



EVANGELISM THAT WORKS



INTRODUCTION

Many people in the church in the West have negative feelings and experiences about evangelism. We know we should share our faith with pre-Christians but we have awkwardly tried programs and tracts and have been left disappointed and often embarrassed. When Jesus said, “All those that follow Him should go into the world, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to do all that He commanded them to do;” He didn’t have a program, course, or an outreach event in mind. I believe He had a very do-able adventure, a lifestyle, where you could be real and be led by the Holy Spirit.

I pray this booklet will set you free from man’s expectations and formulae to be you; and to love God and others effectively into God’s kingdom. You can do it! You were made for this. In this brief life, everything we do of importance will be done better in heaven. We will be better disciples (more moulded into His image), have greater fellowship, be more effective in our service, and worship will be electric. There is one thing we get to do on earth that we can’t do in heaven, one thing that resonates through God’s story of salvation in the Bible, one thing constantly on the Father’s heart.

That you and I authentically co-labour with Him to see people connected with God.

I have been in pastoral ministry for 20 years, and over time my effectiveness, together with the rest of the team (the local church) to reach the lost has grown. For years we have averaged one baptism per week (90% are totally new to church). Folk have asked me to share how I do it. I don’t want them to be like me, but find their own effective way of sharing their faith. I’d like to simply communicate important principles. Some have asked me to pray for them so that my anointing for evangelism may be passed onto them. I struggle with this idea. Each of us when we received the baptism of the Holy Spirit received a gift mix and a ministry style. My initial anointing majored on deliverance ministry not evangelism or pastoral care. Now evangelism and pastoral care have become my strengths but this didn’t come from anyone praying for me. It came from a journey with God, wrestling with the Holy Spirit and getting revelations from scripture that seemed to come alive and active in me, changing who I was and how I saw life.

As I reflected on the Word I realized;

- I cannot save anyone. The Holy Spirit draws and convicts. He just wants me to join in and support Him with my ‘words’ when He asks me to.
- I will never see or meet someone that God doesn’t love and has already tried to draw to Himself in some way.
- There are not seasons of salvation. Today is the day of salvation for someone. Biblically, a ‘normal’ church will see people added to their number daily.
- It takes a team to make a disciple. It cannot be done apart from the local church.
- There isn’t cold turkey, hit and miss evangelism in the Bible. Confront someone with the gospel and be available personally to follow up. Paul, the Apostle I consider to be the most effective evangelist, would stay with folk, establish a church and then check up on folk pastorally.
- The model we most commonly use to bring people to salvation is very different from that of the early church.

It’s the revelations you and I get from the Word and the Holy Spirit that change us and increase our anointing and effectiveness in an area of ministry.

My prayer is as you work through this booklet, on your own or with friend/s, that revelation will come to you and you will experience sharing your faith and making disciples in a way that is natural, fun and effective.

N.B. You will find the coloured text in these notes is suitable to create worksheets for group discussion.

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TWO SCRIPTURES THAT HAVE BECOME A PART OF MY SPIRITUAL DNA AND THAT I REFLECT ON CONSTANTLY.

Matthew 16:15-19 (NIV)

¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

There are a lot of people in NZ that say “I am into Jesus but I am not into the church”. There are a lot of pastors that would say the same thing, as you and I know. But Jesus loves the church.

The Catholics have often taught that the church is built on the apostle Peter.

Jesus said to Peter = Petros which means little rock, on this Petra which means huge rock I will build my church. On what? On the revelation that Peter received that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. The church is built on the deity and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said on this revelation I will build MY church. The congregations we pastor, the people we care for and reach out to are not ours, are not connected to our reputations. They are His people, and He loves them. I will build MY Church.

And he said “the gates of Hades will not overcome it”. When we hear that phrase we can almost picture galvanized gates fighting with Christians on the streets and losing. Those gates may well be portals for the demonic realm.

However gates are things that we go through. And the gates of hell are those areas where people are held in darkness or addiction or hopelessness or fear and Jesus is saying that His church, My church will grow and My church will storm through the gates of hell.

Finally Jesus says in this passage:

¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Now I don't ever want you to dive into my wife's hand bag as there is so much stuff in there. But if you did you would discover something very interesting. In the beautiful Juliette's hand bag are her keys. And her keys unlock the house, our cars etc, etc. What is surprising about her keys is that my bride's keys are exactly the same as my keys. I am her bridegroom, her husband, and she can unlock the things that I unlock because we have shared authority over those things.

The church is His church, He loves it and He is determined to grow it, He is determined to work through it storming and overcoming the darkness that is in this world and setting people free and He has decided to share with us His bride His authority, supernaturally to do just that.

The second scripture that resounds in my spirit daily is Romans 1:16

Romans 1:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

The gospel, Te Rongapai, simply means ‘good news’. Not good advice. Not one of many options people have for spirituality but the good news about how to get right with God. Paul says that he is not ashamed of the gospel, the good news that Christ died for our sins and was raised on the third day, that we are made right with God not because we try hard to be good or pray lots or read our bibles lots. We are right with God only because of what Christ has done

for us. It is not about do, do, do but, done, finished. The good news is all about what He has done. People today say that there are many paths to God; just do whatever works for you. The reality is though, people will never have peace with God or experience the power of God in their lives supernaturally except by trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Jesus has done everything that needs to be done to win us our salvation. And if we simply respond to that grace, to that unearned kindness minute by minute, day by day, we will hear God's voice. We will see answered prayer. We will experience practically the power of the gospel to transform people. Every month we see people totally changed by God, healed of sickness, relationships transformed, addictions broken not because we give good advice and counselling or engage the social sciences or provide great community services but because they experience and hear about the unearned, undeserved love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus. When they experience Jesus they also experience the power of the good news. People today are nervous about preaching the gospel. Sin is sin. You are not going to heaven if you are sleeping with someone you are not married to. You are not going to heaven if you are in a same sex relationship or you get drunk or stoned. Jesus came to save the sinner. If the message we give them doesn't call people to repentance, if the message we give them does not include heaven and hell and the amazing price that Jesus paid then it's not the gospel. We might entertain and humour and impress people with our eloquent messages but we will have a form of Christianity that lacks power and a God encounter.

It's natural for churches to grow. It's natural for churches to overcome darkness and set people free, to move in their God given authority. It's natural for people to be totally and permanently changed when they hear not some politically correct rhetoric but the call to repentance and trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Brothers, sisters, anointed people called of God to preach the gospel. This is my encouragement to you.

While we should always be open to the Holy Spirit doing new things and rising up new ministries God does that daily and we need to support Him. We don't need to be looking into our history or looking to America or England or on any website to find the key to grow our churches. The key has been and will always be to preach the gospel, to call people to repentance and to a lifestyle where they will trust in the finished work of the cross. Personally I think that over the last two hundred years what we have been giving people is a very watered down, and nice version of the gospel, even a new gospel; a form of religion but without power.

People, in our pride and arrogance, turn to the social sciences or culture or public opinion for the answers and tragically we belittle and forget that all scripture is God breathed.

I believe that the Church, His Church, can grow and will grow in your town and in mine. I believe that we will storm the gates of hell in people's lives and see them set free because we have his keys in our hands, I expect it to happen, for like Paul, I am not ashamed of the gospel - heaven and hell, repentance and faith - because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone that believes!

DISTURBED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (MY STORY)

People have often said I am a very warm, unstressed type of person and that has helped bring people to church. But my experiences that brought me to my understanding of how people are saved and the process of discipleship, has been anything but comfortable and stress free.

Let me share with you some life/theology challenging experiences.

I think all who have enjoyed God's company for a while can recall moments that to others seem insignificant, but to us became catalysts for change.

Baptist Theological College in NZ, (now Carey Baptist College) has in their pastoral training two summer placements, where green, trainee ministers are released on a church for about two months while their regular Pastor is on sabbatical or as they search for a Pastor. I was sent to a very good church for my first placement. The people were kind; I don't think I hurt anyone and the leaders of the church, both the Elders and the Deacons, were Godly people. After a week I noticed something disturbing. Though these leaders were clearly awesome, most of their teenagers and younger adults didn't attend church. I had the opportunity to talk to these disconnected young adults and I said; "Hey, your parents are great, godly people, I don't understand why you don't appear interested in the things of God." The number one reason they gave was that there had been a time or times when they believed and wanted to go on for God (commonly they wanted to get water baptized) and yet they were told they weren't old enough, then the fire they had felt for God gradually faded.

I had a great time on that summer assignment, I don't think I did any damage to the church but I was left feeling uneasy about what these young adults said.

Waimarino Baptist Church was a pastorate to change me forever. God hijacked me one day as I was driving down Parapara Road to Wanganui to pick up my daughter from boarding school. I was listening to Christian radio and two comments made by an evangelist unsettled me.

He said in New Zealand between 85-95% of people from a non-church background that go forward at a rally/outreach event aren't seen in any church two months after their commitment (even if followed up).

I reflected on what I had seen through rallies and events I had been a part of and I thought, to my sickening horror, he's right.

The second disturbing comment was that most European teenagers who make a commitment to Christ will repeat that apparent 'first time' commitment 4-6 times. Again I reflected on what I have seen in NZ and I thought, "Horrors he is right." We are doing something wrong in the way we lead people to Christ if people are not sure if they have changed or if they have had a real God encounter, and so repeat the process multiple times.

Months later God was to totally undo my theology of salvation in the most disturbing way. I was already unsettled in my thinking which got worse when an elder of the church (Dr Jim Corbett) visited me with a video by David Pawson (an English Pastor) called "The normal Christian birth." Dr Jim asked me if I thought that baptism in water was a part of the salvation experience and I said no, it's an outward sign of an inward decision made by someone who has been walking with God for a while. David Pawson's teaching relooked at the way the early church (book of Acts) made people disciples and stressed the work of the Holy Spirit in faith, specific repentance; water Baptism and Holy Spirit Baptism. He described a 'biblical' NORMAL Christian birth that was so far removed from my world view. Biblically these four things are all inseparable parts of the one salvation event.

For months I felt frustrated with what I was learning, annoyed at the politically correct, ecumenically sensitive material available as evangelistic tools and shocked at the disconnect I saw between modern evangelical practice and the Biblical norm.

In those months I answered these questions in my personal study. Take a moment to consider your answers and

discuss them with a friend before moving on.

1. Is there anything like a sinner's prayer in the Bible?
2. Is the goal of evangelism to get someone to pray a prayer or to make disciples? (see Matt 28:19-20)
3. After Acts 2, the day of Pentecost (normal Christianity began on that day), is there any Christian in the New Testament who had not expressed faith, repentance, and been water and Holy Spirit baptized?
4. In the Biblical norm, how long did it take for someone to receive water and Holy Spirit Baptism?
5. How old does a person have to be before they can: 1) believe, 2) repent, 3) be water and Holy Spirit Baptized?

These questions troubled me and what I saw in the Bible disturbed me even more. Here are my reflections:

1. Is there anything like the sinners prayer in the bible?

You and I know that God responds graciously to humble sincere prayer and yet it is clear that no-one was ever led to Jesus using such a mechanism in the Bible, nowhere do people ask Jesus into their hearts or say a one sentence prayer where they generally ask forgiveness for all their sin. Wherever people responded with faith and repentance they were baptized, buried in a watery grave and received the Holy Spirit. No one doubted their salvation because they physically obeyed God, the Holy Spirit was active washing away unconfessed sin and filling them with Power. **In Acts chapter 2, on the day the church began, Peter stood up and boldly proclaimed who Jesus was and that He had died for their sins. The crowd BELIEVED and so they ask Peter:**

"Friends, what shall we do?" Peter said, "Turn back to God! Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children. It is for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live."

Some people have suggested that Romans 10:9 is the sinner's prayer formula.

Romans 10:9 (CEV)

°So you will be saved, if you honestly say, "Jesus is Lord," and if you believe with all your heart that God raised him from death.

Firstly, not only does this scripture omit the need for repentance, water and holy Spirit baptism (it is however a crucial part of the whole truth), neither here or anywhere in the bible does it suggest that one (general) prayer covers all sin or that salvation involves asking Jesus into your heart.

Secondly if salvation involves just belief and confession of that belief, why is that pattern not consistent with the rest of the New Testament, especially the example of people coming to faith in the book of Acts. No one should form a theology of salvation out of one verse.

Finally, some commentators suggest that this confession was the confession given just before total immersion baptism. For example imagine that someone has just heard the gospel explained, and they believe and turn from specific sin. The Christian/evangelist/pastor would then ask them:

"Have you decided to die to the old life where you were the boss, and be raised to a new life, where Jesus is your leader for the rest of your life?"

To which those first believers would confess "yes, Jesus is Lord."

Then they would be baptized in water and the Holy Spirit immediately.

This is the most likely historical context and best understanding of Romans 10:9

Having said all of that, which is important, you and I know that God in His grace will always respond in some way to a humble believer.

“Repentance Then and Now”

Friends, when I open the Word of God and exegete its contents at Whangarei or somewhere else, I sense a real responsibility to speak the truth, to let the Bible speak for itself rather than colour what is before me with politically correct, ear tickling rhetoric. Like all of you I am sure, I love God and I love people, and if you and I truly love the congregations we minister to, then we can't water down what is in here.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

If you boldly preach what the bible says; not what is politically correct the Holy Spirit will change lives! If you don't preach the whole bible, and you try to make what is in here a nice story where we just love everybody, then you will end up with a form of Christianity that has no power. The world doesn't need another club where we sing songs about God and just love each other. The world needs to see the supernatural reality of God. The primary way people begin to experience God's power is when they hear the Bible preached uncompromisingly.

Robert Hall once said

“It is your duty, not to bring down the gospel into a conformity with them (being the congregation), but to change them into a conformity with the gospel.”

If there was one thing in our generation that I believe is woefully lacking in modern preaching it's a call to repentance. We need people who will tell seekers and believers alike that sin is sin, that God is Holy, that God is also a judge, and that heaven and hell are realities.

I was looking at Matthew 25 again the other day where we read of the parables about the return of Jesus, the parable of the talents, the sheep and the goats and the ten virgins. Friends, they clearly teach that Jesus is returning soon, not as the babe of Bethlehem or a lamb to be slain but as the judge of the world and people will be cast out into outer darkness for eternity unless they repent of their ungodly behaviour and follow the Lord. Judgement is coming unless they repent of the lukewarm, people pleasing, vomit inducing culture of this age and do life God's way.

A.W Tozer once said

“A whole generation of Christians have come up believing that it is possible to ‘accept’ Christ without forsaking the world.”

There is a list of sins mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6: 9 & 10 that is essentially repeated in Galatians 6: 19-21 and then again in Revelation 21:8, Paul and John writing to the churches in Corinth, Galatia and Asia Minor say:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

I have been amazed when I have talked to people who have been 'in church' most of their lives and I say to them that if you are involved in sexual intercourse outside of marriage the Bible calls that immorality or fornication and you will not inherit the Kingdom of God. These people often look at me like stunned mullets. Are you sure? I haven't heard that before.

Friends if you love people, then preach repentance.

Think for a moment about the topic of repentance then and now. How different was the preaching of Jesus and the apostles on this topic to what is often preached in the west on this topic today.

What was the first message Jesus delivered after he emerged from the temptation in the wilderness? **Matthew 4:17** records *“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

Jesus called people to repent even before He called them to believe.

Mark 1: 14 –15

¹⁴After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

The Lord said that He had not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13)

When Peter stood up to preach to the masses on the day of Pentecost the Bible tells us that they were pricked in their hearts and said, “what shall we do to get right with God,” and the first thing that Peter said to them was ‘repent’ (**Acts 2:38**). That is, tell God specifically what it is that you are sorry for and are turning from.

Paul, speaking to the Athenians on Mars Hill, a people group not unlike our generation, said to them that the first thing that they needed to do, that God commands all men everywhere is to ‘repent’ (**Acts 17:30**).

When the apostle Paul is facing king Agrippa in **Acts 26**; even in front of this most powerful man who can take Paul’s life at any point; Paul tells Agrippa that all people everywhere need to repent, turn to God and do works that give evidence to the genuineness of their repentance.

Avoiding a call to repentance is a bit like inviting all the local kids to a street party, to free food and games and activities. And even though you know that your street is a busy thoroughfare for speeding trucks imagine that ‘out of love’ or ‘not wanting to challenge their freedom’ you never tell these kids to stay off the road. That’s not love. That’s the way of a people pleasing world. No power will follow people who take this approach to the bible.

Friends, preachers, people who have the opportunity to help people encounter a real and loving God please preach repentance to the unsaved and the saved alike. My experience has always been this, that when people truly repent, they dig a well in their hearts that the Holy Spirit can fill. If a person doesn’t repent, if there isn’t a heartfelt, specific turning from sin, they experience a powerless form of Christianity. I would always invite people to spend time with God confessing sin and if it is an addiction to confess it to another Christian. I have found that the deeper the repentance the greater the infilling work of the Holy Spirit when they are later baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Two stories to illustrate this point: The first involving salvation and the second involving a Christian.

Every week I have 4-7 people serving their community hours at the church as directed by the Corrections Department. It’s a win, win because we cannot afford cleaners and maintenance people and about ½ of our PD workers get to experience God personally. I had just spent 5 minutes with this young man and was walking across the stage over the baptismal pool to show him his list of jobs for the day. As we crossed the stage he said to me, “I believe that I had to do PD work at this church because God wants you, Russell, to baptise me.” So I said to him; “Awesome, but there are two pre-requisites to baptism, to becoming a normal Christian: Firstly faith in who Jesus is and what He has done for you and secondly, repentance.” And so we began to talk and I discovered that he had been watching Christian programs on TV and people like Joyce Meyer had made a lot of sense, and that he had been to a local Pentecostal church once and to Church Unlimited twice. On the second occasion that he had been to Church Unlimited he had responded to the altar call, prayed the 20 second magic prayer and been given material to take home. He was amazed that he had been so genuine but nothing had really changed.

And so I asked him, “Do you live with a partner?” Yes, he said he had a girlfriend that he had been living with for six years and they had a 5 year old son. I told him, those that practice immorality will have no part in the kingdom of

heaven. If you want to be a Christian don't sleep with her again until you are married. Repent and stop sinning. I then asked him if he got drunk or stoned occasionally. Again he said yes. I said you need to stop that today and ask for God's forgiveness. This guy had been told that he was a Christian and yet had never been told what it would look like to die to self and follow Jesus. He had been offered a small degree of repentance. His girlfriend thought he was mad, crazy, a part of a cult, but I baptized him in water and the Holy Spirit the next day on the basis of his faith and repentance. He instantly and radically experienced God's power. He was instantly a new man.

Four months later the church gave him a free wedding, his relatives stood and said one after the other, "Wow, we see a great new man." His partner began coming to church. On his wedding day he and I prayed for a cousin's healing and both she and her partner broke down as they felt the power of God.

He has led one cousin to the Lord and is discipling him and has been bringing another one to my son's men's group. He is a no compromise Christian who hears the voice of God and has faith like a rock. Why did that happen? Because someone loved him enough to tell him the truth and God did the rest.

Some time ago I had a young man come and see me regarding his pornography problem. It's an issue we all face in ministry. This guy had grown up in a good church. He was going onto porn sites multiple times per day. I sat down with him, warned him of the danger, taught him how to cut off or pluck out the temptation, talked about porn filters, accountability, how to take thoughts captive and replace them with things that are pure and holy and worthy of praise. God even told him as we prayed what was the cause of the problem. As I prayed a demon left him and his eyes looked notably different. But I was worried for him as there had been no genuine repentance.

A month later I preached from Joshua 7 on Achan's sin and how sin, even though Jesus has become our Achan, still hurts those around you consequentially. He came forward at the end of the service to confess his sin to someone on the prayer team. For the next two days he felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit and continued to repent of his sin. I knew then that week that this guy was going to be OK. His faith and relationship with the Lord has come alive since that day.

Friends, you and I have the privilege and responsibility to expound this God breathed book sentence by sentence. If you love people and fear God, please tell them the whole truth. Don't preach so that people will pat you on the back and affirm you for your clever rhetoric. Preach the Word in season and out of season. Call sin sin, call God holy, call heaven, heaven and hell, hell. Love them enough to tell it like it is.

2. Is the goal of evangelism to get someone to pray a prayer or to make disciples?

There are two great commissions in the Bible but Matthew 28 is best known. Consider these words carefully.

Matthew 28:19-20 Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.

Mark 16:16-20 Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Anyone who believes me and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe me will be condemned. Everyone who believes me will be able to do wonderful things. By using my name they will force out demons, and they will speak new languages. They will handle snakes and will drink poison and not be hurt. They will also heal sick people by placing their hands on them.

The goal is to make disciples, yes you share the gospel and baptise people, but the focus is always long-term when we are talking about evangelism.

3. Following Acts 2, the day of Pentecost (normal Christianity began on that day), is there any Christian in the New Testament who had not expressed faith, repentance, and been water and Holy Spirit baptized?

Answer. No. In fact I am certain if the apostles of old visited our churches and found us calling folk 'Christians' and 'church members' who were living in sin (e.g. unmarried with partners, drunkards etc.), not water or Holy Spirit

baptized they would be shocked and amazed.

4. In the Biblical norm, how long did it take for someone to receive water and Holy Spirit Baptism?

Answer. With the exception of Paul's water baptism which didn't take place for 3 days after his conversion experience, mainly because people were too scared to go and talk to him, people who believed and repented were baptized, that same moment, that very hour, in the middle of the night.

5. How old does a person have to be before they can: 1) believe, 2) repent, 3) be water and Holy Spirit Baptized?

I wrestled with this for years. Psychologists used to say a person cannot make a lifelong commitment until they are 18. Now they tell us a person's brain is not properly formed until 25 years old. I don't think that we should take our guidance on spiritual matters from Psychologists! For years I took note of what I had heard Dr James Dobson say, that if a child is raised in a Christian home they should be given the opportunity/freedom to be baptized from 7 years forward. I have now baptized three 6 year olds. The one that rattled my theology and helped me the most was Joanne. Joanne, her brother and her educated parents were raised Buddhist in Thailand. Over months our Inclusion team leader and I would visit the family, answer questions and enjoy their company. God gently led them all to Jesus, and if they looked at other paths things turned to custard. The whole family began praying together 'before' making their commitment to Jesus. When Joanne's parents said that they, together with her older brother Steve, wanted to be baptized, and that they wanted to die to self and live for Jesus, I was stoked. Then mum said that Joanne wanted to get baptized too. Heck. I wasn't sure what to do. I was scared of quenching the work of the Holy Spirit in children, so I emailed the elders for advice. The next day Joanne's mum phoned me. She wanted to share with me what young Joanne had said to her that morning. "Mum, I had a dream. I saw each one of us with Jesus. He held us in His arms and said that He would always be with us."

After years of wrestling over this question I have come to a place where I cannot see how any person can separate water and Holy Spirit Baptism from conversion. They didn't in the Bible. If someone asks me, "How old do I have to be before I can be baptized," I hear the question really is, "How old do I need to be a Christian and to join God's family?"

The answer to that has nothing to do with age and everything to do with faith in Jesus and repentance.

Sometimes it takes months and years of talking with folk to bring them to a place of belief in who Jesus is and what He has done for them. Sometimes I have folk who take an equal amount of time to decide to repent i.e. to confess their sins to God and turn away from them, but if I baptise them in water and the Holy Spirit immediately after faith and repentance are realized I have found that over 90% continue on with God for life. I had months to work these questions through. It was uncomfortable! And if you are thinking, this is different, this is weird, and could Russell possibly be a heretic? I encourage you to just hang in there. Give yourself time to research and mull things over.

Take a minute to get some real encouragement from YouTube. Have a look at the Last Reformation Movie at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zka4DUYeJ5g>.

Please keep reading as I share with you 7 principles that we have adopted for reaching the lost at Ranui Baptist Church, and we are now using at Whangarei Central Baptist Church.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES ON SHARING OUR FAITH EFFECTIVELY

Over the years I have tried to listen to the Holy Spirit as He guides me on how and when to share my faith with people. It can be so exciting to join Him and trust Him in this adventure. I don't believe it is ever wise to use practiced formats, programs and routines. It is rare that these come across to people as authentic and fitting our personality (although they clearly did to the people who created them). Kiwis don't want to be treated as a number in a system or a cog in a program. They want to be engaged personally with a real person who just loves God and cares about them.

The Seven Principles below are guiding principles to help you be a part of the 'main thing' the church exists for, and are not a 'how to' formula or program.

These are the principles of evangelism that I have tried to live by and I find the family at Whangarei Central Baptist Church are increasingly doing.

1. Sow Seeds Early

A Story about a Farmer: Luke 8

⁴ When a large crowd from several towns had gathered around Jesus, he told them this story:

⁵ A farmer went out to scatter seed in a field. While the farmer was doing it, some of the seeds fell along the road and were stepped on or eaten by birds. ⁶ Other seeds fell on rocky ground and started growing. But the plants did not have enough water and soon dried up ⁷ Some other seeds fell where thorn bushes grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ The rest of the seeds fell on good ground where they grew and produced a hundred times as many seeds.

¹¹ This is what the story means: The seed is God's message, ¹² and the seeds that fell along the road are the people who hear the message. But the devil comes and snatches the message out of their hearts, so that they will not believe and be saved. ¹³ The seeds that fell on rocky ground are the people who gladly hear the message and accept it. But they don't have deep roots, and they believe only for a little while. As soon as life gets hard, they give up.

¹⁴ The seeds that fell among the thorn bushes are also people who hear the message. But they are so eager for riches and pleasures that they never produce anything. ¹⁵ Those seeds that fell on good ground are the people who listen to the message and keep it in good and honest hearts. They last and produce a harvest.

In this parable about effective evangelism it seems clear to me that the responsibility of Christians is to throw seed everywhere, that is, to find ways to scatter spoken words about Jesus, the Kingdom wherever we go in the world (field). My primary responsibility to the pre-Christian world is to speak to them. Scatter seeds. Whether the hearers are 'good soil' or not is not our responsibility initially. Our job is just to talk about Jesus.

Romans 10:17 says that no one can come to faith without 'hearing' the message about Jesus Christ.

The big mistake of this generation has been to think that people don't want to hear our words, or that our actions will speak for themselves. Francis of Assisi has been misquoted many times e.g. "witness at all times and if necessary use words." Utter, unbiblical rubbish! I have never known anyone in NZ to become a follower of Jesus Christ without someone explaining things to them. God takes the seed of our spoken words, a testimony, a declaration, and plants them like seeds of faith in the souls of others, seeds He begins to grow if the heart of that person is willing.

One of the biggest misconceptions of the last 20 years in Christianity in the west has been that you befriend someone for a month, a year, a decade and eventually you 'earn the right' to speak to them about Jesus (if they don't die first). The reality is the longer you leave Jesus out of your conversations the harder and less natural it will be for you to include Him later.

The parable says that wherever you go about in the world (field) throw seeds (i.e. God's Word). Let me illustrate how easy this will be for you to do.

We had 7 budget advisors in my previous church and when I sat down to do a budget for someone in the community I mentioned at the very start of our conversation, that I have seen many times the biggest miracles in finance when I have asked for God's help. As I completed this person's budget and made suggestions for them to consider, they would usually come back and ask me questions about God and faith. It became so natural if I threw the seed early. They would usually be very open to me praying for them.

We might speak to quite a range of people in the course of our day's work. Be friendly to them all. Throw a seed early at the start of the conversation and you will find that a lot of people will start talking to you about the Lord.

If some sales person asks how my day is going, I will be honest. I might say, "It's good, I have already seen God heal someone today," or "Good thanks, God seems to make me happy every day." Simple one liners, but the next time I go into that shop there is a good probability that the person asks me to pray for them, pray about something or asks me a question. It becomes natural to include God in our future conversations.

"What have you got planned for the weekend Mr Watts?" "Oh, a few repairs, maybe a fishing trip but what excites me most is church on Sunday morning, you never know just what God will do, it's fun" - might be how I'd respond.

Consider for a moment how you might respond to these statements e.g. throw seed early:

What a beautiful day?

How's the family?

What did you get up to in the holidays?

How are you?

This government is useless!

Did you know that chocolate will make you feel happy!

If you buy this all the girls/guys will like you!

It amazes me that simply looking someone in the eyes and saying "God bless" can be a seed that God will use to begin to germinate faith in that person.

Often people tell you that they are witnessing without using words 'we are being incarnational to those people' i.e. Jesus with skin on. The thing is they forget that Jesus never stopped talking about the kingdom and salvation. How can we be 'incarnational' without words?

2. Follow The Holy Spirit

Where you see the spoken words germinate with faith in someone, make yourself very available to follow them up. Be a co-labourer with Christ. Trust Him to guide you. Join in where you see Him working.

Imagine you have four people who you have recently met and out of love for them boldly thrown a seed or two towards them. Which one of these four should get your time?

- a) John who has lots of needs and wants you and your church to help him.
- b) Mary, who has a few questions about God and is not sure what she believes.
- c) Wendy who is a Jehovah's Witness and wants to talk to you about her faith.
- d) Gopalan who is a Muslim and not interested in your version of Jesus or
- e) All the above.

Take a minute to consider your answer before you read on....

If it's the Holy Spirit who convicts people of sin and draws them to Jesus and to salvation and we are called to be co-labourers with Him I would suggest you make yourself very available to Mary and her enquiries. I will often say to folk who have started to ask questions; I will make time for you no matter how busy I am because I would be so happy

if one day when I get to heaven you get to move in down the corridor.

John may demand all your time as might Wendy and yet you may get nowhere and find the whole evangelism thing discouraging. I spend time with people and pray for people to be saved who God is already at work in and so I have good results and plenty of encouragement. Love them all. Respect them all but focus 95% of your energies on Mary.

Many people in my previous church have the ability to prophecy over strangers and to follow them up. Several have the ability to discern that a person is open and ready for a direct challenge. If you learn to follow His leading in reaching the lost, it's not about you and it is not about your ability or polished presentation. It becomes an adventure with Him which will have encouraging results.

When someone expresses to me an interest in Jesus, the Bible or the church I will make sure I have time and resources to feed that interest straight away.

I have found if you don't, then Satan will get in. Never say in a couple of weeks we are having an Alpha course, go to that and get your questions answered. Feed them today, now, constantly, without giving them a break or an opportunity for Satan to distract them (because he often does). If you feed them as much as they can take, they will want more and they will drag truth out of you. If you leave them with nothing to grow on for days or worse still weeks, often the fire will go out. Please join in where you see God at work.

I apply that to the whole process of discipleship. Many people have challenged me on my practice of baptizing a person immediately on confession of their faith and repentance in water and the Holy Spirit. They say wait until Uncle Fred can come and witness their baptism, wait until they have done 6 weeks of study, wait until it is their special day, their birthday or their anniversary of something. The goal of evangelism is to make disciples. If you help the seeker responds to His Voice immediately, especially at the start and especially with water and Holy Spirit baptism, which will become a pattern for life. They will always experience the power of God when they are baptized. If you wait until a 'convenient time' often they won't sense anything special happening and the transformation of their life for Uncle Fred to see will be nothing like it could have been. Please follow the Holy Spirit.

3. Share The Gospel Lovingly

I realized last year when talking to someone doing community hours with us who had become a Christian that 'we treat people as family before they really are.' I can think of many folk who through their corrections department placement with us, or the food parcel system or receiving a budget from us have felt so respected, honoured and included (because we assume they are going to become Christians soon) that they do join the local 'family.'

In the context of a genuine love for people, the beginnings of a real friendship, you can share the gospel freely. In fact they will ask you to.

There is this amazing story in Numbers 10:29-31 where Moses invites his unbelieving father-in-law to join them on a journey with God through the desert to the Promised Land. Initially the father in law says, "ah, no thanks mate, I have got my own people and my own religion." Haven't you heard that before! Then Moses who I am sure was confident that God would get them through the wilderness says; "listen old fella, we need you, you know the desert better than any of us. Come on mate. The team will be much better off with you on it" (or words to that effect). So Hobad joins them and becomes a part of the community of faith journeying with God to the Promised Land (heaven for us). I find in our Church people often speak to unbelievers like Moses spoke to Hobad, "hey we respect you, we would really value your contribution to the team."

Over the years there have been many programs on evangelism, many tracts to hand out to random people in the street and many publications to put in people's letter boxes. While it is not hard to get someone to pray 'the prayer' with you in the street, in 20 years of being a Pastor I can only think of one person who was witnessed to in the street that ended up in the church and that person was surrounded relationally. Therefore I conclude that in New Zealand, the street evangelism that we do, the publications that we drop, have next to no impact on people long term. It's the impersonal

and often confrontational methods of evangelism that only a few people can do well and the rest of us feel condemned and discouraged over. Even the word evangelism scares most Christians because we have tried the confrontational approaches and it hasn't felt authentic and it hasn't worked for 98% of us.

Share the gospel, according to your style with words, lovingly. Treat people like family before they are. The statistics in all our churches show that this works. Virtually all the people in our churches are there because a family member or a friendly person gave them time individually.

4. Make Disciples

As I mentioned earlier, in the Great Commission (**Matthew 28**) Jesus said "go into the world and 'Make disciples' - first you baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, then you teach them to do everything that I have told you to do." The goal is to make a disciple; that is people who love and fear God, and who are committed to living their lives in obedience to His Word and His Holy Spirit.

Who is the evangelist here?

(a) Mary interceded daily for her wayward teenage grandson Jeff.

(b) On a course a Christian guy introduced himself to Jeff and threw a seed i.e. said something about God.

(c) Jeff's car broke down on the side of the road and Martin a total stranger (a Christian) stopped, assessed the situation, towed Jeff home and when Jeff went to thank him, Martin just said "God cares about you mate, God bless."

(d) Jeff loved the \$\$\$ at work and was totally shattered when he was made redundant (last on first off). Steve (a workmate) asked Jeff if he could pray with him and in response to Jeff's question gave him a DVD testimony to watch.

(e) Jeff went with Steve to see Steve's home group leader Andrew who explained the gospel clearly and answered his many questions.

(f) On hearing Jeff's confession of faith and repentance Robyn the local Pastor baptized him and prayed with others for him to receive the Holy Spirit.

(g) Jeff joined the church and the young adults group where he was well mentored for the next two years with Alvin.

The question to ask is this. Which one of these people in Italics was the evangelist??? Take a moment to work out your answer or to discuss it with a friend before you move on.

If the goal of evangelism is to make disciples all seven of them were the evangelists in reality. It always takes a team to make a disciple and so when you see someone walking with God and being led by His Spirit there is a whole bunch of people that should be celebrating with the angels.

Just as you need to keep feeding them before they came to faith, we need to intentionally mentor them and disciple them in the years ahead. The first two months after a person's baptism is when they face their biggest battles. Alongside the small groups and relational mentoring, we encourage them to do our Foundations Course for New Christians (download from the studies page of the website: www.whangareicbc.org.nz in pdf format). Then we encourage them to read "The Purpose Driven Life" 40 days devotional by Rick Warren and "The Relationship Principles of Jesus" by Tom Holladay.

5. Celebrate Our Priorities

The old adage is true "we become what we celebrate". What we give attention to and celebrate as being important will shape the culture of your life and your church.

In our church we celebrate water baptisms and church membership.

When someone dies to self and is raised to live a new life for Jesus (**Romans 6**) or when they put on Christ (**Colossians 3**) we make a huge noise, we prophecy over them (i.e. whoever is in the room does), we give them a personally made promise box as a gift and we declare who they are now in Christ - forgiven, a new person robed in righteousness, family, on the team, in God's army.

It's huge. It's not a pat on the back for being good for six months. It's a death and a rebirth, a new beginning (part of the one salvation experience).

We usually interview them for membership straight away and get them serving in some role in a ministry team.

Membership is the second thing we really celebrate at WCBC because we believe we are living stones, being added to this eternal kingdom that the very defences of hell cannot withstand. We are better and stronger having this new person bring their gifts and their ministries to the local church. Church membership doesn't have much to do with church structures and constitutions, but it has a lot to do with a local team of people who love God and each other, and are committed to reaching out into the community together.

Every new member is encouraged to fill in a spiritual gifts and passions questionnaire so we can release them to serve where and how they are called.

6. Birth People Into The Kingdom Biblically

Spend a long time thoroughly explaining sin, holiness, the awesomeness of God, heaven and hell, Jesus and the gospel to them **before** inviting them to put their lives right with God and enter His kingdom. The Christian Faith is an action word; you cannot have faith and not live differently. You need to know who you have faith in and what that looks like. Always take people through repentance, get them to take time to confess the sins they need to be forgiven for, and to turn from them. I encourage them to confess habitual sins out loud before a respected believer. When someone believes and repents, baptise them biblically, by full immersion, immediately. At the same time pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit. You give a person the greatest chance of a continued life with Christ if you bring them into the kingdom biblically. The success rate is huge i.e. people who remain connected to church and practise Christian living.

7. Church Leaders Need To Model Evangelism

When Jesus instructs us all to make disciples we cannot relegate the role to the 2% in the church who seem so gifted and natural at doing it. That is especially true for Pastors and Elders. Whether we like it or not the strengths and practices of the leadership team will release the members of our congregations to do well in those areas. When you model it and talk about how you are sharing your faith with others, it will encourage the whole church.

When I was training at Theological college a lecturer said that once a Pastor has been in a church for five years that church will become strong at what he/she was strong in and weak where he/she was weak. This is a scary thought when you are an impatient young man, with bad money management habits and virtually no musical ability. I had to acquire many new skills so I wouldn't hold back the churches I pastored.

I found that when I am focused on reaching the lost and believing God for great things in the church, the faith of the whole church is affected positively. In December 2011 I lost a number of good friends over a few weeks. I am only one of many who lead people to Christ and disciple folk in our church, but the church statistics reflect that during the beginning of 2012 when I felt sorry for myself and my eyes were off the ball (local mission) baptisms dropped off.

Over 20 years I have read that the Pastor and Elders just need to be the vision holders, the CEOs of the church. Others can do the pastoral care and the work of the evangelists. How that must grieve the Lord. We are responsible to seek the Lord for direction and humbly submit that to the members, but Pastors (brothers and sisters), Elders, Deacons and Ministry Team Leaders, we need to visit new folk, follow up on seekers, and show by our lives that we too are part of the body, willing to serve others and obey the great commission.

EVANGELISTIC STYLES

The people I have encountered as the most effective disciple makers in our churches usually don't stick to a program, a presentation or a course but just love Jesus and love people. They have cultivated a relationship in the Lord that just flows out. I have a mature lady who helps run playgroup who is just naturally always testifying to the goodness of God and yet she doesn't even realize she is doing it. Another lady who has the means to live wherever she wants but chooses to live in our caravan park daily prays, "Who are we going to catch Lord, show me who to talk to" and she follows His small whispers and nudges with fantastic results. The more natural and authentic we are the more open others seem to be.

I am a fisherman, love fishing! When I think of my interactions with pre-Christians I can't help but feel I am part of a greater fishing process.

Jean Blasi wrote a book called "Prophetic Fishing" and she describes the adventure so well.

Prophetic fishing springs from the realization that we do not have to work for God to bring others to the kingdom. Instead, we have to get out of the way and let God work through us. It involves getting into the flow of what God is doing and going with it.

Every one of us has the ability to hear His voice and follow His prompts (however they come). Sometimes He urges us to do prophetic acts, to do something radically Christian. Sometimes He gives you a word for a stranger (or most commonly a seeker) which wakes them up to the reality of God. At other times it's simply a prod to phone someone, to say a one liner, to pray with someone. The thing is He wants all of us to go and to speak and that speaking will include the use of Spiritual gifts.

Mark 16:15-17

¹⁵ Then he told them: Go and preach the good news to everyone in the world. ¹⁶ Anyone who believes me and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe me will be condemned. ¹⁷ Everyone who believes me will be able to do wonderful things. By using my name they will force out demons, and they will speak new languages.

At the end of the day Prophetic fishing is the result of supernatural living; a life that is tuned into His presence and voice. We can all do it.

In the Bible there are other styles of evangelism. Probably we use most of these styles to some degree. It's worth giving yourself a score on each style 0-5 with 0 being hopeless and 5 being brilliant, and then get someone who knows you really well to give you a score as well. The Contagious Christianity Course (Willow Creek) gives the best overview of these primary styles.

A. Confrontational style

One passage that I often read in services is Acts 2 where the Apostle Peter stood before a great crowd of Jews and said, "you guys have rejected the prophets and now you have killed the Messiah. You have really stuffed up and you will be in trouble one day when you meet your Maker."

That's kind of confrontational.

People with this style of evangelism are often very direct, very bold, and very assertive.

They don't spend time on small talk; they just get straight to the point.

No matter how good you think you are, you are a sinner who one day will have to give an account for your life to a perfectly holy God and you won't measure up.

This is an effective way of doing evangelism. In Acts 2 three thousand people were baptized that day.

Personally I think very few of us are good at this style of evangelism and so giving out tracts, knocking on doors etc.

is both terrifying and ineffective for us. But some are very good at this!

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 ___

Get a friend to rate you 0 – 5 ___

B Intellectual Style

We may all like to think we have this style of evangelism but in reality only some do.

When Paul in Acts 17 met a group of philosophers in Athens this is the style of evangelism he used. Now if he had confronted these guys they probably would have shown him the door but he addressed them logically, intellectually and persuasively.

He said, “You guys have built a statue to an unknown God. I know who he is. His name is Jesus and this is how you can get to know Him.”

People with this style of evangelism are very logical, analytical and often inquisitive. When they are discussing faith with others you will hear them asking questions like; “What do you think?” Or “How do you know that?” or “What brought you to that conclusion?”

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 ___

Get a friend to rate you 0 – 5 ___

C Testimonial Style

In John chapter 9 we read the account of a blind man who is given sight by Jesus, and he runs around the city telling people about Jesus. When he is confronted by the religious leaders who try to question him about Jesus and Jesus’ theology he says “All I know is that I used to be blind but now I can see.”

Every one of us has a story to tell about our conversion and stories to tell about our daily experiences of God, and we should tell those stories.

However some of us are going to find that a lot easier and more natural than others.

I think that those people with this evangelism style typically are good listeners, good story tellers and pretty good communicators.

These are people who can relate their life experiences to others in a way that is helpful to them.

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 ___

Get a friend to rate you 0 – 5 ___

D Interpersonal Style

While I might wish I had the intellectual style of evangelism, in reality this one is me. I enjoy people. I enjoy making friends and getting to know people. Probably 95% of the people I have disciplined over the years I have genuinely treated as a friend before and after they decided to follow the Lord.

In Luke 5 we read the story of Matthew the IRD guy. He’s just become a believer in who Jesus is and the first thing he does is to throw a special party. He invites all his mates to dinner where they can mix and mingle with Jesus and His disciples. Matthew knows that as a relationship is established and trust grows so will the faith of his friends.

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 ___

Get a friend to rate you 0 – 5 ___

E Serving Style

While no one is ever won into the kingdom of God without words, many people feel motivated and gifted to serve and speak at the same time. There is a huge amount of evangelism that takes place every week through food banks, op shops, budgeting services, counselling services, home help etc.

Dorcas in Acts chapter 9 was a lady who loved to make clothes for the poor and helping the poor in whatever way she could. Many, many people came into the kingdom because she used humble service and words hand in hand. I guess she must have been like the late Mother Teresa, where her service and her words impacted many. In Dorcas' case her kingdom impact on the community was so great that when she died – they turned around and asked God to raise her from the dead because they needed her so much.

No one should ever think that serving replaces evangelism. When we serve others we still need to use words!

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 ___

Get a friend to rate you 0 – 5 ___

F Invitational style

In John 4 we read of a woman at a well in Samaria. Jesus had just exercised a 'word of knowledge' over her life and she had begun to grasp who Jesus actually was. So she runs back into her village, knocks on all the doors and invites everyone in town to come and see this man who gets divine revelations from heaven.

When there is a church event or special meeting think;

- Who can I pick up?
- Who can I invite or phone?

People with this style feel comfortable asking others to come and see, come and hear, come and experience.

Statistics show that this is a very effective style of evangelism.

One survey showed that 1 in 4 pre-Christians would come to church if they were invited personally by a believing friend.

To invite someone to church is pretty effective. To pick them up and sit by them in church is very effective. The potential for kingdom growth through this style of evangelism is huge.

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 ___

Get a friend to rate you 0 – 5 ___

COULD CHILD EVANGELISM BE GOD'S PRIORITY MISSION FIELD?

It's true that people new to an area or going through a crisis, or in life transition or in physical need are often open to the gospel. But there is one group in every country who are always most open. The children.

I suspect that around 50% of the churches in the west, especially Baptist churches were founded because the Holy Spirit said to a person or a group start a children's ministry in this place. Their purpose for starting, the prophetic foundation of many churches was to reach children for Jesus and now most churches have drifted away from those foundations.

I had the privilege of speaking at a special event of the Sunday School Union a few weeks ago on Matthew 18 and it struck me again, that God loves all people but God does have a priority mission field, and it's the children of each generation. Please note what this portion of the Bible says:

Matthew 18:1-14

About this time the disciples came to Jesus and asked him who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ² Jesus called a child over and had the child stand near him. ³ Then he said:

*I promise you this. If you don't change and become like a child, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ but if you are as humble as this child, you are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ **And when you welcome one of these children because of me, you welcome me.** ⁶ It will be terrible for people who cause **even one of my little followers** to sin. Those people would be better off thrown into the deepest part of the ocean with a heavy stone tied around their necks! ⁷ The world is in for trouble because of the way it causes people to sin. There will always be something to cause people to sin, but anyone who does this will be in for trouble.*

⁸ If your hand or foot causes you to sin, chop it off and throw it away! You would be better off to go into life crippled or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into the fire that never goes out. ⁹ If your eye causes you to sin, poke it out and get rid of it. You would be better off to go into life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fires of hell.

The Lost Sheep

*¹⁰⁻¹¹ Don't be cruel to any of **these little ones!** **I promise you that their angels are always with my Father in heaven.** ¹² Let me ask you this. What would you do if you had a hundred sheep and one of them wandered off? Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go look for the one that had wandered away? ¹³ I am sure that finding it would make you happier than having the ninety-nine that never wandered off. ¹⁴ That's how it is with your Father in heaven. **He doesn't want any of these little ones to be lost.***

There is a trend the world over where from about 12yrs of age onwards many children are opting out of the church and faith in Jesus. It seems, however, that where there are churches that help children hear God's voice and be baptized and be involved in ministry (i.e. children are treated as part of the church now) kids are very likely to stay with Jesus. It also seems that if a child has friendships with people of other generations, especially through their teenage years that also helps them stay with God and become lifelong followers of Jesus.

In Matthew 18 children are given as an example of how to humbly enter the kingdom and to grow in the kingdom, as examples of trust and sincerity. But there is more than that going on in this text. Jesus takes how we treat children personally. "When you welcome one of these little ones, you welcome Me."

Jesus says that if you cause one of these little ones to stumble in their faith you would be better off to have a 1.5 tonne grinding stone tied around your neck and be thrown into the ocean than to face the wrath of God.

Jesus encourages us that if we are sinning by causing any of these little ones to struggle in their faith; for example if they see us telling lies (maybe we say "Tell Uncle George when he calls – dad's not home"), or yelling at their mum or dad or getting drunk or doubting the goodness of God, then we need to surgically remove those temptations from

our lives immediately. Our sins need to be cut out severely. Our sinful behaviours have to be dealt with severely, even if it means losing friends or facing huge changes, because the consequences are horrendous.

Jesus has an interesting comment to make re angels. Angels are God's messengers; they are there to help us. I find no biblical evidence that we all have an angel, but I know this, every child does, and the angels that are assigned to children have direct, priority access to the Father.

When Jesus talks about the lost sheep, in the context of this parable He is still talking about children.

Jesus is the good shepherd; we all know that but look at this brief teaching and notice three things about our good shepherd.

1. His love is unconditional.

How do I know that? This lost sheep. This dumb sheep has wandered off and Jesus goes looking for him to draw him or her home. When He finds the sheep Jesus doesn't go "you dumb as sheep, why did you wander off and be such an idiot, why didn't you stay with the flock, hope you learned your lesson kiddo." No, Jesus just loves the straying sheep. He says he will go after it. He loves that sheep unconditionally, whether that sheep is in church or out straying, or up to no good, Jesus loves that little sheep just as much. His love is unconditional. Now he would rather the sheep didn't stray and do their own thing because that sheep will get hurt and will suffer life's consequences but whether that sheep is in church or fighting with other kids at the mall; Jesus just loves that one unconditionally. Nothing that sheep could do could cause Jesus to love him or her anymore!

2. We see that Jesus loves people individually.

Have you ever thought, who am I; man God is so busy talking to Rick Warren and Billy Graham and Benny Hinn and ... I don't feel that I am as important to God as any of them in fact I am not as important as most of the billions of Christians on the planet today. If you think that or our kids do, we are wrong. The love that God has for us is an individual, personal love. He leaves the 99 and searches for the 1. You, me, that child whom we haven't seen at Sunday school for a few weeks. I really believe, though I can't fully comprehend, that if you were the only person on this planet God would send the prophets, send Jesus to die for your salvation and fellowship personally.

3. Jesus' love is emotional.

When He finds the lost one, the wanderer, the struggler, the dumb sheep, he doesn't yell, or lecture or kick up the backside, he celebrates.

He expresses extreme happiness. There is celebration. Jesus rejoices over the one lost sheep that has been found.

Jesus' love for you and me and especially children is unconditional, it's individual and it's emotional.

Our churches prophetic foundation was to run a Sunday School and reach children and disciple children for Jesus. We can add to that foundation but it should always be our foundation. It's something we must always do well.

It's always a dream of mine to see our best and brightest teaching Sunday School and our mature Christian kids supporting Sunday School. All of my children helped other kids become Christians before they turned 12 years of age. That was such a life shaping joy for them. It's my dream that we have a consistency in Sunday School teachers and kids' club teachers, for the kids' sake.

It's a far more effective thing to help children meet Jesus young and be led by Him and learn to love him all their lives, so that they can avoid many foolish mistakes and hurts and have really meaningful lives, than it is to focus on healing, and delivering, and de-confusing adults. If a child has far more than head knowledge but an experience of the Holy Spirit young and a habit of obeying His voice from a young age, that child will live a great life and make a big difference in this world.

I read of the true story of a Scottish pastor who about two hundred years ago resigned from ministry. His reason? In two years of pastoring only one person had come to Jesus, a little boy by the name of Bobby Moffat. And so he

resigned. The history books said of Robert Moffat, that this boy, once he became a man and a missionary to Africa, that his ministry was so effective that his mission work was seen as the number one reason the African continent opened up to the gospel. Just one little boy came to faith. But God used that little boy to change a continent for Jesus. Its right to wonder continually, is there a little Bobby Moffat in our Sunday School now? Is there a little Bobby Moffat in our community that we are going to invite to Sunday School this year?

Jesus loves our kids that are saved and the kids in our community who will be saved soon. I believe that children's ministry is the strategic priority.

I believe that it is time that we make the main thing the main thing in mission again. There is a generation growing up in Aotearoa (in every country) that needs the Lord, their lives are not broken or messed up (yet), they are like an open book ready to be written.

The reason that God started many churches was to reach children for Jesus. I think we need to get back to our prophetic foundations again and make our children's ministry our priority and encourage our most skilled adults and strongest Christian children and young people to serve there.

God loves all people, of that we are all sure. But I am also convinced that children have a special priority in the heart of God and their discipleship is a key strategy to changing a nation for Jesus.

WHAT ABOUT COMMUNITY MINISTRIES?

Ask yourself now, or your group. In the community ministries in your church, how many people have come to faith in the last three months?

How many hours of volunteer and paid service were put into those ministries?

Community ministry is a good thing, a biblical thing, and we clearly need to love the poor, care for the widow, mentor the orphan/fatherless etc. No debate there, but in New Zealand the energy that was once put into children's evangelism and youth evangelism is now to a large extent refocused onto the more financially profitable arena of community ministries. Huge hours are being poured into this and yet very few people become followers of Jesus Christ. It seems to me that if we take a grant from a government body or a trust many community service providers (churches) feel it would not be right to talk about Jesus or to offer a holistic ministry to the community (unless they ask for it). I want to challenge that. We don't stop being Christians when we get a grant from any government organization or a trust. The services we offer are usually of a very professional and skilled level, no one is getting short-changed if we say a few things about Jesus or the church except the person who doesn't yet know Jesus.

Ask yourself. If getting a grant for that new van or that community service means we cannot talk about Jesus, does God want us to take the grant?

I read an old preacher's sermon some time ago with horror because in it he said that to provide community services without the gospel was to make people comfortable before they go to hell. I was shocked, maybe a little offended, but when I walked away I couldn't help reflecting that in fact he was right. There are lots of loving community groups that give out a food parcel or put on a community dinner or provide a parenting course or childcare etc. and they do it very well. But we are Christians.

We can offer them our professional support skills and Jesus. Have we become ashamed of the gospel? Have we forgotten in this politically correct generation that people need the Lord?

I do budgets for folk and deliver them furniture and teach parenting classes and thoroughly enjoy doing marriage counselling etc. but no matter what hat I am wearing, I have been bought with a price, I am His and my love for the Lord and my love for people compels me to say something.

Over the years I have supervised a lot of community workers doing PD. A huge percentage becomes believers because I mentioned Jesus early to them and I just supported the work of the Spirit as He did the rest.

Recently I baptized a man from a pretty rugged background. Before he went into the water I asked him to tell me his story. Some of it I knew, I had seen him around for years. In recent months I had looked him in the eyes, lovingly addressed him by name and spoken prophetically over Him that I knew God was drawing him into His family and that he would be welcome in our family.

His story went something like this. For five years he had been coming to our church for food parcels. He was struck whenever he did that he could feel the presence of God and when he left he would go away thinking about God. The people that gave him the parcels were very respectful and overtly Christian.

Three weeks earlier while he was doing a budget with one of our budget advisors I was about to baptize a lady in the auditorium (She had just come to faith. There had been plenty of words but the night before she got a personal revelation from God). As he watched this lady get baptized (something he had not seen before) God began to work in his heart convicting him strongly of his need to die to self and be raised to live for Jesus (The Holy Spirit began to turn up the heat). A week later he was getting a food parcel again when our chaplain asked him when he was going to commit his life to Jesus and be baptized (He had never been to our church before and wasn't a church goer). He walked away seemingly unmoved then returned an hour later to say to our chaplain, that he needed to be baptized as soon as possible.

I said to him just before he was baptized that if he committed his life to Jesus he couldn't go back to the old sins and

not even sleep with his fiancé, and that the church would put on a wedding for him free of charge if that is what he wanted. This man has got a few challenges ahead of him.

We will probably have a couple of years of very deliberate follow up to do, but he came to Jesus through community ministries as many others have.

When people come to the church for community services they expect to hear about God; after all they have come to a church. Don't be shy.

In a recent survey in NZ of pre-Christian Mainly Music mums they were asked: "When you came to mainly music did you expect to hear about God?" Answer – almost unanimously, "yes". Next question; "Did you expect people to take you aside and explain how to be a Christian?" Answer almost unanimously "yes". Third question; "Did those two things happen?" Answer almost unanimously – "no". How terribly sad. They were open, would not have been offended but we were too careful and they missed out on meeting the Lord. Friends, whatever your community service; invite them to special events, share your testimony, and put tracts and information sheets in food parcels. Have DVDs of testimonies and of gospel presentations at hand. Have your follow up material at hand whether you are in an op shop, food bank, budget service, child care etc. If you put on a community dinner, don't bother unless you give a devotion or testimony as well.

Jesus is the answer to their greatest needs, and they need you and me to be bold and respectful and to start throwing seed (spoken words of faith). Jesus would never feed the poor or heal the sick without pointing to the kingdom of God. You and I desire to be like Him. I was born and raised on the mission field in Papua New Guinea. It was a great childhood and I have godly parents. I understand how cross culturally it can take 4-5 years on the mission field before you see your first salvation but in New Zealand I suggest that if you don't see people start to come to church or church events within three months you are far too shy and need to man up a bit more for Jesus.

Within the next couple of weeks I believe I am going to baptize a man who used to do community service for me (PD). He has even cleaned out the baptismal pool before, so he has been in there so to speak. When I shared the gospel with him he seemed disinterested. Now, some six months later, a lady in our church spoke prophetically over him and he is so close to joining the team. He would say it was those conversations we had (where I appeared to have been rejected) that God used to bring him to a place of wanting to follow Jesus for the rest of His life.

Is it painful to have someone reject you or show no interest? It's disappointing, but it doesn't hurt. I wasn't concerned for my reputation or popularity anyway – it's about Jesus. I bear no scars from that earlier rejection but soon I will enjoy another brother on His team.

Go for it. Discuss with your community ministries teams how you can be more deliberate and prepared to speak to the folk you are serving about Jesus. They expect you to, and Jesus longs for you to!

List each community ministry and brainstorm how you can be more strategic, honest and bold for the kingdom.

One final and very disturbing thought re community ministries. Personally when I read of a nation's history and how Christians brought in the first schools, and medical services equality for women and the first orphanages etc I am inspired and proud of those that have boldly gone before us.

But ask yourself this question and then go through your Bible for the answer.

When the early church took up an offering for the poor in Jerusalem or deacons were set aside to look after widows and orphans, where possessions are shared with the poor;

Was that community service to believers or unbelievers?

To my great surprise it appears that virtually all community service was to believers, which in turn makes sense of the scriptures.

John 13:34-35

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Galatians 6:10

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

I have no doubt that community ministries are a good thing but, have we gone overboard? Has God initiated the community ministries in our church or did we just start them to get the grants or to look like a big organisation?

I say if it is not bearing tangible fruit which can be seen at least every three months then make it a kingdom ministry with evangelistic effectiveness or let the world do it!

WHAT IF SMALL GROUPS AND MINISTRY TEAMS HAD AN EVANGELISTIC FOCUS?

It seems to me that there is a decline in small group attendance throughout many churches and the main reason is that people are too busy. Many employers have moved from wages to salaries for their staff, often requiring more flexible and longer hours. Many people have multiple jobs. People watch more TV and spend longer on websites than ever before. We have embraced a culture where we run our children around to multiple extra-curricular activities. Those that study social trends say that in our culture people don't like to commit to something for more than four weeks.

Many of our churches are becoming major entertainment centres on Sundays, bigger congregations and lower participation in ministry by members. We get our church fix on Sundays but then during the week...we are too busy.

I personally do not believe that we can experience biblical community while looking at the back of each other's heads on a Sunday.

How far have we come from Dr Luke's description of the early church?

Acts 2:42-47

They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together. Everyone was amazed by the many miracles and wonders that the apostles worked. All the Lord's followers often met together, and they shared everything they had. They would sell their property and possessions and give the money to whoever needed it. Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved.

Family...shared... together... no one in need ... miracles...daily salvations.

Does that sound like the modern church to you?

When we consider **Psalm 133:1-3** we are not surprised that with great unity in community God would work miraculously.

¹ *How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!*

² *It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe.*

³ *It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion.*

For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

Isn't that what our hearts long for; real fellowship, real unity, real power, and natural church growth?

Jesus had a dream for His body (1 Corinthians 12), for His church. He said:

John 13:34-36

But I am giving you a new command. You must love each other, just as I have loved you. If you love each other, everyone will know that you are my disciples.

People find it hard to commit to something for a long time. Many of us also have experienced how a small group or ministry team starts with such fire and is so enjoyable for about ... six months then ... it gets a bit familiar, even boring.

We have begun to imagine three things in our fellowship;

What if every small group or ministry team agreed to meet for a defined time? E.g. only commit to a couple of months or a term at a time. And,

What if every small group was formed around their familiar passion?

Maybe there are groups of people with a passion for a certain neighbourhood, or fatherless youth, or art, or fishing, or

music, or hiking, or solo parents. What if those people with a similar passion met together for real fellowship three out of four weeks?

What if every small group or ministry team had a built in outreach component? That is if about every fourth week they did something evangelistic in the area of their passion e.g. street BBQ (with testimonies), a fishing trip (with prayer and testimony), a cooking evening etc. If every group was praying for the lost and working together to do something on a regular basis to reach the lost, they would become a very tight team, very dependent on the Holy Spirit and they would grow through those who are being saved.

What if worship teams kept a door open and an eye open for pre-Christian talent? What if there was built in fun/jam time on those weeks when the team was not busy preparing for Sunday. What if there was real fellowship and support in those teams?

What if each ministry team also functioned as a close fellowship group and an outreach team?

My suspicion is we would never get bored. If we are moving with people who have a similar passion (and therefore they are likely to have God given gifts that support that passion) we would have fun and minister effectively, growing both closer together and larger in numbers naturally.

In an age where people are becoming more private, more individualistic, more isolated (even in built up communities), what if ... Jesus' dream for His church could be realised in your church in small groups and ministry teams?

TOOLS THAT CAN HELP YOU BE PREPARED TO TALK ABOUT JESUS IN ANY SITUATION

A. 5 Fantastic Questions

Last year we watched the DVD course by William Fay and Ralph Hodge “Share Jesus without fear”

This four week course is full of practical ideas and perspectives on evangelism that help take fear out of the picture.

The thing that struck me most about this course was Mr Fay’s 5 fantastic questions.

Though this is not my natural way of talking about Jesus, I have written these questions in the front of my pocket bible as a great resource/memory jogger for later. When you ask these questions of the person you are speaking to, Mr Fay suggests that you just listen and acknowledge what they are saying ... ah ah...

Here they are:

1. Do you have any kind of spiritual belief?
2. To you, who is Jesus?
3. Do you believe that there is a heaven and a hell?
4. If you died today would you go to heaven or hell? Why would he let you in?
5. If what you believe is not true would you want to know?

Asking the five questions is really simple and requires only that you listen. If they don’t know Jesus but answer question 5 that they would like to know the truth if they are wrong, you can launch in naturally and share the gospel and your testimony in a natural way.

B. How To Present The Gospel

Again if you present something out of a book or off a tract it will often come across awkwardly and unnaturally. Often you don’t need to present the gospel because people are happy to be taken to a friend ‘who can explain things better’. But it is good to be prepared.

I don’t think that anyone need present the gospel the way I do but several elements cannot be missed out in what you prepare.

Over the years I have benefited from what I have learned through the Willow Creek “Contagious Christianity course”, Ray Comforts “The Way of the Master,” “Alpha” and Rick Warren’s “The Purpose Driven Life”.

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If you want to see how I put these elements together stressing the most important elements of a gospel presentation take 20 minutes to view “Getting to know God” on our church website: www.whangareicbc.org.nz home page. It is very kiwi and I have found works well in my context.

However you present the gospel message these elements are important:

God loved us before we were born and has always wanted a relationship with us.

God is Holy and awesome. We are not!

The first half of the Bible (Old Testament) and particularly the Ten Commandments show us that no one is good and deserving of eternal life.

My sin causes that separation from God and my awareness that I am empty, disconnected from God. God is not only Holy but He is just.

Therefore a just judge will punish sin.

The cults of the world say you can DO things to earn your way to heaven. The Bible says that the punishment for sin is death and that Jesus' death alone is what gives us the opportunity to connect with God.

I explain the pattern of how to become a disciple from the New Testament starting at Acts 2:38 where Peter says once you believe in whom Jesus is you need to turn from your sins, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit.

Following this one event I am a believer who is like a seedling that Satan wants back (there will be battles).

I then share the principles of the way of "The Purpose Driven Life" and say if you want to grow from a seedling into a mighty tree (Kauri) 5 things are essential:

Fellowship – hang out with other Christians every week

Worship – learn to thank God for everything

Discipleship (although I would use the word moulding) and explain that God will guide you throughout the day and as you obey Him and learn about Him you will be changed over time to become more like Jesus.

Service – God will put a desire in your heart and gifts in you to serve Him in a way that is fun and effective.

Witnessing – you will find a way of witnessing, talking about Jesus that will work for you and be authentic.

Take time to practice presenting the gospel in a way that makes sense and comes across naturally through you.

C. How To Prepare Your Testimony

The Bible encourages us always to be ready to give an account for what we believe. It's important to prepare a testimony. Have a clear testimony of your salvation prepared in your mind and also be prepared to give a testimony of what God has done today, this week or this month. Personally I find that the most recent testimonies to God's goodness flow most easily and with the most naturally worshipful attitude as you tell them.

If you read Paul's testimony to King Agrippa in Acts 26:1-29 you will notice that it follows a pattern that Christians have been using for years.

- a. Before he trusted Jesus
- b. What was the process? What does it look like to become a Christian?
How he trusted Jesus.
- c. Since he trusted Jesus

When we begin to talk about ourselves many of us naturally want to give a long, detailed account. It's also really hard to choose words that someone who has never been to church will understand.

Practise writing down your story on how you came to trust Jesus with your life:

- Use secular language (no Christian jargon)
- Keep it brief
- Keep it personal – use 'I', 'me' statements. You are not giving a sermon; you are sharing your story which no one can argue with. It's your experience.
- Don't focus on all the bad things you have done. Make the focus what Jesus has done for you.
- Appropriate scriptures have power.
- Finish with a challenge.

My two minute testimony would go something like this:

- a. I was raised in a good home by great parents but by the age of 12 had no interest in religion and I had convinced myself that though there must be a God (the world is so fantastically designed – so there must be a designer/maker) that God had probably retired because I could see a world in a mess and not much of God’s power.
- b. When I was 16, a farm worker, and chasing a gorgeous redhead whose sister was a Christian, I had experienced evil spirits (demons) for years. Nothing I had done would drive them away – I had tried everything. This girl’s sister said they would be scared of the name of Jesus. I was amazed to find at ‘that name’ alone they were terrified and left me. That got me re-evaluating life. It felt like God was tugging at my heart and causing me to think about Him every day. I began to read the Bible and found myself believing that Jesus came from heaven, lived the perfect life and died to pay the fine for my sin. I found myself confessing my sins to Him throughout the day. I became convinced that Jesus is ‘the way’, ‘the truth’, and ‘the life.’ I found a church to go to where there were regular healings and God’s power was very evident. They prayed some evil spirits out of me, after seeing that I believed and had turned from my sins, and then they baptized me in water and in God’s power. Just like it says in the Bible Acts 2:38-39, “Turn back to God! Be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children. It is for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live.”
- c. Since then life has been full of challenges but I have never felt alone, powerless or without direction. I have seen so many miracles.

Lots of people have lots of different ideas about who Jesus is. I have found that He is closer than my hands and feet, He wants to talk to me all the time, and if I listen and follow His whispers life becomes an adventure every day.

Most people look for a higher power in life. I daily experience Him and you can connect to Him today when you decide to trust Jesus. Jesus has the power. I have got time for you whenever you have questions. I would love to get to heaven one day and find that you made it also.

Take time now to write out your two minute testimony for:

- Before I trusted Jesus.....
- How I trusted Jesus ... (include scripture if possible)
- Since I have trusted Jesus.... (challenge)

Practise it with a friend and get them to watch out for any Christian jargon.

D. How To Prepare Your Bible As A Tool For Evangelism

Remember that the Holy Spirit is significantly at work in the hearts of people when they hear the word of God and so if you have the opportunity to explain salvation using your Bible get the person to whom you are talking to do all the reading out loud. After each passage ask them what they think it means and help them with the answers if necessary.

Romans 3:23

All of us have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory.

Ask them what they think it means. At the bottom of the page make a note to the next text.

Romans 6:23

Sin pays off with death. But God’s gift is eternal life given by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ask them what they think it means. At the bottom of the page make a reference to the next text.

John 3:16 & 36

¹⁶ *God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.*

³⁶ *Everyone who has faith in the Son has eternal life. But no one who rejects him will ever share in that life and God will be angry with them forever.*

Again ask them what they think it means and be prepared to give some explanations. Make a footnote reference to the next text Acts 2:38-39.

Ask them the question what does becoming a Christian look like? How do we become a Christian once we have worked out who Jesus is and we want to follow Him?

Acts 2:38-39

³⁸ *Peter said "Turn back to God! Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the Holy Spirit. ³⁹This promise is for you and your children. It is for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live."*

If they do believe in the Lord Jesus and want to follow Him, lead them through repentance, baptise them in water and the Holy Spirit as soon as possible.

E. Seven safe questions you can ask a church visitor or a potential friend

A picture stack which reminds us of seven safe questions that you can ask anyone new anytime (Taken from the Caleb leadership course)

1. **A name on a letter box (the picture) My name is (The comment) (Then hopefully they will give you their name).**
2. **A big house (the picture)... Where do you live? (The associated question)**
3. **A group of people standing on the roof (The picture)...Tell me about your family (the associated question) (n.b. many families are blended and 21% of Whangarei families are single parent families)**
4. **One of the people is holding a big clock (the picture)...What do you do with your time (the associated question) NB about 1/4 of Whangarei are on benefits but may volunteer in the community)**
5. **Flying off an arm on the clock is a plane (The picture)...Have you ever travelled? (The associated question)**
6. **Propelling the plane is a tennis racket(The picture) What do you do with your spare time? (The associated question)**
7. **Holding the tennis racket to the plane is a light bulb(The picture) What kind of things do you like to think about? (The associated question)**

For further aids to building relationships contact Rex Booth at calebnz@xtra.co.nz and see if he can organise a bridge builder's course for your church.

F. Setting Your Church Up As A Tool For Evangelism

How you set up your building can make such a difference to helping those who are seekers and maybe checking out your service or coming for a community service of some kind to begin to think about God.

While it is true that most people look on websites to find a church, you still need to be easy to see and understand for the pre-churched person.

It is great to have good council signage from main roads and an uncluttered sign at the front of your buildings. Make sure the print is large and you advertise only the 'main things' i.e. services on Sunday and what your church is about. We have the statement "Where people matter" on our building in large print under Ranui Baptist Church as this signals to the curious that this is a church of relationships, a place where they would be valued.

We leave the closest car parks and the back three rows of our auditorium for guests.

Make sure that signage is clear as you enter the building. People want to know most of all where the main church is, the toilets, the children's church and nursery. No one likes to look silly.

Greet people warmly but don't push for contact details in the first two visits unless they offer them. Most churches give out information packs and free espresso coffee to new comers.

In the foyer we have several things that help the first time visitor.

- a. Photos of most of the church family. People ask the question when they first arrive: do I know anyone, is there anyone like me here and the photos really help.
- b. We have a testimony post full of real life stories of healings, God's provision, marriages restored etc.
- c. People expect to see thought provoking posters or scriptures when they come into church for any reason and so don't be shy.

In our church auditorium we have several things clearly displayed.

- a. **Several scriptures** on what it means to be saved.
- b. A **vision statement** which describes in detail what the church will look like into the future.
- c. Three resource shelves on the back wall. These are filled with resources, DVD's and materials for those wondering "Who is Jesus"? And "Is there life after death". "How to connect with God" etc and are all free.

We have materials for children - Our booklet, "How to join God's family" (which you can also download from our website), CEF study guides and children's New Testament bibles for free. We have materials for teens who are seeking or are ready to become Christians and **new teenage Christians**. Some of the material is written by us and can be downloaded. We also have the Tim Hawkins discipleship series 1-4 and NT bibles for teens for free.

For adults we have a lot of DVDs for seekers, especially "How to Connect with God" which you can view online, and the two Alpha talks ("Who is Jesus" and "Why did He die")

We have our own foundations course for new believers which you can also download online or request a Word version from our administrator at office@whangareicbc.org.nz. Our new believers work through the foundations course with a mentor to draw on when needed. They are instructed not to do the "Steps to Freedom" chapter without a Spirit-filled believer present.

There are studies on baptism and membership and two books they can borrow for 40 days:

- Rick Warren's "What on Earth am I Here For"
- Tom Holladay's "The Relationship Principles of Jesus"

On the resources shelf we only have New Testaments to give away. I have found that if you give out whole Bibles, people often start at the beginning and get bogged down with unnecessary issues.

For all ages we give out the most modern translations which are easiest for them to understand.

MY WORK – MY MISSION FIELD

Proposition, Our ‘work’ is where we are often best ‘in the world’ as His salt and light!

Everybody loves a holiday. Everybody looks forward to the weekend or days off. This morning I want to encourage you though, to recognise the importance to God of your work, your job.

Now firstly let me clarify what I mean by work by means of a vote.

Is a person working if they go to bed late and wake up around mid-day each day?

Is someone in paid employment part or full time working?

Is a university or Northtec student doing work as they attend lectures and study?

Is a parent at home raising pre-schoolers working?

Is someone who volunteers to work in a community service working?

Now my understanding of ‘work’ is whatever we do paid or unpaid whereby we are giving a service or product that adds value to the community. That community might be your family or it might be your customers, it might be your employees or the sports team you coach. When you work you are giving a service or producing something that helps others. The Bible has some very harsh things to say about people who are lazy, are wasting their lives and are a burden on others, and a lot of very affirming, honouring things to say about people who work hard.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-11 (CEV)

⁷You surely know that you should follow our example. We didn’t waste our time loafing, ⁸and we didn’t accept food from anyone without paying for it. We didn’t want to be a burden to any of you, so night and day we worked as hard as we could.

⁹We had the right not to work, but we wanted to set an example for you. ¹⁰We also gave you the rule that if you don’t work, you don’t eat. ¹¹Now we learn that some of you just loaf around and won’t do any work, except the work of a busybody.

That’s pretty straightforward and the Bible has a lot of very affirming, honouring things to say about people who work hard at their jobs.

In the last 20 years much has been said about the leadership offices that some people have been called to by God, called people of maturity.

As it says in [Ephesians 4:11-12 \(CEV\)](#)

“Christ chose some of us to be apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastors, and teachers, ¹²so that his people would learn to serve and his body would grow strong.”

God chooses people to these leadership offices and the local church confirms His calling. The danger is though, that sometimes we look at the leadership offices and say what the missionaries, what the apostles, etc are doing is ‘spiritual’ and important but my role as a school teacher or builder is ‘secular’ and not important.

That couldn’t be further from the truth. The Bible teaches the priesthood of all believers, i.e. that all work is spiritual and important to God. In fact what you do for a job and your location in your work is strategic for how God wants to save the world.

In Jesus’ final recorded prayer He says:

[John 17:15-16 \(CEV\)](#)

Father, I don’t ask you to take my followers out of the world, but keep them safe from the evil one. ¹⁶They don’t belong to this world, and neither do I.

It has never been God’s plan for Christians to be cloistered together and kept protected from the rest of the world. It has always been God’s plan for all Christians to be mixed throughout the fabric of society in our work and in our recreation, being like salt and light in the world. We may not be of this world, heaven is our home, but He wants us in the world.

Now I want you to pause for a moment and think about your work, which might be home education and playgroup or volunteering in a church community ministry or teaching a class in a local school or running a business. Just count in your head for a moment how many people contacts you would have in a day through your work.

How many of you would have more than 5? More than 10? More than 20? More than 30? Salt and light!

I personally believe that the most strategically placed missionaries of today are teachers, especially early childhood and primary school teachers.

How Can Our Work Become Our Mission Field?

1. By letting our Love for God and our Grateful Attitudes flow through our work.

Psalm 86:12 (CEV)

With all my heart I thank you. I praise you, LORD God.

I believe that when Christians go to work and their gratitude to God begins to flow out of them, it brings glory to God through their work. If you and I are deeply thankful for each new day, amazed at His goodness and answered prayer, grateful for our jobs and the little blessings that come throughout our day, it's going to show through our attitude and our manner in our jobs. When we go to our jobs we know that God cares about our work and that in fact He designed us and gifted us to work. He is with us and His promises apply equally at work as they do at Church.

For Example:

Jeremiah 32:27 (CEV)

Jeremiah, I am the LORD God. I rule the world, and I can do anything!

Philippians 4:6 (CEV)

Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God.

Psalm 32:8 (CEV)

You said to me, "I will point out the road that you should follow. I will be your teacher and watch over you.

God cares about your work, He has blessed you with work, He is with you at work and His promises apply to your work. So let your love for God and your grateful attitude bubble out of you.

A second way that our work can become our mission-field is:

2. By Reflecting His Creativity/Craftsmanship through our work.

You and I were made 'in His image'. God has made the world amazingly well. He has given you gifts and talents so that you can do things well. Everything we do in our job should be done in such a way that it will bring Him glory.

Everything that you do should be done not as if you are serving your boss or your customers, although that is important, but as if you are serving God through your work.

Now, because He is creative and He is at work with us, He can give us creative solutions, He will direct us to do what we do to a very high standard. Our drains are to be dug straight, our pipe fittings are not to leak, our cabinet corners should be flush, our surgical incisions should be clean, our word-processing accurate and appealing, and our meals nutritious and well presented.

If you and I choose to do things well, it does reflect to the world something of His creativity, His excellence, His order.

John Piper said this:

"God created us to work so that by consciously relying on his power and consciously shaping the world after His excellence, we might be satisfied in Him, and He might be glorified in us. And when we remember that all this God

exalting creativity and all this joy is only possible for undeserving sinners like us because of the death of Christ, every hour of labour becomes a boasting in the cross.”

Colossians 3:23 (CEV)

Do your work willingly, as though you were serving the Lord himself, and not just your earthly master.

The third way our work can become our mission is:

3. By showing people what real Christians look like (Integrity through our work)

Juliette likes watching murder mysteries and I like being with Juliette and so we watch Father Brown or Grantchester or Midsomer Murders, etc. We are both really good at working out who did it in the first 15 minutes and then we wait to see if we were right. The problem I have with most of these programs is that often it's the Christian leader, or the Catholic priest or the church member who is the murderer. The media seems very biased in the way Christians are portrayed. Most people know a dodgy Christian used car dealer or a supposed Christian who is lazy and dependent on others.

Every time you and I do our jobs with honesty, integrity and energy, I believe that we smash down those false images of Christianity. We remove people's objections to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When a Christian charges a fair price, when we are profoundly honest in our dealings and take our integrity into the workplace, we are making a difference.

The fourth way our work can become our mission is:

4. By having as our goals both financial independence and a desire to bless our customers.

Money doesn't grow on trees and we need it to pay our bills and to live, and those that are self-disciplined and work harder usually earn more money. That is a very good thing. If someone is lazy, is not working, is always looking for a hand-out, that person's lack of work ethic will not be a witness for Jesus Christ. But if a person works hard and earns enough money to pay the bills but learns to use their work primarily as a way of serving and blessing others, that person's life will be a great witness for Jesus.

God always affirms the hard working person throughout the Bible. Jesus said something about work, though, that at first glance seems quite cryptic.

John 6:27 (CEV)

Don't work for food that spoils. Work for food that gives eternal life. The Son of Man will give you this food, because God the Father has given him the right to do so.”

Throughout scripture the hard working person is honoured and we are told to be financially independent and not leaning on others. So what did Jesus mean? Don't work for food that spoils?

Here's what I think He meant. We all need money. And money is a tool; it's not good or bad. But your goal of going to work should not be primarily to pay the bills and feed the children. Your primary goal through your work should be “How can I be useful to God in making him known and by blessing others through this job?” As you work, ask yourself the question; “What is God telling me to say and do as I work that will truly point people to Him and bless them?”

I still remember stories from the news when the share market crashed years ago. Stockbrokers in huge numbers leapt through windows to their deaths. Why? Because the focus on their lives was just to make as much money for themselves and their clients as possible.

They were working just for the perishable stuff. When they lost money dramatically their whole purpose for working and living was gone and so they ended their own lives prematurely. I expect God to bless and lead Christian businessmen.

But whether your business succeeds or fails, your primary goal shouldn't be to make as much as possible, your primary goal should be to partner with the Holy Spirit to be useful to Jesus through your work, to give services, products and most especially words of faith and kindness that will impact lives for eternity. For a Christian your main purpose for working is still there even if the markets fail or the margins are slim. You are working primarily to discover what God wants to achieve through you, in the workplace that day.

The fifth way that our work can become our mission is:

5. By Giving you the Financial Means to Bless Others

The Bible says pay the pastors, support the missionaries, be kind to the poor (especially the Christian poor). None of that is going to happen unless you and I earn enough to pay our bills and have a bit extra to give away.

God has connected every believer with a local church and with a network of relationships, some in missions, some in parachurch organisations, some of them poor. And when you earn an income you have the capacity to bless people and release people into effective ministry.

Proverbs 12:11(CEV)

Hard working farmers have more than enough food; daydreamers are nothing more than stupid fools.

If you work hard you should be able to bless others and to care for others and yet even hard working farmers experience seasons of drought and need the support of a wider network at times.

1 Timothy 5:8 (CEV)

People who don't take care of their relatives, and especially their own families, have given up their faith. They are worse than someone who doesn't have faith in the Lord.

Acts 20:35 (CEV)

By everything I did, I showed how you should work to help everyone who is weak. Remember that our Lord Jesus said, "More blessings come from giving than from receiving."

Ephesians 4:28 (CEV)

If you are a thief, quit stealing. Be honest and work hard, so you will have something to give to people in need.

When Christians work hard so that they can give, it definitely turns the hearts and minds of people onto God.

Finally, my work becomes my mission:

6. By Creating a network of relationships through which I can speak and demonstrate the Gospel.

I guess this is the most obvious reason for us to be 'at work,' and yet if you do all of points 1 to 5 people will think about God but people won't be changed by God. If you don't sow seeds of faith through spoken words into those networks, people will think about God but they won't experience God. There will be respect, even wonder, but no life.

Proverbs 10:11 (CEV)

The words of good people are a source of life, but evil hides behind the words of the wicked.

Romans 10:17 (CEV)

No one can have faith without hearing the message about Christ.

The early church came under huge persecution and as they were being butchered, fried alive, thrown to lions, etc they moved out of Jerusalem to the nations. As they did, the good news about Jesus spread rapidly around the world. They were being persecuted, whole families butchered, but they never stopped doing what Christians do, 'telling others about what Jesus had done for them' (**Acts 8:4**).

1 Peter 2:9 (CEV)

But you are God's chosen and special people. You are a group of royal priests and a holy nation. God has brought you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Now you must tell all the wonderful things that he has done.

They understood the words of Jesus when He said:

Mark 8:36-37 (NIV)

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

Family, if you allow your work to create for you a network of relationships that God will use to bring people to salvation, then you will not only enjoy your job daily now, but there will be a joy and a satisfaction that you will find will last forever!

A Declaration

We declare that God has created us and gifted us uniquely, to work!

We believe that we can change atmospheres by our grateful attitudes at work!

We choose to be a people who, through our integrity in the workplace, will smash down misconceptions about Christ!

Every day we want to discover His will for our lives through our work!

We not only want to be financially responsible for our families, but a blessing to others.

God has given us boldness through the Holy Spirit in us to speak words of faith over this city.

We will be a people who work in such a way that Jesus Christ will get the glory.

SUPERNATURAL EVANGELISM

Proposition: Everyone who has the Holy Spirit is empowered to be a witness for Jesus.

If I were to ask you why the Holy Spirit was given to us as believers, you possibly could give me a list of maybe 20 things that the Holy Spirit was given to us for, e.g. to lead us into righteousness, to teach us or to guide us, as a comforter, or to point us to Jesus, to set us free and to give us divine revelations and utterances. The list would be extensive. But I want to suggest to you that there was **one primary** reason that the Holy Spirit was given. Listen again to what Jesus said just before he ascended back into the heavens, just before He went home again He said to a group of timid and amazed followers:

Acts 1:4-10 (CEV)

⁴ While he was still with them, he said:

Don't leave Jerusalem yet. Wait here for the Father to give you the Holy Spirit, just as I told you he has promised to do. ⁵ John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

⁶ While the apostles were still with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, are you now going to give Israel its own king again?"

*⁷ Jesus said to them, "You don't need to know the time of those events that only the Father controls. ⁸ But the Holy Spirit will come upon you and give you power. **Then you will tell everyone about me in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and everywhere in the world.**" ⁹ After Jesus had said this and while they were watching, he was taken up into a cloud. They could not see him, ¹⁰ but as he went up, they kept looking up into the sky.*

That sounds a lot like the two great commissions:

Matthew 28: 18 - 20

¹⁸ Jesus came to them and said:

*I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! ¹⁹ **Go to the people of all nations** and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and **teach them to do everything I have told you.** I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.*

Mark 16:15-18

¹⁵ Then he told them:

*Go and preach the **good news to everyone** in the world. ¹⁶ Anyone who believes me and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe me will be condemned. ¹⁷ **Everyone** who believes me will be able to do wonderful things. By using my name they will force out demons, and they will speak new languages. ¹⁸ They will handle snakes and will drink poison and not be hurt. They will also heal sick people by placing their hands on them.*

So many people think that only a small group of people who constantly see people won to Jesus and often do it through mass evangelism are evangelists and that if I am not like Bill Subritzky or Nicky Gumbel, etc, I am not an evangelist and evangelism is not for me.

The thing is, in the Bible Jesus tells all of his followers to make disciples or to be his witnesses at home, outside your comfort area and to other ethnicities. He tells all of us to be witnesses and to make disciples. And some would say, Lord that is unfair, you didn't give me the gift of evangelism so how can I be part of the all that bear witness to you?

If you look at the great commissions and what Jesus said to the gathered faithful before he ascended, the Holy Spirit is going to be given so that you can be His witness as you go about the world doing life. How? Because he has given you all spiritual gifts. Jesus said all believers can force out demons, speak new languages, survive when attacked by

poisonous snakes as Paul did, and heal sick people by placing their hands on them. Paul the apostle would go on to say that he wants everyone to desire to prophesy.

It would seem to me that while not all have public ministry gifts or have proven character and have developed one of the five-fold ministries of a mature Christian I do see however that according to scripture all Christians can prophesy, can hear God's voice, can heal the sick and can cast out demons. And because the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you can then, by using His spiritual gifts, be His witnesses locally, to people further afield who are similar and cross culturally. You may not have the ministry of an evangelist, but because you have the Holy Spirit you can be involved in supernatural evangelism. I want to give you some examples of this.

A number of years ago we looked at "**Prophetic fishing**". Because we can all hear the voice of God He can tell us who to speak to, when to say it and what to say to them. I have seen many in do this. "Jesus, as I go to Pak n' Save today or as I go to college please tell me who you want me to talk to and what to say?" God honours that prayer. And so you may approach a random person humbly and respectfully and give them a word from God and the results are really amazing. I met a man about a month ago who had come to a small group meeting with his Christian friend. He wanted to believe but needed to see evidence. Now there are a lot of people who are more practiced and fluent in prophecy than me but when I prayed for him and began telling him what God thought about him and what God specifically wanted to say to him about his secret situation he was blown away and said he wanted to follow Jesus. The demonstration of accurate prophecy witnessed to Him about the reality of God. In this generation where so many voices claim to know the truth, I think it is quite reasonable that people see evidence of God's reality as we witness to Him through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

What if, as you are going about the world just doing life, you made yourself sensitive to His voice and you said to the Lord, here I am Lord, send me, tell me who to speak to and what to say? God answers prayers like that wherever you are, and whatever you are doing. Any time and any place.

My favourite quote from a series I once taught on "prophetic fishing" was something a lady called Jean Blasi said. She said:

Prophetic fishing evangelism is the result of supernatural living. Prophetic fishing springs from the realization that we do not have to work for God to bring others into the kingdom. Instead, we have to get out of the way and let God work through us. It involves getting into the flow of what God is doing and going with it.

I think that there is good biblical evidence that all Christians can prophesy, since we can all hear from God. Therefore why don't we who have the Holy Spirit stop trying to work for God, and instead just get close to Jesus and let Him work through us.

Not only does the Holy Spirit give us the gift of prophecy but God will also give people **Words of Knowledge and Words of Wisdom**. No church is perfect and I don't believe that the Bethel church in America is perfect either, but they have a staggering amount of good fruit from their ministry. I just love how they use the word of knowledge as a tool for evangelism. As part of training their people to be witnesses to the world they send them on treasure hunts. Before they go out into the community they ask them to sit down and ask God for a treasure map.

They firstly ask God to show them a location where someone will be open to the gospel.

They write down what God says.

Then they ask God for a person's name and write down what God says.

Then they will ask God for some distinguishing things about the person's appearance and write down His response.

Then they ask God for what the person may need prayer for and God might say a left ankle, their marriage, a tumour, a problem sleeping etc.

Finally they ask God for something unusual that would make that person stand out to them and they write His response.

Then they go out looking for this ‘treasure’ who has been lost and that God is directing them to find through their ‘treasure map’ filled with words of knowledge.

The stories of the miraculous and of lives transformed that come out of that church are just incredible. Now, other than Paul looking for the Grecian man, I don’t see people doing ‘treasure hunts’ in the Bible, but I am absolutely convinced that every spiritual gift is meant primarily as a tool for witnessing. Treasure hunting to me seems to have the right attitude to lost people and is a good way of getting into the lifestyle of hearing God’s voice. All spiritual gifts help us witness.

Take **Healing** for instance. There are many people around the world who, when they hear that someone is sick, offer to pray for the sick one. Most pre-Christians will say “yes”, even if they are not sure what you are going to do. I remember a few months ago a great young man in our church saw an older person hobbling along clearly in pain past our church. This young guy ran out, offered to pray for this man and laid hands on his legs for healing and prayed out there on the footpath. I think there was some relief from pain straight away and because I went out to be nosy I heard the man express openness to faith. The person doing the praying was not gifted in evangelism particularly but he was able to use the faith that he had and a gifting that he was comfortable to use to be a great witness on that day.

I always admire my wife when it comes to praying for people to be healed. There have been many positive stories. One that will always stick in my mind took place as she was at work in a secular kindergarten, i.e. one of those places where you are not supposed to mention religion, Christianity anyway. A Muslim lady shared with Juliette that she had been trying for years to get pregnant and it had been unsuccessful. She was terribly upset. Out of compassion, my wife immediately asked if she could pray for her. She said “yes”. Juliette prayed and 9 months later this lady came back and thanked Juliette for the miracle of a baby.

Jesus said that all Christians would be able to do supernatural things, including casting out demons.

Deliverance ministry

Now I am very pastorally orientated. I don’t like to risk embarrassing people and so before deliverance ministry takes place I give the person a lot of teaching and following the ministry I tend to explain what happens now and how to stay free, and I choose to do that in the privacy of my office or someone’s home. I don’t see, however, people casting out demons in the Bible so carefully and politely as I do. In the Bible account, when a follower of Jesus encountered a demonised person, often a demon causing some kind of sickness, Jesus, the disciples and the early church leaders would deliver a person of a demon right there and then in public and then afterwards give some counsel to the person who had been set free.

I can think of so many people, especially young people who have seen Bill Subritzky or Weston Carrier or some other Christian cast demons out of folk publicly, who have begun to believe as a result of seeing God’s power over evil and the visible manifestations of that.

One year when the Ranui youth came back from Easter camp the greatest faith building experience they had had was seeing people delivered of demons in front of them. That witness to the power of God was the greatest faith building factor for them in Easter camp.

Here’s my point. The Holy Spirit was given to us for a whole range of reasons: to help us, to keep the church healthy etc, etc. Many people believe that only those gifted in evangelism need to do the work of an evangelist or a missionary, but Jesus’ final words to all believers was that when the Holy Spirit came on them they would **ALL** be His witnesses, locally, to those that are similar to them and across the ethnicities of the world, and that we would be His witnesses simply as they are going about life.

These signs will follow those that believe, they will be given the words to speak, they will cast out demons, and they will lay hands on the sick and heal them.

You and I are living in a country where Christians largely have bought into this unbiblical lie that you can witness without using words. That is a lie from the pit of hell. Faith comes from hearing and from hearing the revelatory Word

of God. Generally speaking, we are living in a nation that doesn't believe in ultimate truth and that has become very politically correct, and so we try not to say anything that might offend someone. It's almost as if the modern church in the west has become ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ which seems foolishness to those that are committed to sin but releases the power of God that brings salvation for those that believe.

If we **truly care** about our neighbours, our kids, our relatives, our workmates, they need to **hear** that there is a God, that some things are sinful and need to be repented of, that there is a heaven and a hell and they need to **see** evidence that the God we serve is real. When Jesus commissioned us **ALL** to be witnesses He did that by sending us the Holy Spirit so that we **all** could use the gifts and the faith that we have been given to help lost people encounter almighty God.

In Romans 12:3-8 Paul encourages us to use the 'measure of faith' that we have. He goes on to encourage us to operate in the spiritual gifts in proportion to the faith that we have. You see we all have the Holy Spirit if we are normal Christians. We all have been given spiritual gifts. Jesus said that all Christians had at least 4, and I would suggest to you we can operate in all 9 when those gifts are needed. We all have the Holy Spirit, we all have spiritual gifts. The problem is that we are not all that confident to prophesy over a stranger or to pray for a random person who is sick. Paul tells us to operate according to the measure of faith that we have i.e. don't wait until you are a mini Bill Subritzky. If you are a Christian you need to start using the gifts that you have got to witness now. Start speaking, start acting according to the measure of faith you have now and, as you do that, you will find that God is faithful and that witnessing is an adventure with God and your faith will grow. I like what the disciples said to Jesus when he told them to forgive 70 x 7. They didn't say "Lord give us that faith, we can't do it." Instead they said to Jesus, "Lord, please increase our faith."

There are times when gifts of faith are given such that you can just trust God for a miracle in a situation that you would not normally be comfortable moving in, but most of us need to begin to give away our faith in order to begin to increase our faith. Operate in the measure of faith that you have and God will increase that faith. When you see any lost person that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is searching for don't say, "Lord give me the faith to witness to that person." Don't ask for something that you already have. You have the Person of the Holy Spirit in you and on you. You already have what it takes to be a witness for Jesus. What you need is a willingness to give away what you already have. I get so much out of the story of the feeding of the 5000 in Matthew 14. Jesus says to his hungry and tired disciples, "You guys feed the multitude, just give them what you have." "Yes but Lord, we just have five loaves and two fishes," In other words, "we haven't got enough." Jesus then gave thanks and gave away what they did have and a miracle took place that will never be forgotten.

Speaking about finance, in Luke 6 Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." In other words, start using the faith that you have, give what you already possess and as you do, God will give back to us out of His resource house in heaven.

There are lots and lots of bored Christians in the west, often going from church to church looking for the 'meat' of the word, some teaching that will really fire them up and make their Christian walk exciting.

In John 4 we see Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman at the well. He and the boys were hungry and the boys went off to get some food for them to eat. When they return, Jesus had given a word of knowledge to this Samaritan woman as a witness to her. The boys are wondering why Jesus isn't hungry and keen to eat and Jesus says the most profound thing to them:

John 4:34

Jesus said:

My food (meat) is to do what God wants! He is the one who sent me, and I must finish the work that he gave me to do.

Stepping out in faith, witnessing to people in the power of the Spirit, living a prophetic life where you are guided by the Holy Spirit's voice, that, said Jesus, is where you get the real food from, that is when your faith becomes alive and

vital.

Friends, God loves lost people! They are like a lost sheep, or a lost coin, or a lost son to Him. They are a treasure to Him. He is searching for the open ones constantly. Because the Holy Spirit has come upon you, ALL of you can be His witnesses this week. I encourage you to get really close to Jesus and let Him guide you in how you can use your gifts to witness to lost people. Just step out with the gifts and the measure of faith you already have and start giving it away. You will find that God is faithful. Your Christian walk will really come alive.

Jesus said to all of us 'Go'. Will you take the risk? Do you love lost people enough?

Will you enter the adventurous lifestyle that God wants for ALL of us?

APPENDIX: FOR LEADERS ONLY

All of us who pastor churches, are elders and key leaders in the church would love to have buildings that are modern and welcoming. All of us would like to have multiple staff (experts doing their specialist roles well managed by the leader/s), and all of us, I suspect, would like to have huge social services and happy congregations. We are human. People have tried to draw on business models and the social sciences to ‘improve’ how we do church and make us socially, and emotionally and structurally healthy. BUT

Consider these questions amongst your leadership team:

1. How important were the buildings to the early church?

If we have the best facilities and yet people are not being saved, would God be excited about our church?

2. As volunteerism has declined in the west, we have begun to leave church to the ‘experts’. Do we really want the experts (often the paid Christians) doing most of the work?

a. Does such an approach really help with discipling new believers?

b. How does it fit with the biblical model of the church in the New Testament where we are all described as ministering parts in the one body, as priests, as living stones

c. **When you look at Paul’s missionary journeys, were they really missionary journeys or church planting journeys?**

3. Does huge social services equate to doing evangelism/mission if no one is getting saved? Is one without the other even desirable to God?

4. We can amend constitutions, tweak position descriptions, hold forums and ‘feel good’ discussion meetings.

But does any of that really unify and empower the church? The reality is the church becomes motivated when the team sees people being saved and transformed by His power.

5. Is a happy church and/or happy pastor a good sign of church health?

I heard a comment from one of our movement’s leaders recently that suggests that a happy church may not be a healthy church. The ‘happiest churches’ are often the ones where nothing radical is happening and they all know each other and congregation numbers are in slow, steady decline.

7. What are we going to measure?

Virtually daily, I see church family helping others re-commit to Christ or repent of their sins (and it’s awesome). But I don’t measure such events or prayers.

At any Church I pastor I measure 4 things, as they all point to the discipleship process, i.e. people becoming Christians and going on to maturity.

a) baptisms

b) new church members

c) % of church volunteering in service in or through the church to the community

d) Our giving trends

When it comes to measuring how many people are actually serving God according to their call and gift I prefer to go through the phone book with a key leader or two and just count those that are serving. On a good year we would have up to 70% of the church involved in serving somewhere. I have found that people coming into our fellowship from other churches are slightly less likely to serve than those that come to Christ with us and home-schoolers are less

likely than most to be ministering in some way (although they are amazing people). Most churches are registered charities and you can get a quick snapshot of how many are serving through your church and trust charities' return i.e. how many are serving and how many hours do they give per week.

VISION

Much has been written about vision in business circles and much said in Christian literature about what it means to have a progressive vision; however I find that most churches DON'T have a vision. A vision describes what the future will look like for your specific church as the Holy Spirit has led you. It will say who you are going to reach, and how and what you expect the church to become as you follow His leading.

To reword the great commission IS NOT a vision. Every local church is not called of God to reach the whole world, feed every starving person, support every missionary, and relate to every people group.

To say that you are going to be upwardly focused (worship), inwardly focused (fellowship and discipleship) and outwardly focused (evangelistically) is not a vision. Every believer everywhere does that, but what is God saying to your church?

To copy Rick Warren's vision or Bill Hybels' vision and reword it for your church is not a vision, it's lazy. These men of God are a gift to the kingdom and have heard God direct them for their churches.

When I first went to Ranui we had 65 people in the church, including children, and many of them were on the verge of going. It was a white church with two very professional Maori ladies in it (certainly did not reflect our community). Several moved well in prophecy and just loving the unlovely person that God sent along. They hadn't really seen any evangelistic fruit since a dynamic youth pastor had left the church several years earlier.

In my first three months at Ranui God was giving me pictures of what the future was going to look like and that my personal spiritual DNA mattered to where the church was going. **Over three months I met with the eldership and we asked God these questions:**

- a. **What were the spiritual foundations of this church? i.e. when it was planted, who did those founding members believe God was telling them to reach and how? You can add to your prophetic foundations in a church but you should never neglect them.**
- b. **Where do we see God working now in bringing people to salvation?**
- c. **Where is the fruit?**
- d. **What is God currently blessing?**
- e. **Did God want ethnic congregations or multicultural congregations?**
- f. **Did God want a big service or multiple services?**
- g. **Who was God calling us to/gifting us to reach out to specifically (people groups)**
- h. **What might the process of discipleship and growth look like for us?**

After three months of prayer we submitted the vision below to the Ranui church at a church camp and it was readily received. Within three years we became a large active church with many ministries. Although each year the elders and I produced yearly statements of faith and expectation, this remained our overarching vision.

We believe we are to be

- A Church family of servants, meeting in multiple services, where everyone of every generation and culture is involved in ministry.**
- Where people are led to Christ and disciplined through genuine FAITH-BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS.**
- A church where new believers are quickly set free, healed and released into their God-given ministries.**
- A Church that is known for His power and His practical love.**
- A Church that knows the urgency of the hour.**

Please, my brothers and sisters, join those of us who want to go back to a biblical way of presenting the gospel to a

lost and dying world.

Join us in birthing those new believers into His eternal family.

Join us in making the Main thing into the Main thing again, that is to go out into all the world, sharing the good news, baptising people into the Kingdom and then teaching them how to do all that Christ wants them to do.

It's not too late for anyone to start. The gospel still works with power today.

Its not about having a gift or doing a program.

We are ALL called to make disciples (not just the evangelists or the Alpha team), ALL.

Leaders, if you lead, if you choose today to make God's primary reason for leaving us on earth still the main thing ...

- God will be faithful.

- He will confirm the gospel with signs and wonders.

- Your church will be messy (with seekers and new believers and their unusual ideas and behaviours). But they will be more united and passionate than ever before.

- Your joy will be full.

Will you lead the way? Will you step out? Will you keep God's vision for the local church in front of them? Will you make space for testimonies and stories?

Will you lead your churches in the adventure that we were all made for?

Will you make a difference for Jesus in our generation?

Will you make evangelism, His priority, THE priority of every local church again?

John 3:16-17 (NIV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Right now, someone somewhere is waiting for you to tell them about Jesus!

If you lead, they will follow!

Summary

For generations now 'evangelism' has become the scary word as we try pretty unsuccessfully to make disciples. We have used a process and formulae which are not biblical (although God in His grace still blesses) and have tried to copy others who are effective. It has felt awkward and for the majority of the church it has been discouraging. It wasn't meant to be that way. God loves His church and He has given us biblical examples and the Holy Spirit so show us how to make disciples. You need to be intentional, you need to use words, but ultimately you just need to be you. There's an adventure waiting for you and me every day. Choose now to become a co-labourer with Him. Enter the adventure. Fulfil your purpose in this generation.

About Rev R.D Watts

Pastor Russell was raised on the mission field in Papua New Guinea, the son of South Seas Evangelical Missionaries Brian and Ruth Watts. He wandered away from God and experimented with other spiritualities until he saw the power the name of Jesus has over the demonic realm at 16. He completed his Bachelor of Theology in 1989 through the Baptist College of NZ. He has been in pastoral ministry for around 23 years, the last 14 of which were at Ranui Baptist Church in West Auckland NZ (a very multicultural church where he expected to see a baptism every week from the pre-Christian community and was seldom disappointed). He is now Senior Pastor at Whangarei Central

Baptist Church. He has a love for presenting biblical and practical tools for ministry that will equip the body to reflect Christ effectively to the world. He has an excellent marriage with his wife Juliette, three adult children and three grandchildren. Pastor Russell is a very relational person and is heavily involved in serving the church and the local community through one-on-one discipleship, the use of Spiritual gifts, running parenting courses and as a budget advisor. His passion is to see people connected to God and fulfilling their purposes in life.

Pastor Russell loves to take workshops and seminars using this material and has always seen good ‘fruit’ following.

“Thanks my brother for everything you did at conference. What a blessing you are. We are seeing conversions and baptisms already. Praise God.”

Tony Collis, Hope Centre Levin

Our community ministries teams were functioning very well and attracted a large number of our community’s unchurched sector. Exactly what we had prayed for, yet conversions were rare. For a year or so our leadership team sensed the Lord was asking us to be more intentional with our evangelism training, so we invited Pastor Russell to come and run his course with our congregation one weekend. We chose Pastor Russell because we know he carries a strong gift of evangelism and his fruit proves it. He imparted a sense of belief that we all need to be able to share the Gospel, and taught us how to do it simply and effectively. How to recognise ‘God opportunities’ and flow with the Holy Spirits promptings. He prayed for impartation through laying on of hands. Within a twelve month period we have baptized 50 people. Most were brand new followers of Christ. Many had come through our community ministries. All had had the Gospel communicated to them from someone in our congregation. They came from all walks of life and are all ages. Most importantly they are still walking with Jesus. We no longer have emphasis on running outreach programmes, but rather equip all our people to live evangelistically.

I sincerely commend Pastor Russell’s workshops and training to any Church serious about reaching the lost.

Greg Morris, Senior Pastor, Oxford Baptist

How refreshing to read such a book where the Christians are encouraged to become personal soul-winners for Jesus Christ. Russell shares his heart for the winning of the lost and we can all learn something from what he has shared. Our experience in The GFM Ministry is that there are many hungry hearts ‘out there’ in the world that are looking for real answers to life. Christians are the only people who can give those real answers because the answer is found only in Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God.

I recommend this book to you.

Rodney Francis, Gospel Faith Messenger Ministry