

# Evangelising your friends

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[ 0 : 00 ] The title of my talk is How to Evangelize Your Friends. And while I was looking at the books, my eyes fell on this one by J.I. Packard, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God.

And it says if God is in control of everything, does that mean that Christians can sit back and not bother to evangelize? Or does active evangelism imply that God is not really sovereign at all?

J.I. Packard shows in this classic study how false qualities these attitudes are. In a careful review of the biblical evidence, he shows how a right understanding of God's sovereignty is not so much a barrier to evangelism as an incentive and powerful support for it.

And that's how I'm going to start my paper. What gives me great encouragement today and great motivation and great joy as I evangelize is my understanding of the sovereignty of God.

I have a confidence as I evangelize because I have a sovereign God. How else can I take a message or how else can you take a message which is obviously unpalatable to ordinary men and women and have any hope of moving them except that God is able to move rebellious sinners like you and like me.

[ 1 : 30 ] In spite of their own information, God can use us because God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. God has said, I will make you fishers of men.

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And this is because God can convert that we go. If God calls whom he wills and when he calls him effectively as we heard the other night, then we can be bold in our evangelism.

Because we know that it is by human testimony that God so often calls people to himself. so that must be our starting point today not to be despondent not to be despairing but surely to be encouraged to know that through us God will save without God we cannot without us he will not and maybe I should say we've had a big lunch with a big breakfast if I see any of you nodding off I'm no hesitancy in naming and shaming I know the difference between nodding in agreement and nodding off to sleep some of you might remember the martini advert anytime, any place anywhere I think that must be our motto as we evangelize as well we can evangelize anytime any place anywhere but I think the problem with so many of us is that we've filled our lives with important activities that are stopping us from responding to God's call to minister for us day after day we rush from one place to the next and we offer everyone we meet all our sympathy but we give them none of our time how often have we said how are you come here to Woolies going into Woolies come here to the co-op go into church come here to church we say it automatically and we don't really wait for the response because we think the response is going to be fine we do it all the time

I was converted under the Callum Atherton's ministry and I grew under Ronnie Morrison's ministry and I had a great time in the North US Three Church day but what I did was I maybe surrounded myself with Christian friends a close group of people who I loved their fellowship but there were so many in the church that I didn't know at all and maybe I said to them on the way into church high food no high take no high whatever and that went on from week to week from year to year I didn't really get to know these people and I think so often that is true for us we don't we lose opportunities to witness to people and to evangelise to people God places people before us and gives us opportunities to reach out to them but so often these opportunities are lost at that time I think I was moving through life at such a speed

[ 5 : 26 ] I had so much on my mind and so many activities that I was just saying about these maybe legitimate activities that I was moving through life at such a speed that I didn't really spend time with anyone I heard people but I didn't listen to them I looked at people that I didn't see and it wasn't until a few years later when I went to North U.S.

to help Ronnie for a few weeks part of my college training that I actually went round to visit these people and I got to know them and they got to know me people I had seen and looked at and maybe spoken to in that sort of way for many years but I didn't get to know them I think the Lord Jesus Christ sends people into our lives but sadly we sometimes regard these people as interruptions through a busy schedule and I think in doing that we are missing many opportunities for witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ so I want you just to think about the people you know I want you to think if we know the joy and the excitement of reaching out to people and evangelising you might be saying today but I don't know how to evangelise but I'm saying today the most effective way of evangelism is friendship evangelism it means sharing the gospel in a real and powerful way in a friendship that you have or have built up over a period of years sadly we feel we don't know how to do it we lack the confidence we maybe lack the experience to share our faith sometimes we just hold back because we're afraid to step out

I honestly believe that even today we have a dormant army of evangelists waiting to be awoken by God and to be used by God in his service to extend his kingdom God turned the world upside down with 12 what could he do in Lewis and Harris and Lewis with us if we have the right motivation the right mindset noticing the opportunities then God will bless us can you put your hand up today if you have friends who are not Christians just take your hand up if you have friends who are not Christians just about everyone put their hand up so often we leave our non-Christian friends behind we do it and we maybe don't realise we do it we're so excited when we're converted we're so excited with the fellowships the krinichus and events like this that we give the impression that we're not really that we're leaving them and we've found something new and I think these meetings and these krinichus and these fellowships are so important they're vital at the beginning but I think we should then have the confidence to move away and to re-establish our links with those who are still strangers to the grace of the Lord

Jesus Christ I believe that our natural friendship network neighbours what colleagues can be a rich harvest for personal evangelism I honestly believe that we must be witnesses of Jesus in our ordinary lives rather than leaving everything behind and heading for the sacred sanctuary of the fellowship all the time we need to do it we need to be encouraged and built up ourselves but we mustn't make it a church and forget what God has said to us I will make you fishers of men we need to earn the right to talk about Jesus and one of the ways we can do that is by caring if personal evangelism is to be right or set in the right context it must be in a caring real human relation field we must get to know our people because we want to introduce them to our friend

Jesus Christ surely that must be our aim to introduce them to our friend Jesus Christ just look at the way that Jesus himself spoke to people the value and the respect he accorded to each individual the Samaritan woman at the well he knew how to break the ice he said can you give me a drink he asked questions like what do you want he showed it that he was interested in her as a person that's how it started when Jesus made Zacchaeus Zacchaeus was not a popular man he was a collaborator he was a friend of the Romans he was a tax collector but Jesus was willing to go to Zacchaeus home and become his friend sometimes as Christians we appear I'm not saying we are but we appear to be proud we appear to be standoffish we appear to be judgmental but what I'm saying today is we should be prepared to join in with people on their journey of faith like Jesus did rather than to condemn them for not having faith at all our great privilege is to introduce people and to meet them where they are

[ 11 : 50 ] I remember Bill Scott who was a minister in Dumfries telling me about a man who used to come to his church but not into his church every Sunday this man had a drink problem he would sit 15 minutes before the church went in and ask Bill Scott to tell him about Jesus he wouldn't go in and there's one day this lady came along and she was obviously going to another church she had a bible she looked the part and when she saw this down and out she went and crossed to the other side walked a bit and shouted across to the minister it's sad isn't it and he said it is sad but they were talking of two different things altogether it was sad that the Christian needed to walk on the other side I'm asking you if you have a compassion to see people saved I'm asking you are you committed I'm asking you to think in your own situation of these non-Christians that you know and you put your hand up and said

I know non-Christians I want you to think about them and I want you to ask yourself do I care for him or her if he goes to hell would I like to see him saved how important is it for me to see these people saved before they die so often we give the wrong signals we come to church taught the rest we may believe church we come out of cars we don't interact with the community but there are situations when we make an effort to interact that things work out brilliantly I was very encouraged recently to be invited up to Shabbos to speak at the evangelistic services I had there at the weekend in November I saw the invitation that was sent out to the people in the community every house in the community was given an invitation you are invited to your church immediately they're saying well they care for us it's our church and everyone in the church went round with these invitations and you know there were people who came who hadn't been in church for years who hadn't been in church at all every night they'd be saying oh Donna was in church and Donna was in church and Donna and how many

Donna's are there there's three Donna's alone who were never in church and then they had a cup of tea just after the cells and one lady came up to me and said the first time ever in my life I've got more than a statistic in the church just had a cup of tea just invited them to the church and many of these people are still following coming to church and I believe some could be converted they had gone and had a meal when they arrived Mr.

McLeoday's wife in the community hall introduced themselves people came and when people think well the church cares for us they will respond they are out there we need to get them in also what's happening in back you know the sports Kenny John when people see that the church is interested in the community then they will feel a part or want to be a part of the church they don't see it as something separate our mission statement is we are a church in the heart of the community with a community in our hearts we can see it but do we mean it do we really want to be in the heart of the community we need to reach the unreached we can have different kinds of ministries we've all got lovely halls in our churches many of us have anyway but a lot of these halls just lie empty and sometimes maybe it's hard for us to take someone directly to church you know in

Madrasti they go to Madrasti and then some people will want to go to the free north maybe if we had ministries where we could get to know people and invite them to the church environment and then they will come to church there's different kind of ministries we have a road to recovery meeting in Uist where people who wouldn't normally go to church have been coming along to this where it is Christ centered they feel that someone cares and through that work alone there's over 10 people who now come to church there's the youth cafe just getting to know the young people in the area I think I was there for three or four weeks before they realized I was a minister they thought I was a policeman and then these people will come to the youth night and to the sports night and we had someone down recently who noticed that these teenagers you know 16 17 18 no church background many of them in Balavani some with maybe military background they weren't swearing they had grown to respect the standards and what was said and who knows what the next step will be

[ 17 : 27 ] I've taken a book with me here and I hope you'll buy it White White Steers to Heaven has anyone read the book it's really amazing we're about this woman who wrote this book up to use twice and the contacts that we made by just getting that woman up to speak we said well let's give the book away free well someone gave us the money to give the book away free to be honest but we said come and hear this amazing story of the work that these people do in Glasgow they work with the drug addicts alcoholics prostitutes in Glasgow Maureen and Hugh McKenna and the first time they were up they had a girl with them called Margaret Taylor who was a prostitute now the first contact with Margaret Taylor was when Hugh said to her would you like a cup of coffee when they were out for the soup or tea kitchen at night and she said no I hate coffee he didn't see her for a month and he said would you like a cup of tea and he said how do you know

I want tea he said well last time I saw you you told me you hated coffee and that was what first said to her well this guy must have a concern for me that lady spoke at our meeting and she's now safely converted and soundly converted and she spoke about how God had used that ministry to bring him to herself sorry herself to him it started off with do you want a cup of coffee and if you look at the number of times Jesus starts with just wee questions like that do you want a drink and it ends up come see a man who told me everything I ever did is not just the Christ don't be put off by the wee things that you can do because they can develop into huge things in God's plan Lydia was converted she opened God opened her heart then she asked missionaries to stay with her

Paul and his missionary friends she just said do you want to stay she opened her home through that opening God opened Europe for the gospel and that means we have the gospel here tonight today and it started with do you want to stay in my house you may not realise the things the little things that you might think are insignificant that can do great and wonderful things in God's plan but you must be prepared to speak to those who are not yet Christians I think there's something else as well sometimes we we follow an agenda that is more concerned with securing the flock than to reach out for the lost sheep we never maybe leave the 99 and go looking I think also in our traditional church life we expect people first to behave then to believe and then to belong that's how we have put it but I don't think it's scriptural at all because

Jesus first welcomed people to belong then they would learn to behave then they would believe with somehow twisted it even though we've got hundreds of examples in the Bible of how Jesus worked that way remember Matthew he was first invited to belong he sat with the other disciples and heard Jesus teaching he learned what following Jesus was about then he believed but we want people just to behave before we take them in we had a girl in church last week and she said I swear and I'm a Darwinist but she was there she came along because someone in the community who was a Christian impressed her and then someone else in the community was a Christian impressed her and then she heard that they both went to this church so she came along we need to be culturally relevant we need to learn the language of those who maybe don't understand our language

I remember staying down in the ferry for two weeks just quite close to where we've got our outreach work in Madras wanting maybe to have a rest there was a knock on the door the first morning we were there and there was a girl next door she was a single parent she had two children and she was just introducing herself to us and she sort of witnessed to us although she wasn't a Christian she said I start to go to the free church have you ever heard of it and then she came later on and she said would you like to come to the prayer meeting it's on tonight I don't feel ready yet to go to the main church on Sunday now that's totally different from our culture and she picked us up and she took us to church it was a disappointment for the minister because he thought he had a bit of breakthrough because the people at 82 were also coming with a girl from number 80 and they obviously were ready and geared up for us because she had said to him

[ 23 : 26 ] I'm bringing friends and he asked me what do you do I said I'm in the free church college and he said mouth dropped but I learned from her because she was open you know do you want to come to church how long would I have taken to say that to her I might not have said it at all in two weeks and then she kept coming and saying I've got all these problems and what do I do about them and I said well you need to pray and she put the door next morning I prayed nothing's happened and then a friend of mine was with me his suggestion to her was keep going to a throne of grace he might have been might as well be speaking Swahili but we keep churning these things out that we understand and we know what they mean and I'm not trying to discredit him but I'm just showing how sometimes we are operating on a different channel from where people are in Scotland and even in Lewis and Harris and US today so I think we need to start where people are not where we think they should be or where we would hope they would be but where they are now Jesus started with people where he was contemporary without compromising his message and I think we need to learn that we too can be contemporary without compromising your message you are the church you have a voice but so often our chorus is but we've always done it this way these are the rules these are the regulations these are the rituals there are churches maybe that are driven by finance how much will it cost there may be churches driven by buildings staying with historical but inadequate buildings should never take priority over reaching the community and the church has done it in so many places and there's been great success

I'm not saying ditch your churches I'm saying maybe use other buildings to develop other ministries as well as the ministry that we know that works let's discover our own purpose today let's discover why we exist as Christians let's have a clear vision of what God wants to do through you and through the church and through the family that is the church I'm going to tell you that some people or some people have been receptive to the gospel and used and while I was thinking about this I picked up another book I haven't paid for any of them by the way and I haven't written them in the book but I will what could I say at your kitchen table your best friends struggling to hold together a crumbling marriage pours out at heart at house group that evening the lonely widow is still grieving after more than a year just wants to talk later your sister telephones trying to come to terms with why she can't have children you long to help to bring words of comfort and healing but where do you start what do you say

Peter Hicks who wrote this book believes that some sufferers perhaps one in ten need professional help and we must admit we must sometimes say well this person needs some professional help what the other nine need to say so very badly is the listening ear of a Christian friend you need to know those you can best reach some examples in our own experience number one it's easy this one someone who just appears in church you've seen them coming we've all seen them coming they appear in church surprise surprise they come back again you can speak to that person you can make contact you can make friends there is definitely a searching on their part God God has brought them to your church for a purpose

God sometimes just does that and he's sovereign he just brings people to you and he says look she's here how often have we heard I went to that church for one two three weeks no one spoke to me because we're all involved in our little groups of close friends and you know I'm not criticizing that but always be on the lookout for that girl or that boy or that man or that woman who has come to your church that happened recently to myself in Sky I was speaking at a conference in Sky and this man in the middle of Newcastle had been spoken to by the word of God I can't remember how but if he had bought a Bible or someone had given to a Bible he was all his friends were into drugs especially and he just felt I need to get out of here and I remember once he was in a holiday in Sky his wife had left him his life was a mess he jumped into his car and he drove to Sky and he pulled up and brought for that big car back beside the tiger in the mahanker place and he saw the sign something like lift Jesus high on Sky he came into the place where the preaching was going on and he said it was like someone was speaking directly to himself like it was his situation

I was preaching on the demonic man and came afterwards to speak and did a wonderful time of just talking and sharing and equipping and put him in touch with content sometimes God just does that bring someone to you right before you and he says well here he is you're a Christian you tell it but I'm asking how often have we not said anything or done anything I'm just asking you to think about that easy contacts close friends or families of people who have been converted there's an opening there what do you think of what's happened to Anne first time parents or someone maybe has just had a baby in your community just go and visit I remember just going to see someone in hospital who had a baby and said do you mind if I pray for the baby next week she was wanting to come to church the week after she wanted to come to the fellowship just by a wee contact like that people going through divorce major problems they need to hear or need to have a listening ear of a

[ 30 : 28 ] Christian friend in the community whether it's back or bar or bad we are there we are to be soft and light if we are to be effective in evangelism there's a huge list there but I wouldn't go through if we are to be effective in evangelism we need to take ourselves into the feelings into the lifestyles into the circumstances of the people we're trying to reach we are to love our neighbour as ourselves and that is bringing ourselves into their situation 100% part of sensing our burden for others is to empathise with their circumstances and understand the situation only as I begin to understand the person

I'm trying to reach can I apply my personal testimony to his or her unique situation when we talk about life evangelism I like to talk about lifestyle evangelism and this is we can do this and we don't even realise we're doing it remember remember the wild demoniac living among the caves and the tombs remember how far he was from civilisation remember how dangerous he was he was insane he was chained up he broke the chains what a sight he must have been with that flowing hair with the unkept beard with the wild eyes with the blistered and bleeding cuts that he had been cutting himself and doing himself harm for all these years but then we read that Jesus healed him and cast out the demons out of him into a herd of pigs and we read that he was made clean then we read he was clothed in his right mind and eager to know what he should do next now that should be our position in

Christ we have been cleansed we have been in the far country we have been prodigal but now that we are in a right mind sitting at Jesus feet we should be eager to find out what Jesus wants us to do next and he wanted to go with Jesus but Jesus said go home and tell your friends and family what great things I have done for you and how I have had compassion on you now you just imagine just for a second what it would have been like when he returned home that man would have made a profound impression on everyone the transformation in his life would have spoken clearly about the ability of Jesus Christ to make someone new his lifestyle his life his transformation would have spoken more loudly than a thousand sermons I am asking if people see in you what

Christ has done for you the way we live the people we are the priorities we make will be powerful aspects of our Christian witness to others I'm asking you how do you live what are your priorities think of Zacchaeus he said look Lord I've given away half my possessions to the pool but if I've cheated anybody I'm willing to give back four times that amount now we can't begin to imagine the impact that would have had on the people around that small community in Jericho it would have been the talk of the town the generosity of the taxman who had touched the lives of so many it would have touched the lives of everyone when they were handed back and they would have seen what what what happened when he was with Jesus we must learn to witness where we live indeed as well as in word woman of

Samaria come and see a man who told me everything I ever did through what she said and the exacting way she said it and the conviction with the way she said it spoke to so many some believed and they went home and told others there are opportunities all around us people are wanting to hear your story people love testimony people love to hear what Christ has done there's a friend of mine called Eddie Mureson he was in prison he was probably him and Jamie Boyle were on a path they were vying for top spot as the most wanted criminal in Scotland he ended up in prison for 14 years for attempted murder if you remember the prison top riots in Softon where they were taking the prison warden and that was him that man now is suddenly converted he has written a book bruised but not broken he has been used by

[ 35 : 58 ] God all over the world Columbia New York Scotland Charles Coulson Watergate one of his books on the bookstops came over to Scotland he was for prison fellowship and he saw Eddie in the crowd and there was lots of people wanting to speak to Charles Coulson and he said are you one of my boys he saw the tattoos on his arm he says yes well you are the one I want to take with me on my tour of Scotland and then he wants them to take him to America what was the beginning of Eddie Muriddon's conversion in the end no prison would take him the prisons were passing him because he was too hard to handle in the end he ended up in one of the prisons in Scotland he had two fully armed guards with him all the time his cell was polystyrene furniture he had covered his own cell and his own excrement you think no hope a man went in a

Christian a church of Scotland minister had read about him and he spoke to him the first thing he said to him was shut up and grow up to the most feared man in Scotland and he threw him a Bible and he said read that and Eddie Murdon said no why I can't read he started teaching to read I was in New York with Eddie Murdon last March that man does not miss an opportunity to speak about Jesus Christ because he says that he was the chief of sinners he was at the very bottom he was in the mire and the murk you know the Glasgow air when you go through the check out and say do you mind if we check your bag we've all been stopped when we're in a hurry he says to the two checking the bag

I know someone who can see even further than your machine someone who can see right into your heart he started witnessing to Jesus we went to the aircraft to Glasgow United Airlines you know where they've got he said to the steward have you ever read that book changed my life in the end I don't know whether it was going to stop it going through Harlem and Brooklyn and he said stop the car and the driver says no way we're stopping here at this time of night we're in a lift and this big negro is taller than me and he must be tall and I said don't let speak to him and he said cheer up mate Jesus loves you but the thing I'm trying to get across is there are opportunities every day if we just realize them he does and he does speak sow the seed sow the seed even when you don't see results dr mcLeod was in years 20 years ago 14 or 15 years later he sees some of the girls he prayed for and the fellowship sow the seed even when you don't see results sow the seed even when the odds are stacked against you sow the seed even when you are feeling a failure sow the seed even when the soil seems hard sow the seed even when the task seems daunting another friend of ours

Alec Mills he was in the RAF in Benbeck he was in the single unit he was the only Christian there and Friday night he used to maybe lock himself away and read his bible and he would be playing American football at 2 in the corridor and he used to pray for all these boys and he used to witness to them and they used to mock him and laugh it one night in the middle of winter on guard duty at 3 in the morning in Bala Manich not the best place to be a phone call came through the military system a man in silence saying I just want you to be the first person to know that I'm a Christian and what you said to me these years ago spoke to me although I didn't show it then so does you even when you don't see results what tools can we use I've been on a course called Evangelism Explosion and if anyone wants to hear about it I can maybe talk to you about it later it's a course where you learn just to talk naturally about your faith you know sometimes you're saying well I wish the thing would come round to a religious discussion then

I could get my bit in it's got what you call diagnostic questions where you make a diagnosis that person is spiritually Jesus himself asked questions to diagnose remember the blind man do you believe that I am able to do this another time who do you say I am another time have you understood all these things Jesus was expert at these diagnostic questions and in the Evangelism Explosion there's two questions the first one is you need to know the person first if you were to die tonight would you go to heaven it's amazing the openings you get from that question second one is if you were to die tonight and if God were to say to you why should I let you into my heaven what would you say and from that responses you can take them to the point of need

[ 41 : 49 ] I met a man on Logan Air flying from Stormway to Binbeckler just last year hadn't seen him for many years he's now the senior driving instructor in Scotland I said I might not see this man again he told me his wife had died of cancer I e'd him in 20 minutes did the thing with him and we had an amazing conversation and I believe I left him knowing what he must do to be saved now that's all we can do Paul may plant and Paul is water God gives the increase but we must plant and we must water now we could have spent 20 minutes talking about this that and the other sometimes you just get one opportunity another way we can evangelise is another way we can evangelise is through hospitality

Duncan spoke about the home the church that met in the home when we were reading Philemon today I know it's amazing the number of times Christ is witnessing in people's homes and I believe that you can use your home to win people for Christ without God we cannot without us he will not I'll just go through very quickly mass gospel just a few verses chapter 1 verse 29 Jesus healing a mother in law he went to Simon Peter mother in the synagogue they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andy he does something amazing there then you read again in chapter 2 verse 1 a few days later when

Jesus again entered Capernaum the people heard that he had come home again in chapter 2 verse 15 while Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house like Levi's repentance party you know it was Levi's repentance party tax collectors sinners were eating with him Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house and he got criticized why does eat with tax collectors and sinners we still get criticized sometimes when we eat with tax collectors and sinners there's a huge list I've got about 15 examples in different homes in Mark's Gospel alone where Jesus went into different houses spoke to different people did wonderful things Jesus author use used the context of a shared meal to witness about himself and the good news of

Christ and it's good what Duncan said about having homes that we can all look back to where we got fellowship as Christians but I want you to think of it in another way just now can we use our homes to take people in who are not Christians and tell them about Jesus sadly I spoke to a Christian after he was converted a year or so and he said since I was converted I had not one non Christian in my house and he was taking that as something good the examples are there in the scripture the examples are there from Jesus Christ you can use your home to get people in we've all got the free church cook if not

Nigella Lawson will do invite people for something to eat people who work with you who aren't Christians people in the community who aren't Christians befriend them take them in and it's by sharing questions and answers that will just come naturally as you eat and drink together that you will get openings remember what Jesus said I will make you fishers of men I am asking has he used you to catch fish for him he wants you to cast out your gospel net the gospel net that you know will bring in he wants you to be totally devoted to the work that he has given you as a disciple because if we're not fishing to quote

[ 47 : 09 ] Max Locado or Christopher Macrae if we're not fishing we're fighting and we're squabbling and we're moaning and we're criticizing I'm asking who will you catch for the Lord because the Lord does use us remember God sovereignly he has given to us the ministry of reconciliation he has said I will make you fishers of men as the Lord showed you where to fish are you in back are you in point are you in scoff are you in star are you in tar are you in ranch plenty of fish in these places yes he has given you plenty of fishing ground he has given you the equipment he has given you the bait he told you the fish are there and will we catch well we won't catch if we're watching

TV and our equipment is safely tucked away in the cupboard don't keep your Christianity in the closet don't hide your rod under a bucket go fishing there is the risen lord who says to you who commands to you to go and you know remember he said without me you are nothing and the disciples discovered that remember they were fishing without them they went on their own strength nothing then he says the other side 153 the net didn't break what does that tell you if you go in the lord's name in the lord's strength you will catch fish but first of all you've got to know what you're fishing for fishing is a skill now when I was a wee boy in

Lough Maddie growing up I knew every lot I knew where to fish I knew when to fish what were the best base what is the best length between the bubble and the hook and different places and different locks I used to have cousins coming from the mainland who would come and I used to get so frustrated I would be ready with my 399 woolly rod you know the pack you get everything in it by the time they got their waders on got the net the hand net the different rod 20 minutes I could have caught 3 fish in that time I think our danger is that we could be like that cousin from the mainland we want another rod and we want other bait and other hooks and we want different flies and we want all this and we still piling it up but we haven't gone fishing yet there's a chapter in the Judges that I preached about this I think it's got to be the communion I can't remember the chapter where different tribes are criticised by God for not doing what

God wanted them to do Dan and others it says Dan were just hovering around the pier painting their boats checking the ropes checking the equipment making sure there's no holes in the creels but they never ever went we can be like that as Christians we say I need more theology I need more I need more but in the end we don't go you've got the equipment already I'm telling you you've all got it you've got the bait you've got the means go fishing sometimes though I think what the problem is we take the wrong equipment you know some of you go sea fishing you know you get the big mackerel cat you ever have you ever taken that to a loch that's full of brown trout you won't catch it sometimes we are not culturally relevant to where we're going we're taking the big rubber eel to a trout that's smaller than the things we need to be culturally relevant and I think each kind of fishing demands a unique strategy remember when Jesus sent his fishermen to catch men on the first evangelistic campaign he defined the target very carefully he said they were to focus on their own countrymen he says don't go among the

Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans go rather through the lost sheep of Israel now Jesus wasn't being prejudiced he was being strategic he targeted the people the disciples were most likely to reach you are most likely to reach the people that you know you know their culture you know their background you know what makes them think you know what makes them think Calum Morrison will be used much better there than he would if we sent him to India we need to go where the fish are back if a home or town refuses to welcome you or listen to you leave that place and shake the dust off your feet Jesus told the disciples they were not to stay around unresponsive people I honestly believe that the Holy Spirit wants to direct us to people he's already prepared to respond the Holy

[ 53 : 05 ] Spirit has already prepared they are united to Christ from all eternity he has prepared them we just need to cast the hook look for open doors don't focus your attention on those who aren't really ready to listen or even people you think should listen his grandfather was a godly man so he will listen well as you may be ignoring the person who has come from chapel working for calling the event who maybe the Holy Spirit has prepared for what you're saying you know just to give you an example you know sometimes the Lord gives us a burden for someone just you know he burdens you with someone that has no connection you know you really should be burdened for your brother and sister who aren't

Christians but you're not but you're burdened for someone who maybe writes an article in a newspaper like happened to myself and Ann recently John Diamond married to Nigella Lawson he died recently of cancer did anyone hear no well he used to write every week in the Times magazine about his cancer and the good man always put his email address at the end of the thing and this went on for a year and I think it was Ann first said well let's send him an email so we started witnessing to him over the email over a period of weeks maybe month but maybe the problem we found and in fact he dedicated one of his articles to you know why don't evangelists accept that I don't believe and they are a bit about this charming couple in the West Niles but he was saying we weren't hitting home you see we didn't know him we had read his articles and we didn't know what made him tick he was from a Jewish background so the best thing for us to do was maybe to put in touch with someone who might know the way he thought so through

Christian witness to Israel through John Ross who knew someone in America who was a converted Jew who was a teacher in the theological seminary in Westminster started emailing you see sometimes we can say well I'm out of my depth here but I know someone you know we can use the context to win people for Christ in order to catch fish we must learn to think like fish in order to catch fish it helps to understand the habits how do I know what an unbeliever is thinking well I used to be a fish myself I know where they go I know what they do I know what they think I know what turns them on if I can use that phrase think of what you were and be wise and be cunning and be gentle to win them for

Christ we need to understand what a fish does to know it's it's like river some fish go deep down some hide under rocks some you know there's all sorts of different ways for different people Jesus Jesus often knew what unbelievers were thinking the number of times you read the scripture Jesus knew what was already in their minds he was effective with dealing with people because he understood them and he was able to diffuse the mental barriers that they held if you know these mental barriers you can diffuse them if you know what the fish is thinking Colossians be wise in the way you act with people who are not believers making the most of every opportunity I'll say that again be wise with the way you act with people who are not believers making the most of every opportunity we must learn to think like unbelievers in order to win them no matter how life changing our message and it is life changing it won't do any good if we're broadcasting in a different channel from the unchurched if you want to tune in to

King of Mode in the morning you don't go to Radio 4 I think the problem is sometimes we're communicating a message but everyone else is tuned in to IELTS FM we're sending the message out but we're not communicating everyone else is tuned in somewhere else we need to know what's making them tick what will make them listen we're not going to change the message we're just going to change the way it's going I think what is the time quarter to three I think pastors ministers need to hear more from you about the sort of conversations that you have at work because because so often the word preached on the Lord's day simply fails to connect with the issues and the realities of the wider world we tell you to be more committed we tell you to give more of your time more of your money for the

[ 59 : 04 ] Lord's work we tell you we need your service we tell you we need your leadership in the church but we don't really equip you to make these dynamic links with those on the outside and we don't tell you how to relate to their affairs we've looked about Jesus and why not look we've thought about Jesus and we've looked at Jesus why not look at Jesus again think think of the sublime teaching of Jesus about worshipping in spirit and in truth remember he said to someone those one day will worship here in spirit and truth can anyone remember where that happened she said we worship in this hill Samaritan woman he ends up the discourse we're saying one day there will be men and women who will worship the father in spirit and truth how did that conversation begin give me a drink the story about the rich young ruler begins the legal wrangle about inheritance how often have we heard conversations about crops and who's getting what and how often have we heard about people wanting to win the lottery and how often have we heard people talking about the weekend they've had and the drinks they've had and you're saying how on earth can I talk about

Jesus here Jesus didn't in all these ordinary situations Jesus' conversations in the gospel arose out of a quite secular and seemingly mundane concerns which he then took to a spiritual level we need to connect and then take matters to a spiritual level we need to learn more about how to say something spiritual in the context of something that is mundane and worldly you don't have to sit there waiting for a religious discussion to talk about religion but we mustn't force it I heard of a story of a young man who was a butcher and he had all these people come in for their serving steaks and their mints and he said I never tell them anything about Jesus then one day this old lady came in for a tough pundits and he was shopping his lives and he said are you ready to meet

Jesus wrong context he was forcing the issue he gave the wrong signal but I think sometimes maybe we're too paranoid at having the right answers if anyone asks us a question about our faith so in that reason we don't speak to anyone or we don't see anything because we're saying well maybe they'll catch me out so I'll just keep quiet I think significant headway can be made through evangelism through relation dialogue we need to learn to think like believers well I used to be a believer we talk to them we spend time with them unless we do that we won't understand but they're thinking of where they are at do you know that the average fisherman never goes more than half a mile from a paved road and he goes fishing you used to see them coming all the time again as I grew up and used people paying big money to go fishing but they would pack their car take half an hour to get ready and then walk a quarter of a mile to a loch that I knew there was not really any fish in but those who knew would hike over the moors and there we would catch a fish

I'm asking are you one of these people who will take a wee trip fling a thing and give it what length are you prepared to go to catch men for Jesus are you willing to go to any length no matter how uncomfortable it might be to win people for Jesus Christ now fishing is fishy and smelly you you go fishing you fill the boat with mackerel you are full of mess because you have been trying to get them off the hook and all that fishing naturally is that way I think as a church for too long we have been wanting our fish already scaled gutted cleaned and cooked before we will partake that's why we never reach anyone remember when I was talking about the belonging and the believing we want people to be that way we're not prepared to get our hands dirty

I sat for a meal last week crab on the menu you had a choice get a bowl of crab's claws and spend half the night cracking them and opening them up and digging in and trying to get to the bits that you can't reach all you could ask for crab meat salad we traditionally have been wanting the crab meat salad we're not prepared to get dirt for Jesus Christ so often we often we just use the same kind of hook the same kind of bait and we think we'll catch every fish there is the 153 that were in the net and John 19 were different sizes different fish we will never catch different people from different cultures if we just stick to the one we when

[ 65 : 44 ] Jesus spoke to the woman at the well what did he talk about he talked about living waters when he was with a fisherman he talked about catching fish when he was with the farmer he talked about sowing seed what we do is we talk about sowing seed with the fisherman we talk about catching fish with the farmer sometimes we're not connected because we don't know who we're dealing with if you ever fish the entire day sometimes you have to change the bait as the day wears on where the fish were biting the morning they seemed to ignore in the late afternoon I think the problem that we can have is we go to the places that used to be good in 1950 people here were caught in the gospel net 2001 we need to branch out we need to look for new fishing grains we need to cast the net wide and where we are

God is giving us fish we use the one hook we don't use different outreach programs because so often it'll cost too much think of different initiatives we can have to reach people there's that ministry there the open door thrust the free church and the open door thrust are coming together in Glasgow we have a ministry that is great but we also need to have different kind of ministries and from chapel and government where the open door thrust are coming in as part of the free church we've got the buildings we've got the equipment take it you know these people that's what works not if we try and implant something that doesn't work that works one place and not someone else have you heard of the initiative with the farmers someone who is a Christian said look at all these poor farmers look at what they're suffering what can we do and there's been an initiative where over a thousand farmers throughout

Scotland and England Wales and Northern Ireland have received a copy of the New have received a tape of a gospel message have received a book I think by John Blanchard and they've all received them and you know I'm convinced that people will be one by Christ even if it's just one out of a thousand it's been worth it for there is rejoicing in heaven for every sinner that turns I'll conclude with this fishing for souls is not a hobby it is not something we do in our spare time it is a responsibility it is a serious business it is to be a lifestyle we are to love our neighbor as ourselves we are to love them and we heard from Duncan I don't know who he was quoting

I thought it was a scripture then I realized I think it was a pop song crazy little thing called love that's what it's all about we need to love them we need to pray for them friendship is the best soil for bearing fruit in the gospel I hope I made you just think differently to look at the opportunities you have that you may not realize you have look at the gift you have that you might not realize you have and use all that to win souls for Jesus Christ what did Jesus say to the demonic man well that's what I'm going to say to you in conclusion now go home to Stornwood to Braggart to Barvis to Bank to Tarber to Ranish to Scalfby to Tarber to Levebara to Uist to South and North go home where you're from and tell what great things the Lord has done for you and how he has had compassion on you to Tornwood