



Share your faith

A practical tool for personal evangelism

'I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith,
so that you will have a full understanding of
every good thing we have in Christ.'

(Philemon 6)

Introduction

Sharing your faith with someone else seems to be one of the hardest parts of the Christian life, and yet at the same time, there are few things more satisfying and rewarding. It's for this reason that the Apostle Paul can urge and instruct Philemon by saying "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ." (Philemon 6)

More significantly, since faith comes from hearing and hearing from someone speaking up, no service we can render to another is more urgent, important or valuable than sharing our faith. It's a long time since Billy Graham ran any public crusades to powerful effect. It gets harder and harder to invite people along to church meetings and events. The most natural, efficient and effective means for reaching people with the good news about Christ is us, sharing our faith.

What follows is a short, simple and intensely practical tool to help us, as ambassadors of Christ, cultivate a desire and intentionally act on it – to share our faith with others.

Our goal, strategies, and prayer for evangelism

Goal

Every year our primary goal concerns seeking and saving those who are lost. This year is no exception. While we are working on three fronts – our primary focus is ‘personal witness’. We’re convinced that our own personal witness to Christ is paramount. So much more efficient and effective than a flier from a letter-box drop or an advertisement over the radio is our personal and prayerful witness to the people we know.

Strategies

But a goal needs to be accompanied by strategies. How do we hope to achieve this ambitious goal? Below are three pretty stretching strategies full of great potential for making Christ known:

i. To issue ‘personal invitations’ to unbelievers to church this year.

“I go to church every Sunday at 5pm. One time you ought to come with me...”

“The church I go to runs heaps of courses explaining basic Christianity. Would you be interested...?”

“This Sunday, my church has a guest speaker who will tailor their message to people who aren’t sure what they think about Jesus. You’d be really welcome. How would you like to join me?”

ii. To testify to our faith in Christ before unbelievers.

“We watched the footy Friday night, had people over for dinner on Saturday and went to church on Sunday morning. It was a good weekend.”

“Sarah and I have been friends for a long time, she was in my bridal party, we played tennis together, and every second Monday we meet up for coffee and to pray.”

“As a Christian it’s probably not my place to comment, but I don’t really think that Christianity compared to other religions gets a fair presentation in most media these days.”

iii. To make occasions for sharing the gospel with unbelievers.

“Christ never really made sense to me until... ..I read in the Bible... until someone explained to me... until I realised how wonderful God’s forgiveness is...”

“The one thing that most people misunderstand about Christianity, but which makes it different from any other religion is grace... Let me explain... ..here’s the most helpful illustration I know (the book, the bridge etc)...”

“How about I just take a moment to explain to you what I believe, and then you can ask me whatever question(s) you like...?”

Prayer

For all of the good we may do, without God’s work our efforts will amount to nothing. So we pray:

Please, Lord, take us and use us in the power of your Holy Spirit to live and speak as ambassadors of Christ. Help us to grow in our desire and capacity to share the good news about Christ with others. And please use us and our witness to bring people to faith in him who is our Saviour and Lord. For Jesus’ sake we pray. Amen.

STUDY ONE – According to HISTORY: What happened then?

Introduction

What do you know of the spread and rise of Christianity in its earliest days? What factors do you think contributed to it?

Read Acts 8

1 This passage starts on a most ominous note – Stephen has just become the first Christian martyr, and it has triggered “a great persecution” which has scattered all except the apostles! What might you expect from this? What actually happened? Why?

2 How many various references can you find to ‘sharing the good news’? What do you think we are supposed to learn from these?

3 Zero in on Philip’s interaction with the eunuch (vv.26-40). For all of the remarkable details accompanying this story, the heart of it is found in verse 35. How do you envisage what actually happened here?

Have you ever had a comparable experience?

REFLECTION ONE – A personal audit in sharing the good news

What factors make personal evangelism most difficult? What can I do about this? What might be some ways forward for me?

What hinders sharing the good news?

- lack of non-Christian contacts?
- struggle to develop friendships with non-Christians?
- could cause me problems?
- not well prepared for sharing my faith?
- need better help in how to present what I believe?
- other things seem more urgent?
- don't often think about the eternal consequences?
- embarrassed about inviting people along to my church?
- don't often pray or watch for people to be saved?
- don't really think of it as my responsibility to evangelise?

What can you do about it?

Action steps for sharing my faith in 2015:

1.
2.
3.

Some tips for sharing your faith

How to bring your faith in Christ out into the open:

1. Use the Monday morning catch-up chats. ("So, what did you get up to on the week-end?")
2. Have some Christian resources you are familiar with which you can share from and/or give away. (eg, tracts, books, DVDs)
3. Make time for and pursue socialising with others. (meet up for coffee, invite others over, etc)
4. Introduce some of your unbelieving friends to your Christian friends.
5. Leave your usual references to God, to Jesus, to faith, to prayer, in your everyday conversation.
6. Make sure you have your testimony prepared, and look to share it.
7. Be bold – pray daily and watch carefully for opportunities to share the gospel.

How to invite others to church:

1. Ask anyone, and don't be prejudiced – even if you expect that they will say 'no'.
2. Try to ask face-to-face – it counts for so much more than e-mail or SMS.
3. Be enthusiastic – sure it will be different, but that's not all bad. And don't water down your invite ("you're probably busy", "I'm not sure this will really be your cup of tea, but" etc)
4. Offer more – maybe link it to lunch or dinner either side.
5. Don't stress too much about 'no'. It's hardly the end of the world, nor even the end of the road (there's always a next time).
6. Have a contingency plan – maybe they would be keen to do something on a smaller, more personal scale, just with you.
7. Pray, pray, and pray – and be wise. If people react adversely, don't keep pushing, let it go.

STUDY TWO – According to LOGIC: What happens now?

Introduction

There are surprisingly few explicit commands or encouragements to evangelise in the New Testament. Does this surprise you? How would you explain it? And most importantly, how would you defend a Christianity that is passionately 'evangelistic'?

Read Romans 10:1-15

1 If Acts 8 provides a lovely snapshot of the history and how Christianity actually spread, Romans 10 tackles the inherent logic of why.

- a) Why is there no need of 'ascending' or 'descending' (vv.6ff.)?
- b) What is required for salvation?
- c) And where does this come from?

2 Verses 14 & 15 contain a very logical procession of rhetorical questions. What challenges / alternatives are you aware of that have been offered at each step? How would you resolve these?

3 What are the implications of this logic: for unbeliever? for believer? For our witness?

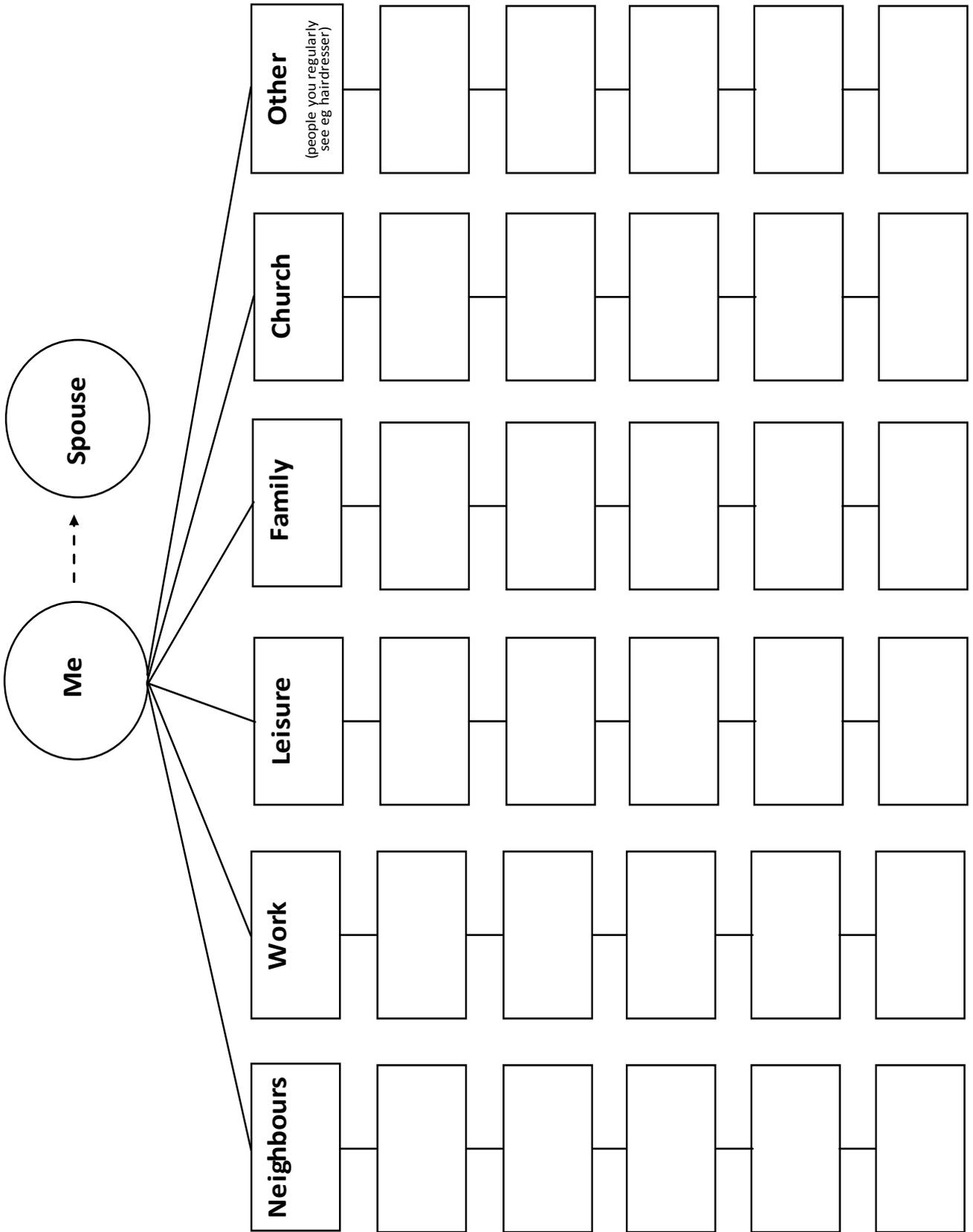
REFLECTION TWO – Getting practical with contacts

This next section contains two charts. Your first reaction to these may be negative. But the reality is that charts are mere tools – just designed to help you be reflective and intentional. If you don't think they work as well as they could or should for you in their present form, then please do not hesitate to amend/alter them. Certainly, don't get bogged down trying to interpret them and get them right. There will not be any exam on them. Spend the time reflecting on your contacts, and on your witness to them. That's the great aim and hope.

My Personal Mission Field

This first chart is designed to help you take stock of your situation and its opportunities. God willing, it will help you to see afresh those whom you have regular contact with. Do they feature as regularly in your prayer life? Are your prayers slanted in one direction or another? Is your hospitality?

In addition, it will help you to spy patterns and dynamics that you may not have been particularly conscious of. Have I let family relations slide? Have I made any effort with neighbours? Do I have some areas where I am known as a Christian, and others where I am not? Do I have a large mission field or a small / dwindling one? What can be done about this – either way?



From the previous chart you may want to focus on four people in particular, whom you will regularly commit yourself to praying for, extend some social invitation(s) to, be watchful for opportunities to witness to, make the most of etc.

(Again, this step may not feel that helpful to you. The four might be obvious enough, and not need to be “targeted”. But if you feel you have a large list of people, just focussing on four makes it feel more manageable, and makes you more likely to commit to certain actual actions in pursuing them.)

Personal evangelism:

*The Samaritan woman ‘went into the town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” So they went out to him... Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony...’
(John 4:28-30,39)*

My Personal Mission Action Plan

The second set of charts on the following page is designed to help you be reflective and intentional with the relationships you have. Where are they up to? Where are they up to in terms of personal witness?

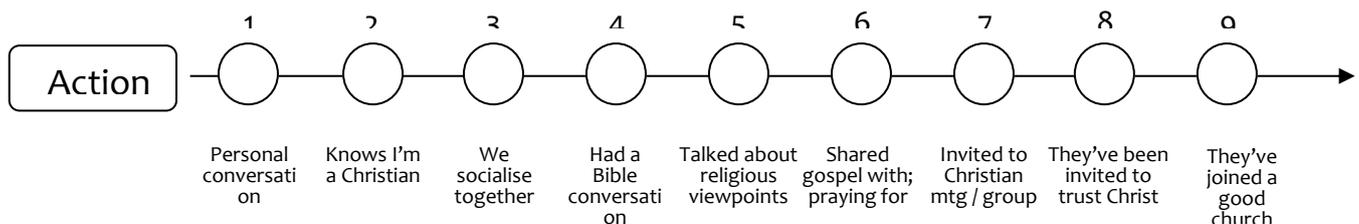
Again, don’t get too bogged down on the trajectory and its order – you may well have jumped around from one point to another, skipping some, taken them in reverse order, whatever. The sequence hopes and anticipates that with deeper relationships come (with God’s help) more significant conversations and opportunities for a contact to actively consider Christ.

The point of this action plan is to help you to see where things are up to and what is needed/appropriate for that particular relationship. Below each is a space to note specific points relevant for each person, for your prayers and your consideration in future contact.

The steps for consideration are these:

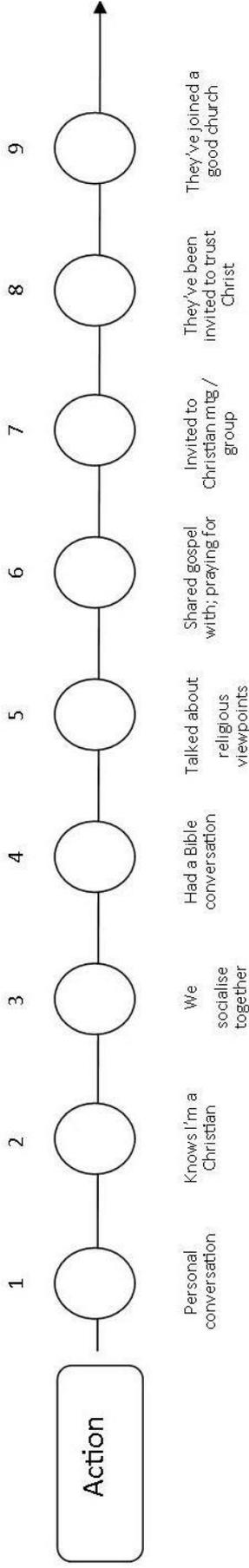
1. I have had a personal conversation with he / she (we've moved beyond the point of contact).
2. I have let them know (it has become known) that I'm a Christian.
3. We've socialised together (beyond the point of contact)
4. We've spoken about the Bible's point of view on something.
5. I know their religious point of view (on a specific matter, more generally).
6. I have shared the gospel with them, and am praying for them.
7. I have invited them to join / participate in a Christian meeting / group (eg church, course, small group etc).
8. They have been invited to put their trust in Christ.
9. They have joined a good church.

Who:



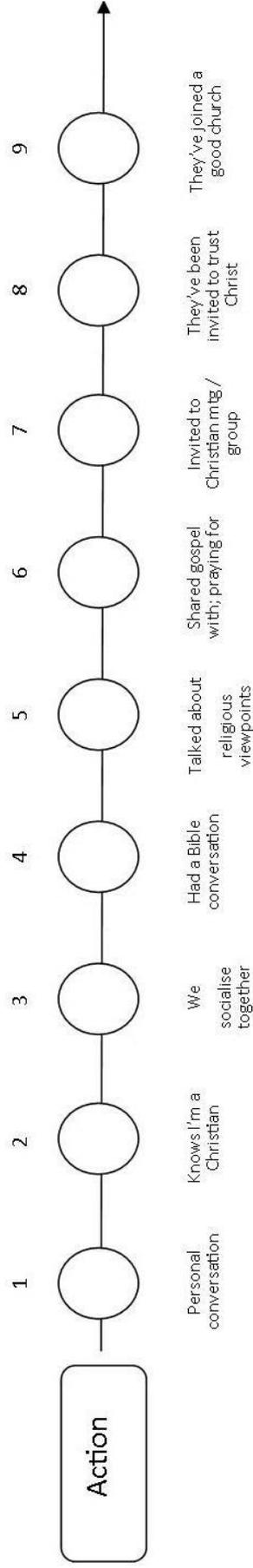
Notes...

Who:



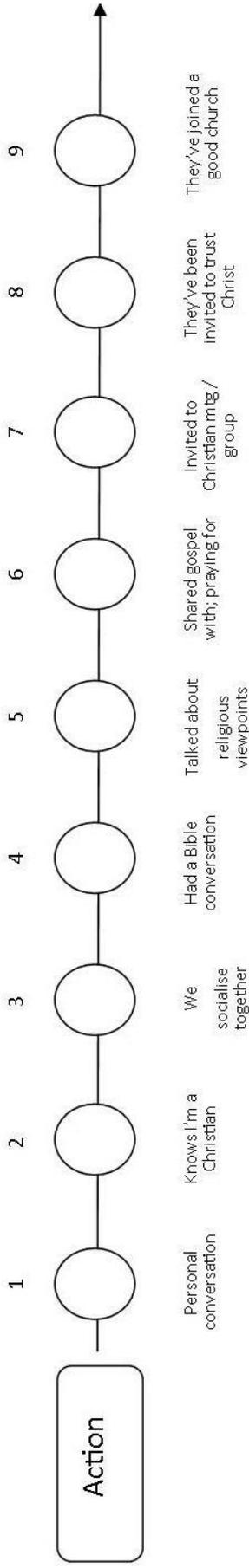
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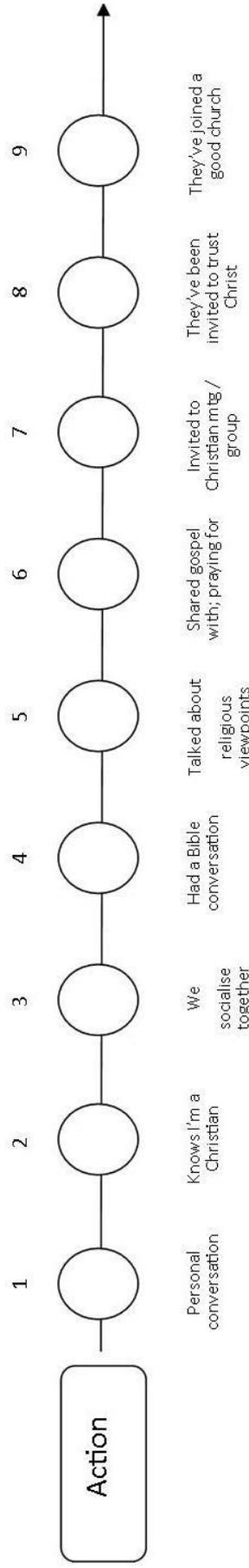
Notes...

Who:



Notes...

Who:



Notes...

STUDY THREE – Over to YOU: What happens next?

Introduction

How do you know what to tell people? How do you work this out?

OR

What is the appropriate way to tell people the good news? Why?

Read 1 Peter 1:10-12, 2:4-10, 3:13-22

1 These early chapters of 1 Peter combine both the delight of hearing the gospel & the duty to declare it.

- a) How much are you motivated by 'delight' – to share with others what you have been so privileged to discover? Why / why not?
- b) How much are you motivated by 'duty' – to do what you feel like you really ought to be ready & prepared to do? Why / why not?
- c) How much does your motivation colour your witness, do you think?
- d) What do you hope other people see? What do you think they see?

2 How much does the example of Christ – who himself preached the good news (cf. Mark 1:14-15) – impact what you do and/or how you do it?

3 To what extent do you see this as an individual task and responsibility? Why? How?

REFLECTION THREE – The good news: Christ crucified for sinners

Because it was the gospel of God which brought us to life in Christ Jesus, we could reasonably assume familiarity with it. But the trouble with assuming something as fundamental as 'the gospel', is that over time we can grow hazy on what is meant and what is not. So here are a few paragraphs aiming to clarify 'the gospel'.

Jesus comes announcing it when he says: "The time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15)

The Apostle Paul, later reflecting on Jesus death and resurrection writes:

*Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ **For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve...** (1 Corinthians 15:1-5)*

Notice here the repeated sequence: event, authority, evidence. So:

- Christ died – as God had promised – and he was buried (he really did die).
- Christ was raised – as God had promised – and he appeared (he really rose).

And the significance Paul points to for Christians including us, is that Christ died "for our sins".

J.I.Packer suggests therefore that 'Christ and him crucified' has 4 important ingredients:

- God: who he is, what his character is, what his standards are, what he requires of us, his creatures. Only as we see God and his awesomeness can we comprehend the awfulness of sin.
- Sin: how we've fallen short of God's standards, and become guilty, filthy and helpless in sin and now stand under the wrath of God. Sin is not first about social or personal effects, but rather it is first offence towards God (so Psalm 51:4)
- Jesus Christ: his person and saving work together. He is God's Son made man to save sinners, the living Saviour who died for sins, to make the forgiveness of sins available to all who believe.
- a summons to both faith and repentance. Faith is not assent but casting oneself on the promises of mercy found in Christ. Repentance is not sorrow for the past, but a change of mind and heart. Without both faith and repentance the response will be inadequate.

(From: J.I.Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, p78)

While it is true, and we often refer to the gospel as meaning more than 'Christ crucified for sinners' or 'how God reconciled sinners through Christ crucified', for example the gospel does refer to freedom from guilt, victory over the sin, the devil and death itself; the gospel is not less than Christ and him crucified, with the summons to repent of sins, believe in him and receive the Holy Spirit.

How does this accord with your understanding of 'the gospel'?

Evangelistic events in our 2015 church calendar

Often the very thing that can prompt a conversation about God, Christ, faith, eternity etc, is an upcoming event, which we can invite contacts to consider.

God willing there will be many more to hit the calendar, but so far for 2015, we have scheduled:

- ★ Some **Invitation Sundays** (aimed to present the gospel simply & compellingly for unbelievers & give people a chance to respond) are scheduled for **Sunday May 31** 'The Promise of Peace' from *The Fruit of the Spirit* series; **Sunday August 2** 'Forbidden Fruit' from the *Faith's Foundations* series (Genesis 1-12); **Sunday November 15** 'Who does Jesus think he is?' from the *Clash of Kingdoms* series (Matthew 14-18) - at all services, 8am, 10am and 5pm.
- ★ **Christianity Explained** is scheduled to run each term – term 2 dates are **Tuesdays in June 2, 9, 16, 23, & 30**; term 3 dates are **Mondays in August 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31**; and term 4 dates are **Tuesdays in November & December 17, 24 Nov, 1, 8 & 15 Dec.**
- ★ For children, our **Kids Club Holiday Program** mission is happening in the first week of the winter school holidays, **June 30 – July 3.**
- ★ Christmas events – **Gingerbread House Night** on December 10 & **Carols-in-the-Park** on December 20.

Resources to help you share the gospel

Great parts of the Bible to read with those exploring Christ

Gospel of Mark, Gospel of John

Luke 15:1-32 The 'prodigal' God

Ephesians 2 'by grace [we are] saved through faith.. not by works'

Matthew 13-17 and the trusting in Christ

Books and DVDs to help those exploring Christ

Basic Christianity by John Stott

Christianity Explored by Rico Tice

The Reason of God by Tim Keller

Prodigal God by Tim Keller

Simply Christianity by John Dickson

The case for Christ, by Lee Strobel

Right side up by Paul Grimmond

A fresh start by John Chapman

DVD: The Alpha Course

DVDs: The Christ Files, The life of Jesus by John Dickson

Books helping Christians to explain the faith:

The Gospel and Personal Evangelism by Mark Dever

Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, by J.I.Packer

Know and tell the gospel, by John Chapman

DVD: Just walk across the room, Bill Hybels

Books to help Christians defend the gospel:

Gunning for God, by John Lennox

Investigating Jesus by John Dickson