



SECTION 3

## Practical Evangelism



NOTES

# Listening to God in evangelistic outreach and being led by the Holy Spirit

In the New Testament, and especially in the Book of Acts, we see a number of examples of God directing evangelistic outreach in very specific ways:

### **Acts 8:26-40. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch**

In verse 26 Philip is given specific directions by an angel of the Lord, and also in verse 29 the Holy Spirit gives further instructions to Philip.

Philip, by being obedient to the leading of God, leads an Ethiopian eunuch to the Lord who is converted and baptised. Without being guided in this way Philip would not have encountered the Ethiopian eunuch.

### **Acts 9:10-20. Ananias and Saul**

Ananias is given specific instructions through a vision whereby the Lord spoke directly with him to go and speak with Saul, even though at first he was reluctant to go because of Saul's reputation.

### **Acts 10 and the conversion of Cornelius through Peter**

Acts 10:3-6. An angel of God appears to Cornelius and gives him instruction to send for Peter.

Acts 10:9-16. At the same time Peter, whilst praying, goes into a trance and receives a vision and hears a voice from heaven speaking to him.

God in His sovereignty and providence is preparing both men, one a Gentile, the other a Jew, for an evangelistic encounter which results in the conversion of Cornelius and a number of others who had gathered to hear Peter's message.

### **Acts 13:1-4. Barnabas and Saul appointed to missionary work**

As certain prophets and teachers were praying and fasting the Holy Spirit speaks, instructing that Barnabas and Saul be separated for missionary work. In obedience, Barnabas and Saul were sent out (in verse 4) by the Holy Spirit, from the church at Antioch, to preach the Gospel.

### **Acts 16:6-10. Paul receives the Macedonian call**

Acts 16:6-7. Paul is twice prevented from preaching in certain regions by the Holy Spirit and receives a vision in the night of a man pleading with Paul to come to Macedonia. (Verse 9).

As Paul obeys this leading a door is opened up for effective ministry, leading to initially the conversion of Lydia and her household, plus the Philippian jailor and his household.

### **Acts 18:1-11. Paul ministering in Corinth**

Having met much opposition and persecution (verse 9), the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision telling him to stay in Corinth as He has



SECTION 3

## Practical Evangelism



NOTES

many people in this city. So Paul stays there an additional eighteen months. (Verse 11)

These examples clearly show how the Lord is directing very specifically evangelistic ministry through His servants, by visions, angels, a direct voice and by the Holy Spirit.

Now we know today as believers that the main way the Lord continues to speak to us is through His Word, the Bible, and it may be very unlikely that we will ever have an angelic visitation, however we must be open to the specific leading of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit can prompt us to go and speak to a specific person, or direct us to visit a particular house, or to work in a certain area or region. We need to be listening for His promptings as we evangelise and be prayerful as we witness to others.

Many Muslims who have been converted to Christianity often share how they received a dream or vision of Jesus Christ, which led them to read the Bible or to seek out Christians to speak with them about the Gospel.

A very helpful book entitled *Prophetic Evangelism* by Mark Stibbe develops this teaching in more depth and gives many case studies.

And it shall come to pass afterward  
That I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.  
Your old men shall dream dreams,  
And your young men shall see visions.  
And also on My menservants and on My maidservants  
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

Joel 2:28-29 (NKJV)



SECTION 3

## Practical Evangelism



NOTES

# The kind of person God uses

## God uses:

### 1. Available people

'Here am I, send me!' Isaiah 6:8

Reliability is often more important to God than ability.

1 Corinthians 1:26,27 tells us that the kind of people that God chooses to use are:

- Foolish
- Weak
- Lowly
- Despised
- Those who are nothing

### 2. Dependent people

'I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.' 1 Corinthians 3:6-7

### 3. Spirit-filled people

Four things that we should remember about the filling of the Holy Spirit:

- We are commanded to be 'filled with the Spirit'. Ephesians 5:18
- It is continuous as we submit our lives to God's control. The verb in Ephesians 5:18 is in the present imperative tense – 'keep on being filled' – so it is an experience that we should enjoy continually.
- It is the key to producing the 'fruit of the Spirit' – 'Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.' Galatians 5:22-23
- It is God's will – 'Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.' Ephesians 5:17

The evidence of which is to be found in Ephesians 5:19-6:9.



SECTION 6

## Prayer and Follow Up



NOTES

### Why we pray

God has called us into a relationship with Himself. Relationships require communication. Prayer is communication between a holy God and a beloved you and me. Throughout God's Word we're taught the significance and role of prayer.

#### **God commands us to pray**

"In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me" (Jeremiah 29:12-13, NLT).

God wants to be in relationship with us. And He knows we need what He can give. Through prayer, we experience life-transforming, life-renewing intimacy with the Creator of the universe.

#### **God reveals Himself to us through prayer**

'Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your gracious Spirit lead me forward on a firm footing' (Psalm 143:10, NLT).

We learn more and more about His character and how His perfect will is working itself out in our own life. Deepening our understanding of God also deepens our faith and desire to worship.

#### **God invites us to bring our burdens and needs to Him in prayer**

'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28, NLT).

We have a Heavenly Father who is more than able to bring victory to any challenge we face. God is a spiritual and physical healer. Like any healthy relationship, we must keep a line of communication open.

#### **God responds to the prayers of His people**

'The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results' (James 5:16b, NLT).

It is through prayer that His work is accomplished on earth. The apostle Paul continually asked for prayer in his missionary endeavors and saw prayer as vital to his success.

#### **God imparts wisdom and understanding through prayer**

'If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking' (James 1:5, NLT).

As we become increasingly aware of our limitations, we can rest in the knowledge that our God is omniscient. Availing ourselves of God's counsel is a blessing of prayer.

#### **God exercises his authority and ability to do the impossible through the prayers of his people**

'If my people who are called by my name...' (2 Chronicles 7:14 NLT)

Our hearts pound with great confidence as we take mighty tasks to our exceedingly mighty Lord.

#### **God gives power to us through prayer so that we may resist temptation**

'Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!' (Matthew 26:41, NLT)

With prayer, you always have a proven shield of protection available. Just say the word.

## Developing prayer

Prayer is not our trying to change God's mind. It is learning what is the mind of God and asking accordingly (1 John 5:14-15). The Holy Spirit constantly intercedes for us even though we do not hear His voice (Romans 8:26-27). He knows the Father's will and He helps us pray in that will.

The Lord's Prayer is our model. See Matthew 6:9-13.

### Five things that we need to know about prayer

Prayer is:

#### 1. Vital

It is foundational – without it the church will not be built up.

Churches that pray about their outreach see fruit!

#### 2. Powerful

It has been said that 'God does nothing except through prayer'

Remember what God has done for –

- Us
- Others in your church
- People in the Bible  
'The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective'  
(James 5:16)

#### 3. Responsive to the needs of...

- The people with whom we have contact
- Christians reaching out with the Good News
- The community  
'So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.' (Acts 12:5)

#### 4. Inclusive

- The whole church can be involved
- Worship services, house groups – praying for the work of evangelism!

#### 5. Innovative

- Encourage different ways of praying
- Regular and systematic personal prayer
- Prayer breakfasts
- Lunch hour prayer
- Prayer walking
- Prayer cards, which include the names and photographs of those who make up the outreach team

*'One week without prayer makes one weak.'*



SECTION 6

## Prayer and Follow Up



NOTES



SECTION 6

## Prayer and Follow Up



NOTES

### Prayer bridges to the lost

It is a stark reality that those who don't know Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord are heading for a lost eternity. The reason for Jesus Christ's coming into the world was to 'seek and save the lost'. In His last words to His Church He gave this command: to 'go into all the world and preach the Gospel'. The 'Good News' is not something which the Church can hold on to, but is something we are commanded to 'Go' and 'Tell'.

In preparation and included in this proclamation is our need to pray, as E M Bounds puts it: 'It is a great thing to talk to men about God. It is greater still to talk to God about men.'

In other words, we need to be praying for those we are seeking to evangelise, to speak to about the Gospel. This may be easy or hard, depending on your discipline and your habit. For some, prayer seems to come easily, whereas for others, they have great intentions, but the practice does not always reach that high. Let me say, we need to be honest with ourselves and with God. Perhaps our first prayer is about ourselves, then moving on to praying for others.

#### 1. Praying for ourselves

The first piece of our bridge is in place – to pray for ourselves so that we are committed to praying for others!

#### 2. Pray for messengers

By this I mean that we should be praying for other Christians to come across the paths of those we are praying for. It is not only ourselves who are involved in witnessing, but we encourage the whole church to do so. As we witness to people, so our brothers and sisters also witness too – sometimes to the same people!

Jesus said: 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.' Matthew 9:37-38

It might be your experience to meet a 'roadblock' with someone you are witnessing to. But another Christian comes along and removes the blockage – and their journey continues because of it. Pray for your friends to listen to these other messengers too.

#### 3. Pray for opportunities

Paul in Colossians 4:3-4 says: 'And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should.'

Pray for help in building bridges to people who need to know Christ and also pray for opportunities to speak clearly about Christ when the time is right. We need to have sensitivity to the work of the Holy Spirit, thus speaking at the right time and in the right way. We need to be encouraged by this too, as it is an answer to our prayers. As an old hymn puts it, 'Lead me to some soul today; O teach me, Lord, just what to say...'



SECTION 6

## Prayer and Follow Up



NOTES

### 4. Praying for boldness.

I think it is possibly fair to say that we all need to pray for boldness. Perhaps like me, you've been presented with an opportunity to witness in the past, but lacked boldness to take it. Well, we need to pray for a godly boldness, one that is attentive and ready to respond as God gives the opportunities. Paul wrote: 'Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should' – Ephesians 6:19-20.

If Paul needed such a prayer, I'm sure we do too! If Paul was a bit scared, perhaps it's ok for us too! But also to pray about it so that we overcome it. Remember that we are called to follow Christ, which sometimes means it's not going to be easy, but God will help us as we lean on Him.

### 5. Pray against spiritual powers.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, 'And even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.'

As you are sharing with someone, you feel you are beginning to get somewhere, when suddenly you lose them completely. It's as if you are speaking to them in a foreign language! Satan will do everything he can to keep people in darkness, keeping them blind to the truth of the Gospel. However, we can be encouraged: 'God opens blind eyes' (2 Corinthians 4:6). Look at the wonderful illustrations in Jesus' life as He went around giving physical sight to the physically blind. What a wonderful illustration of both people's spiritual blindness, but also Jesus' power to restore their spiritual sight. We don't need to go over the top about Satan's power – Jesus is stronger, and also willing to bring healing and restore sight. Jesus is the victor – one day, every knee will bow. However, we need to put in place this next piece of the bridge as we pray against the work of Satan, and for the restoration of spiritual sight. (Ephesians 6:10-20)

### 6. Praying for those we know who need to know Christ

We may think that those we already know, those who are closest to us, are difficult to reach, even impossible to reach, with the Gospel. We need to pray for those we already know; members of our families, our friends and neighbours. These may be the ones with whom we need to build better bridges for the Gospel to cross over. These may also be the most difficult to share the Gospel with as they already know us and what we believe. Pray for openings, for soft hearts and for boldness. Each of these folk are going to a lost eternity without Christ.

Write down the names of 6 people who you will commit to pray for.

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |



SECTION 6

## Prayer and Follow Up



Start building the bridge as you pray for these people and see how God will use you to help them make the steps needed to find Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

'Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.'  
Colossians 4:2

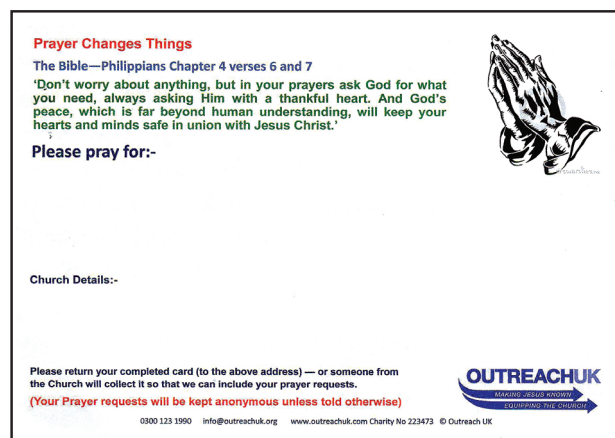
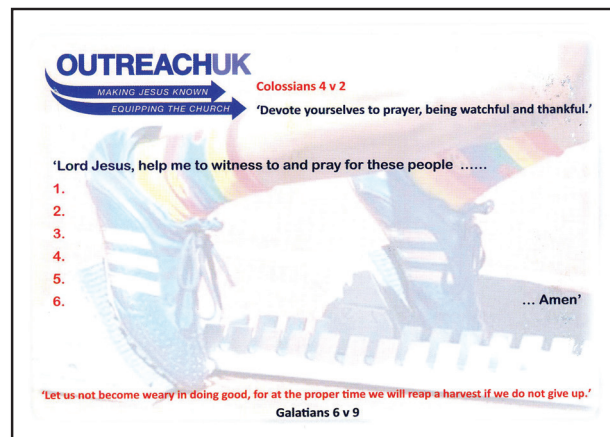
'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.' Galatians 6:9

S. D. Gordon said: 'Prayer is striking the winning blow. Service is gathering the results.'

'Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.'  
Colossians 4:5-6

'But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...'  
1 Peter 3:15

OUK Prayer Cards, available from Outreach UK.  
Tel: 0300 123 1990. Email: info@outreachuk.org



On the reverse of each card there is a helpful 'a,b,c' of how to lead a person to faith in Christ.



## Relating to non-Christians

### Group study

‘Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity’ (Colossians 4:2-6).

With the help of the following questions, write down what the above passage teaches about the way we should relate to non-Christians.

#### 1. How often is prayer mentioned?

What does the passage say we should pray for?

#### 2. What is said about the way in which we should proclaim the message?

Are there ways in which we could improve our relationships with non-Christians and our presentations?

#### 3. How should we act towards non-Christians?

In what ways can the need for wisdom and urgency create tension in evangelism, and how can we deal with it?

#### 4. What should characterise our conversations?

In what ways have we successfully achieved this?

#### 5. Make a list of practical steps that can be taken to relate to non-Christians better.



SECTION 6

## Prayer and Follow Up



NOTES