

Introduction – Evangelism 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

N.B. You will find that the highlighted portions of these notes are suitable to create worksheets for group discussion.

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Disturbed by the Holy Spirit (my story)

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

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

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

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

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

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

The first thing he said was that in New Zealand between 85-95% of people from a non-church background that go forward at a rally or outreach event are nowhere to be seen in any church two months after their commitment (even if they are well followed up). I reflected on what I had seen through rallies and events that I had been a supportive part of and I thought, to my sickening horror, he's right.

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

Months later God was to totally undo my theology of salvation in the most disturbing way. I was already very unsettled in my thinking but that was to get worse when an elder of the church (Dr Jim Corbett) visited me with a video from the church loan video library. It was a video by David Pawson (an English Pastor) called "The Normal Christian Birth." Dr Jim asked me if I thought that baptism in water was a part of the salvation experience and I said no, it's an outward sign of an inward decision made by someone who has been walking with God for a while. However, David Pawson's teaching didn't agree. It relooked at the way the early church (book of Acts) made people into disciples and stressed the work of the Holy Spirit in faith, specific repentance, water Baptism and Holy Spirit Baptism. He described a 'biblical' NORMAL Christian birth that was so far removed from what I had in my world view. Biblically these four things are all inseparable parts of the one salvation event.

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

In those months I answered these questions in my personal study. Take a moment to consider your answers and discuss them with a friend before moving on.

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

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

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

..... *"Friends, what shall we do?"*

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

“Repentance Then and Now”

One of the greatest changes that has taken place in the modern Christian church is that unlike previous generations, the teaching of Jesus and every revival preacher; very rarely now are people called to repent. The gospel has become very politically correct and watered down. Please don't do that. I have found that when the gospel is preached biblically and sin is called sin, the Holy Spirit will move in and repentance and the baptism of the Holy Spirit always takes place.

Hebrews 4:12

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

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

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

If there was one thing in our generation that I believe is woefully lacking in modern preaching it's a call to repentance. People who will tell seekers and believer alike that sin is sin, that God is Holy; that God is also a judge, that heaven and hell are realities. I was looking at Matthew 25 again the other day where we read of the parables about the return of Jesus and the parable of the talents, the sheep and the goats and the ten virgins. Friends they clearly teach that Jesus is returning soon, not as the babe of Bethlehem or a lamb to be slain but as the judge of the world and people will be cast out into outer darkness for eternity unless they repent of their ungodly behaviour and follow the Lord. Judgement is coming unless they repent of the Luke-warm, people pleasing, vomit pending, culture of this age and do life God's way.

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

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

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

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

Friends if you love people, then preach repentance.

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

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

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

Mark 1:14

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

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

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

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

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

I always look forward to assembly each year. 2013 was no different. The venue and the hospitality and the fellowship was awesome. So many people commented in the Baptist that it was a good assembly with a good robust, Baptist like debate on whether Baptist ministers could officiate at a same sex marriage. Personally I couldn’t disagree more. The bible is very clear on what it costs to be saved, that we must lay down, burry in a watery grave our old life and to live Gods way. As Baptists we all affirm that the bible is our highest authority on all matters practical and spiritual. To me it felt like our movement had made a huge shift to try to blend a little with our culture rather than to set up a new counter culture as the church is called to do. I felt that our fear of man began to usurp our fear of God. I felt the Holy Spirits grief and physically sick.

Following assembly I spoke to a man I love in his mid-80’s who I have never pastored. I shared with him what had happened and my amazement that we have moved so far away from our Baptist roots as a bible believing movement. What he said to me also shocked me. He said maybe the only way to reach these people that God loved was to keep the truth from them for a time then when they are secure in fellowship with us maybe they will get it. That is the exact opposite to what was preached by Jesus and the apostles. Jesus preached repent and believe. The apostles preached believe and repent and be baptized. How can a man who has been to church all his life not see how God works, what the scriptures teach?

It’s a bit like inviting all the local kids to your street to get free food and games and activities. And even though you know that your street is a busy, thoroughfare for speeding trucks you never tell your kids to stay off the road. That’s not love. That’s the way of a people pleasing world. No power will follow people who take this approach to the bible.

Friends, preachers, people who have the opportunity to help people encounter a real and loving God. Please preach repentance to the unsaved and the saved alike. My experience has always been this, that when people truly repent, they dig a well in their hearts that the Holy Spirit can fill. If a person doesn’t repent, if there isn’t a heartfelt, specific turning from sin, they experience a powerless form of Christianity.

Two quick stories: The first involving salvation and the second involving a Christian.

Every week I have 4-7 people serving at the church their community hours as directed by the corrections department. It’s a win, win because we cannot afford cleaners and maintenance people and about ½ of our PD workers get to experience God personally. I had just spent 5 minutes with this young man and was walking across the stage over the baptismal pool to show him his list of jobs for the day. As we crossed the stage he said to me; I believe that I had to do PD work at this church because God wants you Russell to baptise me.

So I said to him; awesome but there are two pre-requisites to baptism, to becoming a normal Christian: Firstly faith in who Jesus is and what He has done for you and repentance. And so we began to talk and I discovered that he had been watching Christian programs on TV and people like Joyce Meyer had made a lot of sense. That he had been to a local Pentecostal church once and to another local church twice. On the second occasion that he had been to another local church he had responded to the altar call, prayed the 20 second magic prayer and been given material to take home. He was amazed that he had been so genuine but nothing had really changed.

And so I asked him. Do you live with a partner? Yes, he said he had a girlfriend that he had been living with for six years and they had a 5 year old son. I told him, those that practice immorality will have no part in the kingdom of heaven. If you want to be a Christian don't sleep with her again until you are married. Repent and stop sinning. I then asked him if he got drunk or stoned occasionally. Again he said yes. I said you need to stop that today and ask for God's forgiveness. This guy had been told that he was a Christian and yet had never been told what it would look like to die to self and follow Jesus. His girlfriend thought he was mad, crazy, a part of a cult. But I baptized him in water and the Holy Spirit the next day on the basis of his faith and repentance. He instantly and radically experienced God's power. He was instantly a new man. Four months later the church gave him a free wedding, his relatives stood and said one after the other; wow, we see a great new man. His partner began coming to church. On his wedding day he and I prayed for a cousin's healing and both she and her partner broke down as they felt the power of God. He has led one cousin to the Lord and is discipling him and has been bringing another one to my son's men's group. He is a no compromise Christian who hears the voice of God and has faith like a rock. Why did that happen? Because someone loved him enough to tell him the truth and God did the rest.

About two months ago I had a young man come and see me regarding his pornography problem. It's an issue we all face in ministry. This guy was new to RBC but had grown up in another church. He was going onto porn sites multiple times per day. I sat down with him, warned him of the danger, taught him how to cut off or pluck out the temptation, talked about porn filters, accountability, how to take thoughts captive and replace them with things that are pure and holy and worthy of praise. God even told him as we prayed what was the cause of the problem. As I prayed a demon left him and his eyes looked notably different. But I was worried for him as there had been no genuine repentance. A month later I preached from Joshua 7 on Achan's sin. How sin, even though Jesus has become our Achan, sin still hurts those around you consequentially. He came forward at the end of the service to confess his sin to someone on the prayer team. For the next two days he felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit and continued to repent of his sin. I knew then that week that this guy was going to be OK. His faith and relationship with the Lord has come alive since that day.

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

Please don't share the good news the way of many modern preachers saying maybe this sin is OK or that sin is a grey area. Love them enough to preach the way Jesus did. To preach the way the apostles did. Call seekers and Christians alike to repent and live holy lives so they too can have a real, life changing encounter with God.

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁶ *Anyone who believes me and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe me will be condemned.*

¹⁷ *Everyone who believes me will be able to do wonderful things. By using my name they will force out demons, and they will speak new languages.* ¹⁸ *They will handle snakes and will drink poison and not be hurt. They will also heal sick people by placing their hands on them.*

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

- 3. Following Acts 2, the day of Pentecost (normal Christianity began on that day), is there any Christian in the New Testament who had not expressed faith, repentance, and been water and Holy Spirit baptized?** Answer. No. In fact I am certain if the apostles of old were to visit our churches and found us calling folk 'Christians' and 'church members' who were living in sin (e.g. unmarried with partners, drunkards etc.), not water or Holy Spirit baptized they would be absolutely shocked and amazed.
- 4. In the Biblical norm, how long did it take for someone to receive water and Holy Spirit Baptism?** Answer. With the exception of Paul's water baptism which didn't take place for 3 days after his conversion experience, mainly because people were too scared to go and talk to him, people who believed and repented were baptized, that same moment, that very hour, in the middle of the night.
- 5. How old does a person have to be before they can; believe, repent, be water and Holy Spirit Baptized?** I really wrestled with this for years. Psychologists used to say a person cannot make a lifelong commitment until they are 18. Now they tell us that a person's brain is not properly formed and unwise until they are 25 years old. I don't think that we should take our guidance on spiritual matters from Psychologists! For years I took note of what I had heard Dr James Dobson say, that if a child is raised in a Christian home they should be given the opportunity/ freedom to be baptized from 7 years of age forward.

I have now baptized three 6 year olds. The one that really rattled my theology and helped me the most was named Joanne. Joanne, her brother and her highly educated parents were raised Buddhist in Thailand. Over a period of months our Inclusion Team Leader Bev and I would visit the family, answer questions and enjoy their company. God gently led them all to Jesus, if they looked at other paths things turned to custard. The whole family began really praying together 'before' making their commitment to Jesus. When Joanne's parents said that they together with her older brother Steve wanted to be baptized, they wanted to die to self and live for Jesus I was excited. Then mum said that Joanne wants to get baptized too.

Heck. I wasn't sure what to do and I am scared of quenching the work of the Holy Spirit in children and so I emailed the elders for advice. The next day Joanne's mum phoned me. She wanted to share with me what young Joanne had said to her that morning. "Mum, I had a dream. I saw each one of us with Jesus. He held us in His arms and said that He would always be with us." Needless to say Joanne was baptised with the rest of the family – who was I to argue with Jesus.

So after years of wrestling over this question I have come to a place where I cannot see how any person can separate water and Holy Spirit Baptism from conversion. They didn't in the bible. And so if someone asks me how old do I have to be to be to be baptized; I now hear the question this way, "How old do I need to be to be a Christian, to join God's family?"

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

Sometimes it takes months and even years of talking with folk to bring them to a place of belief in who Jesus is and what He has done for them. Sometimes I have folk who take an equal amount of time to decide to repent

i.e. to confess their sins to God and turn away from them, but if I baptise them in water and the Holy Spirit immediately, after faith and repentance are realized, I have found that probably over 90% continue on with God for life.

I gave myself months to work these questions through. It was uncomfortable! And if you, having looked at my responses are thinking, this is different, this is weird, could Russell possibly be a heretic? I encourage you to just hang in there. Give yourself time to research and mull things over. Please keep reading as I share with you 7 principles that we have adopted for reaching the lost at Ranui Baptist Church.



