

*Also by Jeremy Marshall*

Beyond the Big C  
Hope in the Face of Suffering  
Meeting Jesus

*Also by Mary Davis*

Women of Faith  
The Coming of the King (ed.)

JEREMY MARSHALL & MARY DAVIS

*Scattering*  
**SEEDS**  
*of*  
**HOPE**

EVANGELISM FOR THE  
DISCOURAGED AND INEFFECTIVE

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# FOREWORD

I knew Jeremy for many years. Nearly ten years ago he was diagnosed with incurable cancer and given months to live. God kindly gave him extra time and much of that he used to share his faith – both as a speaker at hundreds of events organised by churches up and down the country where he has talked about hope in the face of death, and one-on-one chatting with his friends and sharing the Bible. Facing death, he became gripped by the need to tell others. As the apostle John says, we must work while it's day because the night is coming, when no one can work.

I have to say that as I read this book I found myself punching the air. Why? First, because it underlines the *essentials* for evangelism: our heart-love for Jesus, belief that the Holy Spirit will do his miraculous work in our friends' lives, and a call to pray.

Secondly, this book *equips* me for evangelism. Jeremy passes on some brilliant questions, which I haven't used before, but which I'm already using, because they

are simply the best questions to ask. I wish I'd known them years ago.

Thirdly, it *engages* with the culture as it is, confirming the fact that most people just don't have any idea about Jesus. So, we're in a new day and Jeremy's advice on the use of social media is so refreshing and motivating. I'm just so grateful for this book, written by someone who spent his life in the world of work and yet had such a good grip on the theology that needs to underpin authentic evangelism. The other great thing is that this book is short, so its lessons can be easily digested. I'm going to be handing it round my church and getting people together to talk about it.

**Rico Tice**

# PREFACE

Why should you read a book on effective evangelism when it's written by some City banker who has since gone to be with his Saviour?! It's a good question... but then this was no ordinary City banker. Jeremy was humbled, enthused, and empowered by his Lord in equal measure and in the most self-evident way. This was particularly true during Jeremy's last years that God gave him beyond the date the doctors had said it was a racing certainty that he would have died! In fact, on the sixth anniversary of his 'expected death day' we had a celebration lunch marvelling at, and utterly humbled by, what the Lord had done with this precious extra time.

It's current social practice to be driven by an urgent self-centred need to complete a bucket list before you die, as if this life is all that there is. However, that was not the instruction that Jeremy received from above when faced with the finality of his diagnosis. For him, there was a different path of intense usage and creative activity, entirely

empowered by the Holy Spirit so actively at work in his life, using the ‘train wreck’ of a body that Jeremy became. The effort of writing this book came at a huge personal cost as the author persevered while under intense suffering.

Why a book on evangelism? Because at the heart of how Jeremy was used in those oh-so-precious final years was a wise and highly effective enthusiasm for telling anyone who would listen how hopeful, how real, how life-changing and enriching life with Christ can be. Jeremy was walking evidence of an intimate personal relationship with his living Saviour.

This man needed no ‘religious crutch’ despite being constantly irradiated by chemo and radiotherapy. He radiated the reality of God’s Holy Spirit empowering him. The human ‘suit’ of his body was in tatters, but his soul, the real Jeremy Marshall, well, that was shining gloriously, made right for the eternity with His God that he knew he had already started to experience. Jeremy had certainty, and it filled him with a peace that no man can create, a peace that literally passes all human understanding.

Jeremy longed for others to know such assurance, not based in any way on his own righteousness, that, he said, was as shot to pieces as his physical body! He was desperately keen for all he came into contact with to have a living relationship with his Lord and Saviour.

In a world that shouts for individual rights, this book exudes the benefits of giving up such self-will. Each allotted day, Jeremy knew the loving peace and joy of



walking with – or in his case, being carried by – a Saviour who has paid a price none of us can meet.

Jeremy Marshall echoed constantly the words Paul wrote in Philippians 1:

*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me (Philippians 1:21–26).*

That is why Jeremy has left you this book, written selflessly in his final months. Please read his book with an open heart, listening for God's calling, as Jeremy provides us with the most practical and exciting ways to share our faith. Don't put off for tomorrow what the Lord has called you to do today. This is an urgent call as those around us go through life knowing nothing of the eternal hope and grace on offer to them.

Let Jeremy share a thing or two about seeking out what the Lord will have each one of us do within our own unique circle of friends and contacts. May his practical advice make us all equally long for a similar relationship,

imbued with the same passion, energy, enthusiasm and love for the lost who surround us all.

Enjoy – and please seek to put into practice, in God’s strength, the fulfilling life of service that the author exemplified literally to the moment he went home.

**Richard Borgonon**

# INTRODUCTION

Most of the Christians I meet are discouraged when it comes to evangelism. They love Jesus and they'd love to be better at telling others how great he is. So what's the problem?

I think that many of us are afraid. We feel that society is very hostile and that everyone is against us. We think that people will be aggressive and unreceptive if we try to start a conversation about Christianity or Jesus. But, friends, this is simply not true: most people don't think about the church or the Christian faith from one month's end to the next.

In my experience, people are not generally hostile; they are indifferent. Empirical external research in the survey *Talking Jesus* backs up my claim.<sup>1</sup> It shows that most people have a Christian friend whom they like. The top traits in their Christian friends were that they were friendly (62%), caring (50%), good-humoured (33%) and generous (32%). The most negative traits were that 10% thought

the practising Christian they knew was narrow-minded or naive and 9% said they felt they were hypocritical. So, yes, maybe there is a tiny minority of people who are hostile – but God may reach them too. Look at what happened to Saul of Tarsus!<sup>2</sup>

Many people don't have the slightest clue about the Christian faith. They usually think it's about being good and doing their best. And lots of people know very little about the Bible. Some people know nothing at all. Zero! *Nada! Rien!* I can't tell you how many people have come up to me after I have spoken and say something like, 'Oh I didn't realise Jesus was a real person. I thought it was just a fairy story.' Or they'll say, 'That's a great story about Jesus. Did it really happen?' But by far the most common reaction I get is this: 'Why hasn't anyone told me about this before?' It's eerie how many times I have heard this. I hope you find this encouraging because it shows that God's Word has not lost its ancient power. People are often intrigued.

If you try reading a Gospel with a friend, you will find that the average person is really surprised by what they find in the Bible, even if they've had a good education. Usually, their understanding of what's in the Bible comes via Hollywood, or possibly from school assemblies. On the whole, it's not that our friends have considered Christ and rejected him – they simply don't know much about him. And they are rich soil for sowing the good seed of God's Word.

The world is in a mess right now. Ongoing worldwide challenges and crises at home have left people feeling worried about the future. Many are much more open to something new. Not necessarily Christianity, it can be anything – but there is a new openness.

But faced with this opportunity, many Christians are nervous and discouraged. Most of us are cowards and afraid of what people think of us. Isaiah 41:10 encourages us and promises us the presence of the Living God when we are afraid.

*So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

I love Jesus and you love Jesus – but we’re not always very good at explaining that to our friends and family. Sometimes it’s a relief to admit this. Many of us feel guilty. But feeling guilty is utterly counterproductive. Others don’t say very much for fear of getting it wrong. What we all need is help and encouragement. I want to encourage you and hopefully equip you to share the fantastic news of the gospel. It is uniquely wonderful news – and news that our friends and family desperately need to hear.

**Jeremy Marshall**

Last year, I came across a Facebook post on evangelism where Jeremy shared three questions that he loves asking people. Later that morning, and thanks to those three questions, I had the best conversation about the Lord and the gospel that I'd had in ages as I chatted to the plumber who was mending my kitchen tap. I reached out to Jeremy on Facebook and offered to help him put his insights into a book. To my delight, he responded with characteristic enthusiasm just a few hours later. I'm thanking God for Jeremy and praying that many of us will be encouraged by his bold yet gentle wisdom which I've found to be so respectful and liberating.

**Mary Davis**

# BUT I'M NOT AN EVANGELIST

Can you ride a bike? Or maybe drive a car? How did you start? Probably very slowly in an empty car park, with great fear and trepidation. Certainly not in the fast lane of the motorway. Learning to drive takes a lot of practice. We need plenty of encouragement along the way. But slowly, slowly, you keep improving until, after many years, it feels entirely natural. Sharing our faith is much the same.

## EASY AS PIE

Some people say that evangelism is easy. They say that you just need three things: you need to understand and believe the gospel, you need the Holy Spirit and you need somebody to tell. All Christians by definition have the first two – and unless you are on a desert island, you also have the third. Simple! No problem. No training needed.

Off you go. Go and evangelise the world. It's easy – like falling off a log.

But it's not easy, is it? I think that evangelism is almost uniquely difficult and we need all the help we can get. How can we tell it's so difficult? Because not many of us do it! How many of the highly trained graduates leaving Bible college in the UK go on to be evangelists? Almost none. How many of them go on to be Bible teachers or church workers? Almost all. And once they're pastors, how much of their time do they spend in personal evangelism? Relatively little.

Why? Precisely because it's so hard to evangelise! It's much easier for pastors to sit in their studies consulting commentaries and producing finely crafted sermons for their congregations (an important task) than going out to find uninterested non-Christians to talk to. It's easier to attend conferences discussing how to unpack the Bible than to look at a Bible passage with non-Christians who aren't at all convinced. And the organisational demands on church leaders are greater than ever before which makes it hard to prioritise evangelism.

What about the rest of us? We don't find evangelism very easy either. What makes it hard? Fear mainly. The fear that I can't do it. The fear of a negative reaction from our friends. The feeling that nobody is that interested anyway. The thought that there's no point in getting into a hostile conversation or risking a friendship for no reason. The worry that we might jeopardise the relationship by saying too much. For all those reasons, we



can't find it in us to cross what evangelist Rico Tice calls 'the painline'.<sup>3</sup>

## TAKE HEART

Training in the local church is, I believe, the best way to overcome fear. I'm not talking ivory towers and 16-week evangelism courses and I'm certainly not talking head knowledge. I'm thinking about teaching a child to ride a bike – a hand in the small of their back, encouraging them along.

Take heart from the disciples. They were truly terrible evangelists and pretty much everything they touched in this area turned to disaster. They turned away children who wanted to come to Christ. They wanted to unleash destruction on people who didn't accept them. They were fearful and lacking in faith time after time. When the soldiers came for Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, they ran away in blind panic. They constantly missed the point of what Jesus was saying. They argued about which of them was the greatest.<sup>4</sup>

And what was Jesus' reaction to their (and our) ineptitude and incompetence in evangelism and discipleship? Incredible patience and incredible training! Jesus models, encourages, teaches, rebukes and coaches them in evangelism. This is why they were 'good to go' in Acts – plus, of course, they were now armed with the power of the Holy Spirit. As J M Boice points out, every time we read in Acts about someone being filled with the

Holy Spirit, the next thing that happens is that they teach others about Christ.<sup>5</sup>

## **A WORD TO THE PASTORS**

Pastors, are you modelling evangelism to your church family? That's how the Lord led his disciples.<sup>6</sup> Are you helping your congregation overcome their enormous fears about evangelism by doing it yourself? Otherwise, there's a danger of being like generals in the First World War safely behind the lines in their chateaux, sending the poor old privates 'over the top'. Those of us who are pastors should be coaching, encouraging, supporting, helping, advising and mentoring those we serve and modelling how to share our faith. The local church is the lifeboat to reach the drowning world and the volunteer crew needs to be trained. Otherwise, they will remain safely but ineffectively tucked up in the harbour!

Dear leaders, do what you can. It's hard because many leaders are busy, tired and discouraged. Is there someone nearby who you could meet for a coffee and find out what they think about faith and the gospel? Could you find one friend and, after a while, invite them to look at a passage of the Bible with you? Might someone you know come to an event that your church is holding? Even if they decline (as they may well do!), you have started to be a model to your congregation. Tell your church about your failures. When we teach our children or a friend to drive and they keep stalling, we don't say, 'Why did you do that? I never stalled when I was learning.' More likely, we'll say, 'You