

Getting the Good News Out!

Salt and Light Ministries

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Contents

Foreword			5
<i>1</i>	The Harvest Bug	<i>Steve Thomas</i>	7
<i>2</i>	The Two Great Commandments	<i>Vic Gledhill</i>	12
<i>3</i>	Getting a Heart for People	<i>Cally Cameron</i>	20
<i>4</i>	Seeing the Harvest	<i>Gary Gibbs</i>	26
<i>5</i>	A Hundred Ways to Love your Neighbour	<i>Cedric Hobbs</i>	35
<i>6</i>	Available to Pray	<i>Roger Cole</i>	43
<i>7</i>	The Non-Evangelist's Chapter!	<i>Mike Beaumont</i>	51

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Foreword

“What is hidden in the roots will be revealed in the shoots.”

This has been one of the lifelong principles by which I have sought to live and build. Experience tells us that what the roots of the plant are like, and what they feed on, determines what sort of fruit grows; where the foundations of a building are shaky, time and disaster will reveal it; where the most simple flaws are not spotted, dreadful disasters can follow – as when a basic defect in the fuel system of the Challenger space craft cost the lives of seven brave astronauts.

So it is with people. What we believe in our hearts will eventually determine how we live, how we build and what we end up with.

This “Roots and Shoots” series is not so much an attempt to define the distinctives of our family of churches, but rather to ensure that all our beliefs and practices are firmly rooted in the Scriptures.

Many people have asked us over the years: “Who are you and what do you believe?” While our structure may appear to be somewhat nebulous, nevertheless the understanding of our common beliefs needs to be clear and unambiguous.

We are a family of churches that believe we are to be “sons of the kingdom” sown into God’s earth. The key that transforms “the word of the kingdom” into “sons of the kingdom” is *understanding* (Matthew 13:23). In the Lord’s first parable of the kingdom (the Sower), the ‘word’ of the kingdom – the seed – when properly received and understood produces fruit. In the second parable of the kingdom (the Weeds), we discover that the fruit has become the seed, and that the seed is “the sons of the kingdom”. The word, bearing fruit, producing seed as sons of the kingdom, planted in the world! That is our prayer for this series of books.

Barney Coombs

Chapter 1

The Harvest Bug

Early Memories

Evangelism has somehow always been in my blood. My memories of early teenage years in a youth group in the Baptist Church in the Toxteth area of Liverpool where I grew up was of going out on to our local ‘reccie’ (recreation ground), just opposite a bus stop, singing songs, giving testimonies and ‘gospel shots’! (For the uninitiated, ‘gospel shots’ are short, to-the-point Bible verses with the gospel in them, which were shouted out in quick succession.) This may not have been a hugely fruitful approach, but it built into all of us young people the attitude that we needed to be ‘out there with the gospel’.

Still vivid in my memory of childhood years were evangelistic campaigns in my home church where hundreds of people came to Christ, with many dramatic healing miracles associated with them. I can still feel the excitement of seeing the power of God as I never ever had, and feeling, “This is it! This is what it’s all about!” There was nothing like seeing people being born again, experiencing the joy of forgiveness, and enjoying relationship with the Lord. Nothing like it! And nothing more exciting than seeing the power of God displayed for all to see! And nothing like the baptismal service where, in one night, 145 were baptised!

Holidays in my teenage years were spent on ‘Beach Missions’. I first encountered Beach Missions while on holiday as a kid with my family in North Wales. It struck me as an excellent idea – to hit people with the gospel

while they were on holiday and had time to think. I determined that that was what I would do for several years with long school and college holidays!

I think that my desire to become a pastor was probably born out of such experiences – the thrill of seeing people born again, experience the power of God, and know him in a personal relationship.

The sad fact is, however, that for many of us, church has become a largely un-adventurous, un-thrilling sort of experience, where we see all too few people really encounter God in new and exciting ways.

The Birth of a Booklet

In July 1997 the Salt and Light Ministries' European Team decided to bring together many of our people who were evangelistic in gifting and in lifestyle for a consultation. We brought together evangelists of all sorts – those gifted in personal evangelism, those with a thirst for engaging in 'acts of kindness', those who love preaching the gospel, those who regularly see miracles of healing in evangelism; in short, those who live and breathe it! It was a first in many ways: the first time so many evangelists from our family of churches had been together; the first time we had really pooled properly our ideas and experiences; and, I believe, the first time many of us had properly appreciated and understood one another's views and the diversity of approaches we took.

This small booklet was born out of that meeting. We felt it might be helpful to bring together some of the various approaches and ideas we shared at that consultation, in order to encourage our whole family of churches to be about the business of 'getting the good news out', in whatever way they could. All the contributors are hard at work getting the good news out (and hence the slowness of this book to appear!) in a variety of ways, styles and approaches. But all are united in one clear thrust: that "by all possible means" we must see people saved! (1 Corinthians 9:2)

Exciting Days!

Our conviction, equally, is that God does not work in a vacuum. At this time, many churches are praying hard for revival. Many churches have allotted lengthy periods of prayer and fasting to this end. We have witnessed a powerful

move of the Holy Spirit in the last few years which we are convinced will turn into a major time of harvest of those who come to know Christ and are catapulted from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son. *But revival won't just happen. It will happen as we pray; but also as we hold out the message of life and light in this dark world.* God has pledged that it is *through the church* that he will make the mystery of his salvation known (Ephesians 3:10-11). As ever, there is a mix of God's sovereign work and power being displayed, and also of our taking action to 'get the good news out'.

Time to Stand Up!

It is clear that, for years, the church in general (at least in the West) has been cowed and intimidated by the World. The World has accused us of arrogance when we have preached that Christ is the only way to God, of putting people on a guilt-trip when we have preached the holiness of God and the need for repentance, and of a lack of compassion when we have promoted biblical standards of morality. But the poverty of what the world has promoted is clear for all to see: we now have more divorces than ever, more teenage suicides, more drug and alcohol dependency, more greed and selfishness. Hardly a track record to be proud of, and certainly not one that should intimidate us!

There is no better time for the church to stand up and hold out to a lost world the offer of salvation; no better time for us to introduce lost and orphaned people to the Father of their spirits; no better time to get the good news out. And if this small booklet seems, at times, to nag rather more than most in the series, it is only because it is written by people who are passionate to touch the lost! It is their life's calling and orientation.

The Harvest is Ready

It was just a few days ago that I was re-reading some very significant words of Jesus, in two passages of the New Testament. The first was this:

“ ‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.’ ” (John 4:34-36)

These words of Jesus, it seems to me, are very clear. We love to make excuses about it “not being the time” or “needing to build bridges”. Jesus said simply: *there is a harvest ready for reaping*. And if it was ready *then*, it is certainly ready *now*! There may be sowing to do at the same time (and we need to find as many ways as we can to sow the seed of the kingdom); but we should also be reaping. Some fields are ripe *now*.

The second passage was Matthew 9:35-38: “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’ ”

In these words Jesus is once again very clear! He is saying again, “The harvest is ready!” But he is very much clearer about where the harvest is: he says it is amongst the harassed, the helpless, the lost; amongst those who have no-one to ‘shepherd’ them. Jesus wants to be the shepherd of their souls. Do we still have such people around us? Then there is still a harvest for the gospel!

Waiting Harvest ... Willing Workers?

But Jesus makes something else quite clear. He says that it is not that *the harvest* isn’t there, in other words, that people are not ready to be saved – they are! It is that *the workers* aren’t there – those who will go out and bring in the harvest! And this is the big challenge of discipleship (for this is what Jesus called and trained his disciples for): will we turn *disciples in our churches* into *workers in the harvest*? It’s all right for us to train people in church work, or ministry in the church; but the big question is: *will they become workers in the harvest*? This is our major question, at this stage of the journey.

I have to say that I think that this is not just a question for us as individuals, but that it is a major challenge to whole *churches*. Can we mobilise people trained in our fellowships to become eager and zealous workers?

The Evangelism ‘Bug’

Or perhaps I can put this another way. It seems to me that the evangelists have a ‘divine infection’ which spurs them on constantly to ‘get the good news out’. I want to encourage us to hear the evangelists as they share their hearts in this booklet, and then to spend time with such people more and more, so that we catch their infection too. It is a good bug to catch! And one that we desperately need, as we pray and prepare for revival – on the one hand, looking to God to pour out his power; on the other hand, using all our energies to get the good news out.

May God infect us all with the Harvest Bug!

Steve Thomas

Chapter 2

The Two Great Commandments

The Old Family Business

The power of familiarity is enormous. People so quickly get used to things these days, especially in this media age. They are always asking, “What’s next? What’s new?” But what I have seen with fresh eyes over these last few years, out of my desire to see everyone functioning in their local church, is that it is not about what’s next or what’s new; it’s about what it’s always been about! And that is – *PEOPLE!* This is what is on God’s heart, what has always been on his heart – *PEOPLE!* My great passion in these days is to somehow see us grasp that this is all that matters ultimately in life: for God to take us into his family business of *people*, in whatever expression that might take; for us to see that our destiny is not about being locked into ‘doing evangelism’ or ‘being evangelistic’, but about expressing the heart of God for *people*.

The Two Great Moral Laws

When once asked by the religious leaders which was the most important of God’s Laws, Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ ” (Mark 12:28-31; parallel passage: Matthew 22:37-39)

None of us have ever doubted this – have we? We would all agree that I must take the energies of my heart, soul, mind and strength and pour

them into my growing relationship with God. But the bit we have missed out is what Jesus links alongside it and makes part of it: *Love your neighbour as yourself*. This is so important: the greatest commandment requires that the same energies, the same commitment, the same emphasis that I give towards *God* has also to go towards *my brother and my neighbour* – both those who know Christ and those who need Christ. God is looking for people who will truly, with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, love *both him and people*.

Jesus' teaching is so clear, so obvious – and yet we seem to have missed it! But as we see its truth again it is both liberating for ourselves and transforming for our 'evangelism'. The strange thing is: once we begin to see it, we see that the message is shouting loud at us from almost every page of the Scriptures! So let me take you on a journey through some of those Scriptures now.

What the Old Testament Said

The Mosaic Law clearly brought out both these dimensions of *loving God* and *loving your neighbour*. In Deuteronomy 6:4-5 Moses summarised God's commands in these words: "The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." He goes on to charge them to write this on their hearts, to talk about it morning, noon and night, to teach it to their children – even to write it on their very doorposts – anything and everything, as long as it gets into them!

But the Law didn't just deal with the *vertical* dimension of a relationship with God; it set in place just as strongly the *horizontal* dimension too. Turn, for example, to Leviticus 19. In the first 8 verses of that chapter, the *vertical* is set firmly in place; but then look what happens. God makes a shift from dealing with the relationship between himself and his people, and moves to the relationship between his people and those that they live among. So, in the next ten verses (v9-18), we find a list of the sort of things God expects from them. Paraphrased it might read like this:

"When you reap the harvest, leave enough around the edges of the fields; don't go over it with a fine tooth comb. Don't go through your

vineyard for every grape fallen on the ground. Don't be mean and stingy; be generous, considerate, kind, think of others, especially the poor and needy. Don't steal from people, don't lie, don't deceive one another. Don't use God's name in vain. Don't cheat anyone, don't rob, don't be a late payer when someone has done work for you. Treat the disabled person with dignity and respect, whatever their condition; don't make fun of them or ignore them. Don't pervert judgement and twist justice. Be impartial towards people; don't treat poor people differently to rich people; treat everyone the same; and judge your neighbour fairly. Don't slander people, especially behind their backs. Don't run people down. Never endanger the life of your neighbour. Don't hold hatred or bitterness towards anyone, or withhold forgiveness from them. Speak the truth with people. Make your standards clear. Don't seek revenge. Don't bear a grudge against anyone." (*And then, for the first time God says it biblically:*) "You shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:9-18)

It couldn't be more clear, could it? The vertical *and* the horizontal. "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut 6:5) and "love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev 19:18).

Back to Jesus

Let's go back to what we saw Jesus teaching earlier when he was being quizzed by the religious leaders (Matthew 22:35-40 and Mark 12:28-31). When asked which was the most important commandment, he gave them, you will remember, not one commandment, but two, one alongside another, thus making them equal in value. He quoted our key verses from Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19: "Love the Lord your God ..." and "Love your neighbour as yourself." But then he added this: "There is no commandment (*singular*) greater than these (*plural*)." In Matthew's gospel it is expressed slightly differently: "*All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*" (Matthew 22:40) This is a piece of new revelation to the whole of history! Christ has suddenly brought these two things together! He is saying, I want you to see that God has put something together, that God has put something in place for you and for how you are to live; but now, no longer as *two* commandments, but as *one*! To put

it more bluntly: you cannot now say you are a follower of Jesus and *not* do good works!

Two foundation stones

Notice that Jesus said “on these two”. The Lord is not saying, “The greatest thing that I require from you is for you to open your heart to me, and to let me work now on everything that is unclean and in the way of your relationship with me; and when that’s worked on, and when you’ve stopped sinning, then I might be able to use you some day ...” Please don’t misunderstand me; I’m not saying these things are unimportant! I, like others, have worked in depth for many, many years of my Christian experience on this whole issue of the need to ‘stop sinning’ and on developing this vertical relationship as the most vital thing.

But, if I can change the picture, Jesus didn’t say that the foundation of our life has *one* foundation stone. Many of us have spent a lot of time working on that foundation stone and cleaning it up (to the point where we sometimes wonder what to do with it next!). It’s as if we had that very strong foundation stone tied under one foot only; and so we are walking through life lop-sided, going round and round, wondering where on earth we are heading. Jesus said there are *two* foundation stones – one for each foot! God never meant us to walk through life with a limp! He expects us to walk through life well-balanced, standing on the two great moral laws that take us, not only into relationship with him, but into fulfilment in everything that you could possibly think of, as we love our neighbour as ourselves. Many of us have stood our ground on our right leg for years: but it’s time to stand on *both legs*. And it’s time to get people standing on both from ‘Day One’.

I am convinced that we would not lose half as many people as we have done over the years, if we could only get them standing on both foundation stones from the very beginning – teaching them that it is not only wrong to be immoral, to steal, to hurt people etc.; but that it is *equally wrong, equally a sin* to know you can do good to someone but not to do it. These *two* foundation stones together have the potential to provide a new generation who learn from early on to lose their lives and not to hold on to them. Let’s let them know that being a Christian is not just about knowing

John 3:16 (the truth that someone has laid down their life for us) but also about knowing 1 John 3:16 (that we should now lay down our lives for others).

Jesus brings it all together, making it practical and unavoidable, in Matthew 7:12. “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

The Good Samaritan

In Luke 10 one of the religious leaders is out to test Jesus again, and asks the same question as the Rich Young Ruler asked (Matthew 19:16): “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” When Jesus asks what is written in God’s Law about it, the answer is rightly given, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ ” (Luke 10:27) Jesus could see that he *knew* it; but was he *doing* it? The man’s question “And who is my neighbour?” suggested not. So Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan – not to describe who a neighbour *is*, but what a neighbour *does*. (If he had made a list of neighbours, he knew we would always find exceptions!) What a neighbour does is what the Samaritan in the story did, as the questioner has to recognise. So Jesus says, “Now you go and do it.” There is no point our knowing and being able to quote these two Scriptures; they are both to be *done*.

The Samaritan factor

If you know it, you are obliged to do it. If you know how to love your neighbour, even at the simplest of levels, and have opportunity to do so, *if you can make someone’s life better off for having met you, even if it’s only for 24 hours, then you are expected to do it* (Proverbs 3:27-29; 1 John 3:16) – whether or not they come to church or get saved! It is this ‘Samaritan factor’ that needs to become part of all our lives.

And So Say All of Us

If Jesus has brought these two foundation stones together in such a powerful and clear way, we would expect to find them spilling over into

the doctrine of the early church and for the church leaders to be saying loud and clear, “And so say all of us!” And that’s exactly what we do find.

Paul, in Romans 13:8, writes: “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘**Love your neighbour as yourself.**’ ” In Galatians he again says, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The *entire* law is summed up in a single command: ‘**Love your neighbour as yourself.**’ ” (Gal 5:13-14) James puts it this way: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (James 1:27) In other words, do you want absolute crystal clear holiness and purity before God? James says it can be found just as much in *visiting people in need* as keeping yourself unstained from the world!

James then sums up the whole thing like this: “If you really keep *the royal law* found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’, you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, *you sin* and are convicted by the law as law-breakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (2:8-10)

What he is saying is this: You may have come to Christ; you may have come into good, sound foundations with good follow-up and everything else; you may have stopped being an adulterous, stealing, lying, cheating, cussing, swearing, law-breaker; but even if, after all of that, you break just one part of God’s law, you are still a law-breaker. And what is he referring to? He is referring quite clearly, in the context, to the *horizontal* dimension. You may have got all the *vertical*; but if you’re missing out the *horizontal* you are committing sin – as surely as you would be if you stole or lied or committed adultery.

The Challenge before Us

We face in these days the considerable biblical challenge of radically changing our present narrow view of evangelism. Essentially we are using *methods* that have not changed for three hundred years! The preaching of the gospel is not just essential – it is commanded! However, there is much more in the Scriptures that will help us to increase our *effectiveness* in sharing that gospel if we will get involved with *people*, as the Scriptures instruct us to.

Paul challenged the Christians at Rome to reach out to their *neighbours* in the same way that Jesus did. Put simply, he said: don't just preach at them – lay down your life for them. Listen to some of his words from his letter to them: “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak *and not to please ourselves*. Each of us should please his *neighbour* for *his* good, to build him up. *For even Christ did not please himself* but, as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.’ ” (Romans 15:1-3)

And to the Christians at Corinth and in Galatia he wrote in similar vein: “Nobody should seek his own good, but *the good of others*.” (1 Cor 10:24) “Let us not become weary in doing good ... as we have opportunity, *let us do good to all people ...* ” (Galatians 6:9-10)

The psalmist wrote of his God: “You *are* good, and what you *do* is good.” (Psalm 119:68) Jesus was the living demonstration of that goodness. It was said of him that he “went around doing good” (Acts 10:38), as well as “healing all who were under the power of the devil ... ” Jesus was simply revealing God's response to people – even to people who didn't deserve God's goodness – demonstrating how God is “kind to the ungrateful and wicked” (Luke 6:35). Jesus was indeed “a friend of ... sinners” (Luke 7:34). He involved himself with people on the basis of what mattered to them, where they were at, and for their good. Not for what *he* would get out of it or would be seen to be achieving. He immersed himself in *their* lives, bearing the reproach of their ill-mannered, ungrateful using of him and, ultimately, their rejection of him.

We need a generation of *new evangelisers* who will enter the harvest field as Jesus did. We need those who will carry the message of John 3:16;

and who, if there is any reputation to be made, it will be on the basis of 1 John 3:16 – laying down our lives for others as he laid down his life for us.

The greatest challenge we face is *not* to see how many people we can get saved! But rather to get every member of the church to give up their lives and to lay them down for the lives of other people *daily*. The cost to us of witnessing to someone is minimal; we fit it into our daily routines. The cost of following in the footsteps of Jesus, in obedience to Romans 15:1-3, is a whole new lifestyle. If we are to go to our neighbours with the no-strings-attached motives and attitudes of Jesus, it will mean a reformation in us personally and in our biblical understanding of what we mean when we say the word ‘evangelism’.

We express the heart of Jesus for people through *The Royal Law* – living by it and putting it into practice. The first step is to start where Jesus said to start – with *the Samaritan Factor: that resolve to make someone’s life better for having met you*, whether they respond to Christ or not. Will we love our neighbour as ourselves? Will we develop new habits that change us into seeing *others’ interests as more important than our own*? Into not looking out for our own personal interests, but also for *the interests of others*? (Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 14:7-9) Jesus taught *good works as the key to God consciousness coming into the lives of people* (e.g., Matthew 5:13-16). Paul warned us not to miss reaching people through *kindness*, which is one of God’s methods of bringing people to repentance (Romans 2:4).

If we love people unconditionally, then they will trust us; if they trust us, then they will listen to us; if they listen to us, then they will hear the wonderful solution to life offered through the cross and resurrection of Jesus. And *that* is evangelism!

Vic Gledhill

Chapter 3

Getting a Heart for People

A few months ago my friend Sarah came to visit me, travelling from Kent to my home in Milton Keynes. She had to drive part of the way around the M25, the large motorway that encircles London. She was not entirely certain of the route, but knew at some point she needed to turn off at Junction 14. Eventually she reached the junction, but having turned off soon realised she was going the wrong way. She stopped to ask for directions and burst into tears when she realised she was completely lost. She should, in fact, have taken Junction 14 on the M1 – a completely different, but connected, motorway! – and was now miles away from her destination. She phoned me in tears, knowing she was literally travelling around in circles. Many hours later she arrived safely – tearful, tired, but relieved!

It is awful to lose our way when travelling somewhere, but a far more terrible thing to be lost spiritually. Countless millions in this world are lost without Jesus, travelling around in circles, never finding their true destination – the kingdom of God. Yet Jesus said, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” (Luke 19:10) This was his mission – in life and in death, to seek and save the lost; and ours should be identical.

Many of us will have seen a child in a crowded shopping centre, crying helplessly, lost and separated from those they love. Equally painful is the distress of the parent as they turn around to find their child has wandered away. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God does not want anyone to perish “but everyone to come to repentance.” God must feel such anguish when he sees his children separated from him, wandering away, lost without him. Fortunately, most lost children in shopping centres are quickly reunited

with their parents and the story ends happily. Tragically, many thousands of people die every day without ever being reconciled to their heavenly father.

Freedom for the Lost

In Matthew 9:36 we read that “when (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” People everywhere are the same today, harassed and helpless, not knowing where to turn. In their search for fulfilment and happiness they turn to things such as money, the pursuit of success, drugs, alcohol and sexual relationships. Instead of finding freedom they become increasingly bound – prisoners of debt, addiction, stress and disappointment. In Luke 4:18 Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah declaring that he has been sent “to proclaim freedom for the prisoners”. The “prisoners” include every person around us – in our families, our streets, our neighbourhoods, our workplaces.

Last October I invited two of my neighbours to attend our *Alpha* meal. In December I invited one of them to our Ladies’ Christmas evening. When I went to collect her, she told me she had not been out since going to that *Alpha* meal with me. In two months she had not set foot outside her house except to go shopping. As Christians we can become so busy, attending meetings and events several times a week. It is easy to imagine that other people must have lives as full as ours, without realising that they are often in fact lonely and isolated, prisoners within their own life and home.

In 1994 a ferry disaster occurred off the coast of Sweden, killing most of the passengers and crew. I was working with Y.W.A.M. in Estonia at the time and so was very aware of the grief of both the Swedish and Estonian nations. A group of Swedish Bible College students who had been working with the church in Talinn were on the ship when it sank. One was a young woman called Yasmina who happened to be a keen climber, and was therefore very fit and agile. As soon as the ship began to sink she managed to climb out of her cabin. Once on deck she grabbed a lifejacket and was about to jump into a life-raft when she noticed a girl sitting on the deck, crying and frozen with terror. She ran to her, gave her a life-jacket, and

immediately asked if she knew Jesus. When the girl said she did not, Yasmina explained her need of salvation and led her in a sinner's prayer, right there on the deck of the ship. They stood together on the edge of the boat, holding hands ready to jump into the life-raft. A wave knocked them both into the sea, separating their grasp. A second wave swept Yasmina into the life-raft. She never saw the girl again but knew that in the last few seconds of her life she had asked Jesus to be her saviour. Yasmina was so certain of her destiny that she was willing to lay aside her own safety to reach out to someone else – someone who needed much more than the safety of a life-raft.

Are we willing to be a people who will reach out to the lost – whether through words or deeds? Are we prepared to sacrifice ourselves, our time and our reputation to be part of God's great rescue plan for mankind?

Awareness of the Lost

William Booth, the founder of The Salvation Army, once said, "Some people's desire is for gold, other people's desire is for glory. My only desire is for souls. I sit up thinking about souls. I lie down thinking about souls. I wake up thinking about souls." William Booth was a man with a passion for the lost, a man consumed with a desire for people to find Jesus.

Jesus was radical in all that he said and did. Our salvation is radical in what Jesus did for us on the cross. In my own experience my life has been so radically changed since I have known Jesus. My prayer continually is for God to give me a greater heart for the lost, that I might learn to love unconditionally, as Jesus did. I live in Milton Keynes, which has a large shopping centre visited by many thousands of people each year. Christmas time is especially busy, and I have stood and wept as I see so many people rushing by. My heart longs for them to know Jesus and the gift of life he is waiting to give them.

The Destiny of the Lost

Hell is real. We all say it; but do we really believe it? Are we more inclined to believe in a benevolent God who could not possibly send good and kind people to eternal damnation? The Bible makes no compromise

about the reality of hell and nor should we. Jesus makes it clear that there is a narrow door through which we must enter. He said, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.” (Luke 13:24) A few verses later he speaks of the agony of hell, saying, “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.” (v28) Hell is real, and judgement is inescapable. We have not been rescued merely for our own sake, but to be a part of the Great Commission, that the lost might be saved from a terrible destiny. Will our response be, as Jesus commanded us, to “therefore go and make disciples of all nations”?

Seeing the Lost through Jesus’ Eyes

As Christians our mission is to love people. Paul tells the Corinthian church, “Christ’s love compels us ... ” (2 Corinthians 5:14). Many times we read that Jesus was moved with compassion to respond to those around him. We should love because Christ’s love is in us, not out of obligation or duty. Loving others is not always an easy thing however! It is simple enough to love kind, pleasant, attractive people. It is much harder to love the angry, the bitter, the defensive and the unattractive. Jesus sets us the highest example: “A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, ‘Lord, if you are willing you can make me clean.’ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.” (Matthew 8:2-3) Again and again we see the compassion within him caused him to respond. No one was ever too diseased, too sinful or too unclean for Jesus.

In India I once met a man whose appearance filled me with repulsion and horror. He was emaciated and naked from his waist upwards. A huge growth bulged out from his stomach. A long scar began from there right up to his chest. At the top of this scar was a gaping hole from which protruded a thick piece of rubber tubing. Everything within me wanted to look away and walk in the opposite direction. I felt desperate, however, to show him love and began to ask him what was wrong. He explained that he had lost the use of his throat and so was fed through the rubber tube. I felt so helpless, and simply asked if I could pray for him. I had nothing practical I could

give him to change his situation, so I gave him all that I had – the love of Jesus. That day I began to understand in a new way just *how* Paul had written “Christ’s love compels us”, and how deeply we can experience the compassion of Jesus for those we meet in our own lives.

Being Natural when Reaching the Lost

Sharing our love for Jesus and the difference he has made in our lives can be as natural as breathing. When someone falls in love, they do not have to be forced to talk about their loved one! In fact, family and friends soon tire of hearing their name mentioned! In comparison, the love Jesus has for us is overwhelming and our lives should reflect that. When talking to friends, neighbours and work colleagues about everyday things, we should not be afraid of bringing Jesus into the conversation. As Christians, Jesus is so much a part of our everyday life. People need to see that being a Christian is so much more than just going to church. It is a friendship and relationship with our loving, heavenly Father. If someone in the body of Christ shares a problem or need, we will pray or try to meet that need. How important it is, therefore, to do the same for those outside the body of Christ. If they share a problem with us, we can simply ask if we can pray for that situation, because that is what we naturally do.

I was chatting to one of my neighbours, an atheist, who was feeling very stressed and on the edge of a nervous breakdown. I listened for about twenty minutes and then asked if I could pray for him. When he said “yes”, I prayed very simply for God to give him strength and peace that passes all understanding. I then happened to be away for several months, but when I returned home he rushed straight over to me to thank me for praying, saying that it had made such a difference!

A few weeks ago the same neighbour was looking very upset and worried. I soon discovered that his father was seriously ill in hospital. The doctors were not expecting him to live more than a few days as his condition was deteriorating very quickly. Again, I asked if I could pray for this situation and again he said “yes”. A few days later my neighbour was fixing his car in his driveway. I stopped to ask how his father was progressing. He was delighted to tell me that he had in fact been discharged from hospital and

was making an excellent recovery. My neighbour is not yet a Christian, but he has seen God move powerfully in two different situations of his life. Important seeds have been sown.

Speaking the Language of the Lost

It is important that we speak to people about Jesus in ways that they can understand. For example, instead of talking about ‘being saved’ use the words ‘becoming a Christian’. Ask if you can share your ‘story’ rather than ‘testimony’. Practise talking to another Christian about your faith in Jesus. Every time you use Christian jargon, stop and think how to say that word or phrase differently – in ordinary language! Also, do not be anxious to say too much. It may be just one thing that you say which will stay in someone’s mind and sow a precious seed. My friend Phoebe was explaining to her friend why she wanted to change jobs. She simply told her that it was something she felt God leading her to do. Years later she received a letter from that same friend saying that she had become a Christian. She had remembered what Phoebe had said many times and decided she too wanted to know the security of being led by God!

We have all heard many times, “God doesn’t want our ability, he wants our availability.” We may not all be evangelists or even very confident in speaking about our faith. But people do not need clever arguments or persuasive words. They need to know that someone cares, that someone will listen, that someone will love and accept them, whoever they are. Will that someone be you?

Cally Cameron

Chapter 4

Seeing the Harvest

Who Cares?

Our biggest problem with reaching the unchurched is easily diagnosed. *We just don't care.* Or at least, we don't care enough. Yes, I know I'm an evangelist and you expect me to say that; but it's something that I passionately believe! So I'm asking you to stay with me for a while as I share my heart with you.

An old illustration makes the point. Imagine for a moment that you were a medical researcher working on a cure for a particular form of cancer. One day you are in the laboratory andEUREKA! You have finally cracked it! There in the test tube is the cure for this awful disease. Now what would you do? If there were any humanity in you, you would want everyone with the disease to have the cure. Only some debased creature could keep the discovery a secret.

The application to evangelism is obvious. Sin is a killer. In fact, it killed *us*. We were "dead in transgressions" the Bible tells us (Ephesians 2:5). That is, until the cure came – through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus!

Every day, we are rubbing shoulders with spiritual zombies – the walking dead. They look like us, speak our language, dress fairly much the same. But they have suffered the death-blow of Adam – eternal separation from the God of heaven and earth.

The scandal is this: we *know* the key of divine resuscitation! We have experienced God's grace, mercy and forgiveness. We have had this disease eradicated from our lives. And yet we fail to share this good news!

What is wrong with us? We simply don't care enough.

Excuses, Excuses

You have perhaps heard about the judge at the World Ice Skating Championships who gave one competitor a maximum score even though he had fallen over on several occasions. His reasoning was that it was very slippery on the ice, so it wasn't the competitor's fault!

People are so good at making excuses for so many things in life. We certainly do in the whole realm of being a witness to Jesus. Here are just a few of the excuses I have heard over the years:

I'm motivated pastorally, not evangelistically

Well, God's heart *is* that of a shepherd. But this means that he looks after his sheep *and* goes after the lost ones as well. If we are seeking God's shepherd-heart, then we will want to care about Christians *and* those who are not-yet Christians.

I don't have any non-Christian friends

Now this is not so much an excuse as a fact of life for many of us. So what is the answer? Get some! If we want to become more like Jesus, which Paul says is God's goal for our lives (Romans 8:29), then getting non-Christian friends is not an option, it is a necessity. After all, Jesus, you will remember, was called "a friend of sinners" (Matthew 11:19).

I don't know what to say

Admittedly, it can be difficult to get started. Most of us are not used to talking about our faith with people outside the church, and especially to unchurched friends. There are courses to go on and books to read which can help a lot. But above and beyond this, remember this: we are not trying to ram the Christian message down the throats of our friends! Peter exhorts us to share our faith with "gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

Rebecca Manley Pippert in her very helpful book ‘Out of the Saltshaker’ (IVP) said that she used to think that witnessing was something you wouldn’t do even to your worst enemy! But if we understand that our message is *good* news and that we don’t have to drop *all* the truth of the Bible into our friend’s lap the very first time he shows the remotest interest in our faith, it will help.

Learn to use intrigue and how to only half-answer people’s questions. That way they will ask more and more and the conversation will progress naturally.

What if my friend rejects me?

Probably the biggest battle we have to overcome is the one that rages in our imagination. We think that if we end up talking to work colleagues, next-door neighbours or family members about the gospel, they will ridicule us or turn their back on us.

Of course, it is true that many may reject the message. But that doesn’t mean they have rejected us!

Paul talks in 2 Corinthians 10:5 about taking every thought captive “to make it obedient to Christ”. Let’s resolve we are not going to be ruled by our imagination, otherwise we will end up non-functional in many areas of life, particularly in this area of evangelism.

If we do end up losing a friendship, it is more likely to be because of our insensitivity than the content of the gospel as such. Perhaps we had rushed the friendship and didn’t have a deep enough relationship to start talking about eternal issues. On average it takes more than four years in Britain for someone to move from initial friendship with a Christian to making a decision for Christ! Once we have seen that, it takes some of the pressure off feeling we have to get it all done today!

I may be asked difficult questions

Well, you probably will! But thankfully, there are only about a dozen questions or objections to the faith which crop up most of the time. It might be an interesting way for a house or cell group to spend an evening or two, working out what those questions are and the best way to answer them! There are certainly lots of good books on the market with excellent

answers if you get stuck. And remember: if you can't answer a question, simply say so! But say that you know someone who will know and that you will go away and find an answer from them if they really want to find out. (Then phone your pastor!)

Is it the Right Time?

It's always the right time! But of course, I'm an evangelist so you would expect me to say that! But I think the Bible backs me up. There are lots of passages of Scripture that make it clear that we are to 'seize the day' when it comes to being witnesses for Jesus. Here are just some of them:

The 'harvest' passages

“The harvest is plentiful ... ” (Matthew 9:37; Luke 10:2)

“Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest!” (John 4:35)

It goes without saying that Jesus spoke these words into a particular situation and time – but then that's what he did with all his other sayings and promises too! As Steve has already drawn out in chapter one, the teaching of Jesus is clear: the harvest is always 'plentiful', always 'ripe'. The problem is not with *the harvest*; the problem is with a *lack of workers* to go into the harvest field and to reap it.

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses ... ”

Here, Jesus tells his disciples that an inevitable consequence of being filled with the Holy Spirit will be an overflow of testimony to him. If we are filled, then we don't have anything else to wait for!

1 Peter 3:15

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

Notice that word ‘*always*’. It tells us that there is *never a wrong time* for being a witness – although of course we do need to use our sanctified common sense about *how* we share our faith.

By the way, the major key to being prepared is given at the very beginning of this verse: “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.” When Jesus rules in our hearts as Lord, and we know that we are his slaves, we will obey him much more easily.

2 Corinthians 6:2b

“I tell you, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation.”

In other words, *today* is a good day to be saved! It’s certainly better than tomorrow! I am struck by how there was an urgency in the preaching of the early church. By contrast, we sometimes share the gospel in a manner that sounds more ‘take it or leave it’ than it being the most important message in the universe!

It is possible for us to understand something intellectually and theologically and still not be stirred into action. And in so many ways as evangelical Christians we have been hearers, not doers of the word, especially in this area of evangelism. But one of the major ways through which we can be transformed into activists is through God bringing revelation to our hearts. It can be scary to ask God to bring revelation to us regarding lost people! But we will never be fully-rounded, fully-functioning Christians unless we receive his revelation in this area and move into the evangelistic aspect of our lives as Christians.

The Compassion of Jesus

A passage of scripture which has been helpful to many of us in this respect is Matthew 9:36-38:

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’ ”

If we could allow that heart of Jesus to overtake our hearts, several results would follow:

We would see people the way that Jesus sees them

When you look at your neighbours, workmates or family members who are not yet Christians, what do you see? It is too easy not to see behind the mask. Often we find it difficult to imagine this person actually becoming a Christian. We try to visualise him as a functioning member of the church – and then lapse into unbelief!

But the Lord wants us to have *his* eyes! There are millions of people who are literally ‘harassed and helpless’. People that you already know!

Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning lost men and women and said: “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.” (2 Corinthians 5:16) But our problem is that we still have a ‘worldly view’ when we think of our unchurched contacts. When we look at their lifestyle and habits, when we listen to their language, when we think about what motivates them, we think there is no way they would ever, or could ever, come into a life-transforming encounter with God.

But *you* were converted, weren’t you? And so was *I*. So why not *them*? We need to be praying: “Lord, give us eyes to see people the way that you see them.” Then we will be able to receive the gift of faith and believe for their salvation.

We would feel the way that Jesus feels about them

When the rock musician Bob Geldof saw the plight of parents and children in drought-stricken and war-torn Ethiopia, he knew he had to do something. Compassion had gripped him for those needy people. In the United Kingdom ‘Live Aid’ was launched which raised millions of pounds for relief work. But during subsequent years, ‘compassion fatigue’ has become a recognised syndrome. We have seen so many TV images of the dead and the dying, we have heard so many appeals for money and help, that we have become inoculated against caring.

When Matthew wrote that Jesus “had compassion” on the crowds, the literal meaning is that he ‘ached inwardly’. What about us? Do you and I ache for the lost? If we do, it will be shown by how we act towards them.

In the same way that faith without works is dead, so our care for those outside of Christ is a sham unless it causes us to *do* something. This applies to us corporately as local churches as well as to us as individuals.

Let's ask the Lord to give us his compassion for those who don't know him, to save us from ever being guilty of compassion fatigue, to keep pouring his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

We would do what Jesus tells us to do

“Ask the Lord of the harvest ... to send out workers ... ” (Matthew 9:37)

When Billy Graham was asked how to prepare for his crusades, he said there were three pre-requisites: “Prayer, prayer and prayer.”

Without concerted, ongoing, serious prayer, very little will happen in terms of our evangelistic endeavours. But the Lord has promised that if we keep on asking, we will receive (Luke 11:9-10).

It is illuminating to discover that Jesus did not tell his disciples to pray for the lost, but to pray for workers to be sent out. The phrase ‘sent out’ is the same as that used when a demon is ‘sent out’ of a person. It is a dynamic thrusting out of God's people into the world that we are to pray for.

Now, very often we are the answer to our own prayers! So, as we read on from his encouragement to pray for workers to be sent into the harvest in chapter 9, we come, in chapter 10, to this:

“These twelve Jesus sent out ... ”

Which only goes to prove that prayer can be a dangerous business!

The Dress Rehearsal

The commission given to the Twelve at this point was basically three dimensional:

- to preach the kingdom
- to heal the sick
- to cast out demons

It was an initial skirmish against the powers of darkness, a trial run in preparation for all that was to come after the resurrection. However, this method of outreach ministry was not only intended to apply to the original Twelve.

In the room where Jesus broke bread with the disciples before his death on the cross, he told them: “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” (John 14:12)

So *all believers* are supposed to do what Jesus had been doing! The *same* things, not different things. When the disciples went out in Matthew 10 to exercise that three-dimensional ministry to the world, they were simply mirroring the ministry of their master. And we are called to do nothing less in our contemporary situation.

The Real Thing

Just before Jesus returned to heaven, he gave his followers their Great Commission:

“Therefore, go and make disciples ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you ... ” (Matthew 28:19-20)

So, when one of the first groups of Christians brought someone to faith, since they had been commanded by the Lord Jesus to teach them to obey all he had commanded, I imagine that at the top of their list would have been things like:

- Love God
- Love your neighbour
- Preach the gospel of the kingdom
- Heal the sick
- Drive out demons

There would have been other things needed to fill in the detail; but that would be a pretty good start, don't you think?

Sadly, it was not far into the history of the church that it stopped teaching the new Christians to obey everything that Jesus had commanded

the first believers to do. And we have been living with the resulting sub-Christian experience ever since.

How Should we then Live?

The truth is, we all fall a long way short of what the Lord Jesus wants for us and from us – including evangelists! It is important that we do not feel condemned when we fall short, for there is no condemnation reserved for us any more (Romans 8:1); but rather, that we realise that God, as always, is calling us upward and onward.

Let's begin to pray for God to open our eyes to the harvest round about us. Let's begin to pray for more of a heart for those who are not-yet-Christians. Let's begin to pray for particular people we already know. Let's start imagining them as Christians! Let's start with those who will be the easiest to reach. Let's ask God to open up opportunities to share the good news, both in deed and word. And then, having prayed, remember this: it is highly likely that God may make *you* the answer to many of your own prayers!

Gary Gibbs

Chapter 5

A Hundred Ways to Love your Neighbour

Statistics, Yesterday and Today

The other day I was reading again the statistics of how people are brought into the church:

- through advertisement, 2%
- through the pastor, 6%
- through organised evangelistic outreach, 6%
- through friends and relatives, 86%

In fact, when you stop to think about it, not much different from how it seemed to happen in New Testament times!

Michael Green writes: “The family, understood in this broad way as consisting of blood relations, slaves, clients and friends, was one of the bastions of Graeco-Roman society. Christian missionaries made a deliberate point of gaining whatever households they could as lighthouses, so to speak, from which the gospel could illuminate the surrounding darkness.”

The New Testament contains numerous examples of this kind of evangelism. In fact, several of Jesus’ disciples came to him this way. First, two disciples of John the Baptist followed Jesus. One of the two, Andrew, brought his brother, Simon Peter. Then their friend Philip brought his friend Nathaniel (John 1:35-46). In Acts 10 Cornelius, the Roman centurion, gathered his relatives and family together to hear Peter, and they were all

converted. The Philippian gaoler brought his family to Christ in Acts 16:25-34.

The Problem of Shrinking Networks

The trouble with most of us, myself included, is that our network of friendships with people outside the church has shrunk; or else our commitment to home life and church life severely restricts the amount of time and energy we can devote to those outside. This is a serious problem that merits serious consideration by individual Christians and by church leaderships seeking to balance the two foundational tasks of discipleship and outreach. One way round it is simply to *think wider*, to take some of the practical ideas listed below, many of which have often been used *within* the church family, and *open them out to others* who are not yet part of that family.

Another problem is that we are often not quite sure how to foster the contacts that we do have, let alone initiate new ones. Telling them to repent or that they will go to hell doesn't seem to provide a way in. This, I believe, is where the Royal Law of loving our neighbour (that Vic Gledhill wrote of earlier in this booklet) provides us with a fantastically creative motivating force.

Openings from the Royal Law

Once we have grasped how key that Royal Law is, it leads us to:-

1. Consider who among the non-Christians we know are receptive

Maybe they are at a crisis or transition point in their lives or are suffering in some way.

2. Pray for them

Make a list to help you remember. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you prophetic insight into their situations and then to remove the obstacles, soften hearts and draw them from sin to God.

3. Strengthen our relationship with them

Begin by making sure your heart is right towards them. Then think of tangible ways to bless them. Paul was prepared to give himself unstintingly to others so that they might come to know Jesus: “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:8)

4. Introduce them to other Christians

The greater the number of relationships formed with Christians, the greater will be the likelihood of the person meeting Christ and becoming integrated into the church.

Loving our neighbour in this way is all part of the process of ploughing up the ground, ready for sowing, watering and reaping to take place.

A Hundred Ways of Loving

The one hundred practical ideas that follow are merely suggestions to get us thinking creatively about how we can channel God’s love towards those who have yet to experience it. They will be that much more open to receiving it if it comes in the context of *a person* they have come to know and trust. Some of the ideas come out of community surveys taken from door-to-door visiting around a new district or district where a small group was meeting and seeking to make new contacts. Others have come from people targeting their friends, relatives, already known neighbours and work colleagues. For ease of reference, I have divided them up into three categories – individual, small group and whole church – since they mostly lend themselves to one or other of those contexts. However, several are undoubtedly transferable – so feel free to adapt them! In addition there is a spread of ideas for all age groups.

Individual Events

1. Cheese and wine evening
2. Barbecues
3. Invite people for a meal/Sunday tea

4. Throw a party
5. Hold a coffee morning/afternoon/evening
6. Hold a fish and chips/Chinese/Indian 'Take-Away' evening
7. Organise a 'house crawl'
8. Provide a meal for someone
9. Bake a cake
10. Make home-made jam
11. Go on a fishing expedition
12. Bird watching expedition
13. Go Jogging
14. Weight training
15. Organise a squash ladder
16. Provide an evening class in an area of expertise
17. Offer free baby-sitting
18. Offer free house cleaning
19. Do gardening
20. Pub socialising
21. Take low-cost family photographs
22. Do some decorating
23. Car valet service
24. Carpet shampoo service
25. Window cleaning
26. Hair-cutting service for children
27. Washing cars for people
28. Join a local committee (sports club, community initiative etc.)
29. Offer to pray for the sick
30. Loan a Christian video
31. Give away a "Good Question" cassette

32. Write a note or card to someone who has just got married/been divorced/become pregnant/had a baby/suffered bereavement/got a new job/lost their job/suffered financial setback/moved house

Small Group Events

1. Organise a lunch club
2. Organise a pub meal in a function room
3. Hold a bonfire party/alternative to Halloween party
4. Pancake party
5. 'Spag-bol' party
6. Pool party
7. Street party
8. Cooking demonstration
9. Park picnic
10. Product party
11. Tear Craft party
12. Book party
13. Board games evening
14. Darts/skittles evening
15. Ten Pin bowling
16. Craft evening (making cards/recipe books/placemats and coasters/tea towels/dried flowers/flower arranging/cake decorating)
17. Quiz night
18. Music evening (various styles)
19. 'Desert Island Disks' evening
20. Cultural evening (speakers telling about their country/food/language etc.)
21. VIP evening with a local prominent personality
22. Ramble (with picnic?)

23. River trip
24. Helping hand (visiting the old/lonely/sick)
25. Hospital visiting
26. Mothers and toddlers/expectant mothers group
27. Car windscreen washing
28. Prison visiting
29. Car treasure hunt
30. Video evening

Whole Church Events

1. Children's party
2. Children's holiday club
3. Family fun day
4. Barn dance
5. Line dance
6. Singles/couples evening
7. Valentine's dinner
8. Cabaret evening
9. Ladies' breakfast/supper
10. Men's breakfast/supper
11. Live music evening
12. Drama and dance evening
13. Homeless outreach
14. Soup run/kitchen
15. Food/clothes parcels
16. Street hand-outs (with a card of explanation) of tea/coffee/doughnuts/pens/chocolate bars etc.
17. Car boot sale

18. Jumble sale
19. Crèche for shoppers
20. Singing and door-knocking with invitations to a social event
21. Counselling service (Pregnancy Crisis/family or financial problems etc.)
22. Healing meeting
23. Seminar on healing/parenting/finance/divorce/marriage enrichment/ studying the Bible etc.
24. Soccer match
25. Escapologist
26. Produce/cake stall
27. Youth events (band and speaker/nightclub type event/‘Battle of the bands’/ice-skating/swimming/day excursions/weekends away/outdoor sports events/indoor team games/computer or video games evening)

Festive Events

The festival times in the year – Christmas, Easter, Harvest, carnivals etc. – obviously lend themselves to particular forms of demonstrating God’s love. Here are a few ideas that could be applied not just to Christmas:

1. Dress up to go round doors with hand-outs
2. Singing round an estate and door-knocking with hand-outs (mince pies, pizza etc.)
3. Christian literature leaflet or card delivered to local homes
4. Singing in a prominent local place and hand-outs
5. Group singing/solo musicians in pub/hotel/hospital/old people’s home
6. Performance of music/drama/dance
7. Open-air worship
8. Festive evening in a function room
9. Dinner party

10. Praise march: flat-bed lorry with musicians accompanied by singers/dancers on foot/people distributing leaflets.

Over to You!

Well, there we are – that at least ought to get you going! It's really not all that difficult when you start to think about it, is it?

And it's really not that difficult either to start building friendships with neighbours, colleagues from work, people we meet at the shops, once we have begun to change our mindset, in the way that Vic outlined to us earlier.

So now ... it's over to you!

Cedric Hobbs

Chapter 6

Available to Pray

How it all Began

Many years ago now, I picked up a hitch-hiker on my way back to Oxford. Near the end of the journey he began to unburden his problem of always being away from his family and wife for long periods of time. He only saw them every three or four weeks for a few days. I felt sure that God wanted me to pray for him. But how would I ask? And what if he said no? Eventually I could stand the tension no longer and asked if I could pray for him before he got out of the car. He looked surprised, but agreed. As I prayed, I was aware of the presence of God filling the car. He thanked me a number of times for the lift and the prayer as he got out.

I didn't lead this man to the Lord. I don't know if my prayers for a job nearer his family ever got answered. But as I continued on my journey, I knew I had been obedient to God in praying for him. I had a tremendous sense of satisfaction in praying for an unbeliever and I began to see that I may have been *a link in the chain* that would eventually lead this man one day to faith in Christ.

Links in the Chain

Bible stories fascinated me as a child growing up. One of my favourites was the healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5). It was the young Israelite girl who served Naaman's wife who suggested Naaman could be healed through the prophet Elisha. Her name is not even mentioned, but she was *the link in*

the chain in leading Naaman to his healing, to his encounter with God, and to his exclamation, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.” (2 Kings 5:15)

Some years ago I was visiting churches in Poland with John Micklefield, who is now based in Winnipeg. At one meeting John preached on God’s desire to give gifts of grace and love to his people, and then turned to ask if I had any words of knowledge. I had been seeking God for some words while John was speaking, and had seen a picture of a dark black spot on a lady’s chest. As I prayed about it more, I saw the word “cancer” written above it, like an exit sign over a door. When I brought this word of knowledge, two ladies in the front row began to cry. Eventually a little lady at the back of the room raised her hand and told the group that it was for her. She was due to go to hospital for the removal of a cancerous growth within the week. We gathered round and prayed for her, without knowing what might happen. The two ladies who had been crying in the front row had been responsible for bringing this lady to the meeting. Nobody else knew about her condition; and they had been moved to tears because God had spoken to someone from a foreign country about their friend, and then used us together to pray for her.

News reached us a week later that this lady had been healed. The surgeon had sent her back home saying he could neither find the lump nor any trace of the cancer. Through this experience the lady came to faith in Christ. But she did so because of *links in the chain* – friends who brought her and visitors who stepped out in faith with them.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if this happened on a weekly basis? It doesn’t at present; but I wonder if it could happen a little more often, if we all reached out to God for those promptings that could lead us to pray for others. Could we too be the link?

The Supernatural Softens the Heart

When John the Baptist was in prison at the end of his life, he sent word to Jesus asking whether he really was the Messiah or whether they should look for another. Jesus’ reply was interesting. He didn’t rebuke John for his doubt or point to a series of fulfilled prophecies from the

Scriptures. He simply told the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.” (Luke 7:22-23)

As Evangelicals we are often very quick to point out that “we live by faith not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Of course we do; but this story seems to suggest that *seeing* has its place. It was what the disciples of John *saw* that would be the key to his being restored in faith and confidence that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

Speaking to others who have experienced some outstanding miracles themselves has inspired me to ‘have a go’ myself. I was once asked to go to a youth group – mainly composed of non-Christians – to speak about the supernatural. To get their attention I told them a few stories first of all of evil supernatural encounters and the devastating effects they had had on some people’s lives; but more importantly, of how these people had received deliverance and healing through Jesus. I then offered to pray for any of them so they could test for themselves whether it was real or not. I had sought the Lord beforehand for a few words of knowledge and shared a simple picture of a girl having had a very violent encounter with her mother and having left home saying she would never forgive her. As I described this scenario the group all pointed to the girl who had actually arrived at the meeting straight from such a conflict.

I went on to bring other words of knowledge and there was suddenly a new attentiveness. We were able to pray for one girl who had suffered from shoulder pains. As we prayed for her, with her arms in an extended position, the group watched with amazement as the muscles across her shoulders eased and her arms grew out to equal length. We talked and prayed for a good number that evening. The supernatural had softened hearts.

After the meeting had officially ended, a young man came to me and said, “My mate wants to know if you can tell him what’s wrong with him.” I began to tell him that I wasn’t a psychic with powers to read minds or tell people’s conditions! I was about to say that I couldn’t help him when the Holy Spirit gave me a picture of a motor bike tipping over and crushing a

man's leg. I told him what I saw and his friend who was listening to the conversation began to shout out, "That's weird ... that's weird ... that's me!" We offered to pray for him and after some hesitation he agreed. We were then able to spend some time talking about faith in God and what it meant to be a Christian. Normally they just wouldn't have listened. But the presence of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural arrested them that night and enabled us to have meaningful conversations about faith in Jesus and his knowledge of us.

Hearing from God (Words of Knowledge)

I have always been impressed with the story of Saul's conversion and particularly of the ability of the disciple Ananias to hear God's instructions to "go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul" (Acts 9:11). But hearing does not come overnight; it is *a process*.

A strange beginning

For me, an important step in the process was attending an Ian Andrews conference. Ian described how women, on the whole, tend to be more 'intuitive' than men, and encouraged the men to be more open to God in this way. At the end of the session he prayed for us all to receive from the Holy Spirit in a more creative and intuitive manner than we had been used to. As I closed my eyes to concentrate on hearing God I was left with an impression of a lady's *blue* jumper. I could not get this out of my mind and became anxious that I would lose out on the benefit of the workshop! As I re-gathered my thoughts, the blue jumper came back into the centre of my mind. This time I asked the Lord if he was saying anything through this. The only thing I could think of was the word '*Danube*'. My attempt to hear God had left me with a piece of music by the composer Strauss called "*The Blue Danube*"!

As I prayed more I felt sure this was for a lady and there was a connection with separation and divorce. Ian invited those who felt they had heard from the Holy Spirit to share our thoughts – and I found myself being pushed to the front of the queue to share first! I very tentatively shared what I thought I had been given and Ian asked whether this meant

anything to anybody. To my surprise (and relief!) a young lady who was already in tears put up her hand indicating that this was for her. Her story went something like this. When she was between five and six she began piano lessons. Her favourite piece was “*The Blue Danube*”. Around that time her parents split up and were ultimately divorced. She had always been under a cloud of guilt, feeling that *she* had been responsible for the separation and divorce. She had come to the meeting asking God to help her and show her clearly that he loved her and understood. A number of other people were able to pray for her and help her during the day, and she was released from a whole weight of guilt that been with her from childhood.

For non-Christians too!

Now, that particular lady was already a believer; but *the same process works for non-Christians*. I am often invited to speak at the Alpha course session on “Does God heal today?” At one of those I asked if anyone in the room felt that God had given them anything for the group. A young member and helper of the group shared how God had given him a picture of a penknife – no words of explanation, just the picture! After a few moments someone in the group indicated it was for him. He had gone through a time of emotional difficulty and a number of fears had gripped him. To overcome one of these fears someone had encourage him to carry a penknife. No one else knew about it, but it now became apparent that God knew all about him! There and then he decided to become a believer. He described it like this. “It’s like telling your first girlfriend that you love her. I don’t know how to say it but I have decided to become a Christian.” And a great cheer went up in the group! The following day someone led our friend through a time of repentance and commitment, and he has since been baptised and now attends one of our churches regularly.

A Hungry People

I recently had to visit the ‘Glastonbury Festival’ to try to find a young girl who had not returned home after the festival had finished. This festival provides, amongst other things, a ‘shop window’ to a massive selection of New Age religions and psychic experiences combined with a heady celebration atmosphere and loud music. I was struck by the power and

appeal of the spiritual experiences on offer. I had not realised the extent or the commitment to which many of those offering their form of spirituality were prepared to go. Two days after the festival had ended many of these ‘workers’ were still on site, seeking to help new adherents into their adventures. I believe all of these to be counterfeit experiences; but for me it highlighted a great hunger for spiritual experience and adventure that exists amongst a whole sector of our society.

It was clear from our recent trip to Argentina that a key part of the revival there had come about through hungry people’s attention being arrested by the supernatural power of God. Clear miracles and deliverance, a willingness to pray with people at almost every meeting, and anointed preaching and discipleship seemed to characterise the fast-growing Rey de Reyes Church in Buenos Aires. We came back with a new fervour to pray for people and believe that God wants to work in a similar but distinct way in our own hungry nation.

Helpful Keys

My heart is that God’s people would be prepared to start stepping out and pray for the spiritually hungry people around us, as a ‘way in’ to sharing our faith in Jesus. So let me end with a few practical keys that I have found personally helpful in seeing something of God’s power touching people’s lives.

Asking

I have rarely found I have received anything from the Holy Spirit without first asking. James says, “You do not have because you do not ask God.” (James 4:2) While this specifically refers to wisdom, it seems to extend to all areas of service. Paul encourages us to “eagerly desire spiritual gifts” (1Corinthians 14:1). I have begun to ask God almost daily for divine encounters and opportunities to pray for people. Even after asking I am still surprised when an opportunity comes!

Believing

When you witness some dramatic healing, hear people telling their experiences of answered prayer, or simply read about them, it does

encourage you to believe! I like to pray, believing God will *do* something as I pray. And I pray from two foundation blocks: first, the finished work of the cross; and second, Jesus' encouragement to pray "Your kingdom come ...". As I pray I am looking for the power of the kingdom of God to come here and now.

Co-operating

I try to encourage the people I am praying for to co-operate with the Holy Spirit. If I can make them feel at ease or let them know what is happening, it always seems to help the process. I used to get very tense when praying for people; but over the years I have learned to become more relaxed, and as a result more seems to happen.

Overcoming disappointment

We can easily become discouraged in this process of reaching out in faith. I have realised that preachers always tend to tell their best stories (rather than their failures) and that their great healing successes always seem to happen away from home! But often, in practice, it is not such a successful path. I myself have offered to pray for lots of people and been refused. On some occasions I have prayed and nothing seems to have happened. However through persevering and the encouragement of others I have begun to see more and more answers to prayer, more people coming to faith, and more healing. This has developed in me an appetite for more opportunities and more confidence that God will work as I pray. But sticking at it was a key – especially through the disappointments.

Learning from others

I have become more aware of opportunities and grown in my ability to pray as I have watched other men and women of faith in action. John Wimber was a master at helping others to engage in the process of believing prayer. I have been helped by attending a number of workshops. There are also many in our churches from whom we can learn or those who have national or international ministries. We need to be careful not just to copy what they do; but their ministries and faith can be a spur to us.

Have an Adventure!

Taking and making opportunities to pray for people is an adventure! I have had opportunities on the streets, in people's offices, at the site of a crash, shortly before people have died in hospital, at social evenings, in people's homes, at youth clubs, as well as at all types of Christian gatherings. The possibilities are endless.

Jesus seemed to encourage his disciples to get involved like he did in praying for and ministering to all types of people – and it wasn't just in the synagogues! He sent them out to have an adventure, to 'have a go' (e.g., Luke 9:1-6). My encouragement to you is to also 'have a go', to be a 'link in the chain'. Who knows? A simple step of faith on your part might be the very thing that will help someone who has been waiting for years to come closer to the living God!

Roger Cole

Chapter 7

The Non-Evangelist's Chapter!

The Trouble with Evangelists ...

The trouble with evangelists is ... well, they expect everyone to be like them! I mean, I'm a Bible teacher by motivation; but I don't expect everyone to be a Bible teacher. Others are called to be apostles; but they don't expect everyone to be like them either. But evangelists ... they just seem to think everyone will find evangelism as exciting and as fruitful as they do – and can't understand anyone who finds it rather more *difficult*.

Of course, they *do* have a point. It is clear from Acts that, while not everybody taught the Bible or did the work of an apostle, everybody *did* seem to play their part in getting the good news out to those around them; and through a variety of ways – public preaching, apologetics, talking with people they met, home evangelism, acts of kindness, praying for the sick – the list goes on. And while the leading figures of the church clearly played a very key part, it is also clear that ordinary people did their bit too. Luke tells us that, on the day Stephen was martyred, “a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and *all except the apostles* were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria ... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” (Acts 8:1,4) In other words, every church member – not just leaders or evangelists – shared with others what Jesus had done for them.

Why Some of us Find it Difficult

So why is it that some of us find it *difficult*? Or at least, more difficult than our evangelist friends, for whom it is the easiest thing in the world? I believe it might be because many of us have grown up with a particular *model* in our minds of what evangelism is – and isn't. And because of that, we write ourselves off before we even get started. In other words, it's not that we can't *evangelise*; it's probably that we can't evangelise in the way we *think* people want us to – or, sadly, the way that some people might have told us we ought to. (There's nothing worse than a finger-wagging evangelist to make non-evangelists feel they were right all along – they just can't do it!)

Things I've Tried

Now, lest I be thought of as retreating into my Bible Teacher's ivory tower of comfort, let me say this: I have probably done most types of evangelism in my life. The truth is: some of it I liked, and some of it I didn't; some of it was successful, and some of it wasn't. On the varied list of things I have tried are things like: door-to-door visiting (now that's the one I *really* hate, and the one that non-evangelists think all evangelists are just waiting to force them into!), street work (I enjoy getting into conversations, as long as I have a leaflet to get me going!), praise marches (I've even been Joey the Clown, complete with outfit, painted face and helium balloons!), Alpha talks (very relaxed!), doing an impromptu Bible Study on the Book of Revelation (ask me about it some time!), acts of kindness (long before our dear friend Vic Gledhill started to explain what they were!), subversive school teaching (as an RE teacher, I got great opportunities to explain very clearly "what Christians believe" and still stay neutral!), radio and TV talks (great for getting across to a few thousand!), praying for the sick in the name of Jesus in the slums of India (one of my great loves!), serving the neighbourhood and building up contacts (my wife and I set up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme to do that). And no doubt I could add more. And while I still might have to take a deep breath and jump in at the deep end at times, I know that there is nothing more exciting than being able to say, "I witnessed!"

A Non-Evangelist's Keys

But of all those different approaches to evangelism, my favourite method by far is *straight gospel preaching* – and the larger the crowd the better! Now, *why is that?* For, without doubt, to some the thought of preaching publicly would want to make them curl up and die. Let them bake a cake or pray for a neighbour (or be Joey the Clown!) any day!

It was reflecting on this that helped me to begin to clarify some of my own keys for evangelism for ‘non-evangelists’. Let me share them with you.

1. Let it fit your gifting

The reason I love preaching the gospel is because *this method of evangelism fits my gifting*. For me, it is no burden at all to preach; and so, by taking the gifting that God has made me strong in, and applying it to evangelism, I find that I am at my best and most fruitful. That's why I can sit really comfortably and do an Alpha talk; that's why I can tailor a gospel message to the needy social area of Blackbird Leys, as I did recently at both Christmas and Easter; that's why I can do a (subtle!) evangelistic radio talk; that's why I can preach the gospel in the slums of India; that's why I can slip the gospel into messages on Sunday when it's clear there are visitors – it all fits my gifting.

We are most effective, it seems to me, *when we evangelise according to our gifting*. Of course, there are times when we may have to turn our hand to all sorts of things (Joey the Clown for instance!); but it is in our gifting that we are most effective. Once I discovered that, I found it very releasing! It meant that I didn't have to be good at door-to-door evangelism; in fact, it was even OK not to like it! As long as I got on with doing what I *could* do.

So, what about you? What are your particular strengths or giftings? If it is serving, then why not start to major on those evangelistic opportunities that fit in with serving. Take your neighbour a cake; visit the old man from across the road in hospital – and simply pray that God might open up a little opportunity for you. You don't have to preach the whole counsel of God to them for it to have been a success, as we shall see below!

Let's not spend our time running from those expressions of evangelism that we *can't* do or *aren't* comfortable in; let's go for those where *it fits!*

2. The 'one more inch' model

The second key that really helped me was what I now call 'the one more inch' model. This is a view of evangelism that sees it as OK not to have shared the whole counsel of God with your contact (in case they walk under a bus the moment they turn away), not to have brought them through to repentance, water baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit and tithing – before you can say you engaged successfully in evangelism!

I am really grateful in this area to a little book on evangelism by Laurence Singlehurst called "Sowing, Reaping, Keeping". If you haven't read this yet, do get hold of it – it is the most liberating book for non-evangelists I have ever read! His thesis is simply this: that evangelism has been engaged in when you have talked to someone, or done something with or for them, and *they are left with a more positive attitude towards God and the next Christian they meet*, and have therefore moved just a little further down the road to becoming a Christian. Of his three steps in evangelism (you will have to get his book for the other two!) his first is this: let's do or say something that will leave this person with a simple message – "God is good and we're OK". This can then be the door-opener for – perhaps you, but perhaps someone else – to tell their story of what Jesus has done for us.

How releasing it is to know we don't have to do everything! How releasing it is to know that all of us can do something!

3. Don't tell it all at once

Laurence Singlehurst's book was very liberating to me in grasping again that I didn't have to tell everything all at once – a healthy balance to the "under-a-bus syndrome". I have realised increasingly that revealing the gospel little by little, particularly with those who are part of your regular circle, can be an excellent method of making them want to know more.

One example is with my neighbours. They moved in six months ago and we did our 'acts of kindness' over the first few days to build a bridge. As we got to know them better, the inevitable man's question of "And

what do you do for a living?” came up. My standard answer is: “Well, I write, I edit, I lecture, I teach; but my main job is as a Church Pastor.” While this gives people a chance to pick up the writing or editing (if they feel really cornered now by a religious freak!), I have found that every time they pick up on the ‘pastor’ bit. “Really? ... Wow! ... Cor, I bet that’s really interesting ... It must be great to get paid for a job you really believe in.” And so I have a chance to throw just one or two more sentences out – which is what happened with the neighbour. He now regularly wants to know where I am off to next and has said the family can call on him any time if they need help when I am away. When he asked me how my recent trip to Argentina went, I didn’t tell him everything, but nor did I tell him nothing! I picked out the story of the visit to Olmos Prison and told him of the change that had happened there and how up to 48% of the prisoners in that maximum security jail had now become committed Christians. He was genuinely fascinated – and at that point I left the topic and changed to something else. And what is more: I didn’t even feel guilty for doing so!

4. Pray for boldness

One of the words that appears quite frequently in the book of Acts is “boldness” or “boldly”. They prayed boldly, preached boldly, spoke boldly – in short, they were a pretty bold bunch of people! They also prayed and *asked God for boldness* (Acts 4:29). I realised that this was something that I had neglected to do, and so recently began to do so.

I had probably only been praying for it for a few days when an opportunity came up. I was coming home from London late one night on the train and had to run to catch it. As I leapt on to the train moments before it left, a young man leapt on behind me, and happened to sit across the aisle from me, as we panted and puffed together! “I always hate that,” he said with a smile, and off we went into conversation. He was obviously quite a talker and was soon telling me all sorts of things about himself. Then came the crunch question: “So, what about you, what do you do?” Now, normally my stock answer is ready: “Well, I write, I edit, I lecture ...” But I was suddenly aware of several pairs of eyes all slowly turning in my direction! Here was a whole compartment waiting to hear words fall from my lips! While a true evangelist would grasp at such a moment, this is

normally the point at which, if I am honest, I freeze or want to speak in a very soft voice! (It's probably the thought of "what are they all thinking" without being able to find out!) But I felt the nudge of the Spirit and a reminder that this is what I had been praying for; here was my opportunity for boldness! So I decided to go for it! The whole compartment got to listen to the next twenty minutes of my sharing with this former church-goer who had "just got too busy", my telling him about Alpha, and his asking me for my name and address, "just in case". He didn't become a Christian that night; but he had been exposed to another stage of God's working in his life (I still pray for him occasionally for God to complete it) and I had begun to see that God can answer prayers for boldness.

A Picture of What can Happen

I don't claim that any of the things I have shared are earth-shattering or great revelations. But hopefully they might have encouraged some 'non-evangelists' to see that getting the good news out *is* within their grasp too.

My recent visit to Argentina showed me a picture of what can happen when the Spirit of God comes and when people respond to his moving, *letting the river flow out and not keeping it to themselves*. Churches of six have grown to six thousand! – and are frustrated because they are not growing enough! We as leaders across Salt and Light Ministries are convinced that revival is heading our way too. But each of us needs to play our part. The atmosphere is changing; the spiritual hunger is growing; there have never been better opportunities for getting the good news out. If all of us look to playing our part – within our gifting, on the 'one more inch' model, telling it bit by bit, and praying for boldness – we *can* do it! And, God being our helper, we are going to!

Mike Beaumont