

The Outpouring

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To Christ be the Glory

384 The Meadway Reading

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION.....	3
RUMOURS OF REVIVAL.....	3
THE OUTPOURING.....	4
EXPECTATIONS FOR THE MISSION.....	4
ACTUAL OUTCOMES OF THE MISSION	4
<i>Numbers prayed for.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Quality of Conversions</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Numbers trained.....</i>	<i>5</i>
TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?.....	5
MASS EVANGELISM WITHOUT THE STADIUM.....	8
AN OUTPOURING OR AN ANOINTING?	9
IS THIS AN ANOINTING OF A MAN OR AN OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?	9
IS THIS TRANSFERABLE?	10
IS THIS ESSENTIAL?	10
EVANGELISING ON THE STREETS.....	12
ITS ORIGIN.....	12
SIMPLICITY AND PURPOSE.....	13
ITS PURPOSE AND POWER.....	13
OLD TRACKS	14
NT KERYGMA IS CLEAR	14
BUT WHY THE HUGE NUMBERS WILLING TO PRAY?	15
UK AND AMERICAN RESEARCH	15
<i>UK research on non-church attitudes.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>American research on non-church attitudes.</i>	<i>16</i>
THE IMPACT ON OUR CHURCH	18
REDISCOVERED CONFIDENCE IN THE GOSPEL	18
EXPOSED GAPS IN OUR CHURCHES.....	18
THE FOLLOW UP GAP	18
FOLLOW UP FIGURES.....	19
THE DISCIPLESHIP GAP	21
POTENTIAL IMPACT ON THE TOWN	22
THE EVANGELISATION OF THE TOWN OR CITY	22
THE EVANGELISATION OF THE TOWN THROUGH A SHIFT IN CONSCIOUSNESS OF A TOWN	22
THE EVANGELISATION OF THE TOWN CONTRIBUTED TO BY FRUIT OF CONTINUOUS OUTREACH	23
THE EVANGELISATION OF THE TOWN CONTRIBUTED TO BY MOBILISATION OF THE CHURCH.....	23
APPENDIX 2 : - PERSONAL STATEMENT PUT OUT ON 9/6/16.....	24

Introduction

This learning review will seek to capture understanding of what has been labelled The Turning outpouring. I began to write this document just five weeks into the outpouring labelled “The Turning” and will be limited therefore in my ability to capture broader learning, that will come out of subsequent reviews. It should be noted that I am personally impacted by what I am writing about and this will undoubtedly influence my perspectives and conclusions, but I believe that such as it is, it is a perspective from an individual at the heart of the outpouring and therefore gives a unique perspective.

Any negative comments about church are not to be taken as negative criticism. The reader should understand that I am pro church, love the church and believe with a passion that the Church is Jesus Christ’s gift to a broken world. In preparing this report I have asked for feedback from other places that have had this kind of ministry from similar evangelists that have carried this grace, I have not yet received any response from the sources I have approached.

I have not made this report personal as it is not the intention of this author to fault or scrutinise those ministry gifts that have carried this grace, but rather to learn how we can do such missional activity better. I have therefore not focused on evangelists that have carried this grace who I consider to be a blessing, and who have done their job of equipping the body with diligence. I have chosen rather to focus primarily on the grace itself and the associated problems that this grace brings.

Rumours of revival

That my brand of spirituality has harboured hopes of seeing revival is important to acknowledge, although we would not be in any way unique in having such hopes, most evangelical churches share such dreams.

I put out a public statement a few days into the mission highlighting the extraordinary circumstances in the early days of the outpouring. This can be found on my facebook page and for those reading the private version of this document in *Appendix 2*. It is worth either reading or looking up that public statement before you continue.

The Outpouring

On the 29th of May we began what we thought would be a one-week mission at our Baptist Church 'The Gate' which would possibly stretch into two weeks. In the end because of the results we were witnessing on the streets we stretched out the mission for a total of four weeks. In that time, we saw over 1850 people prayed for on the streets of Reading with many first time commitments and rededications to Christ. Quite apart from the large numbers of responses to the gospel the sheer number of people willing to let us pray for them on the streets alone took us by surprise.

Again, I repeat for the sake of brevity of this section that I have included as appendix 2 the first public statement giving more background about the early stages of the outpouring. Appendix 1 is not being made public at this time.

Expectations for the mission

In the year leading up to the mission we had begun to train church members in a ministry called "Company of Prophets" which is a ministry that trains church members to prophecy over non-Christians. This ministry had proved extremely successful with our youth (ages 11-18) who went out once a month on a Wednesday evening and prophesied over the lost. Prior to the mission we were working out how we could get more of the church adults involved in this ministry as it provided an instant spiritual connection with non-Christians, who were amazed that we knew secret things about their lives.

For the mission itself the most important goal that the writer was hoping to achieve was a cultural shift in our church which whilst evangelical in belief was not so much in practice, this need had been identified before the mission began. I thought that at best ten people might be added to church out of possibly 50 conversions.

Actual outcomes of the mission

Numbers prayed for

We found that over 1850 people were happy to be prayed for. It has to be concluded from the results that hundreds of people are happy to pray to give their lives to Christ on the

streets of Reading. Five Muslims happily prayed to accept Christ as well as Hindus. The conversions when they started were daily and immediate. The numbers of converts left us with no choice but to acknowledge that in the face of such a move of God all our current systems of follow up are bust, but I took comfort in the knowledge that this would be the case with almost every church in the UK even very large ones. Such mission will force a rethink of follow up.

Quality of Conversions

It is probably important to say something about the quality of the commitments being made. In a normal mission the number of conversions brought back are varied. There will be genuine converts, but there will also be a number who on the streets have stopped to pray out of politeness and still others who have prayed just to move the Christians on, and still others who are open to any kind of spiritual experience. The difference in the outpouring is instead of being able to speak to perhaps 60 – 80 people over a two-week mission we were speaking to that number on a daily basis. The messiness of the kind of conversions seen in a normal mission remains but in the outpouring this messiness is multiplied hundreds of times. In time and with a genuine lifestyle change and much more experience, I am sure the quality of the conversion will improve. The challenge though will be to ensure the believers do have a lifestyle change to get to that point.

Numbers trained

Numbers of people that were trained in how to do street evangelism to date (23-7-16) are 810. the number of people saved or rededicating their lives to Christ averaged 65 a day in the four weeks up to the end of the mission.¹

Too Good To Be True?

When the outpouring happened I wrote an article on the 19th June 2016 which was an update to my initial statement. I shall refer to it extensively in this section, I recognized firstly that we had to learn lessons from history:

“The Azusa Street Revival that took place in Los Angeles, was the origin of the modern Pentecostal movement. Led by William J. Seymour, an African American

¹ We intentionally have not included conversions for which we had no cards such as claimed conversions from children who lead school friends to Christ.

preacher. It began with a meeting on April 9, 1906, and continued until 1915. Although Azusa was criticized by the secular media and Christian theologians of its time, today Azusa is considered to be what led to the spread of Pentecostalism in the 20th century. What God had done stayed on the fringes before spreading through the emerging Pentecostal churches. Of further interest is how long it took for this move to become mainstream. Before 1955 the religious mainstream did not embrace Pentecostal doctrines but by the 1980's a growing number of denominational churches had adopted charismatic doctrines and in its various forms largely accepted the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the speaking in tongues associated with it as normal in Christian life and practice. It took a while for this Pentecostal gift to land in the mainstream church. What is this current evangelistic outpouring?"²

Because I believe that Father has been trying to deposit this outpouring on a receptive community for several years, I do think something similar to Azusa is happening here. Other factors which will not be considered in depth in this report, has given The Gate leadership a different attitude towards the grace brought by the visiting evangelist. It might be worthwhile mentioning one which although not in the writer's opinion necessary as a legalistic style as it is found in other forms in different expressions of spirituality, nonetheless did give The Gate community a receptiveness which may otherwise not have been present. This one factor worth mentioning is the current willingness of churches like ours to embrace the practice of "soaking" championed by many ministries including Bethel in Redding California, but I stress such also finds its counterpart in other church traditions, which would serve in the writer's opinion to produce the same outcome. This concept of waiting on God for hours in worship helped this experience of soaking in God's presence appear normal and mitigated against rejecting the initial experience of the visiting evangelist. It is that normality of experience which our church happily embraced as seeming normative as an introductory process for preparing believers in the Sharing of the Gospel on the streets of Reading.

And so we had a reversal of what would be considered normal in traditional evangelistic mission. The meeting focused exclusively on the believers encountering God, ministry however was focused on proclamation to the unsaved outside the confines of the meetings. Indeed, no altar call for salvation was issued by the equipping evangelist and those who did give their lives to

² <https://www.facebook.com/PrinceYinkaOyekan/posts/10157067126415054>, 19 June 2016

Christ in the meetings did so because members of the body present invited them to do so. There were probably less than 10 individuals who came into salvation through this route.

Mission on the streets was in essence the manifestation of the priesthood of all believers which is a key Baptist theological tenant. Normally in an evangelistic mission we invite the lost to some form of meeting, whether a celebration, healing meeting, coffee afternoon or other such gathering at which the gospel is shared and a response solicited. Such meetings are normally geared up to ministering to them, and, ministry is exercised by the preacher at the front. of the meeting.

Where in past this grace has landed it appears that it has been sold as a church growth opportunity:

“ I believe that Father has tried to release this evangelistic grace into the church for a while but it has not found an Apostolic or a denominational outlet to land in. It could be partially related to the style of the streams it has previously lived in as a grace, which has provoked suspicion, rather than a focus on its effectiveness. I think this grace has popped up in various guises and has been in some cases used as a church growth tool, in other cases it has been used by some evangelists who have used it in its various forms in their teams, but it has not been used to train up mainstream church attenders and that is what has just happened in Reading”³

It is much more than a church growth opportunity and for Kingdom minded churches which many of us in the UK are because we have come to understand that it is essential to survive even where our hearts have not understood Christs prayer for unity. The sheer numbers involved is a gift that solicits unity as it requires collaboration between churches to be most effective. The impact on the church alone should give cause for joy.

Where the leadership of a church are engaged with this outpouring it is the writer's opinion that the impact on their flock will be immediate and most noticeable, it is strongly advisable that the leaders humble themselves and acknowledge that their need of a grace from Christ is no less necessary than that of their flocks:

“The impact on the church has been extraordinary. On this last Sunday around half the church came forwards to testify that God had used them to bring people to Christ on the streets of Reading in addition to this around thirty of those who came forwards testified that at some point in the last three weeks they had for the first time

³ <https://www.facebook.com/PrinceYinkaOyekan/posts/10157067126415054> ,19 June 2016

lead people to Christ, and that on the streets of Reading. This alone should give pause to anyone reading this article, before we ask how many converts were genuine ask yourself the question. When was the last time you saw children, youth, adults of all ages from one church go on the streets and lead anyone to Christ? This is often the preserve of the hard core evangelist. But not anymore in this new outpouring.”⁴

Many leaders in the Town are testifying to a change in the atmosphere of Reading already, with stories of increased salvations in other forms of evangelism but this is anecdotal:

“What is not anecdotal, and is a clear indication of a spiritual shift engineered by the Holy Spirit is the fact that so many people are happy to stop and pray with Christians on the streets of Reading. On one occasion when it was pouring down with rain as many people stopped to pray to receive Jesus as some of the days when the sun has been shining. This is an outstanding work of the Holy Spirit.”⁵

Mass evangelism without the stadium

On reflection and after careful consideration, the nature of this form of outreach is not too dissimilar to the kind of mission that Billy Graham or city mission style missions which are mass evangelistic events; The Turning is best understood as a mass evangelisation initiative rather than a cosy friendship based form of evangelism. The only thing missing is the big stadium or large gathering of the unsaved in one place. With this form of outreach the hundreds of strangers praying to receive Christ are being approached one on one by the body of Christ. But better still with careful planning this evangelistic thrust has the potential of never ending as it is not dependant on one man but the body of Christ as a whole.

We are currently developing a follow up model for towns and cities that wish to embrace this form of church mobilisation. We will be sharing good practice with cities that embrace this form of discipleship.

4 <https://www.facebook.com/PrinceYinkaOyekan/posts/10157067126415054> ,19 June 2016

5 <https://www.facebook.com/PrinceYinkaOyekan/posts/10157067126415054> ,19 June 2016

An outpouring or an anointing?

Is this an anointing of a man or an outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

One of the most interesting questions I had to grapple with in the very early stages was whether what was happening in Reading was this an outpouring of the Holy Spirit or the outworking of the anointed ministry of an Ephesians Four evangelist.⁶ Whilst the grace has been carried by several people and demonstrated by them it is this authors view that it is an outpouring of the Spirit, rather than a personal anointing on the evangelists who have also carried this grace. It was preceded in our case by a prophetic word from heaven sent by the leader of our movement and by a pastor who has a prophetic ministry from Arizona that God was going to visit Reading in an extraordinary way.

It is not a new outpouring but I believe that it is one that has been looking for a mainstream community to abide in. The outworking of the outpouring is on the whole community at once rather than through the individual minister conducting the meeting from the pulpit.

The faith of the ministering minister from the pulpit though is a key catalyst, and the visiting evangelist was for us that catalyst. I thank God for Evangelists like him who have continued to carry the flame and have not given in. His passion for Jesus and love for the lost have sustained his determination to continue to equip the body of Christ.

The characteristics of an outpouring are clear and history is littered with examples. Outpourings are an extraordinary supernatural work of the Holy Spirit impacting a community or group of people.⁷ Such actions are seen throughout history such as happened on the community Count Zinzendorf was preaching at on 16 July 1727.⁸ For the theologian Donald Bloesch the advancement of the Kingdom in history is characterised by such ever new outpourings of the spirit as God continuously pours himself out on an imperfect humanity.⁹ Outpourings have been described using many terms such as revival, awakenings, or even waves. There is no clear absolute definition of terms for such events. In time others will decide if what began in Reading was an outpouring or a reawakening of the church to evangelism. It is my opinion given its

⁶ In the Pentecostal tradition an Eph 4:12 evangelist stand apart from a local church evangelist or one doing the work of an evangelist. The fivefold ministry of Apostle, Prophet, Pastor, teacher and evangelist is understood as functioning quite apart from elders and deacons.

⁷ Acts 2:16

⁸ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.p1154

⁹ Bloesch, D. G. (2002). *The Church: sacraments, worship, ministry, mission*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. P 79

nature, that because it is a presence based energising of the church it is consequentially an outpouring.

Is this transferable?

In the 80's when I became a Christian, I remember attending camps at which people were taught about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Once prayed for many could speak in tongues and demonstrated other supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is work of Jesus Christ and no other. We could pray for people to receive but it is Him who pours out his Spirit on all flesh. This outpouring can be similarly transferred, but of course you might wish to have someone who has walked in it, experienced it and is competent to minister in it pray for you, although it is not essential it is probably advisable.

Is this essential?

What happens to people who gain the script that is used but do not stand in the fire of the outpouring is interesting. I have noticed Christians who have stood in the fire of the outpouring for hours who when they go out on the street find strangers literally walking up to them and ask for pray. Whilst this is not by any means common, it happens enough times to demonstrate a direct benefit between standing in the outpouring and sharing the gospel on the streets. I have also noticed the negative impact of going out on the streets on people who have not stood in the grace but simply turned up for the training so they can use the script, whilst they find the atmosphere in which such mission being done a little easier they seem to struggle much more.

There is something supernatural about what happens in the heat of waiting upon the Lord that transforms the experience of evangelism. The use of the script out of that context cannot be replicated easily without standing in the fire of God's presence. There are probably many reasons why this is the case. My best guess is that the Lord has to change our hearts. We have spent years not producing much fruit as we have shared the gospel faithfully, and, I believe the Lord is now being merciful, encouraging us to stand in his presence in order to change our hearts and by that transaction recharging our passion for him in order to reignite our passion for the lost.

So clearly whilst the script is a great tool that is helping people share their faith it is not what is making the difference. But for the reasons stated above, I would strongly encourage care

in simply handing out the script as this will probably have the opposite effect to what is intended in that it may inoculate individuals from being willing to engage with evangelism as their experience will only truly change if they spend time first in God's presence.

Some of the encounters on the streets are divine appointments. One lady convert who we shall call Mrs X, had just come from an appointment which confirmed she was expecting a baby when we met her. I went through the script with her and she accepted Christ. I then realised I had forgotten my phone in the car, whilst I was gone she shared with my colleague Sue, she told her that a few months earlier, she being desperate for a baby was told by a friend of hers to talk to a pastor friend in Tanzania, he asked her to give her life to Christ (Mrs X was from a Muslim background) she did simply happy to do whatever she had to do in order to become pregnant. Having tried for years to have a baby she prayed the prayer of salvation over the phone with the Tanzanian pastor. We were the first people that spoke to her that morning a few months later, on the very morning it was confirmed she was pregnant. When Sue and I invited her to give her life to Christ and pray that same prayer she welled up and happily said the prayer of salvation again, but this time we are sure with faith and gratitude to Christ in her heart. She gave us all her details and was so glad to know Christ. There are many such stories which demonstrate how Christ has been preparing many hearts on the streets as we have gone out.

The impact of the soaking in God's presence is to change the heart, without which the behaviour of the Christians who are reaching out to the lost will not change. I cannot stress strongly enough that this is the first key to this grace that we have seen in Reading.

Behavioural change is much harder to embrace than is often realised. For example, according to Cancer Research UK, an unhealthy lifestyle is the root cause of about a third of all cancers. In fact 85% of respiratory disease is caused by smoking an avoidable behaviour:

“Smoking causes almost all lung cancer. Poor diet has been linked to bowel cancer, pancreatic cancer and oesophageal cancer. And heavy drinking has been implicated in the development of breast cancer. While healthy lifestyle changes can prevent many cases of cancer,”¹⁰

10 <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/over60s/Pages/The-top-five-causes-of-premature-death.aspx>

Just knowing the facts does not change the behaviour of smokers, knowledge alone is not necessarily enough to change lifestyle. behavioural change often requires a strong motivating catalyst, and this is what is introduced by standing in the fire of the outpouring. The expectation of faith is rewarded by more of the Spirit.

I remember Evangelist Don Double once preaching in the 90's and talking about an old lady who kept on coming to the front to be filled with the Spirit and someone praying for her saying "Fill her Lord she leaks", I believe this is a necessity in the Christian life, the attitude of that that old lady that affirms and admits a daily need for an infilling to function in the supernatural of God is to be admired not ridiculed.

Evangelising on the streets

The training itself is simple it focuses on a specific means of practically enabling the believer with a simple formulaic scripted outline to use when speaking to non-Christians. Whilst it is formulaic the use of it as a prop soon changes once individuals gain confidence, but where confidence is lost they can always fall back on the script. I have done a full analysis and breakdown of the script can be found in *Appendix 1*, but I will share one or two findings here.

Its Origin

This form of 'script' based evangelism is not new, has been used by many ministries. The ministry of Dr James Kennedy who founded Evangelism Explosion in 1962 and which is now in over 70 countries used a scripted format. Dr Rodney Howard Brown and others considered to be on the fringe of mainstream denominationalism. Indeed, the Script used in Reading is virtually identical to the one formulated by Dr Rodney Howard Brown in his book "The Great Awakening, Power Evangelism Manual". The evangelist we invited Tommie Zito was a disciple of Dr Rodney Howard Brown

Chris Walker a Presbyterian minister who has taught evangelism for local mission bases of Operation Mobilization, Youth with a Mission, and HIMF (based in Costa Rica) and who is the principal writer for evangelismcoach.org encourages the memorization of scripts as a means of enabling Christians to share the gospel

Simplicity and purpose

The simplicity of the script is not in doubt, it is neither offensive nor complicated, **practically** it has meant that children as young as nine have been able to use it on their own. Children have been known to read it through with adults and at the end of it adults have responded. **Theologically** its simplicity has meant that every denominational group, church stream or churchmanship has been willing to use it as is without immediately rejecting it. Its simplicity has been its strength and also its weakness. It provides enough for everyone to be willing to give it a fair trial, but not enough in many people's minds to not necessitate a desire to rewrite the script. Indeed, one pastor was in tears as he felt it was deficient in its gospel proclamation. **Emotionally** the script touches on everyone's pride particularly when the simplicity of the tool is presented. Some have responded with the suggestion that they have been to bible college and don't need a scripted aid, others have made it clear they have been trained because they have been to a school of supernatural ministry, still others have said they are ministers and don't need to be trained.

Several Apostolic national leaders have had a different attitude and sat in humility to be trained, whilst honestly voicing their amusement at the simplicity or theological deficiency of the script, this author has done the same choosing to sit in the meetings and be trained.

Its purpose and power

It provides an easy way to share faith. Practically the script provides an access point to the non-Christians. It is in that sense a bridge through which to begin a conversation. Its simplicity and structure provide confidence to the believer, much like the Lord's prayer provides a coaching structure for those who struggle with knowing how to pray or what to pray for. It is not only the children that are able to use it, individuals who struggle to read fluidly are very quickly able to memorise the elements of the script due to its simplicity. The script feels safe and non-judgmental to use

Old tracks

A quick review of old tracks handed out as evangelistic aids shows that many of them are trying to do more than introduce people to Christ, they are in many cases mini books seeking to give a rationale for the need of salvation. They are appealing primarily to the intellect as a means of sharing the gospel whilst in this outpouring ministry is not through a tract but by the believer, the script is incidental to the encounter. The believer is not expressing reliance on the tract but in their ability to communicate the gospel themselves in an attempt to minister to the heart.

The simplicity of the questions in the script engages the respondent and only then are the scriptures stating the Christian position offered.

Theologically the script contains enough to bring people to a knowledge of their need to have their sins forgiven and an understanding that Christ is the one who liberates them from the penalty of their sin but it does need to be revised as it does not contain a clear Kerygma.

NT Kerygma is clear

The kerygma (content of preaching) as used in the new testament came to mean to the church the manner, delivery and content of the gospel:

2 Timothy 4:17 (NIV) — 17 But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message (Kerygma) might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

The Kerygma is the basic evangelistic message proclaimed by the earliest Christians.¹¹ The kerygma is drawn from two sources: Pauline writings of the apostle, and the early evangelistic speeches of Peter in the Book of Acts.¹² In simplest outline the kerygma is made up of: a proclamation of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus, the resultant acceptance of Jesus as both Lord and Christ; and a summons to repent and receive forgiveness of sins. That the resurrection plays a central role in the early churches gospel proclamation is agreed by scholars.

We have added these elements into an updated script.

¹¹ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). In Baker encyclopedia of the Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

¹² The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments (1936), C.H. Dodd

But why the huge numbers willing to pray?

The Holy Spirit does not violate free will. Even with an outpouring of the Spirit and his convicting power, can we discern any other factors that the Lord is using to His benefit? In the UK where many have the perception is that people do not wish to know about God and are disinterested, the huge numbers willing to stop at this stage and engage dispels this notion. Research has been done which helps us understand that this perception is wrong and we will now look at this research.

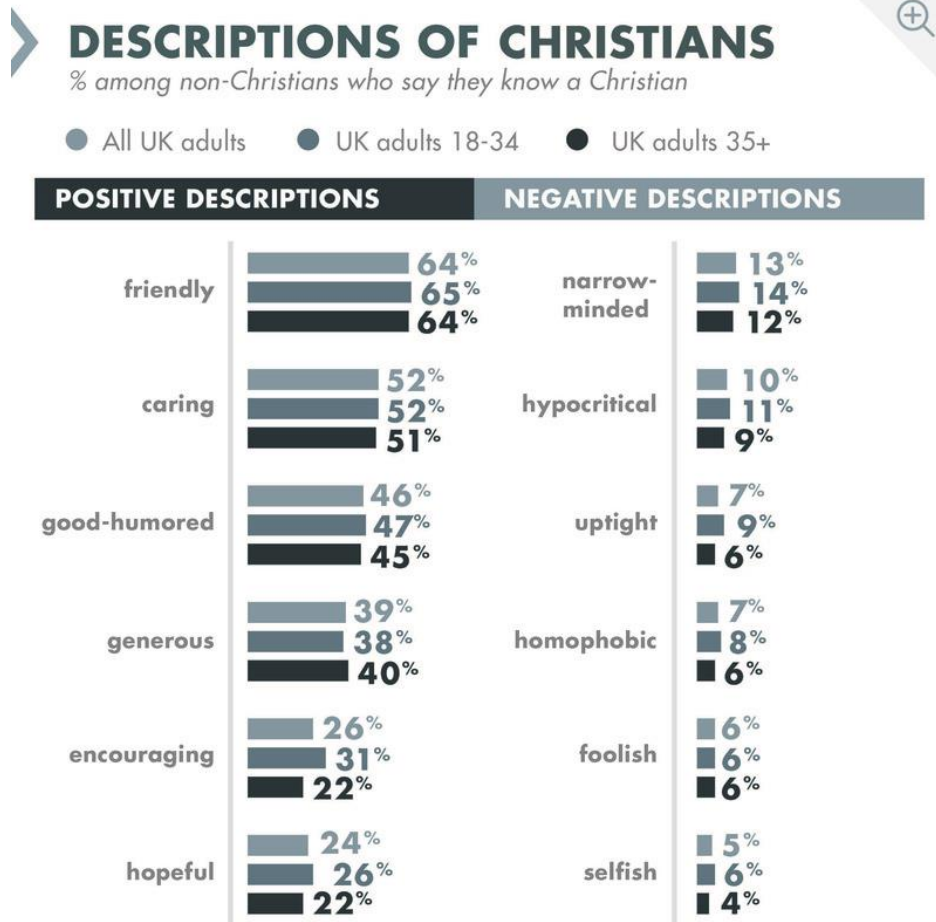
Uk and American research

UK research on non-church attitudes

Looking at the statistics from 'Talking Jesus' produced by Evangelical Alliance, Hope and the Church of England, it points out that 67% of non-Christians in England know a practicing Christian in England, and further it goes on to say that non-Christians like the Christians that they know speaking about them in positive terms.¹³ In fact they very much like Christian company.¹⁴ This may account for some of the very positive responses to the encounters we are experiencing on the streets.

13 <http://www.talkingjesus.org/research/talking-jesus-booklet.cfm>

14 <https://www.barna.org/research/faith-christianity/research-release/perceptions-jesus-christians-evangelism-uk#.V4VzrmxzWVM>



Barna July 2015 | UK Adults 18+, n=3,014 | UK Practicing Christians, n=1,621 | www.barna.org

But 54% of non-Christians say their non-Christian friend has never had a conversation with them about Jesus. The research also shows that 61% of all adults believe that Jesus was a real person but apparently only 22% believe he was God. Everything points towards a favourable outcome if the evangelism is done with consideration, respect and in the power of the Holy Spirit as there is already clearly a wealth of goodwill towards Christians on the streets of England.

Whilst I am grateful for the hard work done by the research teams that have produced 'Talking Jesus' and have confidence in the figures produced regarding the non-Christians, I am less convinced by the figures produced by them regarding how many Christians who claim to share the gospel with the lost actually do share their faith.

American research on non-church attitudes.

I am more inclined to believe the American research figures on the percentage of Christians who share their faith with the lost. We are told that only two percent of church

members invite an unchurched person to church. Ninety-eighty percent of church-goers never extend an invitation in a given year." –Dr Thom Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door*.

Looking at research done by respected Lifeway Research, research given with a caveat that the delicately selected balanced demographics apply to America, we note in the article “Strategic Evangelism: the power of an Invitation”, Ed Stetzer conclude on the basis of research of 15,000 adults done by Lifeway Research that “the Lost are waiting for an invitation”.¹⁵ This is in line with many other research outcomes which show that personal invitation is the key to seeing new people coming into the church. Of course it is such invitations that are sorely lacking in current church life and that with respect to our friends. Encouragingly we are told through the research that 79% would not mind a friend who really values their faith talking about it.¹⁶

A recent survey of 2000 non church going Americans done in partnership with the Billy Graham centre for evangelism and posted online on 28th June 2016, found that of 2000 people surveyed more than half of Americans who don’t go to church identify as Christians. The same research found that whilst the unchurched are happy to talk about faith they are not enthusiastic about going to church.

In America where this style of evangelism has been used in the past what is interesting is this same survey 7 out of 10 of unchurched Americans agree that there is an ultimate plan and purpose for every person. Although 43% of unchurched folk say they don’t worry about what will happen to them when they die, 10% think about it daily, 8% weekly, 11% monthly and 8% annually and so it is a revisited question for 47% of the non-Christian population.

“It is clear” says Scott McConnell executive director of lifeway research that the question of the afterlife may not be effective, but perhaps he is wrong as on the streets of Reading people have happily engaged with this question which is central to their response.

¹⁵ LifeWay Research found that best. 67% of Americans say a personal invitation from a family member would be very or somewhat effective in getting them to visit a church. 63% of Americans say a personal invitation from a friend or neighbour would be very or somewhat effective in getting them to visit a church. 63% of Americans are very or somewhat willing to receive information about a local congregation or faith community from a family member. 56% of Americans are very or somewhat willing to receive information about a local congregation or faith community from a friend or neighbour.; <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/july/power-of-invitation-our-god-pursues-lost-and-so-should-we.html>

¹⁶ <http://lifewayresearch.com/2016/06/28/unchurched-will-talk-about-faith-not-interested-in-going-to-church/>

The Impact on our church

Rediscovered confidence in the gospel

The impact of the outpouring on the church has been both profound and immediate. Following the initial confusion that many of us shared regarding the numbers, we soon just got on with the task of doing follow up. We will have to wait to see whether this change will be long lasting. Over 65% of the community has been out and have prayed for people to accept Christ as saviour or prayed for people to rededicate their lives to Christ.

Before the mission, several individuals had made clear that they could not envision themselves speaking to strangers or witnessing on the street. After the mission though many had a different perspective. Our youth pastor has reported that 50% of the youth have been out and leading people to Christ.

That the church has experienced an evangelistic awakening is clear.

Exposed gaps in our churches

The intention of the church in outreach must be to make disciples not just converts. For the proclamation of the gospel to carry integrity the intention must be to baptise and teach the convert that they must become a disciple:

Matthew 28:19–20 (NIV) — 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The follow up gap

As a church we were clearly not prepared for the numbers of people that were going to respond to the gospel. As I have said before my initial reaction on the second day was to consider closing down the mission because I was unsure that people were genuinely responding to Christ the numbers seemed incongruous. I simply found it hard to believe that it was so easy. I was also concerned as I realised that however follow up would look, nothing I had prepared would be adequate. I was therefore stuck between the tension of giving the lost a chance to find Christ and shutting down the mission because of both my doubt and anxiety at having no

credible follow up plan that could cope with what was happening. The incredible testimonies from members of the Church whom I had real confidence in as strong and dependable Christians helped me to understand that something real was happening here.

Whilst there were clear issues with the ability of the church to cope with the numbers of people willing to pray and make a profession of faith, it would have been wrong in hindsight to have shut down the mission.

The visiting evangelist would happily rest at the idea that making converts is what God is doing in this season, a concept I do not share, he believes that in time God would breathe upon our efforts and bring them into the church. Whilst this is true in part following the teaching of Christ on the Parable of the sower, I am persuaded that we can make a real impact if follow up is done properly and our initial evidence which is presented below demonstrates this.

Follow up figures

Whilst we have given follow up cards to other church groups in a desperate appeal for help, they were even less geared up for mission than we were. It has been hard to assess how motivated they have been to engage in follow up because of the labour intensive nature of such a ministry. I can though give real figures from The Gate church.

On an initial sample of 101 cards followed up by our wider leadership team in the church, 21 of them who engaged in follow up have either met or have been able to secure 26% of respondents for an initial follow up meeting, tea or coffee. This is a huge number and is certainly larger than I anticipated as I was expecting single digits of between 1-2% and hopeful for 5%. I believe the following factors influence the high results in this sample.

1. They are motivated to make the connections as they are hugely invested in the mission succeeding. Others not in our church I know have given up after the second or third phone call and lost interest in perusing the respondent. This essentially is the heart issue God has to deal with in the outpouring.
2. Some of them have phoned the respondent several times which is counter to the prevailing British culture.

3. They have not been put off by the 74% who have brushed them off and not wished to continue the dialogue. Others not realising that the collective approach will yield the fruit become discouraged and give up. This is trawler net ministry rather than fishing rod ministry. We all form part of the net so it is the collective result that counts and this needs to be strongly communicated.
4. They have created the time in their lives to give to following up those who have responded.
5. It has only been possible because we have worked as a team together keeping the news of the responses before the church and thereby keeping the hope of reaching people alive.
6. They are personally convinced of the veracity of the salvations as they have led people to Christ themselves and whilst recognising the scope of the challenge have been willing to make a difference if even if only to a handful.

I was in Bristol recently and asked a group of pastors I was meeting with, what percentage of Alpha attendees they generally saw coming through into discipleship and the anecdotal answer was around 30%. This was interesting, actual research from 148 parishes showed that 21% of those attending Alpha became Christians.¹⁷ When we consider that Alpha attendees are predominantly friends, family, colleagues or acquaintances and we cross reference those results against this kind of street evangelism which is to strangers it is surprising that we should get anywhere near the response we have had. The responses we are seeing arise out of two things. The first is the working in the believers as they soak in the fire of Father's presence and a faith-filled environment regarding this outpouring. The second should not surprise us but probably will and that is the attitudes that exist out on the streets about Christians.

Research has been done by a variety of organisations about this attitude that people on the streets of England have with respect to Christians.

¹⁷ Mike Booker, Mike Ireland, *Evangelism - Which Way Now?: An Evaluation of Alpha, Emmaus, Cell Church and Other Contemporary Strategies for Evangelism*, Church House Publishing: 2010 pg 34

The Discipleship Gap

This is where real challenges exist. We know from alpha that the process of follow up turning into discipleship requires many contacts between the Christian and the respondent. And even after Alpha it takes effort to bring a convert into the church meeting or group. The question we are grappling with at the Gate is 'how should discipleship work in this missional context'? Our old models of invitation into a church group for these respondents will clearly not work. I am now convinced that the only way follow up will work is if the whole church actually obeyed Christ and everyone is now trained in how to make disciples on a one to one basis. I am sure that we as a nation need to re-evaluate how effective we are at disciple making. Most forms of disciple making are done to take the pressure of Christians so that they can simply turn up to a group be fed, prayed for, have fellowship and then go home. The key question is how many of our church members are in fact discipling another younger Christian in the Lord.

If in fact we had been prepared for what was to come and if the follow up responses remained constant at 26%, then of the 1850 respondents 481 would have been willing to be followed up and be glad to have a coffee or tea. However, we had no way of knowing at the time how many would be genuine and appealed for help to the wider body of Christ in the town for the sake of the Lost rather than focus on personal benefit as a church. If we had known what percentage of respondents would be willing to meet up we might have had the courage to tackle it ourselves. It certainly would have been possible for our church to follow up such numbers of respondents if we had given every member of the church a simple discipleship tool and trained them to be as confident in the use of it as they are with the script.

Our current structures though have not been and as yet are not geared up for every believer becoming a discipler of another. Most of our structures of discipleship are group based as is common with most modern churches today. We do our best to disciple in groups as one to one is time consuming and thus personally expensive.

The anxiety of pastors would have to be overcome if this is to happen because of the lack of inertia that exists in current church structures and change is always difficult to bring in.

To bring in this harvest will require not just the willingness of church members to be trained in how to conduct one to one discipleship, Pastors would have to be willing to cope with the messiness of life that such an approach will inevitably bring, as people transition from darkness to light with all their attendant problems. Further, if ongoing evangelism is to be effective we would have to be willing to allow very young Christians to themselves be trained up in how to disciple new Christians themselves. Whilst this is controversial, I would remind the readers that this is exactly what Christ asks a disciple to do, to make disciples and if we take the new testament as our example we have to accept that young Christians should very early on in their faith become involved in discipleship of other newer Christians.

The magnitude and nature of this change is one of the key reasons why this grace has not been able to land with just evangelists bringing it.

Potential Impact on the town

The evangelisation of the town or city

The impact on the town of sustained and continuous evangelism will be the evangelization of the town. By this I mean.

1. A large number of people will hear the gospel on a regular basis.
2. A large number of people will become sympathetic to the gospel.
3. A large number of Christians will engage in gospel proclamation
4. A large number of people will get saved.
5. The church will once again restructure itself for evangelistic endeavour and not just pastoral concern.
6. Give church leaders in the town an opportunity to work together in a kingdom manner beyond social action.

The evangelisation of the town through a shift in consciousness of a town

This form of evangelism has the potential to become so all pervasive that a shift in the towns consciousness can be created. If just five churches with an average attendance (60 members each) are all witnessing, praying for or leading someone to Christ just once a week for

just one and a half hours, then between 300 and 600 people will either come to faith or rededicate their lives to Christ a week. The average responses brought back are between 1-3 respondents. Some groups have seen upwards of 20 respondents in an hour but most come back with an average of two in an hour. Scaling up these numbers over 52 weeks gives you a staggering figure of 31200 people prayed for. The results of the streets of Reading show this is easily achievable if a determined group of churches chose to work together to change the prevailing culture.

We have in the space of just seven weeks trained up 810 people in how to share the gospel with the lost. I estimate with the number of cities asking us to bring this grace to their town (18 at last count) that we will train between 50,000 – 100,000 people in how to share the gospel in the streets of the UK in the next 18 months.

It would not be possible to pray for so many people in a town or city without changing perception of Christians, Christianity and Christ. And it will not be possible to see so many cities doing this without changing the narrative of Christianity in the country.

The evangelisation of the town contributed to by Fruit of continuous outreach

There is also the potential of long term fruit arising out of faithful and sustained outreach. During the training anecdotal evidence came out from several individuals that they had themselves taken between several months to two years between making a commitment to Christ to becoming a committed member of a church community. Where a group of churches will make the commitment to collaborate and give faithful commitment to reach out in this way for a sustained period of time, it will result in reaching out to many of the same people and eventually plucking the evangelical fruit when the time is right.

The evangelisation of the town contributed to by Mobilisation of the church

Many churches dream of having their members engage with the task of mission. This form of evangelistic outreach empowers ordinary members to do just that. If churches will work together the impact over two years should be noticeable in more people finding their way into church.

Appendix 2 : - Personal Statement put out on 9/6/16

Personal Statement from Yinka Oyekan Senior Minister of The Gate.(9/6/16)

There is an Evangelistic outpouring happening now on the streets of Reading.

Context is everything!

Around 15 years ago the Lord gave me a lucid prophetic dream about revival. I saw a river flowing like a waterfall onto the street from the roof the church building we occupied at the time, above this cascading river was the cross.

I saw children running into the river with joy and ease as they came down a slight decline into the cascading river making their steps easier. I saw the adults eventually catching up with what was happening but their steps were a bit harder as they had to climb a slight incline. As long as the Cross was magnified the outpouring continued but where anyone went above the cross it stopped.

Then in 2010 following a visible and tangible manifestation of the Glory of God in our family home, a manifestation which happened to disrupt dinner (we saw it as a cloud and felt it as sparks of lightening), the Lord in a vision gave me a clear word about Fathers love coming down and sweeping towns and cities in the UK into a new outpouring, but only if believers in cities would gather together and call out upon him. The leadership of three cities initially responded (Liverpool, Plymouth and Ely) but the gatherings did not go beyond the leaders.

Recently, I should have guessed something was afoot and that something strange was about to happen because in the weeks leading up to what I can only describe as the manifestation of that lucid dream I began to see angels everywhere. I have not been one for seeing angels, but recently they began to appear particularly in our current church building where this outpouring has begun from, but they also were appearing in my home and one of them spoke to me audibly. It was all really quite strange. But now I realise that Father was flooding the area with His troops and that was the point of their appearing. I was not so easily impressed by angels because I have on more than one occasion spoken to the Lord himself in a dreams.

Last week we invited evangelist Tommie Zito to lead our mission endeavour. All I was hoping for was a cultural shift in our church which whilst evangelical in belief was not so much in practice. I thought that at best ten people might be added to church out of possibly 50 conversions given we were starting from further back than I would have hoped.

I did not realise what was coming. We are finding that hundreds of people are happy to pray to give their lives to Christ on the streets of Reading, five Muslims have so far accepted Christ as well as Hindus. At last count yesterday over 720 people had prayed in the streets after just 10 days of mission.

I was trained by Evangelist Don Double and so thought I had effective follow up procedures in place, we have been so overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of conversions that all our current systems are bust and we will have to think again. True to the dream, the children are leading the way one young 11 year old has lead 46 people to Christ on the streets, my fourteen year old has lead 11 people to Christ and my nine year old has lead thirteen of his friends at school to Christ, on the school run, on the way to work at petrol stations all over the town on buses people are praying and accepting Christ as saviour, those who have come down and sat under the anointing are reporting back to me that once they got back home they are leading people to Christ. One pastor went back to his town and lead 6 people to Christ the minute he got back home having spent time with us in the renewal.

It is not like anything I have ever seen or experienced before and it left me reeling, feeling baffled and confused. Teachers leading colleagues to Christ during their break, it is every day, it is nonstop and it was initially baffling.

We will end up using many church buildings as a launch pad for this outpouring. The church of England Verger who has let us use part of his grounds as a launching pad into the town centre was inundated with stories from the staff from John Lewis (A large department store) in the middle of town who were queuing up in front of him to tell him how blessed they were at being stopped and prayed for.

What is happening is not revival yet if revival means the whole of Reading is turning to Christ, but it is an exponential explosion of what you would normally see in what I would call a normal mission. Everything is the same but hundreds of times multiplied, so there are more genuine salvations but also more people who have responded just to move teams on and also more people who whilst not sure what they did none the less are searching and want God and meant the prayers. 80+% are estimated to be prayers of Salvation or Rededications it is all so overwhelming.

I am one of a Leadership Team of five for Reading Christian Network, a charismatic umbrella body for many of the ministries and churches in the town and today when we met I offered to hand over what has started at The Gate to the town. In that meeting we heard many stories of peoples encounters with what is happening. If the Pastors in our town will pursue and will pay the cost of pursuing it both spiritually and practically then it could lead to full blown revival. Eph 4 Evangelist Tommie Zito and I believe Reading could become the first city in Europe to be swept by the Glory of God. At this point I must be honest about what I prophetically believe, I thought the Revival the Lord showed me was coming was to start in the South West and I have tried very hard in previous years to ensure the leaders there knew this. The Gate will practically steward this outpouring whilst submitting to the spiritual oversight of the town to cover and give leadership to it.

Now for the really good news.

It is transferable to any city or town that wants this. I believe that this can happen in any city in this country or in Europe and because of that Tommie Zito's ministry and Barnabas Fellowship of Churches are going to partner to facilitate this. Why do I believe it is transferable? Oh the joy of the simplicity of all of this. It is not a technique, it is not a program, it is not a church growth plan but something Holy from the Lord, it is simply the empowering of ordinary believers to be able to share the gospel on the streets and that is where the power to transform our cities lies. If we will humble ourselves, not try and control it and allow the Holy Spirit to flow we will see incredible things on the streets of every city in this nation.

I drew this picture attached to express my initial bewilderment at what I felt after the first day, indeed on the second day I was really worried and came under the most severe psychological attack, worse than anything I had experienced in the last four years which had been tough years of contending with spiritual forces. Why the psychological difficulties? Well I value my integrity but had no credible frame of reference to explain what I was seeing by the second day. On top of that I realised my follow up techniques which I prided myself with being good at were not going to be good enough. We have since begun to understand how to steward this move of God.

It was only after I accepted that Father was at work did the Lord send a pastor from Andy Au's church from Brighton to encourage us. He came at the prompting of Jonathan Conrathe and when he arrived in Reading the Lord told a lady he had met three years ago to call him and tell him that revival was about to start and that the Lord had told her He was in Reading at that precise moment in time. This encouraged the meeting and gave us resolve to press in.

Why Reading?

We have been praying every week for 19 years for God to move in our town. This Wednesday was the day 19 years ago that the prayer meeting started. The leadership of RCN are more united and honest with each other than we have ever been.

Why 'The Gate?'

God knows that whilst I am not the most prolific church planting Apostle, nevertheless I would never be content with holding this outpouring to just our church and my leadership team are just the same. Men and women who are a Kingdom minded team. A pastor receiving this gift may have been tempted to hang onto it as just another means of church growth which I believe many have seen

Tommie and his ministry as in the past. Yes I wish to plant churches, yes I would love a huge church but, I would honestly prefer that every church become strong and growing whether they are part of my Baptist denomination, Barnabas Fellowship of churches, Anglican churches, Catholic churches Methodist churches or any other denomination or stream. I just long to see all churches growing and thriving. I believe God knows my heart and has trusted me knowing I would honour his servant Tommie and would seek to pursue what he had sent me and pay the cost. This is why I have a personal resolve to facilitate Tommie Zito and what he brings to our nation.

Thanks:

First huge and eternal thanks to Jesus without you Lord who can stand.

Big thanks to Tommie and his sacrificial team from America who have certainly poured gasoline onto our little fire. The Eagle and The Lion are on the move together.

The Gate Leadership team especially Sue Winyard who oversees our evangelistic ministry, Janet Parkins faithful woman of God, Gareth Owen my wonderful and faithful right hand man who will pick up anything to help me, Veronica Petterson, Mabel Boyd, Karen Lewis, Lesley Carter, Jill Morris Kathie Davis-Bater , Alastair and Jane Mitchel Baker, Graham Bates, Tayo Oyekan, Joel Owen, Becca Carter Rory Malone, Matt Stubbs, Malcolm Horne, Rich Silley, Megan Perryman, Mick Penson, Nathan Winyard and all the teams of people helping to steward the practical aspects of this. (Forgive me if I missed you out)

Wiktor Zbrzezniak for stepping into the gap for Barnabas and to Eric and Pat Whittiker for your prompt obedience to get into the River.

Thanks also to Clyde Thomas who helped steady my nerves in the initial stages. And Pastor Ike Harris who encouraged Tommie to come to us.

And Finally Bill Johnson for investing in me the last few years, it kept me going through very difficult times and kept me spiritually alive Thanks Bill and Benny Johnson

What next?

Brother Tommie and I are calling this move "The Turning," if you want us to bring Tommie and Teams of people trained up to your city later on in the year message me on Facebook and we will begin to facilitate what I believe is going to be a grass roots movement of the Holy Spirit. It is not about superstars it is about ordinary people filled with an extraordinary God.

Yinka Oyekan

Senior Minister of The Gate & Team leader Barnabas Fellowship of Churches
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