipped.

BRIDGE TO LIFE — COMMUNICATION TIPS

If I were communicating without the above text, I would prompt myself from the two pictures above as follows.

Picture one: On the *right* is God — he love us

At the *bottom* is the problem — our sin and its consequences

In the *middle* is thus a gap — a gap our good deeds can not bridge.

Picture two: In the *middle* is the cross — we consider what Jesus did.

At the *left* is the person — they are left with a choice to make.

But the *right* hand side is where they will end up if they choose Jesus— and so we are reminded that, because they are not yet dead, the purpose is restored relationship with God bringing restored purpose, and eternal life as the significant benefit beyond.

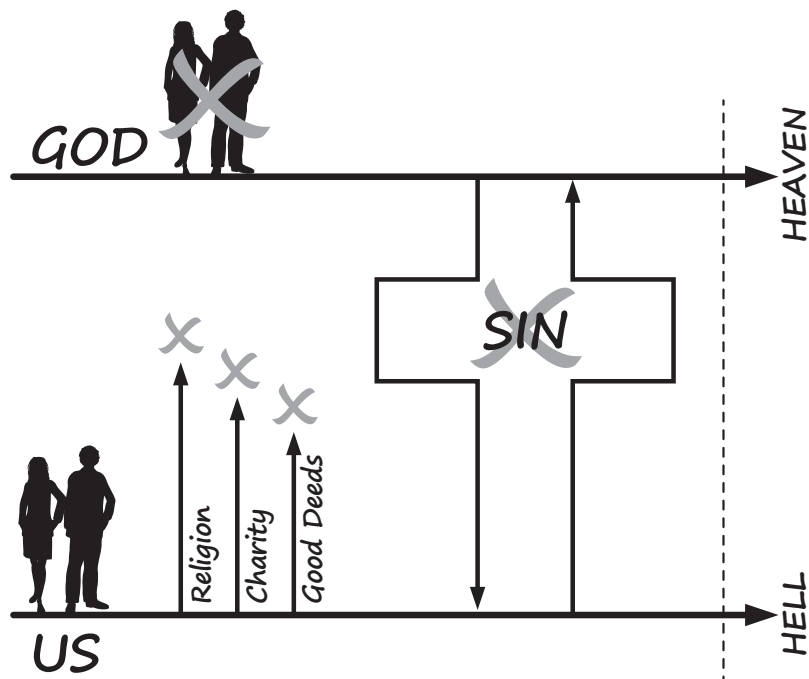
The prayer — as simple as A, B, C. Admit. Believe. Commit.

A new believer's first steps are (1) the Bible, (2) prayer at home, (3) big and small groups at Church (teaching and friendship), and (4) showing and sharing God's love on earth — as above.

You will note that I am careful to explain the Lordship of Jesus — which this illustration does not illustrate well. As earlier mentioned, this is often weakly communicated in gospel presentations.

As a communicator, the above message could be quite easily remembered by thinking of the two pictures.

Below is a second way the same message can be communicated, but which can illustrate Lordship visually.



GOSPEL ILLUSTRATION #2: THE GOSPEL DRAWING

I have found this particular 'drawing' helps me to explain the gospel more clearly than the above. I have sometimes drawn it while explaining, but have also preached with this picture in my mind.

When training people to share the gospel I have found that, even if there was no paper to draw on, by remembering the parts of this drawing a person was prompted what to say.

I will explain it point-by-point to equip you, and so you can equip others.

COMMUNICATION TIPS:

1. Draw the horizontal line with 'GOD' and a person standing on it (as at the top). (God is represented by the words because He is spirit). (Note, you can draw the people by using stick figures).
 - Explain how in the beginning humanity was with God, and the creation was perfect.
2. Cross the person out, write the word 'sin', and draw the second horizontal line below with a person on it.
 - Our sin separates us from God (explain sin).
3. Turn the horizontal lines into arrows (at the right hand side — representing heaven or hell beyond death) and add a vertical dotted line (representing the time of death). It is not necessary to write heaven and hell. If you say it — they will remember, and this helps keep your presentation shorter.
 - The real problem is this: Sin has consequences. We will all, one day, die (the dotted line). Now we have a problem — because we get to heaven only if we are perfect. Otherwise we're already on the road to hell!
4. The small vertical arrows (and again, it is not necessary to write words such as religion, charity, good deeds, etc.)
 - What we have done: We have attempted to 'get back to God' through good deeds, charity and religious efforts. But the standard required is *perfection*, which none of us can achieve (place small crosses above the arrows).

5. The good news: (drawing the cross)
 - What God has done: God looked, saw and cared, so much so that He came to earth (*the line on the left of the cross, drawn in a downwards direction, coming down to earth*) as the man Jesus,
 - ...lived a sinless life (*the small horizontal bottom of the cross*), and then died on the cross for our sins.
 - But, He then rose again, proving everything He had said and done was true (*the vertical line of the cross, drawn in an upward direction — like Jesus ascending to heaven*). (Cross out the word 'sin') He took the punishment. And this makes our restored relationship with God possible.
6. This thus leaves us with a choice (*pen sitting at the bottom of the right hand line of the cross — where the paths diverge either up the cross to God or along the bottom line to judgment*)
 - we can either live life our way (*trace to the end of the bottom line*), or God's way
 - (1) choosing to believe in Him (*trace up the right hand line of the cross*)
 - (2) Thus being restored to our purpose in life, making this world a better place for Him (*trace along the top before the dotted line, which represents our point of death*), and
 - (3) being assured of heaven with Him in eternity when we die (*continue tracing along the top line through to heaven*).

What I like about such methods is that they are very easy to learn and remember. I have trained many people in the second of these. Many have been able to remember the method months later, without any revision.

Revision, however, is hugely beneficial, and easy to accomplish as a Church or small group. All it takes is for one person to come forward during a service or small group meeting to demonstrate, and everyone is reminded.

The whole gospel is covered, and every member equipped!

2. TRANSITIONING TO A RESPONSE

At this point you are already equipped to share a simple and clear gospel message, were the opportunity to arise. What is needed now is a way to make a transition so as to bring them to a point of response — or to encourage them one step toward Christ if they are not yet ready to follow Him.

It is important here to *engage them* more personally. The dynamics must change back to those of a conversation. Having heard the message from you, your turn to talk is finished — but your role is not. What is now needed is for *them* to talk.

THREE EXCELLENT QUESTIONS:

To assess a person's readiness to receive Christ you could ask the following questions:

1. Where are you in this picture?
Or, where are you right now in relation to God?
The first question establishes their current position.
2. Where would you like to be?
The second question assesses their readiness and desire to follow Christ.
3. Is there any reason why you may not want to cross the bridge now?
Or, is there any reason why you may not want to trust Christ now?
(Can you see anything that might be hindering you?)
This question helps identify any hindrances so you can discuss them.

If they were to identify a hindrance, and you were to discuss it, it is sometimes wise to ask this same question again at the end of that conversation. Sometimes a hindrance is genuinely removed, and a person now ready to respond.

4. To follow Christ is then as simple as A, B, C.
This 'A, B, C' can be used not only as an outline for prayer, but *as a way of summarising all that has been discussed*.
 - A **ASK** — It is about recognising our sin, and asking for forgiveness.
 - B **BELIEVE** — It is about faith, believing in who Jesus was and what He did.
 - C **COMMIT** — Is about the Lordship of Jesus, following His teachings as His friend.

3. LEADING THEM IN A PRAYER

Were they to feel ready to respond we could now ‘seal the deal’ by leading them in a prayer. We note that the real ‘deal’ is decided in their hearts. However the outward words are important.

A first response to God is maybe a bit like getting engaged, while a person’s baptism is maybe like getting married — stating the commitment publically, with the recognition that it is for life.

Because it is *their* decision it is good to ask them to pray for themselves. We could explain what they might say, or could lead in a prayer that they can repeat after us.

To help you remember what to pray, here are three easy-to-remember outlines:

Idea 1: Use the same A, B, C (Admit/Ask — Believe — Commit) as above.

For example: “Dear Jesus, I *admit* that I am a sinner and *ask* for your forgiveness. I *believe* that you are the Son of God, and died for my sin. Thank you for loving me! I *commit* to live for you for the rest of my life. Please help me live a life that is pleasing to you. Amen.”

Idea 2: Simply pray through the gospel content, as above.

(A message of love: Sin, Righteousness, Judgment, Jesus as Saviour, Jesus as Lord).

For example: “Dear Jesus. Thank you for loving me! I recognise I have done wrong (*sin*) and that I fall short of your standard of perfection (*righteousness*). I see now that I have a problem (*judgment*). Thank you for giving your Son Jesus, who died on the cross for my sin. I ask you to forgive my sin (*Jesus as Saviour*). I make you the master of my life. I commit to learn about you, and to follow you, and serve you in this world (*Jesus as Lord*). Thank you for loving me (*it is a message of love*). Help me to live a life that is pleasing to you.”

Idea 3: ‘Thank you. Sorry. Please. Please.’

For example: “Dear Jesus, *thank you* for dying on the cross for my sin. I’m *sorry* for the wrongs I have done. *Please* forgive me for my wrongs (*Jesus as Saviour*). *Please* come and be my Master and Lord. I commit to following you from this day forward (*Jesus as Lord*).”

All that is left is for us to put this into practise.

AN IMPORTANT PERSPECTIVE FOR ‘RESPONSE TIMES’

Salvation is best understood as a ‘considered decision.’ Too often we have called people to follow Jesus with great emotion, and this has confused the decision they are supposedly making. I recall reading of a response call in a Church that was so emotionally powerful that a man who didn’t want to respond found himself putting his hand up while still not wanting to. Needless to say he exited the Church as soon as possible afterwards because he had been emotionally manipulated, and was more resistant to Christianity after the experience. I note that even if manipulation was not the intent of the preacher, it is what he did.

At the present time we see fewer responses to Jesus than fifty years ago in many Western cultures. Some — in their eagerness to see responses — have looked for what ‘works.’ What has seemed to work has been highly ‘choreographed’ response calls during services — and so these ‘methods’ that confront people and cause them to consider Jesus have been studied and perfected. However, in truth, this hasn’t worked because these ‘salvations’ don’t last. I have seen one hundred people respond in a highly emotionally charged altar-call by a guest speaker at an event, and could find none of them in a Church a year later.

In Luke 14 Jesus talked about the cost of following Him. He likened the decision to a man building a tower who would consider whether he had enough money to complete it *before starting to build it*. He then likened the decision to a king going to war, who considers if he has enough men and resources to win the battle *before going to war*. Jesus was instructing the people around Him to carefully consider the implications of following Him before choosing to.

As important as the decision to follow Christ is, and as eager as we may be to see those we love respond, and also as much as we might urge them to consider... ..it must remain their decision, and we must guard our manner so that we do not convince them of something that they will feel unconvinced of a day later.

Jesus said in Luke 14:33 “...any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” He did not make the decision easy for those who were listening — and neither should we.

I’m not saying we should make it overly hard either — but I am saying we should protect the decision to follow Christ as a ‘considered decision.’ We should make the path clear, and encourage those around us, in love, with all our passion, *to consider* taking that path — but not push them beyond what they are ready for.

What about success?

If they do not respond, you have succeeded in exactly the same measure as if they had responded — because your job is to tell them, not ‘convert’ them. While it is right that your passion is for their response (you desire for their sake that they be reconciled to God) you will get no reward from God for any person’s decision to follow Him! You will, however, be rewarded for every time you told another person about God’s love from a motive of love, or encouraged them toward faith.

As discussed at the start of chapter eight, our ‘win’ is to have helped a person take one step closer to Christ. Each step they take toward Christ is their ‘win’! When they have heard the gospel, and understood it, they are closer than before! The Holy Spirit can now remind them of this message (or the illustrations you used — noting illustrations are more memorable) and convict them of the truth of this message in due time (see John 16:8).

Until you had shared the gospel this was not possible!

IN SUMMARY: THE MAN IS THE MESSAGE

Some people feel scared that, if they try to share their faith, they will get something ‘wrong.’ Maybe you are like this. You read the above and feel overwhelmed. If you feel like this, there is real hope for you!

While the gospel does have a content, much of communication is in our manner. If I told you a story around a campfire while feeling angry or depressed it might have a completely different feel to how it would sound were I to tell it while feeling full of hope, or after having something really great happen in my personal life. Who we are, and what we feel, comes across in our words.

Imagine two mathematics teachers. While the content might be the same, one might be interesting and the other boring. Communication is not only about content. It is about the communicator!

So, if I shared the gospel while believing that the person listening will be disinterested because their ‘god’ is their sinful pleasures, I might communicate with a condemning tone! However, if I feel genuine awe at the great love of God, and genuine love and hope for the person I am sharing with, I might communicate the gospel as a message of love and hope! If I share with faith that God is already at work in their life because He loves them, my affirming tone may even serve to draw faith out of them.

So, you feel your words are far from perfect? Be encouraged, because communication is about a lot more than words!

We will conclude this section by turning to a truly encouraging story that will remind us that we don’t have to become loud evangelists, or have perfect words.

If we do our best, *God can make up for the rest!*

11

The mystery of the gospel

(THE FRANK JENNER STORY)

During a time of testimonies at Lansdowne Baptist Church, Bournemouth, England, the Reverend Francis Dixon asked a man by the name of Peter Culver to share his testimony. He stood up and said, *“This is how I got saved folks.*

I was in the royal navy. I was serving in Australia. One evening I walked down George Street in Sydney, and out of nowhere stepped a gentleman. He offered me a pamphlet and said ‘Excuse me Sir, I’d like to ask you a question. I hope you won’t be offended. If you were to die tonight where would you be — in heaven or hell?’ He encouraged me to think about it, thanked me and walked away. I’d never been confronted by that question before. I couldn’t get it out of my mind. When I got back to England, I sought out our pastor, and he led me to Christ.”

Several weeks later they had some revival meetings in that Baptist church at Bournemouth. One of the visiting revival team members, named Noel, shared his testimony. He said, *“This is how I came to know Christ. I was in the royal navy in Australia, walking down George Street, and out of nowhere stepped a man and he asked me a question. ‘Excuse me Sir. I’d like to ask you a question. If you were to die tonight where would you be — in heaven or hell?’ And he left me with a pamphlet. Well that really bothered me. I sought out a Christian friend, and he led me to Christ.”*

Shortly after this, Francis Dixon departed with his wife Nancy for his first preaching tour to Australia and New Zealand. Deeply fascinated by the coincidence of the two stories he resolved to investigate the matter further. Who was this unconventional street-evangelist? And how many other people had been impacted by his ministry? It didn't take long to get some answers.

While preaching in a large hall one evening in Adelaide, Ps Dixon related the stories of the two sailors from England. At this point, their host — who happened to be sitting next to Mrs Dixon — waved his arms around, jumped up, and said, *"I'm another! I'm another!"* This man, Murray Wilkes, later told them of how the evangelist had approached him while he was running to catch a tram, and that he had given his life to Christ in an army barracks two weeks later.

Then, while in Perth, Ps Dixon again shared the story of the two sailors. This time, a man approached him after the talk to say that he too had become a Christian as a consequence of the single sentence uttered by the evangelist on George Street, Sydney. (What's more, he had gone on to lead Christian Endeavour for Western Australia.)

And so, Ps Dixon reached Sydney, determined to meet the man behind these stories. After talking with a local Christian worker he found that the man's name was Frank Jenner. Frank was now elderly and with ill health. He had served in the Royal Navy, and attended a Brethren Assembly in Sydney.

Ps Dixon then met with Frank Jenner, and related to him the stories of the four men who had responded to the evangelist's simple question. Frank Jenner, with tears in his eyes, fell to his knees and prayed: *"O Lord, thank you for tolerating me"*. He had been addicted to gambling before coming to faith, and had struggled with bad health for many years. But he had gained an awareness of the urgency of the gospel, and had committed to share with ten people per day. Jenner related how he had spoken to ten people a day for the previous sixteen years, and that this was the *first time* he had heard of lasting results. *"You know, I never heard that anyone I ever spoke to had gone on for the Lord. Some made professions of salvation when I spoke to them but I never ever knew any more than that"*, he said to his guests.

And the story doesn't end there! Ps Dixon continued to relate this story when speaking in various places. Just a month after meeting with Frank Jenner he spoke at a Methodist Church in Keswick, England. After the service, a man who worked for Mission to Mediterranean Garrisons approached Ps Dixon and said, *"I too was challenged by Mr. Jenner, and now I am in a soul-winning work myself"*. Four years later, again, while ministering to missionaries in India, Ps Dixon found another convert from George Street, Sydney. She had responded to the evangelist's challenge and offered her life in service to God. She was now a missionary there in India. In all, Ps Francis Dixon came to know of ten people who had come to Christ as a consequence of the influence of Frank Jenner. It is estimated that this sailor, Frank Jenner, asked that

question of nearly 100,000 people. We can only wonder how many more may have come to Christ.⁶⁴

What can we learn?

While the methods of Frank Jenner were not subtle, the story demonstrates how God can use us even when our methods and abilities seem deficient. This is not to say we should neglect giving effort to learning how to share our faith clearly, and relationally (with a conversational approach). But this account does show us that there is a lot more to the picture than our efforts!

1. There is one thing we should **never** do in evangelism

There is only one thing we should *never* do in evangelism. Let us never be guilty of doing this thing. Nothing!

Why? It is because, even if what we do is 'imperfect' in its form or method or delivery (like we may consider Mr Jenner's efforts to have been), God can still use it. People heard of Christ who would not have heard otherwise. Jenner was sincere in his efforts, *and so God sincerely used him!*

As St Augustine put it, *'Without God we cannot; without us God will not!'* God works through us — so we must do at least something, even if it feels deficient.

2: God is the power in this partnership

The second thing we can learn from Frank's story is that the power in our partnership with God comes from God! So our 'mistakes' in our efforts to share faith are not the end of the world *because God is working with us*. In fact, it's not about us! God is actually working for the lost. Their salvation is His motivation.

Consider this carefully. *God is motivated!* He's waiting for us to do our bit — but, when we do, *He will work!* This is not just slightly important to Him. *This is really important to Him!*

I have seen young people sharing the gospel in an unclear manner, yet with great sincerity. They loved, they believed for God to work, they reached out — *and God worked.*

In fact, with their imperfect communication they were more effective than I (who has clearer communication due to practice and age)!

64 Dr Raymond Wilson has written a book, JENNER of GEORGE STREET. It is available by emailing Dr Raymond Wilson at redowilson@smartchat.net.au. A shorter telling of the story can also be read at <http://www.wordsoflife.co.uk/FrankJenner/FrankJenner.htm> Or viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h76MHjGu08>

SUMMARY

Sharing the gospel in an understandable way is the most loving thing you can do for another person! In as much as we are able to, we must give effort to this, because a clear message will have an obvious communicative advantage over a confused message... ..or no message!

'How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?' (Romans 10:14)

Do something!

It's not about you!

God cares.

Do *something* because you care!

STUDY 7: 'Sealing the deal'**GETTING STARTED**

1. Revision up from last week
 - i. Revise the 'three great questions' and their purposes (chapter seven) and then also the four directions for pre-evangelistic conversations, (chapters eight and nine).
 - ii. Share any conversational opportunities you had this week. How did the conversation start? How did it go? What might have been accomplished? What might be the next direction for your conversations with them?
 - iii. Discuss any questions raised in these discussions (or just select an 'objection' to discuss), maybe writing it down together, then noting the sour note, whether it might be more intellectually or emotionally motivated, and then creating together a series of possible **hearing, illuminating, uncovering** and **bridging** questions.

2. Introduction to this week's discussion
 - i. How many of you know how to share a clear gospel already?
 - ii. With how many people might you have personally shared the gospel?
 - iii. What lessons can we learn from the Frank Jenner story?

DISCUSSION

1. **Read 1 Thessalonians 2:8**
 - a. What should our love for people cause us to do?

- b. Why is this important, especially in the days we live in?
- c. How do we apply this principle in our witness to others?

2. **Read Romans 10:9**

- a. According to this verse, how is a person saved?
- b. Why do you think it is written that we should 'confess with our mouths'?
- c. What is significant about the resurrection of Christ in the salvation process?

3. **Read Titus 3:5-6**

- a. Why did God save us?
- b. According to this verse, how did God save us?
- c. What would be different if God let us go to heaven on 'credit'?
- d. Where is our hope, and how does this hope help us maintain the right perspective?
- e. Write down two questions you could ask a person who believes they have done too many bad things to be forgiven?
- f. Write down two questions you could ask a person who believes they will be able to go to heaven based on their good deeds?

4. Gospel presentation demonstration:

Have someone demonstrate how to share a clear gospel message *

- Try to include in the demonstration how to transition to a response, and to lead them in a prayer, as outlined in this chapter.
- Evaluate as a group whether the *full* gospel was shared.

5. Gospel sharing practice:

Divide into pairs and practise sharing the gospel with each other, going through these three steps. Encourage your members that something is better than nothing — but also that giving diligence to learning these things is God-honouring, and will benefit those we have opportunity to share with (whether few or many).

6. **Revise 1 Peter 3:15**

- a. How important is it that we are ready and able to share the reasons for our faith at all times?
- b. What is at stake if we are not?

7. **Read Colossians 4:5-6**

- a. What do these verses say about our speech?
- b. What do they say about our actions?
- c. Why do we need to be 'wise' in the way we live when among unbelievers each day? *
- d. Which opportunities does Paul encourage them to prioritise? *
- e. How might a person know 'how to answer everyone', considering both what is implied in this text, and what is logical? *

- f. Is it reasonable to say that the type of evangelism Paul was encouraging in this passage was conversational evangelism? *

APPLICATION

1. Share who you hope to reach out to this week (see appendix ten).
2. What hindrances, or windows for opportunity, do you see?
3. What questions might you try asking them (hearing, illuminating, uncovering and building)?
4. With which of these do you hope to go further, to share the actual gospel?

Prayer: Spend time praying for the salvation of these friends, believing for God to work in their lives.

Homework: Read chapters twelve and thirteen, and optionally chapter fourteen. (Leaders please read chapter fourteen).

* Refer to notes in the Discussion Guide at the back of this book.

PART V

The equipping of the leader for effective mobilisation



12

How to multiply effectiveness through working with others, Part I

(A strategic approach for the *effective* mobilising of all believers to evangelistic action through small groups).

INTRODUCTION

God works in all sorts of ways. One of the things I have learnt through experience when intentionally mobilising believers in Churches to outreach is that *people can even be relatively weak in their ability to share Christ yet, because of the faith-communities they are a part of, can be effective in reaching their friends, family and colleagues.*

I am thoroughly convinced of the contents of this book so far. The key hindrance to our spreading of the gospel is in our motivation. (our lack of love or lack of fundamental belief). The second hindrance is in our practical equipping (people don't know how to share the gospel or hold spiritual conversations). Indeed, as communicated thus far, the goal can not be anything less than every believer being equipped and mobilised to reach out to those around them every day.

However, I am convinced that we do not yet have the full picture of all we can do to make ourselves more effective. Our *communities* play a significant part in the success of our evangelism, and our Pastors play a significant role in mobilising these communities.

Turning a whole community of believers toward their mission is what these next three chapters are about. This is the leadership section, and I pray you will read and study them with diligence, because greater fruitfulness lies beyond!

Please note that these next two chapters would benefit *every* Christian to read, because a leader is simply a person who seeks to influence others in a direction. Chapter 13 however is more specifically for Pastors or key Church leaders, considering how to turn a whole Church to a place of *sustained* evangelistic focus and action.

We can all play a part in encouraging others to reach out, and you will soon discover how simply this can be done.

SOME INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS:

OBSERVATION 1: MOST BELIEVERS CANNOT SUSTAIN THE FOCUS ALONE

I believe the oft-told illustration of a burning coal is our necessary recognition if we are to become effective mobilisers of Christian witnesses, or effectively mobilised ourselves. The coal remains hot only when it is in the fire — but when it is taken out and placed by itself it quickly cools. We need to create fires of fellowship in our Churches that include an intentional focus on sharing faith! But we can't create them from the pulpit alone. One thing a pulpit can not do is keep people accountable. Members may nod and smile while the preacher preaches — but they may be daydreaming, and unmoved on the inside! It is in the connected relationships of a small group that real fellowship takes place. The heart is revealed. People are loved and cared for, but also personally encouraged and challenged.

Men like Frank Jenner are the exceptions among us. The reality we must grapple with if we are to be more successful in our mission is this: *Most of us will only sustain a focus on outreach if we are a connected part of a community of like-minded (outreach focussed) believers.*

This is a very simple revelation, but can become profound if we are willing to consider its implications, and apply them.

OBSERVATION 2: THE BENEFITS OF TEAMWORK IN EVANGELISM ARE CLEAR

Consider these three 'M's of evangelism, and their connection to the relational, connected fellowshiping of believers.

i. The Message

We may struggle to share the gospel message clearly, but others in our team may do it for us.

ii. The Modelling

Jesus said that people would know we were His disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35).

While non-believers can watch the way we live our lives every day, if they become connected to a *community of believers* the effect can be greatly increased. Now they are watching the example of many believers at one time. The effect can be powerful!

iii. The Miracle

But there is a third 'm' — and that is the miracle. A person is only saved because God has drawn them and the Spirit convicted them of their need of Christ. Through involvement with a community of like-minded believers we are encouraged to pray and to listen for the Spirit's whispers. This keeps us spiritually 'sharp' — making us more effective.

People can sustain *together* what they often can not sustain *alone*, and — given the importance of evangelism — this point is worthy of consideration (as in these few chapters).

THE CHRISTIAN LEADER IS ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD

What if the way we've been brought up to 'run' Church is deficient? What if some of our practices and traditions are unhealthy, but we are unaware because we are so familiar and comfortable with them? If we do not stop to consider different approaches, with hearts that are ready to respond and change if necessary, we may be guilty of repeating the sins of our forefathers.

As Rick Warren summarised it, your Church can be driven by tradition, personality, finances, people or programmes, but none of these build health in your church. What a Church should be driven by — like any organisation — is its purpose!

HOW TO MULTIPLY EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH WORKING WITH OTHERS

EVANGELISM AND THE ROLE OF THE SMALL GROUP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Many Churches have small group structures. These groups have a variety of names — Cell Groups, Contact Groups, Study Groups, Home Groups or Life Groups. These groups are where the *real fellowship* of God's Church takes place.

In the New Testament there are more than fifty 'one another' statements, such as love one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, etc. Such love and care can only be expressed *in the context of relationships*. Thus we see that it has always been God's plan that we would meet in both large and small groups, just like the early Church did. They met in both the temple courts (large groups) and also from house to house (Acts 2:46-47, see also Acts 20:20-21 and Romans 16:2-5).

If small group leaders were to make outreach a foundational purpose of their groups' existence (this being the primary purpose of the Church's existence), the effect could be great.

Our coming content in the next two chapters will be as follows:

[Chapter twelve]

- (A) What the small group can do
1. Identify those you will reach out to
 2. Pray for them
 3. Equip for relevant outreach
 4. Plan for the building of relational bridges

[Chapter thirteen]

5. Share with them
 6. Disciple them
- (B) Small groups in the marketplace or campus
- (C) Concluding encouragements

(A) WHAT THE SMALL GROUP CAN DO:

(1) Identify those you will reach out to:

Small groups have a role to play in focusing their members on outreach. Members could be asked to make a list of those they would like to reach out to. They could then consider each person's 'level' of receptivity to the gospel — with any identified hindrances being noted for both prayer and for use as future conversation directions.

They could also consider the interests of those they desire to encourage toward faith — these being possible 'bridges' for facilitating relationship time with the community of faith. This is what you were asked to do in study two in this series.

Such an 'identifying' exercise could be done at the start of each year, and then an action plan put into place, taking into consideration what is planned in your Church for the year ahead. Without such intentionality in our leadership, our members' focus on their mission will not be there, and initiative will not be taken.



IMPORTANT NOTE: PARADIGM VS PROGRAMMES

This section is giving you the 'coat hangers' on which everything previously spoken of can be sustainably 'hung'. Just as brick is placed upon brick, please note that point 2 assumes point 1 has been applied. By the end of the third chapter a logical and practical approach for sustainable evangelism mobilisation will have been presented. This is a 'paradigm' for leadership — and once caught, could change the way you see and do 'evangelism mobilisation, making you more effective.

(2) Pray for them:

The leader can then facilitate regular prayer for these people, be that through praying weekly, or scheduling a time monthly. Special focus could be given toward praying for these people in, for example, the six weeks leading up to an 'outreach season'. We will give an outline for this at the end of chapter 15.

An easy prayer guide, using our fingers, is as follows:

Thumb — (good) Loved by God (2 Peter 3:9, 1 Tim 2:4)

Index finger — Against the accuser's effects (2 Cor 4:4, 2 Tim 2:26)

3rd finger — The touch of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:17)

4th finger — (Ring finger) To understand God's love (John 3:16)

Little finger — Use me as an instrument (Matt 9:36-10:1)

If we are not willing to pray, what does that say of our commitment to our mission? The lack of prayer for the lost in many of our fellowships is to our embarrassment — but we could change that!

If such prayer is not *structured* into our fellowship (in the same way that times of worship and learning from the Word are) it will be overlooked!

Please hear what is being suggested here. (*The necessity of intentionality in our leadership in these things!*)

(3) Equip for relevant outreach:

As in all areas of learning, knowledge builds upon knowledge. As children we first learn to write the letters of the alphabet, and then to put them into words. We learn to put words into sentences, and then learn about grammar and sentence structure, and extend vocabulary, etc.

Many of us are babies when it comes to our training for outreach. We have learnt how to read a newspaper, but not how to read the times. *The need for the gospel is the greatest need on our planet!*

While an amount of content has been covered in this book, without *repetition* much of it will be soon forgotten. This is an understanding that all good education curriculums are based upon also. The same knowledge is covered year after year. In each successive year, a broader perspective of the content is developed, and the depth of knowledge increased. In other words, repetition is not merely beneficial to learning. It is essential to it!

With the same commitment to incrementally repeat, broaden and deepen our training content we could become far more effective as trainers and mobilisers. This applies both corporately in our Churches, as well as in our small groups. If we were to become intentional about it we could focus and equip our members for their mission!

Earlier in the book (chapter six) I mentioned some general areas of learning, including: (a) Knowing the reasons for our faith, (b) Knowing how to show care and concern, (c) Knowing how to lead a conversation, (d) Knowing how to share the gospel, (e) Understanding teamwork.

Here is a list of ten, more specific, areas you could do training in. Please do remember that this doesn't all need covering in the first year. We are called to commit to a *lifetime* of outreach, and such knowledge will grow incrementally, and with repetition. The important point here is that we (1) bring intentionality to our leadership by creating a plan of some kind for the sustained equipping our members and (2) then make a start on the first point of that plan.

i. How to share the gospel:

When surveyed, the majority of Christians do not know how to share the gospel.

ii. How to make transitions in conversation and lead in a 'salvation' prayer

Give tips for easy transitioning from a conversation to a testimony, then to a gospel sharing, and then to seeking responses, including assessing their readiness in both understanding and sincerity for making a response. It's a skill set — and not difficult to teach or learn.

iii. How to share a testimony:

Many believers are not prepared to share a short, honest yet compelling testimony, were the opportunity to arise. God's Word says we are to be *always* ready to give the reason for the hope that we have (2 Peter 3:15).

iv. Prayer and intercession:

Those who see the most fruit are often those who engage in the most prayer. They have learnt things, and we could learn also. Prayer is not an extra — but it is extra-hard to do. This is why structuring times of prayer is a wise thing to consider doing if it is not a feature of your current Church tradition.

v. Starting conversational skills:

While it is possible for talking about faith to become a natural thing to do for believers, it is unlikely this will happen without ongoing encouragement and training. Some great content in this area has been summarised in this book. You could teach it!

vi. 'Level two' conversational skills:

Good sales people undergo multiple trainings in sales. How much more important is the gospel than any earthly product? There is a lot more that can be learnt than is contained in the brief three chapters in this book given to this area.

Could it be that 'level two' training is needed — it's just that our Church traditions are so far removed from God's ideal that the idea of this seems a bit 'far removed'. Could it be that we have actually lost our bearings on reality?

Dr. David's book, *Conversational Evangelism*, could broaden perspective, as could other resources in the bibliography at the back of this book. Isn't this important enough for such attention?

vii. How to show care and concern:

Studying through books such as *The 5 Love Languages*, could benefit group relationships, family relationships, and strengthen witnessing ability. Equally, people skills are taught about in books such as *How to be a people person*, by John Maxwell. While this book is not explicitly Christian in its content, it is based on Biblical principles, and people skills are relevant to Christian witness. We get what we promote. If we are intentional in equipping our members for loving relationships we will get loving relationships!

viii. How to answer 'difficult' questions:

Our knowledge of the reasons for our faith grows with exposure and experience. If a group were to have one member research and briefly share on a difficult question per month, over the course of the next two years *more than twenty topics could be*

covered. After hearing a member share a clear answer to a question the group could then put together a list of possible questions to lead a person toward the conclusion through conversation, thus reinforcing an approach to answering questions that suit our times. A list of fourteen common questions, with very brief answers, can be found in appendix six.

Imparting an understanding of the reasons for our faith has *not* been a part of many of our Church traditions. Does our lack of focus on this limit our members' ability to encourage those around them toward faith in Jesus? I suggest the answer is, 'Absolutely!'

ix. How to successfully link new believers to follow-up:

Most who respond at Christian outreach programmes do not make it to a single 'follow up' session at a Church, where they could be encouraged and taught about Christian faith *so that it might continue*. Why is this? There are things we can learn that will enable greater success! (Might our paradigm for follow-up be deficient?)

x. How to successfully do follow-up:

What do you teach a new believer? How might you best teach it? How might you best engage their interest to learn? We shall discuss follow-up a little later in this section (point 6, in the next chapter).

If we were selling any other 'product' where money could be made, you could be sure that the sales managers would not only have thought through the above kinds of things, they would have intentionally trained all their staff in them so they could be effective and make money! How much more important should the gospel be than financial profit making?

There is no reason why all the above could not also be learned by every believer in a small group! All we have to do is start, and we'd be on our way.

If we continue to do only what we've already done, we will continue to get more of what we already have.

(4) Plan for the building of relational bridges

Every relationship a believer has with an unbeliever is a possible bridge for the gospel. It creates the opportunity for dialogue, sharing and encouragement.

It is said of our modern world that people have never had more 'contacts', but fewer friends. While cities have never been bigger, people have never been lonelier. This is our opportunity. If we would become intentional in the equipping of our small

groups for relational bridge building, we could see many more unbelievers visiting our Church programmes (including the small group activities) and hearing of Christ!

WHAT YOU COULD DO IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

a. Consider how to strengthen relationships with friends *individually*.

i. 'Socialise' with them

How could you create opportunities to enjoy relaxed time together with those you seek to encourage in faith? For example, you could have a meal together, play a sport, go to a movie, or invite their family for a BBQ.

ii. 'Serve' them

Is there a practical need that you could meet? For example, you could mow their lawn when they are away on holiday, help them paint their house, help their kids with studies, or take their dog for a walk when they have an injury.

iii. 'Surprise' them

Is there a way you could bless them? You could give them a gift, or remember their birthday or wedding anniversary.

b. Then consider how to build bridges to your friends *as a group*.

This is the more strategic of the two steps. In group settings we can connect with new people in a relaxed environment. *We can now get to know each other's friends!* For example, your **small group** could have a 'family BBQ' at the beach (with everyone's spouses and children invited), and thus strengthen bridges for outreach with unbelieving family members. You could invite friends who would like more exercise to a sports evening together.

The interests of our unbelieving friends determine what we do. And there doesn't have to be a spiritual content at all such gatherings. Through simply getting to know each other they (a) get to watch the example of Christians, (b) get an opportunity to feel more relaxed around Christians, without always being 'preached at', and (c) the group members have a chance to get to know them, and to show love and care.

"By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:35.

With these relational bridges being positively formed they will be more willing to accept a second invitation to a similar activity.

Such 'favour' also makes a *significant* difference to a non-believer when considering if they might want to come to an activity which they *correctly* suspect might be more

Christian in content — such as a Church Christmas or Easter service, a Church camp, or a particular small group event where a small ‘message’ might be shared.

Relevant **Church-wide** events can also be considered here. For example, there might be a Marriage course in your Church. You could invite friends to go along with you, and have some members of your small group attend also so they can help look out for your friends. Your Church might have men or women’s social activities that will suit unbelieving friends or colleagues of yours.

WHY IS THIS EFFECTIVE?

Firstly, because it is relational. Secondly, because it mobilises *all* our members to being involved with outreach efforts. In the group everyone has a part to play.

New friends will usually come back *because they felt welcome* and, in particular, *felt they met people they could talk with*.

In a Church-wide event it is possible for everyone to look out for themselves, with believers staying in their ‘cliques’, unaware that new people amongst them might be feeling a little left out. This is why working from a small group base is more effective. Every person can be personally cared for — and *even in a really large crowd, because the relational groups in the crowd can bring a hidden ‘structure’ to it all*.

THE GREATEST CHALLENGE FOR THE LEADER

As relationships strengthen in small groups it is easy for them to become comfortable, enjoying their friendships so much that they are not really interested in having new people join and ‘mess up’ the dynamics. This understandable feeling needs identifying and discussing.

In reality, changing this dynamic can be near impossible — and especially if the group has been together for a long time. Their relationships are tightly knit. They naturally gravitate toward each other, and naturally talk about all the things they have in common — which is why new friends sometimes struggle to settle into such groups. (Sometimes the way forward in outreach is to re-mix the small groups — but great care and wisdom are needed in this transition because there will be obvious resistance and understandable pain).

It is *love for others* that draws us toward a more outward-looking focus. If we can catch God’s heart we can embrace change.

“There is no better place to be about the redemption of society than in the Christian servant’s home; and the more we deal with the captive, the blind, the downtrodden,

the more we realize that in this inhospitable world, a Christian home is a miracle to be shared.”⁶⁵ — Rick Warren.

SUMMARY OF WHERE WE ARE UP TO:

We have covered four of the six things we can do in our small groups so as to mobilise ourselves and our members to effective outreach.

In the next chapter:

We will broaden our perspectives a little on how we could encourage our members to share the gospel with their friends.

We will then consider how we might find success in our follow-up of friends who come to faith; this being an area in which we are so often weak.

Then, before concluding the small group section we will consider the place of small groups in the marketplace (workplace) and school campus.

The chapter following this will then be consider how we might focus an entire Church toward God’s mission, *bringing all we have considered into one complete picture*.

13

How to multiply effectiveness through working with others, Part II

(A strategic approach for the *effective* mobilising of all believers to evangelistic action through small groups).

In the previous chapter we considered the first four of six keys to effective mobilisation of our small groups to outreach. The point was that we could see more fruit if we were to become intentional in these habits:

1. Regularly identifying those we will reach out to.
2. Praying for them.
3. Equipping our members for relevant outreach, and
4. Planning for the building of relational bridges through both individual and group efforts.

There are, however, two more areas in which we have a responsibility before God.

(5) Share with them

At the end of it all, having prayed and planned we must be faithful to share the gospel with those we love. It must be communicated clearly. This seems a daunting responsibility to most believers — but I believe there is some ‘flexibility’ in this matter that many evangelists do not clearly communicate when challenging believers to ‘get active’ in evangelism.

Often it is suggested or inferred that every believer should be sharing the gospel with their mouth. As a pastor I appreciate that there are many reasons why various believers find themselves unable to do this in different seasons of their lives — and sometimes throughout their entire lives. Just as some people are physically disabled, others are emotionally so, and struggle to find freedom. But there are other reasons too. Specifically, God did not make us all the same shape. We are different — and different for a reason. We have different roles to play. For this reason I believe that creating an environment where a person who isn’t sharing their faith is perceived as a ‘lesser Christian’ is not good!

Life has seasons. People are different. And one method or approach does *not* fit all!

I have seen people who would struggle to share a clear gospel leading many people to the Lord. *Their success has been in their ability to partner with existing small group and Church-wide events and programmes, linking their friends in, and linking their friends to those who can share the gospel clearly with them.* It is said that there is more than one way to skin a cat. I don’t know about that, but I do know there is more than one way to share Christ — and more than one role to be played in the ‘nexus’ of things that take place in the whole process of journeying with them to a place where they are ready to accept and believe the Christian message.

If we can learn how to mobilise our members as a community (as we are being taught here how to do), our effectiveness can be *greatly* increased. Why? Because we can harness the different strengths that God has purposefully given different people.

DIFFERENT PLATFORMS THROUGH WHICH WE CAN SHARE THE GOSPEL

- i. Individually** — we can put into practice the skills we have learnt in our small group times.
- ii. Through small group events** — one person can take responsibility to share the message.
- iii. Through Church-wide events** — when we all invite and relate to others, but only one person speaks the message.

When we work together as a community, even the more timid members of our congregations can be effective in seeing their friends hear the gospel, and come to saving faith!

And if we were to become *intentional* in establishing this perspective in our Churches, it would bear fruit!

DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN SHARE THE GOSPEL

Not only are there different platforms we can share the gospel from, there are different ways to share it. No one method can claim the trophy as being the best, or only, method. Remember Frank Jenner.

Jesus’ real key to success wasn’t a memorized presentation explaining that the Kingdom of God was near. His method was conversation with an ear open to the Spirit — as is demonstrated in account after account when reading the gospels!

The gospel can be communicated through:

i. Speaking it directly (with words)

This is the easiest and most obvious way to communicate the gospel.

ii. Testimonies crafted to include the gospel (with words)

Note that if we share our testimony we have not shared the gospel. A testimony is a personal story that can encourage faith, while the gospel is the message of God’s love in Christ that can save an eternal soul.

However, we could craft the telling of our testimony to include the message of the gospel! With a bit of preparation, many people’s stories could be a platform for this message. Doing this is a very effective way to communicate the gospel because it is both personal and interesting.

iii. Tracts (with a gift)

There are many and various tracts. Sure, there may be some you do not like the feel of for some reason. Some look like they are historic remnants of the 1950s. Some we would only give to people we didn’t know... However, there are *many* and various tracts. Keep looking and find the good ones! (I have written some if you are interested).

iv. Booklets (with a gift)

A great variety likewise exists. These can be useful both in evangelism as well as in pre-evangelism, as there is more room in a booklet to cover matters that

might concern or hinder a person from surrendering their life over to Christ. (I have also written a variety of booklets for this purpose).

v. Books (with a gift)

There are not only many books written about evangelism, but also books written to be used in evangelism. You may find these in your local Christian bookstore.

vi. DVDs (with a gift)

A video is more engaging for many people than a book (some people don't read books). There are video documentaries on all manner of topics related to faith and belief that could interest non-believers. Some include gospel presentations, while others would be of pre-evangelistic benefit.

vii. TV (with a referral)

I have been heartily encouraged to see some great quality Christian programmes on television on Sundays. One could encourage a friend to tune into a programme where the gospel was consistently and clearly communicated.

viii. Websites (with a referral)

A new generation of evangelistic websites are appearing around the world. They are interactive and engaging, well thought through (strategic) and communicate clearly. With more than 4 billion internet users on our planet, the use of internet-based resources and tools is a necessary part of our approach to outreach. People go home and look at things on the internet — so if we give them good web links after conversations... there is a good probability they will look.

Separate to the evangelistic websites there are also a great many apologetic websites which answer difficult questions. While caution is advised in our choosing of websites (as strange beliefs are sometimes discovered), these are great tools!

Points nine and ten could be invitations to small group events and large group events (with an invitation) — if you wanted ten points.

Every method and tool has its place.

God can use any person, and any method!

While we may not all witness the same way, we can all witness!

HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE WHEN NOT DOING MUCH

The following story is an excellent example of how the kind of teamwork we've talked about can be of benefit.

Two Christmases ago we had a Church-wide outreach where our small groups used a Christian video to tell the testimony of a local Christian. The small groups were to invite friends and family to a Christmas party, screen the video during it, and then share a testimony and invite a response. One of our members received a wonderful present that Christmas. Simply 'riding on the back' of the Church programme, he invited his parents to come to the small group Christmas party. Other members of their small group did the same. After the video one of the group shared about why they were a Christian. At the conclusion they saw five out of the six guests giving their lives to the Lord — including his parents. All he had done was invite them!

The year that followed was busy, but when he saw that there was to be a Parenting Course in the Church he thought that it might benefit some of his colleagues who had young children. So he 'tried his luck' and invited two of them. One of these responded very positively as she had actually been looking for such a course to help her as a parent. Despite being a non-believer she and her husband participated actively in the discussion. Relationships were made and strengthened, and their group enjoyed their time together. Then when Christmas Eve came, at the last minute, our Church member thought to invite this colleague to the Christmas Eve Service. He sent her an invitation by text message, which she accepted readily, and she brought her brother and mother along also.

At the end of the service, when the altar call came (and before he even had a chance to ask if she wanted to respond) she and her brother went forward, giving their lives to Christ. He described it as his second wonderful present at Christmas time! While he had not known it, the Lord had been working in his colleague's life. She had been seeking and considering religion for the whole of that year, and eventually felt that Christianity was the one for her. In her words, all she needed someone to 'show the way.' Regarding this our member said, *"As I reflected on this, I just marvelled how God had used me. I did not really do much. I just rode on the opportunities presented by the Church and acted in obedience. I feel so privileged that I was a part of God's plan in bringing a lost soul into His Kingdom."*

(6) Disciple them (follow-up)

Many of us have seen bold outreaches, with passionate messages gaining numerous responses on the day, and yet with nothing to show for it all a week later. How are we to respond to this?

Firstly, we must demonstrate integrity in the way we preach the gospel. While preachers can be passionate to see people 'saved', we should be honest about the kind of commitment God is looking for. Consider how Jesus unapologetically sent the rich young man away in Matthew 19:16-26, all because he would not give *all* of his possessions to the poor. It is of note that we seem to do everything we can to help people come to faith — making the path as easy as possible for them. Jesus' approach was not the same. Following Him must be a considered decision because it involves costs, and a person who hasn't counted them is much more unlikely to continue when faced with them.

Then, secondly, our follow-up efforts do require our diligence and cultural wisdom. Often our follow-up efforts are significantly less energised than our proclamation ones. It is as if we are so keen to birth new 'children' that we forget we need to also care for them.

IT'S ABOUT THE JOURNEY, NOT THE DOT!

Unfortunately we are still very program orientated. Our primary evangelistic focus of believers and leaders is often the evangelistic event, rather than relationships and conversations that we could all be having with our friends. "Follow-up", correctly understood, is nothing more than continuing the conversation with a person. If a person has been talking about spiritual things with their Christian friend before the conversion point, it will be natural for them to do the same afterwards. Our failure to all focus on, and prioritise, taking this kind of journey with our friends is possibly the key reason that most follow-up efforts do not succeed in seeing the person continue in their initial decision. All they have is the dot (they heard gospel and had a felt-response on that given occasion) — but what they need is a journey that leads to a 'considered decision'! If we could learn how to have natural and unthreatening conversations with non-believers, we could all be journeying with a number of people... Then if we added evangelistic events to that picture, the results would last!

I also wonder if we'd do well to change our perspective of follow-up from 'the follow up of converts' to 'the follow up of all who are interested'. Why not follow-up with the atheist who concludes that there might be a God as much as the seeker who decides to place their faith in Jesus? Why not use our evangelistic events to find people who are interested in journeying?

I believe effectiveness in our culture is going to come through embracing a conversational paradigm that sees the journey with a person as the main thing — and the evangelistic program as nothing more than a dot on that journey! However, for the remainder of this short section on follow-up we will discuss our relationship with those who have decided to follow Christ.

Here are a few keys to the effective follow-up of new believers.

i. Understand the 'power of the group' in linking new-believers in

Relationships are often the 'glue' that causes a new believer to integrate into the community of faith. If they have come to know a group of believers as they journeyed toward faith, and feel reasonably comfortable around them, they will likely link in with that group quite naturally whether at their small group meetings, or joining them for Sunday services with a meal at a friend's house to follow. This is the benefit of a team-based approach.

(In other words, our intentionality in reaching out from a team base increases the probability that our 'follow up' will be successful in its goal of linking a new believer into the life of the local Church. This is a significant benefit of giving effort to encouraging what is taught in these few chapters).

ii. First steps in the follow up of a new believer

Whatever the case, it is important that a believer connects with a new believer as a friend as soon as possible. For example, a phone call within two days to say hi and see how they are going, with the goal of arranging a coffee at a café (or visiting for a drink and friendly conversation) so as to be able to encourage their new faith.

When meeting with a new believer here are a few tips.

a. Connect with their felt need *first*

So often we are passionate about the *content* we want to communicate. However, for the same reasons that conversations work better than 'monologues' in sharing with non-Christians, conversations based around felt needs and interests work better with new believers too.

The first step is thus to listen, being best done through asking thoughtful questions, seeking to identify and meet their felt emotional and spiritual needs, as well as their areas of particular interest.

As new Christians they will most likely have a few questions, if you can build trust in your relationship with them and dig them out. Their questions are probably more relevant to their first-growth than the orderly contents of our discipleship programme.

As their questions find answers, and their understanding of God thus becomes clearer, their motivation to learn more will increase.

b. Then 'show them the ropes'

Some larger Churches have very good courses for new believers, but most Christians do not have immediate access to such things. There are various resources online, including sites where new believers can watch brief video teaching followed by reflecting on given questions. For the benefit of those who do not have access to resources, the usual starting content, as seen in many 'new believer studies', is as follows.

(1) Clarifying what it means to be a Christian

- This session clarifies the gospel message, what the decision means and how we know we are a Christian. It ideally discusses *baptism* (which symbolises the gospel message), and encourages them to consider this soon if they are sincere in their faith.

(2) Relationship with God

- This session is about communication with God, good communication being the key to health in any relationship. The habits of (a) *Bible reading* and (b) *prayer* are thus the application. These two habits could be discussed in separate sessions, with the conclusion being to encourage the formation of these habits.

(3) Relationship with God's family

- This session is about our participation in (a) *a local Church* (to express worship, learn, serve, give and therefore grow...) and (b) *in a small group* (to love, care, discuss and reach out...). For those in a smaller Church these two platforms may be the same (you may know everyone and be able to show genuine care to each other). For those in larger Churches these two platforms are both needed, as large-group relationships are shallow by nature.

(4) Relationship with the world

- This session is about *praying for and reaching out to those who are without Christ*, and concludes by finding helpful ways to help this happen.

If you successfully got through these first four sessions, you would have accomplished more than most! If you were on a roll, you could maybe then consider other topics, such as:

- What our new identify in Christ is, and what that means for us (we are loved, are significant, and have great hope. It is a basis for emotional health. Such things are all fully ours, if we will only believe)
- God's commands, their reasons, and obedience to them
- How hurts heal
- Forgiveness — and how to forgive others
- How to break free of bondages and addictions
- Gifts, talents, abilities, and serving God
- Tithing and giving (...because the love of money and possessions is one of the most enticing 'gods' on our planet)
- The power of prayer
- The challenge of unanswered prayer and disappointment with God (consider Job, or how Moses felt after experiencing failure in the biggest risk in his life when 40 years old, when he killed an Egyptian and things didn't go as expected.)

This list could certainly go on...

Because we want to see our Church growing in numbers, it is only natural that we consider how we could get more people through the front door — but we might grow just as fast if we gave a little diligence to 'closing the back door!' The importance of follow up can not be underestimated!

Pulling it all together

In the next chapter we will discuss how to pull together all that has been discussed, in a local Church. Included in this will be a six-week outline of what small groups could do in the six weeks leading up to a corporate outreach (see appendix eleven).

While the above content may at first seem overwhelming to a Church leader, you will see in the next chapter how it is actually very achievable with a little bit of strategic perspective. By the end of the book you will realise that the real challenge is where we started the book — in our motivations (chapters one, two, four and five). This motivation factor will always be the greatest hurdle to a mobilised Church!

Before we conclude our discussion on the role of the small group in effective evangelism mobilisation, there is one type of small group we have not discussed. This is the fellowship of believers in a shared work place, school or university campus. Having discussed (A) small groups in the Church, let's now consider them in the marketplace!

(B) SMALL GROUPS IN THE MARKET PLACE OR CAMPUS

A limitation of *Church* groups is that they are significantly separated from the work place, or school campus. These are the places in which members spend forty or more hours per week. Seeking to partner with other Christians at one's campus or work place is thus going to be of significant strategic benefit to us (and those without Christ).

For pastors and Church leaders

Such groups are sometimes felt to be a 'threat' to pastors, as it is feared they may compete with the Church's activities or small groups, or draw the believer away from a first commitment to the local Church. I'd encourage against this view of things. A believer's first ministry should be where they are every day (their second or third ministry being in the Church in the weekend). It is only logical that they would partner with believers in their work place or school campus.

Some Churches want to bring these groups under the authority of their own Church. While there is a place for this, and some benefits, I note that we can not structure for both growth and control. In mission there must be room for risk, and the trust to release believers to seek God and follow the conviction He puts upon their hearts. Disciple them in your Church for this.

The advantage of these groups

These groups have an advantage over the Church-based small groups in that they don't have the pressure of needing to have a study content. The Church-based small groups which the members are a part of can fulfil that role for them — thus releasing these groups to a greater focus elsewhere!

These work place (or campus) small groups also don't need to play the full role of 'support group' for the members, as the members' own small group in their various churches can help with that too.

As such these groups can become almost entirely focused on God's mission through (a) prayer, (b) facilitating bridging and outreach 'events' or activities for friends and (c) giving genuine friendship to new friends when they do begin to come. The six points given above for small groups could be the significant (if not entire) focus of these groups!

As a thought, these groups are thus not really workplace 'prayer groups,' though they may begin as such. They are 'mission bases,' or 'outreach groups.' Their purpose is not primarily the support of the members' lives, or prayer itself, but the uniting of believers in a common place to a common purpose (fulfilling the great commission in their workplace or campus).

The challenge of these groups is working out what to do so as to reach out, *because prayer and fellowship with each other will always be easy and attractive when compared to stepping out of your comfort zone to reach out to others!*

Some work-place groups become content-centred (e.g., become workplace Bible study groups, or some such thing). While it is not wrong to have such groups, we need discernment, as Bible Study could be done in our Churches. What is specifically needed in the market place is relevant outreach! It is a sad state of affairs when Christian groups in the workplace and campus do nothing different to those in the Church; when all the groups are inwardly looking; and *no one* is giving themselves fully to the mission of the Church.

Just as with the Church-based small groups, the marketplace small groups will need God's creativity if they are to make inroads into people's lives. However, the Holy Spirit can lead you as you seek Him together for wisdom during your prayer times. He is the God of all creativity! Lessons could also be learnt from various work-place and campus ministries that exist.

Here is a simple strategy for a work place or campus group

1. **Partnerships** — link together with a like minded believer or two
2. **Prayer** — Both for (a) those you have a heart for, and (b) God's creativity for outreach ideas.
3. **Action** — Try to do something to bless others or reach out once every three to four months — whether simply an act of kindness, or organising a social, or sharing faith in some way such as through Christmas gifts or Easter Church service invitations. Try to take on the attitude that says *'there is no such thing as a lack of opportunity. There is only a lack of creativity combined with faith!'*

Sharing faith is possible — we just need God's creativity to work out how!
4. **Perseverance** — This is what you do after you've done points 1-3 for a year — or two — or three... For as long as people have breath in them they can still choose to follow Christ — *but only that long.* I believe our call is to do the above again and again and again and again...

A FEW STORIES TO ENCOURAGE YOU**STORY ONE: HOW FOCUSING OUR CHURCH SMALL GROUP PRODUCED RESULTS**

Eugene and Avelyn's small group had been going for five years — and yet they had seen hardly a single friend come to faith. They decided to do things differently. They placed a large emphasis on strengthening the relationships of the members, taking regular time to share needs and pray for each

person as a group. At the same time they started to put a specific focus into outreach. They identified people they wanted to reach out to, and prayed for them regularly. Somehow, something 'broke free' in the dynamics of the group.

New friends started coming. The group members were encouraged to make friends with each other's friends — and new friends started staying.

Many were students, so they chose to get involved in a study venue run by the Church as they could bring their friends to study with them there in the lead-up to the exam time. Through this, more relationships were built between the new friends and the small group members, plus these friends became comfortable entering the Church building and knew their way around it.

By the end of the year they had 15 new members in their small group and 6 new believers — after 5 years of having no new believers!

The principles given above can work — but it does take leadership.

STORY TWO: HOW WE FOUND SUCCESS THROUGH BECOMING A TEAM

Last year, Melissa made a commitment to God to reach out to her unsaved friends. She was entering a new school where she would be for just two years. She connected with some other Christians she met there and they began to pray weekly for their friends. As the months passed there was little fruit, and they soon felt discouraged. However, they encouraged each other to persevere in their goal, and decided to take it to the next level. They began to plan some practical outreach activities! They gave gifts to classmates just before exams, actively invited them to their various Churches' outreaches, and sought to share their testimonies with them whenever the opportunity arose. The fruit simply needed time. Within those two years they saw three of their friends come to faith, and a great many becoming positive and open toward Christian faith. She graduated on to University where she is starting to do the same again.

STORY THREE: HOW ESTABLISHING A TEAM MADE ME MORE EFFECTIVE

Dexter felt challenged by a speaker's illustration. The speaker said that Jesus had called His disciples to be fishers of men, and that in those days they fished with nets, not rods. The speaker used this as an analogy of how we can work together in teams in reaching out. Fishermen also spent a lot of time mending their nets. This was similar to the way Christians spend

time praying, growing and encouraging one another. The message's point was that when it came to outreach we should not think of going alone, but rather *as communities* who are reaching out to communities.

This understanding was reinforced for Dexter when he began to apply himself in a focused way to outreaching on his campus. On one occasion he brought *fifty friends* from his school to a sports event at which the gospel was shared. However, he had some responsibilities at the event, and was simply unable to look out for his friends. While he had seen six or seven friends come to faith already (he was an effective personal encourager of faith) he realised that to be more effective he would need to learn to work in *teams*. Specifically, he needed to set up a kind of 'mission base' in his school campus with other Christians there.

Dexter made a bold decision. He changed Churches specifically so as to be more closely united with other Christians in his school's, as many went to a particular Church nearer to their school's location. To explain this differently, he decided that the priority of mission would bring direction to his fellowship life, rather than the other way around. (I.e. He became a missionary in his home country — as we are all called to do). I was the Pastor of the Church he left, and released him to do this, upon his request, with joy.

As he gave focus to rallying his Christian friends together it was as if the tide had turned in their outreach efforts. Everything began to come together well. He had only been doing this for a few months at the time of writing this testimony, and they had already seen two more friends accept Christ. However, significantly, they could see *many* others becoming more open toward Christianity. Rather than affecting a few individuals around him, by working with a team *they* were now influencing a much larger group of friends.

When he met with his Christian friends at school they prayed for their friends, shared their thoughts and lives so as to encourage one another, and planned various outreach ideas. They put a lot of focus onto having fun together with all their friends. They also utilised all the outreach events of the various Churches they came from, so as to have more opportunities to invite their friends to.

I contacted him a year later to ask how things went in that final year in that school. He told how they saw four or five more friends come to faith, but he rejoiced that many more seeds than this had been sown. His experiences had, however, brought him a greater awareness of the importance of follow-up, as some new believers had been irregular in attendance. He was

now heading up the follow-up ministry in the Church fellowship he was attending.

He concluded, *"It is way better to work as a group than alone. In a mission base it is like a body that is complete. There are the hands, the feet, and the head. But working alone is like having maybe just the eyes doing the job alone. Most importantly, I feel that we should all do this, putting our faith in Jesus and starting prayer groups where we are, because then everything will be in place."*

In all *practical* reality, small groups are the 'home base' of evangelism (whether in the local Church or workplace / school campus) because most of us can not keep ourselves motivated for outreach without the encouragement of others.

Maybe it is as the Bible says: we are supposed to love one another, and care for one another, praying for one another, encouraging one another, and so forth. Maybe we are told to do these things because we need them. Maybe the small groups in our Churches and work places / campuses are more important than we have realised.

What I do know is that they have more potential than we have made use of.

14

How to focus your local Church toward God's target

(PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER)

This chapter is specifically for Pastors and senior Church leaders.

The question that remains for Pastors is how to pull together all that has been discussed, *in a sustainable way* in the life of the local Church.

This chapter shows a way to actually achieve this!

A NEEDED GRACE IN OUR PERSPECTIVE

This chapter needs considering with grace and wisdom, for many Churches and their leaders will not be ready or able to apply its principles, along with many of those found in the rest of this book. Indeed, God has shaped various Churches for various purposes.

While it can more than reasonably be argued that the gospel should be the central thrust of all Churches, one factor is the shape, or gifting, of the Senior Pastor. Few 'pastors' (Reverends, Vicars, Priests, key Church leaders) are gifted or motivated as

evangelists — while many are gifted as *pastors* (motivated to *care* for and *shepherd* the people). Some have a passion for *community work*, some for *expository preaching* and others for the *things of the Spirit*. Most often, what the pastor is most passionate about receives the greatest emphasis. This is only natural! Pastors are busy too, juggling many differing expectations. Some will thus struggle to find the space to consider and apply what is presented here. We need to give all pastors grace.

Secondly, Churches do develop personalities, and once a Church has settled into a certain set of values and practices, that ‘personality’ can prove *remarkably difficult to change*. It has been said that every member of a Church could leave over a period of a few years, with new people coming in to replace them, and the personality of the Church would remain approximately the same. Some of us have seen this happen.

Jesus said you cannot put new wine into old wine skins. Sometimes pastors feel convinced that certain directions are needed, but are frustrated at their inability to turn their Churches in a new direction. It is complicated. Grace and understanding is thus needed, because ‘corporate personality’ is a difficult thing to change. It’s not just the pastor’s fault — or the member’s fault. It’s the challenge of corporate personality in an organisation!

However, nearly every pastor changes the culture of their Church in some area. This is usually the area they are most passionate about. This demonstrates the possibility of change. The question is whether we will bring vision, passion and strategy, with perseverance, to any given area of Church life. With these change is possible. This chapter will explain.

THE NEXT STEP PROJECT

What follows is elsewhere called ‘The Next Step Project’ — this being an evangelism mobilisation strategy for Churches found at www.shininglights.co (look for the mobilising vision). The goal is to help pastors and key Church leaders become a success in the area of evangelism mobilisation, “...*changing the culture of their Churches over a three to five year period so that a relational, conversational and team-based approach to evangelism becomes a natural and built in part of their Church's life.*”

It is a gentle and egalitarian approach for which all resources are provided, and are free.

It additionally functions through what already exists on a week-to-week basis in the local Church — so is not more work to do.

It is simple, practical and achievable.

A promotional video can be viewed at the relevant page at the website.

(A) HOW TO REALISTICALLY, EFFECTIVELY AND SUSTAINABLY MOBILISE YOUR MEMBERS TOWARD EVANGELISM

(1) CREATING AN EVANGELISTIC ‘SEASON’

(Clear gospel messages every Christmas and Easter)

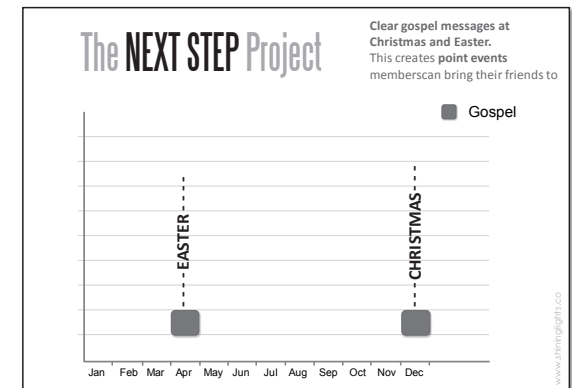
Our annual calendars often fall naturally into different seasons. For example, **the start of a new year** is the good time for **goal-setting**. We can consider how we might want to grow (individually and as a Church) in the coming year, and then plan activities that might aid that growth.

Regarding **gospel outreach**, **Easter and Christmas** are the most natural times for this in the calendar year. Our Easter and Christmas services could thus become our first ‘point events’ around which ‘outreach seasons’ could be built.

i. Creating a season

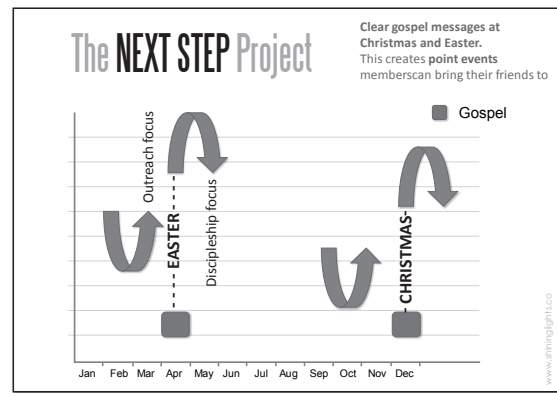
As pastor you could determine that certain times in the year will be more strongly geared toward mobilising the members to outreach, while other times of the year will be geared toward other purposes, such as discipleship and teaching.

Imagine you started by having just two outreach ‘seasons’ per year, these being based around Christmas and Easter. Each season could be viewed as being six to eight weeks in length, with the ‘point event’ (main gathering where the gospel is preached) being the high point.



The easiest way to create an evangelistic ‘point event’ is to use what already exists. You already have Christmas and Easter services, so why not commit to your members to preach a clear gospel message with a clear response opportunity every time! This way you can strategically reorientate your outreach efforts *without creating any more work for yourself*. Our goal here is to bring *intentionality* to what we already do.

The next step is to let your members know you are going to preach clear gospel messages at these times. *Many of them want to reach out to their friends and family too!* The hindrance is that many don’t feel confident to share a clear gospel message themselves, or to answer questions, or of their ability to lead a conversation through asking good questions.



While we can equip them to do these things, it remains that some will struggle. However, I discovered early in ministry that this doesn't mean they don't care about evangelism! If you were to provide friendly, relaxed Christmas and Easter services with a clear gospel message (with response opportunity fitting the culture of your

Church) I guarantee you some members would be excited at that possibility. If you were consistent in this pattern, more of them would become excited with time. Why? Because they would recognise it is actually *their* opportunity to share the gospel with *their* friends and family — and without needing to use words (other than 'would you like to come to our Church's Easter service with me?!')

It is a felt need — and you would now be meeting it.

However, you may not see a great many new friends or family at your first couple of Christmas and Easter services where you make this a focus. This is because it will take time for the trust to grow that you really are going to follow through on this commitment to preach a clear gospel message every Christmas and Easter service.

How do I know? I've done it, and it worked!

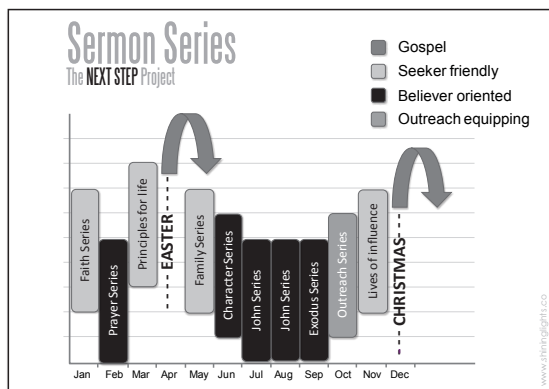
ii. Preaching series around the seasons

Next, you could seek to preach your more 'topical' preaching series, such as 'How to build a strong family life', within these seasons *because such messages would relate well to non-believers*. This way your services are more 'seeker-oriented' within these seasons.

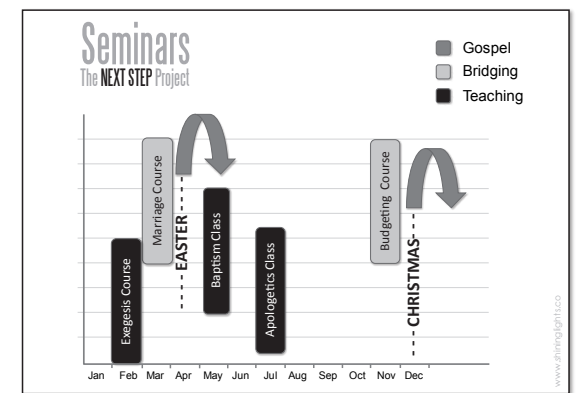
Your more exegetical series, which are more suitable for believers, could thus be done in the months in-between, as illustrated in the diagram.

iii. Programming around the seasons

You could likewise plan other areas of your Church life with these seasons in mind. For



example, seminars on parenting or marriage would relate well to non-believers, so could be strategically placed *before* outreach events so as to create *platforms for inviting people to attend the outreaches*. Other seminars, such as baptism class or a spiritual gifts course, are more relevant to believers. These could thus be placed in the more discipleship-focused seasons in the year.



iv. Gearing the small group up for the seasons

Once you have created these seasons, they can also become annual times when small groups give a more concerted focus toward outreach. At appendix eleven there is an example of what could be done in a small group in the six weeks leading up to a 'point event.' Members can be refocused, involved, re-equipped and recharged for evangelism in these 'lead up' times, making the outreach efforts more effective as well as providing a place in the calendar for the revision of lessons taught with regard to evangelism.

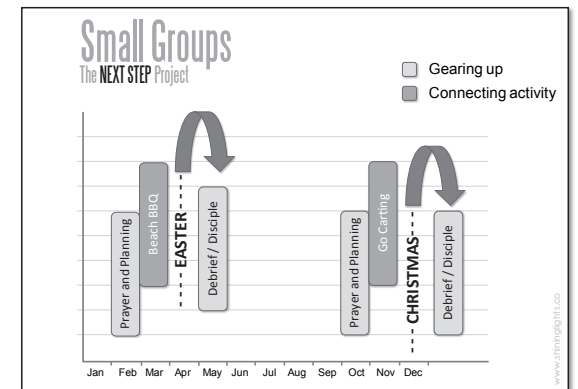
You will note that many of the six responsibilities of small groups with regard to evangelism (as outlined in the previous two chapters) are achieved through what happens in these *few weeks* (as in appendix eleven). This is how groups can accomplish all that was discussed in the previous two chapters without needing to focus heavily on evangelism all through the year. There are goals other than just evangelism! Put together, these small group and Church-wide strategies are both achievable.

2. SIX MESSAGES ANNUALLY

(Motivating and equipping the members for their mission)

(a) Motivating

To motivate members, the primary 'vision casting' could be done through a message at the start and middle of the year. We could schedule *a message in the first month of each year* in



which we remind our members of their mission, and cast a vision for how we could serve that purpose in the coming months or year.

We could then consider doing this again **mid-way through the year**, celebrating successes, and reminding our members of the value of what they are doing.

(b) Equipping

We could then devote an additional **month each year** to preaching a motivational, equipping series related to evangelism. (Resources for all these things are at the Shining Lights website, for those desiring them).

The reason for doing this through sermons is because this is the only way to influence *the whole congregation*.

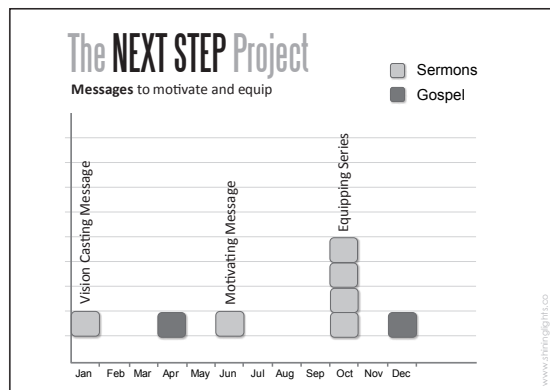
The alternative, is that evangelism training be done through seminars, but in my experience (as one who has taught such seminars) only 10 to 20% of a congregation will come to the seminars. Additionally, if the pastor is not committed to give the purpose of evangelism an ongoing high profile (such as through the sermons and monthly testimonies, as in our next point) the focus of most of those who attend the seminars will not last for long either.

The question I eventually asked myself was, *“Why, when mobilising our members to share the gospel is actually central to accomplishing the mission of the Church, am I training only twenty percent of my members through running seminars when I could be training all of them through my sermons, and then reinforcing this through their small group studies?”*

The Pastor usually has the liberty to set his or her own pulpit direction, and also to influence the small group content. The Pastor can therefore motivate and equip *all* of his or her members, as well as sustain that focus through giving it an additional monthly focus (as discussed below).

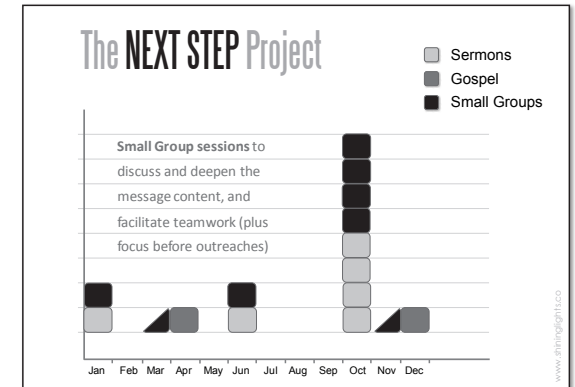
3. SIX SMALL GROUP SESSIONS TO MATCH

Then, in the week following each of the above-suggested six annual sermons, the small groups do studies on the exact same content. Why?



i. The impact is multiplied

Researchers tell us that one month after an event we remember only about 10% of what we *hear*, but 40% of what we *say* and up to 70% of what we *do*. If our goal really is to *change the culture* of a Church, our impact as a preacher and leader can be *four to seven times greater if we can get our members to discuss the messages in their small groups*. It's worth the effort to get our small group leaders to do these studies!



The purpose of these small group sessions is to consolidate and deepen the equipping, and to aid the focus and motivation of the groups. The small groups can take time to consider their own goals for the year, including *identifying* those who they might like to reach out to, and can begin to discuss what they might do together to help this happen. Hindrances could be listed for *prayer* and conversation directions (see appendix 10) and interests considered for individual or *small group bridging events* (as in the previous two chapters).

The same could likewise be repeated mid-way through the year, assessing progress, and adjusting goals and plans as desired. (See appendix twelve for a copy of a small group goal setting exercise I have used annually with small groups).

ii. Team work is facilitated

An additional strategic benefit of this approach is that by getting them to talk about these messages in small groups *you are actually facilitating teamwork!* As pastors, we do not want everything to hinge upon ourselves. By getting members to talk about those they love and desire to share with, and to think through how they could reach out to them, you are helping them begin to work *independently as a team* toward God's goal. If that turns into self-motivated action this is a big step forward!

iii. Personal encouragement and accountability in 'mission' begin to exist

This is the oft-missed 'link' in the chain, and can make the difference between effectiveness and ineffectiveness in our mobilisation. Without this small group dynamic as a part of the process, members can remain invisible and inactive, sitting in their pews.

In small groups, members share stories, ask how each other is going, encourage activity, encourage each other to follow-through on commitments, and so on. These

are things *you* cannot do from a pulpit! In a small group there can be personal encouragement and accountability. They can sustain and support their focus on outreach together! Without this, they might remain a collection of individuals quietly sitting in your pews, nodding as you motivate them from the front, but actually doing nothing!

This point cannot be overstated.

(The triangle in the diagram before the point events is the six week build-up in the small group that motivates, prepares and mobilises the members to action, as well as reminds them of and reinforces past learning in this area).

FREE RESOURCES TO HELP YOU

Possible messages (both motivational and equipping series) can be found at the Shining Lights website, via the mobilising strategy. Each message includes texts, handouts, power point presentations, and matching small group sessions that reinforce and build upon the content.

Relating to the next point in this chapter, links to videoed testimonies are also there, for the times when you cannot find a member to share a testimony.

Each equipping series is Biblically based, and seeks to address both the motivation and practical equipping.

Different series then seek to equip in different areas, so you could preach one series per year without repeating the same contents for a few years.

Knowledge also grows incrementally — so each successive series is designed to reinforce the learning of the previous series, while also adding to it.

A Pastor can thus, over a period of a few years, build knowledge upon knowledge in his or her members, better equipping them to fulfil their calling as Christ's witnesses to those around them.

The primary values (areas covered in the equipping) are:

1. The necessary centrality of the gospel
2. Our necessary dependence upon the Holy Spirit
3. The wisdom of a relational, conversational approach
4. The benefits of a team-based approach

See www.shininglights.co and look for the mobilising vision.

4. A MONTHLY TESTIMONY

The purpose of these is to sustain the focus, while reinforcing the values — and it's a key part of the strategy. It would be nigh-impossible to change the culture of a Church without what follows.

Just like with parenting, if we believe something is important we reinforce it, again and again, until it is a practised habit.

Most Church leaders already reinforce *something* — but it is usually the thing they are most passionate about. Doing this is only natural, whether it be pastoral care, community ministry, Bible study, or exercising the gifts of the Spirit.

And the principle is simple — in leadership, we get what we promote.

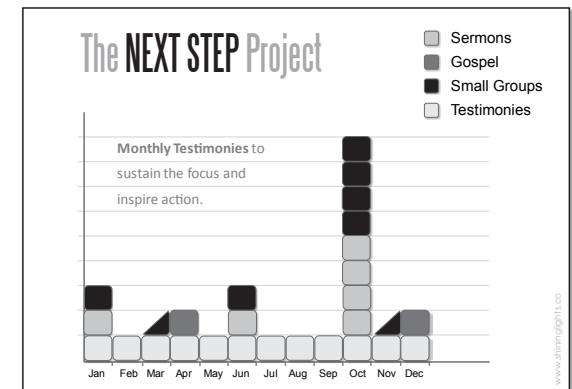
But what if we were to ask what we *should* be promoting, instead of just promoting what comes to mind?

All of the above mentioned possible focuses are important (Bible study, community ministry, spiritual gifts...), *but a healthy sustained focus on reaching out with the gospel is both central and indispensable to our mission.* It cannot be reasoned-away as an 'optional extra' or 'sub-ministry' of the local Church.

Rick Warren, in his book 'The Purpose Driven Church', talked about the core purposes of the Church, summarising these as worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and witness. However, only one of these is our mission! While they are all purposes of the Church, our witness is a different category.

Somehow we've got to start 'talking the talk' about evangelism. *But, how can we do that when it's not our primary passion?* Here is a simple, important, answer.

The easiest way I have found is through committing to have a monthly testimony of how someone has either (a) come to faith or (b) talked about the faith with someone else. Afterwards I, as the pastor, stand up and *reinforce a value* coming out of what has been shared, *thus elevating the status of outreach in the culture of the Church.*



Testimonies are powerful. When members hear other members telling their success stories of talking about Christ with loved ones, or of seeing them come to faith, they feel encouraged! And what we promote, is what we get!

When we do this, *it influences the culture of our Church*. This is both my experience and observation.

(If you cannot find a monthly testimony from within your Church, there are many available online. Links are among the 'Next Step Project' resources as at the mobilising page at www.shininglights.co).

The above is a simple, practical and achievable strategy that comes with all needed resources, is free, and also functions through what a pastor or key Church leader already does on a week-to-week basis. It is no extra work except for the time spent learning how to become more intentional through what you already do — like by reading and considering the chapters of this book.

(B) A FEW ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR SMALL GROUPS

WHAT IF YOUR CHURCH HAS NO EVANGELISTIC EVENTS OR SERVICES?

If you are in a Church where clear gospel messages are not preached at Christmas and Easter services, or at other events or services, *you could organise your own 'outreaches' as a small group (or find para-Church ministries, who run outreach events, that you could partner with)*.

For example, you could have a family evening at Ten Pin Bowling the week before Easter; then at the conclusion of the evening invite everyone to an Easter reflection and BBQ the following weekend at one of your members' houses. Think of creative ways to make the programme attractive for your friends or families, while assuring them it will also be relaxing.

TIPS FOR RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP OUTREACH EVENT

While I would encourage that you seek to share the gospel, I would also encourage that you do so in a manner that is not too 'heavy handed.' While we do want to share the gospel, we don't want new friends to feel 'got at' or set up. If they felt this they might not accept an invitation to such an event again!

- At the start of the programme welcome everyone and let them know what will be happening. This way there are no surprises (they won't feel set up). If someone is going to share a thought about faith, tell them this will happen, and when. This way they know what to expect. E.g. "... then we will have dinner, but just before that — as it is Christmas — I'm going to ask Stuart to share what Christmas means to him as a Christian. After this we will..." This is very important.

- Word your talk wisely, speaking gently and gracefully, truthfully yet personally.
- You could give them some Christian material (booklets or tracts) to read at another time if they were interested. Thus, content you don't cover in a short talk can still be available for those interested to read it later.
- Above all, don't embarrass new friends. If you do, they may think twice before coming back. For the person who speaks, remember to look at *everyone* as you share, so new friends don't feel singled out (sometimes inexperienced speakers accidentally look only at the non-Christians who they hope their message will speak to, making them feel uncomfortable).
- If you did have a 'response form' or 'feedback sheet' (you don't have to) ask *everyone* to fill one in, even though there may be no practical reason for your own members to do so. This is, again, so that your guests don't feel singled out.

It is possible for a small group in a Church to become evangelistically healthy and fruitful, even when the wider Church they are in is not so focused. We are each responsible for our own actions, not those of others.

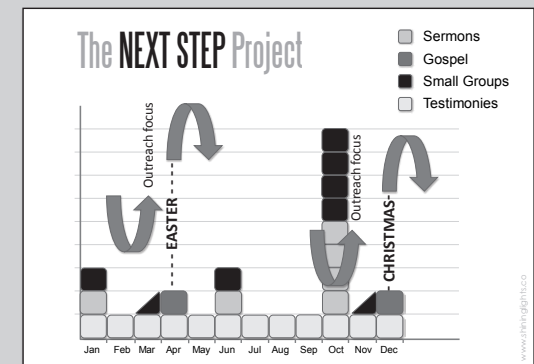
A CLOSING SUMMARY OF THE OVERARCHING PARADIGM THIS CHAPTER PROPOSES

1. The 'hinges' for a congregation's evangelism

...are its **seasons**. This way everything can have its place.

2. The key to effective evangelism however

...is the mobilisation of **every believer**. Members need motivating and equipping, and their focus sustaining.



3. The home base of evangelism

...is **the small group**, as this is where personal encouragement and accountability are based. This is the needed 'link' in the chain. Without this members can remain invisible and inactive sitting in their pews.

4. The primary location for evangelism

...is **the work place or school campus**. This is where members spend the majority of their time.

5. The goal for the pastor with regard to evangelism (Ephesians 4)

...is to change the culture of a Church (which could take three to five years) so that a relational, conversational and team-based approach to evangelism becomes a natural and built-in part of that Church's life.

6. A strategy that can accomplish this

...can be summed up in **four leadership habits**, strategically placed on a calendar:

(1) 6 sermons

— to *motivate and equip*

(2) 6 small group sessions

— to *reinforce*, while also facilitating teamwork and initiative

(3) A monthly testimony

— to *remind*, so as to sustain the focus

(4) Gospel messages at Christmas and Easter services

— to *model*, while also creating 'point events' that all other programmes can build up to.

AIDS THAT CAN HELP THE PASTOR

- **Free resources:** At www.shininglights.co (go to the mobilising page) there are free resources for pastors for the above strategy
- **Monthly encouragement:** Via that page a pastor can 'link in' and then receive a monthly 'enCOURAGEment' email, written specifically to encourage and equip pastors and key Church leaders who want to become successful in this *one* area of leadership. The key to success is continuity in these leadership habits and values. Committing to read to these monthly emails (or listen to the audio version) can help!
- **A 'kick-start' tool:** And if you wanted to 'kick-start' things in your Church, you could have your members and small groups read this book, and work their way through its nine studies. The content of the studies is Biblically-based, but strategically practical toward the goal of equipping the members, and facilitating teamwork.

...and why would you do all of this?

Because you care!

Yes — it really is a pastor or key Church leader's responsibility to equip and mobilise the members to do that. But knowing this will not enable you to turn your Church in this direction. Only a heart that is full of compassion for the people — as Jesus' heart was — will do it! We will only be consistent and effective in our leadership in this area when God's heart for the people has become our heart!

SUMMARY OF THE STRATEGY

- 1 The above four areas present a sustainable approach for evangelism mobilisation in a local Church, while the previous two chapters show how a Church's small groups could realistically and sustainably build and sustain this focus. These strategies are like the pipes that carry the water from the street to the various taps inside your house.

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- 1 The rest of the book contains important content relating to evangelism that can be learnt and sustained; content that is also geared to our postmodern times. These chapters contain values, knowledge, perspectives and skills. This is the water that we want to flow through the above pipes.

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- 2 Putting the content and the strategy together is the vision of this book, and I pray that you catch it.

The effective *and sustained* mobilisation of members to effective evangelism is *possible* in today's world — and even for pastors and Church leaders whose primary passion and gifting is *not* evangelism!

There is no denying it — our communities play a significant part in the success of our evangelism. But our communities need leading!

In your hands you have a simple strategy. The next step is up to you.

In our final two chapters we will reflect upon the Holy Spirit's partnership with us in evangelism, and then conclude with a final Scriptural example and motivation.

STUDY 8: Establishing home base

GETTING STARTED

1. Did anyone here come to faith through a Church or small group event? How did that happen?
2. Have you ever been a part of a small group that was effective in reaching out to others? What do you think made the group effective?

DISCUSSION

1. Revision exercise — Conversation skills: Repeat the exercises from study six, both as a large group and in pairs.
2. Revision exercise — Gospel sharing skills: Break into pairs and practice sharing a clear gospel, including the transition back to a conversation and to response.
3. Discuss: The chapter suggests that the small group is 'home base' for evangelism. What is meant by this, do you agree, and why? Is this biblical? *
4. Planning exercise:
 - (1) Revise the six things the small group can do to facilitate and help their outreach to others.
 - How effectively are you doing these things?
 - How important is it that you do them?
 - What could your small group try together in the coming six months or year?

- (2) Planning some bridging and evangelistic events
- a. Corporate opportunities: Make a list as a group of the 'bridging' and 'evangelistic' events you could plug into in the life of the wider Church so as to help your reaching out.
 - b. Group opportunities:
 - Share (or list) the interests you noted that your family, friends and colleagues had when doing Study One (see appendix seven).
 - What could your small group do that might connect with some of these people (bridging events)?
 - Consider some evangelistic events you could work toward at one or two points later in the year (whether your own events or Church ones, including Easter and Christmas services if the gospel is shared there).
 - Take time to discuss and plan as a group right now. Delegate planning roles amongst yourselves.

Write these programmes next to the names of those they may relate to as in appendix ten.

- c. Individual opportunities: Consider how you might socialise, serve or surprise your friend yourself. Write these ideas in appendix ten also.

WRAP UP

Next week is the final study in this series.

- At this point, what has benefitted you the most from this series?

Note: Next week we will consider questions aimed at helping us plan so as to sustain a focus on outreach in our lives and our groups. It is a practical and important session. A sustained focus on evangelism does not come easily. If we fail to plan, we will have planned to fail.

Prayer: Pray that God would stir a passion for the lost in your hearts, as this compassion is the driving force for all else that has been discussed.

Homework: Read chapters 15 and 16.

* Refer to notes in the Discussion Guide at the back of this book.

PART VI

Important words



15

The work of the Spirit in evangelism

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is often said that ‘Christianity is not a religion but a relationship’. Contrary to the teachings of many other religions, what God wants from us is not only that we follow His rules, but that we give Him our hearts. Rather than being distant from us, He is close to us, and wants us to choose to draw near to Him. It's not so much about what we do for Him as it is about our response to what He has done for us!

This desire for relationship is illustrated perfectly in the way God was found close to Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis 3:8, ‘walking in the garden in the cool of the day’. God was making Himself available to them for relational interaction!

Thus, for us as Christians, the fulfilment of our ‘religion’ is not found in the obeying of rules, but in our knowing and reciprocating of God’s love for us. Our obedience is the by-product of that love (John 14:15). Indeed, it is all about relationship!

However this description of our faith as a ‘relationship with God’ also speaks of a reality in our experience. While we cannot physically see, touch or hear God in the same way we can any other person we are in relationship with, God is genuinely with us by His Spirit. And the experience of this is ours because of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Since the occasion of Pentecost (Acts 2) God's closeness has become more 'tangibly real for believers, because He now dwells with us and in us in a way that He did not before that point in time. The 'nature' of men and women's relationship with God underwent a paradigm change.

From Pentecost onwards, it is as if God became available to us a little more like He was available to Adam and Eve in the garden. While we rarely hear Him speak in audible tones, we grow to hear what He is saying to us as we study His Word, and thus learn to listen and understand His ways. His personal voice is a real thing, even though unprovable to the methods of science. We are the people of the Spirit, living in the age of the Spirit (Acts 1:4, 8, Matthew 24:14). We are supposed to keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). This is not a mystical metaphor, but an expression of what is supposed to be an experiential reality. God speaks to us!

FOR WHAT REASON?

The Holy Spirit has been given, amongst other reasons, to help us be more effective in ministry. In fact, the case is easily made that our empowering for the Great Commission is *the primary reason* for which He came. Acts 1:8 tells us that the Spirit came to endow believers with God's power. It tells us that with this new power (help from God) Christ's disciples (including we who have followed) would be Christ's witnesses to the ends of the earth. This touch of the Spirit put boldness in the hearts of the early believers (Acts 4:31). The Holy Spirit's empowering was the key to their effectiveness in ministry.

Consider again Jesus' example in the calling of Nathanael (John 1:43-51). Jesus knew of Nathanael's great passion for God, and had 'seen' him sitting under a fig tree just before they met. This knowledge was *the work of the Holy Spirit* whom Jesus had learnt to listen to. Consider again Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman in John 4. While it is true that Jesus demonstrated conversational skills, His greater effectiveness in the conversation came about as the result of knowledge He received that this woman had been married five times, and was now living with a man who was not her husband. This knowledge came *from the Holy Spirit*.

Jesus explained His relationship with the Father saying, "...the Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing..." (John 5:19). Jesus was totally dependent upon God's voice and leading. It is because of God's plan to give us His Spirit that Jesus said in John 14:12 that 'those who followed Him would do the miracles He had been doing, and even greater ones.' How would this be possible? John then records Jesus speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit in the next chapter. Those who followed Jesus would do the same miracles because they would be filled with the same Spirit!

While knowledge may grow, and methods abound, it is God who grows His Kingdom!

Let's reflect upon three aspects of God's supernatural work in the process of evangelism.

1. GOD LEADS AND USES OUR PRAYERS

Prayer is a two-way communication. As much as we are talking to God in prayer, He wants us to listen to Him. While we can be faithful in praying through lists of people who we want to see saved or helped in some way, and should do so, the Holy Spirit can lead our prayer in a more dynamic way if we allow Him to. He can lead our thoughts and inspire our hearts, enabling times of prayer that refresh us, and in which we can lose all awareness of time! Also, true to His word, the fervent praying of a righteous person will accomplish much (James 5:16)!

A. PRAYER AND BREAKTHROUGH

The Bible tells us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but '*...against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*' (Ephesians 6:12).

In our 'modern' way of thinking we don't like to talk about such things. Belief in angels and demons is considered to be the stuff of fairy stories, and we are further put off by some Christians who have taken the whole thing too far, thinking there is a demon behind everything. We find ourselves sometimes embarrassed to talk about these things — or uncomfortable. However, the spiritual battle, and breakthroughs in it, are real things. Prayer in Jesus' name is the key to the breakthroughs!

An example from a Pastor in Kenya

In 1988 Ps. Thomas Muthee and his wife felt God call him to plant the Church in the town of Kiambu, Kenya. Their story is one of a number documented on the revival documentary series, *Transformations*.⁶⁶ They were not thrilled at this calling. This town had a reputation as a Pastors' graveyard. It boasted the worst crime-rate in the nation at that time. It was a dangerous and oppressive place, where rape and violence were commonplace, with more bars and illicit stills than churches and grocery stores. No Church had grown beyond a few dozen members.

They realised that, to be successful, they needed to recognise and confront the source of Kiambu's oppression. The documentary details how, for six months, they committed themselves to fervent prayer and diligent research. They eventually identified a spirit of witchcraft, and at the end of that six months got an assurance in their spirits that the spiritual power over the town had been broken. It was *only then* that they conducted their first outdoor gospel crusade.

66 Transformations, by George Otis Jr (The Sentinel Group, 1999).

The change that resulted from this breakthrough was soon clear. In a town where the average Church had numbered only thirty to forty people, their crusade saw two hundred commit their lives to Christ. Healings and salvations became commonplace. By the time this story was told in 1999 the town boasted one of the lowest crime rates in the country; many local bars had been converted into Churches; the population was up twenty percent as it was now a town people wanted to live in; and his own Church numbered five thousand in attendance.

Ps. Thomas pointed out at the end of the documentary that the key to the success, and its continuance, was continued prayer. Also, that *'...if God can do it in Kiambu, He can do it anywhere in the world!'*

Many others have experienced similar things. While a Biblical case can be made for the existence of spiritual powers over areas ('territorial spirits'), not a lot is said about it in Scripture, or on how to respond to or deal with these powers — except that we pray. Prayer can bring spiritual breakthrough in geographic regions!

Sometimes our effectiveness is hindered by the spiritual climate.

Prayer brings the needed air-conditioning!

B. PRAYER AND OPPORTUNITY

As a youth I was taught to pray for opportunities to share the gospel. With a friend, I committed to do this weekly. Many opportunities came in answer to those prayers, though we did not always have the focus or courage to make the most of them.

Early on in our secondary years we prayed that we could share the gospel with the whole school. At age fourteen I unexpectedly won a school speech competition. At the end of the year I was asked to share a thought on what Christmas meant to me in the school assemblies. The Lord had opened the door, and the opportunity was taken (though I am embarrassed to tell of how, at fourteen, I really did lack tact).

In my last year in that school (then called 'Bursary') I had already decided to go to Bible College, and thus saw no real reason to even attend school for that Bursary year. (I later found out I was mistaken, as Bursary was the minimum academic qualification at that time for entry to the Bible College I went to). However I felt the Lord's confirmation to continue to attend that year of school.

We prayed God would be glorified through that year at school, as it seemed otherwise pointless to our youthful way of thinking for me to attend. I studied diligently, but without ambition. Unexpectedly I became the top student in the school that year. A newspaper reporter came to take photos of award winners, and the reporter was so amazed that a top student would 'waste' his educational opportunities by going into Christian ministry that he highlighted this point in the local paper, bringing glory

to God before many. I recall reasoning with the reporter, who was questioning my actions, *'...should not Christian ministers be the cleverest of men?'* The point: By the end of my schooling *the greatest opportunities, and successes, had been brought about by God in answer to prayer, not by my planning or efforts.*

At one time we saw a needy student (I won't explain) come to faith and go on to share the gospel, one on one, with more people in the few months that followed than I did in my entire five years in that school!

In Acts 4:23-31, in the face of persecution, the early believers prayed for boldness in the preaching of the gospel, as well as for power for miracles and healings. What is boldness needed for but to make and take opportunities? The remainder of the book of Acts stands to demonstrate how God can answer such a prayer!

As we pray and believe, God can lead us into opportunities to share with those around us each day. Having prayed for opportunity, we should be ready for them!

An encouragement: Prayer and family

Particularly in Asia I have observed many amazing testimonies of answered prayer for the salvation of non-believing family members. We can take encouragement from these, because God can do the same for your family.

STORY: Can a family be saved?

Catherine was the first to become a Christian in her family. This happened during her secondary years when she attended a mission school. From that time onward she prayed for the salvation of her family members. However it was her father's passing away that motivated her to do more. From then on she prayed fervently and faithfully for her wider family's salvation, including siblings, nieces and nephews. She then would invite them to Church evangelistic events that best suited them.

The first person she brought to Church was her eldest sister-in-law. Catherine stopped attending the English service from that point on, as her sister-in-law preferred to attend a Chinese service. However that sister-in-law then stopped attending Church for ten years. She returned only when diagnosed with cancer, and Catherine saw her baptised in 2007. In those ten years Catherine saw ten of her loved ones come to know the Lord, and is still praying for and following up on various cousins and more distant relatives, a number of whom she was delighted to have seen attending a large evangelistic outreach with her in late 2009.

However, this is not the whole story. Catherine has served as an administrative assistant in the mission department of her Church for twenty-five years. As such, she is aware of, and helps meet the needs of various relatives

of Church members who are serving overseas as missionaries. She has faithfully visited them at important times in the year, given gifts, sent cards, and has shown practical care when they have had needs or been unwell. Where they have been terminally ill, she has facilitated a Pastor visiting so as to share Christ with them. The list of those she has been privileged to see come to faith both in her family, and in the families of those she serves, is both encouraging and challenging. She has simply prayed, cared, facilitated and invited — in each case making the most of the small group and larger Church events and personnel that were available. Sometimes it has been a Church service, while at others a guest speaker in a seminar. Some have been invited to a concert, while others to an ‘oldies songs’ singing time. Even her birthday is used as an opportunity. As she was born on a leap year, every four years she celebrates her birthday, and turns it into an outreach by inviting a Pastor or friend to share the gospel — every time!

When our faith is applied in persistent prayer combined with outreach action, God works! I know Catherine to be faithful in prayer, and her living testimony challenges and encourages me.

CONSIDER JESUS AND PRAYER.

Sometimes Jesus prayed *for whole nights*. How often have you or I done that?

If the Son of God, who was sinless and perfectly united to God, needed to pray then we can be assured that we do! Prayer was essential for the success of His mission, and it will be essential for ours.

2. GOD IS ALREADY AT WORK

A second aspect of God’s supernatural work in salvation is the *hidden* work He is *already* doing in the hearts of those around us, and those not around us.

Jesus said, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...*” (John 6:44). God is active on earth drawing people to Himself, and it is specifically the Holy Spirit who is here doing that drawing! As in the words of a well-known song, ‘God works in ways we cannot see.’ Sometimes our hearts become overwhelmed with the seeming impossibility of many people being saved, but we should not underestimate the will or workings of God.

Two Scriptural truths we can stand upon in this regard are, firstly that God answers prayer (e.g. Matthew 7:7 or John 14:14) and thus, if we have prayed, we *should expect Him to be at work in answer to our prayer*. Secondly, that God is found by those who seek Him (e.g. Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 7:7), and so *we should expect that*

God will be at work in the lives of genuine seekers who have not yet found Christ. Here are three different stories to illustrate this, and to encourage your confidence that God is already at work around you.

STORY: If a person seeks God, what will happen?

My friend was born into another religion. He had, however, been troubled by his sins. This was especially so because he believed that, according to his religion and circumstance, his sins could not be forgiven. He began to plead with God for a way for his sins to be forgiven. Then one day, walking past a Church, there was a two-dollar note on the ground, which he picked up. However the next time he walked past that same Church the same happened again. Then it happened a third time. He recognised that this could not be by chance and so entered the Church — an act that was otherwise unthinkable to him because of his religious background. A prayer meeting or worship practise of some kind was in session. This was the first time he entered through the doors of a Christian Church, and began a journey of discovery in a direction he would not have considered otherwise. In Christ he has now found the forgiveness he was looking for.

While it needed a human voice to share the gospel with this friend, he had sought the ‘God’ for forgiveness — and so, true to His word, God intervened and made Himself known! God is found by those who seek Him. God is at work in many lives, even though we cannot see it.

Another recent encouraging example (at the time of writing) was of a brother and sister, both in their late thirties or early forties, who had recently come to faith. They were sincere seekers, and yet had no Christian to share with them. The sister wrote this.

STORY: Waiting to be invited

“...Like many of you may have faced, I went through a period of feeling ‘lost’ and confused in my spiritual life. I was longing for an anchor to hold onto, and for direction in my spiritual life that could bring true meaning and purpose to my life.

Not long after, while I walked past City Hall, I read the messages of Jesus Christ on the banners outside a Church. Somehow, the messages seemed to bring answers and solutions I needed. My interest grew and I started finding out more.

At this time I also came in contact with a few Christians and observed their wonderful nature and how the Lord had inspired them to be fine men despite life's ups and downs. Even my son came into contact with some Christians at that time, and came home singing some Christian songs. Everything around me just seemed to be filled with Jesus Christ. I was very motivated to find out more, but had no idea how or where to start. So I prayed for God to lead the way for me.

A few months later a colleague invited me to their Church. I attended, and at my first visit to a service heard about Jesus and received Christ, together with my brother. I thank our Father in heaven for this amazing journey!"

Here we see a sincere seeker, not even knowing which religion to pursue at first, but somehow convinced of the existence of spiritual reality, and thus of her need to find and follow one. God heard her prayers and opened the way for her to come to a saving knowledge of Himself through Jesus.

How many people could be walking on the streets of your city or town like this?

As a final story consider how God worked in the life of a new believer who was unsure of her faith. This time it is the story of a youth, rather than an adult. I include this as, although it is not entirely a conversion testimony, it demonstrates again how God is at work in people's lives, even when we are unaware of it.

STORY: So I asked God to touch me right there and then

When Valerie's older sister became a Christian she could see the joy that had come into her life from that decision, but also the great support and comfort she found from the prayers and love in her small group at Church. The changes were so significant that Valerie's mother, a non-Christian, encouraged her to go to Church also. The example of what God had done in her sister's life was enough, and on the night of her very first visit to a Church service she read a gospel tract she had been given and prayed to receive Christ.

Her personal journey continued however. Unknown to anyone else she felt disappointment that her life didn't seem to have changed much. Attending a Church camp she came forward for prayer after the message, and felt the touch of the Holy Spirit in her life. God became more real to her, but she still had uncertainties.

She continued to seek God, and was so desperate one day that, while in class, she asked God to touch her life right there and then. Unexpectedly

she began to sob. Her teacher asked her to help take some things from a class cupboard, at which point she cried even more. To cut the story short, after class her teacher asked her if she was stressed, and, not knowing what to say, she just said 'yes'. She didn't understand why she had cried, but the experience was real.

That night she had a dream. She saw a white figure behind her touching her shoulder when she prayed in class, when she cried at the class cupboard and when she later broke down outside class. Everything in the dream was just like what happened that day, except with the addition of the mysterious white figure. God confirmed to her that her experience was from Him!

Her passion for the Lord, for prayer and for fellowship have continued to increase. She serves in an outreach ministry, and seeks to reach out to her friends.

The Holy Spirit is here on earth, and He is active! His works most often cannot be tested or proven in a science laboratory, but their reality can be found in the lives of those who trust Him.

God desires to see people in heaven, and will go to amazing lengths to reach out to them. We never know what He is doing in a person's life.

We are each in the country, community, workplace or school that we are in because God has placed us there with a purpose! As we engage in the task of reaching out we do well to assume God's Spirit is already at work, rather than the other way around. We should ask and talk about faith with confidence, looking for the opportunities that might come — for, if we are truly willing to be used, God will be already at work setting up the opportunities!

3. GOD LEADS US IN OUR LOVE AND SHARING

A third aspect of God's supernatural work in salvation is in His leading of us in our daily relationships and conversations.

As we study the example of Jesus ministering to others, the wisdom and knowledge He demonstrated clearly required divine help. We are told in Scripture to follow the example of Christ. He was the 'prototype' for perfect human living that we are to imitate. This implies that it is, at least to some extent, *possible* to follow His example (noting that Jesus Himself said that those who followed Him would do greater miracles than He did)! God really can work through us in supernatural ways as we learn to listen and obey!

Understanding Jesus' humanity is important. While Jesus had divine power as God, He had surrendered this when He was born as a human (Philippians 2:6-7). The result was that in His surrendered state He had no actual power advantage over us.

From the incarnation onwards divine knowledge or power only came as a result of the revelation and anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was in every way the same as we are, except that He was sinless.

Jesus thus demonstrates to us the way God can lead us if we will likewise learn to listen to His Spirit. We can be directed as to what to say; given knowledge we could not otherwise know; be prompted to go here or there; and anointed to initiate supernatural works.

STORY: How is your family?

I was sitting in a coffee shop and saw an elderly man sitting by himself. I went and asked if it was ok to sit with him, and we began a conversation. During the conversation I felt prompted to ask the man about his family. The man's eyes all but turned to tears. A story of loss and pain followed, and it opened the door for me to share faith with him and to pray for him.

I recall an occasion when I was about to go out to run some errands, but felt as if God was asking me to stay home and wait. There was no logical reason to do so. There was no way I could be sure it was God speaking, and it seemed a potential waste of my time, but I obeyed. Shortly after a young man came running up the driveway seeking spiritual counsel. Obedience to that gentle whisper of the Spirit enabled me to be found by this young man in his hour of need.

I think of another recent account from a pastor who was visiting a country, and felt God speak to him while driving to do some shopping before visiting an elderly friend's son who was critically ill in hospital. He simply felt the Spirit prompting him to go to the hospital first. Upon arrival he found the family in the midst of a very difficult medical decision, as the man was in a coma and dying. This pastor was able to help the family come to unity in their decision, which in this case was to let this man pass away rather than to intervene again. He then asked if he could pray for them before leaving. At the very moment he said 'Amen' the man passed away peacefully. The family felt so blessed. They had found unity in releasing their son and husband to go to be with the Lord. They had come to feel the Lord's peace in the midst of the experience. This Pastor would not have been there in time had he not listened to the Spirit's prompting, and the family would have suffered greater grief and possible disunity as a result.

One of the most remarkable figures of Church history, who demonstrated an ability to hear and follow the Spirit's voice in evangelism, was Smith Wigglesworth. In his

earlier years he was committed to soul winning through personal witness (in his later years he was able to preach to thousands at a time, and had a constant flow of people coming to him). His method was to go to a place ask the Holy Spirit to show him who to talk with. He would sometimes wait up to an hour before the prompting came. He would then share with that person. He saw about one person per day come to faith by these methods in that season of his life. One story he told was of an occasion where he had waited for an hour and half on a busy street for the Spirit's prompting, and confessed he was beginning to feel frustrated at having to wait so long. The prompting came to talk to a man with a horse and cart. Wigglesworth described the prompting as being as clear as Philip's instruction to join the chariot of the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-39). The man was, however, annoyed at the interruption. Smith quietly sought the Lord as to whether it was the right man, and felt prompted that it was so. He pleaded with the man to yield his life to Christ, and eventually saw a tear in the man's eyes, though it was not confirmed if any response had been made.

Three weeks later he was told that a man who was on his deathbed had been asked if he would like someone to come and pray with him. He had replied *"The last time I was out, a young man got into my cart and spoke to me. I was very rough with him but he was very persistent. Anyhow, God convicted me of my sins, and saved me."* The young man turned out to have been Smith, and hence the story was relayed back to him. The sickly man had passed away that night.⁶⁷

IN SUMMARY:

*"This is one of the great secrets in connection with successful service for the Lord; to work as if everything depended upon our diligence, and yet not to rest in the least upon our exertions (efforts), but upon the blessing of the Lord."*⁶⁸

— George Mueller

To put this into different words, we must do all we can to equip ourselves to be effective witnesses for our Lord — developing our conversational skills, understanding our faith so we have some knowledge, working at showing selfless love and concern for others, learning how to share a clear gospel message, learning to work in teams with other believers, encouraging and being encouraged, making the most of every opportunity. Yet, at the end of it all, salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit. None will come to Jesus unless the Father first draws them (John 6:44). Our dependence is *fully* upon the Lord!

Could it be that we under-estimate the importance of our partnership with the Spirit? A.W. Tozer said, *"If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, ninety-*

⁶⁷ Smith Wigglesworth—Apostle of Faith, Stanley Howard Frodsham (Gospel Publishing House, p 28-29)

⁶⁸ Narrative by George Mueller, 1:611

*five percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, ninety-five percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.*⁶⁹

In conclusion:

The Holy Spirit can lead us in our evangelism, and it is essential that we allow Him to do so because empowering us for Christian witness is His central purpose (Acts 1:8) in exactly the same way as our salvation was Jesus' central purpose.

The busyness and worries of this life can create so much 'noise' in our hearts that they drown out the Spirit's whispers. Yet, as we learn to walk closer with God through each day, our effectiveness can be enhanced. It is a wonderful hope! God is with us, is going before us, and can make us effective!

16

Go put it to work

We will end this book with a concluding exhortation, but I would first like us to take one more look at Jesus in a simple conversation.

(A) A FINAL LOOK AT JESUS

In Luke 10:25-37 we have the account of an expert in the law who stood up to test Jesus. His question was this: *"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

It is of interest to note that the rich young man of Matthew 19 asked almost the exact same question. He asked, *"What good thing must I do to get eternal life?"*

Jesus' first response, in both cases, was very much the same. He responded **with a question**. However the dynamics of the two conversations were quite different. Here in Luke 10 Jesus conversed with a teacher of the law, and such teachers had sought to trap Jesus in His words on various occasions. Jesus thus *returned the burden of proof* to the enquirer.

However, the question accomplished more than this. Jesus now had a chance to **listen** more carefully to this man, to consider what deeper issues or questions might lie behind the initial question. Jesus had no emotional need to defend Himself in such

⁶⁹ I most recently read this quote on a website. I do not have the original book reference.

circumstances. He did however desire to help this man come to a revelation of who He (Jesus) was — given that He was the only one who could be this man's Saviour!

Jesus' reply to the question was, *"What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"*

The expert in the law gave a good answer. Something of his heart was revealed, for he understood the heart of the law to be more than obedient actions. His reply, quoted from two Old Testament Scriptures, was, *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'* (Luke 10:27). The exact same words are found coming from Jesus' lips in Matthew 22:37-39. Indeed it was a discerning answer, surpassing the legalisms of the rich young man who boasted of his own righteousness, claiming to have obeyed the commands, and enquiring as to which others he might need to obey to secure eternal life (his question therefore being about assurance of salvation).

At first Jesus seemed to compliment this religious expert on his reply, but I am not sure it really was intended as a compliment. It was not in Jesus' nature to use flattery. His reply was, *"You answered correctly. Do this and you will live"* (Luke 10:28).

Jesus was skilled in His use of provocative statements in conversations! While this reply was in the form of a statement, it might as well have been a question because it left the topic hanging, awaiting a further response. Who could love God with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength? Who could really love their neighbour as selflessly as they loved themselves? It was an impossible standard!

Now the man's true heart could be revealed. He could admit his sinfulness in humility, or he could seek to justify his imperfections — because he was not sinless!

Well, the expert in the law did the latter. The scriptures tell us the expert in the law wanted to justify himself, and so he asked, *"And who is my neighbour?"*

The **sour note** was now seen and **clarified**. While his understanding of God's law was clear, his acceptance of its various applications in his life was not. To put this differently, there was a contradiction between his beliefs and his behaviour. On the one hand he believed that wholehearted love for God and others mattered greatly, while on the other hand he practiced a more 'selective', and less costly love in his daily life (which the next paragraph shall explain). Jesus now sought to **illuminate** this deficiency.

The parable of The Good Samaritan followed, through which Jesus explained the true actions of love. Sometimes love requires us to step outside of our comfort zones, as well as outside of cultural norms. Sometimes love even costs us something, as indeed it would for an expert in the law if he were to touch an 'unclean' and bloodied man as in Jesus' parable (he would become 'unclean' himself, and thus require an inconvenient time of purification according to their laws).

Jesus' challenge to the expert in the law was clear. The man's application of the law of love, which he had correctly identified, was selective at best. His original question was also answered — eternal life was the result of love's *perfect* application, not merely intellectual assent to the need for such love, with selective application. Jesus' concluding comment, in reference to the hero of His parable (the culturally despised 'half-breed' Samaritan), was, *'Go and do likewise!'* (Luke 10: 37)

So, how had Jesus helped this man? He had helped the man to recognise his sinfulness and need of a Saviour. Jesus was **building** a conversational bridge to the gospel. Jesus' death on the cross was for our sin, but this man would see no need for that if he considered himself righteous already. Jesus thus moved this man one step closer to understanding the gospel.

Within a short few years this man would hear about the cross, and may have even been a witness to Jesus' death on it, for it was less than two years away, and as a diligent religious Jew, he would have travelled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival every year!

What was Jesus' method? Motivated by love, He listened to the Spirit and He talked with people! This is what we must do!

(B) A CONCLUDING EXHORTATION

In the houses around our churches there are thousands of unbelievers. In some nations there are 5000 unbelievers per church. In others there are 10,000, or more. It is to our embarrassment that in New Zealand there are as few as 1,000 to 2,000 unbelievers per church, and that our Churches are still failing to connect the gospel with them! A lot of effort goes into community ministry. This is good. Some have talked a lot about the need for a relational approach to evangelism. This is a good start. However, action in a manner that is geared to our times is what is needed.

This book has presented an approach to evangelism that is geared to our times. For churches, we have not presented 'yet another program' — but instead a simple paradigm of leadership (a set of habits) that can accomplish the most important of goals if applied with consistency, passion and faith.

A great many have placed evangelism in the 'too hard basket'. This book has presented a perspective and approach that could help us take it out of that basket — as summarised in the text box below.

We can become effective in evangelism, and evangelism mobilisation, again!

*"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, **but doing it** — he will be blessed in what he does."* (James 1:25)

A SUMMARY OF THE MESSAGE OF THIS BOOK

REGARDING MOTIVATION:

a. **Knowing God's love gives us inner security and strength**

b. **Knowing God's love for others gives us motivation**

The greatest hindrance to the spread of the gospel is not the fact that our culture has changed, or our fear of rejection from people when we attempt to share that message, or even a lack of equipping. It is a lack of God's love in our hearts. Christ's love compels us.

A great many churches and believers are not focused on their God-given Mission. The heart of this matter is a matter of the heart.

REGARDING EQUIPPING:

We underestimate the need for equipping. Many give less focus to evangelistic equipping than our churches did fifty years ago, but the need is greater because our culture is now further from Christ in terms of its worldview. Our culture is sceptical of religious truth claims. We have rejected moral absolutes. We are thus indifferent toward what the various religions say. Effectiveness in Christian outreach within this culture will require more knowledge and perspective than it did fifty years ago. We have talked for too long about 'postmodernism'. It is essential that we now apply our intelligence to what we know so as to articulate a conclusion. Exactly what areas do believers need equipping in if we are to become effective in outreach, and in mobilising believers to it? It is time to consolidate what we know, so that we can begin to give necessary attention to doing it — and this is what this book has sought to do. It is time for action!

We have also underestimated the effects that our 'multi-religious' culture has had upon those in the Church. Many in our pews are more 'multi-religious' than we realise. They lack many fundamental Christian belief — and this is, therefore, another reason many 'believers' are unmotivated for gospel efforts (and gives us another significant direction to follow if we are serious about addressing this struggle for motivation for evangelistic efforts).

I have thus suggested that evangelistic equipping is needed in the following areas:

- a. Knowledge of the **reasons for our faith**, because it gives us *confidence and content*.
- b. How to **show care and concern**, because it *opens the doors* for us.

- c. How to lead a simple **conversation**, because it *keeps those doors open*.
- d. How to share the **gospel**, because it enables us to *help where it counts*.
- e. How to work in **teams** in outreach, because it helps us to *sustain* and *multiply* our focus.

Knowing what the gospel is, and how to share it, is not enough!

The middle chapters of this book therefore provided some practical content that could help, especially in the area of conversation, because there is very little teaching on this. I believe such content is essential if we are to see many evangelistically passive believers reengaging in evangelism, because they are passive for a reason (their intuition has told them that the approaches we have been suggesting for sharing the gospel will not work with their friends).

REGARDING LEADERSHIP:

While the first key to sustaining an active involvement in outreach efforts is God's love in our hearts, the second is probably our ability to work from a team-base, rather than as individuals. Many of us can not sustain a focus on evangelistic efforts by ourselves! Our churches could benefit greatly if we were willing to re-learn a few things about small group teamwork that are implied (or assumed) in the texts of the New Testament Scriptures.

— AT A SMALL GROUP LEVEL:

Small groups in churches play a significant role in our outreach. In small groups believers can:

1. Identify those they will reach out to
2. Pray for them
3. Equip themselves for relevant outreach
4. Plan for the building of relational bridges
5. Share with them (personally, through group efforts, or participation in corporate Church efforts)
6. Disciple them

However, most small groups do not currently have evangelism as a part of their focus — so we are talking about leadership through change. I recognise that, in most cases, a successful application of principles at a small group level (as in chapters twelve and thirteen) will only be achieved *after* a successful

application of other principles at a church level (as in chapter fourteen). The dynamics of change are difficult.

Small groups in the marketplace or campus could, likewise, be an effective strategy. By applying certain principles, believers could be helped to actively engage in their Mission. We spend one day a week at Church, and six days at work or school, and in the community. This is no small thing!

— **AT A CHURCH LEADERSHIP LEVEL:**

The key leader in a church sets the focus of the church, and in leadership we get what we promote. Chapter fourteen provided a framework (like water pipes to a house) through which everything else in this book (that being like the water in those pipes) could be sustainably taught and encouraged. To summarise:

1. The ‘hinges’ for a congregation’s evangelism are its **seasons**. Mobilising members to their Mission isn’t the only thing a pastor or key church leader does. Through creating seasons everything can still have its place.

2. The key to effective evangelism however is the mobilisation of **every believer**. Yes — we need evangelistic events. However, members need motivating and equipping for their Mission of reaching out to their neighbours, colleagues and friends (Ephesians 4). A small percentage of unbelievers will come to our Church events — but a much larger percentage can be reached if our members can be mobilised to take God’s message to them!

3. The home base of evangelism is the small group. Why? As above in this summary, this is where personal encouragement and accountability are based. Members can remain invisible and inactive sitting in their pews — but not when in a small group. Additionally, most of us can not sustain a focus on evangelistic efforts by ourselves. This is a needed ‘link in the chain’ that many have been missing. *No other approach will mobilise as many believers to evangelistic efforts as this, or to effectiveness like this!* However, success in this will be significantly connected to the pastor or key Church leader’s vision for it. If you are a church leader this is worth a second and third consideration. The Alpha course ‘packaged’ some of these principles, and with great success (though Alpha also has a great content, so the success is a combination of factors). What would happen if we could learn and replicate the principles in all our small groups?

4. The primary location for evangelism is **the work place or school campus**.

This is an indispensable perspective. While a new believer may see their first place of ministry as being in the local Church (where they may become involved in many things), as we grow to maturity our focus should move more and more to our daily ministry; the world we live in the other six days of the week. If our Church leaders will trust and empower our Church members in this way, releasing them to this ministry beyond the boundaries of the local church, we will reach far more people than were our focus only on getting our members to bring the people to us (to our church).

5. The goal for the pastor with regard to evangelism (Ephesians 4) is to change the **culture** of any Church that is not strong in evangelism (which could take three to five years) so that a **relational, conversational and team-based approach** to evangelism (this being an approach that suits our times) would become a natural and built-in part of that Church’s life.

Because the Church does have a Mission, this is automatically (by default) a pastor’s, or key Church leader’s, Mission. This is worthy of some reflection — because it is questionable as to how many of our Churches are really focused on God’s Mission as their mission. Yes, an evangelistic thing or two may be amongst the various ministries of the Church. However, gospel work is more than a ministry of the Church. It is its Mission!

For consideration: When pastors are trained, they are rarely taught about evangelism. Most are not trained to recognise that, amongst their many responsibilities, they are still responsible to lead the church in its actual Mission; to keep the main thing the main thing — to reach those who are without Christ. This is an inexpressibly significant oversight (and from no perspective is this more clearly so than from eternity).

6. A strategy that can accomplish this can be summed up in **four leadership habits**.

These habits (as at chapter 14) can be strategically placed on a calendar, including:

- (1) A motivational and equipping message
- (2) Matching small group sessions to reinforce (and facilitate teamwork)
- (3) A monthly testimony to remind
- (4) Clear Gospel messages at Christmas and Easter services, to model to members

All that has been discussed can thus be sustained. The question is not whether this is possible. It is whether we believe this is necessary!

SO, HOW ABOUT IT?

Do you remember Andy in the story at the start of this book? His parents spent over \$100,000 on his medical care, and did not regret it at all! We believe human lives are valuable — and we are correct, because we are eternal beings, created in God's image and loved by Him!

However, the most important area of health is not physical health, it is spiritual. We will all die physically — but only those who follow Christ will live with God in eternity! The judgement day is coming. It is a reality as real as the existence of the Creator God — as evidenced by the many great complexities that exist like our finely-tuned universe, the machines inside microscopic cells, and the unbelievably complex 'programming' of our minds producing our thoughts, emotions, wills, sense of self-awareness, moral intuitions, dreams, hopes and much more. There is a God!

The consequence of sin is separation from that Creator God — because He is good. However, because of love God has given Jesus. Jesus is God's provision for the sins of all people, so they can be forgiven. He is God's one and only provision! Those who receive Jesus' forgiveness have relationship with God, and thus eternal life. Those who do not receive it, do not. They are lost! Truly lost!

These things are also universal in their application. It won't be one set of rules for the Buddhists, and a different one for the Christians. If true, these are universal truths — and they are scary. However, this is about a universal hope — not a universal condemnation, because God has provided a solution! There is a 'get out of jail free' card. There is an escape hatch. There is a road for deliverance. It is Jesus!

We have the words of eternal life. We must share them, and in ways people can begin to understand. Until we do they have no hope at all.

This is about love.

This is about love.

This is all about love!

So, please consider how you will apply what you have read...

...because you care!

In His service, and the service of those who have not heard or understood.

Dave.

STUDY 9:

Planning for success

GETTING STARTED

1. What spoke to you, or especially encouraged you, from the final two chapters?
2. How helpful has this course been to you?

Encouragement: Sustaining an evangelistic focus will not come naturally to most group members, or to most group leaders. The familiar saying is thus true, that if we fail to plan we plan to fail. In today's session we will reflect through questions in four different categories, considering what we could do throughout this year so as to not lose the focus on what we have learned. Please note that you need not have action steps under every question. Only what is helpful to you.*

DISCUSSION

- (A) Individual growth plan:
1. What will you do to feed your passion for the lost so you do not lose it?
 2. What areas might you need to learn or read about over the next year so as to grow to your next 'level' in evangelism? *
 3. What times in the year do you think you will struggle most to sustain the passion? How can you counter-balance that? *
- (B) Individual action plan:
1. Who will you each seek to reach out to in the remainder of this year?

You could photocopy the worksheet in appendix ten, to create a fresh copy for each person for the following:

2. What are the common interests you share with them? How do you plan to spend time with them?

3. What hindrances to saving faith have you identified in them?

4. In what could you personally socialise, serve and surprise them?

5. Through this, what **hearing, illuminating, uncovering** and **bridging** questions could you discuss with them?

6. What small group or corporate bridging events could you invite them to?

7. What small group or corporate evangelistic events could you invite them to?

(C) Group growth plan:

1. What might you need to do so as to feed your group's passion for the lost, so it is better sustained? *

APPLICATION

1. Commit together in prayer to do what you have planned.

2. Plan your next step.

Prayer: Pray for one another and for those you desire to see saved.

'Let us not give up meeting together... ..let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.' (Hebrews 10:25)

* Refer to notes in the Discussion Guide at the back of this book.

Discussion Guide

STUDY 1: WHOSE JOB IS IT?

GETTING STARTED

Make it your goal to get members sharing openly. Verbally thank every person who shares with an encouragement like “Thanks!” or “Great contribution!” Their involvement (or lack of it) at the beginning sets the pattern for the rest of your time together.

DISCUSSION

- 1d. Prayer for spiritual freedom. Sharing God’s truth to bring revelation.

STUDY 2: RESPONDING TO A CHANGING WORLD

Remember that the goal of this session is that members would understand something of the reasons for resistance to the gospel, but also see that it is possible to overcome these challenges. We are encouraging confidence in their hearts.

DISCUSSION

- 3a. It’s a process, different people are involved, but God is the one overseeing it all!
- 4e. They must really care for the members, because these things are not easy!
- 4f. Because the window of opportunity to reach them may be limited.

STUDY 3: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

In this session, help them see that faith is the key to confidence. With God’s Word opened in our hands and hearts, there is no excuse left for fearful living.

DISCUSSION

- 1b. He knew His Father loved Him, and thus that nothing outside of the Father’s will could happen to Him. There was nothing to fear!
- 1c. The same love of the Father, plus who Jesus was and the fact that His mission was not yet accomplished.
- 3a. It is a spiritual battle

- 3b. In our minds!
- 3c. With truth and reason

STUDY 4: THE NEED FOR KNOWLEDGE

DISCUSSION

- 2a. It is not only historically rooted, but stands or falls on the validity of the claimed events.
- 4d. Consider this verse alongside 2 Corinthians 10:5 and 1 Corinthians 9:22, and it becomes clear that we are to not only answer questions, but anticipate them, such as we see the Apostle Paul doing in Acts 17.

STUDY 5: STARTING THE CONVERSATION

DISCUSSION

- 1b. It lessens defensiveness. It brings involvement, thus engaging the mind in the conversation. A question begs a question, as such a good question can create an opportunity to speak in which they are interested to listen.
- 1c. ii. Desire.
- 1c. iii. Not entirely. See v9. Jesus still had Nicodemus feeling confused, and thus wanting to hear more.
- 1d. ii. A provocative question — the term ‘son of man’ harkens back to a Daniel 7:13-14 prophecy of a man who would be entrusted by God with authority, glory and sovereign power. How could they place their trust in someone if they didn’t know who he was?
- 1e. i. v8. He initiated a conversation that both lessened Defensiveness and created Desire, as this was a woman to whom, according to cultural norms, He shouldn’t have even talked.
v10. A provocative statement that raised Desire.
- 2b. To clarify what, clarify why, and redirect.
- 2d. They turn the onus of proof back to them.
- 2e. He turned the onus of proof to them.

- 2f. He turned the onus of proof to them, thus side-stepping the need to reply or get involved.
- 2g. He didn't assume to know what the man wanted — the purpose of 'Columbo Tactic question 1'. He demonstrated humility.
- 2h. It put the onus of proof onto them. It was a redirecting question to cause them to see from a broader perspective. 'Have you considered that...' It, again, put the onus of proof on them.
3. (2) There are a few levels to this — some intellectual, some emotional, and some a current cultural misconception.

For a straight approach you could ask:

- (1) What do you mean by arrogant and exclusive? (Because their words are accusatory it is fair to reverse the burden of proof).
- (2) Where did you get that idea from (that it is arrogant to have a view)?
- (3) Have you considered that everyone has a view? (Right now they think you are wrong by believing you are right and others wrong — so actually they are also being arrogant and intolerant by their definition, because they are judging you).

Behind this question is another intellectual question — namely the question (or suggestion) that religious truth does not exist. This is why it is considered 'arrogant' to suggest one religion is true... (noting that they are reflecting that they have no appreciation for what religions believe — judging you through the 'spectacles' of their pluralistic worldview of you). You could use different questions to redirect the conversation if you felt this was the case, such as,

(1) Are you saying it is arrogant to believe there is only one way to God? So you believe that all religions are the same? In what way are they the same? [i.e. what do you mean by that?]

(2) What led you to that belief?

(3) Have you considered that all the religions say different things, and especially so in the big matters? How do you resolve that? (The point is that it is illogical to believe all religions are the same, because they do not say the same. Additionally, the Christian claim to truth is not about arrogance. It is about reason. Also — to clarify — intolerance is not about what you believe — or talking about your opinion. We believe in free speech. Right! It's about how you treat people. It's about your manner. It is not judgemental to disagree with another person or groups' point of view. But it is judgemental if you are criticising their character without due reason (which ironically is what the person accusing you of arrogance is doing). We are dealing with a cultural misconception here, but must deal with it gently and wisely.

Note there could be an emotional reason behind their reaction also, such as a previous bad experience with a Christian who really was judgemental of others and arrogant in their manner.

4. (1) See 'Do good people go to heaven' in the previous chapter.

STUDY 6: LEADING THE CONVERSATION

DISCUSSION

- 1b. Hearing, illuminating, uncovering and bridging.
- 1d. 1. We should not assume to have heard until we have listened.
2. Intellectual questions can be answered, and discrepancies illuminated.
3. Deeper emotional or spiritual objections can be uncovered and responded to.
4. Bridges can be built from new or common understandings that help them understand the gospel in a way they have not before.
- 2a. None of us have a completely clear view of God and His Truth. There is little room for arrogance and every reason for humility in our dealing with nonbelievers
- 2c. i. See v26. Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead.
3. (1) If God is so loving, how can there be a hell?

While it could be an intellectual objection, it also could be that a relative recently died, and they fear that relative is in hell. The response to the question will be based around clarifying the difference between God's love and His goodness. It is clear God loves us — He gave Jesus. His continuing justice relates to the fact that He is a good God. To be good He must be just.

Consider these questions: (a) An uncovering question to start: What leads you to question if God is loving? Why is this question so important to you? (b) Illuminating questions: Have you ever thought about why God sent Jesus? If God is all-powerful, why do you think God sent Jesus instead of getting rid of hell? Would you consider a judge good if he let a serial rapist off without punishment? Can you see how it is necessary for someone to be just if they are to be good? (c) Bridging questions: Do you think God wants people in hell? Me neither. Did you know that the Bible says God is willing that none should perish... (2 Peter 3:9)? Could I explain to you what God has done to try to get everyone into heaven? Explain the problem of sin, the coming of Christ, what His death and resurrection accomplished, and the choice we now have before us. How ready do you think you might be to trust God for yourself? Can I give you something to read, and we could talk about it another time?

3. (2) Is it possible to reconcile science and faith?

Note it is a loaded question in that it assumes there is conflict. Hearing: What do you think? Do you think there is a conflict? What led you to that conclusion? Illuminating: What is it about science and faith that you think might contradict? Do the scientists know that stuff for a fact? Were you aware that... (e.g. ...there are many scientists who are Christians, who see no conflict?)... Uncovering: What might hold you back from following God? Bridge building: Are you aware of the many ways in which science suggests the need for a God — or that Christianity

is a religion that encourages scientific investigation? In the conversation that follows you could expose sin and selfishness as the real problem in this world; that the world's evils are not something humans can therefore rid the earth of; that outside help is therefore needed; then explain how Christianity logically fits with how the world really is by explaining 'Do vs Done' as explained in the previous chapter.

4. (2) How can I choose Christ when my spouse is probably in hell? Or, Why would I want to go to heaven when all my mates are in hell?

Hearing / clarifying question: Why do you think they are in hell? / How do you know they aren't in heaven? Illuminating questions: What would they want you to do? If the situation were reversed, what would you want them to do? Bridging questions: Would you like to spend an eternity in a place, lets say, that is just like earth, only there is no suffering or sadness or death? I do too! You seem to believe in God and heaven. Has anyone ever explained to you how any person can guarantee getting to heaven?

STUDY 7: 'SEALING THE DEAL'

DISCUSSION

4. They could use one of the above described explanations, or any other tool or method that your Church has taught.
- 7c. Because it is implied that we would desire to create and capture every opportunity.
- 7d. Every.
- 7e. Implied: conversational skills, people skills that convey warmth. Logically: some knowledge and understanding are also needed.
- 7f. Logically so, as it is about making the most of every opportunity in the course of daily interactions and conversations, and living in a manner that will help us both create and capture those opportunities.

STUDY 8: ESTABLISHING HOME BASE

DISCUSSION

3. (Regarding if this is biblical, a point could be made that it is both an individual and group responsibility. Thus the Bible doesn't differentiate on this matter. 'Going out' to 'make disciples' is the mission of both the individual and the group within the Church!)

STUDY 9: PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

GETTING STARTED

For the group leader(s): Please note that for most people the conclusions reached would need noting next to specific dates in a group-planning calendar if they are to be remembered and followed through. We encourage that the purpose of reaching the lost is worth the effort this would take.

DISCUSSION

- (A) 2. Would visiting any particular ministry help you gain inspiration or ideas?

- (A) 3. Consider the things that can influence your motivation such as prayer partnerships, books, conferences, etc.

- (C) 1. Consider:

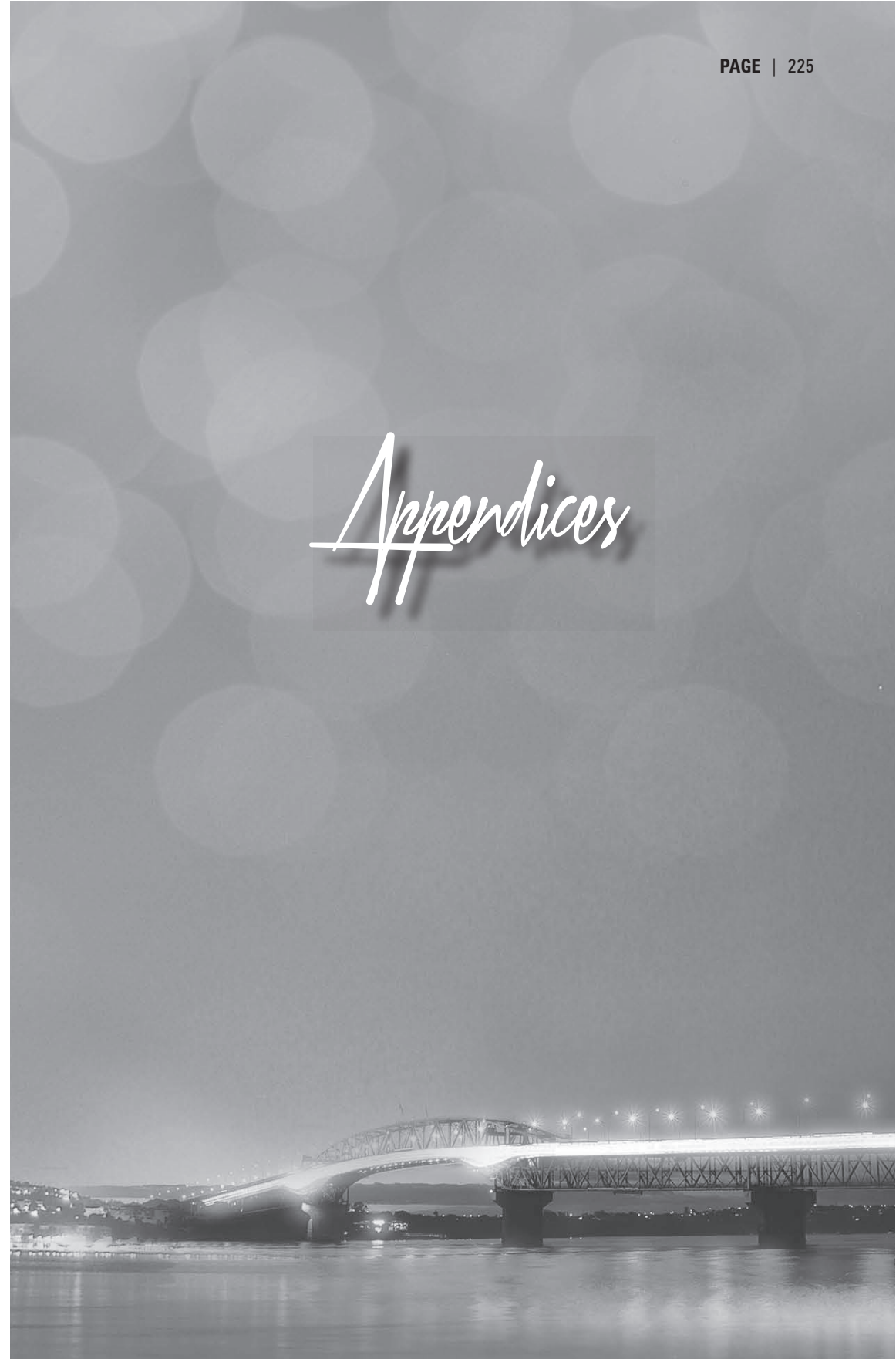
- a. Members being rostered to share a Scripture and thought aimed at answering the question, 'Why is this important?'
- b. Monthly revision of conversational and gospel sharing skill learnt, for a period of six months, so as to consolidate the learning and enable / encourage its application.
- c. Members could be rostered to share
- a difficult question,
 - a reasoned answer, and then
 - a string of questions that could be used in conversation so as to lead a person toward illumination, building bridges to the gospel in the process, all through the use of questions alone.

- d. Weekly (or bi-weekly) 'sharing' where members can give updates on progress made with those identified in appendix ten. Nothing builds success like success! (The small group leader could request a photocopy of each member's appendix eight, or even of just the names of those they are seeking to reach out to).

- e. Weekly (or bi-weekly) prayer for these people at the end of the small group meeting.

- f. Further areas of study, which a majority of your group might have a desire to learn in.

Appendices



APPENDIX ONE: Books you could consider reading (Bibliography)

EVANGELISTIC MOTIVATION

Evangelism by Fire <i>(The first of many motivational books by Bonnke, and the best in this author's opinion)</i>	Reinhard Bonnke
Soulwinner	C.H. Spurgeon
Good biographies of evangelists such as...	John Wesley, William Carey, William Booth, Hudson Taylor, Smith Wigglesworth, Jackie Pullinger, Keith Green, Reinhard Bonnke, and others.

PRE-EVANGELISM AND CONVERSATIONAL EVANGELISM TRAINING

Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult	Nick Pollard
Conversational Evangelism <i>The contents of chapters seven through nine are predominantly a summary of part of this book, used with permission.</i>	Norman Geisler and David Geisler
Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions	— Gregory Koukl

RELATIONAL EVANGELISM TRAINING

Becoming a contagious Christian	Bill Hybels
Out of the Saltshaker and into the World	Rebecca Pippett

INTEGRATING FAITH AND REASON

Love Your God With All Your Mind	J.P. Moreland
Beyond Belief To Convictions	Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler

APOLOGETICS

Living Loud	Norman Geisler and Joseph Holden
New Evidence that Demands a Verdict	(comprehensive resource) Josh McDowell
When Skeptics Ask	Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks
Who Made God? And Answers to Over 100 Other Tough Questions of Faith	Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler.

A Case for Faith	Lee Strobel
To Everyone an Answer	F.J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig
The Design Revolution	William Dembski and J.P. Moreland

WHO IS JESUS?

More Than a Carpenter	Josh McDowell
Is Jesus God?	John Maisel (at www.meeeknessandtruth.org)
A Case for Christ	Lee Strobel
Jesus Among Other Gods	Ravi Zacharias

WORLD VIEWS

How Now Shall We Live	Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey
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DEFENSE OF FAITH AGAINST CURRENT ATTACKS

Many of the above	
The Divinity Code — The explosive new evidence	Ian Wishart (A New Zealander)

CHURCH LEADERSHIP AS RELATED TO EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH AND MOBILISATION

Purpose Driven Church	Rick Warren
Becoming a Contagious Church	Mark Mittelberg

RESOURCES THAT TEACH THE ART OF RELATIONAL EVANGELISM

Seeker Small Groups	Garry Poole
Becoming A Contagious Christian Course	Mark Mittelberg, Lee Strobel and Bill Hybels
Walk across the room	Bill Hybels

APPENDIX TWO: Your Evangelistic Quotient

This very simple survey will give you a score, reflecting at least something of your level of involvement in current evangelistic application. It might also amuse you.

1. How often do you think about the need for others to hear the gospel?
1 Seldom 2 Occasionally 3 Often (weekly) 4 Most days
2. How often do you think of your family members need to hear the gospel?
1 Seldom 2 Occasionally 3 Often (weekly) 4 Most days
3. How often do you pray for your family members' salvation?
1 Seldom 2 Occasionally 3 Often (weekly) 4 Most days
4. How often do you pray for your friends', or colleagues' salvation?
1 Seldom 2 Occasionally 3 Often (weekly) 4 Most days
5. How burdened would you say you feel about the need to share the gospel?
1 Not at all 2 A little 3 Reasonably 4 Greatly
6. How fearful are you of talking about God with non-believers?
1 Greatly 2 Reasonably 3 A little 4 Not at all
7. How many books have you read about evangelism or evangelists (including Christian biographies)?
1 None 2 One or two 3 More than five 4 More than ten
8. When your Church announces an outreach, do you immediately think of whom you could invite?
1 Never 2 Occasionally 3 Mostly 4 Always
9. How many times have you attended evangelism training of some kind?
1 Never 2 Once or twice 3 Over five times 4 More than ten times
10. Could you share a clear gospel message if a friend or relative asked?
1 No 2 A little so 3 Reasonably so 4 Yes
11. If a friend asked you to share why you are a Christian, could you share a clear and concise testimony?
1 No 2 A little so 3 Reasonably so 4 Yes
12. If a friend wanted to become a Christian, would you feel confident to lead them in a 'salvation prayer' (of repentance and commitment to Christ)?
1 No 2 A little so 3 Reasonably so 4 Yes
13. How many times might you have shared the gospel with a person?
1 Never 2 Less than five 3 five to ten 4 More than ten

14. How do you rate your ability to initiate talk about God or religion in general when in conversation with others?
1 Non-existent 2 Weak 3 Moderate 4 Strong
15. How many people might you initiate a conversation with on an average day?
1 None 2 One or two 3 three to five 4 More than five
16. How strongly would you rate your ability to sustain a general conversation, using questions?
1 I can't 2 Weak 3 Moderate 4 Strong
17. In an average conversation, how do you think you make the people around you feel?
1 Awkward 2 No different 3 Accepted 4 Great
18. What is your perception of yourself, regarding other peoples desire to be with you?
1 They don't want to 2 They don't mind it 3 They like it 4 They love it
19. When you hear help is needed to make an evangelistic event happen how do you feel?
1 Nothing 2 Open to help 3 Pleased to help 4 Excited to help
20. In your heart, how many people do you feel personally responsible to share the gospel with, so they have a chance? (for example loved ones who you think might not have a chance if you don't do something etc.)
1 None 2 About ten 3 Twenty 4 More than fifty
21. Have you been able to sustain a focus on outreach to those around you after previous training or motivating experiences?
1 Not at all 2 Briefly only 3 For a while 4 Yes
22. If you had a chance to receive training that could equip you to lead basic non-threatening conversations on spiritual things with friends, to share the gospel, and lead them in a response if they were willing, would you want to come?
1 Not really 2 Possibly 3 Most likely 4 Definitely
23. How strong is the desire in you right now to grow in this area so as to reach out to those around you?
1 0/10 2 3/10 3 7/10 4 10/10
24. How strong would you like that desire to be, if things could be different?
1 The same 2 A bit higher 3 High 4 Much higher
25. Will you at least commit to read this book?
1 No 2 Some of it 3 Most of it 4 All of it

TOTAL SCORE (25 — 100): _____

Score 25 — 43:	A weak current evangelistic quotient
Score 44 — 62:	A moderate current evangelistic quotient
Score 63 — 81:	A strong current evangelistic quotient
Score 82 — 100:	You should write a book

APPENDIX THREE: Your Apologetics Quotient

A simple survey to assess your knowledge level in apologetics.

Definitions: When asked a difficult question you are...

- **Clueless** — if you can't even begin to respond
- **Tentative** — if you can manage a response but with uncertainty
- **Confident** — if you can string together a few good points
- **Expert** — if you can even cite specific Bible verses and extra-biblical sources in support

Write in the right-hand-side box the number representing the most accurate description of your ability to respond to each of the following 40 questions about the Christian Faith:

1. Who made God?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
2. Why couldn't the world always have existed?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
3. How can God make something out of nothing?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
4. What was God doing before He made the world?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
5. How can there be three persons in one God?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
6. How can a good God send people to hell?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
7. How can God be both loving and just?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
8. What is the origin of evil?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
9. What is God's ultimate purpose in allowing evil?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
10. Wouldn't it be better if God did away with all evil immediately?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
11. Does the existence of evil prove that God is finite?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
12. Are Science and Christianity allies or adversaries?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
13. How should Theology and Science relate?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
14. Where did the universe come from?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
15. What explains the actual origin of life?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
16. Are the records of Jesus' life reliable?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
17. Did Jesus ever claim to be God?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
18. Did Jesus really perform miracles?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
19. Did Jesus fulfill the Messianic prophecies?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
20. Did Jesus rise from the dead?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
21. Where did the Bible come from?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
22. Who wrote the Bible?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
23. Were the biblical authors mere secretaries of the Holy Spirit?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
24. What was a prophet in Bible times?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
25. Could prophets add their personal thoughts to God's message?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
26. How did the prophets get their messages from God?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
27. Were the prophets permitted to change the words God gave?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
28. What do you mean when you say "The Bible is the Word of God"?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
29. How else does the Bible claim to be the Word of God?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
30. Does the Bible actually claim to be the "Word of God" in so many words?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert

- 31. Does the Bible claim to have divine authority?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
- 32. What do you mean when you say that the Bible is inspired?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
- 33. Are the very words of the Bible inspired or only the ideas?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
- 34. Does the Bible claim to be inspired on all topics or just spiritual ones?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
- 35. Isn't the Bible also a human book?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
- 36. Does the Bible have errors in it?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
- 37. Are there errors in the Bible manuscripts and translations?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
- 38. How can the Bible be both God's words and Man's words?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
- 39. Were the biblical witnesses reliable?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert
- 40. Are the copies of the Bible reliable?
1. Clueless 2. Tentative 3. Confident 4. Expert

TOTAL SCORE _____ (Min. 40 / max. 160)

Score 40-80: beginner
81-120: Intermediate
121-160: Advanced

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APPENDIX FOUR: Your Conversational Quotient

A simple 2-part survey to assess your conversational comfort and skill level

A. COMFORT LEVEL AND AWARENESS OF PEOPLE (QUESTIONS ORIGINAL)

DEFINITIONS

- Very seldom — less than 2 out of 10 times
- Occasional — between 2-5 out of 10 times
- Often — between 5-8 out of 10 times
- Most times — more than 8 out of 10 times

Write in the right-hand-side box the number representing the most accurate description of your frequency of initiating conversation in each of the following 15 common settings.

1. With your neighbour, over the fence
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time
2. With the counter staff in the petrol station
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time
3. With a person in the lift
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time
4. With a colleague in your office kitchen / pantry
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time
5. With a cleaner at your work place
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time
6. With a colleague while working on a common job
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time
7. With a stranger in the queue at the bank
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time
8. With a stranger on a 'park bench' up town while waiting for a spouse to come out of a shop
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time
9. With a person waiting for a bus / ferry / train?
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time
10. With an old school friend you bump into up town
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time
11. With a person you know from an interest (hobby), or another parent dropping kids at school.
1. Very seldom 2. Occasional 3. Often 4. Most of the time

12. With the cashier in the supermarket
- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
| 1. Very seldom | 2. Occasional | 3. Often | 4. Most of the time |
|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
13. With the sales person in the fish and chip shop
- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
| 1. Very seldom | 2. Occasional | 3. Often | 4. Most of the time |
|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
14. With your accountant who you meet in the supermarket
- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
| 1. Very seldom | 2. Occasional | 3. Often | 4. Most of the time |
|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
15. With the builder repairing your neighbour's fence
- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
| 1. Very seldom | 2. Occasional | 3. Often | 4. Most of the time |
|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|

TOTAL SCORE _____ (min. 15/max.60)

Score 15-30: Reserved; 31-45: Sociable; 46-60: Friendly

B. SKILL LEVEL AND INTENTIONALITY OF ENGAGEMENT (COPIED EXACTLY)

DEFINITIONS

- **Unimaginative** — can't get past initial greetings. E.g. 'Hi, how are you?' or 'Have you eaten your fill already?'
- **Interesting** — can start and maintain engaging conversation based on naturally arising or relevant topics
- **Creative** — can direct already engaging conversation to related topics of one's choice and maintain conversation partner's interest
- **Chatterbox** — can't stop even when conversation partner shows signs of boredom or urgency to leave you

Write down in the right-hand-side box the number representing the most accurate description of how you perceive yourself as a conversational partner with each of the following 5 classes of persons:

- | | | | | |
|--|------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. With a neighbour | 1. Unimaginative | 2. Interesting | 3. Creative | 4. Chatterbox |
| 2. With an extended family member / relative | 1. Unimaginative | 2. Interesting | 3. Creative | 4. Chatterbox |
| 3. With a former schoolmate | 1. Unimaginative | 2. Interesting | 3. Creative | 4. Chatterbox |
| 4. With a former colleague | 1. Unimaginative | 2. Interesting | 3. Creative | 4. Chatterbox |
| 5. With a total stranger | 1. Unimaginative | 2. Interesting | 3. Creative | 4. Chatterbox |

TOTAL SCORE _____ (min. 5/max.20)

Score 5-7: Unimaginative; 8-12: Interesting; 13-17: Creative; 18-20: Chatterbox)

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APPENDIX FIVE: 12 Steps in Establishing a Case for Christianity

(See Dr Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopaedia of Christian Apologetics* for more details).

1. Truth about reality is knowable.
2. The opposite of true is false.
3. It is true that the theistic God exists.
4. If God exists then miracles are possible.
5. Miracles can be used to confirm a message from God.
6. The New Testament is historically reliable.
7. The New Testament says Jesus claimed to be God.
8. Jesus' claim to be God was miraculously confirmed by:
 - a. His fulfilment of many prophecies about Himself;
 - b. His sinless and miraculous life;
 - c. His prediction and accomplishment of His resurrection.
9. Therefore, Jesus is God.
10. Whatever Jesus (who is God) teaches is true.
11. Jesus taught that the Bible is the Word of God.
12. Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God (and anything opposed to it is false).

APPENDIX SIX: Answering key objections to faith

The purpose of this section is to give you a very basic direction for when discussing these various questions. The suggestions here are not perfect — but may help. Further reading is recommended.

1. THERE IS NO GOD

- a. If they make such a statement, the best place to start is to return the burden of proof to them: 'How do you know that?' 'Can you prove that?' 'What led you to that conclusion?'
- b. Do you see that building over there? Did it have a builder? Do you know of any building that does not have a builder? Have you seen all the builders of all the buildings? The evidence of the existence of the builder is the building, not in having seen him or her. The universe exists, and reflects intelligence. The conclusion is unavoidable, unless a person has a prior reason to avoid the obvious conclusion.

- c. Are you aware that science has proven, time and again, and contrary to atheistic desire and expectation, that the universe had a beginning. A cause is thus necessary, and no explanation even exists for this outside of acceptance of a transcendent Creator (though various theories are proposed on a continual basis, and 'hardened' atheists hold to these for lack of alternatives)?
- d. Are you aware that science, while claiming the possibility that all life came from a single first life, offers no answer for the origins of life itself? (A 'God' is still necessary, even if only to make first life. Antony Flew, one of the most notable atheistic spokesmen of the latter twentieth century, rejected his atheistic beliefs because he could not see any way around this point, amongst others).
- e. Are you aware of the discoveries being made in cellular research? How do you explain this? (The level of complexity and design is so far beyond what anyone could have even anticipated that discussion that this could have come about by chance seems futile).
- f. Are you aware of discoveries that have been made revealing the fine-tuning of the 'constants' of the universe to enable life? How do you explain this? (This has created a big problem for 'hardened' atheists, leading to the proposing of various new theories — all without evidence — in an attempt to maintain the *possibility* they are committed to: that there was no intelligent intervention, and thus no intelligent designer. Up to date responses to such theories can be found online, for every few years in our day a book will be published proposing a new one).
- g. The existence of miracles, and many and various personal testimonies, also point toward the existence of a greater spiritual reality.

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

2. I DON'T BELIEVE THE BIBLE.

IT'S JUST FAIRY TALES AND THE MESSAGE HAS BEEN CHANGED.

- a. The Bible is one of the most reliable ancient documents in existence. It has withstood 200 years of higher criticism (intellectual scrutiny). There are over 20,000 documents to verify its reliability, the earliest dated within 100 years of the events and 50 years of the author (The John Ryland Script dated 130AD).
- b. For comparison Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars which were in BC55. There are 9-10 documents with a gap of over 1000 years to the first copy we have. The Bible's reliability is second to none!
- c. Given this one can see that the real issue has to do with a refusal to accept the possibility of miracles, for the documents are about the most reliable ancient documents in existence.
- d. Archaeology also consistently supports the Bible's reliability in its historical and geographic details.
- e. Prophecy is an outstanding internal evidence of the Bible's reliability, also of the Divine 'anointing' that is on the Bible, as well as of the genuinely Divine and supernatural origins and purpose of Christ's coming and life.
- f. Note the objection could be a smoke screen, as they think it an easy way to dismiss consideration of religion. You could ask, 'If I could show you it actually was reliable, would you even want to know?'

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

3. I THINK THAT ALL ROADS LEAD TO GOD. ALL RELIGIONS ARE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME.

- a. Do 'all roads lead to Rome?' If all views are true then nothing is true!

- b. Are you aware that the major religions make many contradictory claims?

As an example of this, consider these contradictory truth claims regarding 'salvation' (also in chapter eight of this book)

In Islam it comes by **belief** in Allah, Muhammad his prophet, and **good works**.

In Hinduism it comes by overcoming karma and incarnations by **good works**.

In Buddhism it comes by **getting rid of all desires** through the eight-fold path.

In Christianity it comes by **faith alone** in Christ alone.

As another example, consider what the major religious leaders claimed

Buddha claimed to **point the way**.

Mohammad claimed to be a **prophet of God**

Jesus Christ is the only religious leader that ever claimed **to be God**.

A radical claim! Either Jesus was the God-Man, or He was not. Logically, it's an important claim to investigate.

- c. All religions, thus, do not essentially say the same thing. And if they are all true, then they are also all false.
- d. If this is understood, it is like having a clean slate from which to reason toward possible truth. How about considering how what exists might exist — for it points clearly toward the existence of a transcendent, intelligent, creative, powerful, orderly, eternal, spiritual (non-physical) being! To explain these mentioned characteristics: The Mega-Being is outside of time because time had a beginning, and spiritual because the physical universe had a beginning. It is an accepted law of science that there must be a cause for every effect, the cause being either external, or inherent in the thing itself. The oscillating [expanding and contracting] universe is an attempt at the latter, but has been disproven on multiple fronts. Finding an alternate explanation — so as to exclude the need for a 'God' — is a significant focus amongst evolutionary scientists in our times. The suggestion that there must be multiple universes is the favoured current alternative, but there is no evidence of this — except the fact that this or some other unbelievable explanation must be the case if we begin with the assumption that there cannot have been any creative being of any sort. Why this dogmatic allegiance to this assumption when the existence of intelligence and order in the creation so strongly suggests otherwise?).
- e. The challenge now is to stir their desire to actually discuss and consider these things. For example...
- f. The orderly nature of the world seems to indicate a personal God! Don't you think it is at least possible there might be one? Are you not at least slightly interested in investigating the various claims of the religions, in case you find one to hold some weight?
- g. If we are spiritual beings, would you agree that there might be a consequence in the after life for what we do here on earth? If you had cancer, would it matter to you what medicine you took? Would taking just anything be fine? If the spiritual realm is real, and therefore possible consequences for the things we do in this life are real, is it not even more important we at least try to find what might be the best, or 'right' medicine for our sin-filled souls during this life?
- h. If I could explain to you what Christians believe God has done for us, would you want to hear it?

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

4. WE ARE JUST MEANT TO BE GOOD PEOPLE — GOOD PEOPLE WILL GO TO HEAVEN.

- a. If there is no God, there is no basis for any real morals (moral absolutes). To say ‘good’ exists assumes there is someone beyond us to establish and define what ‘good’ is, because if there isn’t we are simply like animals, and can determine what we think is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ for ourselves.
- b. (Noting also that the religions say different things, if they think any ‘good’ person can go to heaven, finding a clear definition for ‘good’ is not at all clear because the religions say different things — including on the likes of rape, incest and murder!).
- c. Will Hitler be in heaven? This confirms whether they believe there is *a certain transcendent standard* by which a person is ‘in’ or ‘out.’
- d. If they believed Hitler would be in heaven (which is unlikely), then the needed explanation is of justice. If God is good, He must be just. These two things go together. (Is a judge who lets a serial murderer off just because he asked to be let off a *good* judge?). If the Christian God is true, including heaven, Hitler, and all unforgiven sinners, will not be in heaven!
- e. If they believe Hitler is not in heaven, how good is good enough to get in? Where does your standard come from?
- f. Then consider, do you perfectly live up to your own standard of what is right and wrong? Most do not.
- g. Do you think God’s standard might be the same as our own, or a little higher? All would suggest higher.
- h. If we sometimes don’t live up to our own standards, how can we live up to God’s? The problem is becoming clear, right? (By this logic, none of us live up to what we even perceive God’s standard to be — even if that perception is still lower than the actual standard as defined in the Bible)
- i. *Regarding what the Bible says* (if they accept the authority of the Bible), the standard is *perfection*, and God can not let anything imperfect into heaven.
- j. E.g., if I put one drop of ink into a glass of pure water would that water still be pure?
- k. E.g., did you know that even if a person only sinned 3 times a day, that is 1000 sins a year, and 70 to 80,000 sins in an average lifetime. What do you think an earthly judge would do to a criminal with 70,000 crimes against him?
- l. None of us meet God’s standards, and, because God is just, there is a hell. Because God is loving He sent Jesus. The responsibility for our eternal destinies is in our own hands.

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

5. I THINK RELIGION SHOULD BE A PRIVATE THING, NOT FOR TALKING ABOUT PUBLICLY, AND PEOPLE CERTAINLY SHOULDN’T TRY TO WIN OTHERS OVER TO THEIR OWN VIEWPOINT.

- a. If a deadly disease came about and you had the vaccine, would you share it?
- b. If a building were on fire would you warn the people inside?
- c. What if there actually is spiritual truth? Would you want to hear it? (What if you were sleeping when someone rudely interrupted you to tell you your building was on fire? Would you want to hear?)
- d. Are you aware that the evidence of science points toward a Creator (such as at question nine below) — so one may exist?
- e. Consider what is at stake! If reincarnation is true it will not have mattered greatly what you believe. If Atheism is true it will not have mattered at all what you believe. If Jesus is true, only those who heeded what He said will be in heaven. They can’t all be right, can they? So, shouldn’t we talk about it? Given this understanding of the various consequences, if you were a gambling person, which religion do you think is the best bet?
- f. Note that the real issue may be fear of uncomfortable conversations with Christians who are convinced they are right. I.e., postmodern worldview offense at truth-claiming Christians. This is why a conversational approach to all of these interactions can benefit.

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

6. DON’T YOU THINK IT A BIT ARROGANT OR EXCLUSIVE TO CLAIM THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO GOD?

(Concept taken from some of Dr David Geisler’s handout notes. www.meeknessandtruth.org)

- a. You could ask a clarifying question to understand what they are really saying. ‘What do you mean, arrogant and exclusive?’ ‘Why is that arrogant?’ ‘Have you met people like that?’
- b. Regarding *arrogance* — this has to do with *believed superiority*. We could reply, ‘I don’t think myself better than anyone else.’ ‘I agree with you. We should never be arrogant about our beliefs, disrespecting others.’ ‘I look at Christianity as ‘one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.’’
- c. Regarding *exclusive*, is marriage exclusive? (Yes). So is exclusivity wrong? (Obviously not). We all have the right to believe things, and it is a given that our beliefs will not always agree, right?
- d. The real issue is *the reasons for which a person believes something*, and whether or not they push them on others. What are your beliefs, and for what *reasons* do you believe them?
- e. Note, the argument is sometimes that we should be ‘tolerant’ of other beliefs — but the inference is really that they expect us to believe the same as them (that all beliefs are the same). In reality they are being intolerant of our beliefs (not tolerant of). *Webster’s New World Dictionary of English* defines ‘tolerate’ as ‘to recognise and respect without sharing’, and to ‘bear or put up with’. One can correctly hold strong beliefs in a thing and still be tolerant of beliefs they disagree with.

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

7. THE CHURCH IS FULL OF HYPOCRITES.

- a. How do you define hypocrite, for isn't it true that none of us live up to our ideals?
- b. Note: It may be a more emotional than intellectual objection; it's possible they were hurt by a bad example of a Christian. Empathy may be the best response, and even an apology given on behalf of the 'hypocrite' who hurt them.
- c. To reject a view because of a few 'bad eggs' is not logical. Just because there are bad representatives of a product, it doesn't mean the product is bad.
- d. At least in Christianity the 'hypocrite' acts contrary to their belief — i.e., the belief is good.
 - i. In Atheism, to kill, or even oppress 'lower races' (whether Africans, Jews or those who opposed) is *consistent* with their belief. Tens of millions have been murdered as a result. When Hitler and Stalin murdered millions, their 'bad' actions were *consistent* with their belief! However when a 'Christian' murders, they are acting *contrary* to their belief.
 - ii. In Hinduism, when a person does not help a poor person, they also act consistently with their belief, not wanting to interrupt the bad karma that person has. However, when a Christian *does not* help the poor, they are acting *inconsistently*.
 - iii. In Islam, killing 'infidels' is consistent with belief. In Christianity, killing in the name of religion is inconsistent with, and contrary, to belief. Thus, while the perpetrators of the murders of the Crusades in the dark-ages will be judged by the Christian God, the perpetrators of Muslim's killings of Christians will be rewarded by Allah!
 - iv. So yes, there are bad 'eggs' in every group, but Jesus and Christianity that follows Him is good! Jesus presented the highest ideals known to man, and His life gave reasons to believe them!
- e. As a consolation, at the final judgment the Bible says we will each be called to account for our actions, including for our response to Jesus. God will, no doubt, have a few things to say to so-called Christians who have blatantly lived contrary to their claimed beliefs, and without repentance or humility. Be assured God will deal with them. The important question for you is, what will God have to say to you?

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

8. IF THERE IS A GOOD GOD, WHY DOESN'T HE GET RID OF ALL SUFFERING?

- a. Firstly, most suffering comes from human evils. For example, there is enough food in the world to feed the world three times over every year, yet people are still starving.
- b. Also, by denying God's existence you still haven't solved the problem — suffering still exists.
- c. If you look to the other religions you also won't find a better answer. (In fact, the moment you say 'good' exists, you also say 'evil' exist, and imply the existence of a moral law — and therefore a moral law-giver.
- d. The very question also assumes the intrinsic *worth* of humans — something that does not exist if (a) we are accidents of nature [naturalistic evolution] or (b) merely part of the cosmic 'force', being no more significant than an insect or bacteria [pantheistic eastern religions]. The question actually evidences God's existence.
- e. All answers to the reasons for suffering feel deficient when one is suffering, however the benefits of the Bible's answers to the question are that...

- i. At least the world started good

This means the 'creator' can be good, and the end of the story of history potentially good also. He also made perfect human beings, endowed with free will, thus giving a possible logical explanation for how things became 'not good'. Many other worldviews do not have a basis for defining anything as actually 'good'.

- ii. At least there is a known explanation for the beginning of suffering — our wrongful use of the free will we were given by God.

To see how this explanation shines (even though all answers will feel inadequate to a suffering person) consider the alternatives. For example, the pantheistic (morally relativistic) Buddhist worldview often says suffering it is not really real, which is a bit on the nose when you *are* suffering! It goes contrary to experience! The 'yin and the yang' illustrate this eastern way of thinking. Good and evil are actually the same thing, or more correctly, do not actually exist, except in our minds. The solution offered is therefore (for example, in Buddhism) to remove the impact of their *perceived* existence by getting rid of all desire — whether for good or bad. Fatalistically put, this is to say that if you want nothing you will be hurt by nothing. If you expect nothing you will never be disappointed. The Christian explanation, in contrast, is true to our experience, makes sense, and — beneficially — contains the possibility of hope.

- iii. At least there is a God who cares.

The God of the Bible cares deeply, and our suffering breaks His heart. He alone knows what perfection is like, and how things should be! (Buddhism, Hinduism and Atheism can offer no higher power that looks and cares).

- iv. At least there is hope.

God will, one day, put an end to all sin and suffering. Those who have heeded His voice will be rewarded for their faith in Him demonstrated in this life. As such there are even some benefits that result from our sufferings (as in the next point). In consideration of the alternatives, as good and evil technically do not exist in Eastern pantheistic religions, there is no hope, or even promise, of ever escaping evil. Becoming *nothing / one with the universe* is the highest hope (nirvana). For the atheist, the only possible escape from suffering is death, at which point one ceases to exist at all.

- v. At least there are some identifiable 'positive' purposes for our present experiences that have eternal significance.

Suffering can draw us to faith in God or back to faith if we have wandered from it. We can gain experience through suffering with which we can help others. Our character and faith are developed and strengthened. We learn humility, etc.

- vi. Sub-conclusion: While feeling angry with God is an understandable reaction when faced with suffering or when we touch 'evil', it is hardly logical or fair when all is considered. At least Christianity offers an answer that makes sense and provides hope — even if it cannot immediately remedy the entire situation (no religion does that).

There is no comparison to what Christianity offers the suffering!

"(As an atheist) my argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? Man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?" (Mere Christianity, CS Lewis, HarperSanFrancisco, P 38.)

- f. Their real question is probably more emotional than intellectual. Give empathy with their difficult experiences, ask questions and show care!

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

9. I BELIEVE WE ARE THE PRODUCTS OF NATURAL CHANCE PROCESSES (NATURALISTIC EVOLUTION)

- a. Are you aware of recent discoveries regarding how cells work, and what is going on inside of them?
- b. Science agrees there was a beginning, and that inadequate time exists for first life to come about by itself. How do you explain this?
- c. If natural selection doesn't have the creative power to account for all the vast and functioning diversity we see in species, how do you account for life as we know it? Are you aware that mutations have been shown to be an inadequate alternate explanation — rarely (and debatably) adding information, and never adding positive information? Are you aware that Charles Darwin never even considered mutations a viable mechanism (he believed natural selection or positive adaptations was the mechanism. Mutations were only considered later on when such natural selection had been shown to be inadequate for bringing change beyond the genetically inbuilt limits of a species). This is sometimes described as the difference between micro-evolution (correctly adaptation) and macro-evolution (transitions between species).
- d. Are you aware of what has been discovered regarding the fine-tuning of the universe for life? How do you account for this?
- e. Are you aware of what has been found in the search for fossil links (the links are embarrassingly absent — water-tight arguments cannot be made for the very few possible transitional fossils that do exist — and the search is all-but called off by many)?
- f. (In other words, refer them to recent scientific discoveries and ask them to explain. The evidence is categorically in favour of a special creation in this area. Then reason with them, 'Is it not at least possible that this is designed?')
- g. If you could know an intelligent designer did exist, would you want to know it? (This question addresses the possible prejudice).

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

10. WHAT ABOUT THE CATHOLICS?

- a. So, you believe there is a God? Do you believe the Bible is reliable? If not, what relevance is the question to you? If so, then...
- b. It is true that the Catholic denomination has held (and holds) many beliefs that are not in the Bible.
- c. The salvation of the individual depends upon belief in what God says, as recorded in the Bible. A number of Catholics, and Priests, accept what the Bible says as their authority on this matter — so we do not assess whether a person goes to heaven or not on the basis of their denomination, whether Catholic, Presbyterian or Baptist.
- d. If we are depending upon our good works to get to heaven, our good works are not good enough — whether Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist...
- e. We must depend upon Jesus, and Jesus alone. The sincerity of our commitment to *Him* is then seen in our willing obedience to what He taught, as in the *Bible*. Many denominations have had seasons where they have been led by humans who have turned them into power structures for their own ends. These leaders have sometimes manipulated the messages of the Bible as it suited them. In other words — no Church is perfect or infallible. The challenge to the true Christian has always been to follow God

first, as defined by the Bible. It is not entirely a 'Catholic' issue, or a 'Methodist' issue. It is a Christian issue.

- f. There are Catholics who are true Christians, and Catholics who are merely religious. There are likewise Baptists who are true Christians, and Baptists who are merely religious. Christianity is about believing and following what the Bible says.
- g. Having said that, a fair and reasonable debate can exist as to what the true objectives and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) are. In 1960 a meeting called 'Vatican II' affirmed that the Church again believed what the Bible says about salvation — thus ratifying much of the theological stand of the reformation that we are not saved by works, but by faith through grace. However, possibly in the wake of growing radical Islamic aggression, Pope Benedict XVI has recently reaffirmed the historical Catholic doctrine that eternal salvation can only be had through proper communion administered by a priest in the RCC. This is *not* what the Bible says! Likewise prayer to Mary is not Biblical, and praying before statues is idolatry. There is likewise no Biblical basis for prayer to saints, etc...
- h. Of concern, the RCC is actively campaigning for greater global influence in our radically changing political, economic and religious landscape. They are seeking to be leaders of the global inter-faith movement, with many statements being made that assert that all religions are essentially the same. It is a diverse 'denomination', with sincere believers amongst it, but with significant anomalies.

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

11. I DON'T BELIEVE IN HEAVEN OR HELL

- a. The root of this problem is that they don't believe the Bible.
- b. If they don't believe the Bible the issue could be that (a) they are unaware of its proven textual reliability or (b) they don't believe in miracles (giving reason to doubt its reliability).
- c. (We are now following the logic of Norman Geisler's outline as at appendix twelve). If they don't believe in miracles then the issue is that they don't believe in a theistic God — in which case discuss the intelligent design of the universe and life, and the fact that there was a beginning (which needs a cause).
- d. If, however, they do believe in God, then it may be an emotional question regarding the severity of the judgment / a misunderstanding of the justice of God. For God to be good He must be just. We cannot have one without the other.
- e. The logical explanation is to discuss the authority of the Bible — for we know these exist only because the Bible tells us so.

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

12. YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO TO CHURCH TO BE A CHRISTIAN.

- a. Are you a Christian?
- b. Define 'Church' (they might be reasoning that being part of a less structured small group network is the same thing, which has some validity).
- c. Do you believe in the authority of the Bible? If so, read 1 John 2:19 and Hebrews 10:25.

- d. The Christian life is ‘counter cultural’ in this world. This makes a Christian a bit like a burning coal. Most of us won’t stay strong for long if we are outside the fire.

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

13. WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD THE GOSPEL?

- a. The question could be put ‘How is it fair for God to condemn someone for not having enough knowledge to save them, but just enough to condemn them?’
- b. A simple answer is, ‘Is God good?’ ‘Can God do anything bad or unjust? (‘Do you think it possible that your perspective on what is and is not just could be clearer than God’s?’) ‘Therefore, will anyone be unfairly condemned?’ This is the great hope we have. We can not answer all questions, but we can be assured that God will do what is right and fair.
- c. Romans 1:18-20 tells us that there is a general knowledge of God knowable from the Creation, and that this establishes a basis for guilt.
- d. We might ask, but is this fair? God is not responsible for giving us greater revelation of who He is when we have not responded to the light (or clues) we have already been given. Mathew 13:12 “For whoever has, to him shall more be given.” For example, the Ethiopian (Acts 8), Cornelius (Acts 10), and the God-fearing Greeks (Acts 17). The Bible says that those who sincerely seek Him will find Him (Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 7:7-8). (Concepts borrowed from David Geisler and Norman Geisler).
- e. Illustration: Imagine you are in a desert, it’s getting dark, and you are hungry and thirsty. Then you see a speck of light on the horizon indicating there is human life out there. But instead of moving toward the light, you move away from it. Whose fault is it if you die? (Illustration borrowed from David Geisler and Norman Geisler).
- f. Conclusion: The extent to which God will go to give us a chance to be in heaven is seen in Jesus. Irrespective of how much we know we all have a first responsibility to respond to what we do know.
- g. While we may not yet know the actual outcome for people in some possible circumstances, we have the final assurance that no one will be unjustly condemned.

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

14. WHAT ABOUT ALIENS?

- a. A conversational approach is beneficial, as evidence is dubious and largely speculative.
- b. Are you aware that much of the evidence is dubious and theories are entirely speculative? Is it reasonable to base a belief off this?
- c. Are you aware that the nature of many of the supposed experiences of talking with Aliens fits well with alternate explanations found in the fields of demonology and psychiatry (hearing voices / channeling voices, etc.)?
- d. If we believe in Aliens because someone must have made us (because our biology is so complex), how about talking about just one Alien, and calling Him God? What is the problem with that? We are most logically the products of Design, not macro-evolution. To narrow this down toward the idea of a God consider the evidence of history that point toward attempts by God to reveal Himself to us through a family, then a nation, and then Christ. Consider also the evidence of miracles, prophecy, and changed lives. An Alien (singular) of sorts does exist, has made contact, and wants relationship!

- e. Put differently, (d) is to say, why would you base your belief on something entirely speculative when real evidence sits in front of us pointing toward the possibility that we were intelligently designed by a God who has evidentially interacted with humans throughout our history? If we are intelligently designed, can’t you see how these stories and theories are a red herring, for the logical and important direction of enquiry is in finding out who the Intelligent Designer might be?
- f. Note that a creator God still needs to exist to have fine-tuned the universe that we all live in to be so perfectly suited for carbon-based life. The question of aliens doesn’t replace the need for God. The question is whether God would create aliens.
- g. Why can’t God have created aliens? Ask, ‘So you accept that God exists then?’ If so, confirm that they also accept the reliability of the Bible. If so, you now have a clear basis for discussion.
- h. From a Christian perspective, while some (especially those of liberal persuasion) will jump on the alien ‘bandwagon’ without reservation, it is contrary to the nature of God to confuse us, true?
- i. Some might accuse you of limiting God by not believing in extra-terrestrial life. However, such a view in no way limits God. God is certainly capable of anything in terms of His power and creativity. The reasonable question is whether he would actually *do* this, in terms of His revealed character and nature. God does not act contrary to His character and nature. He could easily make other beings at any other point in eternity (and has made angels and various other heavenly beings, as described in Scripture) — but why make physical planet-dwelling E.Ts. now when it would only confuse us here on earth (where most are already confused about where to look for spiritual truth), and when doing so in a gazillion year’s time would be just as convenient for God?
- j. We are told God made this universe for us. We are the pinnacle of His creation. All the heavens (stars, etc.) were created for His glory, their vastness existing to simply make us go ‘wow’. God has thus told us what is out there.
- k. Of note, there is no *evidence* of any great *complexity* out there that is in any way comparable to what is here on earth. The complexity of an entire galaxy is less than that of the smallest of living organisms. It is *all* speculation.
- l. In examining motives, can you see why people might *want* to believe in Aliens? Many scientists who are religious evolutionists (meaning committed irrespective of reason) are in on the Alien phenomena. The previous explanations that upheld their evolutionary beliefs, such as that the universe was eternal, have been found to be false. Vastly more complicated things have been discovered to exist — such as the workings of the cell and the remarkable (and beyond probable) physical constants of the universe that are somehow finely tuned to make our carbon-based existence possible. If there exists a strong desire to not accept the conclusion of intelligent design (which there does), then we have found a motive for belief in all these speculative ideas, coming from a desire to maintain the view that we are here by naturalistic (physical / no meta-physical designer) means alone. For many atheists, where evolution is now failing, ‘alienism’ can fill the gap. A primary motivation for belief in Aliens is a commitment to naturalism and materialism.

Further reading would be beneficial.

How could you rephrase the above into *questions* for use in your conversation?

APPENDIX SEVEN: Web links

EVANGELISTIC

Example of the new generation of evangelistic sites
www.lookingforgod.com/

For an example of a great smart phone ap (application), search for G7
 This a free gospel app. created by www.traintoproclaim.com

GOSPEL PRESENTATION DOWNLOADS

Video: 'Word art' gospel www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SoRce645cl
 Video: Graffiti 'bridge to life' gospel www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAmQjI1Sog
 Video: Story with a block www.simplysharejesus.com/
 Verbal: Train to Proclaim visuals Search at <http://traintoproclaim.com>

EVANGELISM EQUIPPING

Evangelism Explosion (NZ) www.ee.org.nz/
 Gospel Outreach (NZ. Matt Old) <http://gospel-outreach.org/nz>
 Meekness & Truth Ministries (David Geisler) www.meeknessandtruth.org
 Shining Lights Trust (Dave Mann) www.shininglights.co
 Stand to Reason (Greg Koukl) www.str.org
 Train to Proclaim (Stu Millar) www.traintoproclaim.com
 Way of the Master (Ray Comfort) www.wayofthemaster.com

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In addition to the above...

Creation Ministries <http://creation.com/qa#faqs>
 Exploring Christianity (Dick Tripp) www.christianity.co.nz
 Lee Strobel www.leestrobel.com
 Ravi Zacharias International Ministries www.rzim.org
 Reasonable Faith (William Craig Lane) www.reasonablefaith.org
 Reasons to Believe (Hugh Ross) www.reasons.org

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND CHALLENGES

In addition to the above...

Bible Query (Steve Morris) www.inerrancy.org

EARLY CHRISTIAN GROWTH / DISCIPLESHIP

Gospel Media Outreach — evangelism and discipleship sites
www.globalmediaoutreach.com/sites.html
 I-Christian-Life (A GMO discipleship site) www.ichristianlife.com/
 Campus Crusade for Christ www.tenbasicsteps.org/english/default.htm

APPENDIX EIGHT: The question game

As referred to in Study Five

Subject: Going for coffee.

- Would you like to grab a cup of coffee?
- Where from?
- Where do you want to go?
- Does it matter?
- Do you think it matters?
- Do you like Starbucks?
- Doesn't everybody?
- Do you think they are overpriced?
- Doesn't everybody?
- What's your favourite drink?
- Do you have to have one?
- Don't you?
- Aren't they all good?
- Do you really believe that?
- What do you like most?
- If you don't have a favourite drink, why should I?
- Are we going or not?
- Do we still have time?

(Example taken from a *Meekness and Truth* Small Group Study Resource www.meeknessandtruth.com)

A VARIATION ON THE GAME

As a variation on the game (maybe when playing it a couple of months after completing this series as a part of revision), place a list of the following questions where the competitors can see them. As before they are 'out' if they answer with a statement rather than a question. However, they can positively get a point for every one of the following questions they manage to include in the conversation. Each question can be used only once. 5 'points' gives immunity for one accidental statement. Have fun.

- I am curious you said...?
- Can you help me understand...?
- Pardon my ignorance but what do you mean by...?
- It is interesting that you mention this...
- I've heard you say this a bunch of times...what do you mean by...?
- What caused you to feel this way?
- How did you come to this conclusion?
- Why are you so like...?
- Have you ever thought about...?
- What do you think about my statement that...?
- Have you ever considered the possibility that...?
- Are you open to the idea that...?
- Have you come to any conclusions about who Jesus is?
- Do you think there is any difference between Jesus and other religious leaders?

(This list of questions came from an encouragement email from David Geisler, encouraging friends to make the most of their conversation opportunities.)

APPENDIX NINE: 'Identifying' reflection sheet

Name: _____
Hindrances (prayer and conversation)

Interests (bridging opportunities)

Name: _____
Hindrances (prayer and conversation)

Interests (bridging opportunities)

Name: _____
Hindrances (prayer and conversation)

Interests (bridging opportunities)

APPENDIX TEN: The 'because we care' worksheet

(Referred to in studies one, six, seven, eight and nine)

...BECAUSE WE CARE!

Name: _____

Hindrances
(for prayer and conversation)

Interests
(for bridging opportunities)

Possible conversation outline
1. Hearing questions:

Bridging opportunities
1. Individual
(socialise, serve, surprise)

Evangelistic opportunities

2. Illuminating questions:

2. Small group

3. Uncovering questions:

3. Church-wide

4. Building questions:

Name: _____
Hindrances (prayer and conversation)

Interests (bridging opportunities)

Name: _____
Hindrances (prayer and conversation)

Interests (bridging opportunities)

Name: _____
Hindrances (prayer and conversation)

Interests (bridging opportunities)

Name: _____
Hindrances (prayer and conversation)

Interests (bridging opportunities)

...*BECAUSE WE CARE!*

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(for prayer and conversation)

Interests
(for bridging opportunities)

Possible conversation outline

1. Hearing questions:

Bridging opportunities

1. Individual
(socialise, serve, surprise)

Evangelistic opportunities

2. Illuminating questions:

2. Small group

3. Uncovering questions:

3. Church-wide

4. Building questions:

...*BECAUSE WE CARE!*

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APPENDIX ELEVEN: Small Group Six-Week Action Plan

This relates to the activities of a Church small group in the weeks leading up to a point event (evangelistic event). It not only serves to prepare and mobilise the members to action, but also to revise and reinforce basic evangelistic learning (as discussed in chapters twelve and thirteen).

SIX WEEKS BEFORE:

Priority — Vision casting, identifying and brainstorming (20 minutes suggested)

- Cast a vision:
- Promote the use of a corporate point event (evangelistic event such as an Easter service) as an opportunity for personal outreach.

- Identify:

Do an identifying exercise (if not already done in January).

- Note corporate bridges:

Promote any corporate events or programmes that might serve as suitable bridging platforms to those you are seeking to encourage in faith. From these, invitations can be extended to come to other events or programmes.

- Brainstorm:

Additionally discuss ways your (a) members and (b) group could build bridges to those you seek to bless with the gospel message in the coming weeks (remembering the three areas of socialise, serve and surprise), from which you could invite them to the point event also.

- Pray:

Pray that God would use you in sharing His love, and in seeing people return to Him.

FIVE WEEKS BEFORE:

Priority — Planning and prayer (40 minutes suggested)

- Plan group bridging activities:

Discuss the bridging ideas suggested, and choose the most suitable one or two (these being themed around what you think your friends will be interested in).

Do some initial planning for these.

- Encourage use of corporate bridges:

Note that if a member is bringing a new friend or two to something, other members could go along also with the express purpose of helping the new friend feel welcome/getting to know them.

- Encourage individual bridges:

Encourage your members to do their own acts of love or service (socialise, share, surprise), strengthening their relationships with those they seek to reach.

- Pray:

Talk about the power of prayer; and spend some time in prayer:

(Remember, we get what we promote. Hence why we intentionally encourage these initiatives).

FOUR WEEKS BEFORE:

Priority — Invitations and skill revision (30 minutes suggested)

- Promote all upcoming activities, confirming details and roles.
- Encourage your members to start inviting their friends if they have not already.
- Revise basic evangelism skills:

Especially those skills you think will be most helpful.

However take this as an opportunity to refresh your members in other areas for a more long-term purpose also.

- Pray

THREE WEEKS BEFORE:

Priority — Plan-check and invitations (20 minutes suggested)

- Promote all events.
- Confirm planning:

Checking that all necessary details are in place.

- Follow-up on invitations:

Encouraging members to continue to invite friends.

- Revise basic evangelism skills.
- Pray.

TWO OR ONE WEEK BEFORE:

Priority — Prayer, or it may be your Small Group Bridge-building activity (1 hour suggested)

In your final small group session give concerted effort to prayer

- Listen to your members' stories and encourage them for the efforts they have made

- Encourage faith
- Confirm events details.
- Pray.

CORPORATE EVENT WEEK — GOAL:

Make friends with each other's friends

- Even if a member doesn't have a new friend coming they should still attend, as they can get to know other group members' new friends.
- Consider an immediate follow-up event

For example, you could meet for lunch after the Sunday service. This might make an invitation to a Church service more appealing. If they only wanted to come to the lunch, that is fine too!

Build friendship!

IN THE FEW WEEKS AFTERWARD:

Follow up, celebrate and recharge (focusing on relationships)

- Be sure to encourage your members on their efforts.
- Celebrate all successes (most significantly including the success of simply having tried).
- Give all diligence to the follow up of any who have responded.
- You could give a small vision cast for when the next 'outreach season' might be
- But primarily move on to focus on relationships / fellowship / caring for and encouraging one another.

Seasons of output need balancing by seasons of input.

Encourage faith, strengthen relationships, and grow deeper in love for God.

Do not try to immediately mobilise them into the next activity. Definitely cast fresh vision immediately — but don't launch into it immediately. Give a little time to celebrating, reflecting and recharging!

APPENDIX TWELVE: Small Group Annual Goals Session

1. Leaders notes for one and a half hour session
2. Personal goals guide (handout)

1. ANNUAL GOAL SETTING SESSION

FOR SMALL GROUPS

WELCOME (20mins)

Share what God did throughout the Christmas season and holidays.

WORSHIP (10mins)

Thank God in prayer and song.

WORD

(1) Vision cast by the leader (5mins)

- Share on your Church's vision and upcoming key events for the year
- Cast a vision for making the most of the year to grow and to serve God.

(2) Goal setting activity (20mins)

Give members a copy of the goal sheet, and maybe also the goals guide if you feel this will help them in their goal setting.

- Remind all that there is no point setting unrealistic goals. Keep it real. Look at your heart.
- Note that point 1e will be discussed later.
- (a) Give members time to write a few goals. (10mins)
- (b) Have a time of sharing about areas you most want to grow in. (10mins)

(3) Considering your part in God's Mission for the year (20mins)

Thought: God's heart remains for the lost. This is the Mission of the Church until Christ returns.

- (a) Opening question (5): If you could guarantee success in seeing any one person on earth choosing to become a Christian, who would it be, and why?
- (b) Identifying exercise. (5mins) (see appendix nine of this book)
- (c) Discuss a few of those you hope to reach, and begin a discussion on how you might, as a group, get to meet these people, to aid their journey toward Christ. (10mins)

Idea: Your Church could consider creating bookmarks that (a) have names of those we are praying for written on them (b) have prayer pointers. These might help a little in keeping the vision of outreach alive.

(4) Other general encouragements (5mins)

The leader could encourage members in other areas such as

- Regular Bible reading and prayer
- Regular involvement at Church and in the small group
- Etc.

Idea: You could also consider setting some basic goals for your small group for the year, through discussion with members. This could help gain their commitment to the group's vision for the year. As this example session is already very full for a one and a half hour session this could be done as a part of the following week's session.

(5) Prayer (10mins)

- Pray for your group and members
- Pray for those you would like to reach out to in the coming year.

WORKS (5MINS)

- Cast vision for the upcoming two months of Church and small group life, including the closest upcoming event.
- Promote your next small group meeting and service

PERSONAL GOALS

Name: _____ Year: _ _ _ _

PERSONAL GOALS GUIDE

1. SPIRITUAL

a. **Worship** — Goals for getting to personally know God better

- Devotional life — bible reading, prayer, journaling?

- Will you persevere in these during busy periods at school?

- What holiness issues are there in your life?

What will you do to rectify these?

b. **Fellowship** — Goals for honouring God's family and your place in it

- Will you be committed to Worship services and your small group?

- Will you be committed to a prayer partnership / prayer group?

- Are there foreseeable busy periods through which you would like to grow and sustain this commitment?

c. **Discipleship** — Goals for learning and growing

- Book reading goals? (*for spiritual and also other areas of needed growth*)

- Family growth goals (as a parent / spouse / child).

- Seminars / extra training you need and are willing to attend?

- Attitude to weekly services and small group times...

d. **Ministry** — Goals for serving God through all areas of life

- How will you serve God at home, work, school, Church, Small Group?

e. **Evangelism** — Goals for reaching out to others

- Who will you seek to reach?

- How will you reach them?

- What steps are needed to achieve this? (*'bridging' to them*)

2. PHYSICAL — GOALS FOR PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Do I need more exercise?
- Do I need better sleep patterns?
- Do I need to modify what I eat?

3. WORK/EDUCATION — GOALS FOR CAREER AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- What am I aiming for?
- What will I do to accomplish this?
- What attitude do I need in this so as to honour God?

4. FAMILY — GOALS FOR STRENGTHENING YOUR FAMILY LIFE

- What do you desire?
- What can *you* do to work toward that?

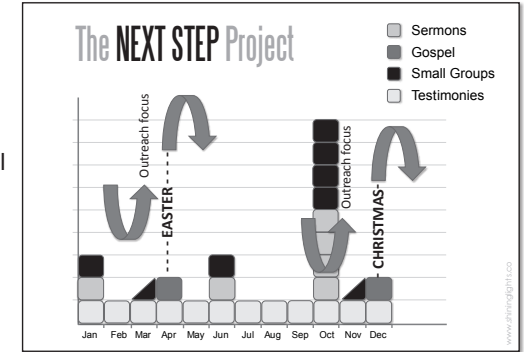
5. OTHERS — OTHER GOALS YOU HAVE

The NEXT STEP Project

Many Pastors would openly confess that evangelism mobilisation is not their strong point. In a study of 1017 Churches in the UK it was discovered that only 36 had trained their people in how to share their faith in the last decade!

This is made even more difficult by the fact that our world is increasingly resistant to the truth claims of our faith. Inside the Church, many are increasingly sceptical that just sharing the gospel is enough — and this is making them resistant to talk about evangelism too.

And if we took a step back and simply discussed invitation, one study reflected that 8 out of 10 Church members would not have even invite a single person to their Church in the previous 5 to 6 years. What are we to do?



The Next Step Project is about offering pastors...

...an approach to evangelism equipping and mobilising that is geared to our times, realistic for any pastor (and in particular if you are NOT an evangelist), and most importantly — sustainable. We've had enough of programs. Our culture has changed — so many of us have had enough of being taught the same methods as 50 years ago too. What content could help, and how could we build an evangelistic culture in our Churches, imparting and applying it?

The goal of the strategy — which comes with all needed resources ...is to change the culture of a Church over a three to five year period so that a relational, conversational, team-based approach to evangelism becomes a natural and built-in part of that Church's life.

It centres (flexibly) around four annual leadership habits ...and you can find out more at the website!

There are no catches. It is important. And it can work.

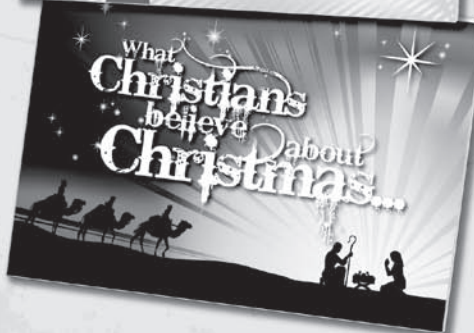
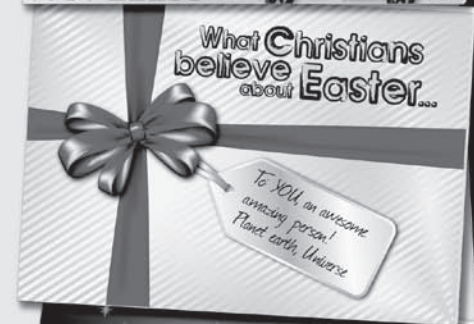
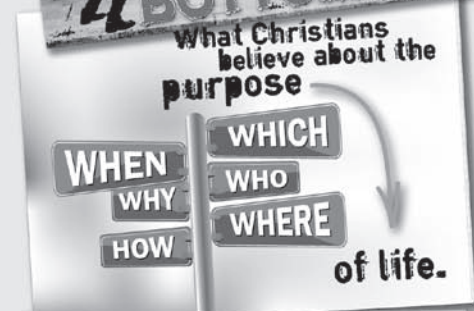
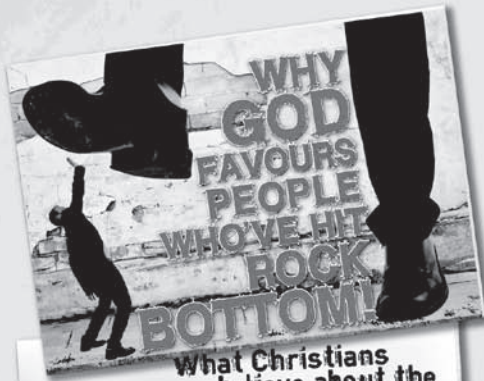
It's really down to your belief in the importance of this goal — because this is what determines how consistent you are in following through with what is suggested.

Lead the charge.

Take it seriously!

Bring change!

www.shininglights.co/mobilising



GREAT resources available now...

Ever felt embarrassed at the outdated content and graphics of a gospel tract?

You are not alone! However, tracts still work, because people are still spiritually hungry. The question is how they are written and presented. The gospel conversation needs engaging differently to how we engaged it 50 years ago!

These tracts and booklets are written with this in mind. Quality paper. Full colour. Great graphics, and content that is gentle and humble in tone – yet which builds a clear case for faith in God, and in Christ, our Saviour.

But do you forget to use such resources? These are for 6 specific circumstances – so the 6 different circumstances remind you to take one along.

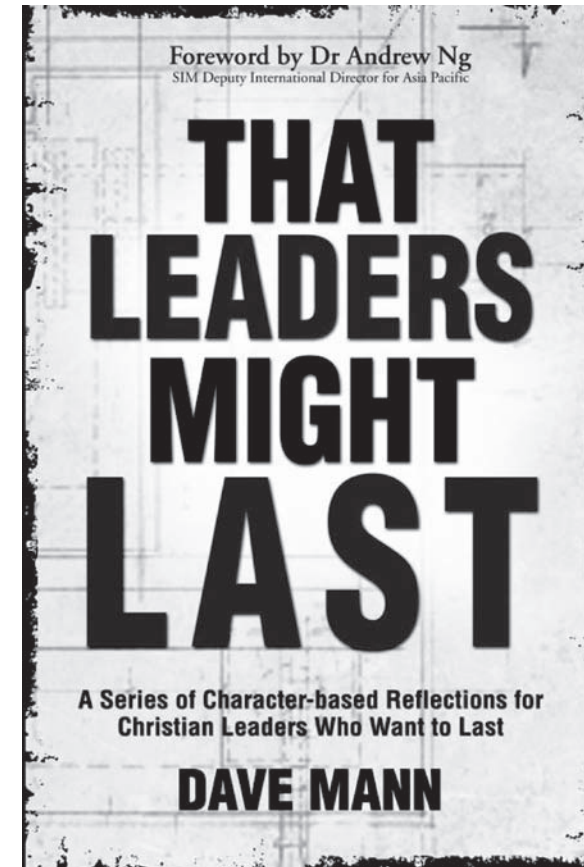
It's too important to do nothing! Why not try these out? Even if you give only a dozen per year, that's a dozen more people you have helped. That would be worth it, because the people you love are worth it. For helpful insights on the benefits of tracts, go to:

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To order, go to our website below



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THAT LEADERS MIGHT LAST BY DAVE MANN

Come and examine Jesus under trial. Consider the challenges of Christian leadership. Feel the pain — and then feel the challenge — because there is no greater challenge than to be like Jesus in such times!

“Dave’s reflections are based on personal experience, observation, research and Bible study. The result is a thoughtful, grounded and, at times, provocative appeal to be committed to a lifetime of mission.”

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“This is a very timely book. As the title suggests it looks at one of the great problems currently facing the Church – the dropping out of leaders. I recommend it for those who are finding the going difficult, and for group discussion amongst Christian leaders.”

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This book provides a simple, practical & achievable approach for doing something we've all been talking about for decades: developing a sustainable culture of evangelism in our Churches that is suited to our times.