



Compiled from a SLT topical updates series, 2025

Do you want to see new people coming to know and serve Christ through the witness of your church and its members? If yes, desire alone won't cause this to happen - and there is no one key if you want to make it happen.

Health in outreach is often the product of numerous concurrent factors.

The following articles outline a holistic approach to outreach. The goal of this is that there be an authentic outreaching CULTURE in the members - then finding its logical expression not only in each individual's personal life, but also then through the church and its small groups, youth group and community ministries.

For most churches, applying what is in these chapters will require no more work than not doing it. The difference is almost entirely about bringing greater intentionality to what we do. This is about learning to lead with a view to the HABITS and CULTURE our actions generate - rather than only the content we deliver. Both are important, and this resource will help you with both also.

An authentically outreach culture is, therefore, the goal - the eventual fruit of which will speak for itself.

- 1. Outreach and Building Culture**
- 2. Outreach and Unity**
- 3. Outreach and Equipping Strategy**
- 4. Outreach and Discipleship**
- 5. Outreach and Small Groups**
- 6. Outreach and Youth Ministry**
- 7. Outreach and the Art of Gospel Preaching**
- 8. Outreach and Reasons for faith**
- 9. Outreach and NZ History**
- 10. Outreach and Community Service**

**** The importance of storytelling to disciple-making as also the preservation of good culture is highlighted within some of these chapters, rather than as its own topic.**

#1

TOPICAL UPDATE

Outreach and BUILDING CULTURE



The need for a minimum standard

If we don't establish a minimum standard for our outreach equipping and focus as churches, the natural tendency will be toward not having a standard. This has significant present implications.

A strange note: A minimum standard doesn't necessarily mean good

What if the standard we set for our churches is too low?

For a comparison, what might a 'good' or 'great' standard look like?

- In leadership, we get what we promote.
- The point of this update is that most churches and movements don't have even a minimum standard defined. What follows is a lack of action.
- This explains why the 'gospel temperature' of so many churches, ministries and church movements is so low.

What if we were to all now define at least a minimum standard - even if not yet a good or great standard?

A possible minimum standard for local church leaders

What if we were to agree together that the mission of the Church itself should get at least a month of focus by way of outreach motivation and equipping through every pulpit, small group and youth group - every year?

- This is one of the simplest possible standards.
- What might happen if this were done?

Until tried, many would likely not actually guess correctly.

What might this starting 'minimum standard' catalyse?

This has been done. If a first year of focus served to equip members on some basic gospel and conversational skills - and if sensible educational approaches were used in this, therefore achieving a measurable learning outcome - a second year would logically revise that content quite quickly - resulting in the discovery that considerably more content is needed!

- So, what could be taught in the second year - or third, or fourth?

What cannot be understood until tried is just how much can be learnt if discipleship is intentional, and done with awareness of learning theory.

If applied, this can literally TRANSFORM the outreaching focus of a church.



A possible minimum measure for members

What about the very simple idea that every church member (maybe considering age 8 up) know WHAT the gospel is and be ABLE to share it within one minute or less?

I personally think we could do better than this, but this is already a higher standard than most churches have.

...and what if our church movements / denominations were also to consider this - bringing leadership to our 'corporate' culture?

If a first standard could be accepted... ..what might we teach next?

A curriculum quickly falls into place.

If the above minimum standard were applied, many would quickly discover that the capacity of their members for learning across the 5 year period was far greater than they realised. Intentionality is the key!

As a framework

- A. Gospel skills
- B. Conversational skills
- C. Storytelling (evidence) skills

For a wider picture

- D. Teamwork (and associated invitational) skills

Data: Our own surveys of NZ churches have evidenced that intentionality in outreach equipping isn't yet the culture or practice of most NZ local churches. There isn't yet a shared view of a minimum standard.

STORY: A NZ church that set a minimum standard

A local pastor took on the challenge of ensuring every member, age 8 and above, could explain their faith in simply language. A minimum standard was needed.

So, one Sunday (this is about 10 years ago now) he demonstrated how to share the gospel message in 90 seconds with a drawing. (To note it, even without whiteboard or paper, if the drawing is remembered it prompts a person who is speaking with what to say - like here https://youtu.be/LY8jud6kmSo?si=MyR1HF_FObSkUzk4). On that very day he got someone aged about 80 – and someone aged about 8 – to come onto the stage to demonstrate. This showed that anyone could do this.

Knowing there would be no memory or sustained application without **REPETITION** he then prompted the same demonstration the following week – and a few weeks later – and a few weeks and months later... **ACHIEVING A MEASURABLE RESULT!**

The wider results that followed:

- There was now a context for wider learning.
- This church went on to become more outreach focused at every level.
- Their community engagement efforts increased.
- The engagement of the community with these efforts increased.
- The number of stories of conversations increased. Then the number of new believers increased.

The change wasn't dramatic, but the change was clear and evident – and it started with an acceptance that a minimum standard was needed.

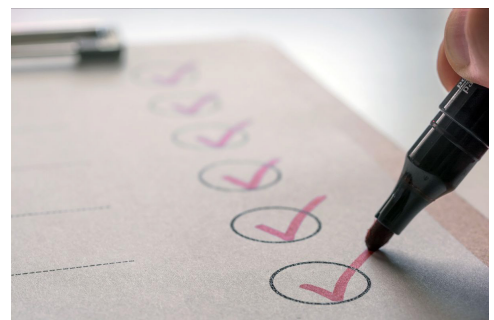
IDEA #1: What if every church, denomination and local pastors' group adopted this most basic of minimum standards?

(Freely choose a higher standard if you desire.)

The need for a FUTURE-LOOKING HABITS for the intentionally-outreaching leader:

If the idea of an 'outreaching culture' is of interest - which goes beyond the above minimum standard - here are some longer-term suggestions for visionary leaders.

Of note, everything suggested here sits within the scope of what a church leader does on a weekly and monthly basis. The key here is in bringing greater INTENTIONALITY to what we do - and through HABITS, knowing habits invariably out-perform programme-based models.



LEADERSHIP HABIT #1 – EVERYONE HAS THEIR “5”

Five people are identified by each believer who they desire to encourage toward faith. Concurrently their interests and possible hindrances are listed.

- Interests are listed to note possible connection points for individual and small group/youth group efforts to connect with them.
- Possible hindrances to faith are listed for both prayer and conversation.

This isn't a difficult habit. (How many churches consistently do this?)

LEADERSHIP HABIT #2 - PULPIT:

[Goal] With a desired minimum standard embraced that

- (a) everyone can share the gospel concisely and also
- (b) communicate evidences through stories and testimony, while
- (c) then asking some good questions to open a conversation

[In the programme] ...the habit of **ONE MONTH** of the pulpit being given to an outreach equipping annually is embraced. We are choosing to ensure our members are equipped for their mission - as our habit.

LEADERSHIP HABIT #3 - SMALL GROUP:

All church small groups and youth group are then concurrently asked to give that one month to discussing our sermons / to an outreach equipping focus – intentionally deepening the learning, while also engaging in ‘role play’ activities so things taught can be practiced. This is done knowing people remember about 10% of what they hear, 40% of what they say and 60 – 70% of what they do.

LEADERSHIP HABIT #4 - TESTIMONY:

While this habit is often overlooked because it seems too simple, it is vital to SUSTAINED RESULTS. The habit is of a testimony being found and released every single month through both weekend Sunday services and in each small groups / youth group is highly powerful. The desired testimony is one either of someone engaging a witnessing type of conversation – or of someone telling of their own coming to faith (and of the person who witnessed to them).

A wise leader then leverages the ‘good vibe’ created to reiterate points or skills taught earlier in the year. The purpose is therefore two-fold. (1a) The outreach focus is encouraged, (1b) as also prayer for each person's ‘five’, while (2) lessons earlier taught about conversational and other outreach skills are SHIFTED INTO LONG-TERM MEMORY AND APPLICATION through their intentional repetition.

LEADERSHIP HABIT #5 - MODELLING:

The local church leader then models good gospel preaching – with simple explanations, stories and evidences at least TWICE each year through the pulpit. (The good leader also shares some of their own witnessing stories / testimonies, so their own example can speak - even if likewise struggling in witness at times, as many church members are also.)

The same gospel focus/preaching is likewise expected of the leaders of each small group and the youth group – communicating the gospel with testimony in support at least twice a year at their own events. With gentleness, wisdom and creativity this can be widely achieved.

THE BIG PICTURE: When we don't have a minimum standard we inadvertently tell our church's leaders or church members that these things aren't actually that important.

- In leadership, we always get what we promote.
- In all things, we always have time to promote what we value.

Were we to set a minimum standard, it would change things!

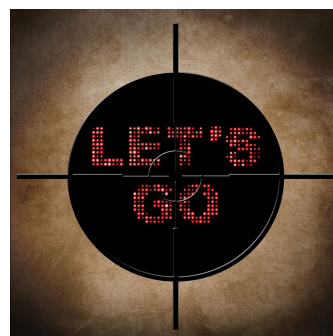
A BRIEF NOTE ON EDUCATIONAL THEORY - RELEVANT TO PULPITS :

A measurable equipping standard (with basic gospel, conversational and storytelling skills included) is **UNLIKELY** to ever be achieved through a pulpit or seminars alone. **It needs leadership** - which requires intentionality and habits!

- Repetition is necessary for **LEARNING** to take place.
- Intentionality in this single thing is the primary learning point of this update.
- **HABITS** create culture because habitual repetition and encouragement alone catalyse actual learning and sustained application.

APPLICATION: People need Jesus! What could you now do?

May God make us effective in making our MEMBERS effective!



Outreaching Culture videos:

Videos to help you build an authentic 'Outreaching Culture'
Go to AllTogether.co.nz/atconsulting

'Reviving the Art of Gospel Preaching':

Clarifies WHAT the gospel is in very simple terms - This brings motivation and vision.
Can be found at AllTogether.co.nz

'Because We Care' series:

The Because We Care 5min outreach equipping video series has two relevant videos. These suit play during Sunday church services like during offering time – or in small groups using the provided discussion guides.

Series 1 – Video 2 – “This is the gospel” (Four points – explain them each in a sentence, and you have the message summarised in 30 seconds).

Series 1 – Video 4 – “How to share the gospel” – with a simple drawing that can serve as a memory tool, enabling a simple message in about 90 seconds. Find these videos at AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members/

Culture Building:

A wider-looking 'cultural building' approach for local church leaders, including sermon / powerpoint / small group and other resources, see AllTogether.co.nz/atconsulting. The five habits outlined in this update is drawn from this resource.

TOPICAL UPDATE

Outreach and UNITY



The topic of 'unity and outreach'

Just as a four-piston car needs all four pistons working to run smoothly, so does God's Church. Health in our wider witness and work will be the product of...

1. Individual effort
2. Small group effort
3. Congregational effort
4. United effort - which can happen at the (a) suburban, (b) city and (c) national levels.

Just like in human body (1 Corinthians 12) - all parts are needed. If one part suffers, the whole body suffers.

We suggest piston #4 is an area of weakness.

Church unity is highly significant to outreach:

Unity is, however, difficult.

- Human nature makes it so.
- ...Tribalism makes it so.
- ...Pride and ambition make it so.
- ...And 500 years of the Protestant movement - with the creation of hundreds of denominations, hasn't always helped.



Theologically:

A theology of unity is very simple. There is only one Church - made up of all who follow and know Christ.



"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all".

Ephesians 4:4-6

Terminology: Church vs church

It is useful to define 'church' with a small 'c' when referring to individual congregations or a denominational organisations, while referring to 'Church' with a capital 'C' refers to the united Church in a place - which would refer to all of God's people and congregations in that geography.

The overarching goals of unity

There are two primary goals in view regarding unity in the Bible.



1. The glory of God

- Psalm 133 quickly comes to mind. "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"
- Just as parents delight at the sound of their children playing peaceably together, so does God.

2. Mission

- Jesus' unity prayer in John 17 is a prayer 'that the world might know'.
- Paul writes, "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you" (Philippians 1:17-28). Unity would produce both gospel fruitfulness and also boldness in the endeavour, despite opposition.

Denominations -An 'Elephant in this room' - so let's discuss it!

Any honest discussion on 'unity and outreach' eventually has to address the role and function of denominations.

- Let's note the tension - and then two points that bring a simple resolution.

1. Probably not God's intent - while also probably inevitable

Few would suggest the existence of denominations was something God purposed.

Biblically, many see their beginning in the way early believers divided themselves between followers of Paul and followers of Apollos.

In response Paul wrote, "For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task." (1 Corinthians 3: 4-6)

It is, however, possibly inevitable that we end up with our various denominations due to the human dynamic, as reflected in this division between followers of Paul and Apollos.

2. Doesn't have to be in tension with a united Church

Many reading will have an appreciation of the history from which the various denominational movements arose. In most cases, the intent was good, not bad.

For a simple logic, if the primary purpose of a denomination is to bring

- (a) **training,**
- (b) **accountability** and
- (c) **support** to the congregations in their geographically sprawling networks.

There is nothing inherently wrong with these purposes, so there is nothing inherently wrong with denominations!

Also, in as much as a denomination does this work well, it can bring increased health to the congregations it serves!



3. Does have a subservient position to take

What makes the local connection most important? The key thing denominational organisations can never lead in is mission - because mission, by its very nature, is geographically defined.

- For example, it is not the prerogative of the Presbyterian or Baptist churches of Tauranga to reach Tauranga for Jesus. Instead this is the mission of all Christian churches that are planted in the city together.
- Mission is therefore the primary factor that necessitates the functional unity of God's people in a place.
- For a boundary: We connect to identify and do together important things, in service to our mission, that we cannot do apart. (There is nothing wrong with independence - doing well what we can individually. What outcomes might require our collaboration?)

Denominations therefore sit in a subservient place with regard to the mission of the Church - even while they can concurrently bring strength and help to the congregations they serve (via their training, accountability and support).

If the relationship is understood, the tension need not exist. (Do you agree?)

GETTING PRACTICAL 3 - 5 - 3 The goals of city and national unity

- **Three** 'levels' of unity
- **Five** attitudes that sustain unity
- **Three** possible areas of application for pastors groups (church leaders together in a location)
- **Support resources**

3 LEVELS: The overarching goals of unity

UNITY LEVEL #1 Coffee and prayer

A natural process in unity amongst churches is as follows:

- A. Coffee unity (relationship)**
- B. Prayer unity (beginning to unite in vision)**
- C. Functional unity (where healthy vision achieves its practical outworking).**

We suggest here that #A and #B are our first 'level' of unity.

Christian leaders gather, establishing an initial foundation of relationship - inclusive of prayer - from which the needed foundation of TRUST comes (not just relationship).

Only then do we transition to consider a SHARED VISION of things we might uniquely be able to achieve together ('level 2').

UNITY LEVEL #2 What can we do together that we cannot do apart



"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." (James 2:17)

God wants more than our enjoyment of relationship and prayer. Our unity has a purpose.

**Put differently, we do not need unity for unity's sake.
As in John 17, we need unity for mission's sake!**

The process of all Christian mission can be summarised as follows:

- **Unity**
- **Prayer**
- **Action**

This process is just as true for a group of Christians gathering in a work place or school, as for a pastor with their team in a local church, a pastors' group in a city or a missionary going to Cambodia who seeks out God's people, to work with them.

We UNITE together ... to then PRAY about...what we could DO.
The goal of our unity isn't only our relationship and prayer. It includes action!

Here are EXAMPLES of how churches have worked together to consider the ideas:

- **Read about what has been happening in England.** Churches united in 1500 separate areas. It was called 'HOPE Together UK' - and Roy Crowne visited NZ to share the story for our benefit. Read at AllTogether.co.nz/roycrowne/
- **Read about the Invercargill 'serve your community' day.** A single day, with nearly 20 projects and a few hundred people involved, has not only helped by way of service - it has likewise resulted in wide reaching reputation and opportunity as a by-product. Read here AllTogether.co.nz/invercargillcommunityservice/
- **Read about Te Hahi.** This outstanding united initiative started in Gisborne. With five churches involved it can meet a need across a city - while bringing reputation, connection and other opportunities as a natural by-product. Read at www.tehahi.org.nz/
- **Read about the Good Neighbour trust in Tauranga.** Starting from a desire to give practical help to people with needs, the work has expanded to include food rescue, fire wood, community gardens and far more. Read at their website goodneighbour.co.nz

These are examples of the kinds of things we can do together but not apart.

UNITY LEVEL #3 What can we be together that we cannot be apart

If level 2 is what we can uniquely do together, level 3 is about what we can uniquely be together. And what is that?

- We can be the creators of a context out of which our church members are empowered and released to unite with one-another in their own areas of interest and influence!

This is the most grand vision of unity!

• Illustration:

Just as a talented pastor running programmes is no match for 100 mobilised members, 20 pastors facilitating united endeavours are no match for 2000 church members released and inspired to INITIATE good things in service to their workplace, school and city!

Were we to help our **MEMBERS** unite in their areas of interest and influence, the effects could be profound!

...but how could this be made practical?

EXAMPLE: Making the MOBILISATION of MEMBERS PRACTICAL

A regular prayer meeting in every workplace and school



- We cannot think of a 'grander' vision for unity.
- This would catalyse the initiative and action of many.
- Some Christians do already initiate like this in their workplaces and schools - but it is rare.
- It is also rare at this point that Christian leaders encourage this as a specific direction for application.



Is this the most simple & profound vision for unity you have ever heard?

How then can we get to 'application' in our unity?

We need to traverse the pitfalls.

Functional unity amongst churches is uniquely fragile.

What then are the pitfalls - and how could we overcome them?

5 ATTITUDES - that can SUSTAIN or UNDERMINE unity

1. Pride - can cause God's favour to withdraw

To quote Marcus Aurelius from the movie 'The Gladiator', ***"There was once a dream that was Rome. You could only whisper it. Anything more than a whisper and it would vanish."***

- Unity is like this.
- Human pride offends God.
- With 'even a whisper of personal ambition' it can 'vanish'.
- There can be ambition in a pastors' group no different to in an individual congregation.
- Leadership / facilitation in the unity space is therefore a most sacred trust.

2. Speaking well of one another

The key challenge relates to denominational and theological differences - and we can **all easily and unknowingly** become guilty of words unwisely spoken.



- **Illustration - church structures:** The Pentecostal might criticise the seemingly **inflexible power structures** of the traditional churches - while the traditional churches criticises the seeming **concentration of power in one man or woman** in the Pentecostal churches.
- **Illustration - spiritual gifts:** The theological conservative might perceive those valuing outwardly expressed **spiritual gifts as being deceived or overly emotional** - while the reverse perception is of a congregation **lacking life, joy and vitality**.
- **Illustration - style:** The person in the traditional church might look at the Pentecostal and wonder why there is **so much emotion and hype** - while the reverse view perceives an **absence of the Holy Spirit's presence**.
- **Illustration - gospel approach:** The church with the 'evangelistic crusade' is perceived to be **too direct** - while the one criticising is perceived as **too quiet, as if too ashamed** of the gospel to share it with those who have never heard.

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

(Ephesians 4:3)

We must speak well of each other!

3. A scepticism of the idea of functional unity

"Once bitten, twice shy."

- Sometimes hidden behind the non-attendance of pastors at city pastors group is a deep-rooted scepticism lack of belief that functional unity is even possible - because 'we tried that and it didn't work'!

4. An unbalanced identity in denomination

This has already been addressed.

Where mindsets are too strongly 'married' to a denomination, it's easy to neglect the wider work of God's Church in the city - even to the point that we cannot even see it.

- If one part of the body doesn't play its part, other parts are affected. (1 Corinthians 12:12-31)



As stated above: **Denomination and Church do not have to be in tension.**

The solution is in **understanding the unique roles and function** of Church vs denomination.

We then pursue health in both!

5. An inadequate recognition of the need of workers released to serve on the united Church platform

While my personal bias might be suspected in this point, you will know that I genuinely advocate for outreach on 'all four pistons' (individual - small group - congregation - combined).

As a simple picture, our funding structures are anchored to local congregations and denominations - not the united Church. In fact exorbitant funds are spent each year on our maybe 3000 pastors and staff's salaries across a plausible 4000 churches

with 2500 buildings nationally - sustaining the first three of those pistons (individual - small group - congregational). Tithes do this.

Yet, because of how we are structured, the same doesn't naturally sit in support of the fourth piston, which is Church work in the city or nation.

Positively: Many do recognise the need for Church work that serves wider purposes in our cities and nation. Consider the student work of Cru /Tandem and TSCF, Rhema Media's work, the unity / networking efforts of NZCN / Shining Lights Trust / Wilberforce Foundation - and then a myriad of ministries working in specialised areas nationally.

The pitfall: If we only have a 'lens' that sees 'denomination' and 'congregation' we might struggle to recognise and empower those called to this important wider work.

- For a Biblical analogy - this is like struggling to recognise Gideon, Ehud, Jephthah, Deborah and Sampson when God raises them up - because they don't fit the mould we expect.
- Workers need releasing and empowering.

How do we overcome the above pitfalls?
We talk about them.



(We won't strengthen the functionality of our unity if we don't talk about it)

The above five-point article can be shared for discussion at AllTogether.co.nz/sustainingunity

APPLICATION Church members

Unite in your workplace / school

1. Meet with other Christians from your workplace or school once per week,
2. to pray together for your workplace/school, and regarding
3. what you could do?



APPLICATION Church leaders together

SUGGESTION 1: Find something you could uniquely do together

With a habit of meeting together as pastors to pray for your city/town as your foundation, **What you could do together in service to the city that you could not do apart?** (Examples are given earlier in this article)

SUGGESTION 2: Find a way to ensure that, as Christian leaders in a city or town, you **KNOW** about ALL of the 'help on offer' coming from all of your local churches to your community

We suspect the above is NOT the case in the vast majority of NZs city and town pastors' groups. Until a church leader knows what the Church of their city or town does, it is difficult to stand as a representative of God's churches.

However, once a group of church leaders have this knowledge, ALL are positioned to stand as a representative of God's Church - which then changes the way we engage!

There is an inherent wisdom to this - if we can perceive it.

The question is then, HOW might we help pastors across a community gain this knowledge - and retain something of it on an ongoing basis?

A simple idea:

Pastors' groups engage in a specific brief discussion every quarter

To discuss what?

- (a) Two of the eight spheres of influence (8 therefore covered in a year)
- (b) ...and also any upcoming seasonal opportunities in the calendar (Waitangi, ANZAC, Christmas etc.).



(To break it down) If this simple quarterly discussion were embraced as a habit

(1) this would bring MEANING and ENCOURAGEMENT to pastors' groups

(2) while catalysing

- enhanced COLLABORATION and TEAMWORK serving the community, and enhanced COHESION (presenting 'as one') to the community

...naturally generating increased ENGAGEMENT with and PROFILE within the community. ...which would unavoidably affect PERSPECTIVES, leading to increased FAVOUR and OPPORTUNITY.

'Suggestion 2' is a strategic key.

SUGGESTION 3 : Engage with and leverage momentum from national initiatives

Just as there are things we can do together but not apart in a city - the same applies nationally

Local Church unity can take on the same 'spirit of independence' ('empire building') as is possible in local congregations - thereby 'shirking off' anything 'national' as of no relevance.

Sometimes regional and national initiatives are purposed by God.

- They bring economies of scale.
- They can enable or catalyse action in multiple places that might rarely exist in a single location otherwise.

Discernment is needed.

By God's grace, enough people discern the value of every gospel effort God has purposed - so it thrives in our nation!



In summary

Level 1 - Relationship and prayer (Establishing your DNA)

- Actively 'disciple' the DNA and culture/thinking of your pastors' groups - achieved through time together discussing matters related to unity - including goals/purposes, attitudes, values of, disappointments in, pitfalls of, possibilities of and desires for unity.

Level 2 - Doing together what you cannot do apart

1. Find something to do together that meets a need in your city (an activity)
2. Know what each other does - so you can represent as one (discussion)
3. Leverage national initiatives - knowing it greatly increases your capacity (participation)

Level 3 - Being together what you cannot be apart

- Consider how you might enable and release the members of your churches to unite in their areas of influence and interest - most-certainly including in their schools and workplaces.
- The vision of catalysing united prayer gatherings connected with every possible workplace and school is a meaningful way to do this -catalysing their connection, prayer and new initiative).

**May God give favour to every gospel-purposed endeavour in our nation
that it might thrive in its season!**

SUPPORT RESOURCES

Books:

God is a City Builder by Ian Shelton - Find online

A House for His Glory by Colin Shaw - Free pdf can be found at www.citybycity.co.nz/resources - Free hardcopy (pay postage only) email admin@shininglights.co.nz

In One Spirit by Dave Mann - Free pdf can be found at AllTogether.co.nz/ebooks/ or can be purchased at AllTogether.co.nz/product/because-we-care/

Organisations:

Shining Lights Trust - Networking / encouraging vision in pastors groups, including a quarterly update to pastors' group convenors re vision + passing on ideas + articles.

- See AllTogether.co.nz/pastorsgroups/
- Subscribe for the quarterly updates at AllTogether.co.nz/updates/
- FaceBook: Closed group only for those facilitating unity / pastors' groups - search 'Mahi Ngatahi - Working Together'

New Zealand Christian Network - An expansive networking work connecting churches and Church ministries (para-church) together. NZChristianNetwork.co.nz

- They facilitate a weekly national online prayer meeting called 'Pray As One', 8pm Mondays. Details at prayasone.nz

Wilberforce Foundation - A charitable and expansive networking effort serving about 150 Church / Para-church ministries in areas of help to governance, healthy working practice, concurrent with the sustaining of a clear gospel vision and hope. Wilberforce.org.nz

The Auckland Church Network - While the efforts of ALL pastors' groups deserve praise - Auckland contains one-third of our nation's population. They've also funded staff (Church workers) to facilitate city-wide work. This is quite a unique dynamic in NZ. AucklandChurchNetwork.nz

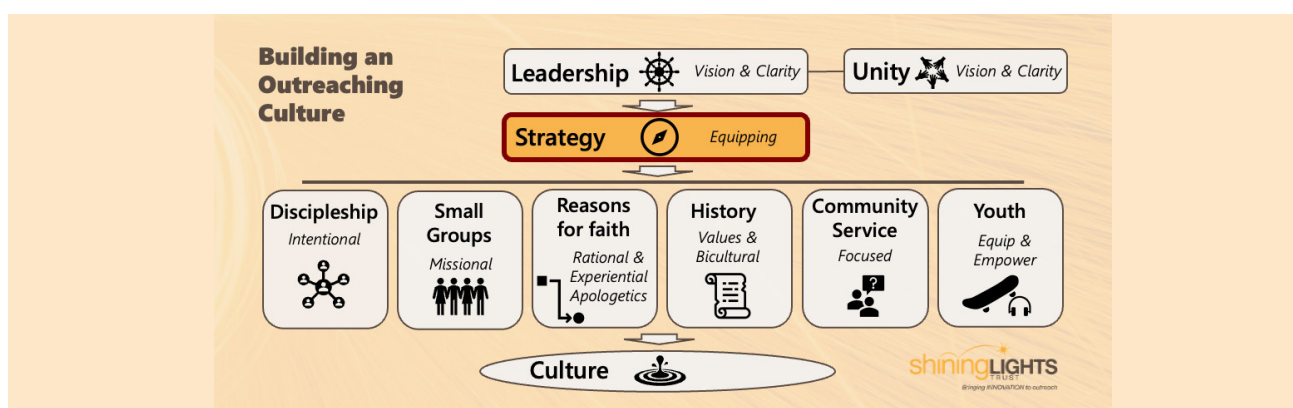
- Auckland churches are encouraged to be connected and united in and for their own 'quarter' or 'wider area' of the city - thereby functioning just like pastors' groups do in all other NZ cities and towns - for your 'city' (meaning 'part of Auckland city').

City by City - Facilitated by Colin and Grace Shaw, City by City has sought to encourage the unity of pastors in cities and towns nationwide. With Colin and Grace having recently retired, a network of Christian unity leaders remains and is praying into its next season. Citybycity.co.nz



TOPICAL UPDATE

Outreach and Equipping STRATEGY



Introduction: Building an outreaching CULTURE

Leading a congregation in its MISSION is one of the most important responsibilities of a local church leader.

However, it isn't automatic that this happens - or happens well.

- Sometimes, leadership practices that generate positive results have not been modelled.
- Sometimes outreach is sidelined as we become busy with other areas of church life.
- Sometimes we focus on one aspect of outreach, neglecting others that might actually be vital to the success of our mobilisation.

Here are three questions - with ideas and resources to help you.



1. Will you intentionally EQUIP?

Sometimes people don't engage because they don't KNOW how. (Skills)

At other times they don't engage because they can't SEE how. (Perspectives). For example, there are many long-term Christians who've been through 'evangelism training' before who can no longer SEE the opportunities. They are stuck.

Holistic, sensible EQUIPPING can change that!

If you will engage with good content, to bring relevant practical equipping to your members, you can 'unstuck' people, generating new activity!

RESOURCES:

Pulpit Resources:

(full outreach-equipping sermon series notes)

AllTogether.co.nz/sermons-studies

Matching small group:

Resources and more, AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups the above 'pulpit series' link + 'Because We Care' video series

AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members

Youth leadership training:

and also outreach equipping resources are at godtalk.nz/leadership and godtalk.nz/equipping

Ensuring members are CONFIDENT re WHY we believe this faith to be true is also very important. 'Thinking Matters', as a ministry, exists in NZ for this reason.

In addition, as a specific resource, we have created a 7-part video-discussion series for church small groups (and youth groups) including 7 x 15min videos + discussion guides + free PDF booklets (read in the week prior to discussion). Called 'Why Christians believe Christianity to be true' it is free online at whychristiansbelieve.nz

Please put this to good use!

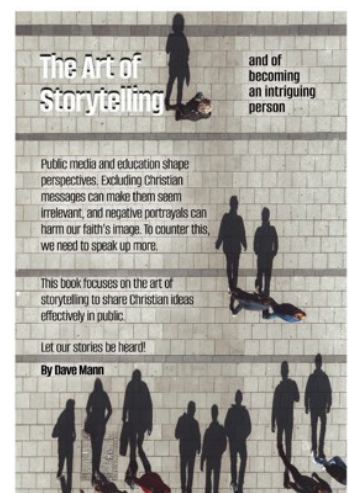


A SPECIFIC NEED: Helping members be more confident to speak in secular environments

- The above 'Because We Care' video series and (2) also pulpit resource both include a series on the topic of 'conversational skills' and also then 'conversational skills for hostile environments'. In both cases Jesus is the role model we learn from.
- As a specific skill, how might we better communicate christian messages in secular places? We suggest the answer is through WISE storytelling. This skillset has particular relevance to those leading Community ministries, Mainly Music, as well as for youth and young adults in their witness to their peers. This can help people re-find their voice in secularised environments.

As a first resource, Dave has written a short book / audio book titled "The Art of Storytelling – and of becoming an intriguing person" available AllTogether.co.nz/rationalfaith/#skillsbook

Might this book or its audio book version (2 hours) be of use to you?



2. Will you intentionally ENCOURAGE (and remind)

...to sustain momentum by shifting short-term learning to
long-term application?

The strategic significance of this point to RESULTS, is very-easily missed.

Very few do this.

Imagine INTENTIONALLY including a testimony per month in your Sunday services -specifically from someone who sought to engage a spiritual conversation in Christian witness. You then leverage that by standing to (a) applaud their initiative (b) while reiterating something you taught on the topic earlier in the year.

- Since the inception of this work in 2011 we have encouraged this HABIT of a MONTHLY testimony - and the same in each church small group. Very few have applied it. We believe the leadership wisdom remains. (I applied this habit when I was a pastor. It shifted things - and then also sustained them).
- This kind of leadership habit can UNIQUELY shift short-term teaching into long-term memory, while keeping the vision fresh and the heart encouraged. I know of no comparison for generating this particular result and outcome.
- (And if you are stuck for a testimony, play one that tells how someone came to faith - again then standing to reiterate something taught earlier in the year, encouraging conversational engagement)

RESOURCES:

Known:

A testimony series, gifted to us all by Life Church in Auckland

knownnz.com

What's unique? The videos are BRIEF (the primary versions being approx. 2.5mins).

This gives you a NZ testimony video per week to use via...

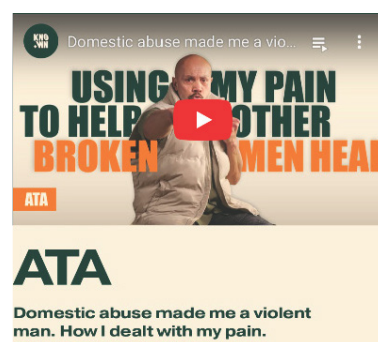
- Social media in your city/town.
- To play at 9.55am as people come into church
- ...or during services / offering time to encourage.
- Or in small groups or other church programmes as part of a communication.

AN IDEA: What if one church per city/town put up a story per week, boosted locally with even just \$5 or \$10?

The stories: knownnz.com/stories

Profile for your church: Add your church to the 'find a church map' via their website.

KNOWN

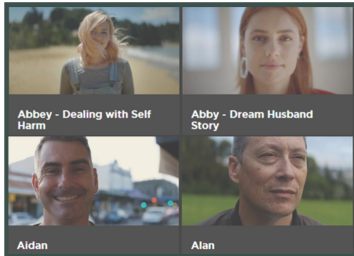




OTHER NZ-MADE TESTIMONIES RESOURCES

'Unpacking Life' NZ testimony series: from Hope Project (30 + stories)

10daychallenge.co.nz/stories/



Life TV:

We also note the extensive testimony resource created by Life TV (200+ stories)

www.lifetv.co/life-stories

Summary: Sometimes the simple things are the most powerful.

- We suggest this is the case here.
- CULTURE is shaped through HABITS.
- The above 'testimony + reminder' habit is strategic.
- It works. Please consider it.

3. Will you then EMPOWER them with a practical vision?

Where and when will they engage conversations? VISION needs casting to help people see HOW and WHERE they might be a witness via their work/school, church small group or your community initiatives.

Here are four areas of vision for YOU to consider - because you can only promote what you can SEE - while your members will only then do what they are able to SEE.

Vision-casting is an important part of leadership.



Workplace (and school) prayer groups are, we think, the BEST mobilisation strategy imaginable. (A big statement.) These rally believers together in the context of their mission!



Church small groups can become outreach-focused. Read our comprehensive article on 'outreach and small groups' within this series with support resources offered. How could you use this resource this year?



Community initiatives by your church are needed – and with focus. Read our comprehensive article on 'outreach and community engagement programmes' within this series. Also note the 'storytelling' training above also, noting this is a vital skillset to empower important verbal witness via these platforms - even if with the simplest of messages.



UNITY amongst churches is a vital component – even if the 'workload' isn't huge. This is again principally about culture while (a) finding something to do together that meets a community need, while also (b) knowing WHAT each other is doing to serve in the community - so every pastor can stand as a representative of God's united Church - rather than only their own local church. Read our comprehensive article on 'outreach and unity' within this series.

In summary

Regarding vision, we can only promote what we can SEE.

The above can position you to lead in a catalytic way - mobilising others.

Regarding the reality we observe in our work across NZ: While above 'equipping' and 'encouraging' isn't difficult, few do it.

Why?

- These leadership practices are not part of current church culture.
- Most have never seen their application modelled - despite decades of church involvement.
- These leadership practices are also not yet being taught/discipled via many of our Bible Colleges - despite their simplicity.

***You must assess whether or not what
is written above is true from a
leadership point of view.***

If so, apply the habits - to mobilise your members!

GOAL:

The Shining Lights Trust's faith-goal regarding 'equipping' is to see intentional outreach equipping practices being embraced by every church leader, empowering believers in **EVERY** church, as applied through **EVERY** pulpit, **EVERY** small group and **EVERY** youth group - **EVERY** year.

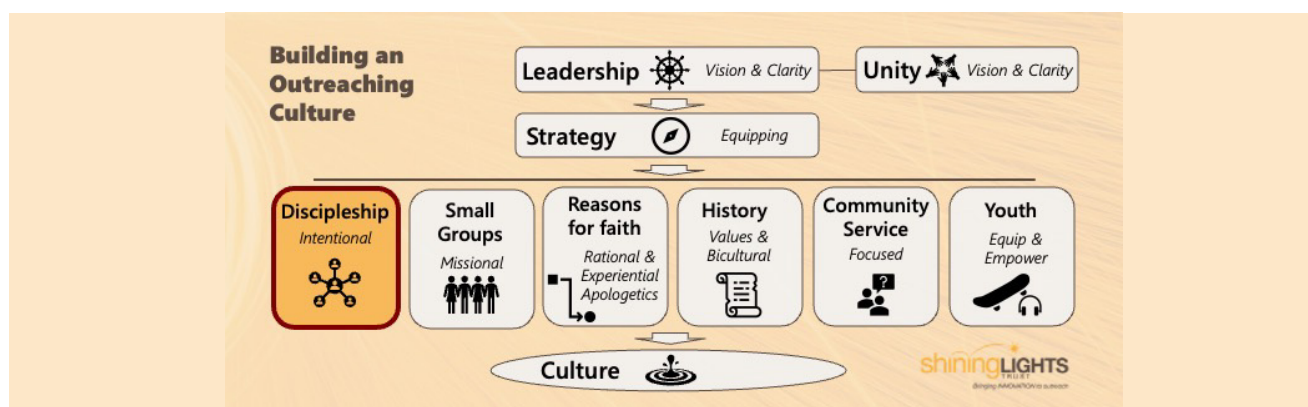
PRIMARY RESOURCE FOR CHURCH LEADERS

See here for our specific four-part video series for pastors on Building Outreaching CULTURE

AllTogether.co.nz/atconsulting

TOPICAL UPDATE

Outreach and DISCIPLESHIP



How to build an Intentional disciple-making culture?

The key dynamic of discipleship is contained in the word 'intentionality'!

Many intended 'discipleship' efforts are not very fruitful. To help, it is important to demystify 'discipleship'. When many think of 'discipleship' they think of a teacher in a classroom or pastor in a pulpit.

Disciple-making is not about 'teaching' and 'Bible studies' – as important as they are. It's about a lot more!

In this article we start with a Biblical foundation and then consider:

1. The goal
2. The methodology
3. The context (Natural contexts for disciple-making)
4. The content – including best approaches (Habits trump content)
5. The importance of measurable results



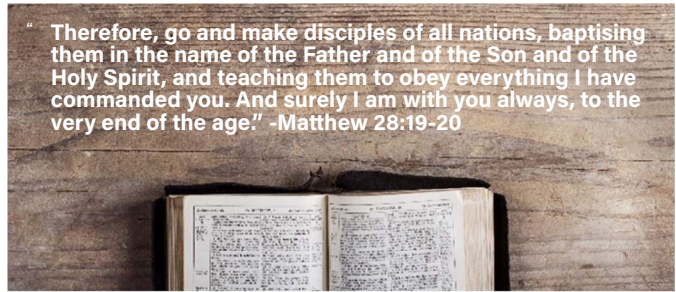


A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Here are some Scriptures with bullet-points.

Matthew 28:19-20

- Making disciples is the great commission.
- The assumption is that this refers firstly to evangelism, to make disciples out of non-disciples.
- Baptism is then the outward sign of the inner change.
- This commission goes on to instruct us not merely to teach Jesus' teachings, but instead to teach people to OBEY them. This requires far more than teaching the content. It is application centred. Put differently, the Great Commission is results oriented!



2 Timothy 2:2

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."

Paul, his audience, and the reliable people they choose, who then teach others.

We aren't called to merely disciple disciples. We're called to disciple disciple-makers!

The goal of discipleship is QUALITATIVE (the quality of the disciple), not merely QUANTITATIVE (what they have academically learned).

1 Corinthians 11:1

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ:"

Philippians 4:9

"Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

- Disciple-making is about life-on-life. At the core of it is our own example.
- Discipleship is application centred and practical, in contrast to being knowledge centred and academic.

The key word for a disciple is 'choice'. The key word for a disciple-maker is 'intentionality'.



1. THE GOAL

If the goal of discipleship is someone who knows and obeys Jesus' teachings, a course that merely explains Jesus' teachings will never achieve it.

To consider an alternative way of understanding disciple-making, consider the intriguing similarity there is in the below definitions of 'evangelism' and 'discipleship'.

1. Discipleship is about engaging continued conversations with these interested people - with the teachings of Jesus in mind.
2. Evangelism is about engaging conversations with interested people - with the gospel in mind.

Some points

- The methodology for evangelism and discipleship can be one and the same.
- Conversational and storytelling skills are highly significant to both.
- The goal of evangelism and discipleship are one and the same: Namely, to help people take steps toward Jesus.
- However, the content discussed with a believer and non-believer is different. For the non-believer, it is content purposed to help them know Jesus. For the believer, it is content purposed to help them to know and then obey Jesus' teachings (Matthew 28)

"Disciple-making is more about taking someone on a conversational journey than simply teaching a set of beliefs or ideas"



2. THE METHODOLOGY

As a skill, our effectiveness in disciple-making is significantly determined by our ability to connect with a person's current felt interests or needs, so as to then impart knowledge or perspectives with hope of helping them forwards in their journey.

As a 'method' or skillset, this is principally done by utilising conversational and storytelling skills to initiate and continue conversations. Only by this means will conversations stay both enjoyable and meaningful, therefore continuing. The truth of these points cannot be underestimated. Most 'discipleship' attempts never get past one or two meetings with a person! What is going on?

Our context of perceived failure

It is to be noted that most new believers rarely attend new believers' classes at all or continue for only one to four sessions if they do. Many Christians have a negative perception of 'discipleship' because of this – thinking 'people aren't interested', 'it doesn't work', and 'There is no point in trying here because it won't work!'

I suspect many of our churches have backed away from being more intentional in their disciple-making because of these kinds of discouragements when attempting to run new believers' courses or similar.

Concurrently, our churches do many amazing things that could be called 'disciple-making' were we to look at this from a different angle.

What is being suggested is that we became too content oriented – and insufficiently people oriented. Our 'methodology' failed!

A telling observation

Consider that nearly every person who ever stopped attending a new believer's course might have happily continued to enjoy coffee and conversation with the person who invited them! If our approach were relational and our methodology conversational and story-based, we wouldn't have this problem! However, the need for INTENTIONALITY remains. Our INTENTIONLITY is what makes it disciple-making! (The word 'making' holds no meaning otherwise).

To give a different vocabulary to this

It is often said that “Programmes don’t reach people; it takes people to reach people!” Church people seem to understand this point. Consider now that it is equally true that, “Programmes don’t disciple people; it takes people to disciple people!”

A course cannot do it!

The intentionality of a person to ‘make’ a disciple, enacted through the context of relationship and conversation, is needed!



We have noted how the word ‘discipleship’ has taken on meaning in our culture more associated with ‘formal teaching’ than ‘relationally encouraging’. The word ‘mentoring’ carries some very positive connotations – when considering how the process of ‘discipleship’ actually works in practice.

For example, compare even the question, “Can I disciple you?” with “Can I mentor you?” These have different connotations. The word ‘mentoring’ is also in common use within our wider society. So, what if we used the word ‘mentoring’ instead?



3. THE CONTEXT (NATURAL CONTEXTS FOR DISCIPLE-MAKING)

What might the PROCESS of discipleship look like – if no course or formal meeting were involved? It is of note in the Scriptures that we see Jesus discipling his disciples by many means!

Jesus sat to teach his disciples with no one else present (Matthew 24:3, Mark 9:25)

Jesus taught the crowds – in front of his disciples (Matthew 5:1-2)

Jesus engaged conversations while travelling (Matthew 24:1, Luke 24:13)

Jesus engaged conversations over meals - modelling ministry (Luke 19:1-10)

Jesus sent them on mission trips, sending out the 12 (Matthew 10) and 72 (Luke 10:1-23)

– likely followed by debrief meetings to consolidate learning (Mark 6:30)

...and Jesus modelled selfcare by withdrawing from both the crowds and his own disciples to pray (Luke 5:16, Matthew 14:23, 26:36).



The process of disciple-making is therefore multifaceted.

Consider, this means that a person being disciplined or mentored doesn't necessarily have to know that this is what we are doing. It doesn't have to be a formalised relationship. The fact that it is discipleship is MADE REAL THROUGH OUR INTENTIONALITY! It is possible to influence a person toward greater faith and fervour for Christ through friendship and conversation. In fact, sometimes the freedom and authenticity of a relationship is reduced by formalising it, because it changes the dynamics and expectations.

Consider these contexts in today's world

- **Helping someone** with practical tasks – like firewood, childcare, gardening, house cleaning, cooking them a meal. Etc.. These create a context for relationship and conversation. The intentionality of our questions is then what counts.
- **Intentionally driving somewhere with someone**, in view of the relational and conversational opportunity this enables – with encouragements or questions in mind.
- **Inviting someone to a course or seminar at church** - whether about Jesus, marriage, parenting, finances, emotional health or physical health (exercise / good diet).
- **Inviting someone over for a meal** – knowing that we get to know people a lot more personally through home hospitality – while taking an interest, with questions in mind.
- Remembering to connect with someone for a **coffee every six months.**
- Lending or giving a person a **book** – which after their reading we also ask about.
- **Referring a person** to an online article, website, devotional resource or book.
- Sending a meaningful thought, note, reminder or encouragement through an email, **text message** – or similar means to keep a connection and conversation going.
- Thinking to ask intelligent and thoughtful questions about things over coffee **after Sunday morning church services.**

To the pastor

It is likely that many of your church members are already intentional in these kinds of efforts . It is just that this isn't perceived or recognised as 'disciple-making'. Recognition given to this could enhance and expand these efforts.

It is also likely that other church members do these things – but with no intentionality. Were a vision to be painted by you regarding HOW discipleship takes place – they might become more INTENTIONAL, and this might change their results – which are also your results as a church!

How could you pass on the perspectives in this article – and then disciple your members – to make this their practice?

The defining factor that makes a relationship 'disciple-making' is the INTENTIONALITY that we bring to it!

The instruction to 'make disciples' was a call to intentionality!



4. THE CONTENT (INCLUDING BEST APPROACHES)

Having considered the (1) goal, (2) methodology and the (3) context of disciple-making today, let's now consider (4) the content.

Our approaches have to be simple. Only then can they be transferable to our members for their application.

Let's look very-briefly at four simple dynamics of disciple-making, in reference to content.

1. **Disciple-making content for discussions with a non-believer**
2. **Disciple-making content for discussions with believers**
3. **The higher goal (habits embraced trump content taught)**
4. **The thought-process when meeting to 'disciple' someone**

These are points you could share with your members, to help them become ever-more effective disciple-makers.

(a) Disciple-making content for discussions with a non-believer

If our goal is that people take steps toward Jesus, anything at all that helps to bring esteem to Jesus within their thinking is a valid part of our content - while our methodology remains one of conversation and storytelling.

Regarding a relevant scope of content:

- **The gospel** – Explaining this simple message at some point is very important – while discussing it is better. However, any lack of immediate response suggests that a wider array of evidence (both rational and experiential) might be needed before they are ready to consider the truth of the message.
- **The Bible** – For example, you could meet with someone to read and discuss your way through the Gospel of Luke together – or you simply share a parable of Jesus as an illustration and then ask a question.
- **Personal testimony** – including the testimonies of others, enables stories to be shared that are relevant to a wide range of challenging experiences, bringing hope.
- **The testimony of history** – The Christian faith has established many of our cultural values, enabling high levels of freedom, prosperity, equality, charity and more. History stories are interesting and can counter a negative public perception of our faith.
- **The testimony of nature** – There are a myriad of stories of amazing and complex things in nature that reflect design, intelligence and the intent of a Creator.

(b) Disciple-making content for discussions with believers

Content for new believers is principally about anything that helps them know and obey Jesus' teachings – as per the definition of the Great Commission found in Matthew 28. However, it needs noting that stories from personal testimony, the testimony of history and the testimony of nature are still relevant. New believers often doubt. These stories bring perspective and encouragement. All of these areas of testimony (the story of things God has done) have relevance to discipleship, and at all stages and 'levels' (Failure to recognise this can result in content-based 'discipleship' which has a weak connection to their everyday lives - which is why some lose interest.) Of note:

- The wider body of Scripture is now also relevant.
- Relational 'accountability' (through encouraging questions) now becomes a core part of our disciple-making, noting the instruction is 'teaching to obey'

How do we bring 'accountability'?

If someone commits to reading the Bible every day, it might be very helpful if you asked a week later how they were going. Many would fail in their goal without your intentional encouragement. This is how we can gently bring 'accountability' – enabling results. In the Parable of the Sower Jesus talked about seedlings choked by thistles (the worries of life and deceitfulness of wealth). If not for your intentionality to connect with and encourage a young believers persistence, the might not persist! This demonstrates again the significance of INTENTIONALITY to disciple-making. There is sometimes a lot of effort in our churches with very little measurable fruit. What if a key 'missing link' was the intentionality of our members to connect with others – to be active in making disciples?

A starting content for discipling believers

Here is one simple summary of some core teaching points for newer or younger believers.

1. Loving God: How are we to have a relationship with a God we cannot see?

- We talk to God through prayer
- We hear from God through the Bible
- We can also hear from God through the inner whispers of the Holy Spirit (including our conscience), through circumstances and through other people – but all of these need discerning.

2. Loving one another: How does this affect our relationship with other Christians?

- We meet in large groups to celebrate and learn.
- We meet in small groups to love and care.

3. Loving the world around: How does this affect our relationship with the wider world?

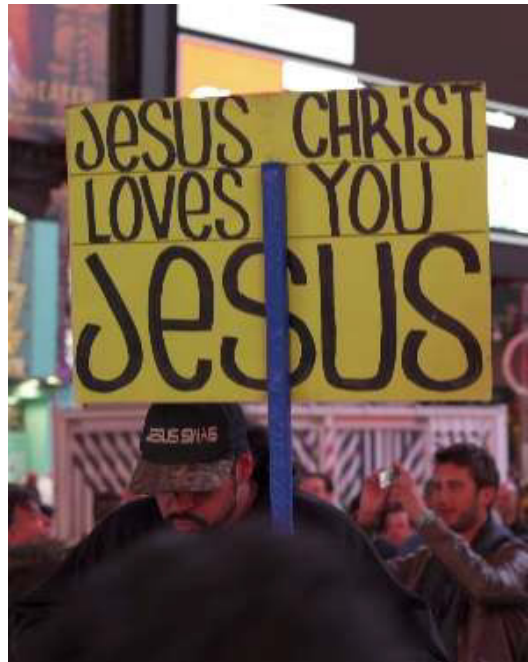
- Our 'ministry' is to use our gifts, abilities, resources and opportunities to love, help and care for others where we are.
- Our 'mission' is to help other people come to know Jesus – just as someone once helped us.

The thought-process of the underlined words is easy to remember, providing a 'syllabus' – with no notes needed.

(c) A goal greater than content: The greatest fruit will come from HABITS embraced!

You will have heard the saying, "Give a man a fish and you will feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you will feed him for a lifetime." Regarding disciple-making, if results matter, this applies! Let me illustrate.

If we consider the above-mentioned three areas, here is what the habit-focused dynamic of discipleship could look like:



Regarding area #1: Loving God – Were we able to help them embrace a HABIT of reading the Bible each day (followed by reflection and prayer), their relationship with God would have an anchor - outlasting and outperforming the things we teach them.

Regarding area #2: Loving one another – Were we able to help them embrace a HABIT of participating with both a weekend church service and weekday church small group, their relationship with other believers would have a significant anchor – outlasting and outperforming the encouragement we give them, while empowering their love to others.

Regarding area #3: Loving the world around – Were those leading the church and small groups to have HABITS in place that facilitate (a) a monthly time of prayer together for the non-believing friends each person is seeking to encourage – and also (b) an encouraging monthly testimony drawn out about how someone came to (or shared) faith after which (c) a motivational or equipping point related to outreach is reiterated, leveraging the encouragement of the testimony... their 'ministry' and 'mission' would have a significant anchor, platform and team!



To illustrate: Imagine a VERY YOUNG youth leader

Imagine a young youth leader who – with no intent to criticise them - really doesn't know very much at all. As a result, their Bible teaching is very weak. However, because of their intentionality in a few leadership HABITS we discover that the youth they are there to make disciples out of have all done the following.

- (a) They've embraced a HABIT of daily Bible reading,
- (b) They've embraced the HABIT of going to a church service each weekend and a church small group (the youth group),
- (c) and as a result of the intentional encouragements of these groups to serve God and be a witness in daily life, they are actively seeking to do this as a witness to their peers.

Would you say that this young leader has failed as a disciple-maker – or might they have succeeded to the highest degree?

This is the importance of HABITS in leadership and disciple-making. They create the CONTEXT for growth.

The same HABIT-based approach applies to other areas of discipleship

For example, imagine you are trying to help a younger couple through marriage struggles. While you might give some good advice, in the long-term, imagine that you managed to help them embrace a HABIT of reading and discussing one book about marriage per year together as a couple. In all likelihood that HABIT would go on to achieve more in their lives and marriage than the temporary help received from things in just one period of their lives

This point is not to be underestimated.

If we **INTENTIONALLY TEACH** these understandings to our church members, this will **ENABLE AND EMPOWER THEIR INTENTIONALITY**, bringing **RESULTS!**

(d) The resulting thought-process when meeting to 'disciple' someone

In summarising the DNA of what is written above, imagine you are about to meet with someone to encourage their faith.

1. We show care first

'They don't care how much we know until they know how much we care.' So we ask, "How are you?"

2. We stay flexible to discuss the questions they are asking next

Again, this is about showing selfless care – while meeting them at their point of felt need or interest. Through asking questions we can ascertain where they are up to on their journey, to help them take their next step. The nature of that journey will be different for every person.

3. Only then do we bring a content that we have prepared

Everything above isn't to say content and preparation aren't important. Quite the opposite. God can lead us regarding the direction to take a conversation – or regarding a Scripture to read and discuss together. Preparation is necessary! It is in our preparation that love clarifies our thoughts – and the Spirit then prompts us to share a particular scripture or story, and to ask a particular question. Nothing said here is intended to undermine the importance of our preparation – but instead to expand what it involves. We aren't trying only to teach a content; we are trying to help a person stay interested and engaged on a journey!



5. THE IMPORTANCE OF MEASURABLE RESULTS

Christian churches have often downplayed the importance of measurable results in outreach and discipleship. here is a truth that sits behind this scepticism. While we're responsible to share the gospel with others as Christians, we are not responsible for another person's response. It is therefore true that results aren't the only measure.

However, they are still one measure – and a very important one. We might otherwise be in danger of neglecting a balancing truth: Namely, that we might be terrible communicators!

If we focus too much on the fact that we are not responsible for a person's response, we might fail to see how we might improve.

Personal story

When a pastor, I had freedom to establish an intentional disciple-making approach in one sector of a larger church. This included just over 20 small groups. As a habit, I required that all groups spend their first week's discussion each year prayerfully setting personal goals in about eight different areas of life. (If a person only had goals in three of those areas, that was fine.)

With their group members' various goals in hand, the group leader could then plan their weekly activities / discussions with awareness of their members' various goals. They could concurrently make notes in their own planning calendar to encourage their members at relevant times. For example, they might make a note to encouraging someone who's goal was to run a particular 10km run in August to start their training in April. In August they might encourage someone wanting to strengthen their marriage to attend a Marriage Course run in the church in September, etc. The discipling of annual goal setting empowered the INTENTIONALITY of the leader – which helped the members to measurably and observably grow! The discipline of annual goal setting empowers the INTENTIONALITY of the leader – which can result in the members to measurably and observably grow!

Revision of the goals mid-year annually enabled the revitalising of these goals in the members' lives. Now, consider the result of the above approach to ministry – as one picture.

At the end of each year, it was possible to have measurable changes and growth in nearly every members life and often in multiple areas.

This approach also generated continuous testimonies – because we had well-over 200 people who could attest to the fact that they had grown or changed. These were like fuel to the ministry, both building and sustaining momentum.

This is the thinking of an 'intentional disciple-maker'. It is a paradigm of leadership. (This article has primarily focused on one-on-one disciple-making. For more on intentionality in small groups see 3 video-teachings at AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups) Embracing a new paradigm is like first riding a bicycle. It can feel awkward and 'programmatic' at the start. However, once the principles and dynamics are caught, it can be done with very little thought required!

In summary of 'an intentional disciple-making culture'

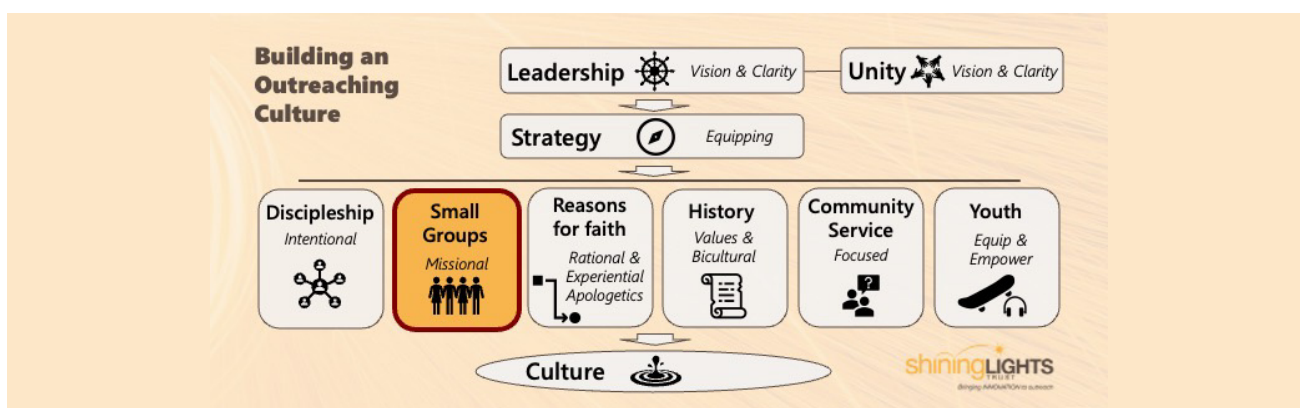
To end where we began: The key dynamic of discipleship is contained in the word "intentionality". If anything is gained from this topical update, we pray it would be a revelation regarding just how true this prior statement is. It is a paradigm of leadership – and it yields fruit!

- What could you take from this topical update to apply?
- What could you take from it to teach to others?
- How might you build an intentional disciple-making culture in your church – to see multiple members becoming engaged with greater intentionality?



TOPICAL UPDATE

Outreach and SMALL GROUPS



Introduction A Church WITH small groups VS a Church OF small groups

The early church met in the synagogues (large groups) and from house to house (small groups).

- It was not a large gathering with some small groups. It was instead a church made up of small groups.
- Put differently, it could be said that Christianity started as a 'house church' movement.

History

At the time of Constantine centuries of persecution ended when Christianity became a state-sanctioned religion (The Edict of Milan - 313AD).

- 60 years later Emperor Theodosius made Christianity become a State Religion (The Edict of Thessalonica - 380AD)
- As a synopsis: From then onwards the larger gatherings became the primary focus — just as they remain in the West today.
- What is of note is that the Church thrived when meeting only in small groups – while it did not thrive so well when meeting only in large groups. When the small group gatherings stopped, or were diminished, something fundamental was lost.

Bible

My NIV New Testament has 57 'one another' statements -like love one another, pray for one another, etc...

- Being 'the Church' God wants us to be requires a context of relationship.
- Large group gatherings do not provide this in a manner fitting the 'one anothers' .
- Both large and small groups are necessary to apply these instructions.

Furthermore, there is an interesting pattern in Acts where there are initial larger gatherings and disciples were "added" (Acts 2:41-47).

- The Church then grows - and they meet house to house. The 'centralised leadership' of a few apostles was 'diversified' - releasing a multiplicity of leadership.
- Even those appointed to serve the poor started preaching - with outstanding results (Acts 6:1-7). Concurrently, many leaders needed releasing through the house churches - and the Bible articulates that the number of disciples then "multiplied" - vs being merely 'added' (Acts 6:7).



A cultural point of note: What is OUR weakness in NZ?

- Do you think it fair to say that our inherited 'church culture' is one that has under-valued the small group?
- What if this is one of our weaknesses as the NZ Church - to identify and bring balance to?

A specific and important question WHAT IS THE MISSION of the CHURCH SMALL GROUP?



The mission Jesus gave his Church (Matthew 28) is to make disciples of non-disciples.

By defining 'church' as 'congregation' in our minds, it is possible that we have limited our understanding of this instruction.

Of note, 'making disciples out of non-disciples' is not only the mission of the local congregation...

***... It is also the mission of every church small group!
This has significant implications***

(To clarify)

The mission Jesus gave us is therefore - by its very definition - not only the mission of every local congregation. It is also:

- The mission of every church small group
- The mission of every individual Christian
- And the mission of every Christian family.

A simple and necessary question logically follows regarding our many church small groups:

How might we restore the God-given mission of the church small group to our small groups?

Outreach as the CULTURE OF (rather than as a PROGRAMME IN) the local church

While our small groups could run an outreach programme every term - the reality is that programmes don't reach people; it takes people to reach people.

- The most effective outreach in a local church will come as a result of the MEMBERS becoming authentically 'evangelistic' in (a) who they are, and (b) together as a team.

The key to achieving an authentically evangelistic culture IN the members of the congregation is our leadership HABITS.

- Habits build culture - not programmes (though having good programmes certainly helps).

So, what HABITS might be able to help us 'reinsert' the mission of the Church small group into our local church's small groups?

FIVE leadership HABITS for church small groups to 'reinsert' their mission

1. **Identify your 'five'** (who, hindrances, interests - An annual habit)
2. **Pray for your 'five'** (A monthly habit)
3. **Testimony of conversations engaged** (A monthly habit)
4. **Socials - based around their interests** (A quarterly habit)
5. **Invitations to local and combined church** programmes/events/courses (Occasional)

Below resources explain the above.

This is achievable for any small group.

This doesn't require use of the regular Bible study / discussion time in weekly meetings - so all pre-existing (other) purposes of the group exists for can continue unchanged.

From a strategic point of view, we suggest that this answers the question this article is purposed to answer and as simply as possible in view of a minimum 'pace' of leadership direction required to actually catalyse outcomes.

There is a difference between a church with small groups and a church of small groups. Our small groups aren't 'add-ons' to a church. They are the church - and therefore need priority and also health as the disciple-making vehicle God intended!

SUPPORT RESOURCES

Sermon Resource: The Biblical and historical basis for church small groups

"Intentional disciple-making through church small groups" Audio sermon by Dave Mann.

Can be found at AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups

- Audio file: 40min message
- Notes for pastor preaching
- Powerpoint (Content without design/images for your adaption)

From the SLT: Equipping video on this topic for small group leaders

This 16 minute video for church small group leaders articulates the above -though in different words. Can be found at AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups

Participant notes:

- Download to give each leader when they watch this
- ...to discuss and consider together how this might be sustainably applied.



From the SLT: Small group leader training...integration holistic growth with outreaching culture

Your denomination or church might have other small group training resources you use. The below is just an option - however it is notably one that is holistic - while INCLUDING the outreaching dynamic which is so often left out.

Personal note from Dave: In my prior assignment as a pastor in Singapore I gave intentional focus to learning about church small groups. Having been 'thrown in the deep end' in a very different dynamic of church I knew I needed to learn new things. The below resulted from this journey. To this day, the fifth year of applying the below teachings remains the most exciting thing I have ever touched in outreach. We grew through the small groups.

(Further comment on the thought behind what was and wasn't selected for this training, and why, can be found under 'The philosophy /thought behind this training' at AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups

People:

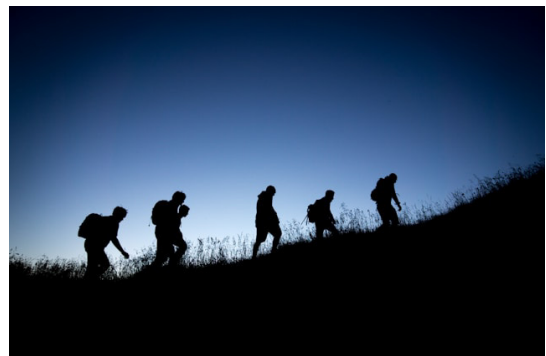
The following Kiwis have significant experience in small groups / small group church planting. These pioneer-spirited church leaders are New Zealand heroes! You may know others in addition.

Robin Corner - worldwidecpm.org

Nick Klinkenberg - www.nickklinkenberg.com

Nick and Sarah Field - www.theway.co.nz

Tony Collis (catch from 22mins) - <https://youtu.be/Sl6nU5DtunY?si=uvo1GYtixnsjzOa0>



SUPPORT RESOURCES

Church small group leader training videos & guides:

Go to AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups for videos and participants guides.

Video 1 - 30 minutes

1. Three key goal areas — and how to achieve them through simple 'fringe' habits (because habits are what builds culture)
2. Programme flow and priorities
3. Discussion leading tips — Part I



Video 2 - 30 minutes

4. The essentiality of small groups to the function of the Church
5. Small group life-cycle
6. The essentiality of annual goals to life-changing small groups (including outreach goals)



Video 3 - 40 minutes

7. Discussion skills — Part II (group management)
8. Planning (putting it all to practice — to deliver measurable results).



Books:

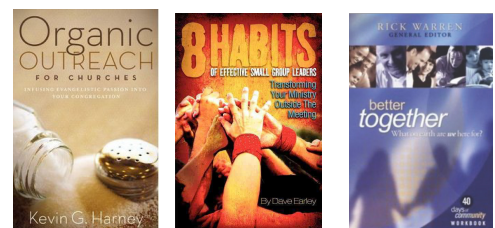
Generations for Life - by Tony Collis tony@hopelevin.org.nz

Elephant in the Room - by Dave Mann. See chapters 6 and 7. (Free PDF available on request to admin@shininglights.co.nz, or purchase in print from AllTogether.co.nz/products/#outreach)



Because We Care - by Dave Mann - See chapters 12 and 13. (Free PDF of book available upon request to admin@shininglights.co.nz, or purchase in print from AllTogether.co.nz/products/#outreach)

Organic Outreach - by Kevin Harney. A different approach to 'outreaching culture', though with the same founding understandings regarding 'culture'.
(AllTogether.co.nz/products/#outreach or search online)



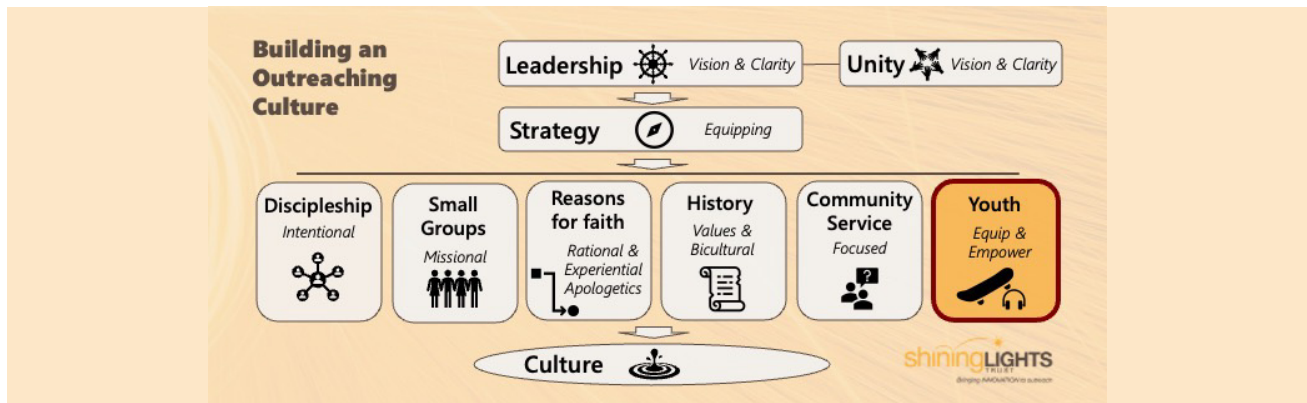
Eight Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders - by Dave Earley. A review at AllTogether.co.nz/outreach-book-review-8-habits-effective-small-group-leaders then search online)

Better Together - by Rick Warren. A truly superb small group resource including book and discussion guides. This was created following the '40 Days of Purpose' material, which many churches have used. It is an excellent material that can help to gel a group together - and with a meaningful direction. Find online.

Where do we go from here - by Ralph Neighour. A paradigm book written in the 1980s about the then-exploding Cell Church movement of Asia. Find online.

TOPICAL UPDATE

Outreach and YOUTH Ministry



If current patterns aren't turning the tide, repeating them isn't going to change the situation.

Some of the most critical 'gospel gaps' in the NZ Church as a whole are in the youth ministry arena. This has relevance to key church leaders / denominational leaders /pastors' group convenors - not only youth leaders, because it is considerably relevant to the greater success of our God-given mission.

Consider these facts:

- About 85% of those who come to faith do so before age 20.
- Today, almost all of these from non-church families come to faith do so during their teenage years.
- Most of these come to faith between ages 11–14, noting research is suggesting worldview is now largely set by age 13. This makes intermediate-aged ministry highly significant.
- We estimate, youth ministry involvement is down to 25% of what it was 25 years ago in NZ.
- 30 years ago, there were 800 Christian school groups—now, only a fraction remain, with no national data, no networking yet, and little-to-no support.
- In the past, youth leaders in 12+ cities were united so much so that they would have 6 to 8 combined outreach events annually, with groups like Youth for Christ being prominent. Many towns replicated the pattern. Nothing on that scale exists today. It's probably that locations have 1 or no united outreach youth events in an average year.



The question is therefore, what new thinking might be needed?

GAP 1: Intermediate Aged Ministry

Barna Research (https://youtu.be/kaF5_wjtN_E?si=FQRvuwjUVjzQ_ZkT) says worldview is basically consolidated by age 13 these days. It's unimaginably young. The point is maybe primarily that, if worldview ideas related to God and faith aren't seeded' by this point, it is rare that a person embraces faith later. This highlights the importance not only of children's and Intermediate-aged youth ministry -but also of content within these groups that gives REASON for considering the worldview we hold to be true.

Regarding children's ministry - there are still some great opportunities. Many nonchurch parents are still fine with their children attending church holiday programmes - while a level of wisdom is needed in the way Christian messages and values are conveyed. However, in general, outreach to children is more difficult now than in the past. Intermediate aged youth ministries are needed.

Regarding influences - various online articles quickly reflect that parents spend about 7 minutes per day on average talking with their children, while media can be influencing them for 4 to 6 hours—or more. Without intentional discipleship from both parents and the church through everyday conversations, storytelling, and structured group discussions—the foundations needed for a sustained worldview / faith might not be built.

An important insight: Young people have deep questions! This remains true even when they're not asking them out loud. They're quietly wrestling with big issues—God, existence, morality, science, purpose, suffering, and hope. They need honest, thoughtful conversations with people they trust.

The power of simple, open conversations with 11 and 12-year-olds is often underestimated.

The importance of intermediate aged youth groups is underestimated - and the substance of them needs to go wider than the repeating of Bible stories with simple moralistic or devotional messages and games. Why believe this faith to be true?

Programme Options

SUNDAY DISCUSSION TIMES: These can be helpful during the sermon, especially if the sermon content or delivery isn't suited to younger teens. From around age 13, most can follow a sermon, though delivery style is a factor.

WEEKDAY PROGRAMMES: Midweek gatherings offer strong benefits. In our church, for example, we run a one-hour Friday programme at 5pm—mostly fun, with a short topic and discussion. It focuses on connection/relationships, outreach, and building momentum. There are then Sunday discussion times during the sermon that lean more toward deeper topical engagement.

INTEGRATED SUNDAY SCHOOL APPROACH: Some churches keep youth involved in Sunday School, giving them leadership roles in the wider programme -while finding other ways to create space for age-specific discussion or activities.



GAP 2: The Integration of junior youth (Tweens) to youth group

Bridging the Transition to Youth Group

The transition from Sunday School to youth group is believed to be the second-largest point of attrition from the Christian faith, with around one-third walking away because they don't see the point, or don't connect.

A healthy youth group is essential, but so too is a thoughtful integration strategy from early November onward annually:



1. **The youth leader visits the Sunday School** or intermediate group to introduce themselves and invite students to visit youth group. They make the group sound exciting. This is about mental preparation.
2. **Students nearing the end of intermediate school attend** a special youth group programme (or two) in late November and December, tailored to welcome them and share the vision for what's ahead.
3. **One or two current youth (ages 14-15) share their story** about the impact youth group has had on them. This feeds positive expectation.
4. **For larger youth groups, new youth could meet in their future small groups** so the new youth knows who their own small group leader will be the following year.
5. **Parents receive clear information** about the youth group to gain their support and involvement. Most youth will only be there if their parents value it - and drive them.
6. **The new year starts with a fun social event**, building connection amongst the new youth and excitement about the upcoming programming. Diligence is given to helping all feel welcome and new relationships becoming established. They need friends!

This transition is mostly about a social and relational connection—even while with a spiritual vision also. The goal is that these 12 or 13-year-old can't wait to join!

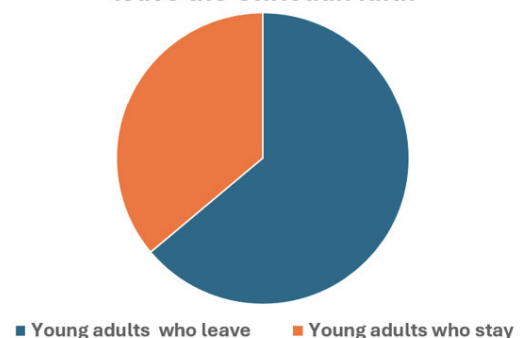
GAP 3: Young Adults Ministry (The Destiny of every youth leader)

An estimated two-thirds of youth leave the Christian faith during the young adult years (ages 18–22). The Fallout documentary by [Creation.com](https://www.creation.com) highlights this trend clearly.

The Core Issue: No Clear Reasons for Belief

The main reason for this attrition is that many young people were never given compelling reasons to believe the faith is true. Multiple studies have evidenced this.

Estimated young adults (18-22) who leave the Christian faith



I once came across a study listing six reasons why young adults left church within which none directly mentioned a lack of reasons belief. On closer inspection, every reason tied back to questions about what we believe and why. For example, some perceived a moral prejudice in the faith around sexuality issues - which is actually a question about where moral values come from.

The Solution to Young Adult Attrition is in Youth Ministry

If we want to prevent this 'fallout', we will need to consistently equip young people early on not only with what we believe - but with why we believe it. The data has consistently said that this is a foundation for lasting faith - while many churches and youth ministries continue to give very little diligence to this preferring (a) to only teach what we believe -expecting blind faith, while (b) desiring that they experience the touch of the Spirit. These two things are needed - but so is a clear 'education' on why we believe the faith to be true - because our faith is a counter-narrative to what they hear through public media and education every day.

Here are two further reflections on Young Adults ministry.

The Need for a Young Adults Group

AN ATTRACTION FACTOR IS NECESSARY: Cultural shifts mean young people now take longer to reach independence—emotionally, financially, and spiritually. Where 13-year-olds once took on responsibilities like getting a job, today many 25-year-olds still live at home and rely on their parents. This delay affects both emotional and faith development - which affects how we approach young adult ministry. Many young adults are not mature enough to sustain their own faiths without help akin to what youth ministries have provided. While what appeals to an 18-year-old is very different to a 12-year-old, the point is that an attraction factor is still needed. This is maybe different to even just 20 years ago. Young adults ministry might benefit from a re-think.

- (See "The What and How of Youth and Young Adults Ministry" by Dave Mann for more. Noting chapter 10, 'Young Adults Ministry - The New Paradigm') - You can find his resource at the bottom of this document, listed under the 'Resources' section.

INVOLVEMENT KEEPS THEM CONNECTED: Young adults are more likely to stay when they are involved—like in worship, sound, welcoming, youth leadership, and more. Responsibility builds purpose and fosters social connection around shared tasks.

DISCIPLESHIP IS CRUCIAL: Every young adult needs a space to discuss faith openly. Intentional conversations ('discipleship') in small group settings can help them process complex issues they face in today's culture. Older ones who are willing to give relationship to them can facilitate - bringing care and wisdom.

How to find a Young Adults Leader?

If a youth leader stayed in the role a few years, they are the ideal person, as they already have relationship, and invested interest. In this sense, "Young adults ministry is the destiny of every youth leader."

Alternatively, a slightly older individual or young married couple can work well. They bring life experience and will shape group culture in a way that might not happen if they are not there. Concurrently, with the vision clarified, most of the actual programme planning and even discussion / Bible study leading can be delegated amongst the young adults. They will more strongly 'own' what they research and say themselves.

GAP 4: Pastors and Elders who take responsibility for ensuring both the youth ministry and its outreach are healthy

This point is significantly underestimated - and possibly not talked about enough amongst our various church leadership structures.

The average youth leader stays in the role for just 18–24 months. Most begin with little experience—limited crowd management, very few discussion skills, cannot explain what the gospel is succinctly, and no experience running school groups—all while juggling study or a first job. Can we really expect them to build a healthy culture in our youth groups on their own?

This high turnover keeps the momentum of many youth ministries and their outreach at a considerably low ebb.

This is a cycle that repeats.

The solution? Pastors and elders must take ownership. The health of a youth ministry starts with the older churches leaders who intentionally equip, guide and support the new youth leaders, bringing vision and oversight - and who visit and support regularly.

For example: When a new youth leader starts, how are they inducted? What guidelines, training or direction comes from senior leadership

For example: How often does the pastor / and elder and spouse join with the youth ministry, getting to know the youth, being aware of the challenges - to be positioned to bring encouragement or help?

The lack of this is a key reason youth leaders don't last long.

RESOURCE: See a booklet from the prior group of NZ denominational youth leaders on this topic at sustainablepractices.org.nz

The lack of this is a key reason youth outreach is so weak - with most NZ youth NOT having opportunity to hear of or know Jesus during their youth years.



RESOURCE: Godtalk.nz addresses this - see below.

Godtalk.nz was created after surveying the gaps in Christian youth ministry and outreach. The resource is purposed to support youth outreach by (a) equipping new youth leaders, while (b) resourcing them to bring simple and sensible outreach equipping.

It is however, a tool intended for senior pastors or key church leaders to know about - to pass to each new youth leader. Because of the high turn-over of youth leaders, this is the only way that youth outreach can be made strong.

How to use it effectively:

- Ask the new youth leader to watch all 12 short 'leadership' videos (totalling just 60 minutes) - godtalk.nz/leadership
- Then, meet with them later (approx. 90 minutes) to
- Discuss what they learned and encourage application.
- Clarify with them that annual outreach equipping is an expectation you have of them in their role (because it is unlikely to happen if this is not your expectation)
- Clarify with them that annual outreach equipping is an expectation you have of them in their role (because it is unlikely to happen if this is not your expectation)
- Highlight the equipping videos + discussion guides in the resource, thereby leaving them fully resourced for this - godtalk.nz/equipping
- Encourage leadership development—inviting them to now gather a few potential leaders to meet monthly for training, using one or two videos as a discussion tool within this training each time.

It is the process that sustains the focus. It is unlikely to happen any other way.

AN IDEA: If both the pastor and youth leader subscribe to the monthly Godtalk updates AllTogether.co.nz/godtalk-signup/ - the pastor can delete this each month - only until they are again looking for a new youth leader. The email therefore serves as a reminder of the above.

[Support resources are at the bottom]

GAP 5: Youth Leader Unity - An Overlooked Key to Momentum

It is natural in a small nation that denominational support structures for youth ministries are generally under-resourced. Our geography is extensive in contrast to our population. The level of support possible is limited!

The uniting of youth leaders in a city or town is a strategy that can somewhat mitigate this resourcing and support limitation. We are suggesting that a higher priority on youth leader unity (within each city and town) is needed - and that this requires ongoing ADULT intervention / intentionality to happen. When united...

- Youth leaders will last longer.
- They can share resources, making the work easier.
- They can encourage their youth to be united just as they are - but in their schools.
- They can agree that outreach equipping is essential and make sure it happens.
- They can unite to enable city-wide outreach events that their youth groups can combine in.



The result?

- Youth ministry gains visibility.
- More teens engage in spiritual conversations.
- Interest in youth groups grows.
- Momentum is helped to return to youth ministry and outreach!

AN IDEA: What if pastors and other key church leaders – as a habit – facilitated the unity of their ever-changing youth leaders – again and again – every time their leaders change...? This more senior involvement is needed because the unity of youth leaders naturally falls over whenever the key youth leader facilitating it moves on.

A SUSTAINABLE EXTENSION OF THIS IDEA: What if a mature Christian couple hosted a delicious cooked bacon and egg breakfast (with hash browns, mushrooms, coffee, juice...) at the start of every school term – to which a key youth leader invites the youth leaders of their city or town? The youth leaders manage their own meeting. The point is that mature Christian leaders in each community take responsibility to ensure this is happening - because it will not happen in a sustained way otherwise! Regarding the agenda of the united youth leaders in any location Their unity is vital to outreach because it affects...

- sustainability in ministry,
- intentionality in outreach equipping,
- the facilitation of school groups - in which their youth likewise unite
- and catalyses larger youth events that add momentum and strengthen the gospel focus.

[Support resources are at the bottom]

GAP 6: Christian Youth Unity in Schools

Just as the strength of youth groups and their outreach will be helped as youth leader unite – so also strength and witness of youth in their schools. In uniting to pray, God can lead them as to what to do. (Three steps.)

The implications need perceiving.

If this is done...

- Many will be stronger in their faith and witness – and compromise less
- More conversations with peers will result
- More profile for the faith and youth groups will result
- More consciousness of and interest in the faith will result
- More interest in visiting a youth group or combined youth event will result
- More readiness for messages shared at the youth group will result
- More perseverance in faith decisions new youth seem to make will result – because those events and decisions were just one point on a journey – not the only point on the journey.

Conversations that start at school often continue or are completed at a youth group. It's exactly like hard soil that is 'tilled', to be ready for seed.

For the inverse, if conversations are not started at school through the boldness of youth – every other aspect of youth outreach will be weaker as a result - with the list above noted.



GAP 7: United Youth Events

This is our seventh and final gap.

There is a saying; 'Programmes don't reach people. It takes people to reach people.' This saying is true. However, programmes are still useful! A larger youth programme can attract a crowd, drawing people to an environment and message they might not otherwise hear.

Where the conversations youth are equipped to engage might spark interest - spurred on by the boldness generated through the unity of youth in their schools - it remains that interesting events are likely to catalyse their first visit to a youth group. Once there, conversations started at school and elsewhere naturally continue.

- Larger united events add momentum to Christian youth ministry.
- They give it profile.
- They can change the perception of Christian youth ministry from being 'a few small groups of youth in some churches', to 'an amazing crowd of young people having fun that I want to be a part of!'



If we consider the Christian youth scene 25 and 30 years ago, Youth For Christ ran 6 to 8 city-level youth events annually in most NZ cities annually. They were 'cool' - with bands and creative arts and the gospel communicated. Youth wanted to be there!

For a great many young people, those events were a first step toward involvement with a local youth group and church. Today, this strategic 'bridge' is missing in most NZ cities and towns. Only the uniting of youth leaders in each location will change that.

It's another missing key to momentum and outreach ..while for its first step - the youth leaders must unite!

SUMMARY:

This isn't just for youth leaders—it's a vital focus for pastors, denominational leaders, and those who lead pastors' groups.

- We are reminded that 85% of those who come to faith do so before the age of 20 -the majority from non-church families doing so in their teen years, and most-specifically in the 11 - 14 year old age bracket.
- We are reminded that the average youth leader is only remaining in their role for approx 18 months to 2 years currently.

...And while some might say \$8 out of every \$10 spent on outreach could go to youth ministry - this isn't about money, its' about the CULTURE that sits within and amongst us as churches.

Can we SEE the gaps?

Do we have a CLARITY OF VISION regarding how they might now be plugged?

The issue isn't funding or staffing, because more staff within the current paradigm won't fix the problem. Different thinking is needed - and we suggest the above points and resources (above and below) represent just that!

- With the 7 gaps noted - what could you now note and apply in your church and/or youth group and city?
 - What could you copy and paste to someone else in an email - for their consideration?
 - What resources below might help?
-

SUPPORT RESOURCES

SUPPORTING MINISTRIES: - alphabetically listed

www.alpha.org.nz/youth – an 8-week course

www.catalystmovement.com - encourage school groups plus outreach events & equipping

www.christiancamping.org.nz - multiple youth camps run at multiple locations. forthiscity.co.nz -

youth rallies, leader support and outreach equipping godtalk.nz – outreach equipping resource for leaders and youth, plus school groups. sunz.org.nz – Youth leader equipping and support, outreach equipping, safety and health and more. www.unashamed.nz - outreach events & equipping

www.wol.org.nz - Outreach support to youth leaders, equipping and events. Also safety and much more ...or contact your own denominational youth ministry support person.

SUPPORT RESOURCES FROM OURSELVES:

- **For outreach equipping** - godtalk.nz/equipping
- **For youth outreach leadership training** - Note: This is for key church leaders to note as a tool for each new youth leader godtalk.nz/leadership
- **For youth leader unity** - godtalk.nz/unity – there is a 'how-to guide' available as a PDF
- **For school groups** - godtalk.nz/ideas/ - We note catalystmovement.com have a new 'how-to guide' as a PDF – likely soon available via their website, to which the above URL will provide a link.

A book by Dave Mann: "The What and How of Youth and Young Adults Ministry"

Link to full book: AllTogether.co.nz/the-what-and-how-of-youth-ministry/

- **Note Chapter 3** - Integrating 12 year olds
- **Note Chapter 10** - Young Adults Ministry
- **Note Chapter 11** - Young Adult Curriculum



An encouragement and challenge to our local church preachers



Might the key to a revival in our gospel preaching be in a reviving of the vision of our hearts?

Acts 2:40 says this...

"With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, Save yourselves from this corrupt generation".

- How often do we 'plead' with audiences to consider Christ like Peter did?
- How often do we warn audiences of the peril that awaits if they reject Christ?
- diplomacy and gentleness are good things, might we have lost our gospel vigour as Kiwi Christians?

Charles H Spurgeon articulated this same point as follows:

"Preach, for instance, as you would plead if you were standing before a judge, begging for the life of a friend, or if you were appealing to the Queen herself on behalf of someone very dear to you. Use the kind of tone in pleading with sinners that you would use if a gallows were erected, and you were to be hanged on it unless you could persuade the person in authority to release you. That is the sort of earnestness you need in pleading with men as ambassadors for God".

(The Soul Winner, by Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Pg 94)

- **At the heart of this, might our 'fear of man' have become greater than our fear of God?**
- **For a different thought - might our 'fear of man' have become greater than our SIGHT of those who do not know Christ?**

In Matthew 9:35 it says Jesus 'SAW' the crowds...

- This was not referring to his sight of their physical form. He instead 'saw' their spiritual condition ('harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd').
- Can we SEE the desperate spiritual need people have for a connection with God through Christ which 'the gospel' is the explanation of?
- Or might we have become so fearful of being misunderstood or even judged for trying to 'scare people into the faith' that we shy completely away from any 'pleading' or honestly expressed passion - as if we no longer believed our own message?

These are challenging questions!

If we are going to change this, here are three small pieces of vital teaching.

Remember: The gospel message has a SPECIFIC content

While there is a specific message to communicate, compelling gospel preaching is something of an 'art' because communication is about a lot more than a list of propositional truth statements.

However, to start somewhere, we do need to define the core tenants, or points, of the gospel.

These could be worded in various ways. For one easy approach based on Peter's preaching in Acts 2 and 3 consider these 5 words:

- 1. Creation**
- 2. Fall**
- 3. Redemption/Jesus**
- 4. Restoration**
- 5. Evidence (It would seem most of his message was evidence in both cases).**

An alternative outline could be:

- 1. Love**
- 2. Sin/Separation**
- 3. Jesus**
- 4. Evidence**
- 5. Choice.**

Sometimes a Christian or leader might THINK they have communicated the gospel because they talked about Jesus - when in reality they have only communicated a part the message, possibly failing to communicate it at all.



Remember: You haven't COMMUNICATED if it wasn't said with HEART!

Beyond its necessary 'content' the gospel is also a personal message - which means something. A message is about more than words. It is sometimes only actually communicated when done so with a comprehension of the compelling love story it is while also of its sobering gravity!

To consider some balances - on the one hand the gospel really is a 'legal contract'. Theologically this is called substitutionary atonement. Christ died for us, in our place. This is a theologically true analogy.

However, it is also a love story - with an act of great personal sacrifice purposed to enable a restored relationship. As is written in our Easter gospel booklet's text - it's not only a ticket to a movie with popcorn (a positional transaction). It comes with an obligation to go to the movie while eating the popcorn (a relationship that needs engaging with, and a Lord who needs obeying).

Both analogies therefore convey aspects of the message that are true. It isn't one or the other. In summary of the paradox or balance this brings to gospel preaching:

- **Heart without truth is irresponsible.**

- This definitely happens. Many 'gospel preachings' in churches never actually share the gospel.

- **Truth without heart isn't really the message - even though God's Spirit can still anoint truthful words that we state with very little comprehension of their compelling urgency.**

- Imagine a person saying "I love you" with no meaning.
 - While the words are right, their meaning might be lost to the person hearing them.

As a statement:

Our HEARTS and MINDS must both be FULLY ALERT AND ALIVE, COMPREHENDING the truth and gravity of the message we speak before we can TRUTHFULLY and COMPELLINGLY communicate it!

Finally: Here are FIVE keys to an effective evangelistic message

...because the above didn't cover points 1, 2 and 5. In summary of an article (You can read the full article at AllTogether.co.nz/five-keys-effective-evangelistic-message/):

1. Prayer and faith are necessary If we don't believe for a harvest the mystery is that we might not get one.

2. Non-believers must be present

It isn't automatic that this happens. Leadership, promotional and people skills are involved.

3. A certain content needs covering

Just talking about Jesus isn't enough. The gospel has a specific content.

4. A connection with the audience is necessary

It is the communicators job to actually communicate - which requires a sense of 'connection' and also heart. Merely stating truth isn't enough.

5. A clear challenge and response opportunity is necessary

If a response hasn't been called for, we haven't communicated the gospel!!



THE CHALLENGE

In summary:

The Apostle Paul said, "The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11).

- There is always an urgency with the gospel. We must be spiritually awake.

Jesus said, "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work." (John 9:4).

- Times and seasons change - and do not last forever.

For application:

- When did you last plead with people to know Jesus? How might you do this? (What might this sound like? How might doing this be worded?)
- Might some of us have lost our actual belief in the gospel - leaving us unable to communicate it in a compelling way?
- Might some of us have lost our 'sight' of the lost multitudes and their condition, leaving us unable to speak in a compelling manner?

How, now, might you work to convince your audiences of the truth and reality of the 'full' gospel message?

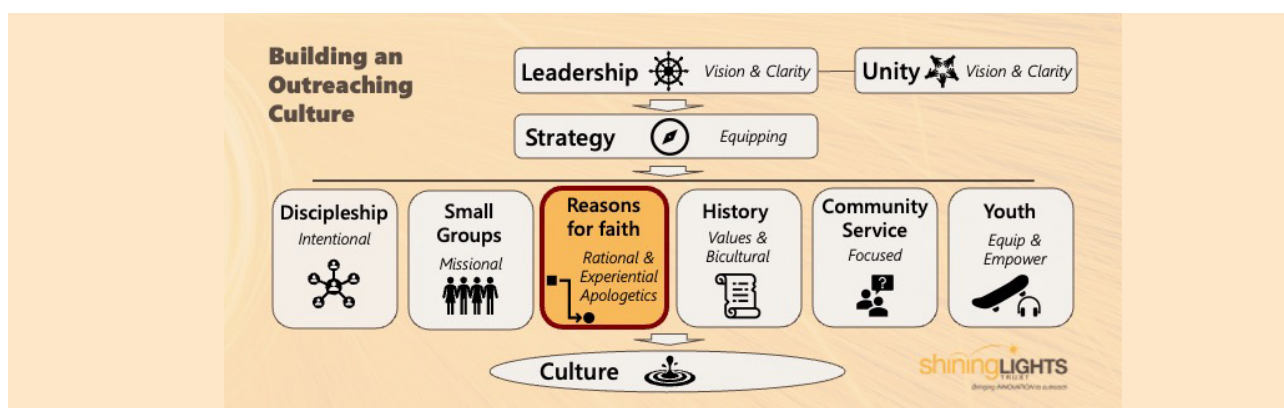


IF YOU'D LIKE TO EQUIP MEMBERS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL ITSELF HERE ARE SIMPLE RESOURCES:

- **5min video + discussion** - to equip members AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members/
- **Printable PDF article** - 1-page long for pastors - Outreach Today Chapter 2 -Knowing our own message. Which can be found at AllTogether.co.nz/printmaterial/
- **Pulpit + small group** - A simple and clear four-week pulpit and small group resource titled "Gospel Equipping". Can be found at AllTogether.co.nz/sermons-studies/#S&S7
- **Online article** - ..specifically on Peter's gospel preaching in Acts 2 & 3 which you will find at: AllTogether.co.nz/peters-gospel-preaching-and-our-shame/

TOPICAL UPDATE

Outreach and REASONS for faith



"Outreach - and REASONS for faith"

A problem to recognise

Terminology

- Reasons for faith
- Aka, 'apologetics'
- Aka, experiential and rational evidence / reasons to believe

Measuring attrition

Our churches still lose about 2/3 of their young adults. Studies across the past 30 or more years have consistently shown a lack of known reasons for faith to be a primary factor.

For example... a telling study called '**Fall Out**' studied university students who had left their faith. They discovered that , "...every student we spoke to who was equipped with answers as a young person still retains their Christian convictions..."

This is only one symptom of the problem.

In case the nature of this problem is missed...

Consider the following objections.

- Why believe in a God when you can't see him, and the world is full of evil?
- Why trust the Bible when we know the documents have been changed?
- Why trust the Bible's prophecies, when we know things like that cannot happen?
- So what if Christians have spiritual experiences. All the religions do, right?

... and these are questions YOUR MEMBERS are silently asking.

(Their friends don't ask these questions because they don't believe answers exist!)

We suggest this area of knowledge, witness and conversation is more important to discipleship and witness than our NZ churches generally recognise.

Below is an outline of HOW this could be changed
- with a view to sustainability

(A true change would need more than a one-time programme / teaching)



In this topical update A 'book' of thought at the length of a medium book chapter

(1) An introduction

- Summary of evidence
- Biblical basis
- Gospel communication
- A mechanism - storytelling

(2) Understanding where the problem sits

- A challenging question
- Ross' story to illustrate the point

(3) Some simple solutions - if the goal is a long-term effect

1. Teaching the art of storytelling (As witness - suiting public contexts - with resources)
 2. Simple leadership HABITS (A four point resource is articulated)
 3. Other support resources
- Why Christians believe Christianity to be true
 - Thinking Matters (conferences and more)

Introduction and overview

A wealth of evidence for our faith exists:

There are many areas of learning that point toward the rational and experiential truth of our faith. Consider the testimony of...

- History,
- archaeology,
- literature,
- eyewitness and contemporary accounts,
- fulfilled prophecy,
- scientific study of the creation (information, irreducible complexity within life -exhibiting intelligent integrated order, system and process...),
- rationality within philosophy,
- miracles,
- and also of a changed life.

A Biblical basis for including evidence in Christian witness

- **Acts 2:** When preaching the gospel Peter refers to the **evidence** of Biblical prophecy – which his hearers were familiar with.
- **Acts 3:** When preaching the gospel in Acts 3 Peter refers to the **evidence** of a miraculously healed man the people could see standing in front of them.
- **Acts 22:** When giving a defence of himself in Jerusalem (wisely in Aramaic) Paul tells his own testimony - appealing to the **evidence** of common history and of his own human experience.
- **Acts 27:** When preaching in a context of Greek philosophers in Athens Paul intrigued them enough to be invited to a meeting of the Areopagus, where he then made a **connection** through an inscription 'to the unknown god', to then give **evidence** (reasons) as to why he believed in a single God who is over all - as contrasted to their culture of worshipping created things.

Communicating our core message ('the gospel') is not only about stating WHAT we believe, but also WHY we believe it to be true!

A teaching framework for including 'reasons' as a component of gospel communication

In considering Peter and Paul's examples, gospel communication therefore includes not only a core message as is summarised here...

1. **Creation** (Created by a loving God with good purpose)
2. **Fall** (Separated through sin)
3. **Jesus** (Redemption - a path for restoration because of love)
4. **Restoration** (...to relationship with God - affecting relationships amongst people, and with our planet) It also includes...
5. **Evidence** (Why we believe these claims to be true).

An appropriate mechanism for passing evidence on within our culture...it's called "STORY"!

- 'Argumentation' can backfire easily. It is possible to win arguments, while losing people.
- However, every area of evidence listed above can be shared as a story.
 - For example, we explain a reason for faith as a personal story about what amazed us. (Same message - different mechanism)

*The above is so simple that it begs a challenging question.
WHAT ARE WE MISSING?*

Understanding where the problem sits

A challenging question:

Why have we, as Christian leaders in NZ, generally NOT valued this area of teaching / witness in our churches and denominations?

Could it be that we have assumed it somehow unimportant to our DISCIPLESHIP and WITNESS?

What might have led to our 'cultural' disinterest as churches?

- Did we once hear that some Christians used to argue with people on the streets? They won the argument but lost the person. We don't want to be like that.
- Are we fearful of the accusation that, 'Christians are against science' - so we have backed off?
- (Freely make your own list of possible causes.

Could we now consider the possibility that this needs to change?

Two audiences

(1) The Christian believer

1. An unanswered question
2. ...takes root as a doubt
3. ...which becomes a new belief
4. ...(a) leaving a person internally detached from their prior faith and
5. ...(b) unmotivated for witness.

Consider not only the church members (of all ages) who have left our churches these past 20 or 30 years - but also those still present in body who are not really present in spirit.

What if that sincerity is undermined by a fundamental disbelief - rooted in a series of questions we've never really answered?

(2) The 'postmodern' Western non-believer

- If there is no such thing as truth, why bother even asking the questions?!
- (There is no second point for the non-believer in this thought-process.)

What if so few ask questions about our faith because the hope that answers might exist has been abandoned!

Consider Ross' story

An engineer friend in his 60s recently told me how he had been long-conflicted between what secular 'science' taught him and what the Bible states. Throughout his prior 40 years of Christian life since coming to faith as a University student, his experience of God had been sufficient to feel content in his faith. However, the whole creation and flood stories made no rational sense. In Ross's own words, his brain wasn't always in sync with his faith. For him, his faith wasn't affected by this (he kept going to church and believed), but confidence in his faith was.

He then discovered Creation Ministry and Answers In Genesis and other networks through which he heard scientists explain rational evidence for a Creation.

He says there is a new sparkle in his faith as a result, and a desire to learn. He also now feels saddened thinking of young Christians going to Tertiary Education with no answers to the secular 'scientific' worldview.

A challenging observation

It is of note that Ross had 40 years in churches without ever having a rational explanation for the Creation explained clearly enough to catalyse his discovery of amazing scientific work that exists in this arena.



What if we - as church leaders - got this one wrong?

What if 'reasons for faith' is actually fundamental to both discipleship and witness
- noting again the Scriptures above?

What might a way forward look like?

Some REALISTIC solutions for SUSTAINED RESULTS

1. **Teaching the art of storytelling** (Storytelling in witness - a mechanism for communication suiting church and public platforms - with support resources)
2. **Habits** (How even very busy church leaders can still catalyse a change)
3. **Other support resources**

1. Teaching the art of storytelling

This is a culturally suitable mechanism for giving evidence.

Why discuss storytelling when the topic is evidence / reasons for faith?

- We're practical people. If we cannot see HOW we might apply this knowledge, we'll likely be disinterested in the knowledge.

Summarising the key point:

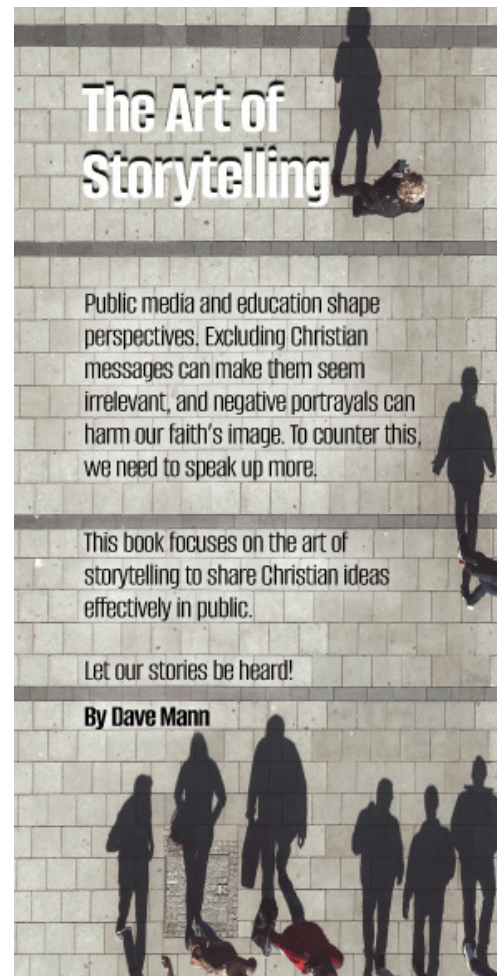
There is hardly anything said through a statement that could not just as easily be said through a story with a question.

- For example I say, "...something that convinced me the Bible could be trusted was..." I then share an evidence that intrigued or spoke to me.
- We have thereby re-framed a rational argument as a personal comment.

'Storytelling' is a topic to include within a holistic outreach equipping.

Resources:

'The art of storytelling' go to AllTogether.co.nz/rationalfaith



2. Leadership HABITS to impart a knowledge of the EVIDENCE for faith

If we teach 'reasons for faith' as a programme of the church, the programme will come and go and what was taught will soon be forgotten.

Only leadership HABITS can build culture and long-term retention.

In application

Would you please consider applying these FOUR leadership habits?

(Read / share the full article on these points AllTogether.co.nz/rationalfaith/)

Habit #1

Bringing INTENTIONALITY to the stories you tell AS ILLUSTRATIONS

We already speak. We all tell a variety of illustrations. Through our stories and illustrations we can impart reasons for faith in a 'by the way' manner - even while talking on a different topic.

- **E.g. The topic of 'God loves us'** could be illustrated with details of the DNA in our cells, reflecting God's care in creation (while concurrently communicating the rational necessity of there being a Creator).
- **E.g. The topic of "the Word of God is to be a treasure in our lives"** could be illustrated with some of the many outstanding evidences that validate its historic reliability - adding 'awe' and interest to the message (while literally evidencing its historic reliability).
- **E.g. The topic of 'loving others' / 'helping those with needs'** could include historic testimony of the immense good Christianity has achieved in history, creating our entire cultural values related to care of the poor, needy, marginalised, sick and more - thereby illustrating your primary point (while concurrently evidencing the unique power and positive impact of our faith for good within history).

The lesson is to INTENTIONALLY choose illustrations that CONCURRENTLY impart reasons for believing this faith to be true.

In addition, by doing this you model a 'by the way' method for communication that your members can imitate in their conversations too!

This full article AllTogether.co.nz/rationalfaith/

- Book: 'The Art of Storytelling - and of becoming an intriguing person' - as above.

Habit #2

ANNUAL USE OF SHORT VIDEOS IN CHURCH / SMALL GROUPS / YOUTH GROUP

This is a very simple annual habit, which any church and youth group could adopt.

Every year, for one month, play a short Q&A video during your Sunday services (e.g. at the offering time) - followed by an encouragement to ask and engage with the big questions of life - because answers exist.

- **Culture-building habits don't get simpler than this!**
 - **Our 10 Day Challenge 'Faith Q&A' video series is Alltogether.co.nz/faith-qa/**
 - **For 'Thinking Matters' videos, search their YouTube channel.**
-

Habit #3

INTENTIONALLY TEACH 'THE CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS OF JESUS' TO YOUR MEMBERS

This is a 'companion HABIT' (then including storytelling and 'reasons for faith' within that annual 'conversational outreach equipping' via pulpit, small group and youth group).

Stories are shared in the context of conversations. The conversational skills of Jesus are an important part of a church's outreach equipping.

So the point isn't missed - this annual equipping HABIT (by the church leaders) is what creates the 'framework' that sustains ongoing equipping in all areas:

- the gospel,
- teamwork and outreach,
- the Holy Spirit / prayer and outreach,
- conversational skills for outreach,
- storytelling in outreach,
- history and outreach,
- and reasons for faith in outreach.



The above is a pastors' outreach equipping 'curriculum' - to see the members equipped, enthused and able - with 52 sermon opportunities annually and maybe 40 small groups meetings annually to communicate it across.

Resources:

- Find notes on conversational outreach culture + support resources for pastors
AllTogether.co.nz/atconsulting/

Habit #4

LEVERAGE CURRENT AND TIMELY INITIATIVES AND RESOURCES

Below are examples. Their momentum can help you!

***The above four habits are achievable for any church!
Will you embrace them as YOUR habit?***

(Click AllTogether.co.nz/rationalfaith for the full article).

SUPPORT RESOURCES

Thinking Matters conferences:

Want to hear truly quality speakers on these topics?

Get to one of their events

Bless your youth / young adults / leaders / members

- **Conferences** - promote them
- **Monthly apologetics nights** - remote them in your province
- **Books** - see the website

Find out more at ThinkingMatters.org.nz



Why Christians believe Christianity to be true:

A discussion series that is designed to suit both church and non-church audiences, youth and adult — and is FREE for church use.

- 7 videos - 15mins long
- 7 discussion guides
- 7 booklets - well researched, yet short (Print options for purchase)



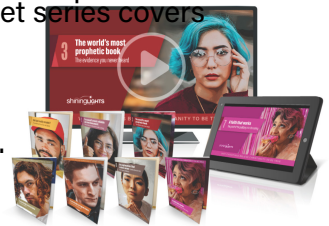
For church leaders:

There would be 100 powerful illustrations / stories / quotes suiting your use within the concise content of the 7-booklets. (Buy a set for your shelf- then use it!) The booklet series covers maybe 25 different topical areas of evidence.

As an outreach resource:

This can be used as videos and as booklets (and as PDF or given in print).

Download a promo business card to print and give to people.



In discipleship:

Youth - Videos + discussion guides Older - Videos + booklets + discussion guides. (Have members read the booklet the week PRIOR - then meet for short video + discussion). Go to

whychristiansbelieve.nz

'Answers to big questions' Children's Church programme:



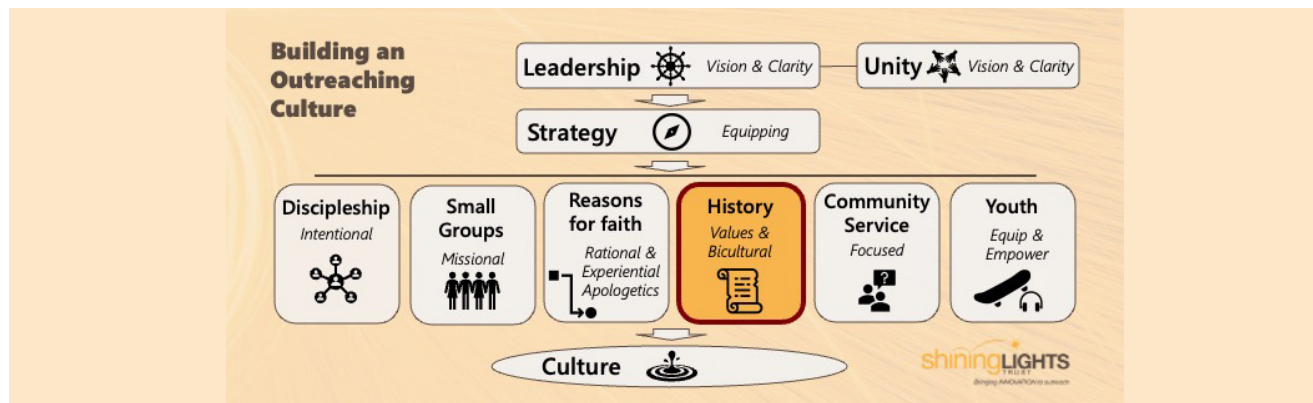
9-week children's church programme based out of the 'Why Christians believe' series

This **SUPERB** programme has been created by the team at C3 City Church. It includes a raft of truly interesting ideas, illustrations and activities for children.

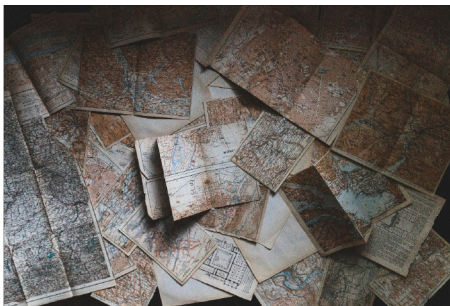
Go to whychristiansbelieve.nz/childschurch/

TOPICAL UPDATE

Outreach and NZ HISTORY



Why it is in the interests of ALL NZ CHURCH LEADERS to become STUDENTS OF HISTORY?



Most of us are disinterested in history when young. Some are still disinterested when older. However, for many, an interest is sparked when we perceive the significance history to how we perceive ourselves as a culture - shaping our values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, religion and politics.

A knowledge of history can literally shape a nation!

How is culture preserved? It is principally through story. (Even with a cultural practice, it is the story that gives the practice its meaning.)

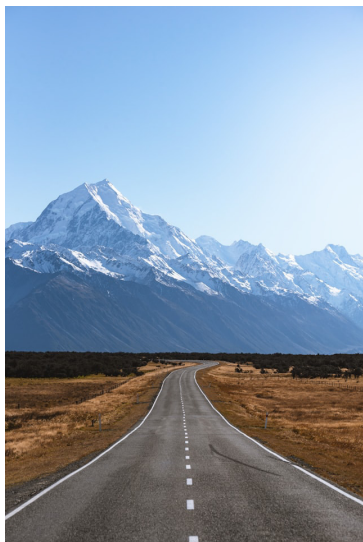
- A story told can shape a person's perspectives.
- As a simple statement: **"Those who tell the history write the future."**
- The stories we fail to pass on likewise shape perspectives.
 - A generation left ignorant of their past are vulnerable to suggestions regarding who they are.
 - **As a simple statement: "Those who control the present can control the past."**
 - FAILING to tell stories from history can also be hazardous!

By controlling education and media, those with power can control the perceptions of the public - and especially of the young.

- E.g. Prior to the French Revolution strategies involved the writing of books in the names of famous dead people - to re-write history, beliefs and perceptions.
- E.g. In both the socialistic applications of Communism and Fascism, State controlled education was a priority to win over children's minds.

- This is why our very Christ-influenced culture has valued the idea of a free press (also called 'the fourth estate') - kept separate from any Government interference so the people can be protected from tyranny.

To consider our New Zealand context



As New Zealanders we know very little of our cultural and values history. **Resulting public views on faith:**

- (a) Christianity is perceived to have almost nothing to do with who we are today.
- (b) Regarding our bicultural history - Christianity is often perceived as a mere tool of colonisation.

This public viewpoint is significantly inaccurate - but few know this because the history hasn't been told!

The importance of public perception to Christian witness

A person's perceptions are unavoidably the starting point for any 'God conversation' they engage in.

Public perceptions therefore matter and engaging with them is a necessary part of our witness within this culture.

Our proposition:

It is in the interests of all Christian leaders to embrace a new value and habit:

- **(a)** We choose to study and learn a number of the stories of our bicultural history and also values history...
- **(b)**... to begin to INTENTIONALLY and CONSISTENTLY tell these stories as illustrations via all platforms we have access to.
- This can position our members to do likewise.

To illustrate - from conversations in our 'Hope Project social media:

- If someone says our faith is to the detriment of society - we explain a 'big picture' history story, illustrated with a specific example that shows otherwise.
- If someone believes religion only brings bad to the world and that a 'secular utopia' is the better goal - we tell *two* history stories (about known outcomes of Christian influence - and also of religious secularism).
- If they believe Christianity was an imposition of colonisation - history stories are the only answer that makes sense.
- If they believe Māori were gullible and easily won over and converted by missionaries - data and history stories are the needed response.
- If they think Christianity has no relevance to public society today - there are countless history stories from our wider values history to tell - because the values of Christianity are like the air we breathe as New Zealanders (even while this isn't perceived because we don't know our history)



To illustrate - from a face-to-face conversation: I recall a conversation with a friend who seemed to think our faith had only brought harm throughout history - until they heard a couple of history stories. Their perspective shifted, and they've been silent on the matter since.

Stories work!

A First Step - We need to learn our own story!

What stories? Let us help! - Three sections follow:

1. Our bicultural history - A list of stories
 2. Our values history - Some perspectives and a list of story areas
 3. The need for story telling - by creative means
- How we could apply a new knowledge of our history to impact culture.
-

1. Our bicultural history

The Christian dynamic is significant within our early bicultural story. Here are some examples of possible stories to know and tell - in no particular order.

- The first invited Pākehā settlement was a missionary settlement (Consider the stories of Te Pahi, Ruatara and Samuel Marsden)
- While the embrace of Christianity by Māori was slow and considered, when it did eventually take place it was widespread, and both fast and significant in its positive implications - despite the truly terrible later betrayal of the Treaty / Te Tiriti.
- Consider then stories of some amazing early missionaries - Henry Williams and Octavious Hadfield being of special note
- Patuone (Northland)
- Ngakuku and Tarore (Waikato)
- Katu and Te Whiwhi (Kapiti Coast)
- Henere Wiremu Taratoa (Bay of Plenty, Kapiti Coast),
- Hēni te Kiri Karamu (Rotorua, Northland, Auckland, Bay of Plenty)
- Wiremu Kingi Te Rangitake (Taranaki)
- Te Whiti and Tohu at Parihaka (Taranaki)
- Piripi Taumataakura (East Coast),
- Te Manihera and Kereopa (Taranaki)
- Wiremu Tamehana Tarapīpipi Waharoa and then also the first Māori King (Waikato)
- ...amongst many.
- Consider also Dr Malcolm Falloon's doctoral thesis on 18th Century Māori conversion for an insight into the scale of what happened. (Easily found online).



Regarding the Treaty / Te Tiriti o Waitangi:

- Here in New Zealand, without those few early missionaries (which there weren't many of) the amazing Treaty we have would never have come about.
 - They were the key negotiators - sitting up late into the night in conversation with the Chiefs.
 - They then travelled - and wherever they went Chiefs signing because of relationship and trust.
 - Many were also then defenders of the Treaty - though sadly with increasing flaws over time as injustices became entrenched, public media took a side, missionaries aged and were also maligned and the population dynamic of the nation completely changed.
- Radical efforts in England by Christian men like James Stephens (nephew of William Wilberforce), Lord Glenelg and Lord Normanby created a context for the remarkable Treaty we have. Their efforts sprung from a Christian humanitarian movement catalysed by the 'Clapham Sect' ('sect' meaning group). Their specific motivation was to 'stop the disaster of colonisation'. This is a powerful and important part of our New Zealand story!

A vision to capture: *The perspectives of those who hear the above stories will unavoidably be affected by them.*

Resources: listed at the bottom of this PDF or go to AllTogether.co.nz/nzhistory

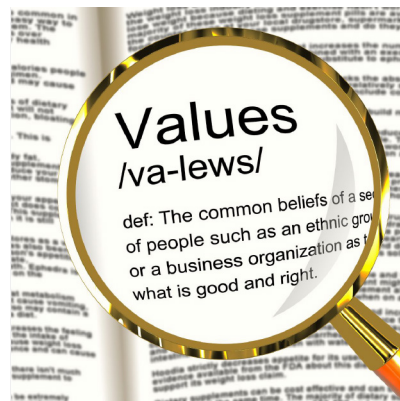
2. Our values history

Our wider cultural history is not yet understood amongst our churches like our bicultural history now is.

It is, however, equally as important

Were the public to know our cultural values history, many would NOT think negatively of our faith like they do!

We suggest our 'values history' is therefore a primary area of new learning needed.



To open the scope of the topic:

"We live in one of the most free, prosperous, equality-based and charitable societies on our planet - as also in human history. How did we get it so good?"

The primary answer:

It is because of Christianity, which progressively shaped our values, thinking and behaviour over a 2000 year period of history.

The challenge:

Both we and the public know very little of our cultural values history.

An even greater challenge:

Our public media, public vocabulary, education systems *and indeed entire culture* has been 'religiously secularised' - as significantly enabled by this ignorance of our own cultural history!

We would not think as we do if we knew!

To illustrate - common objections in 'Hope Project' social media:

- People believe religion to only ever cause bad things - like wars.
- They then ironically argue for a culture of charity and care - unaware that, if not for Christianity, none of us would hold these values as we do here in New Zealand.

To illustrate - how we might respond:

- *"We live in one of the most free, prosperous, equality-based and charitable societies on our planet - as also in human history. How did we get it so good?"* -We then illustrate with a story from any one area of history
- In the words of N.T. Wright, *"Religion has killed its thousands; and secularism its tens of thousands."* (I.e. History shows that modern 'religious' / humanistic secularism is not the solution)
- *"The opposite of bad religion isn't no religion, but good religion - and good religion exists."*
 - We then illustrate again with a short story from any one 'topic' area of history to validate the point.

What we have found is that the stories of history cut through.

They are history - so cannot be argued with. They evidence cultural points. They are a powerful communication tool within culture!



A needed CULTURAL discovery:

- Christianity is like the air we breathe as a culture.
- Its influence sits both in and behind many of the most cherished cultural values.
- To deny this is like a fish arguing there is no such thing as water.

Topical areas to study in our history

- **Human rights / individual freedoms** - Our entire idea of 'human rights' and of individual freedoms is premised on the idea that we have been created special, in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).
- **Education for all** - Christian influence is the backdrop to our cultural ideas on this.
- **Healthcare for all** - including the 'invention' of the hospital.
- **Our cultural concepts of charity**
- **The ending of slavery - and equality of the races**
- **The equality of the genders**
- **The idea of the limitation of powers** - fundamentally shaping Western 'liberal' (meaning 'freedom for the individual') democracy, which is equally undergirded by a high view of people because they are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Together these infer a Government that is accountable to God in its role of creating a context *in which the people can be most free and prosperous* (Vs the ever increasing growth of the Government, concurrent with the wealth of those leading -and of their business partners).

- **Our systems of law and justice**
- And more. A bibliography for further reading is below.

To church leaders in New Zealand - Is New Zealand a 'Christian nation'?

Few have yet had courage to say it - but a case is easily made. We live in a time when a secular (at the time) historian like Tom Holland admitted they are actually more 'Christian' than they are 'European', while new- atheists like Richard Dawkins call themselves 'cultural Christians.' It is surely time to find our voice within culture on this matter!

To make the point: We are NOT an atheistic nation by values, nor Hindu, Muslim or Buddhist. This isn't about being a Christian - but instead about being 'Christian!' (And even atheists can now discern the difference - so we should!)

3. The need for storytellers- by every creative means

Sir Winston Churchill said...

"One of the signs of a great society is the diligence with which it passes culture from one generation to the next. This culture is the embodiment of everything that the people of that society hold dear. When one generation no longer esteems its own heritage and fails to pass the torch to its children, it is saying in essence that the very foundation, principles and experiences that make the society what it is are no longer valid.

What is required when this happens and the society has lost its way is for leaders to arise who have not forgotten the discarded legacy and who love it with all their hearts".

Could we become a body of leaders who will again esteem our own cultural history - to make it known?

A brief bigger picture strategic view

'The law of the five' is an idea springing from recognition that in an information-overloaded and media-saturated world like ours, people need to hear something from five seemingly distinct sources before they believe it to be true.

So, to augment (shift) public perception a Government / business / group of people needs to:



Communicate their point through multiple concurrent means.

APPLICATION:

Church leaders: Pulpits have often been a starting-point for change in history!

To illustrate the process: Through your pulpit ...you tell some of our stories from history to your members...

- ...which are then reinforced in or through a church small group discussion,
- ...then on a video,
- ...on a Shine TV programme,
- ...in a Christian radio interview,
- ...in an anecdote in your church bulletin,
- ...in another print material or book or publication,
- ***...catalysing the efforts of early adopters who are gifted as 'creatives' -who create media and other means for the sharing of the same knowledge...***
- ...in a social media post,
- ...so it's then heard from a friend,
- ...in a book and a NZ based documentary programme
- ...and then from a public newspaper,
- ...and then weaved into media on public TV,
- ...then from the university lecturer,
- ...who equips the teacher
- *...who educates the minds of the students*

.....which shapes an entire culture.



The STORIES and ILLUSTRATIONS given in your pulpit matter!

- You are ONE part of God's Church.
- Together we can inform and influence culture!

Culture does not just change; it is changed!

Concluding statement and proposed strategy:

We ask that Christian leaders nation-wide cultivate a practice of valuing and telling bicultural and values history stories as illustrations - and do this on every possible platform (church and public)!



Chronicles of Paki - illustrated history series:

Get a full set for your church alltogether.co.nz/products/#history

Series 1

1. Te Pōwhiri – The Welcome
2. Te Pahi the Adventurer
3. Ruatara and the New Beginning
4. Patuone the Peacemaker
5. Elizabeth Colenso the Teacher

Series 3 - Treaty series

1. Te Rerenga — The Pathway
2. Te Wiki — The Week
3. Te Hui — The Meeting
4. Te Tohu — The Signing
5. Te Nanu — The Disappointment

Series 2

1. Henry Williams the Peacemaker
2. Ngākuku, Tārore and the Little Book
3. Te Whiwhi, Katu and Te Wai Pounamu
4. Octavius Hadfield the Friend of the Tangata Whenua
5. Wiremu Tāmihana Tarapīpipi the King Maker

Story 16: He Whakaputanga - The Declaration of Independence

Junior series 1: Same 5 stories for younger children

Our primary resource: 'Aotearoa-New Zealand's Untold Story':

A book by Dave Mann and the SLT, published 2026. It's 14 chapters outline the history through which we become one of the most free, prosperous, equality-based and charitable nations on the planet, as also in all of human history.

Search at AllTogether.co.nz/products

Bibliography:

Our wider values history - Video

- *Jesus the Gamechanger*, (DVD / documentary series) Karl Faase.
- *Centuries Collide* (Shine TV - view online)
- *Drive through history: Ends of the Earth* (Shine TV - view online)

Our wider values history - Books

- *What if Jesus had never been born?* D James Kennedy.
- *Who Is This Man?* John Ortberg. (From AllTogether.co.nz/product/who-is-this-man)
- *Dominion*, Tom Holland
- *The Rise of Christianity*, Rodney Stark.
- *How Christianity Changed the World*, Alvin Schmidt.

Our bicultural history - Video

- *Te Rongopai*, (DVD documentary) Stuart Lange
- *Colonisation, Christianity and the Treaty*, (3-part documentary) Andrew Urquhart - found <https://youtu.be/1IDZqGXBxjk?si=EG4Px0IDszWfjJ5f>.

Our bicultural history - Books

- *Bible and Treaty*, Keith Newman.
- *Te Rongopai 1814 'Takoto te pai'* (Ed. Allan Davidson, Stuart Lange, Peter Lineham, Adrienne Puckey)
- *The Years Before Waitangi*, Patricia Bawden.

TOPICAL UPDATE

Outreach and COMMUNITY SERVICE



Three points:

(1) Establish an outreaching CULTURE in your members

(The pizza base)

The first strategy for community outreach is in the discipling (growing) of those who will do the actual work. These people are your church members / congregants.

Their primary community engagement will be through their witness via their everyday interactions - with a secondary involvement in your church-run community engagement programmes.

However, regarding your community activities, these will only have an authentic spiritual component in as much as those who lead and serve in them are authentically spiritual people - equipped by you to be Christ's witnesses in the world!

A well known trap

There is a natural process by which Christian community initiatives are caused (or allowed) to go silent on their faith.

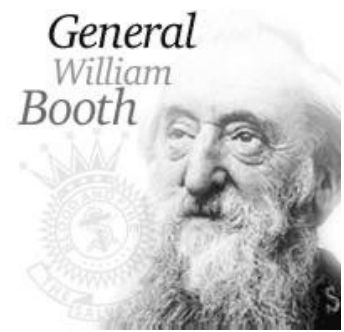
A huge number of Christian initiatives in history have been 'secularised' - and the pattern continues today.

Two directions - and why BOTH are needed

- **Remove the works of love** – and the message of love might not make sense.
- **Remove the message of love** – ...and we are in danger of being incalculably unloving!

As William Booth put it, ***"If you want to give a hungry man a (gospel) tract, put it between two pieces of bread"***.

This is to say our works of love and message of love **need to go hand in hand.**



The cultural need for us to go 'silent' about our faith in community engagement is DECREASING

• **The temptation to go silent about our faith is very real.**

- It is natural to desire applause and respectability.

• **This 'agreeing to silence' is no longer as culturally necessary.**

- **To typify the 1980s:**

- There was too much assumption we were a nation of Christians.
- Evangelism styles were also far more direct.

- **Today:**

- We do not assume most to be 'Christian'.
- We have now learnt and adapted in how we communicate, showing appropriate sensitivity.

- **Consider also:**

- There is also now a growing appreciation of 'holistic care' -including the spiritual - throughout the entire ('secular') care industry.
- In Te Ao Māori (the Māori worldview) the wairua (spiritual) is considered to be intrinsic to life - just as it is in the Christian faith. So karakia, for example, are now culturally acceptable at the start and end of public meetings in a way that they were not back in the 1980s.

• **The point:**

- Silence on our faith is no longer the 'prerequisite' to acceptance and funding it once seemed.
- There are fresh models to consider and follow.

Some good examples of distinctly Christian community engagement:

• **CAP NZ**

- Check out **Journey Church in Te Kuiti** - which is one of three 'case studies' below. They are entrusted to deliver various Government services within their community.
- Research the **'HOPE Together UK'** movement. Churches across the UK are increasingly being awarded Government contracts to delivery public services with no 'religious limitation clause'.
- I wrote a short book titled **'The Art of Storytelling'** - and of becoming an intriguing person' to articulate how I have personally navigated Christian communication in secular places (Free pdf or 2 hour audio book can be found AllTogether.co.nz/ebooks).

Holistic care includes the spiritual. There is a growing appreciation of this in our culture, inclusive of an ability to respect those of the Christian faith.

How could we ensure the 'message of love' stays connected with the 'works of love'

It is about our people!

Even where a programme that has no formal space for a spiritual recognition (which is rare in bicultural NZ where karakia is standard), if the gospel is clearly in our pulpits, equipping our people, it will be in their conversations within the programme (even if not significantly so from the front).



Our selection of leaders matters

Significant Christian charities in NZ have sometimes appointed non-Christians as their leaders.

- The culture of a work will always follow the values of its leader.
- In this scenario, the 'CHRIST' is then progressively removed from the 'CHRISTian charity.'

(2) Selecting your programmes



(The pizza toppings)

With an outreaching culture established in your people -it's now time to consider your programmes.

The pizza illustration

The base: The outreaching culture - common to all churches.

The toppings: The outreaching programmes a church then selects - being different in different churches and communities.

A healthy outreaching culture is the essential foundation - but then we need connection points!

The way churches engage will typically be shaped by two things:

1. Local community needs
2. The 'raw resources' of the congregation
 - Resources includes buildings and other assets - though most significantly our people.
 - Below is a list of ideas - and then three case studies, showing what 3 amazing NZ churches are doing.

Anchoring new ministries with great leaders

In selecting the ministries we initiate, a key question is, What are our people's dreams and interests?

- If it is anchored with them, it might outlive us.
- If it is anchored with the pastor, and the pastor moves on, it might fall over.

Is what you are initiating truly the vision of some of your members - separate to your inspiring of them?

Areas of possible service:

- **Consider areas like marriage and parenting** – with possible courses on Marriage, Pre-Marriage, Parenting of babies/toddlers/children/teens, Divorce Recovery, Grief Care – as also special interest groups, AA, Counselling Centres and more.
- **Consider other age-related efforts like for children and youth** - Beyond the Sunday School and Youth Group also consider Mainly Music, after school care, Icons / Girls Brigade, Rally, A church based Scouts group, 24/7 Youthwork, etc.
- **Consider social service work that meets 'material' needs** – including Food Banks, Op Shop, CAP Debt Centres, Pregnancy Choice Centres, various types of chaplaincy and more.
- **Consider more specifically evangelical initiatives like Alpha** – or similar options like Long-Story Short, Christianity Explored, Why Christians Believe and 10 Day Challenge.

(3) What does this look like in practice?

(Case Studies)

Here are some colour-coded case studies from:

A - Hope Centre, Levin - Ps Tony Collis (Busy town - medium size)

B - Journey Church, Te Kuiti - Ps Terry Bradley (Rural town - medium size)

C - C3 City Church, Tauranga - Ps Alan Hood (City - larger size)

CASE STUDY A: Hope Centre, Levin

What are examples of how you connect and serve within your community?

Ps Tony replied to note three primary initiatives.

Hope Hub Food Rescue Programme

Details: Wednesday 2pm-4pm

What: Providing free food to 150 - 200 families per week.

Team: The effort has two part time paid staff and 10 volunteers.

Volume: Their 'Food Rescue' combined with their Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 'Pop Up' shops distribute more than 2 tonnes of food weekly. Some food is shared with other food providers, to help them out.

Resourcing it: People and businesses in the community contribute.



Winter Wrap

Details: Presently once a year late May

What: An event where PJ's, blankets, duvets, jerseys, scarf, clothes, hats, shoes.... are gathered and then made available for free to eager locals

Team: A team of 6 to 8 make this happen

Connection: This connects with and helps dozens of families annually to get through the winter that much warmer.



Cafe Koha

What: Shortly to be launched, a koha-based Cafe providing community and Cafe food.

When: Open Monday and Tuesday, the hope is to soon include Friday 10am-2pm

Team: Supported by volunteers from the community and Hope Centre.

Comment: The initiatives are all quite distinct

- The first is a wide-reaching regular and personal.
- The second is a wide reaching, once per year, meeting a need.
- The third utilises an existing team for a much more personal connection.



CASE STUDY B: Journey Church, Te Kuiti

What are examples of how you connect and serve within your community?

Ps Terry replied with the below two initiatives. (You'll be blown away by the second!)

Comment from Ps Terry Bradley and Ps Liz Brandon:

"...we asked ourselves the question, If we disappeared from our community, would anyone notice? This led us to take a look at who we are as a church, what we do and how that reflects the love and life of Christ to our community. This led us to even change our name to Journey. Everyone is welcome to join us on the journey. As we turned our hearts in this direction opportunities came our way to serve our community - and we said yes."

Te Kuiti Foodbank

Details: Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 11am to 1pm **How:** Once a food bank they supported, the opportunity to run it fell to the church in 2018.

Scale: From one fridge/freezer to now having its own large premises, a sizeable team and significant community connection.



"Number Twelve"

The scope of this one will amaze you!

Website: numbertwelve.co.nz

Beginnings: Started 2011 as a 'Social Sector Trial' reporting to Wellington, while governed locally via governmental departments by a board including the Mayor, School Principals, Senior Police and Ps Terry.

Today: Handed over as a community driven work with the sole covering of Journey Church with 8 full time staff delivering multiple Government contracts in/for the community.

The work: We provide a wrap-around service of support, information and direction serving rangatahi, their whānau and our community. The work carries a level two clearance with the Ministry of Social Development, with a number of key Government contracts (even including driver licencing alongside youth support, vocational training, employment support, the Mayor Taskforce For Jobs initiative, and more).



Comment: They've achieved truly wide-reaching community connection, inclusive of partnership, good reputation and opportunity.

- Of note, there are only two primary initiatives.
- However, there are multiple sub-initiatives in the second - though this beneficially enables paid staffing, and a myriad of opportunities to connect, love and encourage.

CASE STUDY C: C3 City Church, Tauranga

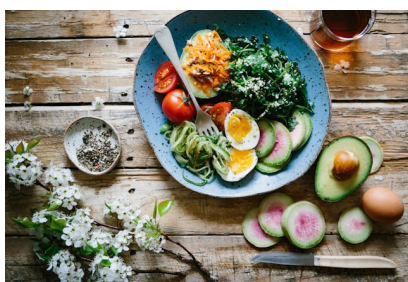
What are examples of how you connect and serve within your community?

I sat with Ps Alan Hood locally here in Tauranga to make this list.

This gives an example of a 'larger church' in a city - in contrast to the above which are in a medium town and then a comparatively small town.

Side point: Town vs city

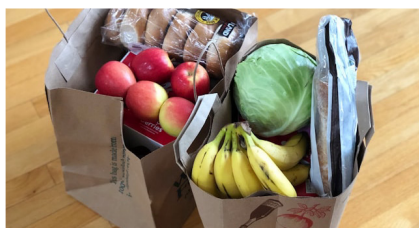
There is possibly a growing difference in NZ between the dynamics of city churches and town churches. This is worth noting - to help us understand, help and encouraging one another. The number of active Christians in many towns is falling below the 'critical mass' needed for momentum. The effect on their profile and witness is significant. The challenge for leaders is to innovate - which the above models.



Koha dinner

Details: A dinner utilising our café. Community members who couldn't afford to go out for paid dinner are invited - and local schools and similar community groups are empowered to do the inviting / giving of this opportunity.

Why not for the homeless?: We were encouraged not to do a dinner for the homeless because various churches cover this base in different ways in our city. This met a unique need, making connections, utilising our existing café and team.



CAP

Details: A debt centre, with two church members anchoring it.

Why? It met a clear need, it sets people free, and it has leveraged the expertise of some of our members.



Gifts for children in Oranga Tamariki care

Details: Church members donate financially and materially, giving NEW gifts, which are passed on via Oranga Tamariki staff / carers / social workers to children who might not otherwise receive a present.

Why: It met a need, showing kids there is something positive. It also helped the carers / social workers have a positive interaction where connection points are sometimes mostly negative.



Atrium Commercial Cafe and Conference Centre

Details: A commercial café run out of our large 'Atrium' foyer area.

Scale: About five thousand people come through the building every week.

Why: We wanted to see the community connected with our church every day. It 'demystifies' church for them. A surprising number of business and similar groups have begun using the church premises since the café started.



Scouts

Details: A church-based Scouts group – particularly well attended in the younger 'Kea' and 'Cub' age groups.

Why: A church member had a passion to start this.

Scale and nature: We've attracted a significant number of kids with developmental challenges of various kinds. Interactions with families around this have been significant and fruitful - with committed leaders suiting the work.



Shalom Kindergarten

Details: Shalom kindergarten, with its own premises attached to our church buildings, has been running for 40 years.

Why: The church recognised an opportunity to connect with and serve the community, with Christian-based education.



Light Parties

Details: Light Parties are a fun replacement for Halloween. The church filled with various games, with church members volunteering and lollies as prizes.

Why: An alternative to Halloween that attracts a few thousand. BBQ, drinks, candy floss etc... Many families come. Invitations are intentionally extended to other programmes that support families - including many of the above.



Courses supporting marriages/families

Details: Various courses are run, which are usually well attended and supported by the community. (Marriage, Menopause, GriefCare, Divorce Recovery, AA, Etc.)

Why: These have been a valuable connection point that meets real needs.



Chinese language groups / Alpha

Details: A group that meets, including Mums and children, to practice English. The Alpha Course has been one material used in the process.

Why: Initiated by members. It met a need.



mainly music

Details: Mainly Music has been run for over 20 years.

Why: An amazing connection point through which love can be shown, meeting a variety of needs (supporting mothers / care-givers)



Details: The Christmas Box is an initiative of Life Church in Auckland which we picked up on. Church members donate food items - and then help to put together about 1000 Christmas boxes, gifted by various means to community groups.

Why: While it doesn't directly bring profile to the church it helps those in the community who are struggling.

(4) How do we measure success?

(Final word)

Surely success is to do our best for God, with what we have. Agree?

To remember: One effective effort might be more valuable than five ineffective ones.
(Busyness is not the measure of success.)

"What do you think God is calling you as a church to do in service to the material and emotional needs of your community?"

Be encouraged and may we serve our communities well.