



40acts 2016 individual challenge



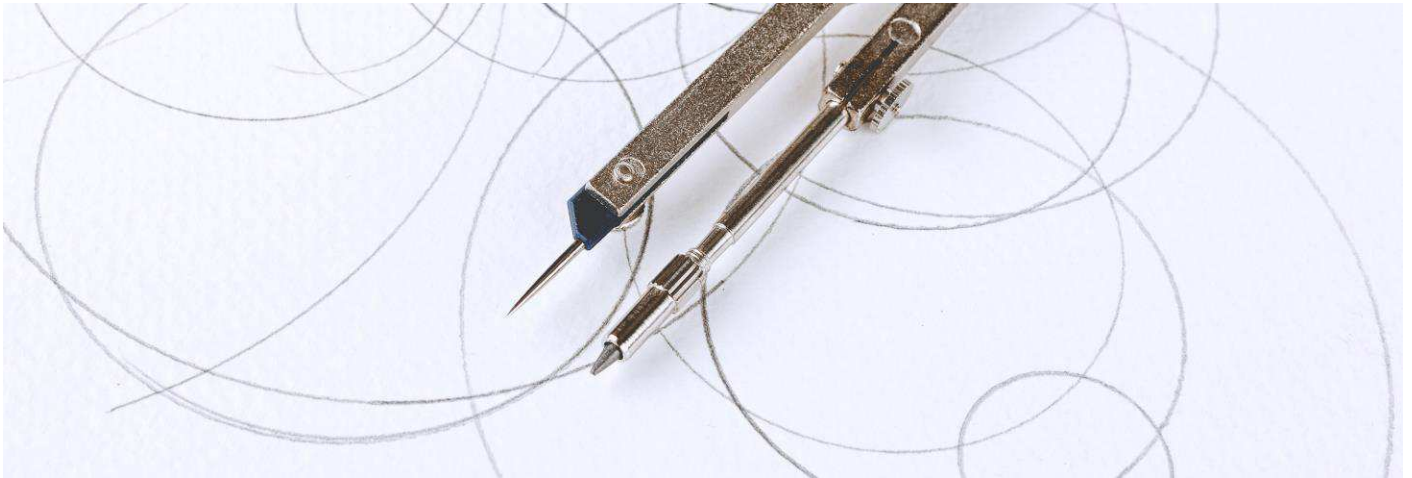
Lent 2016: February 10th until March 26th 2016

Follow the 40acts campaign at: www.40acts.org.uk



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transforming generosity

ACT 1: CIRCLES



All of us have circles: friends, family, immediate and wider communities – the list goes on. Today's act will prepare you for a generous Lent of connecting with and serving these circles of people.

Green: Find a notepad and pen – sketch out your social circles: friends, family, colleagues, sports teams, church. Notice how they might overlap, or be completely disconnected. Stretch yourself – include the circles of people that you **could** plug into a little better, with more effort. Stick your doodle up somewhere in your house, as a reminder for the next 40 days of the people God has placed into your life. They're your opportunity to practise generosity!

Amber: If you've got a little more time today, do the green option and then spend some time praying intentionally for these circles and how your 40acts experience might impact on them.

Red: Want to go all out today? Why not contact one of your circles – start a Facebook group, use WhatsApp or email, or pick up the phone – and let them know about 40acts? Encourage them to join you for the next 40 days, and see if you can find a group of people in your local community to make a generous impact wherever you are.

"He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:27-29)

As we start 40acts – whether this is your first time or your sixth – let's begin by thinking about the people in our lives... and the people **around** our lives.

I suspect there will be many loved ones in our inner circles who will feel warmly affirmed and cared for throughout the next 40 days. Beneficiaries of coffee, cake, impromptu meals and visits, hand-written notes and even active listening! But what about the people around us? Those you come into fleeting moments of contact with each week?

Your neighbour? The shop assistant who offers to pack your bags and counts out your change? The cleaner you pass each night as you leave work? The bin men? The receptionist in the doctor's surgery?

You know their face, and perhaps their name, but we rarely know their story.

The next forty days will be fun, rewarding, challenging and profoundly counter-cultural. Are you prepared to be counter-cultural? Jesus was. And 2,000 years later, Redemption is just as counter-cultural as it was at the time of the crucifixion. It is still free. It is still available in abundance and it is still available to everyone in – and around – our lives. So who are you connected to?

You already know the inner circle. They are your friends, family and colleagues. But just how deep are these relationships? And what about those in the wider circles around you? What might God have in store for them – through you – over the next forty days? And what might God have in store for you – through them? Our vision at Stewardship is to see the world encounter Jesus through the generosity of His church. It's what inspired us to create 40acts six years ago and what drives us to make this Lent the most generous yet.

You are here, as our [launch video](#) says - right where God needs you for the next 40 days of Lent.

Are you ready?

LINKS WE LOVE

- 1) Here's a few we made earlier: Take a look at the Stewardship team's circles & get some ideas for your own! [Have a peek!](#)
- 2) Now here's an idea...why not [write an email to your future self](#) with what you hope to achieve in the next 40 days - It might be a fun read when its delivered at the end of the challenge! (Remember to set the delivery date to 26th March 2016).

CONTRIBUTOR

MIKE O'NEILL - CEO, Stewardship
<http://www.stewardship.org.uk> @michaeljoneill

Mike is Chief Executive of Stewardship. He is passionate about simple acts of generosity and encouraging others to develop a generous lifestyle. Mike is married to Donna and they have three young children.



CHARITY

RZIM- <http://rzim.org>

Ravi Zacharias International Ministries is a global team of speakers with offices throughout the world in: the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Romania, Turkey, the Middle East, India, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Our primary mission is to reach and challenge those who shape the ideas of a culture with the credibility of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



ACT 2: NO SCRUBS



Alright. Some of us are clean freaks. Others prefer to live in organised chaos. One thing we can all agree on, though, is that our communities feel like nicer places when they're litter-free. It's better for the environment, and easier on the eye. Roll your sleeves up and make your world cleaner today.

Green: If you're not heading out today, or you only have half an hour, why not offer to do the chores for someone else in your house – a family member, or a house-mate perhaps. It might feel a bit awkward to ask your neighbour if they need anything cleaned up, but if you share a communal area, start there.

Amber: Grab some rubber gloves and a bin bag, and hit the streets for a community clean-up. If you want to get really fancy, you could even use separate bags for plastics and paper, and drop them off at your local recycling point when you're done.

Red: Remember that circle of friends you contacted yesterday? Well, today's your first chance to plan a get-together for a cause. Organise a cleaning party – perhaps you'll all get together to litter-pick, or clean off some graffiti, or repaint a community area that's looking a little tired (you might need permission from your local authority first). Put a date in the diary and start planning!

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Genesis 2:15 NIV)

It had been years since I'd seen one of these. Like a near-extinct bird, the lesser-spotted Christian bumper sticker caught my eye last summer. It was old and peeling around the edges, but the 'This is not my home, I'm just passing through' sticker was still intact. Some of us have been thinking about creation and the planet so long we have forgotten that there are those who still believe that planet earth is only a stopgap before the main performance on the stage of heaven.

Genesis 2:15 makes clear that from the start we were made to 'work, dress and care for creation'. So the plan was never that the bumper sticker would be true.

Earth isn't a stop-off; it is our home and – as shown in Revelation 21 – heaven is going to invade earth. There isn't going to be some mass evacuation, but heaven is coming to us.

Which means we need to roll up our sleeves because we have work to do. We need to be involved in working, dressing and caring for creation. It's not something to consume and then destroy, but to care for and restore. Our role is to be stewards of the great gift of earth, stone, water and air. We are to work to bring about a restored creation, a beautiful creation, a creation that reminds us of Eden.

Where is your Garden of Eden? What are your Eden streets called? Eden scrub ground and Eden car parks? We each have a Garden of Eden to love, treasure, clean, restore, dress, preserve and bring justice for. So let's not wait for someone else to do our job; let's get involved and live up to the first challenge in the Bible.

CONTRIBUTOR

CRIS ROGERS – Vicar at All Hallows Bow

<http://rabbirogers.tumblr.com> @Rabbirogers

Cris Rogers took on the leadership of a church that had shrunk to seven people and is situated in one of the toughest estates in London. Cris and his family moved to Tower Hamlets with the desire of restarting the church. Five years later, the church is 160 people strong. Cris also leads the worship, justice and community gathering called <http://www.thepursuit.co.uk>



CHARITY

EDEN NETWORK- <http://eden-network.org>

In a nutshell Eden's mandate is to go to the most challenging urban areas and share God's life-changing love in word and action. The really special thing about Eden is the way that our teams live long-term in the community, engaging creatively with the problems of those growing up there, making disciples, and radically affecting people's life-trajectories.



ACT 3: ROOTS



We can live somewhere for decades and never really put our roots down there. What does it look like to get more deeply rooted in our home community? Today's act will help you to explore ways of generously investing in your home town.

Green: Find an excuse to make a local connection today. Take a quick detour to a small local shop or, if the local supermarket is more your thing, take extra time at the checkout to connect with the person who serves you. Learn their name, ask them how they are, or simply thank them for their help. Try to remember their face for next time. In other words, plant a tiny seed of community today.

Amber: Chances are, somewhere in your community right now there is a voluntary group desperate for help. What a perfect way to get rooted! Find out about groups in your area – whether that's a parent/toddler group, a women's refuge, or a local football club. Give them a call today to see if you could volunteer your time, talent or finances to help them keep their doors open.

Red: The most revolutionary ideas are usually answers to a simple problem or a need. Take a long, hard look at your community, and see if you can find a gap to fill. It might be that your town has no social groups for the elderly, or that there's no youth club at your church. There might be no support group for cancer survivors, or a coffee morning might be needed for single parents. Whatever it might be, take steps today toward creating something to plug the need.

Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely. (1 Corinthians 13:12 NLT)

Recently, I looked at my US passport. Inside is my UK visa and I noticed some peculiar words written next to my status. They read, 'Migrant'. As a Minister who has come to serve in Scotland, I had never considered myself a migrant, but I do know what it feels like to leave a community and attempt to create a new one.

In our transition to Scotland, we have felt isolated, misjudged and misunderstood and have carried the weight of unfamiliarity. At times, we too have longed just to be 'known'. But to be known means we have to be in communion (from the same root word as 'community'). Our desire was to press into God for his communion, and lean on others for friendship within our new community.

As newly arrived Americans, we celebrated Thanksgiving Dinner last November and each of our children invited one or two friends from school. I then began the labour-intensive search for canned pumpkin (available at Tesco Online, for all you homesick Americans who like me were unable to find it) as we attempted to recreate the recipes our family holds so dear.

Traditionally we eat a turkey dinner and reread the story of the Mayflower, Squanto and the providential salvation of the pilgrims. This year was different from normal Thanksgivings, because of the people around the table. No longer family in America or Macy's Day parades, there were secondary and university students and the godparents of my daughter Ellie. Included were Dundonians, a Glaswegian, the godparents from Aberdeen, and a beautiful Nigerian girl (also a family of migrants).

We laughed, were loud, had great conversations and in our different ways revelled in the goodness of God. I was thankful, not only for Jesus Christ, but for those he has brought to our family. It was a joyful attempt at enhancing community. Even so, I am reminded that he is the one who creates our communities because he knows us, everything we need and our lives completely.

CONTRIBUTOR

NATHAN MCCONNELL – Pastor of Downfield Mains Parish Church
<http://www.downfieldmainschurch.com/welcome.htm>

Nathan, his wife Courtney, and their four daughters live in Dundee, where Nathan pastors Downfield Mains Parish Church and is writing his PhD dissertation, on Asylum Seeking and Christian Mission, at the University of Aberdeen.



CHARITY

THE ATTIC- <http://www.theattic.btck.co.uk>

The Attic is a local Dundee Charity that has worked with kids, young people and families in Dundee for over 17 years. We are now currently located in Kirkton which is one of the bigger housing estates in Dundee. We have a community base called 'The Attic Lounge' where we use it as a space to connect and build community with local families. We work from the premise that 'People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care'. Our heart is to see healthy whole families that have hope and a passion for life.



ACT 4: 999



Today's act is incredibly practical and simple: find a need and meet it. Now. Today.

Green: Put the word out in your household or your friendship group today – ask what needs people have right now. It might be simple: picking up some shopping, fixing a leaky tap, or a quick lift somewhere. They might just need a hug or a listening ear. Whatever small thing you can do for someone else today, do it.

Amber: 40acts is a community of over 100,000 people, and all of us have individual needs. Build community online today – find a fellow 40activist and see if they have a need you could meet.

Red: Phone up your local foodbank/ church/refuge/homeless shelter and find out what supplies they're running low on today. It might be food, bedding, craft supplies or loo rolls. Head to your local shops and stock up, then drop a care package round to them this afternoon.

'A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.' (John 13:34–35 NIV)

Last year was a tough one for my family. In January 2015 my wife, Niki, was diagnosed with breast cancer and our life was turned upside down. We experienced a whole series of challenges as she faced surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. There were occasions when we cried together and other moments when we laughed. Throughout it all we found great support from family and friends. We knew that many folk were supporting us in prayer, but what was also really touching was the small practical ways in which people showed they cared. Some people sent cards and flowers. Others provided meals. We appreciated the occasional invites to go out to dinner in friends' homes. Some people sent kind messages of encouragement to our daughter, who was living away at university in Nottingham.

We discovered that kindness is often an under-appreciated gift. And so-called 'random acts of kindness', no matter how small, are always appreciated because they show that someone cares. In John 13:34–35 Jesus says, 'A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'

Wherever there is a human in need, there is an opportunity for kindness and to make a difference. And sometimes it doesn't have to be a practical gift. During a difficult period of Niki's treatment one guy at church, who I didn't know very well, took me to one side and told me the story of his mum's struggle with cancer many years earlier. His empathy and kind words were really touching and reminded me that others understood our struggle.

So look out for those God-given opportunities to live out Jesus' command. There's no shortage of needs out there and today you might be the 'emergency service' someone needs.

LINKS WE LOVE

Read today's blog for a list of things to think twice about giving to your local foodbank... [Click here](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

LLOYD COOKE – Chief Executive of Saltbox
<http://www.saltbox.org.uk> @lloyd_cooke

Lloyd's passion is to see the 'sacred and secular' worlds work in closer partnership and he spends much time engaging with agencies in the public sector and the wider voluntary and community sectors. Lloyd is married to Niki and they have a daughter, Holly. He is a life-long Stoke City fan and believes that God answers prayer!



CHARITY

SALTBOX - <http://www.saltbox.org.uk>

Saltbox is actively involved in organising prayer, renewal and outreach initiatives, and is concerned to see people come to a real and personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as both Saviour and Lord. It also seeks to encourage greater discipleship within the wider Body of Christ and to motivate churches to take up the challenge of being "salt and light" in their communities. Pastors and leaders who believe, teach and live by the Word of God.



ACT 5: QUICHE?



What better way to start the week than with food? Some of us struggle to share a box of popcorn, whilst others happily over-feed everyone who crosses their threshold. Wherever you are on that spectrum, consider this: food has brought people together since the dawn of time. Use it as a means to build relationship today.

Green: Cook for your friends or family tonight, and try to make sure everyone sits together to eat at the same time. Don't rush the meal – enjoy each other's company.

Amber: Don't let them dine alone: the guy selling *The Big Issue*, the girl everyone ignores at college, a friend in hospital (because let's face it, hospital food is rarely fine dining...), or someone you know who is home alone today. Ask what their favourite treat is and take it along with you.

Red: Share food with a stranger today: you might pay for someone else's meal in a restaurant, or strike up a conversation with the person behind you in the queue. Whether you choose to give someone the gift of food anonymously or with a friendly hello, make a point of blessing someone you don't already know.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' (Matthew 26:26 NIV)

Everyone was squished together on the boat travelling down the Mekong in Laos. My husband was the only non-local. A woman opposite him got a leaf out of her pocket, carefully unwrapped it, and began to eat the rice rolled inside. She glanced at my husband and instantly recognised him: someone who has no food. She offered him a portion of her tiny packed lunch. Language and cultural barriers were smashed – albeit a bit awkwardly – as they chewed and nodded and smiled.

Across land and time, in Edinburgh in Scotland, some 15 years later, my daughter and I chat with a guy sitting in the drizzle on the pavement outside a well-known coffee chain outlet. Actually, he says, in answer to our question, he doesn't need a sandwich – someone's already in the queue buying him one! We laugh with him, pat his dog Basher, and get him a latte to go with his sarnie.

I love the fact that some of the most powerful conversations Jesus had were over a meal. He invited himself to lush banquets with the 'wrong kind of people' such as tax collectors – social outcasts of the time – and had beach barbecues of fish and bread with his dearest friends and followers.

In fact, what they ate wasn't really important. It was the conversations and human connections made over those meals that changed hearts and touched minds. It's no coincidence that Jesus spoke of himself as synonymous with food – essential to the human condition. When you share food with someone, you share something incredibly valuable and precious: yourself.

CONTRIBUTOR

JACKIE KAINES – Writer

<https://jaxkaines.wordpress.com> @jaxkaines

Jackie is a writer who loves hearing people's stories. She lives in England's northernmost town, Berwick-upon-Tweed, with her husband, one child who's yet to fly the nest, and a hen that sits on the nest but doesn't lay eggs.



CHARITY

BETHANY CHRISTIAN TRUST - <http://www.bethanychristiantrust.com>

Our services focus on preventing homelessness as well as alleviating the suffering of people who are homeless.

We provide tailored [visiting support](#) and [community development](#). We also support individuals and families to help them address long-standing issues including: [social isolation](#), unemployment, and drug addiction.



ACT 6: CUPBOARD LOVE



One key to a generous life is to be good stewards of what we have. Today's the day to say I'm bored of the hoard, and put the stuff we have to even better use. What do you have hidden away in cupboards that someone else could benefit from? Who might need/want it? Could you give it away or lend it out today?

Green: Start simple: gather together a few bags of stuff to take to your local charity shop. And not just the scraps, people – let's give some good stuff away too!

Amber: Go back to your circles – who might need what you've got? This may take a little more thought and effort (e.g. sorting out bundles of kids' clothes, digging out old tools, fixing an old bike ready for giving away, or wiping a laptop). Be intentional about what you give and to whom.

Red: Organise a clothes/book/jewellery/ tool swap. Contact the people in your circles to see who would be interested in helping out or hosting, and then find ways to spread the word. A great way to minimise clutter, meet someone else's need, and make new friends all at once.

If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers – most of which are never even seen – don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. (Matthew 6:30–33 The Message)

'Your living room is where you share the story of who you are,' wrote a certain well-known Swedish retailer. I wonder what your living space says about who you are. Looking across our lounge I see: a bed-settee (we love having people to stay), candles (remembering our babies who died in miscarriage), rugs (reducing fuel consumption as we care for God's world), mugs and strewn items of clothing (evidence of four young people in the house), a box of musical instruments (still there from our pre-school era!), and a returns package (our offspring are on first-name terms with Amit the delivery man).

This question could extend to your wardrobe: does it hold a select few items regularly worn, or is it clogged up with clothes tied to your aspirations for the future (different bodyshape/job)? I like William Morris's words, 'Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.' It's a great benchmark.

Jesus, in Matthew 6, says: 'What I am trying to do here is to get you to relax, not to be concerned with getting, so you can respond to God's giving' (The Message).

One key to a generous life is to be good stewards of what we have. Self-help books and TV shows sing the praises of decluttering. Giving things away benefits the people who receive, but it is also about freeing us up to respond to God's giving. As you consider the three challenges for today, I wonder what the things you give away say about who you are.

I had a couple of items to give to a homeless lady back in the summer, and God prompted me to also give her the bracelet from my wrist. This had no financial value, but was special as a tangible reminder of God with me when I was suffering from anxiety.

Sometimes we are called to give of our best, inspired by God who has given the most precious gift of all.

LINKS WE LOVE

Read today's blog to discover why giving your best is the best kind of giving...[Click here](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

ANNE BOOKLESS – Co-founder of A Rocha UK
[@TheBonkersMum](#)

Passionate about God, my husband and daughters, caring for planet earth, Southall, growing vegetables, pulling a perfect espresso and running down sand dunes. Co-founder of A Rocha UK; currently working as a teaching assistant, whilst involved in lay leadership at St John's Southall.



CHARITY

SERVANTS TO ASIA'S URBAN POOR-
<http://servantsasia.org/countries/united-kingdom/>

Servants is an international network of Christian communities living and working in the slums of Asia and the West, participating with the poor to bring hope and justice through Jesus Christ.



ACT 7: ALL EARS



It's tempting sometimes to make our conversations a tool for self-expression rather than genuine consideration for what the other person is saying. Remove interruptions and that natural inclination to queue up what you are going to say next, and actually listen to people.

Green: The first step might be simply to be disciplined in removing distractions. Make an effort to switch off devices or screens if you're around others today.

Amber: Dust off the telephone and call someone for a chinwag today. Except, do less chinwagging than them; make a point of asking questions about their life and be genuinely interested in their answers.

Red: If you have a little more time today, make a point of having a tea break with someone. It could be someone you haven't spent time with in a while, or the colleague you sit next to. Take half an hour to really listen to them – make mental notes of any prayer points and commit to pray for them this week. (Bonus points if you let them know you'll be praying for them!)

'Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.' (Luke 8:8 NIV)

I love exploring places and writing about them and during the last two years some editors have graciously published my work in their magazines. I have visited some amazing places – mainly in East Anglia – and have met some amazing people. If I stop to listen I hear some wonderful stories and God has a way of setting up divine appointments.

In a country lane an elderly lady straightened up from her weeding and chatted over the hedge. She told me about her home and how it was once a pub called 'The Bell'.

In Norwich market I met Malcolm Snelling, who has been selling fresh fish there for 55 years. He had some stories to tell! In a Norfolk town I even prayed with a retired butcher who had Parkinson's disease.

People in my village also love to talk about their memories. There's Tom, who saw a German plane crash in a field on his farm. Later he found the pilot's brown leather shoes (they fitted him perfectly). There's Margaret, with wispy white hair, who sang on stage with Val Doonican; and there's Eric, whose dad was a blacksmith and preacher who was buried with his Bible.

Closer to home, my mum told me how her grandfather trapped sparrows to feed his hungry family, and sometimes she talks of her beloved brother, killed by touching an unexploded bomb. There's a saying: when an old person dies a library burns to the ground. In fact, each of us has a unique story to tell if we're given the time to tell it.

Jesus always had time for people. From the trembling woman who cautiously touched his clothes to the father desperately worried about his child. Nowhere in the Gospels does he ever say, 'I'm a bit busy at the moment.' Whoever we are, whether young or old, we all long to be listened to. Let someone know that their words are valued today.

LINKS WE LOVE

Need some tips on becoming a better listener? Read *The 3 Essential Steps to Listening Well* [here](#).

CONTRIBUTOR

ANGIE JONES – Writer

Angie Jones is a recently retired teacher who simply loves to write. A follower of Jesus – grateful for the gift he's given her and keen to serve him.



CHARITY

OPEN DOORS- <http://www.opendoorsuk.org>

Open Doors supports persecuted Christians with Bibles, Christian materials, training, livelihood skills, advocacy - and in a whole host of other ways - so that they know they are not forgotten and can stand strong to serve their communities. So that they can give life.



ACT 8: DIRTY CASH



'Money is the root of all evil' – isn't it? Actually, no. It's in the love of money that evil finds a root. If financial giving has become a taboo subject for you, face it head on today. Give financially. Whether you've got pennies or millions, there is great joy and freedom in thoughtful and intentional giving. You might be a regular giver or never have given before: use today as a way to explore your capacity for financial generosity.

Green: If times are hard at the moment, spend today in thought. Challenge yourself to look honestly at your giving attitudes: do you view it as 'your money', or God's? How much would you like to be able to give, if you could? What causes would you give to? Pray about those things. If you find that you have a little loose change that accumulates each day, why not start a Giving Jar? When it's full, you can choose who to give it to.

Amber: If you don't give regularly, why not start by setting up one regular gift to your church or a cause that's on your heart? Review your budget or start one and check what proportion of your outgoings is devoted to giving. Make this a first step on a generous journey and commit to reviewing this on a regular basis.

Red: Grab your Bible, get out your budget, and make a list of your assets and annual giving. Pray, and allow God to guide your giving as the first financial decision. If you don't already have one, look into setting up a giving account. You can use it to support one charity/church/Christian worker or as many as you like. If you're already a giving account aficionado, why not make today the day that you increase a regular gift or set up a new recipient?

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:10 NIV)

'Are you a Christian? How can you do this and wear a cross on your lapel?'

'This' was me giving a talk to some medical staff about their financial planning some years ago. I was wearing a suit with a small gold cross tastefully pinned to my lapel. My questioner was a newly qualified Christian doctor for whom (by the turning up of her nose) money was as inevitable yet as distasteful as emptying bedpans.

Interestingly, the Bible in general and Jesus in particular have a lot to say about money – without the upturned nose. The book is full of wisdom about saving, investment, insurance, debt, budgeting and, of course, generosity.

The overwhelming message of scripture is God's grace to an undeserving creation. And the consistent application of that grace for us as we handle money is in generosity.

In fact, it is not the cash that is dirty; it is our love of cash. We are the recipients of so much grace and generosity from the Father, the least we can do is live generous lives for others. But when our love of money overcomes our generosity we can become resistant to God's grace. The love of money may be the root of all evil but generosity with money grows good fruit in our lives.

As we learn generosity and how to handle money as recipients of grace, we make better and better decisions about finances in all areas of life. Money is not dirty cash – something that we separate out from our faith. Following Jesus affects everything, including how we spend, invest, borrow and give.

So I turned to the doctor and tried to explain how there was no conflict for me in wearing a cross and talking about money. In the words of John Mumford, founder of Vineyard Churches in the UK, I described life as a Christian as being less like a grapefruit and more like a milkshake. Faith and money should not be tasted in separate segments but all whisked up together!

LINKS WE LOVE

- 1) Find out more about the Stewardship giving account [here!](#)
- 2) Watch today's video blogs to discover the principles behind financial generosity... [Watch now](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

DAVID FLOWERS – Leeds Vineyard/Flowers McEwan Ltd.
<http://www.leedsvineyard.org> @FlowersDavid

David Flowers is the pastor of Leeds Vineyard and a director of Flowers McEwan Ltd, a financial planning firm in Leeds. He is learning generosity despite being a Yorkshireman.



CHARITY

THE VINE - <http://www.thevineleeds.org>

The Vine is a charity that exists to serve the people of Leeds and the surrounding area. Our vision is a vibrant, thriving city where the people we work with fulfill their personal, social, economic and spiritual potential. As a charity we are committed to building bridges into our communities.

The Vine

ACT 9: DIAL UP



Today's act is all about activating the gift of prayer. Wait, what? How is prayer generous, you ask? When we pray, we spend time talking to a God who lives and moves and acts on our behalf and for the good of those who love him. It's generous because you're asking the creator of the universe to do a good thing for someone else. Powerful stuff, folks.

Green: Get your local newspaper or flick open your Facebook/Twitter newsfeed. Shoot up some quick arrow prayers for the stories you see listed there.

Amber: Schedule a regular time throughout the day to pray for newsfeeds or your circles. Write down prayer points or download an app to organise your prayer life (our favourite is Prayer Mate).

Red: Not prayed much recently, or ever? It can seem hard at first but today's the day to try. Jump over to TryPraying and see what it's all about. Already a seasoned Prayer Warrior? Why not share the gift of prayer with others today? Order some books from TryPraying to share with others, in person or by leaving them in public places.

This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. (Acts 19:10 NIV)

I had been a decent self-respecting agnostic for some time. I had absorbed the misinformation that there were no real answers to the honest questions a young person would ask: Is there any evidence for God's existence? Why is there all this suffering? Etc. But when studying maths at university, I met a Christian who was confident of his faith and was willing to meet and let me argue the issues. To my great surprise I discovered there were answers and gradually learned that I, the agnostic, was the one without the evidence and he, the Christian, was basing his faith on evidence. After some months I realised I needed to respond.

It was probably the most honest prayer I had prayed, and in a totally unreligious setting – the second floor of the West Wing of Birmingham University library with maths books in front of me: 'God if you are there, and I'm not sure you are, but if you are I want to know you.' Two weeks later I knew he was! I had reached a point of trusting God with my whole life, and then one morning I was alone in my room and found myself overwhelmed with a sense of peace, joy and excitement all rolled together into one four-hour experience. I knew that Jesus was alive and was at work in my life from then on.

Don't you find it remarkable that God is interested in us and wants us to have honest conversation with him? We don't need any special skills or high-level clearance to get in contact with him. In fact there are no barriers (except those we put up ourselves). Wherever we are, whatever we're doing, day or night, we can talk. So how about praying an honest prayer just now before you stop reading this? You could tell God what is important to you that you are concerned about. You could say something you are grateful for. You could ... well, just be honest. Here's some space to do it ...

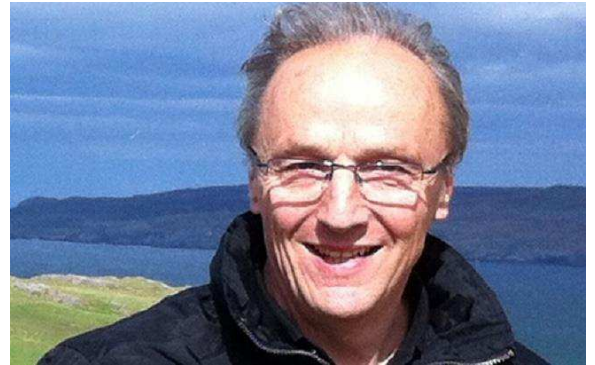
Praying. Millions of people in the UK do it: believers, sceptics, grannies, young people, people who are desperate and people who are not. And God responds.

And here's a thought: who could you offer the gift of prayer to today?

CONTRIBUTOR

DAVID HILL – trypraying
<http://www.trypraying.org>

David Hill lives in Edinburgh and is married to Claire. They have four adult children. He has worked as an entrepreneur encouraging evangelism, prayer and unity across churches. He is currently directing the trypraying initiative. He loves a good car journey with loud music.



CHARITY

THERE IS HOPE - <http://www.thereishope.co.uk>

trypraying is for those who don't do church, it's an invitation to begin talking to God, a website, a smart phone app and a booklet.



ACT 10: SPUR ON



Our words have immense capacity for good. When we use them encouragingly, generously, and genuinely, there are few things that have more power. A timely word can change the course of someone's day, or even someone's life. Use words wisely.

Green: Grab a stack of Post-it notes or sticky labels, and write down some one-line encouragements. Then stick them up around your house, your gym, your work or your town for other people to find.

Amber: For some people it's really hard to actually say nice things. Writing nice things is simple, perhaps even texting nice things – but saying nice things? That takes a bit of courage. So today, try to give three verbal encouragements. Make them genuine and appropriate.

Red: Grab some chalk and head for the streets. Find a patch of pavement and get creative: write a public message of encouragement for everyone to see. It's legal (it washes off in the rain!), and brightens everyone's day. A great act to do with kids, too!

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. (Proverbs 25:11 ESV)

'A word fitly spoken,' says Proverbs 25:11, 'is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.' Other versions have 'golden apples in a silver basket' or 'on a silver tray'. A shining, striking image that portrays the effect of good words: they create a relationship and invite more words to be echoed in reply, like the light between two beautiful reflective surfaces. Generous words given to us become words that can flow out generously to others.

We can all think of golden apples that have been handed to us. Many of mine came from a student teacher who, although he only spent one term working in the school where I was a pupil, is one of the adults I remember most fondly. I was dealing with that common 13-year-old's problem of feeling completely invisible, but this teacher never walked past without a quick, encouraging word or two. He could see me! Later, he wrote in my yearbook two words: 'Never change.' Two golden apples for a confused, insecure teenager – treasured for years.

Jesus, too, is a great giver of golden apples. 'You are the salt of the earth,' he told the gaggle of uncertain fishermen who followed him around; 'you are the light of the world' (Matthew 5:13–14 NIV). Later, as he was about to leave them, he told the same group of people that he called them his friends, that he had chosen them to bear fruit, and that they should love one another (John 15:14–17).

Jesus' generous words are meant for those of us who follow him today, too. If we let them take root in us, they will eventually produce the fruit that he promises, and then we'll give it to someone who needs it: golden apples, on a silver tray.

CONTRIBUTOR

AMY ROBINSON – Writer

<https://www.amystoryteller.com> @Ameandme

Amy Robinson is a writer, performance storyteller and ventriloquist, and benefice children's worker for four Suffolk church communities. She has published three books with Kevin Mayhew, writes scripts and resources for www.GenR8.org and blogs a bit. She lives in a rectory with the rector, two children and lots of puppets.

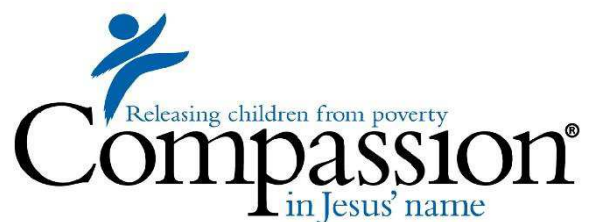


CHARITY

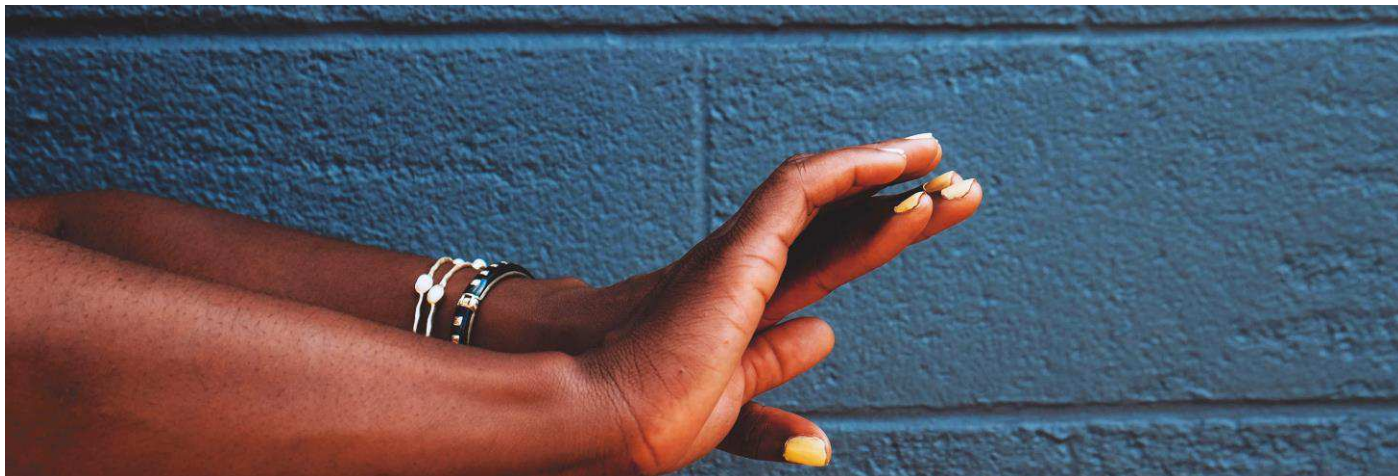
COMPASSION UK - <https://www.compassionuk.org>

Compassion is one of the world's leading child development and child advocacy organisations.

Our approach is a personal one. Working with the local church, we link a child living in poverty with a loving sponsor, like you. Each sponsor gives their child access to education, health checks, plus the opportunity to hear about Jesus. There's no quick fix to global poverty, but through our programmes, children's lives are being changed. We're impacting families, communities and whole nations.



ACT 11: L.O.V.E



Love means a lot of different things to different people. It might look like hanging up the bathroom towels after you use them, instead of leaving them on the floor. It might look like a special surprise. It might look like a day spent in someone's company. It might just be a pat on the back and a smile. But each of us is built to give and receive love. It's a basic need. So give it to someone today.

Only one option: Show love to someone today. Consider two things before you do that, though: (1) In what ways does that person experience love the most? Do they prefer acts of service, gifts, quality time? (2) What kind of love do you most struggle to express? Have a think about the ways you might challenge yourself to step outside your comfort zone and love someone the way **they** need to be loved today.

God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son. (John 3:16 NCV)

Without oxygen and food and water, we can't survive. But there's something else. Something just as crucial to our survival.

In one orphanage, it was discovered the babies were not thriving. And, even though they were being fed properly, some were dying. Researchers finally uncovered the reason. These babies were not being held or touched. They were not being loved.

Without love a baby will not survive. And neither will we.

Love, like oxygen, is vital.

We use the word LOVE about all kinds of things – we love our spouse. Or a kitten. Or a holiday by the sea. Or a film. Or a cup of tea. Or a chocolate biscuit.

We use the word lightly. What is love? Hasn't it got it to be more than that...?

I wrote this entry in my devotional:[1]

What is love? Is it a feeling in your heart?

The Bible says Love is much more: it is patient and kind, never bears a grudge, doesn't demand its own way, always wants the best for someone else, never puts itself first, never gets jealous, isn't proud, doesn't boast, isn't rude, always hopes, never stops.

Oh dear, that's quite a list. Who can love like that?

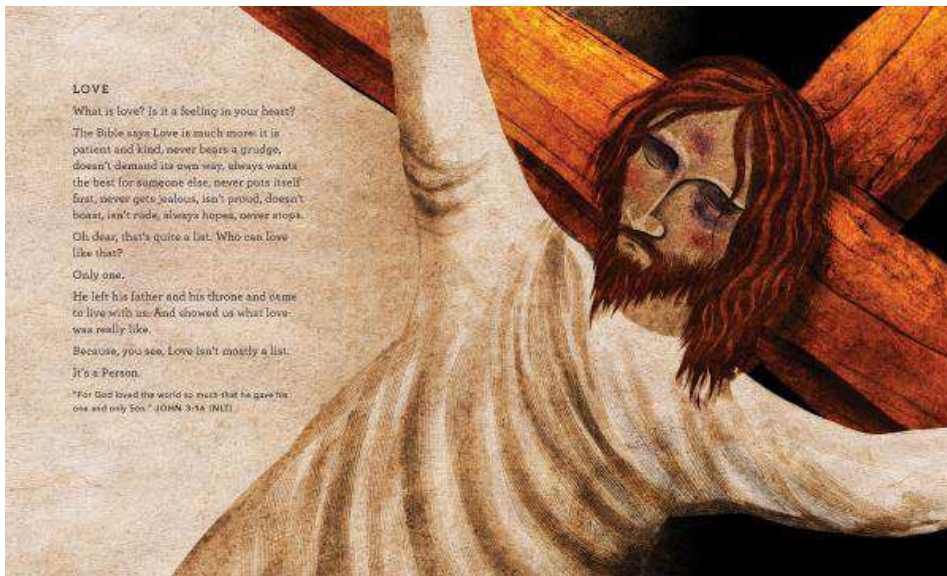
Only one.

He left his father and his throne and came to live with us. And showed us what love was really like.

Because, you see, Love isn't mostly a list.

It's a Person.

May the One whose name is Love, the One who made us from love, to love, may he fill our hearts and our souls and our minds today. And may we be open doors through which He may love the world.



[1] From [Thoughts to Make Your Heart Sing](#) by Sally Lloyd-Jones, Copyright © 2012. Used by permission, all rights reserved. www.sallylloyd-jones.com

LINKS WE LOVE

The facets of generosity: why our love languages matter. Today's blog looks at love languages - [what's yours?](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

SALLY LLOYD-JONES – Author

<http://www.sallylloyd-jones.com> @sallylloydjones

Sally Lloyd-Jones is a *New York Times* bestselling author whose books include: [Thoughts to Make Your Heart Sing](#), a children's devotional which won the ECPA Christian Book of the Year award in adult inspiration, and [The Jesus Storybook Bible](#), now available in a format for all ages with a new design and title, [The Story of God's Love for You](#). Sally also has a new picture book coming out on 8 March, [Skip to the Loo, My Darling! A Potty Book](#), illustrated by Anita Jeram, illustrator of *Guess How Much I Love You*.



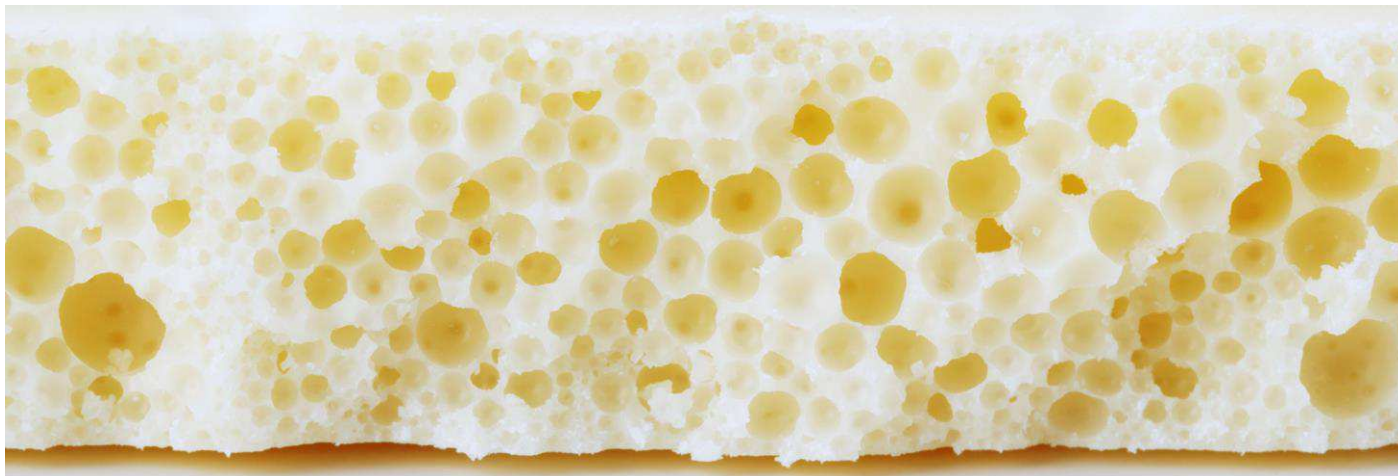
CHARITY

BLOOD:WATER - <http://www.bloodwater.org>

We are a community, motivated by the love of Christ, to create lasting change in Africa. We give our lives to serve local leaders and join them in the fight to end the HIV/AIDS and water crises.



ACT 12: CHOCOLATE TUESDAY



Chocolate. Everywhere.

Green: Slip a bar of chocolate into someone's bag with a note saying '#40acts'. Or leave a bar or two in your local library, on a park bench or on the train.

Amber: Chocolate everyone in your department/road/ toddler group – or wherever you happen to be going today.

Red: Clear the confectionary aisles in your local supermarket and get out onto the streets, handing out free treats for all. Or you could do what some challengers did last year and announce free chocolate on your commute home!

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22–23 ESV)

Back in 2013 I had a little idea. I called my sister and told her I wanted to buy 100 Easter eggs and give them away – would she like to come? She was so excited, especially as we rode up and down the supermarket aisles filling the trolley with some of her favourites! That weekend, we gathered a few more friends and headed into the local community – what fun!

As we handed out the Easter eggs, we found people started to smile, laugh, talk and respond. Conversation flowed and I caught a glimpse of how an act of kindness could be a catalyst for building new relationships and forming stronger communities. That day sharethemiracle was born, and last Easter teams across the UK reached out to over 15,000 people in their communities, often with chocolate Easter eggs and invitations.

It's amazing how well people respond to free chocolate. It's something everyone can get involved in and a great conversation starter. I can genuinely say from my own experience that you'll quickly see that, far from being sceptical, people start to respond with a wonderful openness that will inspire you! In one exchange, a woman was near to tears as she accepted an egg. Her husband was very unwell in hospital and the egg we gave her just happened to be his favourite. In another, some schoolchildren were handing out eggs, and as one lady accepted an egg she told them that the last time she'd seen a member of their school they were trying to knock down her garden fence! She saw this as a real act of reconciliation.

We celebrate the greatest act of kindness at Easter, so why not grab the challenge, reach out to your community and prepare to be amazed by what happens!

CONTRIBUTOR

DAN USHER – Share the Miracle

<http://www.sharethemiracle.org/get-involved/churches/>
[@ShareMiracleUK](#)

Dan Usher lives in Surrey and is passionate about family, faith and music. With a background in the technology sector and a passion for entrepreneurship, Dan loves to meet new people and connect with those with similar passions.



CHARITY

URBAN SAINTS - <http://www.urbansaints.org/region/urban-saints>

Since 1906 Urban Saints (formerly known as Crusaders) has been reaching out to children and young people with the good news of Jesus Christ. We are passionate about working with children and young people who have no church connection, helping them to realise their full God-given potential as they journey from childhood to adulthood.



BY APPOINTMENT TO THE KING OF KINGS
SERVING YOUNG PEOPLE
FOR OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS

URBAN SAINTS

ACT 13: SECOND FIDDLE



For some of us, relinquishing control and sacrificing our own agendas or plans is difficult. It means that (a) we don't get our own way and (b) we have to trust someone else or put them first. But practising playing second fiddle sometimes is important and generous: it shows the other person that you recognise their worth.

Green: There are plenty of small ways to put others first. Perhaps hold the door open for more people than necessary. Give up your seat on public transport. Let someone else go ahead of you in the queue. Let someone else choose the TV channel.

Amber: Don't haggle – hand over. Consider a situation you're in at the moment with a friend or family member where you might be at loggerheads over something. It could be anything from choosing a new paint colour for the lounge to disagreeing with your best friend over what to do at the weekend. Normally you'd find a happy medium – a compromise. Today though, let that person's wishes and opinions trump yours. Let them know that you value their thoughts as much as your own.

Red: Plan a perfect day out for someone. Pick activities that they would love – not the things that you would love to do with them. You might hate hiking, clothes shopping, fishing or the cinema – but if that's their thing, go for it. Joyfully. Without counting brownie points...

Love from the centre of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. (Romans 12:10 The Message)

Fifteen years ago my husband and I visited Bangladesh with World Vision to meet our 11-year-old sponsor child in one of the world's worst slums, on the edge of Dhaka. We were excited to meet her and confident about our role, which was to gather facts for a book that might encourage people to give and thereby improve conditions for some of the world's forgotten.

We loved the fact that to Jesus there were no unimportant people. However exhausted, however pressured by those in authority, he set aside his own needs to concentrate on whoever stood in front of him, showing respect and love for the marginalised, the children, the women and those who had physical problems which literally placed them out of bounds.

His example had been the solid ground on which we had tried to live our lives and perhaps we saw visiting Shanaj and her family as an opportunity to demonstrate this.

We had not anticipated a lesson in what that really means.

I had taken gifts, colourfully wrapped, and we had both imagined handing them over to Shanaj and her brother and sister. Pictured their eyes shining as they excitedly tore off the paper.

It wasn't like that. After politely thanking me they calmly placed the unwrapped parcels behind them, and returned their attention to us.

I panicked. Had I broken some cultural rule? Did they not like the colour of the wrapping paper? Oh no, our translator explained, they will be wanting more than anything to open their presents, but they have been taught to value the giver more than the gift.

So here we had it. Three children, the poorest of the poor, setting aside their own agenda to show respect and love to us because at that moment they wanted to demonstrate that we were the most important people in their world.

CONTRIBUTOR

BRIDGET PLASS – Writer and Speaker

Bridget is a writer and speaker who for many years has worked alongside her husband Adrian, speaking in just about every venue you can think of, and some you can't! For the last six years she has been a member of Scargill House community in North Yorkshire, now living off-site but still closely involved.



CHARITY

WORLD VISION - <http://www.worldvision.org.uk>

World Vision improves the lives of the world's poorest children by working closely with communities to tackle the root causes of poverty.



ACT 14: ACKNOWLEDGE



Your grandma, your English teacher, your next-door neighbour from all those years ago... All of us know someone who influenced or impacted on our lives for the better. Today is about acknowledging their generosity, and returning the favour.

Green: If you've only got a few minutes today, reconnect with your blast from the past somehow. You might find them on Facebook, or you might have their contact details in an old address book somewhere. However you choose to do it, simply spend five minutes saying hello and finding out how they are these days.

Amber: Assuming you've made initial contact and you've got a little more time, perhaps you could find a way to say thank you. Feel free to write it down in a letter – it might be a nice memento for the other person to keep.

Red: If you could repay the favour today, how would you do it? Perhaps that person used their skills, networks or resources to help you to get ahead. How could you do the same for them today? Make a plan and put it into action today.

Let each one of us make it a practice to please (make happy) his neighbour for his good and for his true welfare, to edify him (to strengthen him and build him up spiritually). (Romans 15:2 AMPC)

It would be hard for me to get across how persistently problematic I was as a child to those who were responsible for my development in life. Since having my own kids, I have discovered a new level of respect for my parents, but I have to admit my teachers had a lot to put up with too. I'm sure many of them must have wondered what they'd done to deserve a John Keskeys in their class and even questioned their vocation. I had that incredible ability to hijack each class, much to the dismay of my teachers. In my drive to squeeze all the fun I could out of each day, I simply did not understand the word 'consequences'. This was my school life and the root of my teachers' daily vexation until I left – never to return – or so I thought.

I became a Christian at 15 after an encounter with God, and after doing a lot of other reconstructive work in me God eventually revealed his agenda for me and the teachers I'd tormented for so many years.

'I want you to go back to visit all of your teachers and say sorry for the way you treated them.' Oh dear. I could feel the sense of embarrassment already at the thought of going back to my primary school aged 17.

I remember Mrs Badger's face when I walked through the door of the headmistress's office. I have tears in my eyes as I recall the moment she looked up and without introduction she said, 'Hello John.' I hadn't seen her in 10 years.

The five minutes in her office 'repenting' went some way to repairing the damage I'd caused. Much more than that, my words told a bigger story – that the huge investment of time and effort she'd made in me had eventually paid off, even if it had taken a decade to get there. It felt more like obedience than generosity but Mrs Badger graciously received the 'thank you' wrapped up in a big sorry.

Make today an opportunity to acknowledge the generosity of those who have spent themselves investing in us.

LINKS WE LOVE

Rich Stanton shares a powerful story of redemption and generosity on [today's blog](#).

CONTRIBUTOR

JOHN KESKEYS – Sales & Marketing Manager, Stewardship
<https://www.stewardship.org.uk> @Jakesk2

John is married to a wonderful wife/nurse called Rebecca who puts up well with his slightly crazy Geordie ways, and they have been blessed with a David (8) and an Esther (6) who keep them both busy, challenged and inspired. Apart from camping, the outdoors and a love of all things bushcraft, John is still searching for local mountains but after 20 years living in Essex that hope is waning. He has worked at Stewardship for 18 months as Sales & Marketing Manager.



CHARITY

XLP - <http://www.xlp.org.uk>

XLP is about creating positive futures for young people growing up on deprived inner city estates, struggling daily with issues such as family breakdown, poverty, unemployment and educational failure, and living in areas that experience high levels of anti-social behaviour, criminality and gang activity. Every year XLP helps thousands of them recognise their full potential. We believe positive, consistent relationships can restore a young person's trust in people, nurture the belief that things can change and encourage them to set positive goals and work hard to achieve them.



ACT 15: MORE



It's easy to do the bare minimum, isn't it? Or even to simply get the job done. Our time is precious, after all, and our energy is limited. But there's a universal secret to delighting others: unexpected and undeserved abundance. Going above and beyond. Putting in 110%. Walking the extra mile. Pick your metaphor and dive right in today.

Green: If you're at home today, or can't find a way to do this act for someone else, simply spend a bit more time than usual in prayer. It'll only ever be time and effort spent well!

Amber: Find small ways to delight someone today. If someone asks for a cup of tea, give them biscuits too. If you are in a restaurant, leave an extra-generous tip or a glowing review online. Forget the cost and find your joy in the smile on someone else's face.

Red: Go bonkers. Think of the most outlandish, extravagant act of generosity you could feasibly do today wherever you are, and then go for it. You might bake cookies not only for your neighbour but for everyone on your street. You might drive half an hour in the opposite direction to where you need to go, just to give someone a lift home. You might offer to make the coffee for your team – not just once but for the whole day. Whatever you choose, do it cheerfully.

I know how to get along and live humbly [in difficult times], and I also know how to enjoy abundance and live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret [of facing life], whether well-fed or going hungry, whether having an abundance or being in need. I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens and empowers me [to fulfil His purpose – I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.] (Philippians 4:12–13 AMP)

Going the extra mile is not just a phrase in our household. It is a lifestyle. Based on Philippians 4:12–13, we have always raised our daughters with the knowledge and belief that they are able to do above and beyond what they think they are physically capable of, because of the God that we serve. In this way, going the extra mile isn't extraordinary; it becomes the norm.

So how does going the extra mile impact on our lives?

Our family are big givers but, just as we give to and invest in others, God has poured his abundant blessing into us, often from the most unexpected of sources!

Our daughters both mentor and speak into the lives of young people, sharing personal struggles to reassure them that 'pastor's kids' live a normal life too! They share about the challenges they have met as Christian teens (now adults) in a world that doesn't particularly encourage faith! Kofi and I share our personal ups and downs regularly from the pulpit, to show what God has done in our own lives to encourage others. This would not be possible through our own strength. For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfil your purpose] for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13 AMP)

For our family 'going the extra mile' means being real and shining the spotlight on the less than perfect parts of ourselves to encourage and strengthen others. In being available to be used by God and trusting him wholly, our openness and vulnerability has always been met with love and appreciation. So step out of your comfort zone; lean entirely on your faith and trust God to have the rest.

LINKS WE LOVE

Watch today's video blog to hear a story of [OTT generosity in action!](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

KOFI AND JAYNE BANFUL – Praise Christian Centre
<http://www.praisechristiancentreondon.org.uk> @PCCLondon

Kofi Banful is the Senior Pastor of Praise Christian Centre in North West London. His anointed teaching ministry is founded on Hosea 4:6a, 'My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge', a word God impressed upon his heart. He has developed his God-given gift for unravelling the word of God with extraordinary clarity. He does this in a dynamic, humorous and practical manner, which leaves an indelible impression whenever he ministers.



Jayne Banful is an anointed Bible Teacher, Professional Counsellor, Life Coach and an Associate Pastor of Praise Christian Centre. Her ministry is described as 'one sent to heal the broken-hearted and to speak a word in season to those that are weary'. She uses her personal experiences of how God has set her free from emotional wounds to illustrate her teaching.

They have two daughters, Siobhan and Sinead.

CHARITY

MERCY - <http://www.mercyuk.org>

Mercy UK exists to provide opportunities for women to experience God's unconditional love, forgiveness and life-transforming power in partnership with her local church. We look to address the root causes of issues women face, rather than merely medicating the symptoms or addressing the external behaviour. We seek to help break the cycle of destruction by helping others find freedom and restoration through the services we provide. This in turn will positively affect the generation they will parent and drastically reduce the chances of history repeating itself.



*Restoring Hope.
Transforming Lives.*

ACT 16: ADOPT



Adoption is a central concept in the Christian faith. The Bible says we've been adopted into God's family and taken under his wing. With that in mind, how could you extend that generosity to others who may lack family, friends, role models or guidance?

Green: Count how many friends (not acquaintances, but actual friends) you have outside your age-group. It's easy to live in a silo and expect that there's nothing to learn from people who are older or younger than us. Be challenged today to make friends with someone from another generation.

Amber: Think about short-term ways you can offer to care for others. You might babysit for your neighbour or for a family at church; you might offer to look after or regularly visit an elderly person to give their loved ones some respite from carer duties.

Red: Think longer-term. How might this act be challenging your heart today? Perhaps you've wanted to become a mentor for a while, but never got around to signing up. Maybe adoption or fostering is something you've felt called to for a while, but you've felt apprehensive about taking the first steps. Well, make those moves today. Let today become the catalyst for something that changes both your life and the lives you touch.

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13: 3–7 NIV)

'How can a creepy show like The Moomins be on children's TV?'

Growing up in the 1980s, that was one of two questions constantly on my mind.

The other question was 'Am I adopted?'

Ok, you may not have asked yourself about the Moomins, but wondering if you are adopted has to be one of those things that's crossed everyone's mind at some point in their life.

When I was 13 my dad passed away and it hit home that if anything were to happen to my mum, adoption could become a reality for me. It also made me realise that not only was I blessed with a strong family unit but I was part of a church where someone was always looking out for me.

At the time, I thought my church was full of weirdos and life's rich tapestry was there in full colour but, like family, they were my weirdos and the reality is that none of us are 'normal' – not even you or me.

There was Edith with her speaking clock in a carrier bag that would go off at the same time every week, Harry who had no concept of personal space, and the 'hanky man' who danced and waved his handkerchief during worship times – the unique blend of humanity that's in every church in one way or another (if you can't think of anyone odd, then you're probably that person!).

But each of them looked out for me and expressed the kind of genuine love that the Bible talks about in a way that changed my life. They all took time to ask how I was, encourage me or simply talk to me when it wasn't comfortable for them to do so. That is what kept me in my faith. Not theology, not judgement, not the Sunday service, but being shown a love that is talked about in 1 Corinthians 13 – a love that adopts.

I have two nephews who are adopted and I appreciate that it's a big commitment that not all of us are cut out for, but we can all play our part. Whether that's taking a neighbour under our wing, helping someone who is homeless, visiting someone who is lonely, speaking to a young person at church or coaching a child struggling at school. Imagine the impact it would have on someone who has no support around them.

That is the kind of adopting we can all do.

LINKS WE LOVE

Watch the incredibly inspirational story of Iain and his family, on their journey of fostering and adoption...[watch here](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

PAUL CHENERY – TLG

<http://www.tlg.org.uk>

Paul grew up in the North East of England and now lives in Bradford. He is married to Louise and is still amazed he managed to persuade her to move up from Surrey to marry him – result. Paul is Head of Fundraising and Impact for TLG The Education Charity. TLG brings a hope and a future to children in crisis. TLG's vision is to develop a network of church-based centres and volunteers to help children and families across the UK. Paul has a business background and fundraising experience that he tries to put to good use as 'Jack of all trades and master of none'. He likes the usual sport stuff, once finished 5th on The Weakest Link and is now very good at writing in the third person.



CHARITY

TLG - <http://www.tlg.org.uk>

TLG is a Christian charity that believes that education is a basic human right. We know that it can help to create opportunity and to live life with purpose. TLG aims to provide a second chance to all children and young people who have been excluded from school or who are at a crisis point in their education and provide that opportunity.



ACT 17: PROPOSE



Ladies! Today's the day to pop the question if you're so inclined! (KIDDING! But do let us know if there is a 40acts wedding – that would be a first!) Today is a leap year, so technically you have been given the gift of extra time. What do you propose to do with it? How might you use today for someone else's benefit?

Only one option: Today you can choose how to be generous: you have no restrictions on how to spend this extra time. You might want to catch up on any acts you missed so far, repeat any that you liked, or make up your own! Share what you propose to do with your 40acts online community to help those that might be stuck with what to do.

'But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing' (Matthew 6:3) and 'Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you' (Matthew 5:42 NIV).

'You Christians only do good because it makes you feel good,' says every undergrad who's just discovered Nietzsche. And they're generally wrong. Most of the time, if you're British, giving makes you feel faintly embarrassed and massively awkward.

Dear Lord, please don't let them think that I think I'm better than them because I'm doing this. I should look him in the eye. Show that I truly see him. But not in a poverty tourism way. Aaaa!

I know. Cry me a river. But whether it's giving to a person sleeping rough (with its practical, ethical and social complexity) or an organisation (with the attendant guilt for spending more on coffee than on charity), giving can easily feel horrific.

This may feel counter-intuitive (and, hey, on a leap day that's OK), but I say let's revel in the discomfort of giving. On this leap day, this strange gift of a day, why not take advantage of the discomfort and let it spur us to do something different from what we usually do – what we're usually comfortable with, in terms of giving?

If you are a spontaneous, random act of kindness and personal touch giver, try something different today. Set up a boring direct debit to a charity that will never send you a sponsor letter. Better still, give to an institution so large there is no danger of them making you feel special. Support administration costs that make mission possible or the infrastructure that pulls nations from poverty. Think about Matthew 6:3 and separate your giving from what works best for you.

If you are an organised, researched, systematised giver, today's a good day for you to break out too. Just give, without thinking. Without comforting control and predictability. Decide today that if someone asks, you'll give, Matthew 5:42 style.

Don't argue. Just try it. It's a special day.

CONTRIBUTOR

JONTY LANGLEY – Writer

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Jonty Langley is a writer and journalist with an interest in justice, faith and the arts. He also works for one of Britain's oldest Christian mission agencies.



CHARITY

BMS WORLD MISSION - <http://www.bmsworldmission.org>

BMS World Mission is a Christian mission organisation, working in around 35 countries on four continents.

BMS workers and partners strive every day to make Jesus known and share the full life he brings. From legal work to surgery, food projects to education, BMS works with local partners, providing help where it is most needed, among the most marginalised and least evangelised people in the world.



ACT 18: FAIR ENOUGH



Fairtrade Fortnight started yesterday. One way we can live generously every day is by making the small changes in our shopping habits which have a huge impact.

Green: If you can't support Fairtrade with your wallet, use your voice instead. Read up about the movement, and tell someone why it's a cause worth supporting.

Amber: Buy Fairtrade today when you stop at the shops for that drink or snack. Want to kick it up a notch? Buy two of whatever you're getting, and give one to a friend.

Red: Ever thought about a Fairtrade wardrobe? It might be more costly, but ask yourself: if that high street store can make a profit on those £5 shoes, how much really reaches the factory worker paid to make them?

'Who is my neighbour?' (Luke 10:29)

Confession time: my great weakness is for chocolate. It's not very Lenten, but I seriously love high-quality dark cocoa products. That's why it was a shock to learn that in cocoa-growing regions fewer and fewer young people are growing cocoa, as the benefits are so poor (see <http://goodbye.fairtrade.org.uk>). There is a solution, however.

Two years ago I visited a cacao plantation in Ghana where A Rocha works to ensure the raw ingredients for chocolate are produced in a way that helps local communities have a good income and also protects the environment for the long term. Fair Trade really does make a difference! Buying only Fair Trade chocolate ensures a decent wage for small-scale local farmers, enabling them to thrive, their farms to be sustainable, and our sweet-toothed habit to actually do somebody some good.

It was chocolate and coffee that first got me into Fair Trade back in my student days, but as I've seen more of how our globalised world works, I've learned that the issues go beyond our taste for hot drinks. When one of my best friends got married he and his fiancée – despite being on low incomes – decided their wedding rings would be from Fair Trade gold. How could they pledge their love if the symbol at the heart of their marriage was mined with suffering and injustice?

Clothing, footballs, wine and bananas, as well as chocolate and coffee: buying Fair Trade is pretty easy for us in the UK. Yet it's also a clear way of saying 'You are my neighbour' to people we may never meet but who are created in God's image and deserve to experience God's love. Next time you're tempted to buy the cheapest instead of paying a small premium for Fair Trade, just ask yourself, 'Who is my neighbour?'

CONTRIBUTOR

DAVE BOOKLESS – A Rocha International
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The Revd Dave Bookless is Director of Theology for A Rocha International. Apart from chocolate, he loves wildlife and wild places, Bradford City Football Club, Indian food and films, his family, and Jesus (not necessarily in that order). He's written or contributed to a boring number of books, and blogs regularly for A Rocha.



CHARITY

A ROCHA – <http://www.arocha.org/en/>

A Rocha is an international Christian organization which, inspired by God's love, engages in scientific research, environmental education and community-based conservation projects. With over 30 years of experience, A Rocha is now active in 19 countries, forming a truly global network of engaged professionals who share a united vision for community-based conservation work.



ACT 19: DAILY GRIND



Our lives are often built around routines. People factor highly into those routines, but sometimes they become nameless and faceless as we concentrate on our own tasks and desires. Today we'll take a moment to get off the hamster wheel and show some gratitude towards the ones we're most likely to overlook.

Green: We might see a lot of people day in, day out. It can become easy to take them for granted, and forget to greet them with affection, or even just to say a simple thank you. Be mindful of how you treat your nearest and dearest today; they deserve your courtesy and kindness just as much as anyone else.

Amber: Your daily latte-maker, your bus driver, the lollipop lady, the postman – why not leave something nice for them to find? Slip it into their bag, leave it on the doorstep or pop it into the tip jar – and leave a note to explain that you're thankful for them.

Red: Take it higher: look at those people in positions of leadership above you. Being a boss can be a tiring, thankless task. The buck stops with them, and blame often lands at their door when things go wrong. It's the same with church leaders, school teachers, our MPs and local authorities. Today, take time to acknowledge the effort they put into leadership, and bless them with words of encouragement or a small gift.

'He will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."' (Matthew 25:45 NIV)

My churches are not massive in numbers but they are big in heart. Take Hazel for example; she helps me at weddings. Hazel took some persuading to get involved because she was worried that she didn't have posh enough clothes to be a wedding verger. I told her I wasn't bothered about what she wore. She said, 'Yes, but it's not your wedding, is it, Kate?' She smiles at everyone, arrives about two hours before, hovers, dusts and makes sure the kettle is on for me and the organist. She keeps a sewing kit in her cupboard for wayward best man's buttons and always makes sure I have clean tissues. A couple of weeks ago she was poorly; I thought we could manage without her. I suddenly realised just how much Hazel does. The seats for the bridesmaids went unreserved, the best man's flies were down (Hazel always checks) and when a guest had a coughing fit halfway through no one brought her a glass of water.

And Hazel isn't the only one; there's Graham the church warden, Andrew the treasurer, Mary, Josie, Elaine, Dorothy, Joy – the list goes on. Each one quietly and devotedly getting on with the things that need doing, things that I admit I sometimes don't notice or say thank you for.

I gave Hazel some flowers last week. A few days later I noticed the same bunch in Hazel's neighbour's window. 'I am sorry, Kate; I'm not ungrateful,' Hazel explained. 'It's just I thought the old lady next door would like them better.'

CONTRIBUTOR

KATE BOTTLEY – Vicar, Church of England

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The Revd Kate Bottley is a Church of England vicar of three churches in rural north Nottinghamshire and a chaplain to an FE college. A regular columnist for the TES, she has also written for The Guardian, The Independent and Radio Times. She is a regular contributor to BBC Radio 2's Pause for Thought. Kate, her husband Graham and their dog Buster are part of Channel 4's BAFTA winning show Gogglebox. Kate is part of the Archbishops' Council project team. She is a Greenbelt festival trustee.



CHARITY

AGE UK - <http://www.ageuk.org.uk>

Age UK is the country's largest charity dedicated to helping everyone make the most of later life. We believe in a world where everyone can love later life and we work every day to achieve this.

We help more than 5m people every year providing support, companionship and advice for older people who need it most.



ACT 20: BEAM



Smile – it's free, it's contagious, and it brings feelings of warmth and happiness. Share your smile with everyone you meet today. Even smiling on your own is known to release endorphins and bring a sense of joy, so flash those gnashers and get your grin on.

Only one option: smile as much as you can.

Be full of joy always because you belong to the Lord. Again I say, be full of joy! (Philippians 4:4 NLV)

I've always been a firm believer that a smile has the power to improve the day of those around you. It certainly improved mine (albeit briefly) on holiday in France last summer.

My family had headed back to our mobile home to freshen up before going out for dinner while I caught the last few rays of the sun by the pool. As I strolled home through the park, a woman in a colourful sarong beamed at me from ear to ear and waved as she shouted, 'Hey Gorgeous, do you fancy a drink?'

I stopped dead in my tracks, slightly flummoxed and was about to reply with 'Well that's very kind of you, and I'm extremely flattered, but I'm married' when her young daughter sailed behind me on her scooter, responding with a cheery, 'Oh hi Mum, no I'm fine thanks, what time do you want me home for tea?'

A potentially embarrassing episode – and believe me, I have had many – was averted with just a split second to spare.

The story caused much hilarity as I relayed it to my wife and family later that evening, but the smile of the mystery lady, however unintended, made me smile and is something I try to do every day with friends and complete strangers.

I've seen the power a smile, a joke or a compliment can bring at the school gates, in the office, while playing sport or queuing in Sainsbury's.

A smile is a gift you can give anyone, even a stranger. It costs you nothing. In fact it will probably cheer you up just doing it. But this cheapest of gifts can be priceless for the recipient as it lights up their day.

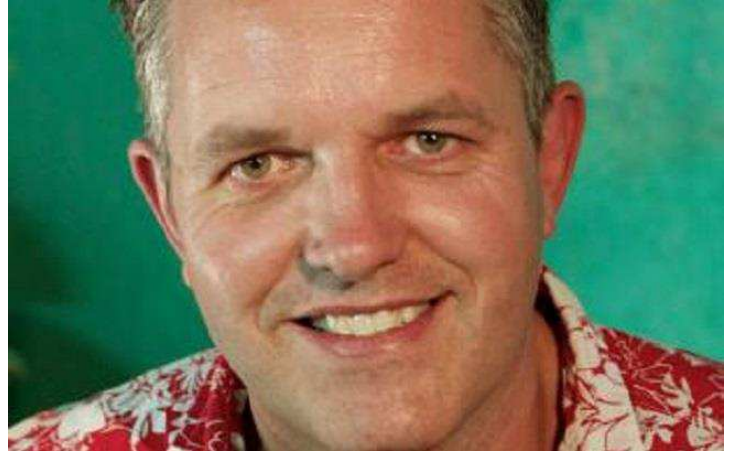
And you never know, they might smile back.

CONTRIBUTOR

STEVE LEGG – Sorted

<https://stevelegg.com> @Steveleggu

Steve Legg is a British evangelist, author and founder of The Breakout Trust, a Christian mission organisation based in Littlehampton. For over 27 years he has travelled throughout the UK and 20 countries overseas, using a crazy mix of comedy, trickery and mystery to communicate the Christian message to young and old. His passion is creative communication of the reality of the Christian faith through performances, books, DVDs and other resources. The author of 13 books, these days he spends much of his time on the groundbreaking men's Christian lifestyle magazine, *Sorted*, which has 100,000 readers in 26 countries.

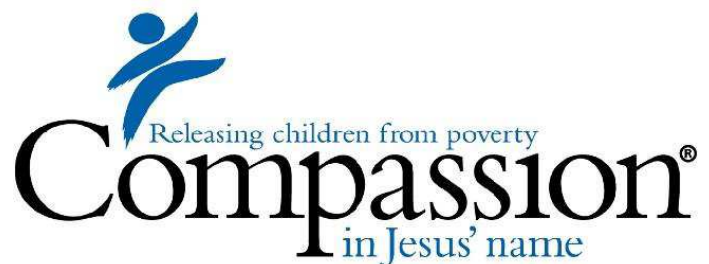


CHARITY

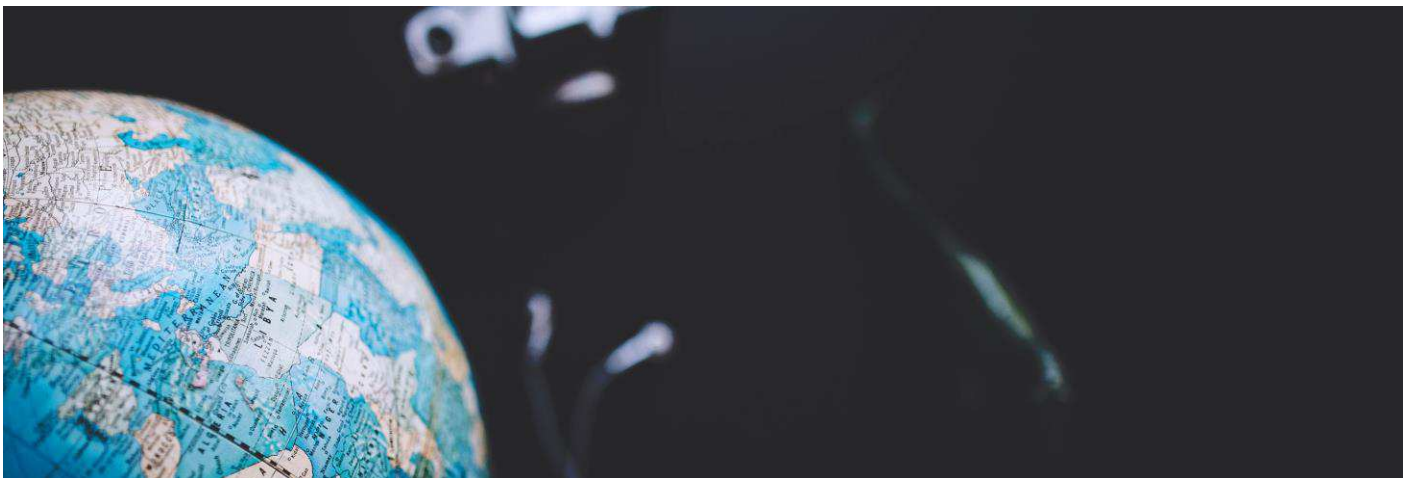
COMPASSION UK - <https://www.compassionuk.org>

Compassion is one of the world's leading child development and child advocacy organisations.

Our approach is a personal one. Working with the local church, we link a child living in poverty with a loving sponsor, like you. Each sponsor gives their child access to education, health checks, plus the opportunity to hear about Jesus. There's no quick fix to global poverty, but through our programmes, children's lives are being changed. We're impacting families, communities and whole nations.



ACT 21: GLOBAL WARNING



Creation is in trouble. Scientists predict new global crises every other day, and our governments are under increasing pressure to do something about it. But really, much of the problem lies with us. Small things, every day, make a difference. It's the difference between leaving a legacy of destruction and ensuring life for those who come after us.

Green: Be mindful. Write down everything you buy for the next seven days. At the end of the week examine your list. Highlight needs in one colour and wants in another. Pray over your list. In future weeks, think for a few seconds before you open your wallet.

Amber: Fast from spending money one day a week. Walk or cycle to work. Take a packed lunch. Go to the park or the library at lunchtime instead of mooching around the shops. Read that book you never got round to. Visit a friend. Dig out your guitar/flute/paintbrush. Learn to have fun without spending money.

Red: Go without clothes for a year and you could reduce your carbon footprint by 5–10%. You can still wear them! Just don't buy any new. Visit charity shops and vintage markets. Borrow or swap. Refashion existing outfits. Get out the sewing machine and invent things. Make friends with your cobbler! Mend stuff!

'You shall not covet.' (Exodus 20:17)

A few months ago, Amnesty International and Greenpeace issued a joint statement to the 195 countries meeting together in Paris for COP21 to discuss climate change. The statement linked global temperature rises with human rights: an additional 600 million people could face hunger by 2080 due to climate change, it reads. A few days later, the world's governments signed an agreement to reduce net carbon emissions to 0% by 2050, signalling an end to the fossil fuel age.

Climate justice will be difficult to deliver though, because dirty fuel helps provide cheap products; and there's another, less overt, type of fuel driving demand for them. A fuel stemming from you and me. The Bible calls it mammon. Love of stuff. God thought it so important that he enshrined it in the Ten Commandments.

We're surrounded by an ocean of things we don't need. Things that seemed fun – useful even – when we bought them: electric juicers, ice cream makers, spaghetti forks with rotating heads. If we were to play Where Are They Now? a year on, I'd guess they wouldn't have a starring role.

G.K. Chesterton said, 'There are two ways to get enough: one is to continue to accumulate more and more; the other is to desire less.'

What's the real cost of the things you desire? Almost everything we buy has a carbon footprint. Isn't it time we faced up to the fact that our decision to hush up the tenth commandment has far wider reaching consequences than emptying our purses: it's costing the Earth.

A few months ago, the governments of 195 countries, that's all the countries in the world – financially challenged, developing countries amongst them – committed to strive to end climate injustice. This Lent, will you join them?

CONTRIBUTOR

EMMA GREENWOOD – Liberti Magazine
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Emma Greenwood is the green columnist and fashion editor at Liberti Magazine. She joined Greenpeace protests aged 8 and has been wearing pre-loved vintage since she was 14. Married to comedy guy and Christian speaker Mark Greenwood and mum to two crazy veggie children, she documents the ups and downs of family life chez Greenwood in her blog Greenmum.



CHARITY

GREENPEACE - <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk>

We defend the natural world and promote peace by investigating, exposing and confronting environmental abuse, and championing environmentally responsible solutions.

GREENPEACE

ACT 22: ESSENTIALS



One year, on the first day of 40acts, a lovely lady called Becky sent the team a care package in the post. She knew we'd been working around the clock, so she sent healthy (and a few not-so-healthy) snacks and drinks to keep us going. It made a frantic morning into a happy one. Whose day could you brighten with some essentials today?

Green: Make up a generosity kit for the week ahead. Think about the places you'll be, the people you might meet, the kind of weather you might have. Pack things that could come in handy for someone else – a spare umbrella, some plasters, a trolley coin – and resolve to give them out whenever you see a need.

Amber: Think about someone or a group of people in your circles who might be in need. Know any brand-new parents? Make them a meal or a care package today. Has someone new just joined your church, workplace or group? Create a welcome box for them, with tips for settling in and invitations to social events.

Red: Start up a care package project with friends, family or a specific circle – for new neighbours, new families, or anyone who enters your community. Make a point of always having supplies kept somewhere, so that packages can be quickly put together by the team and dropped off promptly.

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. (2 Corinthians 9:12)

Occasionally we encounter people who can't help themselves, whose thankfulness and gratitude to God just bursts out of them in all sorts of practical, quirky and joyous kinds of ways. Kanchan is one such person – someone whose door is always open, whose cooker is always on and whose antennae are always twitching, ready to pick up on a need. 'God just brings people to me,' she says modestly, but when he does, she listens and does what she can to help.

Despite being a complete newcomer to gardening, Kanchan decided to embrace the offer of a veg bed in a neglected community allotment. Seeing others were struggling to maintain theirs, she adopted three more and soon there were multiple veg beds bursting with leeks, kale, beans, courgettes and other produce all destined for those she spotted that needed them. Some were given fresh out of the ground, others were turned into delicious pakoras, ratatouille or curries to give away.

No-one goes away empty-handed from Kanchan's home – things flow in and out like some informal stock exchange. Even the bin men get a packet of crisps to keep them going as they pass by. You may not have thought you needed a butternut squash or a margarine tub full of dahl when you arrived, but you'll find yourself appreciating the joyful generosity of it when you leave.

Her thankfulness to God is overflowing and infectious and makes me realise that generosity isn't always tied up in a nice neat package. In fact it teaches me that over-thinking generosity can tie you up in knots. So next time you hesitate to offer someone your spare bag at the checkout, make a tray of tea for the workmen outside in the road or give a brolly to the person getting soaked at the bus stop, remember Kanchan and do it for the love of God.

LINKS WE LOVE

Need some help whipping up a generosity kit? We've got some [ideas for you here](#).

CONTRIBUTOR

KANCHAN SHAH AND FIONA MEARNS

[@FionaMearns1](https://www.stewardship.org.uk)

Kanchan has lived in her community of Muirton, Perth for 42 years. She worships both at the Adventist Church in Dundee and Riverside Church in Perth. Courgettes are her favourite vegetable and she's always looking for new ways to cook them! Fiona has the joy of worshipping alongside Kanchan at Riverside Church and nearly equal joy of working in the Business Development Team at Stewardship.



CHARITY

CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE -

<http://www.csw.org.uk/home.htm>

Three quarters of the world's population lives in countries with severe restrictions on their religious freedom – in fact, it's one of the most widely-violated human rights in the world.

We think this is unacceptable. We're working to change it. Our vision is of a world where everyone is free to choose their beliefs – to hold and practise any religion they like, or none at all.



**CHRISTIAN
SOLIDARITY
WORLDWIDE**
VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

ACT 23: LAST ROLO



It's often said that the way to tell whether someone loves you is to see whether they'll give you their last Rolo. Whether it's our last Rolo or our favourite jumper, sometimes we get a bit clingy about the stuff we have. When the stuff we own starts to own us, it's time to re-evaluate the situation. And the best solution to hoarding? Giving it away.

Just one act for today: What are you holding onto too closely? Could it be your favourite scarf, your second, third or fourth guitar, or a piece of jewellery? Or perhaps you need to start smaller today – with a book, movie or music collection that has grown out of hand? Or just give away the equivalent of your last Rolo? If you can't afford to give something, why not loan it out? You might offer to let someone use your car, your camera, or even your phone/tablet for the week. The choice is yours. Live today with an open hand.

[Jesus] said to them, '... life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.' (Luke 12:15 NIV)

I'll always remember my first trip to India: there were people making idols out of wood and stone along the roadside; shocked I asked my colleague Sekhar, 'Why can't people see that these idols are just objects, not gods?' I don't recall his answer, but I do recall the corresponding question he asked when he came to the UK: 'People here have so much stuff; why can't they see that it's not making them happy?'

Ouch. I had nothing to say. His remark completely cut through my cultural blindness. I thought worshipping objects in India was crazy, but we were doing the same thing right here!

I've had the pleasure of encountering people in the UK who seem to live free from this blindness, and their generosity has felt like a cool glass of water in a desert. For example, when my wife and I were working in Zimbabwe and returned to the UK temporarily, we needed a car for a couple of weeks, but were short of cash. Someone we barely knew lent us her car (and travelled by public transport instead) with hardly a second thought. I couldn't believe it.

When Jesus encounters a man who loves his possessions (in Mark 10), he tells him, 'One thing you lack. Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor...' He doesn't say this to everyone he meets, but he's very clear about the prescription for this young man. My belief is that this was the specific remedy for the materialism that afflicted him. At times I've really struggled with letting go of some of my stuff in the same way, but I know that the tension I feel in these situations is a firm reminder of how important it is for me to let go and offer someone that last Rolo.

CONTRIBUTOR

RICH GOWER – Tearfund

Rich Gower is a Christian economist who works as a Senior Associate at Tearfund and as a consultant with a number of other NGOs. He and his wife Sophie live in Bradford, where they try to make as much time as possible for investing in the local community, water sports and generally enjoying the great outdoors. They had their first child – Aidan – last year.



CHARITY

OASIS ZIMBABWE - <http://www.oasiszw.org>

Oasis Zimbabwe seeks to give impoverished children the best start in education they can, through establishing pre-schools in partnership with local churches in the high-density suburbs of Harare. These pre-schools also enable Oasis to improve the health outcomes of children.



ACT 24: STAND



It's easy to get weighed down by the injustice and need we see all around us, and to imagine that there's nothing (or very little) we can do about it. Choose not to shy away from a cause today. Lend your voice to the voiceless, stand up for those who can't stand up for themselves, and don't wait for someone else to be the solution.

Green: If you're short of time, spend a few minutes recognising the causes that really get your blood boiling. What are you passionate about? What has affected you, your family, your community? Pray for answers, for solutions, for funding, for peace – and listen out for God's prompting. He uses us to bring change; dare to believe that he could use you.

Amber: Use the internet to research a cause you love. It might be medical research, sanitation, social welfare... Whatever it is, there will usually be a charity already working to change things for the better. Start with their website, and discover ways to support them. You might sign petitions, attend rallies, write to your MP, give or fundraise, take part in a campaign or tell your social networks.

Red: If you really want to go all out and publicise your chosen cause, why not throw a fundraising event and invite a speaker/charity representative to your church or local community group to raise awareness? It's a great way to make a big noise and create some community memories, too.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. (Proverbs 31:8–9 NIV)

While many might describe me as a fundraiser, I prefer to say I am a storyteller.

I've been passionate about justice and poverty issues ever since volunteering with Tearfund over 20 years ago and spending a summer working in Uganda. Convinced I was going to change the world and save the poor, instead I found myself irrevocably changed.

The desire for poverty to be tackled hadn't changed but the way I could best help had. I had learned the best way I could help wasn't to do things to or for people – or even give them things. What I could best do was use my voice and speak up.

But in recent years I've even changed how I speak.

One of the insidious things about poverty is the lies it tells people – it leaves people feeling that they are helpless and voiceless. To combat those lies, part of our response to poverty must be to tackle it holistically: not just the material need, but also the spiritual and emotional need. To defend the rights of the poor and needy is to acknowledge their God-given value and potential; to empower them to use their own voice.

Five years ago in Ethiopia I met a group of 20 women who, with the help of their local church backed by Tearfund, had formed a self-help group where they saved their own money, in tiny amounts at first, and then gave each other loans to

set up small businesses. The income generated from this group was paying for their children's schooling, healthy meals, medicine, and even to help poorer people in their community.

The women's faces shone as they shared their stories and each one stood and said, 'I give praise to God for what he has done and now let me tell you what I have done ...'

We heard their voices.

My job is not just to tell their stories. I'm duty bound to make sure that their voice is heard when I tell that story.

So, today, let's speak up and ensure that the voice of those who need us most is heard.

Whose story has God put on your heart?

CONTRIBUTOR

FIONA MORRISON – Tearfund

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Fiona Morrison is the Church Relationship Manager for Tearfund in Scotland – she travels the country speaking to churches about poverty and justice issues. She's passionate about the work and mission of the local church – but also finds time to be passionate about books, movies, cheese, nail polish and stationery.



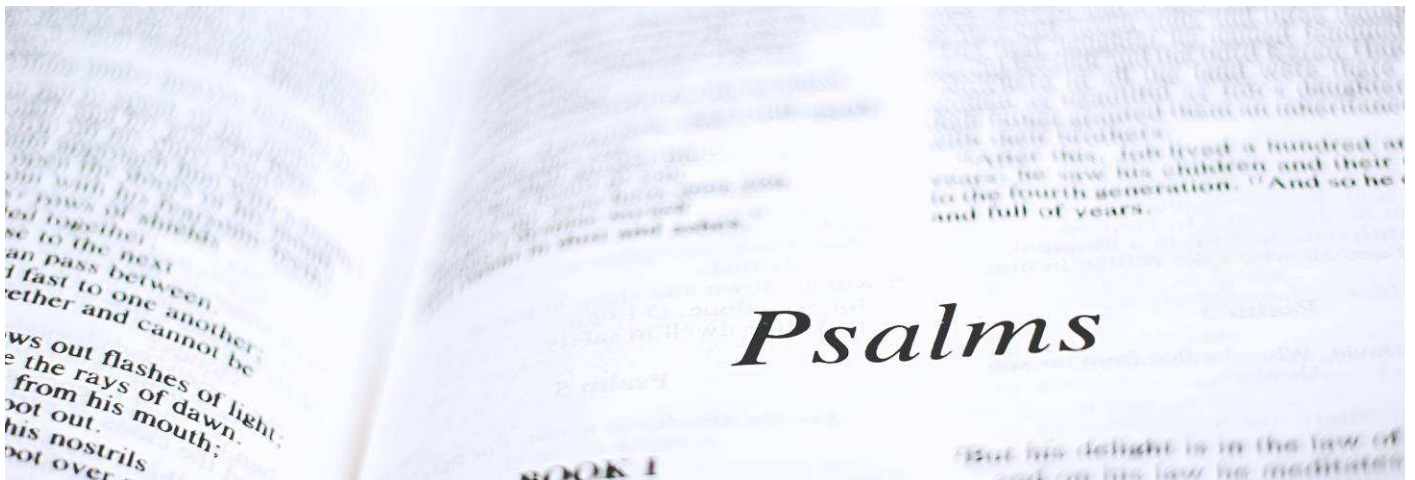
CHARITY

TEARFUND - <http://www.tearfund.org>

We're Christians passionate about ending poverty. We're following Jesus where need is greatest, working through local churches to unlock people's potential and helping them to discover that the answer to poverty is within themselves. When disasters strike, we respond quickly. We won't stop until poverty stops.



ACT 25: SERVE THE SERVER



Some of us are dab hands at memorising Bible verses. Some of us get them mixed up with Disney and Shakespeare quotes. All of us, though, can probably remember a time when a Bible verse shone an incredible light into our situation. Give that gift of light, freedom and hope to someone else today.

Green: Share a favourite verse on your social network of choice. If you're feeling brave, tell people why it's meaningful to you. Tell the story of how it came to you, and how it changed your perspective. You never know who might be in a similar situation.

Amber: Who are you with today? Friends, colleagues, neighbours, family? Think about what's going on in their lives, or perhaps have a chat and ask them. Pray with them or for them, and see if God leads you to share anything in particular from his word with them. It's OK if not; just share an encouraging verse that has spoken to you previously instead.

Red: The Bible isn't the easiest book to understand, but when you read it alongside other people there's a chance that you'll see things you didn't recognise before. Find someone to read a chapter with today. Spend half an hour unpacking the meaning and practical application of it, and at the end note down how it has encouraged you both today.

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11 NIV)

I love the Bible! It's the inspired word of God and I don't quite know how I'd get through life without its teaching and truth. People have risked life and limb for this book and yet sometimes we seem to treat it with contempt. The pre-eminent leader of the Indian independence movement in British-ruled India, Mahatma Gandhi, said this: 'You Christians look after a document containing enough dynamite to blow all civilisation to pieces, turn the world upside down and bring peace to a battle-torn planet. But you treat it as though it is nothing more than a piece of literature.'

We need to start treating the Bible like the dynamite it is and recognise that it's so much more than just a book!

What's your favourite Bible verse? Mine is part of Romans 8:31: 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' (NIV). I've always found it to be a huge encouragement and a bringer of perspective regardless of all that's going on around me. Sharing a verse of scripture with others can encourage and help them too. Consider what verse you could share, who you could share it with and the best way to share it today.

Go on. Share it! Get your phone out and tweet it to the masses or text it to an individual. Ring a friend and share a verse. Share a verse over a coffee with someone. Give someone else one of the greatest things you can today – eternal truth from the word of God! Go on bless someone else today, right now.

LINKS WE LOVE

Need some pinspiration? Right-click & save some of these [shareable Bible verses!](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

GAVIN CALVER – Evangelical Alliance
<https://www.eauk.org> @GavCalver

Gavin Calver is the Director of Mission at the Evangelical Alliance and has a burning passion to see the gospel reach every person in the UK. He was formerly the National Director of Youth for Christ, is an ordained evangelist and regular public speaker, and has authored four books. Gavin is married to Anne and they have two children: Amelie and Daniel. He loves new challenges, is a passionate AFC Wimbledon supporter and was part of the team that broke the world record for the longest five-a-side football match.



CHARITY

YOUTH FOR CHRIST - <http://www.yfc.co.uk>

Youth for Christ (YFC) is a national Christian charity that was founded by Billy Graham in 1946. Working with over 250,000 young people each month, we draw alongside children, teens and young adults from every background and culture in Britain. Our 400+ full-time staff and countless local volunteers specialise in working with unchurched youth: communicating and demonstrating the Christian faith..



ACT 26: BAKE OFF



Apple pie, cupcakes, croissants, chocolate gateau, raspberry roulade, black bean cacao brownies... Whatever your speciality, treat someone to a taste-bud party today. Make it healthy, gooey, rich or gluten-free, and make someone smile.

Green: No time to bake a show-stopper? That's OK. Your local supermarket or bakery makes a fairly good alternative. Drop something yummy off to your neighbours.

Amber: Roll up those sleeves and prepare to get flour *everywhere*. There are fewer things better than homemade baking. You can choose the lucky recipient.

Red: Hit the streets – take your baking to the high road, the local police station, the busy bus stop or the nearest park. You might want to take a few 40acts cards to explain what you're doing...

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. (Ecclesiastes 3:1 NIV)

Marshmallows, pink and white, with a fresh strawberry and icing sugar garnish.

I enjoy labouring over a hot stove for many hours to produce a spectacular meal, honestly I do. It is also – perhaps more so – a delight to come up with something simple that communicates love and care rather than hard work.

On one occasion after his resurrection, Jesus unexpectedly appeared to his disciples on the shore of Galilee to serve them a simple meal of fresh cooked fish, barbecued on the beach. I love the combined elements of simplicity and surprise here.

Spending time thinking creatively, rather than just working hard, is often the key to producing a gift that will be long remembered and appreciated by the recipient. And there is nothing quite like food to bring us together in community and relationship.

I have often cooked for Alpha meals and one of the things much appreciated, by the organisers and guests alike, is something to break the ice at the introductory supper. I have never been a fan of saying to a group of strangers, 'Now we are going to have an icebreaker' – it makes me shudder!

In my experience, nothing breaks the ice and melts the atmosphere better than a large glass bowl full of pink and white marshmallows adorned with fresh strawberries glistening with a trace of icing sugar.

An unusual combination I grant you, but this very simple and unexpected part of the meal gives pleasure to those who are eating and gets them talking as well! Almost everyone will feel at ease to turn to the person next to them, even though a stranger, to express a childlike delight in being presented with a marshmallow and a strawberry.

You don't need to be an expert chef to open a packet of marshmallows or barbecue a fish. The simple gift of a dish can highlight the love behind it and bring a smile to anyone's face. So whatever your culinary skills are, get creative and spread some joy.

LINKS WE LOVE

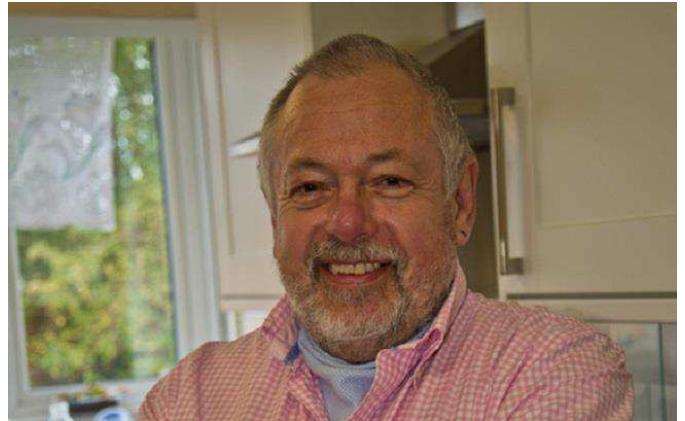
Find out how The Feel Good Bakery used food as outreach on [today's blog!](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

JOE STORY

<https://www.joestory.co.uk>

Joe's passions centre on Jesus and the kingdom of God, and are expressed through writing, hospitality and a serious involvement in the local church scene. Semi-retired as a Baptist minister, he now tends to concentrate on the areas of preaching, teaching and being chief cook and bottle washer. He runs a continuously out-of-date website which he is gradually trying to sort out.



CHARITY

MISSION AVIATION FELLOWSHIP - <https://www.maf-uk.org>

Every three minutes one of our planes takes off or lands somewhere in the world. On board are dedicated teams bringing medical care, supplies and Christian hope to communities struggling to survive amidst poverty, conflict or natural disaster. Flying across deserts, jungles, swamps and mountains, we reach places that might otherwise remain cut-off because of impassable or non-existent roads.



ACT 27: WORTH THE WAIT



People who dedicate their lives to service roles – whether they are waiting staff, airline hosts, or people on the end of a customer enquiry line – spend a lot of time giving out. It costs us very little to give back to them. Turn the roles on their head today and serve your server.

Green: Wherever you go today, treat the person who serves you with dignity and courtesy. Make eye contact, ask and remember their name, ask how they are, and remember to say a genuine thank you. It sounds simple, but a bit more mindfulness and effort can validate that person and brighten their day.

Amber: What can you do to help? Clear a table in the café, stack the baskets or trolleys in a shop, put stuff back on the shelves if it has fallen off. Yes, technically you'll be doing a job that someone else is paid to do, but your helpfulness might be making someone's day a little less stressful.

Red: Leave an extravagant tip, tweet an encouragement about great service or write a complimentary letter to their Head Office/line manager.

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:14–15)

Working as a missionary in China, it was my privilege to co-lead a weekly Bible study with the leader of a local house church. We didn't have our own building, and so we would hire a private room in one of Beijing's many bustling restaurants. Although my co-leader was a respected pastor, he would always help clear up after us, and chat to the restaurant staff. At first the staff were embarrassed by having this older man help with menial tasks, but over the months he got into conversation with waiters and waitresses and found out about their home town and their family, and it was no surprise when people asked about our Bible study and wanted to go to church with him. The pastor was a talented evangelist, but his first contact was often an act of unconditional service. I see the same attitude when I'm hanging out with the missionaries from London City Mission. They are always on first-name terms with local shopkeepers and café staff, and it is a habit that I have been trying my best to copy.

My colleague, Will, has a habit of saying thank you by name to waiters and shop assistants, and he follows it up with enquiries about family. Those simple conversations bring smiles to faces and break down barriers. Outings with Will often end up noisy affairs as waiters scold him for his love of chocolate biscuits or the failings of his favourite football team, but there can be serious moments too. I have seen deep emotion when Will has offered to pray for a relative struggling with cancer or a mum worrying about a son's exams. His attitude of wanting to bless brings warmth and friendship in a city where loneliness is all too common.

As a Christian, I am called to follow the example of one who was willing to wash the feet of his disciples, so it shouldn't be very hard for me to show kindness and respect to those whose job it is to serve.

LINKS WE LOVE

Charlie looks at five ways to make your server feel special [today on the blog!](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

GRAHAM MILLER – London City Mission
<https://windylondon.com> @windy_london

Graham Miller is Chief Servant of London City Mission but has worked as a missionary in China, Wimbledon, and Gujranwala. Graham learnt his preaching skills at the Cornhill Training Course, and his accounting from the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. He has previously worked for a multinational selling everything from fish fingers to green tea. Graham is married to Alison and has three kids: Harry, Sam, and Annabelle.



CHARITY

LONDON CITY MISSION - <http://www.lcm.org.uk>

We exist to serve the church of London in sharing the love of God and the good news of Jesus Christ with the least reached of London.



ACT 28: SHOW & TELL



Our unique skills, talents, insights and experiences make us invaluable to each other. You might have no idea how to fit a shelf, but you could be fantastic at styling a house. You might be a computer whizz or a knitting champion or a chess king. You could know what kind of garden will grow in clay soil, or you might draw illustrations beautifully. Whatever your skill set, there will be someone who could do with your knowledge. Offer it freely today.

Green: If you've only got five minutes, you'll need a skill you can teach quickly. Teach a teenager to sew on a button, help an elderly person to set up their phone or configure their social network, put up a picture with a DIY-phobe, make an omelette with someone who can't cook, teach a colleague the short-cut keys on a computer keyboard... There are a lot of quick options to choose from. The tough bit is finding someone to help!

Amber: What can you do that others wish they could? It could be a practical skill like DIY, baking or craft. Or maybe it's ways to get fit, be more productive at work, or close that deal. Offer to spend a few hours with someone, teaching them something new.

Red: Commit to share a skill on a regular basis (e.g. helping someone improve their English, teaching someone an instrument, or anything that requires regular lessons).

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10 NIV)

When I started work as a legal aid barrister, the hours were merciless and the remuneration often fictional. Free time was sparse and I was reluctant to spend it on others – inside or outside work. After turning to scripture and praying, it became evident to me that each of us has been called to serve in every way we can: mentally, spiritually and physically, and this includes the sharing of skills. Just because we serve in one way does not mean that we cannot also serve in other ways (James 2:15–17), and that goes for all aspects of our lives.

Keeping our skills and talents to ourselves is an easy temptation to fall into – either because we prefer to use them for our own benefit or because we simply cannot see how they could be helpful to others.

The creation of Urban Lawyers was the catalyst for me. Setting it up gave me a way to share my skills by using my free time to make the law more accessible to marginalised groups in society. We aim to inspire law students from non-traditional backgrounds through a variety of means and provide support and finance and educate young people about their legal rights and civic responsibilities.

One of the specific ways I realised I could help was in speaking. For me, public speaking was part of what I did, but I saw that this was daunting for many young people. So we developed role-play activities and team exercises and set challenges such as obtaining three pieces of information from strangers to encourage others to overcome their fear of speaking to people or in front of strangers.

Urban Lawyers has been running for more than five years and during that time the joy of sharing my skills and helping others has been an antidote to the occasional times of gloom I experience in my day-to-day work as a barrister.

I believe that God has called me to share my skills. In essence, we should remember that we receive from God, we give back and we keep nothing for ourselves.

LINKS WE LOVE

Thinking about mentoring? [Watch Matthew's story](#) on the blog today for inspiration.

CONTRIBUTOR

TUNDE OKEWALE – Urban Lawyers

<http://www.tundeokewale.com> @urbnlawyer

Tunde is a Barrister at Doughty Street Chambers and Founder of Urban Lawyers. In just five years the award-winning organisation has supported over 5,000 young people, and it recently partnered with BPP Law School in awarding scholarships to students from non-traditional backgrounds. Tunde advised the 'Citizens' Inquiry' into the Tottenham Riots and the resulting report ultimately influenced national policy and helped secure funding for Tottenham residents. He was also part of the Bar Human Rights Committee delegation to Nigeria, in partnership with UNICEF, developing the Child Protection Network. Tunde is currently patron to Hackney Law Centre and provides legal training to Youth Offending Teams nationally.



CHARITY

SEVEN Cs- <http://www.sevencs.org.uk>

At Seven Cs our aim is to offer a helping hand. Through our service clients have the opportunity to gain new skills, meet new people and develop new interests.

Our holistic support to an individual may involve any combination of the following: Practical, emotional or spiritual help, Guidance and information, Creative activities and training.



ACT 29: BOGOF



We see Buy One, Get One Free! offers everywhere in shops these days. Often, we don't even need the free item we're getting. But someone else might. Who could you share it with today? Buy one, give one free!

Green: If you're not heading out or money is tight, raid your house. Chances are, you'll find a spare nearly-new toolkit, two copies of the same book or something else you can give away. Ask around on your social networks to see if anyone would like it for free.

Amber: Got points on your loyalty card? Why not give them to someone else or use them to get vouchers or gifts to give away?

Red: Head to your local trusted café or corner shop. Put some cash behind the counter and ask them to give everyone's order for free until the money runs out.

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. (Matthew 25:35 NIV)

I met Mary in Wandsworth Foodbank in January 2014 – a beautiful 24-year-old mother whose benefits had been suddenly cut over the Christmas period. She said – matter of factly – that her children had eaten a burger bun (no burger) for that Christmas lunch. Her anxiety levels were raised as she thought social services would take her children away if she was unable to feed them. She had begun selling her furniture to raise money for food.

That was when the local community stepped in: the elderly couple next door donated money from their pension, the local school provided free school meals as the situation continued, and her MP gave a voucher for the foodbank.

As a mother myself, I found myself in tears in the middle of 21st-century London as I identified with her struggle to take care of her children. I have found myself in tears many times since in relief and gratitude to those, known and unknown, who have entered situations providing food, hope, comfort and support. People remembering to drop their donation into the foodbank collection point when doing their weekly shop has meant the difference between eating or not for some people. I have to be honest too and admit to tears of anger and frustration that people made in the image of God are being treated in this way and with such unconcern.

As shop shelves burst with special offers, it seems unbearably hard that for some those offers are beyond reach.

I have nothing but praise and thanks for those who, with no thought of reward, have given food, clothing, presents for children and toiletries to meet the need of those in crisis in their communities. They may never know the results of their actions, but without their actions there would have been no results.

Buy One Get One Free offers are in every aisle in every shop; we may not need or want an extra item but there will always be someone who will – like Mary. So why not Buy One Give One Free and turn those unwanted extras into something of value?

CONTRIBUTOR

ALISON INGLIS-JONES – Trussell Trust

<https://www.trusselltrust.org> @ijoneswilliams

Alison is a trustee and volunteer at Hammersmith and Fulham Foodbank and a trustee of the Trussell Trust. She lives in South London with her husband and two sons and attends Wilberforce's church, Holy Trinity Clapham. Her life has been transformed by her work with the Trussell Trust and she experiences daily what Richard Rohr calls 'reverse mission'.



CHARITY

TRUSSELL TRUST - <https://www.trusselltrust.org>

Every day people in the UK go hungry for reasons ranging from redundancy to receiving an unexpected bill on a low income. Trussell Trust foodbanks provide a minimum of three days emergency food and support to people experiencing crisis in the UK.



ACT 30: MARGINS



Society is often unkind to those deemed to be 'on the fringes'. Those who have their lives 'together' can sometimes forget that they're only ever three missed pay-cheques away from homelessness, or one chronic illness away from disability, or one bereavement away from single parenthood. It's a sobering thought, but it's one that should motivate us to gather people around us in love and show kindness to everyone – irrespective of their circumstances. A circumstance doesn't define a person; all of us – without exception – are important to God.

Green: Look out for someone who is marginalised today in the local supermarket, on your journey to work, or in your community, and make a point of smiling and saying hello to them. If you are not going out, do a bit of online research about disability or marginalised groups.

Amber: Find out what disability/homeless/refugee services there are in your area. A search on local authority websites can help show you special schools, day centres, adult care homes and foodbanks. Search for other relevant charities and support groups in your area. Put them on your own and your church's prayer list.

Red: Get together with others in your church or community, and pray about and plan how you can invite adults and children with learning disabilities or people from other marginalised groups and include them in your church. If you've done the Amber challenge, then you'll have a head start, knowing where these people are in your community. Get in touch with Prospects for support and read this blog for lots of ideas on how to get started.

All of you together are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of that body. (1 Corinthians 12:27 ERV)

You know the story of the four men who destroyed a roof so that their paralysed friend could get to Jesus? And how wonderful that they did, because Jesus changed that man's life. But if his friends hadn't bothered ... (Luke 5:18–26).

Helen has Down syndrome. She can't read or write, takes her time to speak and gets really cross when things don't happen as she was expecting. She loves to pray for people who are ill. Gwen doesn't speak and likes to flick the pages of the Bible. She uses Makaton to sign the words of the worship songs and joins in with her own vocalisations (loudly!). David reads the Easy English Bible and is able to answer so many questions about the Bible. Frank is blind and is a wheelchair user. He loves to lead us in prayer and has amazing faith that encourages others.

These people are enabled to come to Jesus because it is us who have changed. We've learned to communicate in different ways; we've thought about how we reach out to the marginalised and tried to take down many of the barriers people have to being part of the Body of Christ.

There are many who are marginalised in our communities. People with disabilities, families with young children with special needs, people who are homeless, refugees, ex-prisoners, single families, people who are LGBT ... I'm sure you can add to the list. Churches can be the greatest barrier to these people coming to Jesus.

Let me encourage you to pray for God to open your eyes to those who are marginalised in your community and be flexible and eager to learn how to include them in your church or fellowship. Let's be like those friends of the paralysed man and be enablers.

CONTRIBUTOR

LYNN MCCANN – Reachout ASC

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Lynn McCann is an ordinary Christian who is one of the leaders of the Good News Group, a weekly congregation for adults with learning disabilities, at St Andrew's Church, Leyland. She is an autism consultant by day and a volunteer for Prospects at the Keswick Convention. Lynn writes about including people with disabilities in church at www.includedbygrace.wordpress.com



CHARITY

PROSPECTS - <http://www.prospects.org.uk>

Prospects works through local churches to reach out to families affected by learning disability to offer the very best quality in professional care, in Jesus' name.



ACT 31: BEELINE



In some countries, towns and societies, talking to the people you meet – passers-by, shopkeepers, fellow commuters – is entirely normal. Expected, even. You might not be a natural talker, but think of it this way: everyone around you is a valuable person with his or her own life, experiences, struggles and stories. Every friend you have today was a stranger once. So make a beeline for someone today and strike up a conversation.

Green: If you're unlikely to see anyone new today, perhaps you could learn a few greetings or phrases in a different language or in sign language. The ability to communicate kindness across cultures and disabilities is always a good skill to have up your sleeve.

Amber: Pluck up courage and pick a person to talk to today. You might not need to go out of your way. It could be whoever you happen to sit next to on the bus, the guy who makes your morning brew at the coffee shop or just someone you walk past in the street. A smile and a 'Good morning' is often the best place to begin.

Red: Talk to anyone and everyone today. Literally everyone you meet. Go wild!

His disciples said, 'What are you talking about? With this crowd pushing and jostling you, you're asking, "Who touched me?" Dozens have touched you!' (Mark 5:31 The Message)

The wonderful (if a little bleak) website Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows has an entry that bears quoting in full:

Sonder: n. the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own – populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries and inherited craziness – an epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you'll never know existed, in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk.

Today's act is about talking to strangers. I'm going to say you could do much worse than carry that made-up dictionary entry in your head all day as a reminder that each passer-by has their own story. The dictionary might call the quote an 'obscure sorrow' but to me there's something deeply good about it, something that opens us up and turns us outwards. Whole situations and opportunities are unlocked to us if we choose to say 'I'm not the main character in this street/shop/café.'

This year I've joined my church's outreach team. As an introvert, it isn't my feel-good zone. There are a good 30 seconds at the start of each conversation when I can come up with a million ways to exit. In all this, I've found the Gospel stories of Jesus's interactions with strangers a real boost for me. The Gospel of Mark in particular is a relentlessly busy account, full of the hassle and push of daily life – and relatable for that. There's power in the stories in part because of how ordinary the settings are: a bustling street, a pool, the road out of town, Jesus' own home. In those places, Jesus reaches beyond himself and the busyness, and makes space for complete strangers.

Challenging my sense that wherever I am is 'about me' has led to great moments of encouragement and support that just wouldn't have happened otherwise. Where I'm primed to be rushed, bustling and blinkered, I'm learning – slowly – to be available and vulnerable to those around me. I hope you're able to do the same today.

CONTRIBUTOR

JOEL LEAKEY – UCB

[@joelleakey](#)

Joel edits the Bible notes magazine *Word For You* for [UCB.co.uk](#). He spends his time jumping between London and the coast of Northern Ireland. He thinks the coffee shops in Ireland are much nicer, but inexplicably no cheaper.



CHARITY

WAR CHILD - <https://www.warchild.org.uk>

We're providing life-changing support to the most vulnerable children whose families, communities and schools have been torn apart by war.



ACT 32: ANON.



Anonymous generosity can often be the most fun and freeing. No need for explanations, no expectations of grand thank yous: just a simple act of kindness.

Green: Leave a note or a small gift for someone anonymously, letting them know why they are appreciated.

Amber: Set up an anonymous gift for a friend or family member. It could be something that you arrange to have delivered, like a bunch of flowers, or perhaps a subscription for their favourite magazine. You could also set up an anonymous Direct Debit to a charity or a church, using your Stewardship giving account.

Red: Get creative. In previous years, challengers have bought items on random couples' wedding gift lists online. You might buy cinema or theatre tickets and leave them at the box office, with instructions for them to be given to the next customer free of charge. It's up to you!

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:3–4 NIV)

I love giving things away – money, presents – in fact all types of stuff. I used to get carried away and just give on the spot but more recently I've learned to hold back: I wait a day and then give the gift anonymously.

I don't generally like to talk about it. Talking about giving anonymously is a slippery slope. In fact, if I truly wanted to be anonymous, then I wouldn't talk about it all. I know what I'm like: self-congratulation would creep in and I'd slowly become impressed with myself. It would be more about me than the giving and that would defeat the object of giving anonymously.

So to make sure I don't get caught in that trap, I won't tell you who I am – I'll just encourage you to think about it.

I'll tell you why I give 'under cover': because I want to bless. I really want others – people I know and some I don't – to feel the joy of 'being seen'. To know that someone saw their need, met it and did so for one reason: to see them joyful, blessed and loved. What's more, giving to others anonymously means they aren't burdened by the need to return the favour, leaving them free to receive and just be blessed.

I visited a church recently and noticed they had a croissant breakfast for their morning gathering. There was a £2 per head cost. I wanted to bless the attendees, so I prayed, worked out the average number of people and planned to give enough money for everyone to get a free breakfast one Sunday. I wasn't there to see what happened but I had fun imagining them all tucking into a free breakfast with a smile on their faces.

And that is the beauty of giving anonymously. Freeing yourself up; putting all that 'self' stuff aside and working with God to bless others. As it says in Matthew 6: 3–4, even if you don't get to see the results, our heavenly Father does – and that is reward enough for me.

LINKS WE LOVE

[Use these stories as inspiration today!](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

ANONYMOUS CONTRIBUTOR

CHARITY

ANONYMOUS GIVING - <http://www.stewardship.org.uk/giving/giving-account>

Give anonymously with a Stewardship giving account. You can request donations to individuals and organisations without your name on them. Haven't got one? Find out more here...

ACT 33: HATS OFF



You've got a brain the size of a planet. Your shirt matches your eyes! You're so good with numbers/animals/children/words/taxidermy! It's good to let folks know why they're great. Go and pay them a compliment today.

Green: Give one very deliberate compliment to someone who needs to hear it today.

Amber: Aim for five genuine compliments today. It doesn't have to be in person, either. You might tweet it, do a #bestiebrag on Instagram, or endorse a few friends on LinkedIn and let them know what you think makes them great.

Red: Look for the good in everything today. Tell as many people as you can the things you appreciate about them.

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.' (Matthew 22:34-40 NIV)

I had a whole conversation with a complete stranger last night. In London. On the tube. No, seriously!

Moments earlier I had been trying to avoid this stranger who was carelessly swinging her perfect ponytail in my face with every jolt of the carriage.

Thankfully, a mass exit at the next station gave me space to move further down the carriage. I sighed with relief until I turned ... and saw she was right behind me. I was trying to summon up some grace from my imaginary WWJD bracelet when I realised she was speaking to me: 'I really like your hair.'

Oh.

What ensued was a conversation about hair styles and products. We talked about skin care and treatments. We discussed music and she wished me luck in the singing recital I was on my way to.

The stranger's name is Nicole and, in all my years of complimenting and being complimented, I have never been so affected as when this teenager broke down the barriers, completely changing the atmosphere and bringing positivity to a stressful situation. In her acknowledgement of me, a complete stranger, Nicole affirmed me as someone worth talking to, worth sharing with.

We didn't talk about faith, but what Nicole did was an echo of what Jesus taught when asked what the greatest commandment was: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind," he said, '... And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Who doesn't want to feel affirmed or acknowledged? These are acts of love and it's a wonder what can result. So thank you, Nicole. Thank you for not being afraid to talk to a stranger in an awkwardly packed carriage on the tube.

And by the way, I love your hair too.

CONTRIBUTOR

TOLA FISHER – Writer

<http://www.christcouture.co.uk> @christcouture

Tola is a writer who has edited Mothers' Union's *Families First* magazine for three years. In her spare time, reading and event organising are priorities while blogging and exercise should be.



CHARITY

MOTHERS' UNION - <http://www.mothersunion.org>

Mothers' Union is an international Christian membership charity that aims to demonstrate the Christian faith in action through the transformation of communities worldwide.

We are working with people of all faiths and none in 83 countries to promote stable marriage, family life and the protection of children through praying, enabling and campaigning.



ACT 34: INCLUDE



Invitations are the fun bits of mail that come in the post, once in a blue moon, in amongst the bills. Everyone likes to be included and invited, so extend a warm invitation to someone today, especially to someone who doesn't normally make the guest list.

Green: Invite someone new round to yours, for a cuppa, to watch the game or just to chat. It could be a new person at college, church or work or someone new on the street. Book a date and put the kettle on.

Amber: Open up your home and invite a few folks you might not usually hang out with. Whether it's a curry night or a board-game bonanza, you're sure to make a few new friends.

Red: Throw a party for a group that could do with getting together. It might be a parents' breakfast (you'd have to arrange a kids' club in tandem), something for the fellas, or an elderly persons' lunch. Enlist the help of your circles to make it an event that everyone remembers!

'The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.' (Mark 12:31 NIV)

'Fancy coming to this?' It sounds so easy but for some reason often when we get to that moment of invitation, something starts to malfunction in the plan.

My wife and I were invited to an event recently and when we arrived we were greeted by name at the door and welcomed in. We were given a nice drink and taken to our reserved seats with a small gift on them and, if I am honest, we felt amazing. The invitation didn't just stop at 'Fancy coming to this?' It was part of a whole process of intentionally making people feel really valued, and this can often be very counter-cultural.

Making people feel great with an invitation and a fun event is good, but it doesn't need to be a big production number. I try to invite outside of the norm, like the time I went to pick up a sofa that I had bought on Ebay. I invited a younger guy who was going through a difficult time to come with me. Yes, he was helpful in lifting the sofa, but the invitation was bigger than that. We talked about life, faith and the ups and downs as we travelled along doing something together, and it started from a simple invitation. I invited a guy on the margins of church to the local recycling centre with me and part of the trip meant that I would take the old rotting sofa from his front garden. We talked life and faith on the journey.

Simple invitations that intentionally invest in the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of those around us, that's loving our neighbour, right? Let me leave you with this: you're not successful in the invitation only if the person accepts it; you are successful when you just invite! Have a go!

CONTRIBUTOR

NATHAN BLACKABY – Christian Vision for Men

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Nathan Blackaby is a husband and father of three children and heads up CVM, Christian Vision for Men. He has worked as church pastor, Chaplin in Teen Challenge and builder bloke in Essex.



CHARITY

TEEN CHALLENGE - <http://www.teenchallenge.org.uk>

Teen Challenge UK is a national charity whose aim is to place hope within reach of every addict.



ACT 35: BUOYANCY AID



We all live in the centre of our own narrative, but it's helpful to remember that everyone around us has their own story too. It has highs and lows, and sometimes those lows are seemingly invisible. Today we're each going to be a lifesaver for someone going through a tough time at the moment. Ask their friends and family what that person needs instead of asking them, and be sensitive to the person's privacy and dignity.

Green: Don't underestimate the power of your prayers. If that's all you've got to give today, it's more than enough. Pray for things like breakthrough, joy, clarity and peace in the person's life, and ask God to show you how best to support them.

Amber: Sometimes in times of crisis, trying to explain to others how they can help is too exhausting. See if you can find out how to meet a practical need in the person's life, without necessarily asking them first (other close friends and family are a good place to start). It could be something as simple as offering time to talk, running some errands or a quick grocery delivery that keeps them above water today.

Red: Be invested. There are some problems (like illness or bereavement) that you can't make your problem too. But you can show that you're in this for the long haul. Dedicate time to checking in, to seeing if anything needs doing, to being a good friend. Commit to seeing the person through the tough times, and help them to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. (Romans 12:15 NIV)

I sat there as she told me about how her ex-partner used to beat her black and blue; how he once kicked her in the head so much she ended up in a coma. She shared how the cocktail of prescription drugs she now took as a result of the abuse was robbing her of sleep and the ability to think straight. She was overwhelmed and exhausted.

'God, what on earth do I say?!'

I'd met this lady through my work with Christians Against Poverty (CAP). Her abusive relationship had left her financially and emotionally bankrupt. Praise God she had found us and was beginning to get help with her debts, but right now things were still tough. I believed that God had a plan for her but to say it out loud in that moment just seemed so trite. I had no idea what she'd been through, or what I could say to ease her pain. I just felt so useless.

But then I felt the Holy Spirit encourage me to realise that I didn't need to fix this: I just needed to give this lady my time, love and compassion. So I did. I didn't say much, except for a simple prayer at the end, but with tears in her eyes she hugged me tight and thanked me for listening. It didn't feel like much to me but the fact that someone cared meant a lot to her.

Sometimes we have no words to make things better but I believe we can still offer support by coming alongside people in their pain. In Romans 12:15 Paul says, 'Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.' Sometimes people just need to know they're not alone.

CONTRIBUTOR

KATHY FREEMAN – Christians Against Poverty

<https://capuk.org> @CAPuk

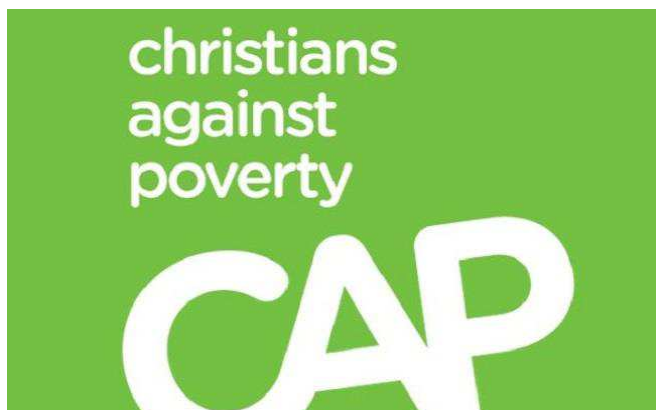
Kathy lives in Leeds and works at Christians Against Poverty's Head Office in Bradford, as a PR Officer in the Communications team. She is passionate about tackling poverty and injustice, and especially loves to write about lives that have been transformed by Jesus.



CHARITY

CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY – <https://capuk.org>

We are passionate about releasing people in our nation from a life sentence of debt, poverty and their causes. Working with the Church we bring good news, hope and freedom.



ACT 36: WILD CARD



Today you get the chance to play your 'wild card'. It's the act we left a big question mark over so we could let you—the 40acts community—give us direction. What you told us was (1) there were some acts you went all out on and would love to repeat and (2) there were some you bailed out on and would like another chance to try. The Bible is full of people who received second chances, and even third and fourth chances: Peter, Jonah, Mark, Samson, David, the list goes on.

So that gave us an idea: let's make today the day of the Second Chance. Another chance to embrace the challenge you loved or another chance to step up to the one you missed first time round. So seize your moment— this is your second chance.

Green: The easy one: eat, sleep, repeat. Revisit one of the acts you really enjoyed, or one of the acts you were looking forward to doing but had a really busy day.

Amber: Half hearted, missed opportunity, a sense of disappointment or just out of your comfort zone. One of your acts didn't quite go to plan? Like the song – dust yourself off and start all over again.

Red: Is there a calling, a task or opportunity that you have neglected or even failed at? Or is there someone you have dismissed, pigeon holed or have had a break down in communication with? Revisit that calling, person or opportunity, you never know what is around the next corner.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, (Jonah 3:1)

It was Sunday morning in the perpetually crowded post-church coffee scrum and there she was. I'd heard about this girl and I'd seen her a couple of times from afar but we'd never met.

This was the moment to introduce myself. I had an accent (she's American, I'm British), so what could go wrong? After all, you only get one chance to make a first impression, right? So I channeled my inner Hugh Grant, walked over to her and confidently made "a move".

We started dating shortly after that but it was short lived. Our lives were headed in different directions and while we remained friends that was it all it was to be.

Years later, I had cause to go back to the States and as we were still in touch, we met for a coffee. It caught me by surprise but in that moment I realised that while life was now more complicated, there seemed to be no real reason why this couldn't work again. A restless redeye flight home, and a couple of missed calls later, we talked about giving "us" a second chance.

If you ask my wife about our first encounter, she will have no recollection of a conversation with the englishman who ummed and erred amongst the sugar

sachets and stirrers. So, I'm thankful for multiple second chances.

We often remember those first times but how often do we remember the second chances? A first time may initially be more memorable but a second chance makes us more aware of what life could have been without it.

It is a gift and this week we remember the greatest gift of all. Grace - a life-giving gift, generously given over and over again. A gift that gives us all more than just a second chance.

CONTRIBUTOR

JON MARCH – St Lukes of Kentish Town

<http://www.slkt.org.uk> @jonmarch

Jon is married to Sus and they have four rather energetic children. Together they have the privilege of leading St Luke's church in Kentish Town, North London. St Luke's was closed in 1991 and remained closed until Jon & Sus were asked to reopen it in 2012 with a team from Holy Trinity Brompton. The vision of St Luke's is to be centred on Jesus, transforming communities one life at a time. When time allows, Jon enjoys the Camden music scene, craft beer and the trials and tribulations of Tottenham Hotspur.



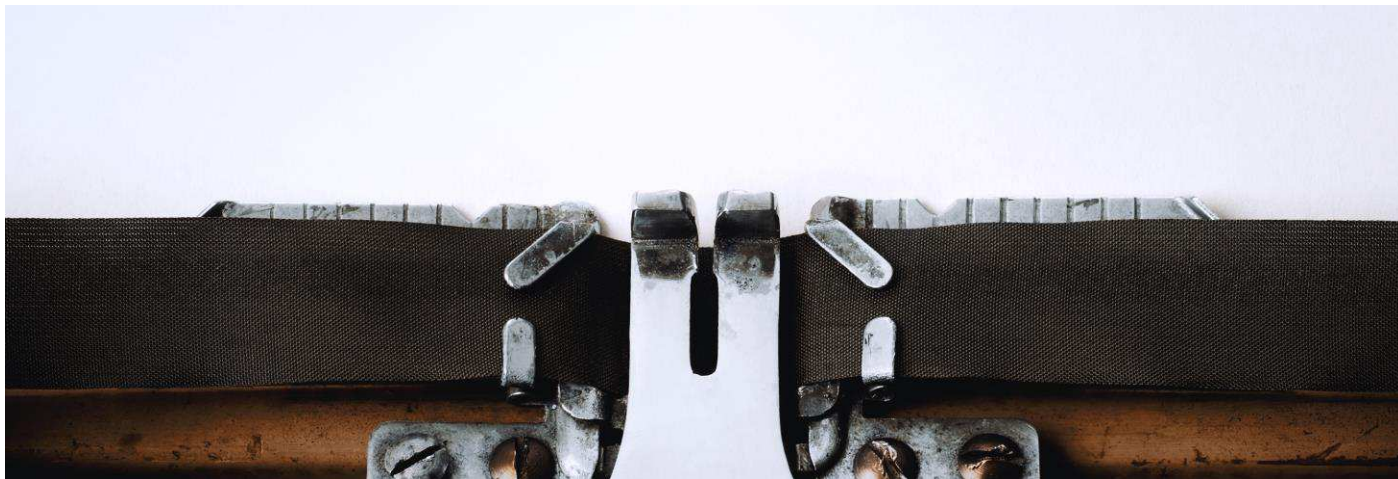
CHARITY

KIDS CLUB KAMPALA - <http://www.kidsclubkampala.org>

Kids Club Kampala aims to bring hope and love to vulnerable children and to transform poor communities in Uganda. KCK was ultimately set up to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to children and families living in situations of extreme poverty in and around Kampala. KCK works to empower children and women from disadvantaged communities, bringing sustainable changes through various development projects and supporting their basic needs.



ACT 37: TESTIFY



Our testimonies are often the best advertisements for Jesus. You don't have to have a perfect life. You don't have to have all your ducks in a row. But being able to articulate how God changed your life is generous because it offers someone else hope. It says to them, 'If he can do it for me, he'll do it for you too.'

Green: Is this tough for you? Maybe you've not ever shared your faith with others. In which case, start small – it could be a simple social media comment or like that hints at your belief. Don't believe in all this Jesus stuff? Take time out today to think about your 40acts experience – in what ways has it changed you and your story?

Amber: If your testimony feels too personal to share, or you haven't got much time, simply share online today what you've learned from your 40acts journey so far. You might like to post it alongside a photo that encapsulates what 40acts has meant to you as a way of introducing your faith to others.

Red: Share your testimony with someone or a group of people today. How you choose to do it is up to you – whether that's on- or off-line. Remember: it doesn't need to be miraculous, sensationalist or world-changing. It changed you, and that simple message is powerful enough.

Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me. (Psalm 66:16 NLT)

You've got a story to tell. You might not think so, but you do.

Maybe it's an adventure story, packed with excitement and suspense. The time you got stranded in Marrakesh. The hunch you followed to set up your own business.

Or maybe it's a drama. The lost laptop. The relationship crisis. The car that wouldn't start when you were already late.

Maybe it's a tragedy. The dreams you lost – or never had. The addictions. The betrayals. The grief.

Or maybe it's a love story. The parents who believed in you when no one else did. The friends who stuck with you, through thick and thin. The one that got away. The one who stayed.

Probably, your story is a mixture of all of these things. But whatever it is, it matters. As we speak of God's work in our lives, we are reminded, 'God is for me and he's for you too. We're all in this together.'

You don't need to be strong or brave to have a good story. God has used my weakness to reach others and your words will do the same. In his hands, your story can pierce darkness and rekindle hope. It's a gift and he calls you to give it.

Sharing our story is not about spotlighting ourselves, but about pointing to our Saviour. You are never the hero of your story; Jesus is. But for this reason, we speak. We speak of the God who made us and faced hell to bring us life. We speak of the arms that carry us, through the furnace and through the storm. We speak of beauty and we speak of brokenness. We speak of his story, and we're awed by the fact that it's our story too.

No one can testify to Jesus in the way that you can. Today – will you share him? And will you share yourself?

LINKS WE LOVE

Struggle to know what to say? Craig shares his story today [on the blog](#).

CONTRIBUTOR

EMMA SCRIVENER – Author

<https://emmascrivener.net>

Emma Scrivener was born in Belfast, but now lives with her husband and daughter in the South East of England. She is the author of *A New Name*, published by IVP, which talks about her experience of eating disorders and mental health. Her second book, dealing with pastoral care, will be published this year. She blogs at <https://emmascrivener.net>.



CHARITY

THE BIG HOUSE- <http://www.thebighouse.org.uk>

The Big House exists to help young people to know God's love as they encounter Jesus and are cared for by the church, especially when they dealing with difficult issues or circumstances. To do this we provide counselling, camps & weekends, and training for leaders.



ACT 38: #WASHDAY



Today is Maundy Thursday, the day when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. It was a simple act that said so much about service, humility, love and much more besides. So in the spirit of that, prepare to get wet.

Green: Keep it simple: offer to do the washing up or wash the windows, or do something around the house that you might not normally have done for someone else.

Amber: Offer to wash something a little more unusual – your neighbour's car, their wheelie bin, their patio.

Red: Wash something really dirty for someone else. The kids' football boots might be caked with weeks' worth of mud. The pavement in your street might be in need of a jet wash. There could be some obscene graffiti on a wall in your area. Go and scrub it off.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51:7 NIV)

Like anything that happens every year, it's easy to take the events of Maundy Thursday for granted. Year after year in our churches, we re-enact Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet.

Sometimes this is done literally by washing each other's feet in a service. Sometimes Christians go out in their local high street and offer free shoe-shining. While this can be appreciated – it is, after all, a very public act of service and offers a chance to stop and chat to strangers on the street – it is not a gift everyone can accept, especially if they are wearing trainers rather than leather shoes.

Because of our familiarity with the story, it's easy to forget quite how that first foot-washing must have felt. The disciples had walked through dusty streets to reach the Upper Room. Their feet were dirty, hot, sweaty. Smelly perhaps. And yet Jesus knelt before them and gently took their feet in his hands.

If you've ever had your feet washed, you'll know it's a disturbingly intimate event. One thing, perhaps, to have your feet washed by a servant – but by Jesus? No wonder Peter protested and tried to refuse the gift he was offering.

At one level, this was simply an act of love: a leader humbly serving his people with his head bowed. At another, the action is ripe with symbolism. By washing their feet, Jesus was preparing them for that deeper, life-changing washing away of sins. You are washed clean; you are forgiven.

This year, why not try to transform your community by washing? Have a look at www.washday.org for ideas on how to make a difference by an act of washing in the service of others.

LINKS WE LOVE

A journey back to the story of Jesus and Peter. [Be inspired today.](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

SARAH MEYRICK – Diocese of Oxford

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Sarah Meyrick is Director of Communications for the Diocese of Oxford.



CHARITY

WATERAID UK - <http://www.wateraid.org/uk>

WaterAid is an international organisation whose mission is to transform the lives of the poorest and most marginalised people by improving access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene.



ACT 39: HUMBLE



Humility is necessary for both forgiving someone and apologising. Don't let your ego stand in the way of reconciliation and freedom today.

(Another 'just one option' act): Whether it's apologising to someone or forgiving someone, either can be difficult. Humble yourself today and take steps towards doing whatever you need to do in order to wipe the slate clean with someone.

*And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!
(Philippians 2:8 NIV)*

I was running late as I hurried to the railway station. However, the road was blocked by a 4x4 vehicle which was prevented from turning into a drive by a parked taxi. There were drivers in both cars and they were both getting angry, but neither would back down, despite the cacophony of horns from the waiting traffic. Eventually a passer-by diffused the situation, but I wasn't the only person who was made late that day.

Few of us find it easy to humble ourselves and put the needs of others before our own, yet our failure to do so often creates a series of relational roadblocks which damage and diminish us, and cause difficulty for other people.

True humility is not about denying our abilities or even our virtues; it is about seeing ourselves in the light of who God is, so that we give up the right to be first and instead give ourselves to serve others.

The shock of the day Christians call Good Friday is the claim that God 'humbled himself' in the person of his eternal Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus was fully equal with God yet, rather than use his power for himself, he became human and sacrificed himself on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. His breath-taking act of self-emptying humility opens the door for us to find peace with God, despite our many failings.

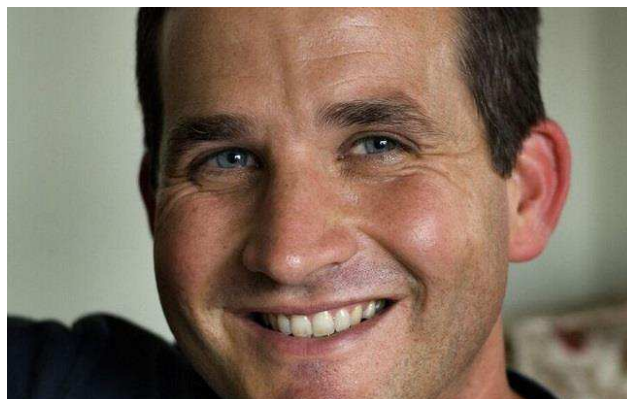
For us, then, the challenge of Good Friday is to follow his example and humble ourselves. That might mean repairing a strained relationship by saying sorry; it might mean extending forgiveness where someone has wronged us; it might mean putting someone else before ourselves. It always means humbling ourselves before God as we confess our failures and receive the forgiveness freely offered to us through the cross.

CONTRIBUTOR

JOHN RISBRIDGER – Keswick Ministries

<http://www.abovebarchurch.org.uk> @JohnRisbridger

John Risbridger is the team-leading minister at Above Bar Church, Southampton, and the Chair of Keswick Ministries, which runs a large Bible-teaching convention in the English Lake District each summer. He is also a member of the Evangelical Alliance Council. John is married to Alison and has two daughters. He has recently written a book on the theology of worship. He loves playing his piano, walking in the Lake District and eating cream teas in the New Forest!



CHARITY

KESWICK MINISTRIES - <https://keswickministries.org>

Keswick Ministries is committed to the spiritual renewal of God's people for his mission in the world. There are three fundamental convictions which shape all we do: hearing God's Word, becoming like God's Son and serving God's mission.



ACT 40: SACRIFICE



Lent is usually marked by giving up: chocolate, TV, social media, whatever it is—we 'sacrifice' those everyday pleasures as a discipline. But how much of a sacrifice have we made? How far should our sacrifice go? Today – as Lent concludes and we look forward to the new hope that Easter brings - we're turning it up a notch. We're going to ask you to commit to a life of sacrifice; beyond just simple abstinence. It's time to reconnect to the ancient view of sacrifice, to offer up our very best to God. The kind of sacrifice which opens our hearts and minds to a life of true generosity.

ONLY ONE OPTION TODAY: It's time to take our generosity to the next level. Think, pray and act on the sacrifices you have, or might still, make during this last day of 40acts.

What has your 40acts journey highlighted? Can you see patterns in the way you've used your time, talents and finances – what more could you do with them? Have you made temporary sacrifices in the last seven weeks that should become permanent? And what is still standing in the way?

This Easter weekend we remember Jesus giving His whole life as a sacrifice to save each of us from an eternity apart from God. He's interested in all of us, not just a part, so what new sacrifices is He asking you to make, to offer up your best – and live and give generously beyond the 40acts challenge?

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5: 1-2

When Pastor Tony Morley heard about the desperate need for a new kidney facing a member of his congregation, he and his wife Joyce prayed. Seeing the impact that the three-times-a-week dialysis was having on the young woman, he offered himself as a potential live organ donor and started the lengthy process to determine if he was a match. Tony shared his story with the Stewardship team recently. In his own words:

"John 13 tells us to 'Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.'"

"Love is incredibly practical. Joyce and I discussed this. She is a nurse, so we had an idea of what we were getting into, and we talked about the risk with major surgery as well as the practical recovery issues."

The results came back – positive. Tony was a match and given the all clear for surgery.

The operation went well, but Tony's recovery was far from perfect, taking twelve weeks instead of the usual six. From Tony's perspective, this was also a gift, providing him time to reflect on how and why he chose to give his kidney. "We were connected by similar pasts" he discovered, with both having lost loved ones to kidney disease.

The transplant was a success and his

recipient rejoices in a functioning kidney and a heart full of gratitude for the generosity and sacrifice of her donor.

It's a big story and one that few of us can, or may get the chance to, replicate. And today, this Holy Saturday, we stand in the shadow of an even bigger story - of Jesus' sacrifice.

Many of us taking part in 40acts will be looking to tomorrow, recognising and accepting the hope that Jesus gave us by offering His best, His life, in place of our own. Some of you might still be exploring and questioning whether you believe the Easter narrative is true – our prayer for you this weekend is that you'll discover comfort and truth in the resurrection of Jesus.

In Romans 12 v 1 we read: "in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship."

It can be easy at times to fall into the trap of saying to ourselves, "What have I got to offer, that God might possibly want or use?" or "Is my gift good enough?" and limit our own experience of generosity as a result.

Today, we challenge you to go all in. To be a living, breathing, all-day-everyday sacrifice. Something alive and active – so much more than just a 'giving up'. An offering, a giving of our best to God. And He, as creator of all things and originator of all gifts, is ready to receive them with arms outstretched.

Throughout 40acts, we have been blown away by the daily examples of you, us, our community, offering up our best. We have been humbled by the stories of those who felt God saying, "This is what I want from you today", even if it meant stepping firmly out of a comfort zone, sacrificing self in favour of others, or stretching ourselves beyond self-imposed limits.

As we reach the end of Lent for another year, let's look back and celebrate what we've achieved together, and reflect on the lessons we've learned about ourselves and our giving along the way.

We might not all give a kidney like Pastor Tony, but our best gifts are yet to come.

What generous act are you being called to make today, or commit to, beyond 40acts?

For the rest of the year? For the rest of your life?

What will you sacrifice to do Life generously?

LINKS WE LOVE

After 40acts, [what's next?](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

THE 40ACTS TEAM! - Stewardship

<http://www.stewardship.org.uk> @stewardshipnews

The 40acts team is made up of Daniel, Debbie, Fiona, Charlie, Alex, Sian, Catherine and John. We are a total melting pot of personalities and we wouldn't have it any other way. We spend most of our days dreaming up generosity challenges, thrashing around borderline-crazy ideas and overusing the phrase "let's crack on". The next phrase we are hoping to work into the teams every day vocabulary is "Flidgeomwoopa-dieslapgebang-odervotvotsmellydingasbonjos".



CHARITY

YOUR LOCAL CHURCH - <http://www.stewardship.org.uk/give>

Today we invite you to give to your local church. You can set up a Stewardship giving account, where you can manage all of your tithing and charitable giving from one simple, secure account online.

Find out more here: www.stewardship.org.uk/give

Alternatively, you can fundraise for your church using www.give.net. Visit this page to get started.

