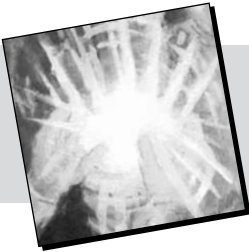


telling*basics*



Introduction

Just imagine for a moment that you had discovered –

- a shop that was giving away free food that week
- a miracle cure for cancer
- a way of wiping out starvation in the Third World

In each of these cases, what would you do? Why, you would go and share your discovery with others immediately. In fact, not to do so would be monstrous! Even if there were to be no gain in it for yourself, you would not hesitate to share your good news with others.

Discovering God's love through Jesus is exactly the same. Once we have discovered it, it should be the most natural thing in the world to want to tell others about it.

Paul, one of the key leaders in the Early Church, was initially such an opponent of the church and its

message of Jesus that he went around persecuting Christians. But once he was 'born again', he immediately started to tell people about the change that had happened in his life and what Jesus had done for him.

Read:

Acts 9 v1-22

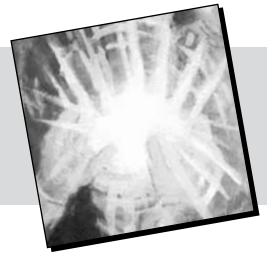
What words in v20 show that Paul got straight on with sharing his new-found faith?

What words in v21 & 22 show how effective he was at this?



*God's heart is for **all of us** to become effective in sharing what Jesus has done for **us**. In this booklet we want to show you that it is nowhere near as difficult as it may seem.*

Motivations for telling



All of us give ourselves best to things when we are **motivated** to do them. (Compare, say, your motivation to visit a friend to enjoy a slap-up meal, with getting round to clearing out the garage or shed!) Here are some factors that help or hinder Christians in feeling motivated to tell the Good News of Jesus to others.

1. **Six reasons for telling**

- Excitement because your life has changed so much from your encounter with Jesus (e.g., John 4 v28-30 & v39)
- Gratitude for what Jesus has done for you (e.g., Mark 5 v19-20)
- Concern for people who are **lost** without Jesus (e.g., Romans 10 v1)
- Awareness of people's deep needs all around you (e.g., Matthew 9 v35-36)
- Distress at what you can see people are giving their lives to (e.g., Acts 17 v16-17)
- Responsiveness to Jesus' command to go and tell (e.g., Matthew 28 v18-20)



Which of the above reasons (or any similar ones) do you find stirs you most at this time? Why do you think that might be?

2. **Six excuses for NOT telling**

- I might not be able to answer their questions
- They might reject my message – or even worse, **me!**
- I've lived too bad a life for God to be able to use **me**
- I don't know how or where to begin
- I'd probably **put my foot** in it
- I'm scared!



Why do you think these excuses might be understandable, but nevertheless are not sufficient? (And hence are excuses and not reasons!) What answers would you give to each of them?

3. *Six keys to getting motivated*

a. *Ask God to give you his heart for people*

Pray that God will help you to see people as he himself sees them – lost and without hope and purpose, no matter how busy or full their lives might seem. Getting God’s heart has to be the place to start!

b. *Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit every day*

The more we are **filled up** with the Holy Spirit, the more natural it is for us to **spill over** (rather like a glass full of water) into the lives of those we are among that day, without our needing to **try hard**.

c. *Remember that you can ‘learn on the job’*

You do not need to have spent hours **in the classroom** learning all the answers first. Telling about Jesus is rather like driving a car – it’s best learned by doing it! You may not be able to answer every question that you are asked; simply tell people you’ll find out and come back!

d. *Remember that God has already started*

God will have been at work in the hearts of people long before you get to them! It may be through their circumstances or concerns, through some previous contact with other Christians, or through some sort of spiritual hunger awakening in them. See yourself, not as having to have the final answer, but as being the next step in the chain.

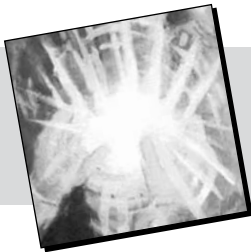
**e. Believe there are
'divine appointments' in life**

The Holy Spirit will often highlight to us those in whose lives he is starting to work – perhaps as we are praying or even as we bump into them at work or in the street. Some of these will be God's **divine appointments** in the day for you, so take them!

f. Get started straight away!

Like most things in life, the longer you leave it, the harder it gets! And it's the same with sharing your faith. Christians who are the most motivated in telling others about their faith tend to be those who simply **get on with it** from the beginning. Resolve that you will do the same.

Are there any of the above points that I especially need to take hold of at this time?



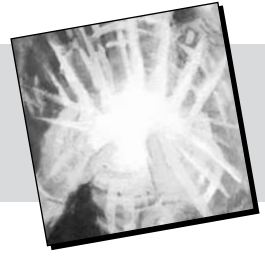
2 Methods of telling

What we want to get across in this booklet is that there are **many ways** that we can be involved in 'telling' the Good News of Jesus – and not all of them involve words! We can sum up these different ways under three main headings:

- **works** – the things we do
- **words** – the things we say
- **wonders** – the things we pray for

In the following sections, we will look at each of these in turn.

3 Methods of telling: by works



The first way of telling – and often the **way in** – is through our **works** – that is, **the things we do because of the people we are**. If Jesus has really made a difference to our lives, then it should be easy for people to see that.

There is nothing to be embarrassed about in **being good** and **doing good** – though often in Western society, you might think there was! But remember this:

*It is much better to be a
do-gooder than a **do-badder!***

Jesus said that the change in us for good should be so evident that it can be **easily seen**.

Read:

Matthew 5 v13-16

What did Jesus say he wanted people to see?

Why?

What attitudes do you think we might need to beware of when doing good things for others?

In what areas, then, can we let people see the change that has happened in us?



1. *In our lifestyle*

“Let your **light** shine before men ...”
(Matthew 5 v16)

Things like changed attitudes and behaviour, integrity, hard work, kindness, patience, good manners, not joining in with gossip or foul language, not ‘borrowing’ things from work, can all be **light** in dark places. Some things will make a more powerful impact in some places than others; but all can help to say that **we have changed**. Our prayer should be that people will then ask us: **Why?**

Are you aware of areas in your life that have begun to change and that people are already noticing are different? If so, what has been their reaction?



2. *In our influence*

“You are the salt of the earth ... the light of the world.” (Matthew 5 v13-14)

Jesus wants his followers to act like **salt** and **light** in their everyday lives – at home, at work, at school, with friends. He wants us to be an influence for good, an influence for him.

*What do these two pictures of **salt** and **light** communicate about the sort of influence we should be having in our world? (Think what each of them does.)*

(i) salt

(ii) light

*Think about the people you come into contact with each day. Spend a few minutes asking God to show you how you can be **salt and light** to them*



in a practical way.



3. In our deeds

“... that they may see your good deeds ...” (Matthew 5 v16)

We have already seen that we should not be afraid of **doing good** simply because of what people might think. Remember: Jesus himself was known as a man who went around doing good (see Acts 10 v38). In fact, doing good has always been in God’s heart for people – from him to them, and from them to others.

a. The two key commandments

Read:

Mark 12 v28-34

Summarise the two commandments that Jesus says are the most important ones in life:

- (i) _____
- (ii) _____
- _____



These two commandments sum up God’s heart for us.

Many of the laws in the Old Testament (the first half of the Bible, covering the time before Jesus came) were simply practical outworkings of this. Look at the following passage, for example, and see how putting God first had to be followed then by very practical expressions of concern for others.

Read:

Leviticus 19 v1-2 & 9-18

How would you sum up those laws in the language of today?
v9-10



v11

v12

v13

v14

v15

v16

v17

v18

In the New Testament, too, the importance of loving your neighbour as yourself was constantly underlined.

Read:

Romans 13 v8-10

James 2 v8

If we have genuinely discovered the love that God has for us in Jesus, then we will constantly be on the lookout for opportunities to love and serve others in his name. Not to do so, the Bible says, may give people genuine cause for wondering whether our life has changed at all, as the following passages show.

**Read:**

1 John 3 v11, & v16-18

1 John 4 v7-12 & v19-21

Try to sum up these passages briefly in your own words.

**b. Acts of kindness**

We should always be on the look-out, then, for opportunities to love our 'neighbour' or our 'brother' wherever we can. We can do this by engaging in what Peter called **acts of kindness** (Acts 4 v9).

Acts of kindness are tangible expressions of God's love through his people. They **earth** his

love in practical, relevant – at times, even fun!
– ways.

So, what are some of the ways in which we can demonstrate God's kindness to people? Here are just a few to get you thinking, but there is space for you to add ideas of your own:

■ **As individuals**

- finishing off some work for someone at the office
- making a meal or baking a cake for someone who is ill
- taking a friend's or neighbour's children to school for them
- mowing a neighbour's lawn when they are away
- _____
- _____

■ **As a church**

- running a kids club to help parents during the school holidays
- washing cars or windscreens in the local car park
- organising meals for the elderly or distributing food or clothing parcels
- handing out doughnuts or sweets during a presentation on the street
- _____
- _____



Which of these do you think you would you feel most comfortable doing? Why?

[For lots of other ideas of **acts of kindness**, see **Getting the Good News Out** in the Roots and Shoots series of booklets, published by Salt & Light Ministries.]



When God gave us Jesus, it was the greatest **act of kindness** ever. Let's look to take every opportunity that we get to display that kindness to others too.

c. **Why should we do acts of kindness?**

- It demonstrates part of God's character
- It shows you are trying to **practise what you preach**
- It helps to break up the **hard ground** in people's hearts in a way that words can sometimes not do
- it gives us opportunity to explain **why**
- it fits in with the Bible's teaching that it is **God's kindness that leads you towards repentance** (Romans 2 v4)

In short, actions speak louder than words.

*Are there **acts of kindness** that I could begin to give myself to in my circle of influence?*

4. **Summary**

Telling through our **works**, then, is something that all of us can be involved in – without really trying! – through our **lifestyle**, our **influence** and our **kind deeds**.

Remember: we do not have to win everyone for Jesus the first time we encounter them or the first time we share our faith with them! In fact, for the vast majority of people, certainly in the West, it takes many encounters with Christians over a period of time for them to begin to understand what



the Good News of Jesus is really all about – probably just like it did for many of you reading this booklet.

Our goal should simply be this:

To leave people with a more favourable impression of God than they had before, ready for their next encounter with a Christian.

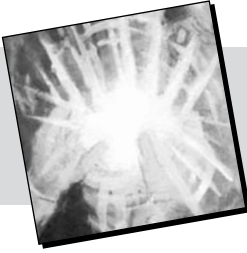
For many people in the West, our **telling** needs to begin with helping people to grasp the most simple message, which one church leader has summed up like this:

God is good – and we're OK!

Acts of kindness can be one of the easiest ways to convey this message.

Methods of telling: by words

It is one of the most natural things in the world to talk to people about what is important to us. Just think of all the conversations that go on about football teams, or cricket scores, or pop groups, or



... well, almost anything. Why should it be any different for us with Jesus?

In the New Testament, we find that people were always eager to tell others about Jesus and what he had done for them. As you read the following passages, note the different settings or ways – some personal, some quite public – in which the ‘telling’ was done.

John 1 v40-42

Mark 5 v18-20

Acts 5 v18-20 & 27-32

Acts 8 v26-35

Acts 16 v13-14

Acts 17 v16-23



As we can see from all of this, there are many settings and many ways in which we can be involved in **telling**. But wherever and however we do it, there are four main steps to **telling by words**:

1. Telling what Jesus has done for ME

In a court of law, one of the most powerful pieces of evidence is the **testimony** of a **witness**. The job of a witness is really quite simple: to tell what you know! Witnesses do not have to concern themselves with what they do **not** know, only with what they **do** know.

This is the first and easiest step for us as Chris-

tians when it comes to giving our testimony as a witness to Jesus: telling what we know, telling what Jesus has done for **me**.

Key things to remember in our telling are:

- **How** I became a Christian
- **Why** I became a Christian
- **What** difference it has made to my life

Remember to bring it up to date by telling what he has done for you recently – answering your prayers, helping in difficulties, bringing peace etc.

No one can argue against this! This is **your** testimony and nobody can deny it – even if they don't like it! It happened, and it is true.

*Now try this exercise: Imagine that you have just two or three minutes to tell your **testimony** to someone who has asked you about it. How would you go about it? Try to include the three bullet points above. If you are doing this in a group, share it with one another.*

Remember: Being a witness is simply about telling what you know.

2. Telling what Jesus has done for US



While telling what Jesus has done for **me** is so important, and is frequently the starting point, in itself it is not enough. If we stop there, we leave the Christian message as something entirely **subjective**. People can say about it, '**That's great for you – but what's it got to do with me?**'

But what Jesus has done for us is not just a **subjective** thing, it is **objective** – that is, it is **always true for everyone everywhere**. Its message is a message for everyone because the Bible tells us that “**all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3 v23) – whether they know it or not. So at some point in our telling, we need to go on to tell what Jesus has done for **us**.

*The Good News of Jesus is always true –
for everyone, everywhere.*

You might find the following four points helpful as **pegs** to hang your thoughts on when sharing the Good News with others. Two are to do with God, and two with us:

Let's look at each of these in turn. There is space for you to either write down part of the verse given, or to add in favourite verses of your own as you become more familiar with the Bible. (Memorising some of these verses can be a great help for when you are talking to people!)

a. God's character

God exists, and loves people and cares about them.

GOD	MAN
-----	-----

e.g., Psalm 8 v3-5

He is eager to show his kindness and grace to people, but equally, sin offends what is perfect about him – his holiness and righteousness.



e.g., Exodus 34 v5-7

b. Man's condition

Every human being who has ever lived has **sinned** –

- **passively**, by failing to live up to God's standards
- **actively**, by disobeying God's commandments

There are no exceptions, no excuses.

e.g., Romans 3 v23

d. Man's response

The gospel (the **Good News**) is entirely about what *God* has done for us. **It is his work from start to finish.** Being religious, trying hard, doing good, being decent, not hurting others – none of these makes any difference. What God asks from us is that we simply **believe** what **he** has done for us through sending his son Jesus to die on the cross, and that we then **live changed lives** in the light of that.

e.g., John 1 v12

c. God's solution – Jesus

God loves us so much that he himself provided someone to pay the price of all our sins – no one less than his own Son, Jesus. Jesus did this when he died on the cross in our place.

e.g., John 3 v16

Romans 6 v23

Romans 5 v8

John 5 v24

Pick out the key verses (from those given, or your own) that you would use in sharing the gospel with others. You might even want to practise presenting the gospel in just two or three minutes.

Ten 'top tips' to remember when explaining the Good News to people:

1. It is meant to be **good news**, not miserable news! Let your life and presentation reflect that.
2. People **do come to faith** when the Good News is



- preached – no matter how strange it may sound while you are sharing it!
3. **Tone** is as important as **truth** when sharing the message. Share the gospel sensitively according to people's needs.
 4. It is not all **your** work! **The Holy Spirit is already at work** in the person you are talking to.
 5. Jesus made the gospel **accessible** to people – try to do the same. He went where they were and explained it in ways that were relevant to their lives and needs.
 6. Be **creative** in explaining the gospel if you can be – after all, Jesus was. Don't get stuck in a rut! Find good illustrations and use them.
 7. **Different people** will respond to **different ways** in which the gospel is presented. Some might respond to being '**punched on the nose**'; others need to know they are loved or may need questions answering.
 8. **Don't use religious language.** It is not necessary and only hinders the process. Just be yourself!
 9. You don't have to present **all** the message on every occasion. Present **whatever you get chance to** and don't feel guilty for not sharing everything.
 10. The Bible teaches: "One sows, another reaps." **You** don't have to do it all – just your bit! Then trust God for that person's next encounter.

Are there any of these that you particularly need to remember at present?

3. *Asking what Jesus has done for THEM!*

Having taken time to **explain** the Good News, the next step is to see if they now **understand** what Jesus has done for **them**. They do not need to be great theologians or to understand every aspect and detail; but do they see their need of Jesus and are they ready to give their life to him? This can be the most exciting stage of all – but also the one where we can **blow it** if we do not handle it right. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit is there to help us, if we will look to him.



Here are some steps that can help at this stage.

a. *Ask if they understand*

Don't presume that they understand just because you have explained it! Remember that it sometimes takes several times of telling before **the penny drops**. And remember: we are not looking for a **theoretical** acceptance of the gospel, but a recognition that it **applies to them**.

b. *Ask if they are ready to make and keep a commitment to Jesus*

Don't force people or push them into it – even (especially!) if you are excited. They need to weigh up the cost of what this life-changing experience will mean for them (see Luke 14 v25-33). If they are not ready, do not look disappointed; simply encourage them to keep thinking. And you, keep praying!

But if they are ready ...

c. Get them to pray aloud

Praying aloud is the first step of making our commitment known. Encourage them to do it in words of their own (remind them they don't need any special or **religious** words – God just wants it from the heart). If they find that difficult, you could lead them in a prayer, phrase by phrase, with them praying after you.

Having a framework in your own thinking can help you to explain the sort of things they should include. Here is a very simple one, around which people can add their own words:

Sorry – Thank you – Please

- **Sorry** – for the things I have done wrong, God, and for the things where I have let you down.
- **Thank you** – for sending Jesus to die on the cross in my place where he paid the price of my sins.
- **Please** – forgive me now as I put my faith in Jesus and help me to live a new life with you.

d. Pray for them now yourself

Thank God for his forgiveness and the new life he has given them. Speak this out confidently over their life! Most of all, pray for them to be **filled with the Holy Spirit**. Without his presence, we are still left with a life of self-effort. Tell them to **expect to feel different and to start changing!** (When we don't tell them this, it is generally because we are scared it might not work!)

e. Follow them up

No one leaves a new-born baby just to **get on with it**; nor should we with a new Christian. Take a particular interest in their well-being and growth, especially over the first few weeks and months.

Help them by –

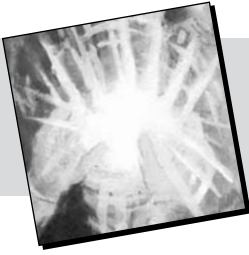
- giving them a booklet explaining what they have done
- ensuring that they get a Bible and helping them to start reading it regularly
- encouraging them to join a new Christians' course at church (your leaders will explain what is available and appropriate)
- bringing them along to church meetings where they can worship God, be fed spiritually and become part of the family of God
- introducing them to some of the church leaders

*Let's stop at this point and spend a few minutes praying for some of our friends who are not yet Christians, asking that God will draw them closer and that he will help us in our **telling**.*

Methods of **t e l l i n g :** **by wonders**



Even the most casual reading of the New Testament reveals that – whether it was Jesus, the twelve disciples, or the early church – the **telling**



of the Good News was not just by words, but also by **wonders** – that is, by demonstrations of God’s power.

Look at the following passages and note how clearly the two were linked. Write down the key phrases from each.

Luke 4 v16-19

Luke 9 v1-2 & v6

Acts 3 v1-16

Acts 8 v4-7

Acts 19 v8-12

If our God is a miraculous God, then it should be the most natural thing in the world for us to expect to see him answering prayers in a miraculous way – especially to back up our telling of the Good News.



Sometimes people can be afraid of **getting involved** in such things, fearing that miracles can also be performed by contact with occult powers. Indeed they can! But that did not stop God’s people in Bible times from getting hold of **genuine supernatural power**. And remember, they were often surrounded by far more false powers than we are. (See, for example, Exodus 7 v8-13; Acts 13 v6-12; Acts 8 v9-25)

1. The purpose of wonders

a. They demonstrate the reality of God’s presence and his superior power

Read:

Acts 19 v11-20

In many parts of the world – especially those that

are either polytheistic (believing in many gods), or that believe in one God but reject the uniqueness of Jesus as his Son – demonstrating the power of the true and living God through **wonders** is still a powerful evangelistic tool.

But in the West, too, where people have often discarded Christianity as irrelevant to life today, it can be a powerful means of demonstrating the reality and power of God. There is nothing like seeing an unbeliever get healed by the God he doesn't believe in!



b. *They can draw people's attention to the message*

Read:

Acts 4 v5-12

The purpose of wonders is not for them to be an **end in themselves**, but to **draw people** to the God who lies behind them. Our heart, having prayed for people, should not be for the focus to be on the healing, nor on us, but on God, just as it was for Peter in the passage above.

c. *They are a tangible manifestation of the caring heart of God*

Read:

Acts 4 v9-10 (again!)

Matthew 14 v13-14

Note how Peter saw this healing as an **act of kindness**, and how Jesus healed the sick because **he had compassion on them**. Both incidents clearly show that healing reflects the caring heart of God.





d. They can help produce a more whole-hearted response to the message

Read:

Luke 5 v1-11

Sometimes God needs to **break in** to our every-day lives in a supernatural way, just as he did with Peter, James and John, to show us that he is bigger than anything and everything we have been committed to. Once we have seen that, it can be so much easier to give ourselves wholeheartedly and completely to him and his purposes.

Which of these four purposes strikes you as being the most relevant in your own situation?



2. The process of wonders

So, just what is the process behind this use of the supernatural in our **telling** the Good News? Is there a technique to be learned or a course we can go on? No! It is much more straightforward than that. All these things, the Bible tells us, are **gifts of the Holy Spirit**; and he loves to distribute them to God's children!

Read:

1 Corinthians 12 v7-11

Paul was writing here about how spiritual gifts were to be used in the setting of church meetings; but it is clear that he also believed they could also be used as part of sharing the Good News with others. (See, for example, 2 Corinthians 12 v12 and Acts 28 v7-9)

As you look at Paul's list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, which of them do you think might be particularly appropriate for using when telling the



Good News? How could you imagine their being used?

While most (if not all!) of the gifts Paul mentions could be used as part of our sharing the Good News, there are some that can be especially helpful. Let's just look at two of those and see what we can learn about using them.



a. Healing

Remember: it is not **us** who heals, it is **God**. Our job is simply to ask him to do it, and then to point people to him when he has. Seeing God heal them is a powerful way of people starting to see that God **cares for them personally**.



Some points to remember:

- when the issue of illness comes up in conversation, take the opportunity naturally
- offer to pray for them (and make sure they understand you mean there and then, not later on your own at home.) You could begin with words like, "You might think this is a bit strange, but I really believe God answers prayer and heals people. Would you consider letting me pray for you now?"
- pray simply – especially when people are not used to prayer. Be as natural as you can be and **don't go all religious** on people!
- expect God to guide you as you pray; respond to any nudges or thoughts that he puts into your mind.
- ask them how they feel at the end of praying and tell them you will keep praying for them throughout the day.

*The key to praying for people is: **be relaxed!***

Actually, they don't expect to be healed anyway – so what have you got to lose? And if they aren't healed, at least you have shown you care about them!

*How do you feel about **having a go** at praying for people to be healed?*

b. Words of knowledge

Words of knowledge (or, as the NIV translates it, the **message of knowledge**) are insights that God gives to us quite supernaturally about someone's personal circumstances or situation in order to bring healing, release, understanding or reassurance into their life. (See, for example, John 4 v16-19; Acts 5 v1-4)



- Be open to the **nudges** of the Holy Spirit. He will often put a strong impression into our minds (or even our bodies – for example, you might suddenly feel a pain in some part of your body where it was not before). This is often his way of drawing our attention to some need.
- Step out with what you feel God has given you. You could begin with words like, "I know this might sound funny, but ...
... have you get a pain in your leg?
... have you been worrying about your son?
... did you have a frightening experience last year?"
- If they respond positively, tell them you feel God wants to heal them, or bring some encouragement or release to them, or whatever it may be.
- Remember that this gift is meant to draw people to God – it is **not psychic** and it is

not busy-bodying! If it is a highly personal word, then ensure that you handle it in an appropriate way that would not bring about embarrassment.

*Have you begun to experience these sorts of **nudges** of the Holy Spirit – even if you didn't recognise what they were? If you are studying this in a group, share your experiences with one another and pray that God would help you all to grow in this area.*

3. The pitfall of wonders

Now it's time for a health warning!

Warning: Pitfalls around!

Operating in any of these areas is dangerous!

What on earth do we mean by that?

Let's start by saying that it is **not dangerous** because –

- there is anything to fear in any of these gifts or in the Holy Spirit who lies behind them (in fact, Jesus describes them as **good gifts** in Matthew 7 v11)
- they might **go wrong** or **not work**
- evil powers might deceive us (for if you have been born again and set free by Jesus and are filled with his Holy Spirit, what have you to fear?)



Nevertheless, there are real **pitfalls** in this whole area if we are not careful. (The dictionary defines a pitfall as **an unsuspected danger** or **a concealed trap or pit.**) And the pitfalls are to do with the fact that **the human spirit is so prone to**

becoming proud.

How easy it is for us to pray for someone, to throw ourselves on God as we cry **Help! – come and do this!**; but then, once the healing has happened, to start to take a little bit of the credit for ourselves, and to start speaking as if **I** have a gift, or as if **I** am someone special.

Remember: the purpose of our using wonders is to focus people on **Jesus** not on **me**. As long as we remember this, God will be more than happy to keep using us – and we won't fall into the pit!

*How do you feel about stepping out in this area of **wonders** as part of your telling the Good News?*

Conclusion: Time to tell

We started this booklet by saying that it is the most natural thing in the world to share a discovery you have made. You have made **the greatest discovery of life!** We trust this booklet will be a help and provocation to you to begin to share your discovery with others. It's time to tell!

Why not spend a few minutes praying, both for those people that you are looking for opportunities to share the Good News with, and for God to help you grow in each of these areas of telling that we



have looked at.

