



Loving God Loving People

Brendan Pratt

Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.

Session 1

"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work and walking around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, **fix your attention on God.** You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you."

Romans 12 Message

"It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions. By what means shall we determine whose side we are on?' Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His Image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things."

E G White, Steps To Chris

Spirituality Is Your Life?

“He has showed you O man what is good. And what does the Lord requires of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to **walk humbly with your God.**”

Micah 6:8 (New International Version)

Sometimes when we think about spirituality we think of something separate from our everyday reality. Perhaps we imagine a monk living a life of daily rituals and strict discipline. Perhaps we think of some ‘super-spiritual’ person who seems to be forever reading the Bible and praying. However a spiritual life is God’s plan for the way you live all of your life now.

Spirituality is not something you “have.” Rather, it is a path you are on, where you are continually learning from and growing closer to Christ.

What Spirituality Is Not – Pseudo Transformation.

How many people are radically and permanently repelled from the way by Christians who are unfeeling, stiff, unapproachable, boringly lifeless, obsessive and dissatisfied? Such Christians are everywhere. What they are missing is the wholesome liveliness springing from a balanced vitality with the freedom of God’s loving rule... Spirituality wrongly understood or pursued is a major source of human misery and rebellion against God.

Dallas Willard, *Spirit of The Disciplines*

Obviously it's not supposed to be this way, yet for many it's the sad truth. When people are not being authentically transformed – when they are not becoming more loving, joyful, Christlike persons – they often settle for what might be called ‘pseudo-transformation.’

We know that somehow we are supposed to be different but if our heart isn't changing, we will look for more superficial ways of demonstrating that we are spiritual. We might think spiritual maturity is simply about how much biblical information we have acquired. We think we should be doing ‘spiritual things’ that will prove how spiritual we are. We end up looking down on people who are not working at their spiritual lives as hard as we are and can become more judgemental rather than more loving. We focus on outward behaviours, making them the test of godliness while ignoring deeper and more destructive sins of the heart.

We need only to hear Jesus' words to the religious leaders of his day to know that pseudo-spirituality is a deadly disease and a common and contagious one at that.
(Ortberg, Pederson & Poling, *Fully Devoted*)

By strong will or through pride we can readjust our outward appearance or behaviour, however this is not what spirituality is about.

It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions. By what means shall we determine whose side we are on?'
E G White, *Steps To Christ*

What Is A Right Understanding Of Spiritual Life?

Ellen White continues with this answer.

Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His Image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.

To pursue a spiritual life means simply to order your life in such a way that you stay connected to Christ, thinking as He thought, speaking as He spoke and walking as He walked. This life will look different for each person but there is a common core – 'Love God with all your soul, mind and strength and to love people as you love yourself.'

Mark 12:30-31 (New Living Translation)

When someone asks you how your spiritual life is going, the real question is: 'Are you becoming more loving toward God and people?'

Spirituality Is About Real Life

Your spiritual life is simply your whole life – every minute and detail of it – from God's perspective. God is interested in your entire life.

Too often we compartmentalise our life into various, seemingly disconnected, segments. We talk about our physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual life as if our spiritual life is somehow a separate area of our life. Paul assures us in the opening of Romans 12 that this is not how we are to approach spirituality. All of our life is to be placed before God. Spirituality is all of your life.

Your physical life is your spiritual life

Your social life is your spiritual life

Your emotional life is your spiritual life

Your mental life is your spiritual life

Your ordinary, everyday life is your spiritual life. While we will talk about heart building habits and special times of spiritual renewal our big challenge it to have our youth experience what it means to live their ordinary, everyday lives with God. Their "eating, sleeping and walking around lives". Romans 12, Message

Your spiritual life is simply all of your life from God's perspective.

Don't remove spirituality from the realm of real life. Often we relegate God's life in us to special times, places and states of mind – we've become so used to this style of life that we're hardly aware of it.

Spirituality is integrating and interacting with God. It's not about being in a trophy case in heaven but that we may be in relation to God and others now.

Richard Foster, *Celebration Of Discipline*

An Ordinary Day With Jesus

“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Colossians 3:17 (New International Version)

Too often people spend months or years or even decades feeling guilty about how they're approaching their spiritual lives – this is not God's will for his children – he has another plan. His great desire is to walk together with each child through the ordinary days of their lives.

John Ortberg & Ruth Barton *An Ordinary Day With Jesus*

We think if only the pressures of everyday life were lifted then we could be the kind of people God wants us to be. For the apostle Paul the reverse was true. He believed the place to grow close to God is right now in our EVERYDAY lives!

Every moment is an opportunity to say 'Here's my chance to learn from Jesus. He's right here, right now, ready to live in magnificent partnership with me.'

Imagine what it would be like to spend an ordinary day of your life doing the things you normally do, but actually doing them with Jesus. What if, for one day, you were to work, eat and sleep just like normal – except somehow Jesus was by your side each moment? When it was all over and you put your head on the pillow that night, what would you look back on the day with excitement and joy? What would make you cringe? Most of us would acknowledge that such a day would feel different.

In Paul's day a name signified the whole person – it was a label for the person's character. When Paul says to do everything in Jesus' name, he's saying to do these things according to Jesus' character – the same way Jesus would if He were in our place.

Of course, this isn't something we attempt in our own power. We don't just do things for Jesus in His name – as if He were far away, like a spectator watching while we act on stage. When we become Christians, Jesus takes up residence within us. We do life with Him, in partnership, not as a performance.

What would an ordinary day with Jesus look like in your life?

- If someone were to observe you waking up, would they say it was pretty much like seeing Jesus wake up?

- What would it mean to eat breakfast in Jesus' name? Maybe it means you would actually eat breakfast! Would that affect the amount of gratitude you feel or the pace at which you eat?
- What would it look like to drive in Jesus' name? If you could actually see Jesus in the passenger seat next to you, would He look nervous? Would you drive slower than normal?
- How about work? Whether in an office or at home, school or retirement village, how might your daily work be different if you were to do it in Jesus' name?
- Watching TV. How would you watch TV – what sort of programmes?
- What would it mean to vacuum and pay the bills in Jesus' name?
- Everyday relationships. Think about your relationships with your family, friends and neighbours. Think of the words you've spoken so far today. If speaking in Jesus' name, how many words would you have had to hold back?

Living with Jesus comes in one-day doses – we can only live in Jesus' name one day at a time. We need to learn to find God in each moment of the day. Just like a 'Where's Wally' book, where you search the picture for the red and white beanie wearing character, we need to develop the skill of identifying God's presence in our lives. Take moments to be still and quiet in your mind. Be mindful of God's blessings and His presence in the things around you. Focus on Jesus' presence with you as you go through the seemingly inconsequential moments of your day. Take moments to direct your thoughts back to Him: ask for His help or His guidance, or simply share your heart with Him.

Reflection Time

Would you like to spend a day with Jesus in person? Why or why not?

What are some of the ordinary things you can thank God for which have happened in the last 24 hours?

Would your friends say that being around you is a bit like being around Jesus? What would have to change for this to be the case?

Adapted from John Ortberg and Haley Barton, *An Ordinary Day With Jesus*, Zondervan, 2001

This is an excellent resource that would be useful to work through with your youth group.

Connecting With God

"Remain in Me and I will remain in you...." John 15:4

Vine and Branches

In John 15 Jesus describes the connection that is possible with us like being a vine and its branches. He explains that if we, the branches, remain connected to Him then through us He will bear much fruit. A truly fruitful, fulfilling life is one where, because of our intimate connection with Jesus, He is able to work in and through us to produce spiritual growth with its resulting fruits of the spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

In the same analogy Jesus also talks about how He prunes those who are connected to Him. Part of being in relationship with Jesus is to allow the pruning of things such as pride, jealousy, and bitterness. The result of not abiding in this connection is 'outer darkness'.

When you are 'abiding/staying connected' in Christ, then Christ promises to work in you. When this happens you just find yourself being the person God designed you to be – the things Christ would have you do become the things you want to do. Jesus promises that by beholding Him change will happen. See John 15

Our job is to abide/remain connected

What habits/life patterns/thoughts allow you to abide/remain connected?

Threats To Connection

“What does it matter if you gain the whole world but do so at the expense of your soul?”

Most of us have no problem recognising that a relationship with Jesus is important. In fact, we would agree that it's vital. The problem is that in the process of living life we end up settling for a stunted relationship, a mediocre relationship that is far short of God's purpose for us.

We are stopped by distractions, having no plan, exhaustion, chores, wandering thoughts, bad timing or a sense of obligation rather than enjoyment of God. We are like the seeds that Jesus described in His parable recorded in Matthew 13, choked by the cares of this world.

Often we live life with no regard for God's perspective of us. Even sadder is that instead of looking to God for our purpose and fulfilment we chase the next thing that promises to fill the void – it might be a new body shape, car or relationship. That hollow feeling, instead of being filled with God, is filled with noise, busyness, success, and achievements – each promising a sense of fulfilment and none delivering.

What would you say are the biggest threats to spiritual growth?

Some common threats to spiritual passion include:

Consumerism/Materialism

We live in a world that tells us that to get ahead we need to buy the latest products. We get caught in the trap of wanting more and we keep riding that same old merry-go-round of chasing things even though some very smart people, including Solomon, tell us that fulfilment is not found on this ride. Nevertheless, we think that if we could just get the next thing and try it, it could work for us. It is kind of like worshipping the created things rather than the Creator - Romans 1:25. Sometimes it's worthwhile to remember that there will come a time when the products we chase now will burn – they will be far less valuable then.

The dangerous thing about chasing possessions is that we end up living a life that is focused on self. Consumerism destroys community.

Consumerism erodes our heart for serving and we begin to think that we are on this planet to be served. Spiritual formation is about giving our life away, serving and putting others first which goes against the message our consumer driven society promotes.

Consumerism is so deeply rooted in our culture that it has become part of the air we breathe. Many churches are based around consumerism. We become a dispenser of religious goods and services where people 'come to get' instead of mission stations where people are 'launched to give'.

The Dangers of Consumerism

- People put our trust in money instead of God for meeting needs
- We get caught in the lifestyle chasing income trap
- We serve money rather than money serving us
- We neglect serving, sharing, connecting, worshipping and growing at the expense of getting more

It's All About Me Thinking

"May Christ be formed within you." Galatians 4:9

One of the biggest threats of consumerism is that it leads us to think that life is about us. In pursuing Spiritual Formation we need to realize that we are not on this planet for ourselves. Your life is not about you! You were made by and for God and it is only in God that life makes sense.

For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible,... everything got started in Him and finds its purpose in Him. (Colossians 1:16, *The Message*)

Finding real meaning in life is about letting God use you for His purposes rather than you using Him for yours. The ironic thing is that when we give control of our lives to God and let Him shape, lead and guide, we end up with a life that is far more fulfilling than would otherwise be the case. God is not just the starting point of your life – He is the source of it.

Noise

We are the noisiest society in the history of the planet. Ipods, radio and television ensure we don't have to be quite. Noise defeats solitude and time when we can come face to face with ourselves. It muffles the still small voice that speaks of our need for significant purpose. Psalm 46:10 reminds us to "Be still and know that I am God." We often

leave no time to be still and know – we sacrifice meaningful relationships at the altar of busyness and noise.

In our media-drenched, data-rich, channel surfing, computer gaming age we have lost the art of doing nothing. We are addicted to stimulation. Take away stimulation and we get bored, we fidget and fiddle,

Where does the still, small voice of God fit into your life? When do we give God the chance to lead, guide, correct and affirm? And if this seldom happens, how can we lead authentic Christian lives?

Hurry

Again and again as we pursue spiritual lives, we must do battle with hurry.

These days our culture teaches that faster is better. But in the race to keep up everything suffers including our relationships and health. We are in such a hurry that anyone or anything that slows us down becomes the enemy.

Ellen White is so right when she says in her little book, *Happiness Digest*, that “Hurry will keep us consumed by the cares, riches and pleasure of life and prevent [God's] way from taking root in our lives.”

The hurry trap is the sense of importance that it gives – I'm busy, I must be important.

The most serious sign of hurry sickness is a reduced ability to love. Love and hurry are incompatible. Love always takes time and this is one thing hurried people don't have.

If Satan can't make us turn from God he will make our lives too busy and unfocused that we skim in our devotion to the Lord.

Externalism.

When externals are the main emphasis, spiritual formation doesn't really happen. The process easily falls into life draining legalism. Peculiar modes of dress and behaviour don't change the heart. The Pharisees in Jesus time give us a case study of how externalism can kill spiritual formation. They were so interested in the outside that they neglected what was happening on the inside. Their hearts had become hard even though outwardly they appeared to be doing everything right.

Comfort

One of the biggest causes of spiritual stagnation is **comfort**. Sometimes we're just plainly too comfortable. There is nothing wrong with being comfortable, however, when our spiritual growth gets sacrificed to comfort it's a problem. "We get too comfortable and just drift, we settle into a mushy belief that something better is eventually just going to happen to us. You can drift, get up, go to work, come home, eat, watch TV, retire and die or you can take each moment and say, 'God, this is yours.'" (Bill Hybels *Honest To God*)

Christianity is a supernatural walk with a living, dynamic, speaking, personal God. A vital relationship with Jesus Christ takes time – not leftover throwaway time, but quality time for solitude, contemplation and reflection.

Be still and know that I am God Psalm 46:10

Training v's Trying

"...rather train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

1 Timothy 4:7b-8 (New International Version)

Athletes don't just try hard, they train. In spiritual formation many people try, fail and think this life of connectedness with God is not for them even if it exists at all. Spiritual Formation is not a matter of trying harder but rather entering a life of 'training in Godliness'. This thought lies behind Paul's advice to the church at Corinth: 'Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever'.

Trying hard can accomplish only so much. If you are serious you have to enter into a life of training. To enter a life of training means to arrange your life around certain exercises and experiences that will enable you to do eventually what you are not yet able to do, even by trying hard.

Heart Building Habits

Let your roots grow down into Christ and draw up nourishment from Him. See that you go on growing in the Lord, and become strong and vigorous in the truth. Colossians 2:7 (Living Bible)

In Pursuing spiritual formation we need to orient our lives around practices and habits that remind us of what matters and gives God space to work in us. Some people refer to these practices as 'spiritual disciplines', here we will call them Heart Building Habits.

Being Intentional

We are unlikely to deepen our relationship in a haphazard manner – some intentional commitment and reorganization is necessary. Spirituality cannot be orchestrated or controlled with a generic formula but neither is it random. All of us know the frustrations of random, haphazard efforts that lead nowhere in spiritual life. We don't drift, we decide.

Our spiritual life, like our bodies has a requirement for health and growth. Some people don't want to pay the price for developing good spiritual habits. Sadly, they end up paying a much higher price - spiritual disease.

We need to be intentional about our spiritual life. We don't become healthier and increase our muscle tone by just sitting back and seeing what happens.

What Heart Building Habits Are Not

Heart Building Habits are not a measure of your spirituality, rather they are the habits/practices that we put in place in order to grow in the fruits of the Spirit. Heart Building Habits should end up being fun. The fruits of the Spirit are joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control, all of these things are enjoyable, therefore the practices required to develop these fruit can be enjoyable too.

Heart Building Habits will not earn God's favour. This is an important point. You already have His favour. Keep in mind that these heart building habits do not save you. They are not a pursuit in themselves. They are to help us grow towards the life God desires for us.

Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, 'Without me you can do nothing.' Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness all depend upon our union with Christ.

E G White, *Steps To Christ*

What Heart Building Habits Are

Heart Building Habits include any activity that helps me gain the power to live the life Jesus taught and modelled. There are as many heart building habits as there are people. God desires a unique relationship with you. However there are some basic habits that we see modelled in Jesus' life and which people throughout history have found useful in connecting with God.

Some Foundational Heart-Building Habits

Nurture your relationship with God by making space for extended times to meet with him – devotional study, worship, prayer or anything that allows you to be still and know that He is God.

Some foundational heart-building habits include:

Solitude

The society we live in is filled with ideas, values, pressure and temptations about success, security, comfort and happiness that we do not even notice unless we withdraw on occasion. Solitude is about taking quiet, uncluttered time – just you and your Creator. Seek time to 'wait on the Lord' Isaiah 40:31.

In the 'rat-race' that can so often be our society, solitude is vital if we are to re-calibrate around God's purposes. Solitude is the one place where we can gain freedom from the forces of society that will otherwise relentlessly mould us. Solitude provides time out to think about how we are being influenced and shaped. In Solitude there are no friends, mobiles, emails, ipods or TV, it's 'Just As I Am', just me and my desire or lack of desire, for God.

We rarely stop and wonder if God might want to speak to us. God speaks through His word, through people and direct leading of the Holy Spirit. He will bring a verse to mind and guide you through thoughts and feelings. When did you last turn off the TV, CD and hear nothing but the fridge humming? When did you last turn off the soundtrack of your mind and come away from numbers, machines, words, schemes

or whatever it is that occupies your waking thoughts. When were you last available to God in order to give Him a chance to speak to you.

Scripture

It's not about just knowing more; it's about change in our lives. The Pharisees prayed and studied, however they did so in a self-seeking way rather than looking for a connection with God. You can know that hydrogen and oxygen make water, but that makes no difference if you're dying of thirst. Knowledge is good, but only if it causes a change that leaves you with a stronger love for God and people.

Read a small section slowly and repetitively to see what God might want to say to you. Take notes as you read if that is helpful. Some people find it helpful to re-write the passage in their own words. Different forms of study include book studies, word studies, character studies or following through a theme.

Some useful questions to ask as you read are:

- Does this text reveal how...
- I should believe about God?
- I should praise, thank or trust God?
- I should pray for myself and/or others?
- I should have a new attitude?
- I should make a decision?
- I should do for the sake of Christ, others or myself?

Worship

We often think of worship as an event that happens in the church on Sabbath mornings. However, worship is about lifestyle. In this lifestyle regular spots of praise and thanksgiving to God keep things in perspective. Maybe it's listening to a piece of music that draws you closer, maybe it's in nature. Find whatever it takes that brings you to worship God.

Journaling

Some people have found journaling to be very valuable in connecting with God. A spiritual journal might include thoughts about how God is working in your life, self-understanding and evaluation. Maybe it will include thoughts and feelings about God. One of the useful things about journaling is the ability to be able to look back and see how the Lord has led.

Prayer

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary, in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to him.

E G White *Steps To Christ*

Jesus retreated from crowds for both solitude and prayer. Prayer provides a vital connection to God.

In Luke 11:1 there is a record of the disciples' request that Jesus teach them how to pray. The Lord's Prayer was the result of their interest. Jesus took a number of opportunities to give the disciples advice on prayer. Some of the advice He gave included:

- (a) Pray regularly – it is a matter of when, not if
- (b) Pray privately – don't get involved in displays of piety
- (c) Pray sincerely – He wants to hear your heart
- (d) Pray specifically – invite God into specific situations

Prayer has been likened to leaving the smog of this world to breath the pure air of heaven. Let's grab the opportunity for a breath of fresh air regularly. It will sharpen the mind and allow for a fresh perspective and a refreshed purpose.

"Get down on your knees before the Master, it is the only way you'll get on your feet." James 4:10 (Message Bible)

Fellowship

Christian growth is not to be done alone. It is a discipline to choose people who you can be spiritually accountable for and can grow together with. This often happens best in a small group.

Service

Being involved in service to others is a discipline that is beneficial to many in drawing closer to God.

Other Heart Building Habits can include:

What heart building habits have you tried and what made them work or not work?

Spiritual Pathways

Adapted from John Ortberg and Haley Barton, *An Ordinary Day With Jesus*, Zondervan, 2001 and Gary Thomas, *Sacred Pathways*, Zondervan, 2000

God seeks a unique connection with each of us and there are as many different ways to connect with God as there are people. However there are some general ways these connections work. A spiritual pathway is the way we most naturally connect with God and grow spiritually. The main pathways are:

.

- Intellectual
- Relational
- Serving
- Worship
- Contemplative
- Creation

Most people connect with God best through at least one or two of these main pathways and there is usually at least one pathway that is very unnatural for us.

While we must shape our life around heart-building habits that connect us with God we must also recognise the opportunities to extend ourselves in our relationship with God in the areas that are not our natural pathways.

Intellectual

Characteristics

You draw close to God as you're able to learn more about him.
The study of theology comes naturally. However at times you have little patience for emotional approaches to faith.
You are a thinker

Biblical Example:

Paul

Grow:

Read great books that challenge you.
Expose yourself to lots of teaching.
Find like minded people with whom you can learn.

Cautions:

Guard against becoming all head and no heart
"One of the hardest things in the world is to be right and not to hurt anybody with it." Dallas Willard
Don't confuse being smart with being spiritually mature.

Ways to Stretch:

Devote your self to corporate worship and to private adoration and prayer.

Engage in self-examination to assess whether or not you are being loving.

Relational**Characteristics**

Spiritual growth comes most naturally when you're involved in significant relationships.

Small groups and other community life experiences are the key.

Your life is an open book.

Being alone can drive you crazy.

In key times of growth, God will often speak to you through people.

Biblical Example:

Peter

Strengths:

You need a relationally rich life

Pray with others in community

Learn with other people – in a small group

Use your network of contacts to further God's kingdom

Cautions:

Guard against superficiality

You can grow too reliant on others and become a spiritual chameleon.

Ways to Stretch:

Keep some of your experiences with God secret so that you don't become addicted to what other people think.

Study Scripture for yourself so you are grounded in God's Word rather than in others' opinions

Invite close friends to speak truth to you so that your relationship is more than just social.

Serving**Characteristics**

God's presence seems most tangible when you're involved in helping others

You're often uncomfortable in a setting where you don't have a role.

If you have a role, then you sense God's presence and delight.

You constantly look for acts of service you can engage in and often don't even need to be asked.

Biblical Example:

Dorcas

Strengths:

Get plugged into a church body so you have opportunities for meaningful service to offer God.

Look for glimpses of God's presence in the people you serve and in the execution of your tasks.

Prepare to serve first by praying so your service is genuinely spiritual service.

Cautions:

Be careful not to resent other people who don't serve as much as you do.

Remember that God loves you, not because you are so faithful in serving him, but because you are his child.

Don't confuse serving with earning God's love.

Ways to Stretch:

Balance your service with small group and community life.

Learn how to receive love even when you're not being productive

Practise expressing love through words as well as actions.

Worshipping

Characteristics

You have a deep love of corporate praise and a natural inclination toward celebration

In difficult periods of life, worship is one of the most healing activities you engage in.

In worship, your heart opens up and you come alive and enthusiastically participate.

Biblical Example:

Miriam

Strengths:

Experience great worship on a regular basis

Use worship DVD's or CDs and make your car/room a private sanctuary.

Learn about other worship traditions and incorporate what you learn into your personal worship time.

Cautions:

Be careful not to judge those who aren't as expressive in worship.

Guard against an experience-based spirituality that always has you looking for the next worship "high".

"The danger in finding a way to God is that people grow to love the way more than they love God." Meister Eckhart

Ways to Stretch:

Engage in the discipline of solitude

Serve God in concrete ways as an extension of your worship.

Remain committed to your church even when worship isn't all you would like it to be.

Contemplative

Characteristics

You love uninterrupted solitude

Reflection comes naturally to you.

You have a large capacity for prayer.

If you get busy or spend a lot of time with people, you feel drained and yearn for times of solitude.

Biblical Example:

Mary, Martha's sister

Strengths:

You need regular, protected, intense time of solitude and stillness.

Act on what you hear from God in the silence

Cautions:

You have a tendency to avoid the demands of the real world because it doesn't live up to your ideals.

Be careful not to retreat to your inner world when friends, family or society disappoint you.

Resist the temptation to consider your times of private prayer and solitude as less important than the more public acts of ministry performed by others.

Ways to Stretch:

Choose a regular place of active service.

Stay relationally connected, even when those relationships become difficult or challenging.

Connect with those who have a service pathway

-Pray for them

-Get involved in some aspect of their ministry activity.

Creation

Characteristics

You respond deeply to God through your experience of creation.

Being outdoors replenishes you.

You're highly aware of your physical senses.

You tend to be creative.

Biblical Example:

King David

Strengths:

Find a location for getaways.

Make beauty a part of your spiritual life.

Cautions:

You may be tempted to use beauty or nature to escape.

You will find that people are sometimes disappointing.

Guard against the temptation to avoid corporate worship because you think to yourself, "I can worship God in nature, on my own."

Ways to Stretch:

Stay involved in a worshiping community.

Be willing to help out in less-than-beautiful settings.

Take Scripture with you into nature, and meditate on God's Word as you enjoy his creation.

When do you feel closest to God?

What area would be good for you to extend yourself in?

Three 'R' Questions To Ask Each Day

1. Have I Renewed?

When you wake up, check in with yourself. What fears or anxieties are you carrying even before your feet hit the floor? Even while your head is still on the pillow, at the beginning of every day invite Jesus to spend it with you. Jesus honours our freedom, so He usually doesn't impose himself on people who aren't open to Him. He goes where He's invited, so invite Him into your day.

Your invitation might be as simple as 'Lord, before I get up I want to invite you to join me in everything I do today. Thank you for your willingness to live in and through me.'

2. Have I Re-calibrated?

Throughout the day take some time to stop your work, be quiet and focus on God. Build in some margins.

Maybe you need wisdom for a tough decision or you just need to remind yourself of who God is. 'Cast all your anxieties upon Him because He cares for you.' 1 Peter 5:7 (New International Version)

3. Have I Reviewed The Day With God?

One of the best tools available to help you find God in each moment is a review of your day. Sports teams review their games to see how they played and, as the apostle Paul reminds us, our spiritual life is far more important than a game. Learn from mistakes and be encouraged in progress. Reflect on the attitudes you regret and ask God to 'prune' these things in you. We often don't take time to reflect on anything, let alone our lives. You'll begin to be awed by God's presence in the ordinary moments of your day.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor martyred by the Nazis wrote: 'It is a decisive rule of every Christian fellowship that every dissension that the day has brought must be healed in the evening. It is perilous for the Christian to lie down to sleep with an unreconciled heart.' We reconcile cash registers at the end of each day – what about reconciling your heart.

Spirituality is about allowing God to work in and through us. It is about being connected to Christ, like the vine and the branches in John 15. Ellen White recommends time each day contemplating Jesus – especially the last scenes of His life. When was the last time you 'beheld' Jesus?

Reflection Time

What would you say are the biggest threats to spiritual growth in your life?

What do you think it means to 'find rest for your soul'?

What ideas do you have for living life at a less frantic pace?

Consider a time when you have been running on empty, what were the worst symptoms?

If you drew a picture of your life would it be characterised more as a flowing stream or a stagnant pond? Why?

What activities have you found which help you avoid stagnation in your relationship with God?

How does it make you feel when you remember that God owns everything?

What space can you make in your day to allow God to penetrate this world's 'all about me' culture and be intimately involved in your life.

Useful Books For Spiritual Growth

At the Adventist Book Centre you will find a wide range of resources that will be helpful in your spiritual growth.

Anderson Ray S, *Living The Spiritually Balanced Life*, Baker Books, 1998

Blackaby, Henry, T, and King, Claude V. *Experiencing God*, Broadman and Holman, 1994.

Blake Chris, *Searching For A God To Love*, Sycamore/Pacific Press, 1999

Foster Richard, *Celebration of Discipline*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1989

Frazee Randy, *Making Room for Life*, Zondervan, 2004

Haffner Karl, *The Cure For Soul Fatigue*, Pacific Press, 2000

Hybels Bill, *Too Busy Not To Pray*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1998

Maxwell Randy, *If My People Pray*, Pacific Press, 1995

Mulholland M. Robert, *Invitation to a Journey* IVP, 1993

Ortberg John & Barton Ruth, *An Ordinary Day With Jesus*, Zondervan, 2002

Ortberg John, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, Zondervan, 1997

Ortberg John, *Love Beyond Reason*, Zondervan, 1998

Warren Rick, *Purpose Driven Life*, Zondervan, 2002

White Ellen, *Steps To Christ*, Pacific Press

White Ellen, *Christ's Object Lessons*, Pacific Press

White Ellen, *The Desire of Ages*, Pacific Press

Whitney Donald, *Spiritual Disciplines For The Christian Life*, Navpress, 1984

Willard Dallas, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Harper Collins, 1988

Willard Dallas, *Hearing God*, Fount, 1999

Willard Dallas, *Renovation of the Heart*, Inter-Varsity, 2002

Willard Dallas & Johnson Jan, *Renovation of the Heart in Daily Practice*, Navpress, 2006,

Willard Dallas & Simpson Don, *Revolution of Character*, Inter-Varsity, 200

Session 2

Pictures of Church

What is the first picture that comes into your mind when you think of the word 'church'?

For many people it's a building, service or organisation. We say 'see you at church' or 'we are going to church'. The New Testament church would have found these sentences a little odd. While buildings and services are aspects of what it can mean to be a church, they are not the big deal.

For the apostle Paul 'church' means a missional community. The Greek word we most often translate 'church' is the word 'community'. Paul describes the church as Christ's body where we all join together to encourage, pray for, serve and grow with one another. The New Testament describes the church in terms of serving, worshipping, sharing, growing and serving *together*. Paul reminds us however that we're not just any community. We are a community with a life-changing mission. Together we allow Christ to work in and through us to impact the world.

The Revolution

The church must run counter-clockwise to the world and in place of individualism value interdependence, in place of consumerism value service, in place of things value deep relationships with people. This would truly be the revolution our society desperately needs.

The church we read about in the New Testament was not so much about a service but how being part of the 'new community' transformed all of the believers life. Church was wherever members of that community were. This means that Chatswood church is not really a building. Church really isn't the programme we attend. Chatswood Church is the body of believers who make up this community.

It also means that when anyone comes into contact with you they have come into contact with Chatswood church. Your life is the mission. You are the revolution our society desperately needs. Chatswood church this week will be at work, at school, at Westfield, at

the hairdressers. Wherever people of this body end up that's where Chatswood church is.

Constantine and Pictures of Church.

So how did we change from church being primarily about people to it being about buildings, services and organisations? In AD 306 Constantine became Caesar of the Roman Empire. For various reasons Constantine made Christianity the state religion. Up until now people really had to want to be Christian because they could literally die for their faith. Now everyone had to be Christian - not because they had fallen in love with Jesus but they had no choice. The Christian church went from being a persecuted community meeting in homes to having state given buildings. Church became a service everyone had to turn up to once a week. The service became a ceremony everyone had to watch rather than a community everyone participated in. The 'priest' became those who did church while everyone else looked on rather than the 'priesthood of all believers' that Paul had talked about. No one did evangelism because everyone had to be Christian anyway. 'Evangelism' was something that 'professionals' did far away on the edge of the empire. Church became a once a week service that really didn't impact people's lives. All you had to do was show up, pay up and then go home.

Unfortunately many Christians today still think of Church with Constantine pictures. Church is a once a week service in a building that you show up to, pay up and then go home. You don't invest your life into this community. You don't let 'church' change your lifestyle. Ministry is for the pastors and your job is to watch. Evangelism is for someone else to do in a far away place. This is not the revolution that God created the church to be.

The Church – A Light in the Darkness

The church is to show the world what happens when a group of people do life God's way. The church is to be a place where, in the face of a self-oriented society, a light would shine that allowed people to see what life really is all about. Our church is called to be a city on a hill that shows Sydney what can happen when people allow God to work in and through them.

The church is not a place for people to gather occasionally for religious services. It is not one more social institution. The church is God's dream for His most cherished creation. What is there like the church? No accomplishment, no organisation, no country, no other group of people has the ability to meet a person's deepest longings in the same way the church can. Ellen White describes the church as "the object

upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theatre of His grace." (*Christian Service*, 13)

"The development of meaningful relationships where every member carries a significant sense of belonging is central to what it means to be a church. This is a God-ordained gathering of people that is so strong the even 'the gates of hell will not overcome it'." (Randy Frazee, *Making Room For Life*, 31)

Being God's Community

Loving relationships are the heart of a healthy, growing church. Loving relationships are the mark of the Church that will tell the world of a loving God. While programmes may draw people to a church event, it will be the supportive relationships that are developed which will provide the glue that will enable people to stay and engage in greater spiritual growth.

The future of our church depends on how well we develop true community. We can only get by for a while on skilled communication and programmes to meet needs. Unless we sense that we belong to each other we will become stale, irrelevant, and a place where people suffer alone. The price for not being in community is enormous - lonely unaffected lives, a church full of people warming pews and looking on but never being changed. Light rarely being shone and a world that continues in darkness. We have been given the incredible privilege of being Jesus' hands, His feet, His eyes, and His heart together. He works through us to impact the world.

The job is not to get people to come to 'church' but have our people being 'church' in the wider community. When the wider community engages with our church members they have engaged with the 'church'.

How are you investing your life into others in the Chatswood church family?

What pictures of Chatswood church do people get when they meet you at work, school or wherever you end up this week?

A Living Sacrifice Life

In the opening section of Romans 12 Paul outlines what it means to be a 'living sacrifice' and making everything we do an offering to God. He then moves on in the chapter to describe what a 'living sacrifice' life looks like.

With two or three others read through Romans 12 and write in point form aspects of what a 'living sacrifice' life looks like.

Paul describes a 'living sacrifice' as someone who shapes their life around:

- **Worshipping**
- **Connecting**
- **Serving**
- **Growing**
- **Reaching**

As we seek to have Christ formed in us we will pay particular attention to shaping our lives around these purposes. We will get involved in activities and environments that promote these activities. In balancing these five aspects we will also be ensuring we are growing as wholistic Christians and not becoming so involved in one aspect that we forget its relationship with other aspects of the Christian life.

In our churches we will pray, dream about, explore and implement ways that we can grow in these five areas together. Revelation 12 & 14 give a picture of an end-time community on a mission. The description includes:

1 – Obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus 12:17. We must be teaching our churches what it means to be disciples of Christ and how to apply the gospel in their everyday lives. **(Growing Spiritually)**.

2 – The rest of her offspring (remnant) Rev 12:17 (God's new Community). The remnant is a community that shows the world what happens when a group of people choose to live life God's way. We need to grow our churches in the sense of community where we are loving one another deeply, encouraging each other and putting others' needs ahead of our own. The world needs to see God's word applied in the lives of a group of believers. **(Community)**

3 – Proclaiming the gospel 14:6, including that Babylon (systems of worship that do not put God first) are fallen 14:8. We are to take seriously our command to be outward focused. We need to let the world, that is 'drunk on self', know that there is a better way of life for now and eternity. **(Sharing)**

4 – Giving Him glory for judgment is come. Worship Him 14:7 We are commanded to take worship seriously. Worshipping God for what he has is and will do. In this context we are commanded to worship God for his creative power which brings with it a responsibility to steward our environments. **(Worshipping)**

5 – Following the lamb wherever He goes 14:14. This is a fantastic picture of a community of people who have given their own lives away and are prepared to follow God on His mission. **(Serving)**

These purposes are summarised well in our Adventist Fundamentals:

Seventh-day Adventists Believe...

The church is the **community** of believers who confess **Jesus Christ** as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for **worship**, for **fellowship**, for **instruction** in the Word, for the **celebration** of the Lord's Supper, for **service** to all mankind, and for the worldwide **proclamation** of the gospel. The church derives its authority from **Christ**, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures which are the written Word. The church is **God's family**; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the **body of Christ**, a **community** of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the **bride** for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her to Himself a **glorious church**, the faithful of all the ages, the **purchase** of His **blood**, not having spot or wrinkle, but **holy** and without blemish –

Fundamental Belief, 12 (was no 11 before introduction of new fundamental at 2005 General

Recognising that the purposes for our life are the same as for the church we will aim to become:

1. **Connecting Believers** - Hebrews 10:24-25, Ephesians 2:19
(Community, Fellowship)
2. **Growing Believers** - Colossians 1:28, Ephesians 4:15
(Spiritual Growth, Discipleship)
3. **Serving Believers** – Ephesians 4:11-13, 1 Corinthians 12:7
(Serving as Part of The Body)
4. **Sharing Believers** – Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 20:24
(Evangelism, Outreach)
5. **Worshipping Believers** – Romans 12:1 & 2, Psalms 27:6

I think Starbucks cares more about selling my neighbours coffee than the little church down the street cares about helping its neighbours find forgiveness in Christ. Churches would never admit this, and to say it out loud sounds harsh, but they live it every day. – leoskwo posting on OutofUr.com

The gospel says, "Go," but our church buildings say, "Stay."
The gospel says, "Seek the lost," but our churches say, "Let the lost seek the church."

Howard Snyder (The Problem of Wineskins)

"The answers are not found in our models, methods and manmade systems but in the truth of God's Word and in being filled and led by the spirit of God." *Neil Cole (Organic Church)*

"Men are looking for better methods; God is looking for better men"
E.M Bounds, Power Through Prayer

"A ship in the harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are made for"

The Life of a Fool

Needs v Wants

Lifestyle v Income

The Quest for _____

While I am on a quest for more I think that if more does come then it must be for me.

Be on Your Guard Against Greed (Luke 12: 15).

It is hard to see Greed in the mirror

Your _____ Worth is not Your _____ Worth (Luke 12:15).

"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Money is dangerous because it deceives us into thinking that wealth is the easiest way to get everything we want.
Money is dangerous because we trust money rather than God to solve problems.
Money is seen as an end in itself and traps us – we run from poor, needy and family.

Sabbath is a guard against consumerism. A day when we are not defined by our possessions, where time does not equal money and where we take a break from consumerism.

The man in this parables problem was not that he was rich. His problem was that he didn't know why he was rich.
The problem was not with that he planned but rather he did not plan for far enough out.

He thought his life was what he owned.

Even though he was seemingly in control of everything, he was not even in control of his own pulse.

You Fool

He is a fool who most of us would like to emulate.
He was financially lost and he didn't even know it until it was too late.

5 - Remember That It All _____ (Luke 12:20)

All his possessions would be distributed, not because he was generous but because he was dead.
He was dependant on God for his allotment of time, pity he did not also realize it is the same with his possessions.

Luke 12:21. This will happen to everyone who stores up for himself.

6 - Life is About Being _____ Toward _____ (Luke 12:21)

Being rich toward God begins with giving to God that which he desires most of all – You.

Your life can be a source of pleasure to the God of the universe.
Being rich toward God means loving and enjoying the people around you.

Being rich toward God means learning about your gifts and passions and using them in a way that improves the world.
Being rich toward God means becoming generous with your stuff.
Being rich toward God means making that which is temporary become the servant of that which is eternal.

Luke 12:30 – **Seek His Kingdom** - live a life that is oriented around Kingdom priorities and values

Luke 12:33 – **Give to the Poor**

Luke 12:33 – **Store up Treasure in Heaven.**

Temporary v Eternal

12:35 - **Be Dressed Ready for Service**

12:34 – **Give Your Heart a Check Up**

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Rearrange your life around generosity not simply consumption.

Jesus says if you don't get this straight you run the risk of total loss.
You and I have the opportunity now to be rich toward God.

When you have extra treasure take time to remember why.

Remember that you only exist to Glorify God and as a response surrender all you have to the one who made it all and owns it all anyway.

Further Resources:

Andy Stanley, *Lost Series* available on itunes. North Point Ministries, Inc, 2005.

John Ortberg, *It All Goes Back in the Box*, Zondervan, 2007.

Tim Kasser and Allen D. Kanner, *Psychology and Consumer Culture – The Struggle for a Good Life in a Materialistic World*, American Psychological Association, Washington, 2008.

Ben Maxson, *Let God Be God – Biblical Stewardship Foundations*, General Conference Stewardship Department, 2006

Renovation of the Heart

Jesus replied, "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Matt 22:37

Cultivating a Well-Ordered Heart

Spiritual formation involves cultivating a well ordered heart, We look externally for order and balance and blame outward situations – if my job was different, if my parents weren't so demanding.... However, when we are brutally honest with ourselves we have to admit that the truly significant disorder is in our heart. Solomon said: 'Keep your heart with all diligence – out of it flow the issues of life.' Imagine what the world would look like if it were filled with people who had well-ordered hearts.

A well-ordered heart will ask questions like:

- How can I fill my daily tasks with a sense of the presence of God?
- How am I involved in Christian community?
- How do the people closest to me experience God working in and through me?
- Am I growing in a love for God and people?
- How will I handle money in a way that draws me closer to God?

The answer lies in being intentional about our spirituality. This is not some works trip but rather orienting our lives around practices that allow us to live a life more purposeful and abundant. "Fixing your attention on Jesus, so that you will be changed from the inside out." (Romans 12 Message) Ellen White suggests we should make time each day to contemplate the life of Christ, especially the closing scenes – it is by beholding that you are changed. Maybe you need to take a look at your life and schedule and determine what needs to be changed so that you have the time to "be still and know". Maybe some good things will need to be eliminated from your life to give God the chance to work in and through you.

When this change happens you find yourself being concerned for what concerns God. Your heart beats and breaks for what God's heart beats and breaks for. Scripture tells us that people and the church are very high on God's priorities and therefore they should be high on ours too.

Session 3

For the Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost Luke 19:10

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me' (Ministry of Healing, p 143)

Lost

Matthew 13:44 Who is the Pearl? _____

Lost sheep – Matt 18:10-14

Luke 15 – Lost stories

Luke 19:10 – I Came to seek and save the lost

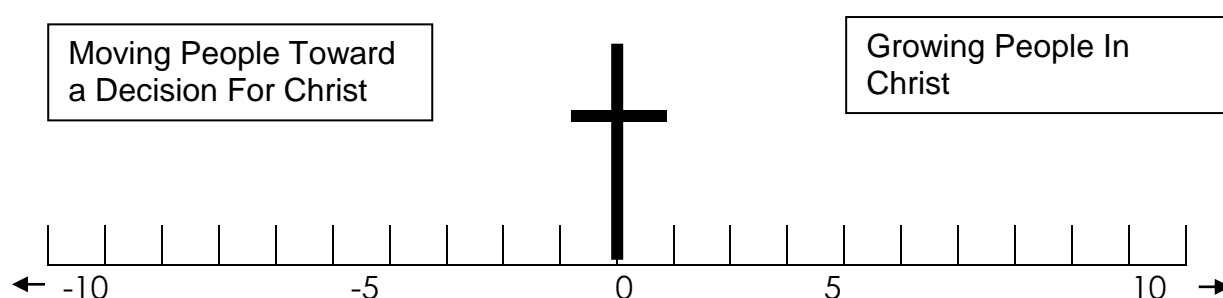
Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them
In the name of the father, and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and
teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely
I am with you always to the very end of the age – Matthew 28:19-20

Re-thinking Evangelism

Thinking Through the Evangelism Continuum

Often the concept of evangelism is pictured in very confined terms. Evangelism is seen as the public event, door knocking or follow up of contacts from a media campaign. While these are essential parts of the evangelism process, which we need to resource and promote, to meet the changing challenges of our city we need to think outside the box. Too often church members abdicate their responsibility for living evangelistic lifestyles and see evangelism as something for the

'professionals'. An expanded definition of evangelism would see our current picture as part of an evangelistic continuum.



Left or Right of the Cross

Every person in Sydney is either left or right of the cross. Right of the cross people are those who have given their lives to Christ and are growing in discipleship. It is only as people grow right of the cross that they begin to share God's heart for lost people and then make sharing their faith an essential part of their lives. Too often we have moved people along the process for baptism but have neglected to continue growing people on the right hand side so that they in turn reach more people.

On the left of the cross are people who are at various points in their spiritual development. Someone at -1 or -2 has a basic understanding of the Bible, gives God and the Bible authority to some extent and has at least some interest in spiritual things. These are the people, amongst those who have not made a decision for Christ, most likely to respond to our usual attractional approaches to evangelism. Our traditional evangelism grew up in a time when most of our society, who were not attending church, were in -1 or -2. On the right side of the cross our evangelism attracts people who may have made a decision for Christ but who become Adventists as part of their continued spiritual growth.

Much of our evangelism is still targeted at people who are on the right side of -2. The challenge is that most of our population is now left of -2. This does not make our traditional methods wrong; they definitely have a place along the continuum. Our traditional methods will still attract people, however the pool to attract from is getting sociologically smaller.

Our challenge is reaching people left of -2. This will include community based ministries, intentional friendship building, service evangelism

along with other creative ways of mingling with people, winning confidence and meeting needs. Too often a dichotomy is made between friendship/service evangelism and public evangelism. In fact, both forms of evangelism are complementary as part of a process. As people move from -5 toward -2 they will reach a place where our traditional approaches will meet what they need to move the new few steps.

The Growth Process

Every person is different and will grow spiritually at different rates and in different ways. There is not one right track however a process needs to be in place that allows people to plug in at different points and grow in various ways. A generalized process would be as follows and takes an average of three years.

-10, Ambivalent towards Christianity or most likely as been colored by negative pictures.

-9, Thinks positively about Christianity. This is most likely through a service/community project or a positive Christian influence (friendship).

-8, Second positive picture of Christianity

-7, Third positive picture of Christianity

-6, Developing of a significant Christian friendship/influence

-5, Open to attending a church organized programme or project such as parenting seminar, cooking class, playgroup or joining in on a service project.

-4, With growing continued contact open to spiritual conversations and Christian literature/media e.g. Signs or Search

-3, Active wondering re the claims of Christ, the Bible and how the gospel might impact their lives.

-2, Willing to attend a Christian presentation or join an evangelistic small group. Developing network of Christian friendships.

-1, Willing to attend church worship services and join in with activities of the church community

0, Makes a decision to give their lives to Christ (Baptism)

1, Regular attender of church activities

- 2, Serves in a role in the church that is appropriate for new attenders.
- 3, Increasing sense of belonging in the church community and is intentional about Christian growth.
- 4, Is intentional about growing in fellowship, worship, serving and Biblical understanding.
- 5, Is actively sharing his/her faith with others.
- 6, Ongoing, growth in understanding and applying God's purposes.

Below -5 the methods of evangelism that work best include friendship and various service initiatives. Around -5 to -3 some of our usual programmes like health outreach, parenting seminars, marriage enrichments etc would be useful along with a developing friendship network. From -3 to 0 our familiar events such as a reaping campaign or prophecy seminar would be useful. Small groups can also play a very important role at this point. On the right side of the cross is an effective discipleship process in the congregation.

Steve Sjogren gives the following list of words that describe traditional evangelism in relation to an approach that is more needs-oriented. Keep in mind that the traditional approach still has its place in the process.

Monologue...	...Dialogue
Compelling Proof...	...Compelling Story
Presentations...	...Conversations
Words...	...Images
Our Language...	...Their Language
Us/Them...	... Fellow Travelers
Fishing from the bank...	...Swimming with the fish
Believe to belong...	...Belong before believing
Event driven...	...Context driven
Come and see...	...Go and be
Scripted...	...Spontaneous
Winning...	...Nudging
Gospel presentations...	...Gospel experiences

(Sjogren, Ping and Pollock - *Irresistable Evangelism*)

Life-Changing Friendships

What factors stop you building life-changing friendships with people?

What will you do to address these factors?

Mingle With People

The first step in friendship evangelism is to mingle with people you already know having a Christ-like desire for their best good.

Think through what connection you will make. How much are you committed to making this work?

Listen

Listening is something you can do anyplace, anytime. No fancy equipment or budget is needed.

Pray for your friend and that you allow God to work in and through.

Everyone is different, be ready to read the situation.

Minister To People's Needs

Ministry springs from a heart touched by God's unconditional love expressed in service toward the practical needs of those around you.

Finding a Person's Spiritual Address

The messages that are likely to get through to a person's heart are those that are addressed to that person's individual needs. At different points serving or friendship are the primary points and if met will allow the process to move on toward spiritual needs. Sjogren, Ping and Pollock in their book *Irresistible Evangelism* outline four needs and basic approaches to meet them.

1 - Physical needs – Active Kindness

This involves demonstrating God's love by offering to do humble acts of service, in Christ's name, with no strings attached."

2 - Emotional/Relational needs – Active Listening

This is all about genuine friendship and taking an active interest in someone's life. Taking time to understand people opens doors.

3 - Directional Needs – Active Wondering

Taking the time to find out about a person, their hopes, dreams and how they view the world.

4 - Spiritual Needs – Active Sharing

This is where you can have spiritual conversations and explain how God has worked in your life.

Think of these skill sets in terms of a written address with 1 being the area, 2 being the street, 3 being the number and 4 being the name on the envelope. When the process is worked through in this way the message people get from God, through you, is much more likely to be received and opened.

Not everyone fits neatly into these four stages. Some people are eager to jump stages. However, in delivering God's message, these four areas usually allow for greater effectiveness.

"The trick of delivering God's mail to a person's spiritual address is really no trick at all; it's mostly a matter of caring enough to treat people with the kindness and respect we desire for ourselves. If you keep in mind the apostle James advice to be 'quick to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19) you will see doors open.'" Sjogren, Ping and Pollock in their book *Irresistible Evangelism*

Win Their Confidence

Winning the confidence of others cannot be forced or manipulated, but is built through caring relationship.

Follow Me

Sharing the gospel happens in an open, trusting relationship, using language relevant to the context and needs of the person with whom you are sharing.

Shaping Your Testimony

Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect.

1 Peter 3:15-16 (New Living Translation)

Before I met Christ my life was...

I first felt me need for Jesus when...

God began breaking through to me...

Right now my relationship with Christ is...

2 - Think of the last five people you shared with spiritually. What was the response? What would you do different in hindsight?

The idea that you could become a mature Christian and not have a heart that is broken for those who are lost is inconceivable
- Erwin R. McManus

**Try putting yourself in the other persons shoes. Ask yourself:
“How would I react in his or her place”.**

"God wants us to become Contagious Christians – his agents, who will first catch His love and then urgently and infectiously offer it to all who are willing to consider it. This is His primary plan, the one Jesus modelled so powerfully, to spread God's grace and truth person to person until there's an epidemic of changed lives around the world."

(Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming A Contagious Christ*)

God calls for light bearers who will fill the world with the light and peace and joy that come from Christ. God will use humble men, men who will cherish a sense of their weakness... They will reveal that Christ dwells in the heart, imparting purity to the whole being. Ellen G White,

Evangelism, p629

"It's common for members to verbalize their love for Jesus, but their witness consists of dropping their offering in the plate so that someone more qualified can communicate the good news. Church leaders are hopeful, but they wonder out loud if anyone really knows how to reach the lost. Like a VCR on pause, the whole church seems to hesitate as if waiting for something new to try."

Ron Gladden,

Your duty cannot be shifted upon another. No one but yourself can do your work. If you withhold your light, someone must be left in darkness through your neglect

Ellen White

'It is easy to get distracted and sidetracked from your mission because Satan would rather have you do anything besides share your faith. He will let you do all kinds of good things as long as you don't take anyone to heaven with you. But the moment you become serious about your mission, expect the Devil to throw all kinds of diversions at you.'

Rick Warren

USEFUL BOOKS FOR GROWING IN FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

Dickson, John. *Promoting The Gospel*, Blue Bottle, 2005.

Gladden, Ron. *The 7 Habits of Ineffective Churches*, AdventSource 2004

Haffner, Karl. *Out of the Hot Tub, into the World*, Pacific Press, 2002

Hybels, Bill. *Honest to God?*, Zondervan, 1990

McManus, Erwin. *An Unstoppable Force*, Group, 2001

Mittelberg, Mark, et.al., *Becoming a Contagious Christian (Participants Guide)*, 1995

Paulien, Jon. *Present Truth in the Real World*, Pacific Press, 1993

Sjogren, Steve. Ping, Dave and Pollock, Doug. - *Irresistable Evangelism*
Group 2004

White, Ellen. *Christian Service*, Pacific Press.

White, Ellen. *Education*, Pacific Press

White, Ellen. *Evangelism*, Pacific Press

Session 4

Where to for Chatswood?

- What will be different about how you go about your life this week?
- What heart-building habits are you going to try?
- How are you going to connect deeply in relationships this week?
- What will you do to grow your awe of God this week?
- Who are you going to intentionally connect with this week in a way that shows them Christ?
- How are you going to be serving in your home, church and wider community this week?

Chatswood's Outreach Plan

1. How will your church promote an outward focus in the congregation?

Ideas: Sermons, Small Group/Sabbath School Group Studies, Friendship Evangelism Course, Newsletter Articles, Prayer Groups, Leadership Meetings etc.

2. How will your congregation integrate with and serve the community?

Ideas: StormCo, Skill Development, Food, Lifestyle Management

3. What does your church already do that can be refocused outward and linked into the evangelism process?

Ideas: Sabbath Schools, Social events, Choirs can all be linked into the evangelistic process.

4. How will your congregation link with contacts made and build friendships that move people along the process?

Ideas: Create environments for building friendships e.g meals, sports events. Invite to social type events, link into other programmes,

5. What reaping points will your congregation use.

Ideas: Evangelistic small groups, Reaping Campaign, Reaping Sermon Series etc.

6. How will your congregation grow people in their relationship with Christ?

Ideas: Discipleship Small Groups, Introducing Spiritual Practices, Spiritual Mentorship Plan, Journaling etc

Steps Toward Instilling Evangelistic Values

1. Pray for it
2. Lead it
3. Teach it
4. Illustrate it
5. Study and discuss it
6. Disciple it – Need to be involved in direct discipling of others
7. Inspire it
8. Personalize it – People need to see the issue on a personal level, see how evangelizing will affect the people they care about.
9. Fund it
10. Schedule it – Scheduling rooms and time slots for outreach – oriented prayer times, training, seminars, strategy sessions, team meetings, outreach events, even seeker services. Going on trips to attend effective churches and ministries, or attend vision lifting conferences and workshops.
11. Measure it – If you can't measure it, you can't manage it!
12. Reinforce it – reinforce the good things that are happening
13. Celebrate it

Elements for building a contagious church

1. Leaders fully committed to the church's evangelistic mission
2. Willingness to try fresh approaches
3. Participation of the entire church body
4. Alignment of the ministries to the church's evangelistic mission
5. Strategic co-ordination of all outreach activities
6. Sustained effort
7. Unswerving devotion to Christ and His message
8. Commitment to prayer and the role of the Holy Spirit

Satan would rather keep us busy doing anything in the world other than building a contagious church.