

CHAPTER NINE

WHY EVANGELISM IS AN EVENT, NOT A PROCESS

SIX STEPS TO DRAWING A NON-CHRISTIAN TO CHRIST



To persuade us that evangelism is a process.

The devil has successfully convinced many Christians that evangelism is a process and not an event¹. How? By conveying the idea that any behaviour which draws a non-Christian closer to the point of conversion is evangelism.

The enemy knows he cannot poke his head in the back door of a church and announce blatantly, “Church, don’t proclaim the gospel!” This would make his agenda too obvious. His dark instructions to the Church must appear as light. In fact, they must sound quite plausible to get through our heresy radars.

The truth is that *drawing a non-Christian to Christ* is a process. But at some point in the history of the Church, the devil has been able to subtly modify this statement and persuade us that

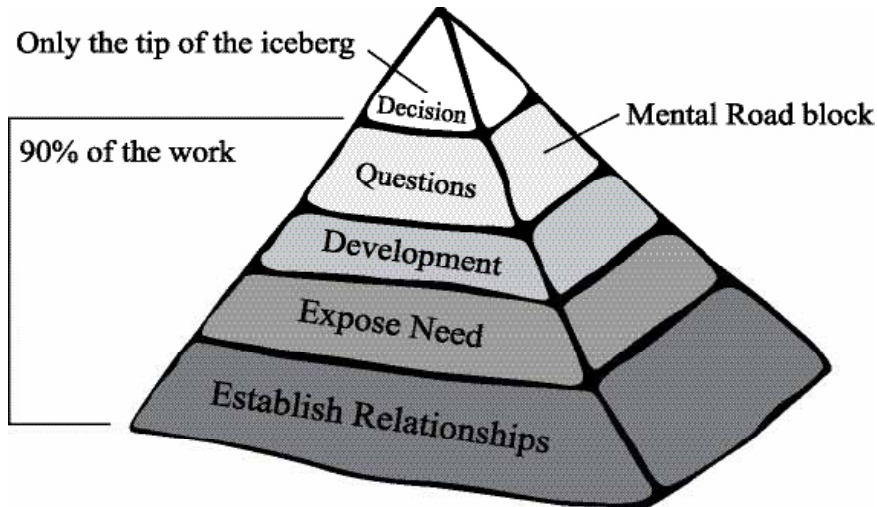


¹ In Chapter One, I detailed the origin of the word “evangelism.” Just to re-cap, when a Roman runner announced to Caesar that the Empire had had a victory in battle, the announcement had a beginning, a middle, and an end point i.e. the announcement was an event. The runner was “an evangeliser”, the message “the evangel”, and the act of announcing the victory “evangelism.” When we proclaim the gospel, the message has a beginning, a middle, and an end point. It too is an event.

evangelism is a process – a lie which has spread through the Christian community.

The difference between the two is huge...

At first glance the distinction between “evangelism is a process” and “drawing a person to Christ is a process” might seem small. But the negative repercussions for evangelism are huge. If we don’t deal with this device of the enemy, and apply a strategy from heaven



to defeat it, our battle for souls will inevitably get harder. Let me explain. Below is a popular model which is often used in teaching evangelism, in which evangelism is described as a process. With this pyramid, there are four tiers which precede a “decision” :

In this model, all four steps prior to “decision” are presented as “bits of evangelism,” so that if a believer does nothing other than “establish relationships” with non-believers, they are still considered to have been evangelising. But is this understanding accurate? No. As we discovered in chapter one, to evangelise is to proclaim or spread the gospel. “Exposing need”, for example, is a great thing and to be encouraged. But here’s the thing: by itself, exposing needs cannot be called evangelism. If we label it as such, then we are not likely to go on to proclaim the gospel.

By the same token, many believe they are evangelising by:

- Bringing their non-Christian friends to church.
- Reaching out to the community.

- Going on a short-term mission.
- Modelling Jesus before non-Christian friends and workmates.
- Answering the questions non-Christians have.
- Meeting needs.
- Praying and fasting for non-Christians.
- Giving out food parcels.
- Inviting non-Christians to meals... and so on.

All these are vital aspects of our Christian witness in the world, and to be encouraged, but none of them actually *is* evangelism. If all these activities are classified as evangelism, human nature being what it is, what do you think most people will naturally choose? That's right, the soft option.² And here's the twist: most Christians think that evangelism in the West is booming because the church is busy with all of the above.

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“The critical question is not, ‘How much interaction is there between Christians and non-Christians?’ but, ‘How much proclamation or spreading of the full gospel is going on to non-Christians in the midst of all the interaction?’”

And why is the devil going to such trouble to stop gospel proclamation? Apart from wanting to preserve his life and a cluster of other motives which I discussed in the Introduction, he is also aware of what the Bible teaches about the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16). In chapter 12 I unveil Jesus' teaching on this. Once read, it will be abundantly clear why the devil has gone to such lengths to stop gospel proclamation.



The critical issue...

Most churches think they are doing really well when they have lots of interaction going on between them and the community. But his is not the issue. The critical issue is not, “How much interaction is there between our church members and our community?” but,

² Kevyn Harris, in appendix four, has written an excellent article on this issue.

“How much proclamation or spreading of the full gospel is going on to non-Christians in the midst of all the interaction?”

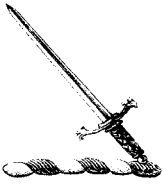
From the idea “evangelism is a process”, a host of variants have arisen to fuel the confusion. For example:

- *Relationship* evangelism (where building a relationship with a non-Christian is equated to evangelism).
- *Hospitality* evangelism (where we invite non-Christians to join us for a meal).
- *Apologetics* evangelism (where we debate critical issues with non-Christians).
- *Sports* evangelism (where we play sport with non-Christians).
- *Workplace* evangelism (where we hope our behaviour at work will draw someone closer to Christ).
- *Prayer* evangelism (where we pray for people to be saved).
- *Penetration* evangelism (where Christians venture into non-Christian territory and begin mixing with them).
- *Kindness* evangelism (where Christians are involved in child sponsorship and acts of kindness such as putting money in parking meters).
- *Natural* evangelism (where we talk about God when the conversation naturally arises).
- *Servant* evangelism (where we serve the community where we live, and in doing so attract them to us, and so to Christ).



I beg you not to misunderstand me here. If you run a ministry in one of the areas above, and you have called your ministry by the name of one of these things, or written a book on the topic, you are not being criticised. God forbid. I honour your work and your contribution. In writing about this confusion, I am holding out to you strategies and insights from heaven which are intended to cause your ministry to surge in its fruitfulness and effectiveness.

So here is the strategy. To avoid the confusion, why don't we categorise all these variants as *pathways to evangelism*, or *doorways* which open up to us the possibility of doing evangelism,



or *ploughing activities which till the soil of the human heart* to prepare it to receive the seed of the gospel, rather than labelling them *as* evangelism? Without doubt, building relationships, hospitality, apologetics, outreach through sports, workplace interaction, prayer, penetrating our communities for Christ, showing kindness, bringing up conversations about Christ naturally, and serving our communities are all behaviours which open up for us the possibility of doing evangelism. Each holds the potential to make evangelism a whole lot easier. Just imagine how much more effective our evangelism would be if all Christians were passionate about these behaviours!

Let's stop fuelling the confusion...

Unintentionally, however, connecting the word “evangelism” with these brilliant outreach initiatives has fuelled confusion, which in turn has hindered the proclamation of the gospel. Many of those practising them have thought that in doing them they were evangelising. So, how do we correct this misunderstanding?

There are several strategies from heaven that we can implement immediately. First, it would be biblically accurate if the pyramid I mentioned earlier was modified to emphasise the need to proclaim the gospel *at some point* prior to a decision. This would affirm the truth that evangelism *is a specific event within the process of drawing a non-Christian to Christ*.

Some examples of how easily the confusion can spread...

Here are two examples of how this device is spread.

One friend recently said: “Think of evangelism as links in a chain, each link moving your friend closer to Christ. For most people it takes many links, many people, and many experiences to prepare their hearts for a life-changing commitment to Christ.” Another friend produced a glossy brochure advertising an evangelism conference. “Evangelism is not an event,” they wrote. “It is a process, a life commitment... we need to understand the importance of



process. God works by drawing each individual person in many different ways, allowing them to grasp the reality of His love and the change only He can make. This process involves all of us, because we are the tangible tools He uses.”



This is how the angel of light works. He mixes truth and error...

It all sounds so right, but when we examine my friend’s comment closely, and the advertisement, in the light of the biblical definition of evangelism, we raise a red flag. They both, of course, contain truth. That’s what makes the enemy’s devices so hard to detect.

For example, it is true that evangelism is a life commitment and that we need to understand the importance of process. It’s true that many experiences prepare the hearts of non-Christians for a life-changing experience. It’s true that God does work by drawing each person differently, allowing him or her to grasp the reality of His love and the change only He can make. It is true that this process involves all of us. There is no doubt we are the tangible tools He uses. The error is that evangelism is being communicated as a process, not an event.

So what can we do to retain these truths and yet eliminate the errors and all the confusion? This is where model “The six steps to drawing a non-Christian to Christ” kicks in.

THE SIX STEPS TO DRAWING A NON-CHRISTIAN TO CHRIST.

In His grace, God has given us a model which has helped the church neutralise many of the devil’s devices. The model is called the “Six steps to drawing a non-Christian to Christ”. We designed a 3m x 1m ceiling to floor banner which shows these six steps in picture form. With this banner:

- Every ministry in a church is honoured and esteemed, which is so important.
- Every ministry can see where it fits in relation to the big picture, which is drawing non-Christians to Christ.

- Churches are given a powerful, visual, and easy to understand picture of their mission and the reason they exist.

The ideal is to have these banners hang prominently at the front of churches. They act like a spiritual compass, helping to keep a church “on track” and focussed.³



Drawing a non-Christian to Christ is, indeed, a process...

Drawing a non-Christian to Christ is a process with six steps, only one of which is actually evangelism.

<i>Six steps to drawing a non-Christian to Christ</i>		
Step one	Ploughing	Any influence upon a non-Christian which makes him or her more open to Christianity and receiving Christ.
Step two	Sowing	Proclaiming or spreading the whole gospel.
Step three	Watering	Same as ploughing except it happens after sowing has taken place.
Step four	Growing	The supernatural work of God to bring non-Christians to the point where they are ready to be harvested.
Step five	Harvesting	Inviting non-Christians to convert to Christianity. Those who accept our invitation are harvested.
Step six	Discipling	Bringing new believers to full maturity in Christ.

Evangelism is the sowing step – a specific event *within* the process. These six steps are sequential. For example, in the natural realm a farmer must plough the ground before he plants the seed. After planting the seed he must water the ground and perhaps fertilise it. Then he has the joy of watching his crop grow. When the crop is ready, he harvests it.

These metaphors are all through the Bible...

Five of the metaphors⁴ I use in this model, borrowed from the world of agriculture, are peppered through the Bible. Each describes a certain aspect



3 To view a picture of this banner, please visit www.esisite.com where you will see one advertised on the home page.

4 The only non-agricultural term is “discipleship.” This term is used frequently in the New Testament.



“Evangelism is the sowing step - a specific event within the process.”

of the process of drawing a non-Christian to Christ.

Ploughing, for example, the first step in the process, is alluded to in 1 Corinthians 9:10. “When the ploughman ploughs and the

thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest ...” Paul is using the agricultural terms *ploughing* and *threshing* to describe spiritual realities. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 3:6 he uses the terms *watered* and *planted* to represent part of the process of drawing a non-Christian to Christ: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.”



Regarding “sowing,” Peter uses the agricultural metaphor when he calls the gospel message seed: “...being born again, not of corruptible seed” 1 Peter 1:23 (KJV). And Jesus Himself likens the message to seed in Luke 8. In the parable of the seed and the sower, He compares the human heart to *soil* and good works as the *crop*: “But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop” (Luke 8:15).

The lunacy of continually ploughing and never planting seed...

The same imagery occurs in the Old Testament, for example in Isaiah 28:23-26. *“Listen and hear My voice; pay attention and hear what I say. When a farmer ploughs for planting, does he plough continually? Does he keep breaking up and harrowing the soil? When he has levelled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cumin? Does he not sow wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? His God instructs him and teaches him the right way... this comes from the Lord of*



“Isaiah 28:23-26 also alludes to the lunacy of the person who continually ploughs - prays and fasts for the lost, or worships frequently in a church, or does works of service - but never plants the seed of the gospel.”

hosts who has made His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great.”

This passage is actually speaking about Judah and the Lord’s judgment of that nation. But it also alludes to the lunacy of the person who continually ploughs – prays and fasts for the lost, worships frequently in a church, or does works of service – but never plants the seed of the gospel.

Taken together, these agricultural metaphors help us to understand not only how non-Christians are drawn to Christ, but also where each person and ministry in the Church fits into the process.

How this model will help pastors and leaders...

The six-step model above clarifies which Christian activities are evangelism and which are not. But it also has other benefits



First, it honours every local church ministry.

Literally every ministry in a church will fit into one or more of these six steps. For example “counselling” would be a “ploughing” ministry if the people they are dealing with have not heard the gospel. If they have heard the gospel, the counselling becomes a “watering” exercise.

The counsellor might have an opportunity to share gospel with someone. In this case, they are “sowing.”

Leading Bible studies for believers would be a “discipling” ministry, and so on. Here’s the thing - ***what’s missing from most churches is an explanation of how each of the ministries of the church fit into the the big picture.*** The big picture is drawing non-Christians to Christ.

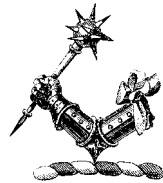
When NASA was building a rocket to land a man on the moon, literally thousands of people were involved from astronauts, to engineers, all the way down to people cleaning the toilets. Everyone knew their part, but they also all knew the big picture which was to be the first nation in the world to have a man walk on the moon. If they didn’t know the big picture, their work would

have lacked meaning and purpose.

Likewise, everyone in a local church must know their part, and they *must* know it in relation to the big picture. With the six-step model, people in a local church can see clearly where their ministry or gifting fits into the process of drawing non-Christians to Christ. This six-step model makes it clear.

Second, it helps us stay focused on our priority and purpose.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the banner with the six steps printed on it is like a spiritual compass for a local church. It helps the church stay focussed on true north. And what happens to people on a journey who don't have a compass? You know the answer.



Sadly, many churches in the West have lost their way.

They have lost sight of:

- the big picture which is to draw non-Christians to Christ.
- the mission of the Church which is to evangelise the world.
- the purpose of the Church which is to make disciples.
- the motive which is to glorify God.

These are what I call “the big four” or true north on the Spiritual compass.

Week after week, month after month, year after year, these lost churches find themselves just going through the motions i.e. their people come to church, sing three fast one, two slow ones, listen to a message, put something in the offering, listen to some notices, and finish with a cup of tea and muffin down the back. They don't stop and ask the question “What's this all for?” or “Why are we doing this?”




With respect to “the big four” these churches have no clear cohesive, definable strategy in place to draw non-Christians to Christ. There is no on-going training to

equip their people to evangelise the world, and no accountability for the same. They wouldn't know whether their people are evangelising or not. Finally, in these churches "discipleship" is just a vague and fuzzy smorgasboard of spiritual activity where church members get to pick and choose what they want and don't want. Like cows in a field, they casually and randomly graze from one clump of spiritual grass to the next.



In this respect, Jesus was utterly different. He "discipled" the disciples for a specific reason. And what was that reason? To evangelise the world and show them how to draw non-Christians to Himself (Luke 19:10). For Him, He set His face like flint on the "the big four".

The six step model will help your church find truth north again, which will in turn get it  fizzing!

*"The devil doesn't want leaders
and evangelists to see and
understand the six-step model."*

It will also be a huge help for Christians in the work place as well. It helps them see

that they are missionaries, with specific and strategic Christian tasks to perform at work i.e. what can I do to "plough" the heart of my fellow workers? How can I create opportunities to "sow" the seed of the gospel into each of their hearts? What can I do to "water" those seeds? etc.

For example, Keith Wilson in New South Wales, Australia, works the six steps into his job. Keith is part of the staff of a Bible College. On the property is Tahlee House and the heritage site. Bus loads of non-Christian tourists flock to see this site.

Keith has been "wise as a serpent, gentle as a dove." After showing the guests through the buildings and surrounds, he takes them through a high quality Power Point presentation of its history.

At the end he simply says something like, “*Thank you ladies and gentleman for coming today. I hope you enjoyed the presentaton and the tour. As you know, this is a Bible College and the staff here are all Christians.*

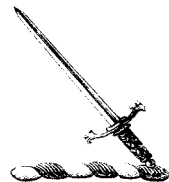


A short video has been developed which summarises this entire book (holding up a Bible) in eleven minutes. Most of the tourists who have seen it comment on how they have enjoyed it and how informative it was. If you would like to see this eleven-minute presentation, please stay behind. For those who have others things to do, please feel free to leave at this point. There is a complimentary high tea lunch next door starting in fifteen minutes.” Keith reports that nearly all of the people stay.⁵

At the end he does not have an altar call, but gives everyone a little booklet which expands on the gospel presentation just seen.⁶ Keith is an example of a clear-thinking Christian who knows the purpose and priority of the Church. He is seeing the opportunities and making the most of them.

The tour of the historical site and the Power Point show are examples of “ploughing.” When he presents the gospel he is “sowing.” The high tea lunch is an example of “watering.” Why don’t you follow Keith’s excellent example and incorporate gospel proclamation into all your church programs and activities?

Third, the six step model helps leaders in their planning and praying by showing them where the strengths and weaknesses of their churches lie. For example, it helps them see where evangelism is taking place in their church programme, and where it is not. If your church has meetings where non-Christians are present, you ought to regularly proclaim



5 Keith is working on ways of increasing the number of people who stay behind. Please pray for this excellent initiative. See www.tahlee.org

6 The gospel presentation and follow up booklets are available from www.esisite.com. The follow up booklet is called “How to be sure of going to heaven when we die.”

the gospel there.⁷ Even if the vast majority of people attending a meeting are Christians, there are still valid reasons to proclaim from time to time.



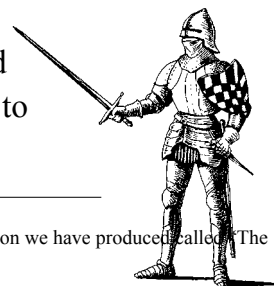
Four good reasons to proclaim the gospel regularly in your church services...

One: You will be equipping your people. Many Christians don't know what "the gospel" is anymore, because many churches have stopped proclaiming it. We need to remind them regularly of its content. This prepares them to give the gospel to non-Christians with whom they mix. It also signals that this message is at the core of our faith.

Two: You will encourage Christians to bring non-Christians to church. Christians who know that a clear, succinct, relevant, uncompromising, gracious, balanced gospel message is being proclaimed at their church are far more likely to bring their non-Christian friends along to hear it. There is a real place, of course, for sermons which strengthen Christians. But if that is all there ever is, you'll unwittingly hinder evangelism.

Three: It will bring the focus back to where it ought to be. It directs us back to the priority of world evangelism (i.e. our mission) and helps refocus churches which have unwittingly strayed from this priority. When church leaders examine the ministries of their church in light of this six-step model, the vast majority quickly discover they have drifted into the modes of ploughing, watering and discipling. Sowing is either absent or sorely neglected.

Four: You will see pseudo converts saved. There are people already in local churches that look and sound "saved" but they are not.⁸ Plus, one never knows just who is sitting in church. Just before I was about to preach in a church I was once visiting, I leaned over to the pastor and said, "Do you want me to present the gospel at the end of my message?"



7 An ideal option to proclaim the gospel is the 11 minute gospel presentation we have produced called "The Gospel Message!" available from www.esisite.com.

8 I discuss this issue in detail in chapter 20.

He replied, “I think we’ll be okay this morning. I have had a look at who is here and it’s all the regulars.”

A few minutes later he leaned over again and said, “Actually, it wouldn’t hurt to the gospel message video. I would like my people to see it again. Go for it!” At the end of the service, I presented the gospel. Five people responded for salvation in a congregation of 100. One was a 64-year-old man who had been going to the church for sixteen years. Two were visitors who had slipped into the back of the church after the service had started. The other two were young people who had come to church for the first time with other young people in existing church families.



Of course the devil doesn’t want leaders and evangelists to see and understand the six-step model. He certainly does not want church members to know how their church life activities fit into the big picture of drawing non-Christians to Christ. And undoubtedly he wants to perpetuate the lie that evangelism is a process. Now let’s look at each of the six steps in detail.

1. Ploughing

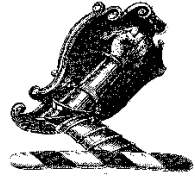
God uses at least five ways to “plough” the soil of the human heart - that is, to prepare people to receive the gospel and to receive Him. He will use:

1. Christian actions such as giving out food parcels, prayer, intercession, worship, fasting, making friends with non-Christians, setting up community projects, inviting people to church, giving a testimony, talking with people about God over coffee, apologetics, Christian counselling, dreams, visions, and so on
2. Creation (Romans 1:20)
3. Conscience (Romans 2:15)
4. The Law (Galatians 3:24)
5. Pain and difficult times (e.g. Psalm



119:67)

The goal of ploughing is to create the right heart conditions in non-Christians so that when they hear the gospel and understand it, they will receive it with joy. The contribution of those involved in ploughing ministries is vital and cannot be overstated. After all, unploughed ground will not yield a harvest. The following is a recent example from my own experience which illustrates how our behaviour as Christians can “plough” the soil of the hearts of non-Christians to make them more open to Christianity and to receiving Christ.



How returning some sunglasses ploughed the ground...

One morning, I set out to buy a new pair of sunglasses. I wanted a good quality pair, but decided to visit a second-hand shop to see if I could snaffle a bargain. It was about 9:30am when I arrived at the shop. The weather was fine, warm and still; and sitting outside were two people enjoying a cup of tea and a cigarette. They looked relaxed and in no hurry, and so pulling my iphone from my pocket, I approached the older of the two people. She was a woman in her forties.

Me: (smiling and casual) “Excuse me. I wonder if you can help me?”

Betty: (smiling and drawing on her cigarette) “Sure.”

Me: “What’s the best selling book in the world?”

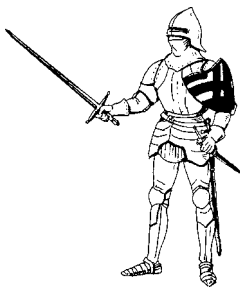
Betty: “Don’t know. What is it?”

Me: “It’s the Bible. We just make a video which summarises the whole book in 11 minutes. Here, have a look”
(handing her my iphone)

Betty: “I don’t want to be rude or anything, but I would rather not do this. I am not religious and I don’t really want to know about Christianity. Is that okay?”

Me: (smiling) “Sure, no problem. Hey, you have a good day.”

I left these two people on good terms and entered the second-hand shop, soon finding two pairs of sunglasses that I liked. I couldn’t decide which pair to choose and so I decided to ask the person behind



the counter if I could pay for both and take them to a friend who worked nearby as an optometrist. She would know which pair best suited the shape of my face. So I walked to the sales person, two pairs of sunglasses in hand. The assistant was the person whom I had tried to “love with the gospel” outside the shop only a few minutes earlier. It turned out she was the manager. We exchanged some small talk as I paid for the glasses with a credit card. One pair was \$59 and the other \$20. I left the shop and went to see the optometrist. She thought the \$20 pair looked best.



I returned promptly to the second hand shop and the manager credited my card for \$59. I thanked her and left the shop. As I was driving along, I soon became aware that the glasses were top quality. I remember thinking to myself, “Wow, these glasses are amazing. They seem so light and the view they give is fantastic.”

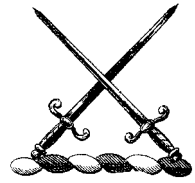
I stopped the car on the side of the road to inspect them more closely. When I read the inscription on the inside of one of the arms I got really excited – *Giorgio Armani!* Yes, I had bought a pair of Giorgio Armani sunglasses for \$20. I soon sobered up. “Those glasses shouldn’t have been \$20. They should have been about \$200 second-hand. I inspected the little box that the manager had given me. Inside was the original price tag - \$419.

Just then my mobile phone rang. I told my friend on the other end about the sunglasses. She replied, “Don’t worry about it. That shop is always ripping people off by buying stuff from people desperate for money and then on-selling the goods for a huge profit. Keep them and enjoy them!” I hung up the phone and thought about the situation. I knew I would never be able to enjoy those glasses if they were not completely and honestly mine.



If the shopkeeper had made a mistake, and I didn’t

return them, the glasses would not be “fantastic” no matter what brand they were or how expensive they were. I already knew in my heart that I did not want to displease Jesus.



Furthermore, holding onto the glasses would wreck my Bible reading, because my conscience would plague me. So after finding the phone number of the shop from the sales docket, I rang the manager.

Betty: “Good morning, Cash Converters. Can I help you?”

Me: “Hi. My name is Julian. I am the guy that just bought a pair of sunglasses from you...”

Betty: (cutting me off in mid sentence) “Yeah, what’s the problem?”

Me: “I don’t think they are a \$20 pair of sunglasses.”

Betty: “Yes, they are. They are \$20. You got them off the rack of \$20 glasses.”

She was a little defensive, as though I were accusing her of charging me too much.

Me: “No, I don’t think they are \$20. You see, I just looked on the inside of one of the arms on the frame and it says *Giorgio Armani*.”

Betty: (after a prolonged pause) “Okay... you’d better come back to the shop.”

Me: “Okay. See you in a minute.”

When I entered the shop the manager was waiting eagerly. I handed her the glasses, and she quickly inspected the inside of the frame. She looked up and called to one of the sales assistants. He came over and I realised he was the person who had been sitting with the manager outside the shop during a break thirty minutes earlier.

Betty: (loudly) “Get those glasses over there sorted out! They are all mixed up! We just about sold a \$150 pair of sunglasses for \$20!”
(Turning to me and smiling) “Thank you for returning these.”



The sales assistant took the glasses and scuttled off in the direction of the glasses case. I followed him, curious to see the price of the other “expensive” glasses. Under his breath, and looking furtively over his shoulder to make sure the manager was not listening, he said, “No one ever returns things if they paid too little!” Not seeing any other glasses that I liked, I returned to the manager and told her that I would still like to buy the *Giorgio Armani* glasses. I handed her my credit card. She swiped it and charged another \$130 to my account. As she handed me the sales docket, the other assistant returned and stood beside the manager. I reached into my back pocket and pulled out two booklets. The booklets explained what a Christian was and how to become one.



“God has only commissioned us to preach the gospel to all nations; the results belong to Him.” ¹²

Me: (offering the books to the manager and her assistant, and speaking gently) “Here. Have one of these. They explain what a Christian is and how to be forgiven.”



Betty: (smiling and extending her hand to receive the booklet). “Thank you. Look, I really appreciate your coming back with those glasses. I am going to read this.”

The assistant: (also smiling) “Yeah, thanks, me too.”

We shook hands, said our goodbyes and I left the shop. I can’t describe the joy and peace that flooded my soul as I walked out. I had paid a lot more for those sunglasses than I ever wanted to, but I knew the act of returning them had “ploughed” the hearts of the manager and her assistant so they were open to Christianity and to receiving Jesus.


2. Sowing

“Sowing” is the proclamation or spread of the gospel. It is explaining to non-Christians why they must be saved, how Jesus can save them, what they must do to be saved, and the cost of discipleship.

Where does the Bible teach about “sowing” and “seed?” Earlier in this chapter, I referred to passages in 1 Peter and Luke, where

Jesus explained that the seed is the Word of God.

“Sowing” is the second and most crucial component of the Great Commission.⁹




The opposite extreme, however, is to never invite someone to consider a commitment.

3. Watering

“Watering” activities are the things Christians do that provide favourable conditions for the seed of the gospel to grow. They are the same as “ploughing” activities except that they happen *after* someone has heard the gospel. Both seek to improve the likelihood of the seed taking root. That is, they move the non-Christian closer to the point of conversion. The apostle Paul recognised the importance of this:

“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow” (1 Corinthians 3:6).

It is easy to water the seed of the gospel once it has been planted. Recently I went into a café with a friend to present the gospel. I was training my friend to evangelise, and chose this café because it was empty. The staff members of empty cafés are often likely to have time to hear the



“Instead of understanding that it is God alone who convicts, we can be deceived into thinking it is we who must save people.”



gospel. The conversation went something like this:

Me: “Just two coffees thanks – lattes, please.”

Staff member: “No problem.”

Me: (in a friendly way) “Hey, who is the manager here?”

Staff member: “It’s me, actually. How can I help?”

Me: (smiling and holding up my iphone) “Can I ask you a question. What’s the best selling book in the world etc.” She accepted my invitation to watch the video.

After she had made my coffee, she enthusiastically watched the

9 The four basic components of the Great Commission are going, sowing, baptising, discipling.



video. At the end, she confessed she was going to hell. I prayed with her and gave her a follow-up booklet. She then went back to work.

When I went to pay the bill it came to seven dollars. I handed her a \$10 note and said, “Please keep the change. You were very gracious to give us your time and let us take you through that presentation. Thanks for helping us.”

This is one simple way of “watering” the seed we have planted. Another is to clear the plates off the table for the staff and take them to the servery.



“Watering” is an essential part of the process of drawing non-Christians to Christ. When people have heard the gospel message, do we just put our feet up and sigh with relief? No! We need to be more zealous than ever in giving out food parcels, praying, interceding, worshipping, fasting, making friends, setting up community projects, inviting people to church, giving a testimony, talking with people about God over coffee, serving, counselling and so on.

“Harvesting is gathering into the Church - the body of Christ - those who have been convicted and grown by the Holy Spirit.”

4. Growing

“Growing” is the supernatural work of God to grow the seed of the gospel – that is, to save people. Only God can do this. It is His sovereign work to convict non-believers of the truth of the gospel message that they have heard. Scripture tells us the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are involved in this process: “When He [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8). While the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment, the Father draws the non-Christian to Himself. “...For this reason I have told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted by the Father” (John 6:65). Then there is John 12:32 “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

Only God can grow the seed of the gospel...

Read carefully what theologians have said about growing the seed of the gospel.

**Dr Leon Morris:**

“Left to ourselves, we continue in sin. It is only as God does a work of grace in us that we have the desire and the strength to turn away from evil and respond to the message of salvation. People come to Jesus not because they are gifted with unusual spiritual perception, but because it is ‘given’ them from the Father. The whole of our salvation, from start to finish, is a work of God.”¹⁰

Dr Michael Green:

“[Fruitfulness in evangelism] is something which depends entirely...on the work of the Holy Spirit. All is the Spirit’s work, not ours. That must never be forgotten. We can speak the challenge, urge



“The blue print is for all six steps to flourish. But if we neglect sowing, the penalty is severest of all.”



alone.”¹¹

and encourage as we will, but we are ...unable to bring anyone ‘from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God’ (Acts 26:18).

That is God’s sovereign work

Dr John Stott:

“God has only commissioned us to preach the gospel to all nations; the results belong to Him.”¹²

Huh? If God wants everyone saved, and only God can save people, how come not everyone ends up being saved?

Dr William Barclay explains why some people do



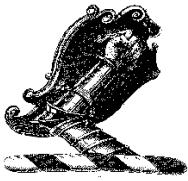
“God will not honour our efforts to skip ‘sowing’ – the priority – by focussing only on ‘ploughing.’”



10 Dr Leon Morris. *Reflections On The Gospel Of John. Volume 2: The Bread Of Life. John 6-10.* Baker Books, 1987, p.248

11 Dr Michael Green. *Evangelism Through The Local Church.* London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1990, p.10

12 Dr John R.W. Stott. *Christian Mission.* IVP, 1975, p.38



not become Christians, even after they have heard the full gospel.

“Jesus was well aware that there were those who would not only reject His offer but who would also reject it with hostility. Jesus had insight into human nature. He could read [people’s] hearts; and the greatest responsibility of the human heart is that there is a core over which we and we alone have control. No one can accept Jesus unless he is moved by the Spirit of God to do so, but... a person can resist that Spirit, and such a one is not shut out by God; he is shut out by himself.”¹³

Barclay, Stott, Green and Morris are explaining the interplay between the drawing power of God and the free will of the person who has heard the gospel.

The devil would like us to forget it is only God who can save people. Instead of understanding that it is God alone who convicts, we can be deceived into thinking it is *we* who must save people. In chapter one we discussed how our efforts in the battle are hindered when we perceive evangelism as the winning of souls.

Never inviting non-Christians to come to Christ is wrong too...

The opposite extreme, however, is to never invite someone to consider a commitment. The reason many people don’t come to Christ is because we don’t invite them! We need to be looking, praying and expecting to bring people to the point of decision after we have presented the gospel. I do this by asking two questions:

“Is there any reason why you shouldn’t turn and surrender right now?”

If they say “no” to this question I ask a second:

“Would you like to turn and surrender right now?”

If they say “yes” I pray the sinner’s prayer with them and lead them to Christ.¹⁴ But I don’t stop there.

13 Dr William Barclay, *John*. Volume 1. Edinburgh, Saint Andrews Press, 2001, p.236

14 This prayer is in the follow up booklet “How To Be Sure Of Going To Heaven When We Die” which you can purchase at www.esisite.com

Always give away a follow up booklet which synchronises with your gospel presentation...

Say the non-Christian I have just led to the Lord is called Bill. To avoid the twin disasters of “easy believe-ism” and “pseudo conversions” I say, “Bill, I believe the prayer you just said was genuine. I believe it came right from your heart and it was sincere. But I can’t see into your heart, and you can’t see into mine. I can’t be sure of what was going on in your heart. Here is a little booklet I would like to give you (showing Bill the booklet). In the middle section (showing the middle section) there are seven questions and a genuineness test. If you read carefully through this section, you will be able to tell whether your turning and surrendering to Jesus really was sincere.”

Be discerning...

There are provisos with this advice. First, in a one-on-one situation it is not always appropriate to ask these two questions. We must discern each situation, case by case, and be led by the Spirit.

Secondly, if I am proclaiming the gospel in a crowd situation, I always give an altar call. This is because, unlike in a one-on-one situation, it is even more difficult to discern what the Holy Spirit is doing in the heart of each individual.

5. Harvesting

Harvesting is gathering into the Church – the body of Christ – those who have been convicted and grown by the Holy Spirit. Harvesting is reaping what has been ploughed, sown, watered and grown. In essence, it is any situation where a non-Christian accepts Jesus as Saviour and Lord and joins the Church.¹⁵ Non-Christians are harvested into the Church in two ways:

- a. *By a sovereign act of God.* For example, imagine a Muslim lady who lives in the middle of Iran where there is no Christian in any direction for 500 kilometres. One night Jesus appears to her in a dream and she converts to Christianity.

¹⁵ By “the Church” I mean that body of believers on earth who have also accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. And yes, it’s good for them to identify with a local church and join in.



- b. *By human invitation.* This is what happens at altar calls, for example, or during personal evangelism.

6. *Discipling*

Discipling is bringing the souls that have been harvested to spiritual maturity so that the cycle of six steps continues to flourish. In the main, this is the job of the local church.

Why sowing is a critical step...

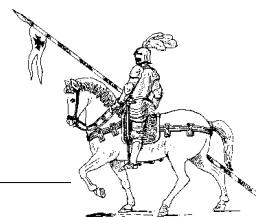
It goes without saying that if we neglect any of the five steps over which we have control,¹⁶ the consequences will be disastrous. The biblical blueprint is for all six steps to flourish. But if we neglect sowing, the penalty is severest of all.

In the natural realm, if a farmer sows little seed he will get a small harvest, no matter how diligent and masterful his ploughing.

It is the same in the supernatural realm. Given that little sowing of the gospel is going on, I don't anticipate a great harvest. Presuming to expect a harvest without planting seed is not faith but folly.

Imagine a wheat farmer who spends all his time diligently ploughing and fertilising his fields, building sophisticated irrigation systems, cleaning his farm equipment and devising pest-management programmes. He is also a devoted and disciplined Christian.

One year he gets the idea that "by faith" he is going to ask God for a crop of wheat without planting any seed. He is certain that if he prays and fasts, worships with fervour in his house,



A A A

*"The most humble person
is not the quietest person
but the one who most
closely imitates Jesus."*

¹⁶ There is one step we do not have ultimate control over: growing.

and continues preparing his fields faithfully, he will wake up one day and see a healthy crop of wheat in his well-ploughed fields.



Is this farmer a spiritual giant or is he a fool? We know the answer. Here's the thing: there is no



“Prayer and means [gospel proclamation] must go together. Means without prayer – presumption. Prayer without means – hypocrisy!”

Charles Spurgeon.

difference between this farmer and the modern Church if the Church focusses only on ploughing, plants no seed, and still expects a great influx of souls. The devil laughs with delight when he sees us living in spiritual la la land. In short, we are fools if we think we can get away without sowing.

What's the lesson here? **Keep “The Big Four” firmly in focus in your church!**

Dean Comerford, a colleague in New Zealand and friend in the ministry, made an astute comment: “When it comes to revival,” he said, “we are all waiting around on earth praying for God to do the miraculous, while God is in heaven waiting for us to do the obvious.”

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. People reap what they sow” (Galatians 6:7).

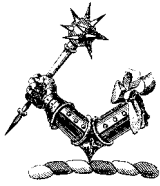


“Every revival in the history of the modern world has been grounded in an explosion of prayer and evangelism.”

George Barna

Another reason why God does not instantly convert everyone...

Sometimes people have asked me, “If God is the only one who can convert people, then, for heaven's sake, why doesn't He just do it? It's so easy for Him, so hard for us. Why can't we just move from ploughing to harvest? Couldn't God save us the effort and sovereignly convert everyone, irrespective of whether they have heard the gospel?”



Aside from the issue of breaking the law of sowing and reaping, there is another reason why God will not bring a harvest of souls into the Church without the proclamation of the gospel: He will not honour disobedience. “Your word, O Lord, is established in the heavens. It shall not be moved” (Psalm 119:89). According to scholar **A. A. Anderson**, the phrase “Your word” is an expression of God’s all-embracing purpose and will, and it is fixed for all time.¹⁷ “You must not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it...” (Deuteronomy 4:2).

The New Testament continues the theme: “Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

The command for the whole Church to go to the whole world with the whole gospel still stands. God will not honour our efforts to skip “sowing” – the priority – by focussing only on “ploughing.”

Without sowing, we will never inherit the fulness of God’s blessing and the non-Christian world will not be as impacted as it could be. Sowing is the task of the Church, and the redemption of the world and the salvation of sinners really depends on our obedience.

I believe God is in heaven crying out to the angels, “When will My people do as I commanded them? I long to save those who hear My gospel.¹⁸ I will not go back on My command in Mark 16:15.¹⁹ Once those that don’t know Me hear the gospel, I will honour My Word by drawing them, for My word will not return void.²⁰ Holy Spirit, I know You long to go to those who hear, and convict them so they might be saved.²¹ I long to bring about an end-time harvest of souls into My Kingdom²² but I will not until My Church sows the field of the world with the gospel.”



17 Arnold Anderson. *The Book Of Psalms: Volume II*. Greenwood: Attic, 1972, pp.831-2

18 2 Peter 3:9. Luke 15. The lost sheep, the lost son, and the lost penny. John 3:16

19 Psalm 119:89

20 Isaiah 55:10-11

21 John 16:8

22 Mark 4:29

Paul the Apostle made a passionate plea to the church in Rome not to neglect sowing. “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news?’” (Romans 10:14-15.)



Amos goes on to say that to neglect any command of God can threaten our intimacy with Him. This threat becomes more acute when the command neglected is His priority. Amos 3:3 says, “How can two walk together unless they be agreed?”

If we in the Church disagree with God about the priority (and clearly, judging by the collapse of personal evangelism in the West, we do disagree with Him), guess who needs to change?

What is humility..?

Many who desperately want to see a harvest of souls into the Church quote 2 Chronicles 7:14;

“If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Often when leaders explain this verse, they emphasise the need for radical prayer and turning away from sin, repentance, confession, holiness, seeking God’s face, fasting, worship, meditation, silence, etc - all great strategies and weapons in the battle for souls - but how often do we hear about the *humility* of which this verse speaks? Humility is simply doing things God’s way. The most humble person is not the quietest person but the one who most closely obeys Jesus.

Proclaiming the gospel was a core behaviour for Jesus. A big part of true humility, then, is to imitate Jesus’ evangelistic lifestyle.

To return to the priority of evangelism would be an act not only of humility but also of repentance. It is futile to pray for a great harvest of souls and yet not go to them with the gospel, the instrument God has ordained to bring about their salvation (Romans 1:16).



Keep prayer and proclamation together...

Charles Spurgeon wrote: “Prayer and means [gospel proclamation] must go together. Means without prayer is presumption. Prayer without means is hypocrisy!”²³

“Preaching the gospel is spiritual chemistry,” writes Evangelist **Reinhard Bonnke**. “Prayer brings power but preaching releases it. Preaching the gospel is like plugging into a power socket. The gospel cannot be used until it is spoken. Proclamation is absolutely part of the divine plan. People are saved in no other way.”²⁴

Answer your own prayers...

Once there was a wealthy farmer who lived in a country where there was a famine. He used to conduct family prayers in the house every day and used to pray that God would help the poor people who had not enough to eat. One day after prayers, his young son said to him, “Father, I wish I had some of your corn.” “Why do you wish that?” said the farmer. “Because,” said the son, “if I had, I would answer your prayers.” The boy was quite right. The farmer prayed to God to help the starving people and he could well have helped them himself.²⁵

So, you want revival...?

History shows us that if we want revival, or a great influx of souls into the Church, all six steps in the model I have discussed here must flourish.

According to **George Barna**, every revival in the history of the modern world has been grounded in an explosion of prayer *and*

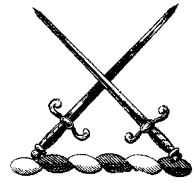
23 Charles H. Spurgeon. *The Soul Winner*. Grand Rapids. Zondervan, 1948, p.140

24 Reinhard Bonnke. *Evangelism By Fire. Igniting Your Passion For The Lost*. Kingsway Publication, 1996, p.125

25 Cited in: Dr William Barclay. *Ambassador For Christ*. The Saint Andrew Press, 1973, p.70

evangelism.²⁶

Dr William Hendriksen and **Dr John Piper** are two leaders who issue a stern warning as we consider the cost of neglecting sowing.



Dr William Hendriksen: “The Spirit is working mightily, always in connection with the Word, the gospel.”²⁷

Dr John Piper writes: “[The gospel] is the weapon that God designed to use in penetrating the kingdom of darkness and gathering the children of light from all the nations (Acts 26:16-18). His whole redemptive plan for the universe hangs on the success of His Word. If the proclamation of the Word aborts, the purposes of God fail.”²⁸

Missiologist and author **Dr Donald McGavran** pleads with church leaders to understand and act on what people like **Barna**, **Piper** and **Hendriksen** are saying. “Every expansion of the Church in all ages,” he writes, “has depended upon the Word being spread by believing Christians of all ranks.”²⁹

Evangelising the world is very achievable...

Evangelising the nation you live in is achievable.³⁰ Take New Zealand for example.

If there are 250,000 genuine Christians in New Zealand with its population of about 5 million, and each were to proclaim the gospel to *one* non-Christian every week, we could see New Zealand evangelised in twenty weeks.

Say Australia has a population of 20 million, and one million genuine believers, they too could evangelise their nation in 20 weeks.

Say Britain has six million genuine believers out of 60 million, they could evangelise their nation in a sizzling *ten* weeks.

On a global scale, if all born-again believers mobilised in this way, the proclaimers would not only evangelise those who were already

26 George Barna. *Evangelism That Works*. Regal, 1995, p.23

27 William Hendriksen. *Mark. New Testament Commentary*. Banner of Truth Trust, 1975, p.168

28 Dr John Piper. *Let The Nations Be Glad. The Supremacy Of God In Missions*. IVP, 2003, pp.64-65

29 Dr Donald McGavran. *Effective Evangelism*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing. New Jersey, 1988, p.50

30 By “evangelising” I mean ensuring that everyone in the nation has heard and understood clearly the words of the full gospel, delivered graciously and sensitively by a Christian.

living in no time at all, but our proclamation efforts would easily outstrip population growth. And if they hear it multiple times? Well and good.

Our ploughing efforts so far have not been wasted...

All our efforts so far through ploughing may *not* have been wasted – if we now go and sow the seed of the gospel. Our faithful, relentless ploughing has been great preparation. There has never been a time when New Zealand and the Western countries to which I've travelled have been more ready to receive the gospel. The following story goes some way to prove statistically that New Zealand, at least, is ripe for sowing the gospel and that our efforts with ploughing have not been wasted.

Introverted nurse becomes prolific proclaimer...

In 1999 a 23-year-old nurse attended one of my evangelism seminars at a Baptist church in New Zealand. “Adelle,” as we'll call her, was a self-confessed introvert. About six months after the seminar I received a phone call.

Me: “Good morning. Julian speaking.”

Adelle: “Hi, my name is Adelle. You won't remember me but I attended your seminar two years ago at Napier Baptist church.”

Me: “Great! How have you been getting on, Adelle?”

Adelle: “Well, I attended your seminar because I wanted to say to God at the end of my life that I had given the gospel to at least one person. When I attended your seminar, I was so shy I couldn't even speak to people at church. I sat right down the back so I wouldn't be noticed.”

Me: “How have you got on? Have you managed to achieve your goal and reach that one person?”

Adelle: “Yes, I have.”

Me: “How wonderful! What happened?”

Adelle: “It went really well. I so felt that God was with me that I wanted to try to give the gospel to a second person right away, which I did. That encounter was even better than the first, and so I thought I'd give the gospel to someone else.”

Me: “God bless you! So you reached a few people then?”

Adelle: “Actually, I went home and decided I would try to go door-to-door around my neighbourhood. I work as a night nurse, go to work at eleven and get home at seven. I sleep until midday or so, have something to eat and then set out around the neighbourhood giving the gospel. I keep good records and work systematically, so I know who is in every home.”

Me: (astonished at her courage and commitment)

“So you go on your own?”

Adelle: “Yes.”

Me: “How long have you been doing this?”

Adelle: “About six months.”

Me: “And how many people have you reached with the gospel?”

Adelle: “About a thousand.”

Me: “Incredible. How have you found it? How many people have said they didn’t want to see the presentation, or have been aggressive?”

Adelle: “Only two people. One was my father and the other was a drunken man.”

Me: “What about all the others?”

Adelle: “They were absolutely brilliant. About twelve families have come to the Lord. At Christmas time I received a stack of Christmas cards and when I’m out shopping, people often stop me and ask me questions about the Bible and things. I’ve had seven marriage proposals!”

Me: “Wow, and you said you were an introvert?”

Adelle: “I’ve been healed. Going with the gospel has completely changed me.”

In Adelle’s own neighbourhood, only two out of 1000 people did not want to take the time to hear an in-depth explanation of Christianity and to find out how they could be forgiven. Why such a good result? The faithful ploughing of many Christians. The positive responses are testimony to the excellent preparatory work the Church has done.

The fields in most Western countries are well ploughed, waiting to be sown!

In most Western countries, ploughing has been done well and the fields are ready for seed. We still need to press in and go further in prayer, service and good works. But it is time to sow. The non-Christian world is ready *right now* for the seed of the gospel. Their spiritual hearts are like soft, warm soil. God wants to save souls. He has made that clear in His Word. He has shown His hand. What are we going to do? No army ever won a war by hiding in their bunkers.

If we want to win the battle for souls, we must enter the fray with a renewed commitment and passion to see all six steps in the model I have discussed here flourishing, particularly personal evangelism.

You may want to pray with me right now:

“Dear Lord Jesus, work through this book to cause me to take up personal evangelism. Please help me. I need an outpouring of Your Holy Spirit into my life right now. And if I don’t feel anything, I am going to start anyway, knowing you said you’d always be with me.

I don’t want to continue being inactive in evangelism. I want to be a doer of the Word. Help me to lay down all my excuses, and take steps for training. Help me to set goals, to be accountable and to fight for this “greatest of all” causes – not for a few weeks to see how it goes, but for the rest of my life, irrespective of how it goes or what other people think of me.

You said You would be with me and I stand on this promise. I lean on You and depend on Your help and supply. Sometimes it will be tough, Lord, and I expect disappointment and discouragement, but also great joy as I step out and learn how to evangelise, but with You anything is possible.

I will run the race, and run to get the prize. I’ll try to mobilise others to follow my example, but if they don’t, it won’t stop me. I am still going to learn and grow. I am committed. I’ve made up my mind. I will not turn back. So help me, Jesus. Amen.”

Now, *that* is a great prayer!

So far in this book we have unveiled many devices of the devil

which have hindered our efforts to evangelise. To counter these, God has given us battle strategies from heaven which will help us not only neutralise his devices, but achieve victory in the war.

In the next chapter I examine another four possible reasons why we have lost confidence in the gospel, and give four simple solutions. Addressing these four issues will be vital to our recovery in the war and our success in the future...

Summary

- Thinking of evangelism as a process undermines it.
- Evangelism is not a process.
- Evangelism is an event within a six step process.
- There are six steps in the process of drawing non-Christians to Christ.
- The six steps are: ploughing, sowing, watering, growing, harvesting, and discipling.
- These six steps are to a local church what a compass is to an explorer. They help a church keep its eye on the mission and the purpose, and stop it from losing its way.
- It is vital for each ministry and person in a church to know where they fit in relation to the big picture (i.e. drawing non-Christians to Christ), just as it was vital for workers at NASA to know where they fitted in relation to the big picture of being the first nation on earth to have a man walk on the moon. The six step model will help a lot to do this and in so doing your church will begin to fizz like never before.
- Want revival? Then engage in both radical prayer and radical evangelism.
- The most humble person in a church is not the quietest. It's the person who most closely obeys the commands of Jesus, chief of which is to evangelise.
- **ACTION POINT:** Purchase a six steps banner and start teaching about the six steps in your church. Order from the home page on www.esisite.com. Relentlessly filter everything that goes on in your church through this six step model.
- **ACTION POINT:** Relentlessly teach "The Big Four" in

your church:

- THE BIG PICTURE which is to draw non-Christians to Christ.
- THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH which is to evangelise the world.
- THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH which is to make disciples.
- THE MOTIVE which is to glorify God. The greatest way to glorify God is to do His will. The priority of His will is to evangelise the world and make disciples.