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Be prepared for the long game

Many of us may well never know this side of heaven what sort of impact we have had on those we have been talking to – it is quite likely that our conversations will only bear fruit after we have left the scene. That encourages us to keep praying for people, even when we are no longer regularly in contact with them. God has the overview, and we are often a link in the chain – ++Justin says that ‘God is a lot better at this stuff than we are. We just need to be ready to be the witnesses he calls us to be.’

Answer the Question!

Listen carefully to the questions being put to you. The role of a witness to Jesus Christ is to take someone they’re talking to, or listening to, the next appropriate step for that person. What’s normally appropriate is to listen very carefully for the questions you are being asked, and answer them, rather than the questions you are not being asked.

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Always be ready to give an answer

1 Peter 3 encourages us to always be ready to give an explanation, a reason, for the hope that is within us. That means it is worth thinking through what our story of our journey to faith is, and how we can tell it in 2-3 minutes (no more!). It is also worth thinking about the key questions people ask (Suffering, does Science disprove God? What about other faiths? etc) and working out how you would answer the question if asked. And if you aren’t sure, ask someone you know who may have the answer!

Realize the importance of evangelism

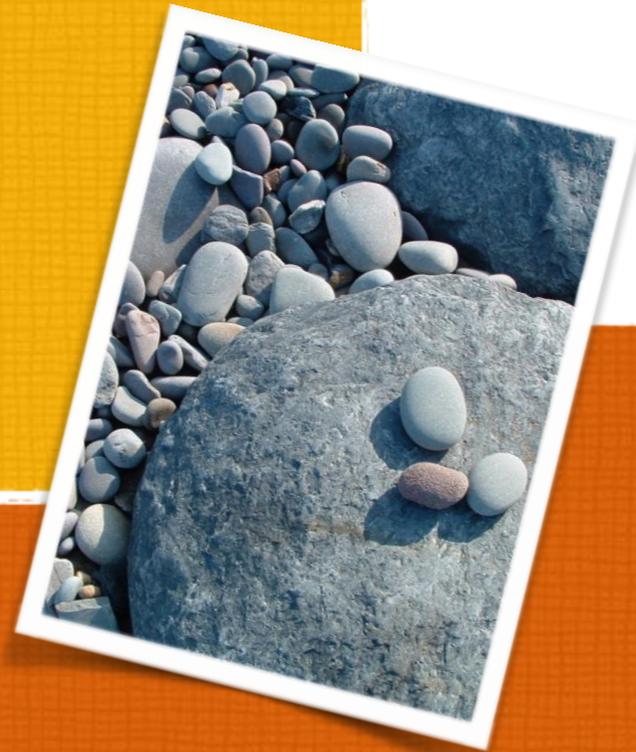
Will we take up the mantle to share Jesus? If we don’t, there will be big consequences. In 1944-45 there was a report from the Church of England entitled **Towards the conversion of England**. One of the themes in it was that as long as every Christian fails to be a witness, we will fail to move towards the conversion of England (or Cumbria, in our case!). Whilst there are lots of people who can communicate the Gospel clearly, we need to recognize that we are all witnesses.

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Hints & Tips

Evangelism



Me reach
In reach
Out reach

Evangelism

Ask someone who is a Christian what helped them on their journey to faith, and somewhere in their story is likely to be the impact of a friend who encouraged them, prayed for them and answered their questions. Having set ourselves the challenge that, by 2020, everyone in Cumbria will have discovered more of God and his purpose in their lives, if we are to see that achieved, then it is only likely to happen if each one of us is involved, And that can seem scary to many (if not all) of us. So how might we go about helping others to discover more of Jesus in a sensitive and wise way? The Archbishop of Canterbury was asked what his ten top tips for sharing the good news of Christ with those around us are, and this is what he came up with.

(These tips were first published in Premier Christianity magazine Premierchristianity.com)

1

Pray

Talk to God about the people who matter to you, before you talk to them about God. It is God who will change people's understanding, and their lives. So pray for those around you – ask for wisdom to know how to approach them, and what to talk about. When to speak and when to be silent. When we pray, God works. Try it. You'll be astonished at what happens.

Evangelism involves all of us

One of the problems of evangelism, says the Archbishop, is that we have professionalized it, so that unless you are one of those folks who does it for a living, you can't do it. And that's exactly the opposite of the pattern you'll find in scripture and at the best points of the tradition. And it's a nonsense! Evangelism involves each one of us – all of us have a story to tell of what difference God has made in our lives, and are likely to have people to whom we can tell the story.

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Do it out of love

We need to come at this ready to question our own hearts. Just how consumed are we with the wonder of Jesus' love? We share the good news, not because it is a duty so that, just before we go to bed each night, we can think 'yes, I can tick the box to say that I did share the good news of Jesus today', but rather because we're so consumed with knowing how wonderful Jesus is that we want to talk to others about that as well.

It's not about results

So don't measure success by those who instantly convert. The Archbishop describes growth as a 'collateral benefit'. If we are going to be a church that reflects the nature of God, we will be a church that goes out, and brings in. Growth is a collateral benefit, but it isn't a sign that we are doing it right.

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It's Good News we are sharing!

There's a problem with human beings, which is that we don't know God. One way or another, there's a barrier between us and God. God has solved the problem, and it is open to us to take that solution into our lives by opening them up to his presence. The Bible says that God loved the world so much that he gave his Son so that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life. This is about hope. It's positive. It's really good!

Trust that the Holy Spirit is at work

Let the Spirit lead. He is at work doing extraordinary things. We need to trust that He is taking people at the right pace, and with the love that embraces them from God, not with the kind of manipulation that people can easily be tempted into using. We are called to be witnesses to what God has done. It is he (through his Spirit) who changes their lives so that they come to know him. Don't feel under pressure! God is at work.

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