

I started preaching in Melbourne's slum areas.

Looking back on it I guess I must have looked very much like a boy preacher. I started preaching during my 17th year but I had been preparing for it for some time. All my first sermons were preached to a congregation of none in the quietness of the lounge room of my mother's house. My first pulpit was an upturned banana box on top of a piano stool. It held my notes and I took turns in leaning upon it, leaning over it, holding onto it and thumping it as I went through my sermon manuscripts.

No one had taught me to preach. I had not read any "teach yourself to preach" books. All I knew was that the example of preaching that I had been hearing for many years in our own local church in Box Hill was not quite the kind of preaching that I wanted to emulate.

I wanted preaching to be vital and alive, full of interesting comment on events that were happening at that moment in the newspapers and magazines, and bringing to bear insights from the Bible.

Not knowing where to turn for material and not having much water in the bottom of my well, I had been cutting out articles from magazines like "The Readers' Digest" for some time. I re-wrote these into a style that suited myself, placed carefully some Biblical quotations and insights and thought that that made a sermon. My ignorance was only surpassed by my confidence. I put together those sermons, wrote out pages of notes and standing in the empty lounge room with the upturned banana box in front of me, preached to imaginary congregations.

The first sermon I really got working well came originally from a sermon written by Dr. Peter Marshall who was quite in vogue at that time following his tragic death. Dr. Marshall, who was the subject of the film "A Man Called Peter", was the Chaplain to the United States Senate. A book of his sermons called "Mr. Jones, Meet The Master" had just been published and a condensed version of one of his sermons entitled "Disciples in Clay" had featured in "The Readers' Digest".

I took this Readers' Digest condensed version of his sermon, adapted it and worked it over and

over. Just after my 18th birthday I was invited to take an evening service in the Newmarket Church of Christ.

I organised friends from my home church and some relatives who lived near Newmarket to attend that night. I looked forward to that first sermon with tremendous enthusiasm and practised preaching it on the upturned banana box in my lounge room until I was very familiar with every part of it. I even wrote out every word for conducting the rest of the service including the prayers, the reading, a poem I had found, the welcome to people and the announcements and all the other bits and pieces that went to make an interesting evening service.

What my banana box did not prepare me for, however, I discovered thirty seconds after walking out onto the platform before the congregation - there was a microphone in the pulpit. I had not been prepared for the microphone and it rather mesmerised me. Knowing how off-putting it can be for people to move in close to a microphone and then far away from it, all that first night I maintained a steady distance from the microphone in order to give the listeners the right level of microphone help. I need not have bothered. I found out later that it was not plugged in! It was not even a microphone for amplifying my voice through loud speakers, but a microphone to amplify the sound into some sets of hearing aids for deaf listeners, none of who were present anyway!

I should not have been overawed by the congregation. True, my friends had come from the Box Hill Church of Christ willing to help out a young student in his first sermon, and my Aunty and Uncle and a couple of cousins were there. Together my friends and relatives swelled the congregation. The fact was, there were 14 people in the church that night including myself, and eleven of them were my friends and relatives!

I preached Dr. Peter Marshall's sermon "Disciples in Clay" with tremendous enthusiasm.

On the way out of church that night, one of the two Newmarket people who were there, a young girl about 16, came up to me and without batting an eye said, "I really loved that sermon. That was a magnificent presentation tonight. It really moved me, I really loved that sermon." My ego

swelled up and my head nearly burst at such praise. Then she went on "Yes, I really loved that sermon. In fact it was one of the best The Readers' Digest ever published!"

Talk about being deflated. The air went out of me quicker than a balloon, which has been let go. From that moment on I learned to avoid The Readers' Digest and I have never used anything in The Readers' Digest subsequently as a source for likely sermon insights.

Other students also had problems with their preaching. I remember a student friend of mine, a former farmer named Cliff Perkins. He was a big strong rugged fellow but he had problems with some of his words. He would frequently use a wrong word, which sounded something like the right word, sometimes with disastrous results. He was preaching in the other little wooden church at Ascot Vale one day close to Easter. He was telling the story of how the Apostle Peter betrayed Christ on the night before his crucifixion. Cliff made the point quite clearly that Peter followed Jesus into the courtyard of the High Priest, and stood round the fire as it was burning in the centre of the courtyard. Using a touch of dramatic realism said "And there stood Peter, in the High Priest's courtyard, warming his hands on the brassiere." From that moment on none of the women in the congregation could stop laughing and several of the men guffawed out loudly. Poor Cliff's sermon was lost, but I am quite sure that he learnt what the distinction was between a brazier and a brassiere.

Many people ask me when I first started to preach without being dependent upon notes. The source of that habit came by accident. I was preaching one day in the little wooden church at Ascot Vale. The pulpit was beside a wide-open window, which had been opened to catch a breath of fresh air on a stifling hot summer Sunday. I was not long into my sermon when a gust of wind blew in the window and twelve pages of typing slid off the pulpit and fluttered down in all directions and in complete disorder onto the floor beneath. I suddenly realized that every eye in the congregation was riveted upon me wondering what I would do next.

Nothing could have been done to catch people's attention more than it was at that moment. I instantly thought "All of these people are wondering what I am going to do and they are waiting to laugh as I go down out of the pulpit, pick up all the pages, sort them into order and then go on."

Then I had a second thought "If I cannot remember it when I am preaching it, how can I expect people to remember what I have said when they go home?"

At that moment I decided to take the risk and preach the rest of the sermon without going down to pick up my notes. Everybody's attention was upon me waiting to find out when I would stumble and stop having run out of material. I kept my eye fixed upon everyone and there was magnificent eye contact. I finished the sermon as I had prepared it and made all the points that I felt necessary and not for one instance did anybody's attention wander away.

I had discovered the secret of communicating with people by looking them in the eye.

Although I have often used notes since in more than 15,000 sermons I have prepared, always on the most of important occasions I preach without notes in order to keep that eye contact.

After that day I ventured down from the pulpit, preaching beside it, then a little away from it, and then finally preaching in the centre of the platform without notes and without any pulpit and with no barrier between the people and myself. The further I got away from the pulpit the more intense was the contact. Ever since I have typed out my sermons in full, and generally speaking, preached without notes.

Later that year was my first Christmas service. It was an important occasion because all the churches of the area gathered together in a large Christmas service. The combined churches packed out the huge church in which we all gathered.

I had been asked to preach the Christmas Day sermon and I was shaking with fear during the hymn prior to my sermon. My nervousness must have been very obvious because the elderly Baptist minister reached across and placed his hand on my arm in a steadying influence and said something absurd which broke the tension and greatly relieved my fear. In the midst of this enthusiastic hymn while everybody was singing about shepherds watching their flocks by night, the Baptist minister said to me "People have funny faces when they are singing, don't they?"

As I gazed down from the high pulpit I suddenly realized the truth of the matter and began to

chuckle. My nervousness ceased and I commenced that sermon with a totally relaxed frame of mind. After a little while in those two wooden churches I realized that preaching was the most important thing that a man could ever do. Because it has eternal consequences. A person can be made right God eternally through the foolishness of what we call preaching. I printed a sign upon the top of my pulpit where no one else could read it except myself which said " No man can at the same time present himself as important and Jesus Christ as Lord." I have read that quotation thousands of times and I have sought to follow it in practice.

The task was to present Jesus Christ as Lord. That became the main feature behind everything that was said and preached. And over the next few years people did become Christians. That girl who had read the sermon written by Peter Marshall made her commitment to Christ, then her sister and friend; a whole group of boys who were on probation made their commitment to Christ and changed their entire lifestyle. Then some men who came on parole from prison made their commitments to Christ, and some parents of children who attended the little Sunday School and a whole host of teenagers from high school where I used to conduct classes and then the young man with whom I had lunch once a week for two or three years discussing the faith, a young science graduate with his Masters degree in science and later his PhD completed, confessed faith in Christ. He too was baptised and came within the fellowship of the faith.

The pulpit may have been of polished wood but it was the old upended banana box standing on the piano stool that became the first pulpit from which the riches of Christ and His salvation were proclaimed.

I wish to discuss preaching from the perspective of my ministry of nearly fifty years, within the evangelical tradition:

Here is my philosophy of preaching. I will outline nineteen aspects of preaching that we have found to be blessed of God in the setting of a local pastoral ministry. At Wesley Mission, Sydney, we have been through one of the greatest periods of Church growth in the history of our nation. Here is principle #1. *Preaching is effective if you communicate the Gospel in a contemporary manner.* Some evidences of that growth would include such things as:

\* In the last fifteen years we have established 14 new congregations and 12 daughter churches, most of which are self-sufficient and no longer part of our ministry.

\* We increased our annual income from \$5 million p.a. to \$150 million per annum, by far the largest church congregational budget in the world.

\* We have raised the funds and appointed new full-time staff at a rate of two additional staff every single week for the first thirteen years, three per week for every week of the next three years and six per week for the past 2 years.

\* Since 1988 we have established the Wesley Institute of Ministry and Arts with 400 full-time students currently enrolled, and 3000 completing part-time courses.

\* We have built, at a cost of \$100 million, buildings to house homeless people, care for dying people, provide psychiatric treatment for depressed, purchased a fourth hospital, housed children and families in crisis and the like with none of this money coming from Governments.

\* We have seen more than a dozen people commit their lives to Christ every single week with many people entering the ministry and missionary service. One Sunday I preached on the significance of overseas cross-cultural missionary service. I gave an appeal for men and women who would commit themselves to full-time missionary service. Twelve people did so including a doctor and two nurses. Later the same day in a service I repeated the same message and gave the same appeal and forty-one committed their lives to missionary service. Later the same night I repeated the same message for the third time and two others made commitments. On that one day 55 commitments were made to full-time service in cross-cultural evangelism. On another Sunday another forty people committed themselves to training for full time Christian ministry or missionary service.

\* We have increased our national coverage by television and radio, and in purchasing and running two of the most famous radio stations in Australia. I served as Chairman of the Board of both radio stations for a decade.

\* We have conducted some of the largest services ever held in Australia with 35,000 attending our largest Christmas Service in open air gatherings featuring over one thousand singers, dancers and actors telling the Christmas Story.

\* We demolished all of our church head office and worship facilities, and constructed a new Wesley church, Wesley Theatre and Lyceum, college and parish areas, restaurant and four level shopping arcade, undercover car parking for 400 cars and a 38 storey office tower all leased, and we have opened the whole complex at a cost of \$320 million, with 35,000 people attending the opening celebrations. We opened the whole complex debt free!

\* In the last eighteen years, we have demolished and rebuilt, purchased and leased more than 350 buildings for the ministry of just one city church, and have increased our net asset worth by more than \$250 million dollars.

And the primary reason for this amazing growth of a church has been the fact that we have concentrated on communicating the Gospel by word and deed. Here then is #1 principle of preaching from my experience: *Preaching is successful if the church demonstrates that the Word of the Gospel and the deed of practical care are ministered together.*

The Apostle Paul was the greatest church planter and Gospel communicator in history. How did he go about his work of planting new churches and communicating the Gospel?

He never left us a manual, but he did leave us clues in his letters and his addresses and the accounts of his travels recorded by Dr Luke in "The Acts of the Apostles."

Paul explained the characteristics of his ministry and gave a pattern for our preaching ministry today when he was closing his Letter to the Romans. Here are the distinctives we must follow in communicating the Gospel today. These distinctives indicate how we must communicate the Gospel. Note from ROMANS 15:14-19 a framework for communicating the Gospel.

### 1. THE GOSPEL STARTS WITH GRACE OF GOD. <sup>(vv. 14-15).</sup>

*"I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me."*

When he was Saul of Tarsus, the crusading rabbi, Paul knew little of the grace of God. He persecuted the church and sought to destroy it. When Paul met Jesus Christ on the Damascus road, he experienced the grace of God. God's grace saved him. God's grace called him and made him an apostle. *"We have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name."* (Romans 1:5). Preaching starts with the grace of God.

Here is principle #2: *Preaching must start with the grace of God.* There is much shallowness in preaching today. Too many ministers think they are called to be entertainers or pop-psychologists, or else they give summaries of what new social concept the church must accept.

The focus has shifted from God to humankind. Preaching is too much us and not enough God. Too much entertainment and not enough evoking a response. For all their words the Word of God is not being clearly heard.

Dr John Piper in his book "THE SUPREMACY OF GOD IN PREACHING" (Baker p20) says *"If God is not supreme in our preaching, where in this world will the people hear about the supremacy of God? The vision of a great God is the linchpin in the life of the church, both in pastoral care and missionary outreach. Our people need to hear God-entranced preaching. They need someone, at least once a week, to lift up his voice and magnify the supremacy of God."*

Piper says the goal of preaching is the glory of God. *"My burden is to plead for the supremacy of God in preaching -that the dominant note of preaching be the freedom of God's sovereign grace, the unifying theme be the zeal that God has for his own glory, the grand object of preaching be the infinite and inexhaustible being of God, and the pervasive atmosphere of preaching be the holiness of God. Then when preaching takes up the ordinary things of life -family, job, leisure, friendships; or the crises of our day -AIDS, divorce, addictions, depression, abuses, poverty,*



*hunger, and, worst of all, un-reached peoples of the world, these matters are not only taken up. They are taken all the way up into God."* (p.20)

The Gospel must start with the glory of God. I have conducted more than 400 small evangelistic campaigns in local churches, mainly in rural Australia. On each occasion I proclaimed the Gospel of God's grace and Christ's redemptive love. Here is principle #3 *Preaching can be the work of a visiting evangelist conducting a special crusade, short or long, with one church or many, proclaiming the grace of God.*

For over fifteen years I spent over 35 weekends every year conducting a small evangelistic crusade from Friday night to Sunday morning with the churches in some small rural community, returning Sunday afternoon to an evangelistic ministry in my own church and through television and radio. That was an exhausting and body-numbing approach to preaching. It is a valid form of evangelism, but probably not as effective as the effort warrants. The proclamation of the Gospel, however, must always start with the grace of God.

## 2. THE GOSPEL IS THE CENTRE OF OUR MINISTRY. (v.16).

*"Because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit".*

Paul had a *"priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God"*. He used two different words for *"minister"* here. One translated *"minister"* is the word from which we derive the word liturgy - *lietourgon*. Paul used this word to describe himself. Other times he used the common term *doulos* to indicate a *"servant"* of Jesus Christ, or *diaconus*, a *"minister."* But here he chose *lietourgon* because he saw his preaching like that of a priest offering sacred worship to God.

His priestly offering was not a lamb but his Gentile converts: *"that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."* Though he is involved in the tough, mundane business of travelling the ancient world on foot, suffering from exposure, threats, beat-

ings, and rejection, in his heart he sees himself in priestly garb in the Temple, lifting up the souls of men which then ascend as a sweet-smelling fragrance to Christ. They were a "*spiritual sacrifice*" to the glory of God.

Here is principle #4: *Preaching is the presentation of the Gospel as a "priestly duty"*. Note that Paul does not use the expression in connection with any liturgical practice but explicitly with "*the gospel of God*". He is affirming that the proclamation of the gospel is a solemn and sacred act. This insight into ministry certainly adds dignity and responsibility to our service. How we perceive ourselves greatly determines how we live our lives.

Psychologists remind us of the importance of self-image. Imagine what this priestly self-perception did for Paul. His ministry was to him intensely sacred. The most mundane daily occurrences were holy.

However ignominious his treatment, he was garbed in imperturbable dignity as a servant of God. Everything was done to please God. All of life was a liturgy. If only we could see our service as such, our lives would be transformed. A friendly word to a homeless man becomes an offering to God. A child held and loved is a liturgy. An unemployed person treated with dignity is a gift to God. This sacred view of life was characteristic of the missionary Paul. ("ROMANS" Kent Hughes Crossways. 1991 p288). This high view of the priestly ministry leaves no room for the minister of God to live an immoral life, or live in homosexual or adulterous relationship or any other life style that is not holy and acceptable to God.

During my early ministry in a rural community, I faced an argumentative, run-down and divided church of 35 members. We decided that the best way the church could pull out of being self-centred was to become centred on communicating the Gospel to a township of 8,000 people. Here comes principle #5: *Preaching is a whole community event*. We ran a one-week mission from Sunday to Sunday. We first worked hard to contact every person in the community.

In four months of preparation we visited every family we could and 27 adults from outside the church families made commitments to Jesus Christ and were baptised. Then eleven laymen went visiting some more and 32 adults made commitments to Christ and were baptised. Then we con-

tacted all 8000 people in the town by mail, visit and through the newspaper and 4,500 attended in one week with 261 making commitments to Christ! The membership of that small church increased by 300% that week because the whole community joined in the preaching of the Gospel.

Communicating the Gospel has been the centre of my ministry. Following that, for the next 13 years, each Tuesday night I met with a small band of people for prayer. Then half the band would go out two by two to appointments previously made to "*discuss faith in Christ and membership in our church.*" The person who came with me was learning to witness and share the Gospel message.

During this period, going out each Tuesday night, I led over 800 people to Christ in their own homes! Here is principle #6: *Preaching is a weekly event, involving laymen and personal contact.*

At my very first church sermon I preached in the slums of our city, only fourteen people were present. Yet I gave a Gospel appeal. In the subsequent seven years I stayed at that church scores of people made commitments because the church knew I was serious about preaching for commitment and they supported that. Here is principle #7: *Preaching starts with the preacher's commitment.*

At Wesley Mission, Sydney, we preach for commitment to Christ every Sunday without exception, and legend has it that there has not been one Sunday in 120 years that has not seen at least one person coming forward in at least one of our services to commit his or her life to Christ. In our other services and through our media response to our Tele-counsellors about a dozen commitments are counselled each Sunday at services conducted by myself or my colleagues. I never stand up to preach without praying for conversions and people making public their commitment to Christ. We pray every week that God will give us disciples not just decisions. Converted, changed, repentant lives are the objective in our preaching.

Here then is principle #8: *Preaching is the means of conversion.*

Communicating the Gospel involves reaching hidden people groups and crossing ethnic boundaries. Twenty-seven years ago I announced I was planning to commence a Chinese service. I would preach each week at a separate time, have a Chinese interpreter, finish with Yum Cha and seek to minister to those without English. One Chinese man and his wife, Mr and Mrs Ping Hui agreed to start with me. Ping brought his brother Andrew and his wife Mabel. They brought four more. Soon I was preaching with both Mandarin and Cantonese translators. Today we have 3,500 Asians attending and three Chinese pastors.

In the same way we identified with Chinese students in Australian at the time of the Tienamin Square massacre. Over 800 students looked to Wesley for protection from Chinese Embassy officials, and we became involved with programs concerning immigration, visas, education, English classes, Bible studies and the like. We stood in solidarity with them in a very trying time.

We have visited China and made a film of both the Three Self Patriotic Movement and the Underground Churches. We are establishing a Chinese Internet web site and three of my books have been printed in Chinese in China and used widely by the underground church. More than a million copies have been purchased.

We have Indonesian groups, Tamil and Singhalese, Tongan, Fijian, Rotuman and Samoan. I have on my staff ministers from the Pacific, Asia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, America, Samoa, Rotuma, to minister to people within their own culture. We preach multi-culturally and are translated where appropriate. We have Bible readings, prayers and choral items in languages other than English.

Here is principle #9: *Preaching requires reaching multi-culturally to people groups.*

3. THE GOSPEL BRINGS GLORY TO GOD. <sup>(v.17)</sup>. *"Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God"*. The word translated "glory" carries the idea of "boast." Paul used it seven times before in Romans. He was not bragging about his ministry. He was boasting in what the Lord had done. Paul did not serve and suffer as he did just to make a name for himself. He wanted to bring glory to Jesus Christ: *"That in all things He might have the pre-eminence"* (Colossians 1:18).

When we go out in faith and take risks for the Gospel, in communicating the word boldly through the media, and serving needy people in Sydney, even though the task is too big and our money is too limited, we bring glory to God.

Yet many churches are afraid to take risks. Their main objective was what Kennon Callahan calls "*protecting their place on the face of the cliff.*" He means that in mountain climbing, sometimes climbers find themselves on the face of a cliff where they cannot find a handhold or foothold. In that predicament many people freeze. They cling for dear life. They fear any move could mean the abyss below. Many churches become frozen on the face of the cliff. They cannot find anything in their history that would save them. They cannot see anything hopeful ahead. They became preoccupied with maintenance, membership, and money. (Leadership -Spring 1991.)

That is what I call principle #10: *Preaching is bringing glory to God by reaching out in faith and taking risks for God.* Fourteen years ago I stood on our major city street. We had just demolished the finest church office in Australia upon which we still owed a million and a quarter dollars. Ahead of us was a two acre hole that was eight stories deep. I said to our General Manager of Corporate Services, Richard Menteith: "*Dick, if we are wrong in this and this all falls over, you and I will have the grandest burial site in all of Australia!*"

Developments for the work of God always involve reaching out in faith and taking risks. Anytime I stand in a public park and preach the Gospel, every time I face a business convention, every time I speak on radio or television, I am going out on a limb, risking in faith. The press likes to ridicule an evangelist. The journalist likes to find the dirt of immorality. The local minister likes to repeat gossip about his colleague. The public likes to cut down tall poppies. It is risky communicating the Gospel.

Speaking in a football oval one night, the roar of motor cycle engines drowned out everything else as a large number of heavily tattooed "bikies" roared into the oval. They rode their motor-bikes up to the front of the platform. The atmosphere turned ugly. I was about the preach on Isaiah 6 "Here I am Lord. Send me." I looked at my colleague minister and thought, "Here I am

Lord. Send him!” But God had called me to be the preacher. I changed my introduction, the bikies listened on their motorcycles, and when I gave the invitation, one rolled his bike forward.

Since 1963 I have been on television. We have taken risks to bring God glory through consistently communicating the Gospel on the media. Twenty-seven years ago I started "Turn 'Round Australia" the most widely watched Christian television program in Australia. Twenty-one years ago I started broadcasting on commercial radio. Ever since I have broadcast for four hours every Sunday night on "Sunday Night Live" to the largest audience in the country for a Christian broadcast. I always preach the Gospel and ask people to respond to the call of Christ and speak to our tele-counsellors. It is risky because speaking on the media invites people of all attitudes to sue over something said. Ours is a litigious society.

For years some network or another has telecast our "Discovering" Series made in 150 locations around the Mediterranean Sea. Our Christmas and Easter specials are seen nation-wide in prime time.

Our videos are screened in a dozen countries in several languages. Colleges and schools, not only in English speaking countries, but in Spanish, Italian and Korean countries also study with our videos. 96,000 people hit our web site for sermons every week of the year. Our print magazines, national Christian news broadcasts, press releases on social issues, are read by hundreds of thousands weekly.

Here then, is principle #11: *Preaching is taking the modern highways of communication to reach into every corner of the world.*

#### 4. THE GOSPEL IS EMPOWERED BY GOD. <sup>(v 18-19).</sup>

*"Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from*

*Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ."* The Holy Spirit empowered Paul to minister, and enabled him to perform mighty signs and wonders.

The miracles God gave Paul to do were "*signs*" in that they came from God and revealed Him to others. And they were "*wonders*" in that they aroused the wonder of the people. But their purpose was always to open the way for the preaching of the Gospel. The Spirit of God empowered Paul to share the Word, and to "*leading the Gentiles to obey God*".

This then is principle #12: *Preaching is the exercise of spiritual gifts empowered by the Spirit of God.* The ministry of miracles, signs and wonders are outside the New Testament purpose, unless they are directed towards helping people accept the Gospel. Making people disciples must be the aim. So many in the ministry of signs and wonders seem more intent on confirming believers and comforting themselves than making disciples.

Nothing would convince unbelievers more than documented and verifiable miracles. At Wesley Mission, we do not claim to lengthen legs and remove tumours but by word and deed, in counselling, nursing, providing medical and psychiatric treatment we share the love of God with the lost around us. Changes in conduct and character are just as much miracles as the healing of the sick. God empowers our work through His Spirit.

This then is the important principle #13: *Preaching must be in the context of care.* This has been at the heart of the work of the Salvation Army for more than a century. Wesley Mission has likewise built a ministry of caring for people: the outcasts, the poor, homeless, drug addicted, psychiatrically ill, the prisoner, the dying AIDS sufferer, the stroke and cancer sufferer, the child in crisis, the family desperately strapped for cash, the hungry, the unemployed and so on.

Today we have over 3,500 full-time staff in over 390 centres of care in the name of Christ. The communication of the Gospel is empowered by God when it is done for His glory, using the spiritual gifts of people, and is ministering to people with loving words and practical care and concern.

5. THE GOSPEL IS SPREAD ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN. <sup>(v20-22).</sup>

*"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you."*

God had a plan for Paul to follow: he was not to preach where any other apostle had ministered. This is evidence that Peter had not founded the church at Rome, for this would have prevented Paul from going there. Peter did not arrive in Rome until after Paul.

*"From Jerusalem all around to Illyricum"* (Yugoslavia) is more than 2,000 kilometres! What a tremendous achievement despite dangers and hardship. Paul *"fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ"* by preaching in all the strategic centres and establishing churches there. Paul was the pattern of a pioneer missionary.

This is my principle #14: *Preaching is taking the Gospel to peoples and places where Christ is not known.*

Cross-cultural missionaries are still needed, but a trained national is best. Skilling the trained national, uses the person who has the best language skills, the closest cultural identification, prevents the brain drain to the West, gets the best result for the invested missionary dollar, avoids the problems of visas, furloughs, and closed doors, and gives encouragement and trust to the national church.

Through my Chairmanship for many years of The Overseas Council For Theological Education and Mission, we have trained national pastors in national seminaries, and given funds for theological training, professor support, building and library acquisition for a score of countries. We start at the bottom with lowly village pastors. We are committed to culturally relevant, training of nationals to evangelise their own communities.

Principle #15: *Preaching must be culturally relevant, building up the local body to evangelise their own communities.*



Paul had a tough and disciplined ministry and every evangelist must be tough and disciplined, especially in his commitment to a sacrificial salary and a holy and blameless life. Many concerned with ministry and evangelism have disgraced us all by their lack of personal discipline concerning money, pride and sex. Their falling from grace has damaged every ministry, made a mockery of our commitment to lives of purity, holiness and simplicity, and reminded us all, that but for the grace of God "there go I."

This is principle #16: *Preaching is living a life of holiness disciplined by the scriptures.*

No church in Australia had more involvement than Wesley Mission in supporting the socially needy in our community, nor has a reputation for speaking on economic and political issues of social justice, yet we emphasise the priority of evangelism by living a life of holiness and disciplined by the scriptures. We have been tough on our staff who have violated the standards of personal holiness in defiance of the clear instructions of the scriptures and outspoken about those Churches that condone adultery, homosexual liaisons and immoral relationships especially among Church leaders.

It is not wrong to enter into another man's labours <sup>(John 4:38)</sup>, but Paul avoided "*building on someone else's foundation.*" This was Paul's own calling: he is not saying that this is what all Christians should do. He is well aware of differentiation of function in the service of God. Some plant and others water, and they both work together with God. <sup>1 Cor. 3:6-9</sup>

Some lay the foundation and others build. <sup>1 Cor. 3:10ff</sup> He is simply saying that his own calling is to plant the seed or to lay the foundation. Others will work later, but Paul establishes new churches, and this means going into areas where others have not been. He is to preach the gospel to those who have not heard. To go to those who have heard would be to renounce his calling from God.

Principle #17: *Preaching must build up the body of Christ and co-operate with others engaged in the ministry of growth.* Everything Paul did was with the aim of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Other great missionary hearts that have followed in Paul's footsteps held the same objective. Raymond Lull, brave missionary to Islam, lived by this famous refrain: "*I have one passion*

- it is He, it is He." Charles Wesley sang, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want, more than all in Thee I find." It was said by Alexander Whyte of his long Saturday walks with Marcus Dods, "Whatever we started off with in our conversations, we soon made across country, somehow, to Jesus of Nazareth." Martin Luther said "We preach always Him,"; "this may seem a limited and monotonous subject, likely to be soon exhausted, but we are never at the end of it." So it was with Paul. He would travel anywhere to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dr David Livingstone was cut out of the same mould as Paul. When Livingstone volunteered as a missionary with the London Missionary Society and they asked him where he wanted to go he replied, "Anywhere, so long as it is forward."

We are living in times of the Gospel closing round all known groups of people. The Gospel starts with the grace of God, is the centre of our ministry, brings glory to God, is empowered by God, and is spread according to God's plan. Nothing is more important than working together to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Principle #18: Preaching is working together to close around all who have not yet been evangelised.

God's only Son brought the Good News. There is no calling more fulfilling nor with such eternal consequences than the work of ministry, in communicating the Gospel in a way that our contemporaries understand and which encourages them to respond.

One of the world's great business entrepreneurs is John Sculley, who was then the President of the Pepsi Cola Company. He masterminded the Pepsi Generation. Another great entrepreneur is Steve Jobs, the man who developed the Apple Computer and then the Macintosh Computer which revolutionised the computer world. John Sculley and Steve Jobs are friends, and Steve Jobs wanted John Sculley to leave Pepsi and work for Apple.

Steve said to his friend: "You're the best person I've met. I know you are perfect for Apple and Apple deserves the best." But John Sculley replied: "Steve, I'd love to be an adviser to you, to

*help you in any way, but I don't think I can come to Apple". Steve Jobs hung his head in disappointment, and after an uncomfortable pause issued a challenge that haunted John Sculley for days: he said to John "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?" ("Odyssey" John Sculley, Harper 87. p90)*

Here is principle #19: Preaching is the highest calling from God. That is a question Jesus would ask of men and women whom He would challenge to follow Him in the ministry of the Kingdom of God today: *"Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?"*

Because after the ministry of communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ, everything - medicine, politics, law, business, sales, insurance, professional sport, public service, nuclear physics, computer programming - everything - is selling sugared water! Only the communicating the Gospel gives you the radical chance to change the world.

### **PREACHING IN THE CITY**

Today the greatest movement in the world is into the cities of every inhabited continent. One hundred years ago in 1900, only 8% of the people of the world lived in large cities. Most people lived in villages in rural areas. In spite of the growth of industries, 92% of people were still engaged in agriculture.

But two world wars, transportation, and a growing population able to be sustained in a city, saw, within one hundred years, more than half the people on earth living in cities. Over three billion people now live in large cities. Urbanization has been the greatest story of the twentieth century. We have a missionary gospel to spread into the cities of the world.

Yet many church denominational leaders still behave as if nothing has changed. They still organise the life of the church based upon state lines and a village parish system. The denominations have not learned how to use the media to penetrate the city and possess no strategy to penetrate the security of high-rise apartment blocks. They give token support to developing multicultural congregations and have no policy for influencing the social, political and economic systems of our modern community. This is rank failure by the Christian Church in the Western World.

Yet the city is the most important factor impinging upon the future of the church. In the next ten years we will add another billion people to the planet and most will live in our cities. Christianity will be successful only if it learns to capture the cities of the world.

Nations are changed by people who capture the streets of the city. The ideology of globalisation is today being fought in the streets of large cities. The people of Manilla overthrew the Marcos regime from the streets. The people of Selma, Jackson and Washington marched behind Martin Luther King Jr.. The people of India filled the streets of Calcutta behind Mahatma Gandhi. The people of Paris overran the Bastille. The people of Beijing crowded Tienamen Square. So on throughout history. You can change history by changing the minds of people in the streets of the cities.

Only after His death and resurrection did the people of Jerusalem realize that Jesus was the Messiah of God, an ideal King, a victorious conqueror, a humble hero, and a suffering servant.

He had come, not to bring political victory, but a reign of peace and righteousness with justice for the poor and humble. How they wished they had greeted Him with more commitment! I have always been captured by a line in the musical *"Jesus Christ Superstar."* The Palm Sunday crowd is singing *"Hosanna"* and waving to Jesus and as Jesus passed by they called out *"Christ, you know I loved you. Did you see I waved?"*

Many in the crowded city that day waved. But Jesus wanted devotion not greetings, commitment of the heart not waving of the hand. Even those who wept for Him later that Holy Week were told not to weep for Him but for themselves. Jesus did not want tears of sorrow, but the toil of discipleship of those who would follow Him. The crowd needs to be confronted with the accurate picture of who Jesus is, if their waving is to be turned to commitment. The missionary gospel has tough demands.

That is why in my ministry I have sought to enter the city at every available point through the secret accesses of radio as people listen in their bath or bed, their car or campervan. Every day.

Every week. You would think such a successful media program would be supported gladly by the Church, but our media programs have been vilified by NSW Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia because it is evangelical and firmly based on scripture, and not one cent of support has ever been given.

Through television I seek to enter every city and town in our nation, into lounge rooms and kitchens, bedrooms and classrooms. Every week. Through our magazines I enter the waiting rooms of doctors, dentists and lawyers. In our books we enter the libraries and homes to sit upon shelves and beside beds. Through our videos we stay by the video machines in the schools and homes. We preach in eight languages every week to reach the major ethnic groups. Our Bible based sermons are heard by more Australians every week than any other, perhaps by more people than are in all the Churches of our nation put together.

Through our 56 church worship services we conduct each week in our central church we challenge the people of our city by lifting high Jesus Christ and saying: *"Who is this?"* I am never proud of the fact that across our land I am listened to by more people than any other preacher in our nation. That is not a matter for pride: Jesus has entered many cities on the back of a donkey! But even a donkey can be used to take the Master into the city! We spend ourselves to bring Christ to the city so that people will say: *"Who is this?"* Then seek the answer.

Modern people in many of our cities accept Christianity, but they do not become members of the church. We have to convert believers into belongers! But some people who belong to the church are not really committed. We have to convert these belongers to believers! Jesus Christ does not ask for your admiration. He wants your commitment! Jesus does not ask for acknowledgment. He wants your commitment. Do not say: *"Christ, you know I loved you. Did you see I waved?"* Say instead: *"Jesus Christ, my Master, I'll take up my Cross and follow wherever you lead me."* And join the crowd that follow Him. Jesus was a carpenter and today this church needs Joiners!

A wave changes nothing. Jesus wants to make disciples who will be committed to turning the world upside down. He wants our city confronted, changed, turned around, converted! That means you! Turn to Him now! Stop waving. Start following! Preachers have to learn to speak

the language of the city. We have to listen to what the streets are saying, and learn to communicate with people our message in the language they understand. Too often the church talks to itself in its own language, and the people outside in the city do not understand. By this I do not mean the language of the gutter, but the language of the culture of the city. Preachers will get a shock if they print verbatim copies of what they say and get a cross section of society, including youth, to cross out whatever they do not understand. John Wesley did this with the girls who milked cows and so improved his ability to communicate.

Paul communicated the Gospel intelligently when he entered the great cities of the Mediterranean world in the first century. He spoke to the citizens of each city in their own culture.

At the time of Paul's visit, Athens was in the twilight of the Greek civilization. She would never recover her glory. Athens has been continuously inhabited for 3000 years, but it was in the centuries before the Roman Empire that Athens reached her height.

In the 5th century BC, the days of the marvellous buildings of Pericles, Athens became the mistress of the world and the mother of Democracy. Great writers like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, joined with historians like Herodotus and Thucydides, and thinkers like Plato and Socrates. Their Classical Greek is acknowledged as the world's most perfect expression of human speech in all history.

Great art, sculpture and architecture flourished. The Parthenon, commenced in 447BC, even to this day, remains one of the world's most pleasing buildings. All about were other temples, theatres, the agora or marketplaces, and the magnificent colonnades of the Stoa of Attulus. It is probable that Paul walked through these columns debating with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers as was typical of the teaching method of the time.

He certainly climbed nearby Mars Hill, and spoke to the Areopagus Council. In great cities of the world we copy the architecture of Athens, and many of our public buildings reflect those of Athens; we lecture on Greek philosophy, and Classical Greek, unspoken for 2000 years by any community, is still taught in some of our colleges and universities.

If you examine the sermon of Paul to the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia, you would find that Paul starts with the history of the Jews in Egypt, covers their development as a nation, their expectation of the Messiah, and points to the death and resurrection of Jesus, and our need to repent and believe.

Yet when Paul entered Athens his approach was totally different from that at Antioch in Pisidia. He appreciated their culture and spoke their language. He marched to the beat of their drum. <sup>v16-17</sup> He first spoke to Jews and Greeks who worshipped God. Paul commenced with those who would give him a favourable hearing. <sup>v18a</sup> He joined the philosophers in their debates and with people who just passed by. In the time of Paul there were two schools of philosophy: the Epicureans and Stoics. They debated him. The Stoics' aim was to attain personal supremacy over all areas of life and to control human passions. The Epicureans' aim was pleasure, the happiness the mind finds in freedom from physical excesses. The Stoics and Epicureans walked through the Stoa of Attulus, arguing with each other, for the benefit of crowds of people who followed them to hear some word of insight. Paul was not afraid to talk about his beliefs in the context of other philosophies and faiths.

<sup>v18b-21</sup> He indicated up front his own religious beliefs. He preached *"about Jesus and the resurrection."* As the philosophers debated Paul, <sup>v19</sup> *"some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?"* The word for *babblers* is *spermologos*. It means a *picker-up of scraps*, a gutter-sparrow that picks up little bits of rubbish or seeds. They said Paul picked up bits of wisdom, scraps of thoughts from here and there. The philosophers despised him because he did not argue in the conventional form.

<sup>v22-23</sup> Paul acknowledged their religious attitudes. He was not flattering them, but was stating a fact about Athenian life, dominated as it was by so many beautiful temples to many gods. <sup>v22</sup> *"I see that in every way you Athenians are very religious."* He indicated the statues dedicated to gods. <sup>v23</sup> *"As I walked through your city and looked at the places where you worship, I found an altar on which is written "To an Unknown God." That which you worship, then, even though you do not know it, is what I now proclaim to you."*

Several such altars have been discovered although the inscription is usually in the plural "To the Unknown Gods". Epimenides, who lived in Athens in the sixth century B.C., urged the building of such an altar so as to include any god not honoured with a Temple to avoid any calamity from a wrathful god. Paul said the god they did not know, was known to Him as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul started with what they knew.

<sup>v24-27</sup> Paul preached from a point of agreement. The city fathers nodded in agreement. Every city alderman likes to be told that he has a fine respectable city. All of the Athenians would accept that God was the Lord of heaven and earth as the Stoics argued and that such a God did not live in the beautiful temples surrounding them, as the Epicureans argued. Paul went on, *"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else."*

This pleased the Stoics. Paul said God created the world. That refuted the Epicureans who declared that the universe came by chance. Paul also agreed with Plato that God is a spirit. But then Paul went on with the devastating words *"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us."*<sup>v28-30</sup>

He moved from local interests to the everlasting God. The Creator and ever-present provider for them all, demands from us righteous living and has fixed a day of judgement for us all, calling upon us to turn from our wicked ways. Paul is now at the crunch of the gospel but to show them how close God is to them he does not quote Old Testament poets. Greek city councillors are not going to listen to Hebrew poets.

When he spoke to Jews he quoted Hebrew poets, but when he spoke to Greek city aldermen he quoted Greek poets. <sup>v28</sup>*"For in him we live and move and have our being."* As some of your own poets have said, *"We are his offspring."* He quotes two poets including Aratus who came from the same area of the Empire, as did Paul.



<sup>v29-31</sup> "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone-- an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." Resurrection! That shocked them.

That is the heart of the gospel: God made us, loves us, redeems us, and will judge us by Jesus Christ, the same Jesus slain upon the Cross, but now raised from the dead. The Greeks had argued about resurrection. Aeschylus said when a man dies, his blood seeps into the ground, and there is no resurrection of the body. They believed in the immortality of the soul, but not the resurrection of the body. Christianity is based upon resurrection, not immortality. God gives a new life and a new body, incorruptible and eternal in the heavens.

<sup>v32-34</sup> He found a typical response. Some scoffed, some wanted to hear more, and some believed in Jesus Christ. It is ironic, that of all the famous philosophers and debaters in the Royal Stoa that day, only three names are known in history and they were the three believers in Jesus Christ: Among them is Paul, "*Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.*"

Dionysius became the first bishop of Athens. Damaris became a Christian. Their names are remembered while the names of the philosophers are forgotten. For all their wisdom the Greeks had not found God. Paul's teaching survived while the philosophers were picking up crumbs of human wisdom. We all will be judged by Christ. We all can be saved through faith.

How wise of Paul, to adapt his message to the city in which he was speaking; to direct his address to the mind-set and philosophy of his hearers; to scratch them where they were itching. That is why he was successful. Paul taught us to be relevant to our own city's culture and to speak to it the Gospel.

We are all influenced by our culture. That cultural influence impacts even our Christian faith unknown to most of us. Some cultural influences today are setting the tone for our community val-

ues and political policies.

We are dominated more by economic policies than anything else. For the last two decades the defining principle in our culture has been that we improve our quality of life by improving our standard of living. Our focus has been on material benefit, and expecting from Governments policies that would deliver us a better standard of life. Governments hold as a top priority improvement of economic standards. Yet people say their top priorities are not prosperity but quality of family life, security of employment, and personal care when in ill health. Culture tells us there is an economic solution to our problems. Experience tells us the supposed solution is actually the problem. Some cultural influences in the Church today are more insidious.

I listen carefully to Church leaders. Some refer to cultural mores being essential Christianity rather than to Biblical mores. Recently I heard two leaders speaking not of Christianity but spirituality. That is a cultural expression that has become politically correct. They were promoting spirituality not Christianity, Jesus not the church. These church leaders are speaking as if we can divide spirituality from Christianity and Jesus from the church. They obviously have not thought through their statements.

Jesus did not come to improve the quality of our spirituality. This is new age philosophy. God was not incarnate among us to improve our spirituality, but to save us from our sins. He incorporates us into His body, the Church. You cannot have Him without His body the Church, and spirituality, without Christianity, is an empty shell.

I have heard one deriding those who stress the uniqueness of our faith saying we should accept the beliefs of all people as being equally valid. This is pluralism. But pluralism is the enemy of Christianity. It denies the words of Jesus <sup>John 14:6</sup> *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* It denies the truth of the Apostles who said, *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

It denies the significance of the Cross and His shed blood for the sins of the world. It denies the

authority of Scripture.

All religions are not equal. We do not all worship the same God and we are all not heading for the same destination. You cannot be a Christian and a pluralist at the same time. But this is a culturally accepted concept. These viewpoints are opposed to traditional Christian faith, but are exposed by Churches accepting liberal theology.

I heard another church leader say the church needs to be inclusive of all people and their behaviour. One person said we have to accept, within church leadership, people regardless of their culture, behaviour, whether they were gay or straight, immoral or people with HIV-Aids. Everyone agrees that such people are welcome in the church where they can hear Biblical teaching and the Gospel that can change lives.

But we cannot welcome into church leadership such people without any changes in their behaviour. The whole Biblical concept of being born again, of being saved from sin and of living a life of holiness, was ignored.

I have heard our culture is one of whatever anyone thinks or feels is valid for that person regardless of the Body of Christ as a community of faith. Their philosophy of individualism denies the discipline of the community and promotes as true whatever an individual may think or feel.

One church leader said we must accept the life-stories of people as basic for the way our church is ordered. What was important was their experience should be heard and become the basis of our church order. But the church's order and faith is under the authority, not of people's feelings and experience, but of Scripture. It is not surprising to learn that the Church leader espousing these views, was herself a lesbian living in an immoral relationship!

There is a need today for Christians to stress Christianity as our key commitment not spirituality. We need to stress the uniqueness of our faith rather than the pluralism of others' beliefs. We need to stress our openness to all other people without the acceptance of their standards of behaviour. We need to stress the sense of the church as a community rather than the priority of individualism. We need to stress the authority of Scripture rather than the authority of a life-story.

We come from distinctive cultural backgrounds and we must learn the difference between what stems from our cultural heritage and what is essential to our faith. What is essential will abide, and what is cultural may change. You may have grown up at a time when it was said you could not be saved unless you abstained from using make-up, avoided picture theatres, ball-room dancing and billiards! Other people add their own cultural ideas.

But there is a difference between faith and culture. We need to learn that lesson. We Christianise our culture. We take our behaviour patterns and baptise them, saying, "That is Christian." But there is a difference between what is essential to the faith and what is simply cultural.

When Paul entered the great cities of the Mediterranean world in the first century, he spoke to the citizens of each city understanding their culture. The early church faced the issue constantly as the Jewish culture tried to contaminate the essence of Christianity. They insisted Jewish cultural traditions had to be observed by Christians. This included having all baby boys circumcised, not eating shellfish and pork, and having all food kosher killed. When Christianity spread into the areas we today call Turkey, Greece and Rome it faced a new set of cultural demands.

This included the acceptance of slavery, Emperor worship and oaths of loyalty to the state. Paul had clarity of vision when it came to seeing what was essentially Christian and what was merely a reflection of the culture of the times. We need Paul's clarity of vision today.

How wise of Paul, to adapt his message to the city in which he was speaking; to direct his address to the mind-set and philosophy of his hearers; to scratch them where they were itching. How much wiser is he than some contemporary church leaders! He refused to dilute the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the cultural traditions and standards of his day. He did not give away the essence of the Christian faith in the hope that compromise and change would increase their spirituality. Instead Paul stressed Jesus and the resurrection – the missionary gospel.

We must hold to the cohesion of Christian culture rather than dilute the faith with the passing trends of modern culture. We understand our culture and to speak to it. Like the Athenians, some

will scoff at us; some will want to hear us some more; and some will believe. That's the response in the volatile city. But we have communicated the missionary Gospel to the city.

I have never felt alone in the streets of the city. Jesus Christ has been there before me and He has made the city my home. He loves the city. He wept for the city. The missionary gospel to the city is of Jesus and His resurrection. I must take that message to the people of the city.

### **THE METHODOLOGY OF PREACHING**

People often ask me to explain how I prepare a sermon. I briefly outline the process.

1. I start two years before I actually preach a series of sermons by defining what I will seek to do, by gathering some key resources, by indicating what my Bible resources will be. I then start reading through the Biblical text, word by word, a little every morning making notes on the background as I go. With major books of the Bible, I read one or two of the best commentaries, making notes of key insights.
2. One year before I preach a series of sermons I break the passages down into small portions – one a week for forty-eight weeks. These pericopes are usually the length of a single thought or paragraph. I write the theme of that passage, consider a title that fits then print a leaflet with each week of the coming year, the theme, the title of the sermon, the Bible reference, and an over all title for the series and a couple of paragraphs on why this is relevant to us today.
3. The printed brochure is then posted to several thousand people indicating time, place and date of each sermon. Hundreds of people use this as a guide for their weekly Bible study prior to my preaching. We also run weekly groups where each passage is studied. We have some groups, which meet after the sermon is preached, which then discuss any issues raised. These groups give me good feedback or raise important questions. So the congregation is involved.
4. After some sermons, I stand and answer, immediate questions from the audience.
5. Two weeks before preaching a sermon, I start out typing it, adding in bits and pieces that

have occurred during the months previously. Often the computer has a dozen or more thoughts that have been placed under the title months earlier.

6. In one sentence I write what I believe this sermon should achieve. Everything subsequently must be within the limits of that core purpose. I then write the conclusion, then the major argument. I add illustrations always taken for the news of the current week. Finally I write the introduction.
7. I always type my own manuscripts. 8 pages takes 28 minutes to preach – the time allocated by the television and radio programs! My typed manuscripts may be 35 or more pages, but I can use only 8. So, delete, delete, delete. This takes longer than anything else. If a deleted idea or illustration was good or could be used in future I file it under the appropriate sermon to be prepared later. Soon only 8 pages are left. These are printed, corrected, re-printed and sent to the Internet. My sermons are on the Internet before I preach them. Over 96, 000 people access them every week.. I include in each my sources to which I am indebted and my references used. A print copy is made for everyone coming into the congregation. Many people for whom English is a second or third language follow the text as I preach it. Others mark relevant or meaningful passages.
8. Significant points of interest to a wider audience are caught up in a press release, and sent to newspaper editors and radio and TV Stations. Local papers particularly re-print these press releases.
9. Over the next few weeks counsellors will be busy responding to the telephones from people who hear the sermon via media. Office girls handle written queries and send out thousands of printed copies.
10. This whole process is repeated for each of the different regular services in which I preach. The printed sermon of this week – will be used with a fresh introduction and illustrations one year from now in one of my lunchtime services. Suitable groups of sermons will be turned into manuscripts for a book.

I spend a lot of time, at least twenty hours, preparing each sermon, but I get lots of miles out of each one. It may be thought that forty years of preaching the Gospel limits a person. But I wrote in my diary how I felt about that at the end of 1997:

“I am enjoying preaching the Gospel now more than ever and in so doing I am trying to take the 7pm congregation from a group of people who had been used to socially orientated topical sermons on the issues of the moment to a deeper appreciation of the eternal issues of scripture. For 18 months I preached on Romans, dividing the Epistle into small groups of verses but maintaining their place in the overall outline. Most of these sermons – in fact all of these sermons were doctrinal with our evangelical cutting edge.

During 1998 I have prepared an outline of 46 doctrinal sermons on the Holy Trinity. I will follow the outline of the Nicean Creed. It is a good discipline to concentrate on the great doctrines of the faith and at the same time remain contemporary and relevant. I am deliberately raising difficult intellectual issues and trying to give students a handle on their faith. At the same time I am broadcasting them to a large secular audience and seeking to interpret difficult doctrine to simple and often antagonistic minds. The most part of the radio audience is agnostic but prepared to listen to something so long as it is interesting, relevant and entertaining! Who said preaching wasn't a challenge?”

### **MORE MILES OUT OF EACH SERMON**

A preacher not only writes his or her sermons, but many other things as well. Sometimes I thought of describing myself as a writer. I never studied journalism but from the age of 18, I started to write editorials, essays, booklets, newspaper columns, books, film scripts, short stories without number. It all started in an unusual way.

My first years in the slum churches saw a weekly production of “Focus”, a church newsletter which contained an editorial designed to make people think. My university essays, papers and dissertations probably influenced those editorials greatly. I also wrote a “newsy” column about people. I soon discovered people love to read about people. Today those papers, bound into years, occupy about a metre of shelf space.

But the real influence upon my life as a writer began a day or two after my accidental start as a country parson in the country town of Ararat, Victoria, after we were prevented from sailing to USA to take up my position at the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis.

A day or two after I arrived a journalist from the "Ararat Advertiser" called to see me. News was always hard to find in a small country town and he had to work hard to find interesting news. Often the most interesting thing that would happen in a country town would be in the Courts. He would listen for a phrase from Mr. Alan Vanstan, the local magistrate who would fine a young man for speeding around the community. He would make a comment such as "There is too much speeding by reckless drivers in our community these days. This is the second case I have had this week."

Sitting in the court the young journalist, Chris Fisher by name, would write up a story which would headline in the next day's paper "Epidemic of speeding", says Magistrate. The front page would be full of interviews with people about the recklessness of young drivers speeding in Ararat streets.

The fact was, nothing much happened in Ararat and so a journalist had to work mighty hard to beat up a story. Chris Fisher was about 23 years of age, with a mop of blonde hair, big frame, and an engaging smile.

He was sitting in my study wanting to know why I had come to Ararat. I explained to him that with the assassination of President Kennedy, the Australian U.S. Consulate had gone into a terrorist alert, and on that terrible day documents were accidentally lost including my visas. Which meant my wife and I missed our ship which sailed to the United States a couple of days later with all of our luggage on board but without our stamped passports and visas. I had borrowed a car from my stepfather who ran, among other things, a car wrecking business and he had a blue Mark 8 Jaguar, which he had put together from pieces from wrecked Jaguars. At least that was a temporary vehicle for us. Chris took the photograph of Beverley and I and our nineteen-month-old daughter, Jenny, and went on his way.



I was amazed to see on the following day that we had made the front page, and the second page, and the third page. That story had run out into a whole series of articles under the heading "Missed Boat to U.S.A." "Pastor for Ararat". I suddenly discovered I was described as "Brilliant Church of Christ minister, Pastor Gordon K Moyes, BA, has taken up an appointment in Ararat for twelve months before starting four years theological studies in America which is planned to lead towards a Doctorate."

"An authority on the decline of churches in Melbourne's inner suburbs, Mr. Moyes is only in Ararat because arrangements for his U.S. trip were not completed in time for the American university year."

On and on the story ran. Chris developed a great theory on my expertise in pastoring to the slums and then wrote a paragraph on my post-graduate studies on the scholarship at the University of Indiana in Indianapolis and added to my dreams and plans.

There was then a major feature on the blue Jaguar with "it is not every Pastor who has a father with a Jaguar works." The old car wreckers yard had suddenly been transformed into a "Jaguar works".

We were overwhelmed with embarrassment with the fulsomeness of the articles. While most of the facts were true they had been expressed in a way, which greatly exaggerated their significance. I suddenly realised the power of the press as people called to see us and rang up and sent invitations to speak at functions.

The power of the press, even in a country town, was enormous as I soon discovered. So I went back and closely examined his style. I then bought the leading Melbourne papers and closely examined their style of writing. I was used to slowly working into a subject, explaining why I wanted to talk about this matter, giving reasons for it and background and then logically working up to a conclusion.

I discovered that journalists started with the conclusion. Their sentences were short unlike those of a speaker. I counted the words in every sentence and counted the sentences in every paragraph, noted the number of words in a heading and in a sub-heading. I realised that stories put the facts in the first paragraph and interpretation later and that often the last three inches of a story would be simply cut off because there was not enough column space available.

Chris Fisher had so much success with his first story that he was around the second day to get a follow up story. Things were slow in Ararat and he wanted a few more ideas.

Ideas were something that I had in abundance. I gave him a few ideas and that started a romance with the press which has never finished. Soon two and three articles in every single issue of the "Ararat Advertiser" were about our work, achievements and ideas. Within a matter of weeks thousands of people were reading what we were doing. I studied closely the journalist's style, had lunch with a major Melbourne editor and asked him to teach me quickly what he wanted. He gave me a dozen rules for writing for newspapers and I wrote them down at the lunch table on a paper serviette.

I then submitted articles to him and discovered that they were being printed in Melbourne papers completely unedited. That Melbourne editor eventually published 20,000 column inches of articles without ever editing one aspect of those columns.

I was soon asked to write special columns for Easter and then Mothers Day and Christmas. I wrote those and soon they were picked up by other local papers. Before long the columns were being syndicated through more than a dozen papers. Without meaning to I had started on a career in journalism. Those newspaper columns became a weekly feature for the next twenty years of my life and when Chris eventually became a newspaper proprietor himself, owning a stable of newspapers, my writings were featured in columns, which he syndicated across his own network.

But in the church other things needed to be written. Every week I had a major article I wrote for a church paper, youth studies had to be written, studies for camps, and studies for adult Bible study groups.

Soon the number of studies began to mount up, all duplicated and used widely by other groups and churches. I was then asked to write a booklet explaining the doctrines of the Christian faith and then a booklet on the meaning of church membership. Soon that booklet was spread throughout Australia and all adults coming into membership of Churches of Christ completed their membership studies with the same booklets.

Then the Joint Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist and Churches of Christ asked me to write Sunday School lesson material and dozens of lessons for teenagers and young adults were written and in thousands of Sunday Schools across Australia those lessons were taught by faithful teachers.

Perhaps the biggest surprise came when I was aged 25. After 50 years of writing a continuous column in "The Australian Christian" Randall T. Pitman one of Australia's greatest classical scholars retired and the editor asked me to take up the column in his place. So I wrote each week a scholarly article on a significant New Testament Greek word and its theological insight. I wrote on the one hundred most significant New Testament words and their theological meanings. It has been a thrill to find even to this day, those columns filed among ministers' resources throughout Australia and New Zealand.

I then started writing a column each week for a leading church magazine on Christian doctrines and on one occasion the same column was being printed among Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Churches of Christ papers with the same articles being printed within all four churches.

I then wrote a series of columns for several years on insights found in the New Testament through new translations. Over the next years 3, 000 columns for church magazines came from the typewriter.

At the same time I was continuing my studies in pastoral and clinical education, and in counseling people. I realised how many people in my work at the Aradale Mental Hospital were suffer-

ing from depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, and stress. I took some of the psychological knowledge I had gained from my own studies, added it to case studies I was finding in counseling in the mental hospital and in my own study and added to that the insights from the Scriptures.

Soon a series of booklets began to be printed covering such issues as "How to Overcome Fear", "The Answer to Anxiety", "How to Love", "How to Use Suffering", "Mastering Failure", " Making The Most of Growing Old", "How to Overcome Frustration", and so on. Those booklets were used by many groups of people suffering from depression and the booklet "Defeating Depression" was printed more than 100,000 times. Mr Albert Graham of Ballarat printed all of these booklets and Mr Tom Frazer was the untiring distributor and salesman.

I then found numbers of people needed books to guide them in family life and so books like "Equipped For Marriage", "How To Find Lasting Friendship", " In Time of Death", began to appear. Then a series of small books on Christian doctrinal matters such as "The Existence of God", "How Were We Created?", "What Happens to Me When I Die?", "How to Overcome Sin", "How to Grow From Doubt To Faith". The one "In Time of Death" has been reprinted scores of times and hundreds of thousands of copies have been distributed by Funeral companies to grieving families.

These booklets received widespread sales across Australia and in turn created demand for more books. My first book on church growth "How To Grow An Australian Church" is still a best seller and although it is now more than thirty years since I first wrote it, it sells several thousand copies every year and has become a basic book for church development found in every church library. I then wrote in the field of evangelism and contributed two chapters to books produced by Billy Graham on "The Calling of The Evangelist" and "The Work of The Evangelist". Those books have been studied and used all over the world and tens of thousands of copies have been sold, thanks to the influence of Billy Graham's name. I then wrote a series of books on motivation. The first, "The Secret of Confident Living" was used by Norman Vincent Peale on his television program in America when he stated "this book has the thoughts, substance and motivational quality to make it a truly indispensable aid to successful living". His reading of that book

commenced a life-long friendship with that great American, and this book, with his help, soon sold out.

Other books such as "Be A Winner" were bought by businessmen, salesmen, and insurance executives. The books "Twelve Steps to Serenity" and "Confident in Time of Trouble" brought letters from people all across Australia and overseas who have been helped in their time of need.

Good published books for youth leadership are always hard to find and so very quickly followed two books on youth leadership. Then came chapters in other people's books.

At the same time I was writing scripts for radio and spots of 30 seconds and 60 seconds length on Christian matters. Four and a half thousands radio scripts were written and broadcast over the last thirty years.

Then came three books to accompany a series of films I made. "Discovering Jesus" has had a phenomenal use in many countries of the world. Today that book is used by more than 4,000 secondary schools in Australia as a textbook and by churches as an adult study book. It was followed by "Discovering Paul" and "Discovering The Young Church" which was my 36th book. These were printed in Chinese in China and over a million copies have been purchased. Chinese Christians have used these books widely, and I was thrilled to visit Chinese Universities and to hear from students on how much my books were valued by them. Who knows what the end of this influence for Christ will be.

Beyond this has been my interest in films and the scripts of thirty-eight documentary films were written both on religious and secular subjects. I found people loved listening to stories, so I wrote and broadcast over 400 short stories. Many of these were published and others recorded as volumes of cassettes. Every week without fail someone tells me they love hearing my stories. Many of my films are now on DVD and are sold worldwide. Every week I had written editorials in "The Christian Sentinel" and subsequently "Mission Talk". I have about 2, 500 editorials filed.

In 1979 I took over the editing and writing of articles in “Impact” a monthly magazine. Within three years we had 60, 000 readers each month. Then another, smaller magazine “Frontlines” which features my editorials. In India, a Christian monthly magazine similar to “Readers’ Digest” reprints each month one of my 3000 word articles, which are read by very large numbers of people. In 2003, Beverley and I purchased a magazine “Marriage Works” designed to help young people improve their marriage and family life. This bi-monthly has a growing sub-scriber base, and I write an article in each edition.

But we are now living in the Internet era. So apart from having 3000 manuscripts of sermons available, I also have about 3000 management talks, conference addresses and papers on strategic planning on the world wide web. About 100, 000 hits each week are scored on these sites from all over the world.

Each week we not only have printed copies containing my editorials, but Internet based Wesley Family News going to thousands of members, staff and donors. Likewise I edit and write for several thousand members and supporters of the Christian Democratic Party the CDP e.mag, which contains the manuscript of my “Cross Bench Comments” in a weekly political editorial that I also broadcast. Enquiries and appreciation flow in from all parts of the globe. But I am particularly thrilled with local people who are blessed through the Internet.

*“Dear Gordon, I just wanted to say thank you for your e-sermons. They are always very interesting and encouraging, mainly because of your positive attitude which you spoke about in your last sermon. Sermons at my church seem to have the attitude that whatever you are doing, you are not doing well enough. This has a very discouraging effect on me.*

*You have been an encouragement to me for years. You are a strong uncompromising Christian who is “in the world” (in very big ways including chairman of the inquiry into health) but most ardently “not of the world”. All this from the Uniting Church too! (Which I left as a young adult because of what I perceived as a lack of adherence to biblical teaching).*

*God has blessed you and because of your willingness to serve, we have also been blessed, Thank you again. C.W.”*

*“Gordon, I’m deeply touched by your kindness and generosity you have consistently demonstrated towards me. The benefit I find is that your both genuine need to serve others, comforts the weary and actively motivates me to lead in your example.*

*I share also the appreciation that ‘I have always felt most welcomed when attending Wesley Mission lunch-time services in the city’ no matter of what diversity or background parishioners come from, in meeting their individual need.*

*I also find the E-mail sermon facility to also achieve great rewards in delivering a concise sermon to people who are unable to attend church service for whatever reason.*

*I have found this outreach to be most practical and fruitful in assisting to deliver God’s word in other ways. This is another prime example of an effective strategy by Wesley Mission reaching modern community, which is not limited by geographic boundaries in utilising today’s technology.*

*Ultimately we are seeing God’s hand at work in ministry.*

*Again please accept my appreciation of the fellowship of your team of ministry staff and you provide at Wesley Mission. Regards, George Gohari, Superannuation Administrator, Sydney Water Corporation.”*

*“Gordon, I noticed your name in one of the Prime Minister’s press releases where he spoke at the opening of the Alan Walker Village at which you also spoke. This led me to do an Internet search which found the Wesley Mission where I ended up reading some of your sermons. I found the sermon “DO ALL PATHS LEAD TO GOD? Who He Really Is” very interesting.*

*I've been somewhat disillusioned by the "Church" in Australia mainly due to the publicity given to some of the modern approaches the Uniting church is adopting to homosexuality and popular left-wing views that I consider are undermining the traditional values of our society. So I was pleased to see your comments regarding these matters. And I found the points you made regarding other religions and the relativism that is prevalent nowadays to be reassuring and topical. I was also pleased to see your involvement in the campaign to protect marriage. By the way, I first met you back when you were the Minister at the Cheltenham Church of Christ many years ago! Anyway, I've put my name down to receive your future sermons via email, so I look forward to receiving those. Regards, David Looke, MicroWay Pty Ltd, Australia's Major Distributor of Programming Tools."*

Over all this I have written the scripts for more than two thousand television programs, and on my shelf measuring more than 15 feet in length are the typed manuscripts of about five thousand sermons. These are always typed by myself, not by a typist.

Looking back, then, over my career as a writer I realised the old typewriter which had served me faithfully gave way to a new manual typewriter which gave way then to a newer and more efficient typewriter which in turn gave way to a series of electric typewriters and then to an IBM golf ball and then to Olivetti electronic typewriters and eventually to my beloved Olivetti top of the range hard disk word processor, then Compaq computers and laptops.. I have always enjoyed sitting down at the keyboard and it has certainly taught the elements of spelling, punctuation and grammar to a man who had trouble with all of these at school and University.

A visiting Professor from Milligan College, USA, Dr Richard G Phillips was doing some lecturing and research here in Australia when he came upon my book "Discovering Jesus". He took that back to the States with him and set it as a textbook for students in his class. He gathered other books that I had written and then on behalf of the College wrote and asked me if I would come to lecture the students. I accepted the invitation and then was greatly honoured when I discovered that he had taken a series of my books and submitted them to the Academic Committee of the University and that they had approved his recommendation. So it was, I spoke at the Milligan College Graduation.



Long rows of students in their academic gowns and mortarboards came up onto the platform to receive their degrees from the Chancellor and the President of Milligan College and to shake my hand as their visiting graduation speaker. At the end of the long line of graduates, I in turn stood before the Chancellor and the President. The years of writing were being recognised and a new doctoral hood was placed on my shoulders as the University granted me a Doctorate of Letters for my written work.

This is one of the rarest and oldest of graduate degrees and recognises proficiency and experience in work that has been published widely.

Forty years ago on a hot summer's day in the country parsonage at Ararat Chris Fisher called from the "Ararat Advertiser" and introduced me to the world of journalism and writing. I had missed the boat to USA and had never gotten round to studying there for that doctorate. But later that was conferred on me. "God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform." Communicating the gospel is done primarily through preaching, but writing the message can communicate to even more people.