



Sowers of the Word:

"Woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16)

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Person to Person: A practical approach to effective evangelism



Part 1: The True “No Limit” Message

by Jim Berlucchi

The Christian message is no opiate to send people to sleep, it is no comfortable assurance that everything will be all right. It is rather the blinding light which shows people themselves as they are and God as he is.

William Barclay

A few years ago I received an almost irresistible offer. I opened my mailbox one morning to find an attractively designed folder with this enticing offer: “How to be a no limit person.” Of course, I opened the packet eagerly. The colorful brochure went on: “Yours for thirty days risk free . . . the blockbuster audio program from today’s number one success-builder and best-selling author.” Here was a six-cassette lecture series which promised to help me develop a “fresh, dynamic, you-oriented approach to career and personal life.” Now I could “break the barriers to success,” and “achieve super emotional and physical health,” all for a mere pittance, \$10 for 30 days with “no obligation.” My every problem, frustration, delay, and failure, could be turned to my advantage. I could learn to live according to my maximum potential. This sounded like good

news, indeed.

In fact, the author of this series was offering a glorious plan for personal success. Developed through his own life experience and research, he passionately wanted to pass on to others the best thing he had. He was inspired with “a purpose that shaped his own life – a mission to help people succeed.” He was motivated by a consuming zeal to give others the best thing he had.

What is the best thing you have? Are you driven to share it with others? As Christians we should realize that we are the real “no limit” people. God has given us eternal life in Jesus Christ. We have received an entirely new nature through baptism in water and the Spirit. By God’s power we have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of light, and we look forward to a heavenly banquet with God in our eternal home. We have received the magnificent power of God in our mortal bodies, far outstripping the human power and techniques flaunted in the brochure. Ours are new lives, characterized by power, joy, and the wisdom of our Creator. If the “no limit” author is consumed by a passion to “change the lives of millions of people,” how much more should we, who have come to know the living God, desire to do whatever we can to change the world.

We can change the world, if we ourselves are living a full Christian life and are motivated to influence others toward a fuller relationship with Jesus. But why should a Christian be involved in evangelism?

I can think of at least five good reasons. First, Jesus commands us to spread the gospel. Second, evangelism results in a deeper union with Christ. Third, the world needs desperately to hear about Jesus. Fourth, telling others about Jesus is an exciting challenge that produces joy. Fifth, helping others choose for Jesus saves lives – eternally.

Jesus commands us

Consider, first of all, that Jesus commands us to spread the good news. Jesus’ words at the end of Matthew’s Gospel have been aptly described as the Great Commission. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:19-20). These were his last words to his disciples on earth. Jesus was not merely suggesting or encouraging them to spread the good news (the great suggestion); he was authoritatively directing them, and us, to “Go therefore.” The true test of our love for God is our obedience to his will (Jn 14:21). Like it or not, if we are to love the Lord we must be personally committed to evangelism.

Deeper union with Christ

Spreading the gospel also draws us into a deeper union with Christ. Just as we should integrate prayer, fellowship with other Christians, and the study of God’s word into our lives, so too, should we be witnesses to others about Jesus. Most certainly, personal evangelism deepens our relationship with the Lord; it is a crucial life giving ingredient in the spiritual life. Through it we learn how to draw closer to God, rely on his help, and be led by his Spirit. As we take concern for others, our hearts are transformed into the heart of Christ who came to seek out and save the lost.

The world needs the **Good News**

Consider also how desperately the world needs to hear about Jesus. War, pollution, crime, divorce, loneliness, murder, deprivation, and poverty constantly afflict the human species. Human solutions inevitably fall short.

God's answer is life through God's only Son. No human being or society can be truly healthy apart from God. We who have been given new life in Jesus Christ are the only ones who can offer hope to a dying world. The need of the world cries out to each of us – in our neighborhoods, families, schools, cities, and workplaces. We have only to open our eyes to see the desperate needs of those around us. Once we know their plight, how can we withhold from anyone, the only thing that will satisfy or free them?

Excitement, challenge, and joy

It is also true that the Christian life is the most thrilling, taxing, and fulfilling of all lifestyles. One could reasonably argue that the Christian faith is the only way to true self-fulfillment. A life lost for Christ is the only means to gain life.

When we evangelize others, we reach out to people we may otherwise ignore. We get involved with people's problems and concerns. We deal with the profound issues of life. We fight in prayer for others; we persevere in meeting challenges; and we rejoice to see others experience more of God's love.

An eternal choice

We should always remember that men and women have a choice to make – between life and death. We can easily forget that spiritual reality.

Michael Green said it this way:

According to Ephesians 2:1 men and women without Christ are dead. Their sin has cut them off from the life of God as effectively as death cuts a man off from the life of his friends. Though mentally, physically, and emotionally alive, people are spiritually dead until the life-giving elixir of the gospel begins to circulate through their veins. Society has lost its way. Jesus Christ came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). It is when we realize that our friends – our nice, decent friends – are lost without Christ that we long to help them and bring the good news to them.

“Why Bother With Evangelism?” New Covenant, vol. 11, no. 4

He went on to say that there is simply no middle ground. Either we stand for Christ or against Christ. We either live under Satan's dominion or under the reign of God.

No matter how much we would like to think that the road to eternal life is wide and easily followed, the New Testament tells us otherwise. Jesus will have none of our compromising. We are being saved or lost, perishing or being born again. There is no middle ground.

An understanding of this reality can act as a tremendous motivation to evangelism. C.S. Lewis puts it frightfully well.

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in nightmare.

The Weight of Glory (New York: Macmillan, 1962)

All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics.

As sharers in God's nature and participants in this cosmic spiritual struggle, we hold a treasure in earthen vessels. Scripture likens us to the fragrance or aroma of Christ among those who are perishing. The question that confronts each of us is how we can personally contribute to this great process of salvation. Are there more than a chosen and gifted few who can effectively proclaim the gospel? What is the full message of the gospel? What are the attitudes and methods essential for effective witnessing? How can we overcome fear, embarrassment and the feeling of ineptitude we often experience in regard to sharing our faith?

Let's begin by considering what is involved in what I call everyday evangelism.

[This article is adapted from the book, *Person to Person: How to be effective in evangelism*, © 1984 by Jim Berlucchi, and published by Servants Books, Ann Arbor.]

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Jim Berlucchi is the Executive Director at [Spitzer Center for Ethical Leadership](#). He formerly served as the Executive Director of Legatus, an international association of Catholic CEOs. He is the work/life columnist for [Faith Magazine](#), and a published composer and recording artist. Sample [audio clips](#) of his music are available [online](#). He served for many years as a community leader in The Word of God and The Sword of the Spirit. He and his wife Judy reside in Dexter, Michigan, USA. They are the grateful parents of eight children and enjoy a steadily increasing number of grandchildren.

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Person to Person: A practical approach to effective evangelism



Part 2: Everyday Evangelism

by Jim Berlucchi

Over the last ten years, I have heard the conversion stories of many who have become Christians. I remember Barb's account of how she knelt next to her television one evening and surrendered her life to Christ in response to a eloquent appeal. A Billy Graham rally was the occasion for a childhood conversion of a very dedicated Methodist minister friend of mine. For a number of years I led music at large Catholic rallies (F.I.R. E – Faith, Intercession, Repentance, Evangelism). These dynamic events occasioned multiple conversions and re-conversions, prompting fallen away Catholics to renew their faith.

Different methods of evangelism

These stories illustrate what has come to be known as “mass evangelism.” Here we are talking about large group exposure to the gospel through some form of public preaching. God has worked mightily in such settings, and many people have come, or returned to faith through them.

Another form of evangelism is called random evangelism. This is a kind of spontaneous sharing of one's faith by confident and opportunity-seeking Christians of all stripes. The spontaneity isn't without preparation and training however. There are evangelistic training seminars that equip people to be ready to defend and

advance the faith, and to be on the lookout for every opportunity. “Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you (I Peter 3:15).

A Christian who engages in random evangelism is often praying and prepared to share the gospel at any time and circumstance, whether it be a locker room or on a plane flight. I know of a Catholic deacon who boldly shares his faith in his basketball league. He makes sure his game is sharp by the way.

The Holy Spirit sometimes orchestrates circumstances for dramatic results. I was once waiting for bus – minding my own business. Strangely I began to feel an intense conviction that I was to talk to some fellow passenger about God’s love. The sense was so strong I felt I would burst if I resisted. I sat next to an elderly man and tried to strike up a conversation. Within minutes we were discussing spiritual matters. He seemed down. I encouraged him, told him I’d pray for him and gave him my phone number.

Later that evening he called and left a startling message. That bus ride was to be his last. He was heading home determined to take his life. Our brief conversation convinced him that God was looking out for him. How could I possibly have known? That experience taught me never to undervalue random evangelism, especially when we are being led by the God who knows the secret intentions of every heart.

Everyday evangelism

Another kind of evangelism is what I call everyday evangelism. Everyday evangelism involves influencing others toward the kingdom of God in our daily environments. Normally the process is most effective in situations where we have ongoing relationships with friends, neighbors, co-workers, relatives, or fellow students.

Everyday evangelism is, well, kind of ordinary. One need not be particularly persuasive, articulate or charismatic. Often, the most effective witnesses are recently converted or renewed Christians whose enthusiasm makes up for lack of technical know-how.

Importance of personal relationships

At the heart of everyday evangelism is the recognition of the importance of personal relationships in any kind of conversion process. Few people become dedicated Christians simply by hearing an inspiring message. Few converts are won solely through the distribution of tracts or by watching Christian television. In fact, most people respond favorably to the Good News through the personal influence of other Christians. And the process takes place in the most modest and ordinary circumstances of daily life.

This kind of evangelism effectively led me back to the faith I neglected and then discarded during my ‘enlightened’ college years. I became not only unbelieving, but cynical about religion, thinking it naïve and unsophisticated. Despite my ignorance I still enjoyed arguing with the very few Bible believers in my dormitory hall. I had very little tolerance for religious types and was cynical about Christianity in particular. Not a good prospect.

But thanks to the persistent, yet tactful witness of some fellow dorm buddies my faith was renewed. One of these students, Leo, seemed able to convert the unlikeliest prospects. The rest of us couldn’t help but notice the positive changes in their lives. And these new converts were quite unabashed in sharing their newly found faith. And whether or not they knew it, the few Christian men living in that university dormitory were under close scrutiny by their fellow students.

Because Leo had been forthright and open about his love for God others took particular notice to see if his behavior matched his beliefs. Though I disagreed with his religious convictions, I respected the sincerity of his convictions. I also expected him to conduct his life with integrity, and I wasn't disappointed.

He had a lot of good qualities. Unlike the rest of us, his life was well ordered and disciplined. His room was neat; he kept a consistent schedule; he was hard working and cheerful. And he was really joyful. His steady happiness was particularly striking.

He wasn't just wrapped up in his own world, but was generous, even charitable. One night a guest visited me from out of state. When Leo heard of his arrival, he hauled his mattress into my room to accommodate my visiting buddy. To this day, I can remember the impact that selfless gesture had on me.

His speech was different too. No foul talk. He never criticized or griped. He was patient, sincerely interested in people and always ready to lend a hand.

At the same time he was a bulldog in sharing his faith and it was really pretty infectious. We all knew he prayed for us. He would share with enthusiasm how the Lord was working in his life and helping him. Whenever he returned from church or a prayer service he would fill everyone in on the message. More than that, he kept inviting everyone to come along.

Being the *aroma of Christ* for others

Over the course of eight months, four of the young men in this particular hall seriously committed their lives to Jesus. They had a great influence on the rest of us. Most of them couldn't hold their own in a theological debate. They were motivated simply to pray and pursue. The witness of their lives was indeed credible to their unbelieving acquaintances. They were the aroma of Christ to us – fragrantly drawing us to consider the message of their Master. Their genuineness, tact, and personal credibility carried great weight. In the non-religious atmosphere of our dorm rooms, cafeteria, and lounges they were able, grace-filled ambassadors.

This example shows how effective personal, everyday evangelism can be. It doesn't require years of theological training and expertise. You and I can do it. As you implement principles of personal evangelism outlined in the next chapters, you will be increasingly able to help lead men and women further into the kingdom of God.

[This article is adapted from the book, *Person to Person: How to be effective in evangelism*, © 1984 by Jim Berlucchi, and published by Servants Books, Ann Arbor.]

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What Is the Gospel?

by Dr. John Yocum

In Jesus' time the emperor ruled over virtually all the known world. His decrees were known as *euangelion* which transliterated from the Greek means *glad tidings*, or in today's language *gospel*. Such an *evangelion* or *gospel* therefore came from him who “held the world together.” It was not a trivial, sentimental term. It was majestic and it inspired awe.

A message from the King

The gospel is a message from the King of the universe. It's an address. It's personal – from Someone to someone. It's not an abstract philosophical interpretation of the universe, but a promise, a call and a claim: The promise of freedom and life to captives. A call to follow the liberating Savior-King. And a claim on our gratitude and obedience. In the four gospels themselves, it is often referred to as “the gospel of the kingdom.”

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity.

Matthew 9:35

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only may accomplish my

course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God .

Acts 20:24

The gospel is grace (Acts 20:24). It is favor from Someone who is in a position to be gracious – not a claim asserted.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Face to face with God

The gospel is the message "of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God." It's the message that "Jesus Christ is Lord," the term that belongs in the Greek version of the Old Testament to God alone. (cf. Isaiah 45:18) The gospel tells us, that it is in Jesus Christ that we come face to face with God.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, *Jesus Christ our Lord*, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.

Romans 1:1-5

The gospel was promised beforehand through the prophets. The gospel comes first in the Old Testament. This passage tells us that the Son of God descended from David according to the flesh, that is, according to his humanity. He is the anointed King promised to the people of Israel, of whom any other king is at best a pale shadow.

Furthermore, this passage tells us that his glory as the Son of God is revealed by his resurrection from the dead. David conquered his earthly enemies in their 'ten thousands.' Jesus Christ, the divine-human King, has conquered the seemingly invincible and ubiquitous human foe – death itself. When we recognize this it calls forth faith – belief, trust, confidence – that is manifest in obedience.

Then I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water."

Revelation 14:6-7

This is a simple and clear call to fear, glorify and worship God, who is the Judge of all. Here, in the Book of Revelation, the identity of Jesus Christ is probably presumed. On that basis, the 'gospel' here is a message to acknowledge, confess and obey him.

It is clear from this survey that the gospel is not simply a particular form of the message, like “The Four Spiritual Laws,” or “The Bridge Diagram.” Although these are sometimes helpful tools in evangelism, they are not equivalent to the gospel.

The Letter to the Ephesians provides a good New Testament summation of the gospel. It includes everything from the glorious decision of God before time to make us his sons and daughters in Jesus Christ, to the way we ought to speak to one another in the light of the way that God has set for us in Christ.

Proclaiming the gospel

You can preach the gospel in three minutes but you can't expect to exhaust it in three minutes. In the early Church the preaching of the truth leading to baptism for adults normally took three years, at least among Gentiles. This whole process of preparing and instructing newcomers was a *preaching* of the gospel.

What can the gospel be in a particular situation, such as a one-on-one conversation or a small group presentation? It might be a statement about the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It might be a declaration that God is alive and reveals himself in Jesus Christ. That there is a Someone who desires to have a relationship with you. It might be an assurance that someone has a destiny in the plan of God in Jesus Christ. That life is not hopeless, formless, pointless.

When presenting the gospel message in particular situations, it is important to first ask ourselves, “What is the way in which I ought to speak of Jesus Christ to *this* person now?”



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The Reluctant Evangelist

[also in Spanish > [Español](#)]

A passage that explains why many don't respond to the good news

by Steve Clark

Many years ago I went through a time when I felt a strong inner resistance to evangelizing others. As I would head out of the house, something inside of me would object with a groan, “Not another time of evangelism.” This feeling arose because I thought people wouldn't respond. Maybe I needed to learn a new evangelistic technique; maybe I was not fit to evangelize; or maybe I hadn't prayed enough beforehand.

In fact, most people did not respond to my evangelistic endeavors – at least not in any measurable way.

Then I read a passage in Second Corinthians that revealed to me that I could not guarantee success every time I tried to evangelize someone, no matter what I did. Something more was going on, something spiritual. Here is the passage:

“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. We have renounced disgraceful, under handed ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled; it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from

seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Cor. 4:1-6).

This passage explains what is really happening when we do evangelism. Paul is presenting truths that clarify the spiritual problem we face in bringing the gospel to others. Let's examine some of them.

God himself is at work revealing the truth about Christ. We don't have to rely solely on our own efforts. In the New English Bible translation, verse 6 reads, 'For the same God who said, 'Out of darkness let light shine' has caused his light to shine within us to give the light of revelation – the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

God reveals himself when the gospel is proclaimed, but he wants *us* to do the proclaiming.

God brought light out of nothingness. With that same infinite power, God is causing the light of his revelation to shine in this world. People see the truth in the gospel because God gives light and revelation. He is revealing his glory through Christ. God's "glory," his greatness or power, is manifested through the character, works, and words of Jesus.

How do those without faith see the glory of God in Christ? Verse 4 describes "the light that comes from the good news about the glory of Christ." It continues, 'We have seen that the glory of Christ is the glory of God in him.' *In other words, the good news itself gives off light.* It shines in people's minds and spirits. It impresses the truth on them all by itself.

This doesn't mean we are not needed. God reveals himself when the gospel is proclaimed, but he wants *us* to do the proclaiming. Once it is proclaimed, people will automatically see it as the truth, unless they are somehow blinded. Our task as Christian evangelists is to put people into contact with the gospel and to allow God to reveal himself.

Spiritual blindness

Why, then, doesn't God's effective revelation happen more often than it seems to? Paul gives this answer: *Satan is at work veiling the gospel and blinding people to spiritual realities.*

This came as a great relief to me. Spiritual blindness, not simply my own inadequacies, prevents many of those I evangelize from accepting Christ. This truth touches on an important limitation we have in thinking about evangelism: we do not think about it in a spiritual enough way. It is not only a matter between two human beings. Spiritual beings are involved as well – the Lord God himself and Satan, the father of lies. We need to take all of this spiritual work into account.

Some people are so blinded by Satan that they will not respond; others will be cured of their blindness as we speak the truth of the gospel to them. It is a great privilege to be the instrument to bring someone to our Lord Jesus Christ, to see that person's life freed from bondage to sin and Satan. Keep speaking the gospel until you

come across someone who is ready to let God's light into himself.

In a certain way, it is a matter of percentages: if we want more people to know the Lord, then we have to proclaim the gospel to more people.

Successful evangelizers

Verses 2 and 4 present another important point about being successful evangelizers: *we need to tell the truth about the glory of God in Christ*. Verse 2 says that we refuse to do anything underhanded but “by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.”

St. Paul is warning us against the wrong sort of success orientation. We can want so much to succeed at evangelism that we will try anything that works – like dressing up a story to make things sound better than they are, or relying on dazzling evangelistic presentations to bring people to conversion. This verse does not rule out a concern for the methods we use to present the gospel, but it does make us consider how we are stating the truth.

Servants for Jesus' sake

Even more crucial is verse 4: “What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

We are not winning people to ourselves. We are not trying to convince them to accept us as their lord. We have something people need. They would want it if they realized what it would do for them. We are like waiters bringing food to hungry people or nurses administering medicine to patients who are in danger of death.

How are we to be “servants for Jesus’ sake”? In the western United States, deserts of brown, dry terrain stretch for miles. Every so often, however, stretches of irrigated land appear where everything is lush and green. The question: “What makes the desert bloom?” can be answered a couple of ways. One is “the irrigation system,” but the basic answer is water.

Without water, irrigation systems are useless; the desert will remain brown and dry. On the other hand, the irrigation system is necessary to bring water to the desert soil.

The Lord is calling us to be something like an irrigation ditch. Our job is to get the water to the field. Once the water is there, it will do its job. The irrigation ditch is the servant of the field, providing water for it. Our role as servants, as irrigation ditches in the work of evangelism, is to make a connection between people in need and the living water that our Lord Jesus Christ gives. We do not have to *make* them believe. We have to make an effective connection between them and the Lord so *he* can bring them to faith.

We cannot think ourselves capable without God

We do not have to be capable of doing the mission on which he is sending us. In fact, it is obvious from the passage in Second Corinthians that we cannot think ourselves capable without God. He is looking for servants

who can make a contact for him and who will allow him to reveal Jesus Christ as Lord – something he alone is capable of doing. We do not need to be that effective as evangelists in our own persons, as long as the transcendent power of the gospel is in us, and we are willing to be a channel of it to the world.

Let's keep these fundamental spiritual truths clear in our minds. They are liberating to us. They give us a greater freedom to do that which God is sending us to do – to make the power and glory of God more available to others.

[[Steve Clark](#) is a founder and former president of the [Sword of the Spirit](#), a noted author of numerous books and articles, and a frequent speaker. This article first appeared in New Covenant Magazine August 1989, copyright © Stephen B. Clark. Used with permission.]

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El hombre que no quería evangelizar

[También en Inglés > [English](#)]

Un pasaje que explica por qué muchas personas no responden a la buena nueva

por Steve Clark

Hace muchos años pasé por un período en que sentía una fuerte resistencia interna a evangelizar a otros. Al salir de casa, algo dentro de mí se oponía quejándose, “No más evangelización.” Este sentimiento surgía porque yo pensaba que la gente no iba a responder. Quizás necesitaba otra técnica para evangelizar; tal vez no estaba capacitado para hacerlo; o quizás no había orado lo suficiente de antemano.

De hecho, la mayoría de la gente no respondía a mis esfuerzos evangelísticos – al menos no de una manera en que yo me diera cuenta.

Fue entonces que leí un pasaje de la Segunda Carta a los Corintios, que me reveló que yo no podía garantizar el éxito cada vez que tratara de evangelizar a alguien, independientemente de lo que hiciera. Algo más estaba ocurriendo, algo que era espiritual. Aquí está el pasaje:

“Así que nunca nos desanimamos, porque Dios en su misericordia nos ha encargado este trabajo. Hemos rechazado lo que se hace a escondidas y lo que es vergonzoso; no andamos con astucia ni cambiamos el mensaje de Dios. Al contrario, decimos solamente la verdad, y así nos recomendamos a la conciencia de todos delante de Dios. Pero si el mensaje de salvación que predicamos es oscuro, lo es solamente para aquellos que van a la destrucción. Pues como ellos

no creen, el dios de este mundo los ha hecho ciegos de entendimiento, para que no vean la brillante luz del evangelio del Cristo glorioso, el cual es la imagen viva de Dios. Cuando predicamos, no nos predicamos a nosotros mismos, sino que predicamos a Jesucristo como Señor; y en cuanto a nosotros, nos declaramos simplemente siervos de ustedes, por amor de Jesús. Porque el mismo Dios que mandó que la luz brillara en la oscuridad, es el que ha hecho brillar su luz en nuestro corazón, para que con esa luz podamos conocer la gloria de Dios que brilla en la cara de Jesucristo.”

(2 Co 4, 1-6)

Este pasaje explica lo que realmente ocurre cuando evangelizamos. Pablo está presentando verdades que aclaran el problema espiritual que enfrentamos al llevar el evangelio a otros. Examinemos algunas:

Dios mismo es quien actúa al revelar la verdad acerca de Cristo. Nosotros no necesitamos depender únicamente de nuestros propios esfuerzos. En la Versión Popular de la Biblia (Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas), el versículo 6 dice: “Porque el mismo Dios que mandó que la luz brillara en la oscuridad, es el que ha hecho brillar su luz en nuestro corazón, para que con esa luz podamos conocer la gloria de Dios que brilla en la cara de Jesucristo.”

Dios se revela a sí mismo cuando el evangelio es proclamado, pero quiere que **nosotros** nos encarguemos de proclamarlo

Dios trajo la luz a partir de la nada. Con ese mismo poder infinito, Dios sigue haciendo que la luz de su revelación brille en este mundo. La gente ve la verdad en el evangelio porque Dios da luz y revelación. Él está revelando su gloria por medio de Cristo. La “gloria” de Dios, su grandeza o poder, es manifestada por medio del carácter, las obras y las palabras de Jesús.

¿Cómo hacen los que no tienen fe, para ver la Gloria de Dios en Cristo? El versículo 4 describe “la brillante luz del evangelio del Cristo glorioso.” Y continúa “el cual es la imagen viva de Dios.” *En otras palabras, la Buena Nueva por sí misma ilumina.* Brilla en las mentes y espíritus de la gente. Por sí misma imprime la verdad en las personas.

Esto no significa que nosotros no seamos necesarios. Dios se revela a sí mismo cuando el evangelio es proclamado, pero quiere que *nosotros* nos encarguemos de proclamarlo. Una vez proclamado, la gente automáticamente lo ve como la verdad, a menos que estén siendo cegados por alguna causa. Nuestra tarea como evangelistas cristianos es poner a la gente en contacto con el evangelio y dejar que Dios se revele a sí mismo.

La ceguera espiritual

Entonces, ¿por qué es que la revelación eficaz de Dios no ocurre con más frecuencia que lo que parece? Pablo nos da esta respuesta: *Satanás está actuando para velar el evangelio y cegar a la gente ante las realidades espirituales.*

Esto me produjo un gran alivio. La ceguera espiritual, no simplemente mis propias limitaciones, impide que muchos a quienes evangelizo acepten a Cristo. Esta verdad tiene que ver con una limitación importante que

tenemos al pensar acerca de la evangelización: no la vemos de forma suficientemente espiritual. La evangelización no es únicamente entre dos seres humanos. También participan seres espirituales – el Señor Dios mismo y Satanás, el padre de la mentira. Necesitamos tomar en cuenta toda esta actividad espiritual.

Algunas personas están tan cegadas por Satanás que no van a responder; otras son curadas de su ceguera cuando les hablamos la verdad del evangelio. Es un gran privilegio ser el instrumento para llevar a alguien a nuestro Señor Jesucristo, ver a esa persona siendo liberada de la atadura del pecado y de Satanás. Sigamos compartiendo el evangelio hasta que se encuentren con alguien que está listo para dejar que la luz de Dios entre en su vida.

En cierta manera es un asunto de porcentajes; si queremos que más personas conozcan al Señor, entonces tenemos que proclamar el evangelio a más personas.

Evangelistas exitosos

Los versículos 2 y 4 presentan otro punto importante acerca de ser evangelistas exitosos: *necesitamos decir la verdad acerca de la gloria de Dios en Cristo*. El versículo 2 dice que rechazamos hacer las cosas a escondidas y que más bien “decimos solamente la verdad, y así nos recomendamos a la conciencia de todos delante de Dios.”

San Pablo nos advierte acerca de la forma errónea de orientarnos al éxito. Podemos querer tanto éxito evangelístico que vamos a intentar con cualquier cosa que funcione – tal y como maquillar una historia para hacer que las cosas suenen mejor de lo que son, o depender de presentaciones evangelísticas impresionantes para llevar a la gente a la conversión. Este versículo no excluye el interés por los métodos que usamos para presentar el evangelio, pero sí nos hace considerar cómo estamos anunciando la verdad.

Todavía más crucial es el versículo 4: “Cuando predicamos, no nos predicamos a nosotros mismos, sino que predicamos a Jesucristo como Señor; y en cuanto a nosotros, nos declaramos simplemente siervos de ustedes, por amor de Jesús.”

No estamos ganando gente para nosotros. No estamos tratando de convencerlos de que nos acepten a nosotros como su señor. Tenemos algo que la gente necesita. Ellos lo querrían si se dieran cuenta de lo que puede hacer por ellos. Nosotros somos como sirvientes que llevan el alimento a los hambrientos o enfermeras que administran medicina a pacientes que están en peligro de muerte.

¿Cómo es que vamos a ser “siervos por amor de Jesús”? En el oeste de los Estados Unidos, hay desiertos de tierra árida color marrón que se extienden por kilómetros. Sin embargo, en algunas partes, se encuentran extensiones de tierra irrigada en las que todo es exuberante y verde. La pregunta: “¿Qué hace al desierto reverdecer?” puede ser contestada de dos formas. Una es “el sistema de irrigación,” pero la respuesta básica es el agua.

Sin agua, los sistemas de irrigación son inservibles; el desierto sigue siendo árido y marrón. Por otra parte, el sistema de irrigación es necesario para llevar agua al suelo del desierto.

El Señor nos está llamando a ser como un canal de irrigación. Nuestra tarea es llevar el agua al campo. Una vez ahí, el agua hará su tarea. El canal de irrigación es el servidor del campo, proveyéndole agua. Nuestro papel como siervos, como canales de irrigación en la obra de la evangelización, es establecer una conexión entre la gente necesitada y el agua viva que da nuestro Señor Jesucristo. Nosotros no tenemos que *hacer* que

crean. Tenemos que establecer una conexión eficaz entre ellos y el Señor para que *él* pueda llevarlos a la fe.

No podemos pensar que somos capaces sin Dios

No tenemos que ser capaces de realizar la misión a la que él nos está enviando. De hecho, es obvio en el pasaje de 2 Corintios que no podemos pensar que somos capaces sin Dios. Él está buscando siervos y siervas que puedan hacer el contacto por él y que lo dejen revelar a Jesucristo como Señor – algo que solamente él puede hacer. Nosotros no necesitamos ser tan eficaces como evangelistas por nuestra propia cuenta, siempre y cuando el poder trascendente del evangelio esté en nosotros, y estemos dispuestos a ser su canal para el mundo.

Guardemos con claridad en nuestras mentes estas verdades espirituales fundamentales. Son liberadoras para nosotros. Nos dan una mayor libertad para hacer lo que Dios nos está encomendando – hacer que el poder y la gloria de Dios esté más al alcance de otros.

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Sowers of the Word

- reflections on the call to witness the Gospel and evangelize

by Dave Quintana

Rescue shops and church bells

Perhaps you've heard of famous cricketer and missionary C.T. Studd. He's known for many things including this disquieting quote, "some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell." I agree with him as well as with another spiritual writer who writes that Jesus invites us, "come with me to the darkest places. Come to the hurting, the howling, hollow faces." There's a world out there in desperate need of what we have freely and fortunately received. There are individuals out there dying for the chance to catch a glimpse of the life that we have been abundantly given.

And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to

him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Luke 19:7-10 ESV translation

He is no fool...

Jim Elliot was a missionary to South America. He died a martyr's death as a very young man, aged 30. His wife, author and speaker Elisabeth Elliot, has been a faithful witness to Christ for decades now since his death. Jim is known, among other things, for a simple yet very profound saying, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." He lived that saying and he died that saying. This life is short, very short for some, and passing. Thus, you must live it well. We may not all be called to fulfil this saying the way Jim Elliot was, but we are each called not to be fools, and to live and die so as to gain what we cannot lose.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Mark 8:35-36 ESV translation

We've got what people desperately need

Early on in my Christian life I was fortunate enough to realize just how incredibly blessed I was (and am). I stumbled upon God and stumbled upon life to the full, and I have always been keenly aware of that. Not too long later, I also realized that people are dying to have what we as followers of Jesus have. They may or may not realize it, but they are dying, figuratively and literally, for it. We've got what people desperately need. And so, it is our solemn duty to make it available to them. We can't sit idly by with a "come to us" mentality. We must go to them, those who are lost, and help them rediscover the path which leads unto life.

But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.

Romans 10:14-17 RSV translation

The needs of a broken world

Are we willing to enter the brokenness and the neediness of our world? If we aren't, then I think we are kidding ourselves if we have any hope to make a difference.

So does Dr. Gilbert Bilezikian: "Broken relationships, broken families, broken promises, broken values, broken hearts, broken lives in a broken-down world. In the midst of this mess, allow the local church to function as the Church envisioned by Jesus Christ—a thriving, radiating center of Christian love reaching out in self-sacrificing concern toward the needs of contemporary women, men and children. Let the church be really the Church and watch it exert a supernatural power of attraction that will irresistibly draw our secular,

community-starved contemporaries within its sphere of influence, bring them to Christ in the most natural manner, and integrate them into its life. The best shot at evangelism is to encourage churches to become and to live as authentic, biblically defined communities so that the Lord Himself can become their Master Evangelist.”

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus looked up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again."

John 8:2-11 RSV translation

Don't just sit there—walk across the room

Bill Hybel is a natural evangelist. I've never met him or heard him speak, but just reading his book "Just Walk Across the Room" makes this obvious. The main point he tries to make is simple—as Christians we need to be willing to leave our comfortable Christian conversations and relationships and just walk across the room (literally and figuratively) and engage others in conversation and relationship. We need to develop friendships with people that don't yet know Christ. We need to reach out to neighbours, fellow-workers and "randomers" (those we happen to have contact with) and develop relationships and friendships. Why not frequent the same shops (or banks or ...) again and again, purposefully developing relationships and practicing what Hybels calls "strategic consumerism"? Do we have good news? Could we possibly be so selfish and so irresponsible as to keep it to ourselves?

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Luke 15:1-10 RSV translation

Making the Gospel relevant

Jesus got it right with the woman at the well. She was thirsty (so was he) and in need of water, so thirst was his

starting point because that was her felt need. You gotta scratch where people itch. You gotta provide answers for people's real questions. Or to use a different image, when you are going fishing you gotta use something fish like for bait (not what you like! I mean really, "Here, fishy fishy, want some chocolate cake?"). It is our responsibility as Christians to try to understand and meet the needs of others, to go to where they live and not demand that they come to where we live. Too often today, we sit and wait for people to come to us when our actual responsibility is to take the gospel to them and to make it relevant. We are to join Jesus in his incarnational ministry. We need to make faith alive and Christianity attractive. We Christians were well criticized by the German philosopher Nietzsche when he retorted, "Christians need to look a lot more saved before I'll believe in their Savior."

There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

John 4:7-15 RSV translation

Hudson Taylor

You know how sometimes you seem to read just the right book at just the right time? Well reading about Hudson Taylor—missionary to China—was just that for me. It was fairly early in my years of doing evangelistic and pastoral work with University students. I was okay at it but found it challenging. I enjoyed it for the most part, but struggled to find the balance between what my efforts could accomplish and what was "up to God". I wanted to "believe God for miracles" but I didn't really see very many. I wanted to be a "man of faith" and not "strive in the flesh"—but I wrestled with the Lord and myself trying to figure out how all this fit together. So reading of Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission was "just what the doctor ordered". He helped me understand it was 100% God ... and 100% me (that is, I had to give my all but my all didn't really account for all that much!). He helped me find a peace and confidence in doing what I could ... and then letting go. He helped me learn how to "pour out my life for someone"—and yet somehow remain "detached", how to "give myself completely"—and yet not be "overly ambitious". Of course, I'm still learning all these things, and still trying to see how they are to be manifested in my life—but thanks Hudson for your crucial initial help and insight!

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you.
Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you.

1 Peter 5:1-7 RSV translation

[Dave Quintana is an elder of the [Servants of the Word](#), a missionary brotherhood of men living single for the Lord. He is also a regional coordinator for the [Sword of the Spirit](#) in Europe and the Middle East. He currently lives in London, England.]



(c) Kevin Carden

Seek to Save Others

by John Chrysostom (354-407 AD)

The light of a Christian cannot escape notice

There is nothing colder than a Christian who does not seek to save others.

You cannot plead poverty here; the widow putting in her two small coins will be your accuser. Peter said: *Silver and gold I have not*. Paul was so poor that he was often hungry and went without necessary food.

You cannot plead humble birth, for they were humbly born, of humble stock. You cannot offer the excuse of lack of education, for they were uneducated. You cannot plead ill-health, for Timothy also had poor health, with frequent illnesses.

Each one can help his neighbor if only he is willing to do what is in his power. Look at the trees that do not bear fruit: have you not noticed how strong and fine they are, upstanding, smooth and tall? If we had a garden, we would much prefer trees with fruit – pomegranates and olives – to trees that are for pleasure, not for utility, and any utility these have is small.

Such are those men who think only of their own concerns. In fact, they are even worse: the trees are at least useful for building or for protection, whereas the selfish are fit only for punishment. Such were those foolish virgins who were chaste, comely and self-controlled, but did nothing for anyone. So they are consumed in the fire. Such are those men who refuse to give Christ food.

Notice that none of them is accused of personal sins. They are not accused of committing fornication or perjury or any such sin at all: only not helping anybody else. The man who buried the talent was like this. His life was blameless, but he was of no service to others.

How can such a person be a Christian? Tell me, if yeast did not make the whole mass like itself, is it really yeast? Again if perfume failed to pervade all around it with its fragrance, would we call it perfume?

Do not say, “It is impossible for me to influence others”

Do not say: it is impossible for me to influence others. If you are a Christian, it is impossible for this not to happen. Things found in nature cannot be denied; so here, for it is a question of the nature of the Christian.

Do not insult God. If you say that the sun cannot shine, you have insulted him. If you say that a Christian cannot help others, you have insulted God and called him a liar. It is easier for the sun not to give warmth or shine than for the Christian not to shed his light. It is easier for light to be darkness than for this to happen.

Do not say then that it is impossible. The opposite is impossible. Do not insult God. If we have put our affairs in order, these things will certainly come to be, and will follow as a natural consequence. The light of a Christian cannot escape notice. So bright a lamp cannot be hidden.

[This excerpt is from a *Homily on the Acts of the Apostles*. The English translation of the sermons of the Fathers from The Liturgy of the Hours © 1974, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved.]

[Brief bio of John Chrysostom > Click [here](#)]

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Zacchaeus being called down from the tree - by James Tissot

Zacchaeus' Life-changing Encounter with Jesus

by Jeanne Kun

When he awoke that morning, Zacchaeus could not have expected that he would entertain such an unusual guest in his home and relinquish half of his wealth — happily, at that — before the day was over! His encounter with Jesus was a surprising and life-changing one, and for years afterward, Zacchaeus — and all of Jericho with him — must have often recalled that memorable time when Jesus came to town.

Jesus, accompanied by his followers, was in Jericho on his way from Galilee to the Passover festival (and his death) in Jerusalem. Messianic fever ran high among the excited crowds who greeted him as he traveled to the holy city, attracted by his preaching and miracles. Could this be the Messiah, they wondered, come to deliver them from their Roman oppressors?

A prosperous commercial and agricultural town in Jesus' day, Jericho is located near the end of the Jordan Valley, not far from the Dead Sea. From Jericho, the road begins its steep climb to Jerusalem. As Jesus entered the town, Zacchaeus, one of the district tax collectors, was eager to catch a glimpse of him. However, since he wasn't a tall man, he couldn't see over the heads of the crowd. So, quick-thinking and resourceful — qualities that had likely served him well in his lucrative profession — Zacchaeus ran ahead along Jesus' route and climbed a tree so he could get a good view of the teacher with a reputation for such amazing deeds.

Zacchaeus didn't worry that day about how undignified he looked nor did he care about what anyone else thought of him. Clearly his sole concern was to see Jesus, but we wonder what, in particular, motivated that desire. Was it idle curiosity to get a look at a miracle worker? Or was Zacchaeus moved by a longing for something worth far more than anything his money could buy?

Called a chief tax collector by Luke, Zacchaeus may have been Rome's "Internal Revenue Service supervisor" for the whole district, with other tax agents under him (Luke 19:2). Rights to collect public revenues within the provinces of the Roman Empire were auctioned off in Rome to financial companies. Frequently the bidder who won a contract then sold rights to collect taxes in various regions to smaller speculators, who often abused their positions by charging exorbitantly high rates. Consequently, tax collectors were unpopular. The Jews of Jericho would have especially despised Zacchaeus (Luke 19:7) because his job brought him into contact with "unclean" Gentiles and probably also required that he work on the sabbath. Moreover, he not only collected the taxes demanded by the Roman occupiers but defrauded his fellow townsmen to pad his own pocket (19:8).

Zacchaeus had shrewdly accumulated his wealth and enjoyed the material comforts it brought him. Was he, nonetheless, dissatisfied with his life? If he didn't care how foolish he appeared by climbing a tree to see Jesus, perhaps he was actually hoping for a personal encounter with this preacher whose words were known to cut to the heart.

I must stay at your house today!

Jesus' timing is perfect: He knows just the right hour to reach a heart that is longing for him. So he took the initiative, calling out: "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today" (Luke 19:5). When Jesus found this strange little man sitting up in a tree, he was like a shepherd searching for his wayward sheep. Just a short time before, Jesus had told this parable to the Pharisees who objected to his association with tax collectors and sinners (Luke 15:1-2):

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." (Luke 15:3-6)

In seeking out Zacchaeus, Jesus was also fulfilling God's own description of himself as Israel's "shepherd":

Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. . . . I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over; I will feed them in justice. (Ezekiel 34:11-12,16)

Jesus called out to Zacchaeus by name, just as a shepherd "calls his own sheep by name" (John 10:3). Had he heard the crowds shouting at the little man, mocking him as he sat so oddly perched in the sycamore? Or did Jesus know Zacchaeus and his name by divine insight, just as he had "known" Natharuel sitting under the fig tree (1:47-48)? And Zacchaeus, like the sheep, recognized the voice of the shepherd (10:4).

It was Jesus who sought out Zaccaheus

Zacchaeus had climbed the tree and risked his reputation to see Jesus but, paradoxically, it was Jesus who sought out Zacchaeus. Jesus' desire to be a guest in the tax collector's home — "I must stay at your house today" (Luke 19:5) — reminds us of his invitation to all: "I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

Jesus didn't confront Zacchaeus about his sins or ask him for an account of his shady business practices. Instead, he honoured Zacchaeus with request to be his guest. Touched by Jesus' graciousness, the little tax collector acted quickly and decisively: He "made haste and came down" — no holding back on his part or wasting time! — "and received him joyfully" (Luke 19:6). Recognizing some special quality about this itinerant rabbi, Zacchaeus immediately brought him home. And with that spontaneous, eager response to Jesus, his life was radically transformed.

When the crowds grumbled that Jesus was entering the house of a sinner, was Zacchaeus embarrassed for the Lord's sake? Perhaps he was ashamed and convicted that he was unworthy to receive this thoroughly good man who offered him his friendship. In any case, Zacchaeus was deeply moved by the Lord's presence in his home and reformed his ways.

Zacchaeus not only publicly admitted his wrongdoing to his unexpected guest but also made his repentance concrete: He spontaneously announced that he would share half of his possessions with the poor and generously repay all those whom he had defrauded (Luke 19:8). In making fourfold restitution, Zacchaeus went far beyond the requirements of the Mosaic law regarding compensation for stolen goods (Leviticus 6:1-5; Numbers 5:5-7).

Affirming Zacchaeus' repentance, Jesus declared: "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9). Was there a surprised Mrs. Zacchaeus on the scene, and some startled children and house servants, too? Surely all the members of the household would have shared in the grace and blessings of Zacchaeus' transformation, just as Cornelius' entire household received salvation at his conversion (Acts 10:2; 11:14).

As Jesus carried out his mission "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10), tax collectors and sinners were certainly among those whom he welcomed into his kingdom (Matthew 9:10-13; 21:31-32).

Questions for reflection

Are there any obstacles that stand in the way of your seeing Jesus clearly? What can you do to remove these obstacles and gain a better view and understanding of him?

How has your relationship with Jesus affected your "household" — your family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors? Does it give you hope that your own life can be transformed by a deeper personal encounter with the Lord?

> See also [Zacchaeus' Tall Tale](#), a poem by Jeanne Kun

Jeanne Kun is a noted author and a senior woman leader in the [Word of Life Community](#), Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. This article is excerpted from [My Lord and My God: A Scriptural Journey with the Followers of Jesus](#) by Jeanne Kun (Copyright © 2004 by The Word Among Us Press). Used with permission. This book can be purchased from [The Word Among Us Press](#).

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The Woman at the Well

A life-changing encounter with Jesus

by Don Schwager

The rescue mission

Jesus was on a rescue mission – not only for the Jews, but for the whole world as well. He came to set people free from sin, Satan, and death and bring them God's kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. Jesus' public ministry was centered mainly in Galilee and in Jerusalem. He rarely left the physical borders of Israel. But on one occasion early on in his ministry he decided to cross through Samaria, a land which divided Galilee in the far north from Jerusalem and the region of Judaea in the south.

The Jews for the most part avoided traveling through Samaria. They had been at enmity with the Samaritans for more than 400 hundred years. They despised the Samaritans as an unpure and mixed breed who had inter-married with foreigners. And they avoided contact with them because they were considered unclean. While the Samaritans followed the law of Moses – the first five books of the Old Testament, and kept many of the Jewish practices, the Jews, nonetheless, regarded them as enemies and heretics.



arid mountaneous terrain and dry river-bed in Samaria

Jacob's well in Samaria

John in his Gospel account states unequivocally that “Jesus had to pass through” this region (John 4:4). Why did Jesus feel compelled to travel through enemy territory? As John’s account of Jesus trip through Samaria unfolds, we begin to see that Jesus had a very particular mission he wanted to accomplish there. John tells us that Jesus chose to stop at Jacob’s well, a place of great religious significance both for the Jews and for the Samaritans:

[Jesus] left Judea and departed again to Galilee. He had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

– John 4::4-6

Jacob is a very important figure for the Jews. He is one of the three great patriarchs – beginning with Abraham, the father of faith, and Isaac his son, who in turn is the father of Jacob. Jacob holds a special place of remembrance for the Samaritans because he had settled there and purchased a plot of land a half-mile from the town of Sychar (Genesis 33:18-19). Jacob dug a well there for his family and flocks.

Jacob's favorite son was Joseph. After Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and sold as a slave into Egypt, God raised him up as Pharaoh’s chief steward. During a time of great famine which lasted for seven years, Joseph saved his family from death and brought his father Jacob to live with him in Egypt. Jacob on his deathbed bequeathed this well to Joseph (Genesis 48:22). After Joseph had died in Egypt, his body was transported back to Samaria and buried close to the well (Joshua 24:32). The Samaritans claim Jacob as their father and trace their ancestors to Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph.

Jesus recognized Jacob as one of his forefathers in the flesh, and he also understood that his own mission was to fulfill the covenant promises which God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus now comes to Jacob's well, not simply to rest but to bring revelation of the good news of salvation to the people of Samaria.



Beaking down barriers

When Jesus and his disciples reached Jacob's well, Jesus sent them on ahead to buy food in the nearby town of Sychar. Jesus remained alone at the well. When a Samaritan woman shows up, she was surprised to see a Jewish man sitting next to the well in the harsh midday sun. Why was he alone, without any travel bag, food, or water jug for his journey? Shouldn't he have known that the next town was only a half-mile away where he could find shelter and cool refreshment?

As she approached the well and began to draw water with her rope and bucket, Jesus greeted her and began to converse with her at length. According to the customs of the time, it was improper and even scandalous for a man to be seen with a woman in a public place. A proper woman would flee if a man who wasn't her husband tried to approach her in public. Rabbis were especially careful to avoid contact with women in public. So this encounter was all the more extraordinary in that Jesus deliberately sought to speak with this woman and treat her with special consideration as if she were one of his close friends.

Of all the people Jesus could have chosen to single out for a personal encounter that day, why did he choose to speak with a Samaritan woman? Wouldn't it have been more advantageous for him to speak with one of the leading Samaritans – one of their elders, scribes, or teachers? What business could Jesus have with a woman who had never met him or heard of him before?



Another unusual twist to this story is that the woman chose to come out to this remote well which was at least a half-mile away from her village. And she picked the hottest time of day to travel – at midday (noon time) when the sun was most intense. It certainly would have been more convenient for her to draw water from the town well inside the village of Sychar where she lived. Women usually drew water during the cooler morning time or nearer to the evening when the sun was setting. It is very likely that this woman chose to come to this remote well in the middle of the day because she had been shunned by the other women in her own village and driven away from their company due to her loose living and scandalous reputation.



The living-water

As we follow the story recorded in chapter 4 of John's Gospel, it doesn't take long to discover the real motive and reason for Jesus' conversation with a woman of bad repute. The short dialogue which John records between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is most likely a brief condensed summary of the key points of their conversation. Let's examine the flow of the conversation as John relays it.

Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food).

The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

– John 4:7-15 (NIV translation)



Thirsting for God

We can see from the conversation that the woman is at first intrigued with Jesus. He’s a weary traveler who is alone and helpless to draw water from the deep well since he had not brought with him any rope and utensil for drawing, drinking, and storing water for later use. Jesus is also breaking a social and religious barrier – Jews refused to have any dealings with Samaritans. Jesus does the unthinkable – he offers her friendship.

Then Jesus makes her an offer that she simply cannot comprehend. She takes him quite literally when he states that he could give her *living* water that will quench her thirst forever. All that she can think of is, "Where in this remote and arid land could this Jewish man possibly find a flowing spring of fresh cool water that can satisfy my thirst today, tomorrow, and forever? He must be crazy or he doesn't know what he is talking about."

When Jesus used the expression "living water" he was referring to something which only God could supply. The Scriptures often spoke of water figuratively as an image of the soul thirsting for God.

As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

– Psalm 42:1,2

You give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life.

– Psalm 36:8,9

The Jews understood that in every human heart there is a thirst which only God can satisfy. God is the true living fountain who can quench our thirst forever. Isaiah prophesied that the chosen people would *draw water with joy from the wells of salvation* (Isaiah 12:3). Jesus states a Messianic claim that he can give the true "living water" that will not only satisfy our thirst for God but give us eternal life as well.

Facing the truth

After Jesus speaks about the "living-water," he now speaks very directly to her in a very personal manner to bring her to her own senses. Jesus reveals that he knows everything about her – even her secret sins, failings, loose living, and total inadequacy. She is suddenly compelled to face up to herself.

Jesus told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

– John 4:16-18

Her immediate response, however, is to evade Jesus' inward gaze at her heart and soul. She tries to steer the conversation to another topic – to one of the major religious issues between the Jews and the Samaritans – where the true worship of God should be conducted. The Samaritans had built their temple on Mount Gerazim, while the Jews held that the true temple was on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

– John 4:19-20

Worship in Spirit and truth

Jesus' explains that God intended for the earthly temple to be a type or pattern of the heavenly temple which is spiritual – not made by human hands, but made by the work of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. God's purpose, which he accomplishes through his Son Jesus, is the building up of a spiritual temple – God the Father dwelling with his people, through his Son Jesus, in and through the work of his Holy Spirit. Jesus the Savior is the one who reconciles us to God and who enables us to freely come into the Father's presence to worship him

"in the Spirit and in truth."

Jesus replied, "Believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

– John 4:21-24

The Messiah is here

As Jesus speaks God's truth to the Samaritan woman, he awakens the dormant faith and longing in her heart for God's promises to be fulfilled. She now begins to see more clearly with "eyes of faith" and spiritual vision. And she now confesses that she believes the Messiah will come and reveal God's kingdom. Then Jesus opens the "eyes of her heart" to recognize that he truly is the Messiah and Savior of the world who has come to save her and all who would believe in him.

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

– John 4:25-26

Sharing the good news

When the disciples returned to Jacob's well with their supplies for the journey, they were surprised to find Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman. John tells us that the woman left her water jar at the well and immediately returned to Sychar. She was so excited that she didn't think to carry her water supply back to her home.

She returned to her village a changed person full of joy, forgiveness, and wonderment at what Jesus had done for her. It did not take long for more barriers to fall down. As soon as she arrived in town she told everyone she could meet what had happened to her at Jacob's well. Her joyful testimony of what Jesus had said and done for her left a deep impression on everyone. Could this man, named Jesus, really be the promised Messiah? They had to go and find out for themselves. So the whole crowd went out to the well to meet Jesus and to hear his message of the "living water" and the coming of God's kingdom. They, too, believed in Jesus and begged him to stay in their village.

John tells us that Jesus and his disciples spent two days at Sychar talking to all the people there. The villagers believed in Jesus and openly testified that *this man really is the Savior of the world*.

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."

So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

– John 4:27-42

The joy of salvation

The Lord Jesus offers each one of us the "living water" of his Holy Spirit so that we may receive new life in him and never thirst again. He brings the revelation of God's truth to each one of us, and he brings the revelation of our own personal weaknesses, failings, and inadequacy to us so that we may draw near to him to receive his abundant mercy, healing, and transforming power to live as sons and daughters of the living God. Through the gift of the Spirit he also gives us boldness and confidence to share the good news of salvation to our neighbors, families, friends, and people we meet along the way. May the Holy Spirit fill each one of us with the joy of salvation and the boldness to tell our neighbors what God has done for us and what he offers them as well.

Don Schwager is a member of [The Servants of the Word](#) and author of the [Daily Scripture Reading and Meditation](#) website. | [Photo credits](#): lds.org |

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What Are We to Make of Jesus Christ?

quotes from C.S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis was one of the brightest Christian apologists of the 20th century. He had a uniquely practical approach to understanding God and his ways. His casual tone of writing and simple approach to big issues and fiercely-debated topics makes his works worthy of reading and re-reading. Many of his essays began as live radio broadcasts in the 1940s and 50s. The following selection of quotes shows his approach for explaining who Jesus is and why he matters.

A liar, a lunatic, or the Son of God

Among [the] Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says He has always existed. He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of time. Now let us get this clear. Among Pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it.

One part of the claim tends to slip past us unnoticed because we have heard it so often that we no longer see what it amounts to. I mean the claim to forgive sins: any sins. Now unless the speaker is God, this is really so preposterous as to be comic. We can all understand how a man forgives offences against himself. You tread on my toe and I forgive you, you steal my money and I forgive you. But what should we make of a man, himself unrobbed and untrodden on, who announced that he forgave you for treading on other men's toes and stealing other men's money? Asinine fatuity is the kindest description we should give of his conduct. Yet this is what Jesus did. He told people that their sins were forgiven, and never waited to consult all the other people whom their sins had undoubtedly injured. He unhesitatingly behaved as if He was the party chiefly concerned; the person chiefly offended in all offences. This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded in every sin. In the mouth of any speaker who is not God, these words would imply what I can only regard as a silliness and conceit unrivalled by any other character in

history.

Yet (and this is the strange, significant thing) even his enemies, when they read the Gospels, do not usually get the impression of silliness and conceit. Still less do unprejudiced readers. Christ says that He is ‘humble and meek’ and we believe Him; not noticing that, if He were merely a man, humility and meekness are the very last characteristics we could attribute to some of His sayings.

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

– *Mere Christianity*, Book 2, Chapter 3 "The Shocking Alternative" (Geoffrey Bles 1952, Macmillan, 1952)

The difference Jesus makes

What are we to make of Jesus Christ? This question...has, in a sense, a frantically comic side. For the real reason is not what are we to make of Christ, but what is He to make of us? The picture of a fly sitting deciding what it is to make of an elephant has comic elements about it. But perhaps the questioner meant what are we to make of Him in the sense of “How are we to solve the historical problem set us by the recorded sayings and acts of this Man?” This problem is to reconcile two things. On the one hand you have got the almost generally admitted depth and sanity of his moral teaching, which is not very seriously questioned, even by those who are opposed to Christianity....

The other phenomenon is the quite appalling nature of this Man’s theological remarks. You all know what I mean, and I want rather to stress the point that the appalling claim which this Man seems to be making is not merely made at one moment of his career. There is, of course, the one moment which led to His execution. The moment at which the High Priest said to Him, “Who are you?” “I am the Anointed, the Son of the uncreated God, and you shall see Me appearing at the end of all history as the judge of the Universe.”....

On the one side clear, definite moral teaching. On the other, claims which, if not true, are those of a megalomaniac, compared with whom Hitler was the most sane and humble of men. There is no half-way house and there is no parallel in other religions. If you had gone to Buddha and asked him “Are you the son of Brahman?” he would have said, “My son, you are still in the vale of illusion.” If you had gone to Socrates and asked, “Are you Zeus?” he would have laughed at you. If you had gone to Mohammed and asked, “Are you Allah?” He would first have rent his clothes and the cut your head off. If you had asked Confucius, “Are you heaven?” I think he would have probably replied, “Remarks which are not in accordance with nature are in bad taste.” The idea of a great moral teacher saying what Christ said is out of the question. In my opinion, the only person who can say that sort of thing is either God or a complete lunatic suffering from that form of delusion which undermines the whole mind of man. If you think you are a poached egg, when you are looking for a piece of toast to suit you, you may be sane, but if you think you are God, there is no chance for you....

Now, as a literary historian, I am perfectly convinced that whatever else the Gospels are they are not legends. I have read a great deal of legend and I am quite clear that they are not the same sort of thing. They are not

artistic enough to be legends. From an imaginative point of view they are clumsy, they don't work up to things properly...

[Take, for example] the strangest story of all, the story of the Resurrection. It is very necessary to get the story clear. I heard a man say, "The importance of the Resurrection is that it gives evidence of survival, evidence that the human personality survives death." On that view what happened to Christ would be what had always happened to all men, the difference being that in Christ's case we were privileged to see it happening. This is certainly not what the earliest Christian writers thought. Something perfectly new in the history of the Universe had happened. Christ had defeated death. The door which had always been locked had for the very first time been forced open. This is something quite distinct from mere ghost-survival. I don't mean that they disbelieved in ghost-survival. On the contrary, they believed in it so firmly that, on more than one occasion, Christ had had to assure them that He was not a ghost. The point is that while believing in survival they yet regarded the Resurrection as something totally different and new. The Resurrection narratives are not a picture of survival after death; they record how a totally new mode of being has arisen in the universe. Something new had appeared in the universe: as new as the first coming of organic life. This Man, after death, does not get divided into "ghost" and "corpse". A new mode of being has arisen. That is the story. What are we going to make of it?

The things He says are very different from what any other teacher has said. Other say, "This is the truth about the Universe. This is the way you ought to go," but He says, "I am the Truth, and the Way, and the Life." He says, "No man can reach absolute reality, except through Me. Try to retain your own life and you will be inevitably ruined. Give yourself away and you will be saved." He says, "If you are ashamed of Me, if, when you hear this call, you turn the other way, I also will look the other way when I come again as God without disguise. If anything whatever is keeping you from God and from Me, whatever it is, throw it away. If it is your eye, pull it out. If it is your hand, cut it off. If you put yourself first you will be last. Come to Me everyone who is carrying a heavy load, I will set that right. Your sins, are wiped out, I can do that. I am Re-birth, I am Life. Eat Me, drink Me, I am your food. And finally, do not be afraid, I have overcome the whole Universe." That is the issue."

– *Asking Them Questions, Third Series*, edited by Ronald Selby Wright (OUP, 1050), also reproduced in *Undeceptions* (Geoffrey Bles, 1971) and *God in the Dock*, Chapter 9 (Fount, 1979)

The way it is

"The present state of things is this...the natural life in each of us is something self-centered, something that wants to be petted and admired, to take advantage of other lives, to exploit the whole universe. And especially it wants to be left to itself: to keep well away from anything better or stronger or higher than it, anything that might make it feel small. It is afraid of the light and air of the spiritual world, just as people who have been brought up to be dirty are afraid of a bath. And in a sense, it is quite right. It knows that if the spiritual life gets hold of it, all its self-centeredness and self-will are going to be killed and it is ready to fight tooth and nail to avoid that."

– *Mere Christianity*, Book 4, Chapter 5: "The Obstinate Toy Soldiers"

Why this matters to **you** individually

God...has infinite attention to spare for each one of us. He does not have to deal with us in the mass. You are as much alone with Him as if you were the only being He had ever created. When Christ died, he died for you individually just as much as if you had been the only man [or woman] in the world.

Clive Staples Lewis (1898 – 1963), commonly referred to as C. S. Lewis and known to his friends and family as Jack, was an Irish-born British novelist, academic, medievalist, literary critic, essayist, lay theologian and Christian apologist. He is also known for his fiction, especially *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Space Trilogy*.

Lewis was a close friend of J. R. R. Tolkien, and both authors were leading figures in the English faculty at Oxford University and in the informal Oxford literary group known as the "Inklings". According to his memoir *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis had been baptised in the Church of Ireland at birth, but fell away from his faith during his adolescence. Owing to the influence of Tolkien and other friends, at the age of 32 Lewis returned to Christianity, becoming "a very ordinary layman of the Church of England". His conversion had a profound effect on his work, and his wartime radio broadcasts on the subject of Christianity brought him wide acclaim.

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Good Teacher

By Carlos Mantica

The title of Teacher, Rabbi, is often given to Jesus in Scripture. I think it is very important for all young people to know what kind of a teacher Jesus of Nazareth was and still is.

When I was at university, I had two professors who were completely different, and their way of behaving influenced my studies and my relationship with them. One of them I'll call Mr. Hunter, and he flunked me in geography, the only course I failed in my whole university career.

Mr. Hunter was not concerned for his pupils. His classes were dull, but he would be very upset if you were distracted. He talked through his teeth and with a Southern accent, but he didn't seem to be worried by the fact that foreign students, like me, did not understand him. But the thing that made him famous was his exams. They were designed to find out what you did not know. Thus, they were designed to make you fail. His students feared him, but did not respect or love him or seek his company.

The other teacher I'll call Mr. Quigley, Professor of European History and of Political Science. He was a great man. He would prepare his lectures very well, and the whole class was attentive to his words. If any one of us had a difficulty, Mr. Quigley would stay after class and try to help us. He would often invite his students over to his home to meet his family and have some refreshments. But above all, his exams were designed to find out how much you knew. They did not include tricky questions, and asked about things that were important or that would be really useful for our lives in the future. We all knew that Mr. Quigley was very much interested in having us learn, and therefore in enabling all of us to pass. He was not an easy teacher, but he was a good teacher, a just and committed teacher.

Many people, when they think about Christ, the Teacher, will probably think about Mr. Hunter. They imagine a God who tolerates man but who does not rejoice in him or in his company, a God who would like to condemn all of us in the final examination, and for that purpose carries a minute account of all the wrong things we have done or the mistakes we have made in our lives. Those who imagine him that way live a life full of fear, of course. They fear him but they do not love him, or follow him, or have a concern for being his friends.

But the portrait that Scripture presents to us of Jesus, the Teacher, is rather like Mr. Quigley, except he is infinitely more wonderful and encouraging.

Mr. Quigley was concerned for those who needed help to learn. Christ says that those who are well do not need a doctor, but those who are sick, and that he came to save that which had been lost, that is, those who had failed their courses. He does not rejoice in catching anybody unawares. To the woman who had been caught in the very act of adultery he says, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again" (John 8:11). The important thing was for her to learn the lesson and, since she had learned it, to pass the final exam one day. Like Quigley, Jesus invites people over to his house or goes to theirs. In the case of Zacchaeus, this visit changed his life (see Luke 19:1-10).

But Christ has gone much farther than Quigley, because he has already told us what the only question in our final exam will be – we will be examined about love.

The incredible thing is this: it seems to be the case that, even if we fail love, there still is a make-up test. In the Bible we read the story of a final exam with the Teacher. And the pupil does not pass this test on love. He is nowadays called the Good Thief, but he was not good, and he was not merely a thief, because thieves were not crucified. He was a criminal. His wrongs were many, and maybe his whole life was nothing but one big wrong from the beginning. He comes to the final exam with an extremely bad record, and his life is a very bad answer to the final question. But this man has faith in his Teacher: "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

I think Mr. Hunter would have said, "Damned you!" But Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise. I have taken your place on the cross and, not content with bearing your sins and mistakes, I have decided that all my merits be credited to your account."

According to our standards, no one in the whole Gospel deserves less to be saved, as he has but a few minutes left to repair all the damage he had done, to pay all his debts. Yet there is no one in the Gospel to whom the certainty of final salvation is stated with such assuredness. That is because Christ's attention is not focused on the criminal's sinful life, but on those final words full of faith. The Teacher has discovered the only good thing in the life of this man, and then chooses to examine him on that.

We have our faith focused on the Teacher. Let us not place it on our personal merit, like that Pharisee in the temple, because God sent his Son, not in order to condemn the world, but that the world be saved through him. As long as I am living here, I want to be as good as I can, because the Teacher has faith in me and I don't want to disappoint him. But in order to pass the final exam, I have faith in him, because he does not want to disappoint me.

By the way, I know that many young people think that what the Lord did on the cross with this man was not very fair, but neither was it fair for a righteous man to take our place on the cross.



Carlos Mantica is a past president of the Sword of the Spirit and the founding leader of [La Ciudad de Dios](#) [the City of God] in Managua, Nicaragua, a member community of the [Sword of the Spirit](#).

This article is adapted from his book, *From Egghood to Birdhood: Hatch or Rot as a Christian*, 2001 (available in Spanish and English).

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Tear the Roor Off for Them!

By John Hughes

I found myself inspired by this story recently.

“And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

– Mark 2:2-5

A few things struck me in thinking about these four men and their idea:

It was crazy

Who thinks to take off the roof? How rude! Surely a good-hearted, responsible citizen would see the impossibility of getting the paralytic inside, and decide to wait outside, hoping that on his way out Jesus would notice them.

It was urgent

Couldn't they have waited twenty minutes for Jesus to finish his sermon? These men had a serious sense of urgency about them.

It was bold

They were willing to barge in, to interrupt the Son of God as he was speaking, and to literally put this man's need in the forefront of what was going on.

It was selfless

These four men didn't have anything to gain in doing this. On the contrary, odds are they'd be the ones to pick up the tab for the roof damages.

It was full of faith

One has to be absolutely certain that Jesus is able (and willing) to heal before doing something like tearing a roof off. It seems these men had an acute understanding of who Jesus is, and faith that he would be willing to heal this man.

What about us: how far are we willing to go for the people who need to be brought to Jesus?

- Are we willing to get two or three other brothers or sisters together to carry them?
- Are we open to the seemingly harebrained ideas that the Lord would give us?
- Will we “storm heaven” for them, boldly and selflessly putting their needs before the Lord?
- Do we understand the urgency? Or do we passively wait?

Christ stopped at nothing to bring us to him – are we willing to tear the roof off for our neighbor?



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Minding the Gap

speaking to university students about the person and work of Jesus Christ

by Tadhg Lynch

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

- Isaiah 55:10-11

Pizza parties and friendship evangelism

Dave was the biggest guy at my tennis club. He was the same age as me, 6 feet and 7 inches tall, and seemed a good partner to attempt the boys' doubles championship with. We duly reached the final of the tournament in our first year as a team, but it was a disaster. Despite a good start, I couldn't contain my laughter at his attempts to smash the ball. He missed every time even though he was about twice as tall as everyone else on the court! We lost.

Over the next few years I grew to know Dave better. Dave was very typical of a young guy in Ireland – he was interested in sports, finishing his degree at college and watching football on the television. Although we went to different universities we met fairly regularly for coffee or a drink over the next few years. Our conversation

generally revolved around life, ethics and moral questions. He knew I was “religious” and this interested him – more, I think, than he admitted to me – none of his other friends went to church or prayed regularly. Finally, after getting to know one another for about 4 years, he came to the youth meeting of the Nazareth community in Dublin. He arrived late and missed the prayer and talk but helped us eat the pizza. I always felt I had tried and failed with Dave, and now the opportunity was gone...

Missionary gapper in London

Before I came to the GAP program in London the word evangelism scared me. I had images of prayer meetings upon the streets of Dublin with everyone I knew parading past while I tried desperately to play the right chords to the song “Arise Shine Out”. I knew that speaking to people about God was a task for every Christian, and so I used to “machine gun” my friends with gospel truths for two minutes, wait till they declined the invitation I offered and relax again, safe in the knowledge that my duty was done – at least for the next few weeks. My vision for working at evangelism in London was similar, but on a slightly different scale. Instead of being scared and hurried as I was when talking to my friends I would be fearless and bold, perhaps with a megaphone, safe in the knowledge that no one in their right mind would listen to invitations from a complete stranger. Particularly one with an Irish accent.

My job for the past year has been to speak to people in London about Jesus. In a city of eight million people this should not be a problem. London, however, is a place of extremes - 7, 999, 999 of those people stare assiduously at the pavement whenever they walk anywhere to avoid the other 1 as he bellows “don’t be a sinner, be a winner,” at them. Sometimes its hard to get people in London to even smile, let alone stop and have a chat with a stranger. Our mission in the student outreach is to offer to those who seek, a chance to discover the call God has on their lives and an environment in which to live it out. This has been a year of “waiting for the seekers” and also a year of “seeking them out.” We have met many people during the past nine months. We’ve spoken to many of them about the gospel, brought them to prayer meetings and introduced them to student Christian community.

A free cup of coffee and friendship in Christ

Some days evangelism seems remarkably easy, fulfilling and rewarding – sharing our testimony as we stir milk and sugar into the free coffee we offer people. Other days it’s a struggle to smile at them as we pass it out, but the Lord is accomplishing his purposes through the little we offer him. Our coffee stall on the University campus is one of the main ways in which we meet new people. We have “regulars” who come to us for a free drink. We have “friends” who come for a free drink but also seem to enjoy a chat and a chance to have a worthwhile conversation, and we have “seekers” who want to find out about our life and whom we invite into it. It has amazed me the amount of people who occupy the latter category. In a comparatively short time we have met many people who are happy to connect to our socials, sports events and meetings. Many of these people knew none of us before this year and many we would now count as friends.

Evangelism in London has not been about massive rallies or huge sign-up sheets. Rather it has been a slow process of building friendships with the people God sends us. Even in this the Lord has been surprising – some whom I felt sure would find a home with us have moved elsewhere quickly while others who are not even Christian have shown increasing desire to know about us and about our life. Building friendships has been the most rewarding part of this year – trying to speak to little more than strangers about Jesus is exhilarating – but constructing a friendship for the sole basis of speaking to someone about the gospel (and having them know it!) has changed my perspective on evangelism completely. Its not easy, but no longer is it terrifying. I have conviction that everything I say and do can be used for the Lord, rather than having to squeeze a testimony of my faith into 2 minute spells. God promises that His word “*will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*” This has been tremendously comforting to me over the past year. Some people I

have spoken to refused a free cup of coffee, some have been baptised in the Spirit – God promises that neither word, when we speak it in his name, is wasted.

Life-giving Christian relationships

As you get on or off the train in the London tube stations, the PA system warns you to “mind the gap between the train and the platform.” Working in Koinonia this year has been an experience of “minding the gap” in the spiritual environment of London. Serving where the Lord has called us, building the mission through relationships, intercession, prayer and service. Living and constructing community life on campus in the heart of London is our mission this year. Learning to offer life-giving Christian relationships in every context is a task to continue wherever we live and whatever work we do.

When I go back to Dublin I’m going to look Dave up, take him out again and have a chat. He owes me a pizza...

This article originally appeared in the June 2007 issue of Living Bulwark.

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A Slice of Life in University Christian Outreach



Growing in Faith and Brotherhood

by Ryan Corr

I grew up in West Belfast, Northern Ireland and got involved in [Youth Initiatives](#) (YI), a cross-community youth work organisation that's very active in Belfast and Northern Ireland. Through YI, I got connected to [University Christian Outreach](#) (UCO) in Belfast two years ago and started attending UCO meetings regularly. I also took part in a UCO small group. I'd like to share a bit about my experience in the small group this past year and how it helped me grow in my faith and become a better person.

There's 5 of us in the small group - Steve, Gavin, Noel, myself, and Andy who leads the group. We regularly meet every week. My experience of the small group has been that it's a safe place where I can comfortably talk about anything with the other guys without being judged by them. I feel that I am understood and that the other guys are there to help me grow, especially by through giving me advice and input. One of the things that has helped a lot is that it's just men in the group rather than a mixed group, which means we can relate more naturally as brothers to one another. It also makes it easier to be open with each other as brothers. Hearing others share and open up deep areas of their lives also encourages me to do the same in turn. Many times several of us would be passing through similar experiences and knowing that we are all together in the same boat is a big support.



I've been in quite a few small groups in YI and UCO, but I felt this year's small group was one I have benefited from the most. I had a strong experience of God's presence with me during a trip with YI to Romania last summer. It was there that I decided to give my life more fully to the Lord. But when I came back from the trip, I realized that this decision was going to be challenged every day and I needed regular follow up to keep going. Andy, my small group



leader, did a very good job helping me, first of all through pushing each of the guys to be faithful in coming to the small group meetings. There were many times I wouldn't have come if not for his encouragement. And I always left the small group meetings enriched. Andy is also good at challenging us in a way that incites change for the better. He's the first man in my life that I experienced as wanting to know all the challenges and difficulties I pass through and help me get past them and improve my character.

Looking back this past year, I clearly see that I have built deep relationships of brotherhood with the guys in my small group. I barely knew Steve and was good friends with Gavin and Noel, but now we're all brothers striving forward shoulder to shoulder. I thank God for the blessing the small group has been for me throughout this year and for the gift of brotherhood and support that comes from it.

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CHALLENGES IN LIVING TOGETHER AS COMMUNITY



Growing Up in Maturity

by Tom Caballes

This is to continue until all of us are united in our faith and in our knowledge about God's Son, until we become mature, until we measure up to Christ, who is the standard. – Ephesians 4:13

Probably all of us have experienced “growing pains.” But I remember too, when I was younger, my parents and other people tell me to “grow up.” What they are meaning is for me to act my age, and not be childish. Because of the ‘flesh,’ it is more ‘natural,’ convenient and easier to be immature and irresponsible. In the Christian life, God desires us to “grow up” as well and not be childish in our behaviour. Our goal is to be like Christ in our character. In our Christian walk, it is much easier to be childish too – lazy, irresponsible and selfish. Do people around us – families, friends, brothers and sisters – see Jesus in us?

So How Do We Grow Up to Become More Christ-Like?

1. We need to desire to grow in maturity. We need to take stock of where we are in different facets of our lives and see where there are discrepancies in our attitudes [selfishness, pride, anger, etc.] and behaviour to that of what we are supposed to be.
2. Face challenges and difficulties in a mature way. Ordeals can make us grow – but only if we have the right perspective about it. It can also bring us down if we allow it to do so by acting in an immature way. We need to identify the areas where we can grow as we face those trials in life. We can ask: what is the loving thing to do?

3. As we face different situations in life, we can ask: what is the mature way of responding or reacting to the situation? How would Jesus react? We can also try to see the opposite – the immature way of reacting – and decide not to do it. We need to decide to do the right thing.
4. We need to let go of childish and immature way of behaving and reacting. If we see people doing well and prospering, we need to be happy for them and avoid that question – what about me? *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, thought like a child, and reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I no longer used childish ways.* [1 Corinthians 13:11]
5. We need to learn habits that lead to Christian maturity. How? By immersing ourselves in daily prayer and with God's Word; by building relationships with people who are also becoming like Jesus; and by surrendering our childish or 'adolescent,' selfish hearts and minds to God.
6. Lastly, we need to be patient with ourselves. The goal of being Christ-like will take a lifetime. Little by little, everyday...until people can see Jesus in us.

Other Scripture References

1. *Endure until your testing is over. Then you will be mature and complete, and you won't need anything.* [James 1:4]
2. *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.* [Colossians 1:28]
3. *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...* [Ephesians 4:15]
4. Other Scripture references: Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Cor 14:20.

For Personal Reflection and Group Sharing:

1. In my walk with God, do I try to grow up to be more like Him every day?
2. Where and when do I tend to act childishly? Where are my weak points? How to I grow and overcome them? Who can help me overcome them?



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Surpassing Love: Sabbatical Reflections

by Clare Bick

I pick up the key from the foot of the cross in the small chapel of the retreat house where I spent the last day of my 6 month sabbatical, quietly leaving the place of stillness. It was here that I began the sabbatical last September, a day of consecration and joy as the Lord promised that he would far surpass my hopes and expectations of the time. He said that He would surprise me and amaze me and He did! 6 months later, I set off back to “normal life” with a heart on fire and full of thankfulness to a God of surprises and to all who made it possible for me to have this time apart. I am conscious that I don’t deserve a scrap of it, that many work hard for years without the luxury of time like this, and I truly count my blessings.

The sabbatical was from my service in women’s leadership and pastoral care in Antioch Community – and the heroes and heroines of the story are the many sisters and brothers in the community who took on a lot of extra service over the last 6 months so I could have this time of retreat with the Lord.

The sabbatical took a year to plan in terms of what I was leaving behind, and as the time approached I realised that I didn’t want to just substitute one set of busy activities for another, but to experience the vacuum in my

heart and life and give the Lord space to work in that. All along I had wanted to do some course in various aspects of pastoral theology/spirituality, but in the end the course that I took (and am still in the middle of) was an experiential (not academic) course in Ignatian prayer/spirituality called “Deepening your Awareness of God within You,” which has been excellent. Week after week it has been timely and relevant, and given me new prayer tools and depth of reflection that have deepened my own relationship with God and will also, I hope, be of benefit to others in the future.

Some reflections on this time apart

I am by natural disposition a “Type A” person – driven to accomplish things, and always rushing to the next thing (though often late for it alas) – always trying to make the most of the time, but in the rush missing the present moment. Our dog Alfie would never miss the moment: He is constantly on high alert, ears strained back to catch a sound, nose quivering for the scent, ready for any unsuspecting cat or squirrel that might cross his path.

Taking sabbatical for me was about becoming alert to the possibilities in each day. It was about discovering Kairos time – time sanctified, time as gift in which the present can be celebrated and savoured. I learned to be more attentive to small things – to bird song, the play of light on the water of the local canal, the rich brown smoothness of a conker in the autumn – to have time to care about the homeless guy outside the local Tesco and to enjoy my amazing family: not that I didn’t do these things before, but, in the words of Mark Buchanan: *busyness can make us stop caring as much about the things we really care about....Busyness kills the heart* (Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*, a book that spoke to me at every stage of my sabbatical and which was written while he himself was on a sabbatical).

I learned to live in, and take delight in the present, to savor the moment and be fully awake to things that I would otherwise miss through hurry. Stopping to love. Accepting interruptions. *My whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted*, Henri Nouwen said near the end of his life, *until I discovered that the interruptions were my work*.

I am a slow learner, but, again using Mark Buchanan’s words, *I want to learn to pass through a day without passing it by*.



Symbol of the butterfly

There were 4 key symbols or pictures that were important during the time apart. The first was a butterfly. September, the start of the sabbatical, was also my birthday, and I received 3 different cards with butterflies on them. By the third card, I was wondering if God was trying to speak to me – was it to do with carefreeness? – but in my course that week, the leader used the image of... the butterfly, that savors the nectar on a flower and only moves on when it has fed enough.

I have spent the last months being a butterfly! Feeding deeply from God's word and from the four main books I have read: not an impressive amount for a 6-month sabbatical, but I have read and re-read them, reflecting, drawing deeply from the truths or the light they have shed, before moving on. I have also fed by reflecting on God's goodness and many blessings in my life during this time, and understanding more deeply that the more we practise thanksgiving, the more we discover even more of his grace and his sufficiency in our lives.

In C S Lewis' *Narnia Chronicles*, Prince Caspian, the children return to Narnia after a long absence and Lucy is aching to see Aslan the great lion. When she finally encounters him again, the following exchange takes place:

“Aslan, “said Lucy, “you’re bigger.”

“That is because you are older, little one,“ answered he.

“Not because you are?”

“I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger.”

As I have fed and said thank you and grown over the last six months, I have found him bigger. Butterfly.



Symbol of the pruned bush

The second symbol was a pruned bush/tree, stark and not a pretty sight! This one I was expecting. As I stepped back from my normal roles and responsibilities, as I let go of things and made a vacuum for others, of course there was a sense of loss of identity and disorientation. The realisation that in fact everything will run as well without me (in fact I am not stretching the truth to say that they ran better without me, with new gifts being discovered in others and some great new ways of doing things). And of course, facing the fear: will there still be a place for me when I return? As Martin pointed out, this stripping down is an opportunity for new muscles to develop and to embark on a new journey with God: In order to arrive at that which thou are not, Thou must go through that which thou are not. (St John of the Cross).

Jesus says in John 15:2 – every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful and in Hebrews 4:12-13 we read that the Word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double-edged sword but even more finely... everything is uncovered and open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves. In the place of silence and quiet days I found confidence to be uncovered by and open to, the Word of God, in the way described here by St Paul.

Already into my sabbatical, I had to make the painful decision not to go to some regional community leadership meetings held this year in Beirut – meetings that I love to attend, dear brothers and sisters that I love to be with – but that too was part of the pruning process and when I was finally obedient to this, the peace came.

Taking sabbatical is a step of confidence and trust, rooted in the conviction that God is good and sovereign and able to keep that which we have entrusted to him, and of course that none of us is indispensable. Pruned bush.

Then in Advent there was a little postscript to the pruned bush symbol in the re-discovery of this promise: A

shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. Isaiah 11:1. Writing on this verse, Henri Nouwen commented that our salvation comes from something, small, tender and vulnerable, something hardly noticeable. God, the Creator of the Universe, comes to us in smallness, weakness and hiddenness, as a baby in Bethlehem. It is a very hopeful message, living as we do in a world full of noise and big events: the promise is hidden in a shoot that sprouts from a stump, a shoot that hardly anyone notices. It reminded me too that the pruned bush will grow again: *he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.*



Symbol of the key

The third symbol is a key. It started on a tour at the start of my first silent retreat, when we were shown an ancient key on a nail by the back door. We were instructed that when the key was there, an individual could take it and go and pray in the rock chapel on the top of a nearby hill. A special place to draw close to God. To my great joy, the next day I found the key on the nail, and off I went for a time of adoration and praise and closeness to Jesus. Finding the key reminded me somehow of Jesus' parable of the hidden treasure in the field, or the merchant in search of a fine pearl: the treasure that we have in knowing Christ is of immense value and worth everything we have to give.

Months later, on a second retreat (a total and unexpected gift), I was given a meditation on ... a key! Through this I was reminded that Jesus, who is the holy and true one, holds the key of David. He is the Sovereign Lord over all our lives, and he is the one who opens and closes doors. Jesus is the key to my future in the face of doors I would like him to open or close, and in the face of doors that I am afraid he will open or close. The key became for me a tool of readiness and surrender: I picked it up as a sign of readiness to resume again the responsibilities he would give me after the sabbatical, but then I gave it again to Jesus as a token of letting go and trusting the leading of the Good Shepherd, reminding me of the Life in the Spirit seminar when we explain about inviting Jesus to be on the throne, or on the driving seat, of our lives. When home from the retreat, I placed a key by the cross near my desk, ready to be picked up at the end of my sabbatical. Key.



Symbol of the towel

The final symbol was a towel. This too came in the first retreat, as something for the future, and became a focus of reflection at the end of my sabbatical, reminding me of the love that Jesus showed his disciples in John 13 when he washed their feet and dried them with a towel. I have taken to carrying a small towel in my bag as a reminder of the love in which there is no room for pride or self-seeking. Towel.

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest... Hebrews 4:9-11

There is a discipline involved in keeping sabbatical, especially when you don't go far away from your normal work and service environment and when you have a family. It was a constant challenge to keep choosing for it and a need to be very intentional. Some days inevitably worked better than others. But throughout there was a call to be faithful to this time which was such a gift to me, and a reminder that as the Jews kept Sabbath – even at time of great hardship and terror in ghettos and concentration camps – *the Sabbath kept them... Sabbath living orientates us towards that which, apart from rest, we will always miss* (Mark Buchanon, *The Rest of God*)

Call to Sabbath living and closeness to Jesus

I have returned to my normal life, but I hope not just to continue living as before, but to be marked and changed by this time apart, by Sabbath living, by a new attentiveness, thankfulness, balance, and above all closeness to Jesus, who can show me the path of love

At the start of my sabbatical, Dave Quintana, one of our regional community leaders, sent me a word that he received in prayer for me, that I should expect surprises from the Lord. Well there were 6 surprises in September alone – not just blessings but unexpected ones –and so it continued throughout the time. The

surprises mostly fell into two categories. The first was unexpected renewal of relationship with at least half a dozen dear friends whom I hadn't seen for a long time and which was a great blessing, and led to further surprises. The second was unexpected gifts from the God who provides. As I started the sabbatical, Tom and I were trying to recover from some financial difficulty, and not only did we make good progress during the time, but there were extra surprises: a basket of fruit on my birthday, a crate of wine on the doorstep on Christmas Eve, tea in the Ritz, an autumn walk in Kew Gardens, a visit to Premier Christian Radio's women's day, an extra retreat, a holiday in Scotland, a car to drive there, some gifts of money... all totally unexpected and which spoke volumes to me about the Father's love for us in Christ, reflected through the faces and hearts of dear brothers and sisters.

Last September while I was in prayer I heard the Lord's word of encouragement: "Expect great things of this sabbatical; I will surpass your expectations." He certainly did. He wants us all to *grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know the love that surpasses knowledge* (Ephesians 3:18-20). He is able to do immeasurably more than any of us can ask or imagine! All praise and glory to Him.

LOVE

by George Herbert (1593-1632)

LOVE bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.

'A guest,' I answer'd, 'worthy to be here.'
Love said, 'You shall be he.'
'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on Thee.'
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
'Who made the eyes but I?'

'Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.'
'And know you not,' says Love, 'Who bore the blame?'
'My dear, then I will serve.'
'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat.'
So I did sit and eat.



The Living Water of the Holy Spirit

by Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386 AD)

The water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of living water, welling up into eternal life. - John 7:38

This is a new kind of water, a living, leaping water, welling up for those who are worthy. But why did Christ call the grace of the Spirit water? Because all things are dependent on water; plants and animals have their origin in water. Water comes down from heaven as rain, and although it is always the same in itself, it produces many different effects, one in the palm tree, another in the vine, and so on throughout the whole of creation. It does not come down, now as one thing, now as another, but while remaining essentially the same, it adapts itself to the needs of every creature that receives it.

In the same way the Holy Spirit, whose nature is always the same, simple and indivisible, apportions grace to each person as he wills. Like a dry tree which puts forth shoots when watered, the soul bears the fruit of holiness when repentance has made it worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit. Although the Spirit never changes, the effects of his action, by the will of God and in the name of Christ, are both many and marvelous.

The Spirit makes one person a teacher of divine truth, inspires another to prophesy, gives another the

power of casting out devils, enables another to interpret holy Scripture. The Spirit strengthens one person's self-control, shows another how to help the poor, teaches another to fast and lead a life of asceticism, makes another oblivious to the need of the body, trains another for martyrdom. His action is different in different people, but the Spirit himself is always the same. *In each person, Scripture says, the Spirit reveals his presence in a particular way for the common good.*

The Spirit comes gently and makes himself known by his fragrance. He is not felt as a burden, for he is light, very light. Rays of light and knowledge stream before him as he approaches. The Spirit comes with the tenderness of a true friend and protector to save, to heal, to teach, to counsel, to strengthen, to console. The Spirit comes to enlighten the mind first of the one who receives him, and then, through him, the minds of others as well.

As light strikes the eyes of one who comes out of darkness into the sunshine and enables that person to see clearly things he or she could not discern before, so light floods the soul of the one counted worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit and enables that person to see things beyond the range of human vision, things hitherto undreamed of.



Cyril was born in Jerusalem around 315 AD. He was ordained deacon, then presbyter, and then bishop of Jerusalem around 349. During a time of great division in the church, between the Council of Nicea in 325 and the Council of Constantinople in 381, Cyril labored to reconcile the disputes between church leaders. He was exiled from his bishopric three times, for a total of sixteen years, for his bold proclamation of faith in Christ's full divinity during a time when many bishops and emperors favored various forms of the Arian heresy. In 381 he attended the Council of Constantinople and voted in favor of the formula which completed the Creed often known as the Nicene Creed.

He died around 386.

Cyril is author of the *Catecheses*, or *Catechetical Lectures* on the Christian faith – a series of eighteen lectures delivered during Lent to those about to be baptized at Easter, and then a series of five lectures on the sacraments which were delivered after Easter to the newly baptized.

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Sychar

by John McCabe

When first I went there, tripping and skipping:
Mother's tongue abetting reviews and previews:
Neighbourhood gossip – deaths and marriages, arbitrarily arranged:
Births too, and pregnancies, planned or accidental –
Small village views exaggerated at the lip of the well.
My girlhood dreams blown through cupped hands
Returning deep and amplified in distant echoes of living water.

Years later, after a first failed marriage – custom made –
Shunned by villagers, who cheered me over the treshold,
I turn the spindle to the pained rhythms of flawed promises:
Drawing cold comfort by dull drudgery of repeated journeys;
Made heedless even to whisperings of deep drowned dreams –
Fragments of pottery strewn like broken vows at my feet!

I grew used to being used: parried with lewd rebuff
Shepherds, herdsmen and travellers
Loitering with intent by shadow of the well's wall –
Brazened their frank gaze on the soft curves of my body;
Knowledge of power hinted in the loose folds of my cloak.

I would have whom I choose:
Lovers came; lovers left – transience of desire
Dying in the spent embers of their lust.
They had no skills to soothe the fretful child
Thirsting outside love's lonely door!
Then there came a day unlike any other day –
Save for the sameness of labouring
Under the noon's unblinking eye -
Shadows spoke to me, inverting experience;
Asking in small measure with the promise
Of immeasurable return.

“Give me a drink” –
Beginning a conversation that should never
Have taken place. Had I kept silence
Then centuries would not have unfolded
Nor words
Bridged the animosities of time.

I attempted resistance.
Spoke of mountains and temples –
Stone doors of tradition that love's light debarred.

He called my bluff.
“Go call your husband” – wounding reminders
Of impermanence leaving me crushed, naked,
And thirsting to the soul's core.

“I am He”.
Words falling like drops of living water
In the torrid wastelands of the heart.

Temples crumbled; mountains lost their mystery.
From under the avalanche of so many failed resurrections
I rose and flung from me the soiled garment of my past
And ran homeward to Sychar – my heart breaking with good news.

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John McCabe is an Irish writer and broadcaster. He holds an honors graduate in Arts and degree in Theology. He has a keen interest in Irish, Welsh and English Contemporary poetry as well as Modern European and American literature.

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Zacchaeus being called down from the tree - by [William Hole](#)

Zacchaeus' Tall Tale

poem by Jeanne Kun

Until Zacchaeus was visited so long ago
by saving grace in Jericho,
he'd known no joy nor satisfaction
in all that he'd possessed or wrongly gained.
Instead, he'd yearned for something he could not attain:
The sight of you, O Lord, eluded him,
for he was small of stature (and of heart).

But throwing off his dignity and pride,
he climbed the sycamore and
grew taller than he'd ever been before.
And from this new height,
he won his first glimpse of you.

Passing by that blessed tree,
you probed its leafy shelter with keen eyes;
and catching sight of the chief of tax collectors
perched (as if awaiting fate — or was it grace he hoped to meet there?)
so precariously in his post,
you stripped bare his soul
and looked into his longing.
Then suddenly sure with knowledge of his need,
you offered yourself to him as guest:

Zacchaeus, make haste and come down;
for I must stay at your house today.

Honored by such favor and request,
gladly did Zacchaeus descend
to be host and welcome you into his home and heart.
And as that humbled heart swelled great with generosity
in gratitude that you'd so gifted him with grace,
more gladly still did he give half his goods away
and repay fourfold his failings.
Yet far greater was the recompense that he received:
Since salvation came that happy day to him and all his house,
the little man's no longer stunted by his greed and ill-gotten gains.
Growing to full stature in you, O Lord,
Zacchaeus now stands straight and tall.

> See related article: [Zacchaeus' Life-changing Encounter with Jesus](#).

[Jeanne Kun is a noted author and a senior woman leader in the [Word of Life Community](#), Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. Copyright © 2004 by Jeanne Kun. Used with permission.]

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