

Jesus' Template for Urban Mission

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[0 : 00] Let me read God's word to you in Luke's Gospel, chapter 10.

Luke chapter 10. After this the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them, two by two, ahead of him, to every town and place where he was about to go.

He told them, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers into his harvest field. Go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

Do not take a purse or bag or sandals and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first say, peace to this house. If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him.

If not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

[1 : 09] When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, the kingdom of God is near you. But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet, we wipe off against you.

Yet be sure of this, the kingdom of God is near. I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Woe to you, Karatzin, woe to you, Bethsaida, for if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.

He who listens to you listens to me. He who rejects you rejects me. But he who rejects me rejects him who sent me. The 72 returned with joy and said, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.

He replied, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy.

[2 : 29] Nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Urban mission is a huge topic and we cannot possibly cover all of it today.

I think it's very important because one of the problems I think that faces the churches and Christians is that we tend to fragment as we get to grips with urban mission.

And you get different, almost hermetically sealed, separated groupings. You get the urban mission activists who get heavily involved in, say, ministry to homeless people or ministry to prostitutes or care for the poor.

And then you get the big city churches with their evangelistic programs, with their preaching ministries that are really seeking to attract people to hear the gospel.

And then you get people, groups like, I don't know, the Christian Police Association or the Christian Medical Fellowship. Groups that specialise in ministering to and with and among and fellowshiping among the professionals, the different businesses and whatever that are operating in the city.

[4 : 00] Now, which one of those is urban mission? The answer has to be that all of them are. Is this a message from our sponsor?

No, it's just something else. They're all part of urban mission. And we could quite easily spend this morning talking as members of churches of how can the churches do more to mobilise and equip our members to be what David was reading to us from Jeremiah, to be lively Christians within the hospitals, the offices, the police forces, the schools, the colleges of our city.

We believe that Christians are part of the mission of Christ in doing all that they do to the glory of God. We could simply concentrate on the church's gospel proclaiming ministry in the city.

How do we preach in a way that actually engages with people where they are? How do we make our preaching relevant in cities where there is such a huge range of people whose only knowledge of Jesus comes from reading the Da Vinci Code?

Or people who are from a Muslim background or a Hindu background? People who did go to Sunday school? People who never heard of Sunday school? How do we preach meaningfully in our churches given that we're hoping our members are bringing people in to hear the gospel?

[5 : 42] How can we preach on that? That's a huge issue. How do we minister the word of Jesus Christ to a society that has no concept of grace?

By the way, I do recommend Tim Keller's book *The Prodigal God*. The challenge to us not to be elder brothers. How do we really live out the grace of Jesus in our preaching and in our lives?

And what about all those urban ministry things like the ministry to homeless people, the Christians Against Poverty sort of thing, all the charity shops, all the other activities that we have that are engaging with the needs of the people to get alongside them in the name of Jesus and the love of Jesus.

They're all part of urban mission. How can we possibly deal with them in one morning? Well, I want to look today at this passage in Luke's Gospel because I think it takes us down a step to first principles, but I do believe, and I hope you'll see as we work through the 12 points I've set down here, that it actually provides a test, a checklist, an agenda that we need, that not only to stimulate us to begin in urban mission, but also something that we need to keep coming back to, to evaluate our ministries.

Immediately though, we start talking at a conference like this. We have a problem. I called it on the notes, the problem of missiology. Missiology being, if you like, a shorthand for thinking and talking about missions.

[7 : 28] Missions. When I first went to the London City Mission as Director of Training, the attitude I got, the response I got, especially from some of the older city missionaries, really went something like this.

What you want to think about mission, what you can think about mission if you like, we're too busy doing it. And there's traditionally been, historically been, a tension between the practitioners of mission and the theorists of mission.

Actually, that's not peculiar to the problem of mission. You get it in most workplaces. You know, you get people who've been doing a particular job all their lives. And then somebody comes along and gives them a, says, well look, we've got a health and safety lecture.

And people say, oh isn't that wonderful? We were just saying the other day, we do love health and safety. They don't say that, do they? They say, oh no. There was this wonderful one recently, wasn't there, some European directive means that companies are supposed to hold training courses on how to use a ladder.

And you're no longer allowed to go up a ladder at work unless you've done this half day training course. Well, it's that sort of problem, the problem, the tension between pragmatism and principle.

[8 : 53] But actually in Christian mission, it is a real problem because any of you that are involved in urban mission of any of those sorts, we're all so busy, aren't we?

And sometimes it's not a matter of prejudice, it's just a matter of sheer practicalities. I haven't got time, I've only got one evening a week to be involved in that sort of work. So, I haven't got time, I'd love to read a book about it and think some more about the principles, but I either think or I do.

And there's that tension. We need to pray that God would help us to both think and do. And that's a big, big challenge.

You see, one of the tragedies about urban mission or any sort of practical Christian ministry is that what tends to be, what's a good idea to begin with tends to veer away into unhealthy directions or to run into the sand simply because we don't reflect on it.

How many people who volunteer to do a task, they do it in a poor way in the sense that they're not told, right, when you start as a volunteer, we'll take a couple of evenings and run you through what we're trying to do here.

[10 : 09] And then after three months we'll have a review session with you and we'll get your feedback and we'll talk about it and after a year we'll have an assessment and we'll, so that you can tell us what you feel about the work.

We can make sure you're on the same wavelength. So often people start doing a job and nobody actually tells them what we're trying to do. Nobody reflects on whether we could be doing it better.

Nobody sits down after a while to say, are we achieving what we set out to do? And so people keep doing that task out of a mere sense of duty, however frustrating they find it.

Actually thinking about what we're doing can actually help us to do it more eagerly. And who knows, it might, even without seminars on ladders, it may actually help us to do things a bit better than we were doing before.

When we start thinking about mission and writing about mission, I think there's a second big problem. I called it tweaking the Bible's wax nose. John Calvin, whose 500th anniversary of his birth is being commemorated this year.

[11 : 19] John Calvin says so many people give the Bible a wax nose. It's an out of date illustration today, but when people used to sculpt statues, do a statue of a great man, what they would do would be to put a lump of wax on the front of the block of stone and then, you know, you can shape the wax to get the nose just right.

Because, you know, if you're doing a picture of somebody and you get the wrong shaped nose, completely alters their appearance. So you, a lump of wax, a wax nose is a way of saying this is how the sculptor makes sure that what he's making is exactly as he likes it to be.

And Calvin says we can treat the Bible like that. We can kind of move the Bible. We can fiddle with the Bible until it says what we want it to say. And there's that danger.

It's one of the things that London City Mission is one of those wonderful things. It's a non-denominational organisation. And I go all around the place speaking in different churches.

Brethren churches, charismatic churches, house churches, Presbyterian churches, Anglican churches. And every lively church in the world claims that their church and the way they do things is built on the book of Acts.

[12 : 39] This is, you know, we are the biblical ways. And they all do things differently. It's wonderful. And you stand back and you say, hmm, I always thought there was just one book of Acts.

And we all like to think that what we do is biblical. The danger is we all select from the Bible. Are we fitting our ministries to the Bible or are we fitting the Bible to our ministries?

Ed Clowney, who taught me at Westminster Seminary years ago, says, everybody has different favourite verses. If you're charismatic, your favourite verse is, where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

And if you're a Presbyterian, your favourite verse is, let all things be done decently and in order. And we all have starting points and we need to be very careful on that.

And that leads me on, well, we need to pray again that God would help us to use the Bible properly. And that, by the way, is why I'm talking about a template today.

[13 : 45] I'm not much of a computer expert, in fact, I'm not a computer expert at all, but it seems to me that the difference between a template and, say, a blueprint, is if you get a blueprint, if you get a detailed plan for something, for a piece of machinery, or for a component of a car engine, you have to make it exactly in every detail according to the blueprint.

Every dimension has to be exactly shaped and measured to that. Whereas a template is a kind of flexible framework which sets out the basics within which you've got to operate and, you know, with a template on a computer, you can adapt it to do exactly what you want.

You can include a few things, you leave out, but a template is a flexible framework. And I think one of the reasons we end up with those different theories all based on the book of Acts, maybe we're all right, but what we're tending to think is that there is a rigid blueprint in the Bible for do it exactly this way.

Ed Clowney again used to say, there is no book of Leviticus in the New Testament, telling us what clothes to wear, what shape things, what to do exactly there.

What we've got actually in the New Testament is more of a template to guide us into applying biblical principles relevantly today.

[15 : 21] And then that leads me on to a third point just to make my way of introduction, and I call it this, Jesus or Paul. Yes, I'm talking about the book of Acts because in my experience, most Christians and most churches base their evangelism and their urban mission activity, if they base it on scripture at all, on the Acts and the epistles.

But I want to suggest to you that the Gospels are at least as important as the Acts and the epistles in framing the ministry of the Christian church.

Because, you see, I think theologically, yes, Jesus, the Gospels are before Pentecost. The Gospels are before, if you like, the birth of the Christian church as that new spirit-filled activity.

And yet, in the Gospels, we have the kingdom of God concentrated in one person. We have the spirit on Jesus without measure. And, it's a walking ministry.

That, of course, is why Jesus, it was better for us that Jesus went away, because when he went away, the spirit could be in us, wherever we are, in whatever ministry, in whatever situation we are in.

[16 : 44] But, in the Gospels, we see the spirit's ministry concentrated in the person of Jesus Christ. And I think for our evangelism and for our urban ministry, there are huge applications there.

Okay, all that by way of an introduction. Here, then, is a 12-point template, just going through this passage that talks about the ministry of the 70 or the 72.

It's interesting, Luke, a couple of chapters before, is given an account of the sending out of the 12, the apostles, and there's debate about just where did this, why was there this second ministry?

And without going into the details of that, I think at the very least, she's saying, well look, the apostles, yeah, they were special, they were foundational, you can always get into arguments, well, was that peculiar to the apostles?

Here we've got Jesus sending out the wider group of his followers. It's possible that the number 70 is significant linking in or suggesting not just the Jews, the 12 apostles relating to the 12 tribes of Israel, but the 70 is looking out beyond Israel to the whole world, even though their ministry here is confined to Israel.

[18 : 06] But here we have an example of Jesus sending his followers into the towns of Palestine and telling them some basic instructions about the ministry that they were to pursue.

Okay, let's just run through, you've got the list there on these 12 points, I won't expound all of them, but let's just make a point or two.

Jesus sends them out into every town and place, there you go, the geometry of urban mission. It's really the difference between the word go and the word come.

Let me put it like this, under the Old Testament anybody in the world could become a worshipper of the God of Israel, temple.

But to do that they had to come to Jerusalem, to the temple. Remember there was a court of the Gentiles in the temple. People like Ruth could become members of the family of God, but to do that she had to come to Israel from Moab.

[19 : 22] Under the New Testament the word is go, go into all the world. The temple is no longer a building to which the world is invited, it is a living community that goes into the world.

It has become, it's no longer an attractive ministry, attracting people to come to this spectacular temple in Jerusalem. It is an aggressive ministry, using both of those words cautiously, attractive, or aggressive.

The temple of Jesus Christ is a living community that invades the territory of unbelief, that goes into all the world.

And urban mission is the church sent out into the city. Now that may be a physical going, you know, a going out into the dark corners and into the homes, knocking on doors, whatever.

It may be something physical, but it is certainly something psychological. Psychologically, the church needs, if it's going to be involved in urban mission, to be a going concern.

[20 : 43] A church that has a mindset that is thinking out there. And that shows, for instance, in the praying of our churches. John Miller, Jack Miller, wrote a book called Outgrowing the Ingrown Church a few years ago.

And one of the points he made was that our praying is so often what he called maintenance prayer, rather than front-line prayer. And he challenged churches, say, listen to your prayer meetings.

How much of your time is praying for God's blessing on your services, on your Sunday schools, praying for the members of your church who are ill? How much time do you actually spend praying for the people in your communities who don't come to church?

How much time do you spend praying across the front-line? You know, he says the whole point in war was that you wanted to send your bullets across into enemy territory.

You're in the front-line, you're actually engaging with the other side. And that's a, you know, our churches so easily become places where we escape from the world, and the very, the danger is that the very intensity and loveliness of our Christian fellowship, the very loving care that we have for one another, can become so strong, so, if you like, so, so powerful, that it actually turns our eyes away from the world outside.

[22 : 26] Or alternatively, we can become so defensive, feel so threatened by the world, that we look at, we're ill at ease, even thinking about that nasty world out there.

It's a mindset. We're not only sent out the geometry, we're sent ahead. Jesus sent them out, it says, into every place where he was about to go.

Now, of course, physically, literally that was the case during Jesus' ministry. But that's a geometry, that's a perspective thing again for our urban mission.

Are we looking out despairingly into a world that is really beyond the pale, but I suppose we can try? Or are we going out, are we looking out into communities and societies where Jesus is about to go?

Because our Lord Jesus Christ is Lord of all the earth. He walks among the nations of the world. The kingdoms of the earth are destined to become the kingdoms of the Lord through the gospel.

[23 : 34] And we need that mindset, that geometry. Seems to me that the history of the Christian church has been a constant tendency to turn back to an Old Testament geometry.

To build beautiful churches and beautiful services and to rely on those attracting people to come and see for themselves.

Whereas the New Testament geometry is go into all the world. Okay, second point I want to make is this, the setting of urban ministry.

He sent them out to every town and place where he was about to go. They're kind of heralds for the ministry of Jesus.

But where did Jesus conduct his ministry? Does he say to him, I want you to go to every synagogue and announce that I'll be coming there and holding a meeting? Where did Jesus do his ministry?

[24 : 38] And it seems to me looking at the scriptures that Jesus had a street ministry. If you turn back to Luke chapter 9 from verse 37 onwards, you have a series of encounters and conversations.

Jesus with all sorts of people. There's a man who's come looking for him with a sick son. there's disciples who are arguing among themselves about who's the greatest.

And then one of his disciples said, back there we met a man who was driving out demons in your name. We bumped into him. Then they come to a Samaritan village and the Samaritans are quite hostile.

They don't want them even to stay there. Remember James and John say, let's burn them up like Elijah did, those nasty Samaritan Samarian soldiers back in the book of Kings.

Then somebody else comes running up to Jesus who's eager to follow him. And so on. On other occasions, hostile religious groups come.

[25 : 51] The Pharisees come to try and trip him up. Some people come up to Jesus because they've heard he does free bread. And you're following me because of the bread that I've made.

people come to Jesus for all sorts of reasons. One man came to Jesus and said, tell my brother to give me a fair share of the inheritance.

But my point is that Jesus met people on the streets. A woman taking her son to be buried outside the town of Nain. But in those days people actually lived on the streets.

You know, society there, I suppose the equivalent would be more like a third world town or village or one of those great Indian cities where everything is done out on the streets.

Literally everything is done on the streets. And some people even live on the streets. But walk down the streets and it's not like driving through Aberdeen on a quiet Sunday afternoon where all you see is the odd car going the other way.

[26 : 57] It's life on the streets. Jesus engaged with the people. And he sent these people out there, he sent these disciples out to engage with the population.

How do we do that? Now, this is where we get a break. If I can show you this, can we turn some lights off? This is a seven minute clip I want to show you about our attempt in London or one of our attempts to actually meet people.

How can you minister to the city if you don't meet the city? Jesus met them on the streets. My sort of slogan for this is we need to create streets with roofs on because most of our society don't actually live on the street today and certainly in Britain.

How do we meet with our society? Let me just tell you a couple of facts about departure. The main one is that we've been open just two years now and the last check we did we've got a footfall counter on the door so we can tell how many people have walked in through the door and once we've allowed for team members going in and out, at the moment we've got between fifteen hundred and two thousand people a week.

We've got between fifteen hundred and two thousand people a week coming in through the door there. I was there on Thursday for my lunch meeting somebody and as we sat talking I was trying to explain to him how we were trying to reach out to a Muslim community, Bangladeshi Muslims, to old Eastenders and to Yuppies, an art class must have just finished in the basement because suddenly up the stairs came four women wearing burkas, you know, all over Muslim dress, just their faces showing.

[28 : 55] They've been doing an art class. The next person up the stairs was one of our mission team who'd also been doing the art class and then there were some old Eastenders. Now, two things there. One is, I don't know anywhere else in the East End where Bangladeshis and old Eastenders and Yuppies regularly meet together.

So, even without the Christian element we've got something there that people take notice of. But, I know that one of those Bangladeshi women said to our woman missionary a while ago, you know, I've been in London now for years and I've never been in a Christian church.

Could I come to your church? You know, I was thinking, how much effort do we put in trying to train our church members to evangelise their neighbours? You know, they have to learn all sorts of clever questions and how to present your testimony and all the rest of it.

This is, I think this is fantastic. You know, all you need to do is get your people in a place like departure and then somebody will say to them, can I come to your church? And then they have to remember to say yes.

And she came. And the fascinating thing was she then invited our missionary girl to go to the next sort of Muslim festival meal that they had in their family.

[30 : 10] So she went and she was the first white British person who'd been in that Bangladeshi home and there was a whole extended family. She was a bit nervous whether they'd sort of get it to her.

Actually they were all intrigued. You're a Christian. What do you Christians believe? What do you do? And she spent the whole evening just answering their questions about Christianity and the Bible.

But do you see what I mean? There's departure. we're not meeting addressing directly any classic social needs apart from the need for company companionship.

Yuppies spend all day sitting in front of a screen losing our money in the stock exchange and then they go home to a one bedroom flat and sit watching Sky TV all evening. They can now come across there and hang out in a place where they'll meet others.

That's a social need even if they're filthy rich. If they're bankers they used to be filthy rich. But you know we are addressing social needs but a different sort of social needs.

[31 : 16] But it's a street and who knows what social needs those Bangladeshi people have. It's somewhere you can meet them. It seems to me people sometimes say to me where's the evangelism in that?

Where are you preaching the gospel? Do you have an epilogue every night? We don't. But Stuart Currie who came up as art historian and community worker. Stuart's one of our missionaries.

He was a lecturer in film at Brunel University before he came to us. Every Friday night he shows a sort of world cinema type film and then leads a discussion afterwards.

He also does a lecture regularly on Christianity as displayed in classic art or the story of Jesus as displayed in classic art.

And so there's all sorts of ways in which we have a poetry group that can share poetry and discuss what the poet is trying to say. Then we're moving on and we've now got Christianity Explored group running.

[32 : 15] I hope as that develops that we'll get a lot more sort of little steps up. There's all sorts of ways that you can, from discussing art and what people experience when they express themselves in art, music and whatever, into talking about the issues that Christians want to talk about.

But more basically than that, what we're really doing as a, if you like, as a parachurch organisation, we're saying to the local churches, Gordon Warren from St. Anne's Limehouse was there, the local Salvation Army outreach team, we say to them, look, we've made a street and there are people on the street.

There's, you know, nearly 2,000 of them every week are in there. Why don't you and your church members come on the street yourselves? Come in and have some soup there before you go off and do your Bible study.

Come here and do a, encourage your members to do a sowing class and then for 10 weeks they'll be sitting next, perhaps to a Bangladeshi woman. Where else are your Christians going to have that sort of chance in a non-threatening environment to actually encounter people?

Jesus sent his disciples out to the streets and towns to meet people. You know, whatever ministry we're going to do, we may have a fantastic ministry, a plan and programme, but if we don't actually engage with people, if we don't meet the people, how are we going to, you know, where are we going to get our clients from for that ministry?

[33 : 50] Number three, vision and confidence for urban mission. Let me just explain what I mean by these. Jesus told them, the harvest is plentiful.

Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers. You know, Jesus is talking to us and saying, look, the, the, we shouldn't be intimidated.

Verse three talks of, I'm sending you out like lambs among wolves. Wolves. We have this problem with the city. Are we frightened of the city? Are we frightened of those gangland areas?

Are we terrified of those Muslim communities because we've been bombarded with so much stuff in the secular press about Muslim terrorism? And so much stuff, let it be said, from certain Christian organisations about how Muslims are trying to take over the country and how Muslims persecute Christians all over the world.

There's truth in those, but it's not the whole truth. And we can be intimidated. And yes, if you like, there are plenty wolves in the city. And I'm sending you out into the city, among the wolves like lambs.

[35 : 04] But, we're doing that in dependence on the Lord of the harvest. This city is God's harvest field. world. We live in a world that God has purposed to save through Jesus Christ.

He is the saviour of the world. He is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. That doesn't mean each and every individual, evidently from the Bible narrative.

But it does mean that there is no part of this world that is a no-go territory to the people of Jesus Christ. vision and confidence. Our whole era is harvest time from Jesus is coming to the end of the world.

But there's also a sense that there are particular seasons of harvesting. Paul at Athens said that it is God who has fixed the times and the places where people live.

I could spend a lot of time on this, but those Muslims in London, a threat to our civil liberties, perhaps. But why are they there? We have 600,000 Muslims living in London.

[36 : 18] And they're all learning English. And they walk through the doors of our cafes. Somalis, Afghans, and so on. We have a historic harvest mission opportunity to reach areas of the Muslim world that have never been reached before.

The Lord of the harvest is at work. And that goes, obviously it's there in a huge way in London, but it's there in all our cities and all our towns.

The Lord of the harvest. So we need that vision and confidence. Prayer and dependence. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into the harvest.

We have to pray because the key to urban mission is something that only God can do. And the key to urban mission is people called and equipped by the living God.

Not programmes. You can gather money by hook or by crook. You can hire buildings. You can write programmes.

[37 : 26] But the decisive step in every urban ministry, every ministry, is the people who run it. And having been the director of recruitment for LCM for ten years, I can tell you that's the difficult part.

We cannot create suitably gifted people. We can only look for them and pray for them. It is God that makes them.

As a, you know, if you like an extreme example to underline that point, one of my friends when he was minister of a church had a great idea. He's going back before computers and all this sort of stuff.

But he saw a printing press for sale, advertised for sale. A company was going out of business. And he thought, wouldn't that be fantastic if we had a printing press in our church, we could do really good literature to distribute among the neighbourhood.

We could have good handouts in our services. These are going back to the days of Roneo duplicators. Had a proper printing press. So he, you know, took half the church's body and went and bought this printing press.

[38 : 35] And five years later it was still sitting in the cupboard or in the loft in the church. Because he hadn't got anybody in the church who could operate it. It's the people that are hard to find.

And it's God who creates people. And it's God who goes with us. Those people are God's assistants. Jesus doesn't say to us, go into all the world and come back on the last day and tell me how you've got on.

Jesus says, go into all the world and I'm going with you. We are God's fellow workers. So it's vital that for recruitment and for ministry we are dependent on God.

Vulnerability in faith. Well I've always talked, I've already talked about the lambs and the wolves. Perhaps I should be here more talking about verse 4. Do not take a purse or a bag or sandals with you.

But do not greet anyone on the road. Maybe five and six merge together here. Somewhat difficult to understand just what Jesus is saying in verse 4.

[39 : 44] Some suggest that the purse was a sort of begging bowl that itinerant preachers would hand around to take a collection whenever they spoke. And that Jesus here is telling the disciples, don't go out and be those sort of beggars who try and impress people with what they say so that they'll give you money.

What's he mean by not taking bag or sandals? What does he mean by not greeting anybody on the road? I think there's a strong element of the local culture involved in his commands.

And Jesus I suspect is saying that don't get mistaken for the sort of peddlers of ideas who just sort of milk the gullible people of their money.

And don't be sort of scheming about it. Maybe that's the reference to taking a bag and sandals. Don't worry about getting a whole lot of equipment. How are you going to sustain yourself for the next six months?

Go in faith. And he says, don't greet anyone on the road. Is that a possible distraction from the work?

[41 : 03] You know, when I ministered in Argyleshire, we lived in Ardnarmurken down the end of a single track road. And you say, well, how long does it take you to drive from Kilhoen to Salon?

And the answer was, well, it depends who you meet coming the other way. I mean, tourists are bad enough when they try and reverse into the passing places. But, you know, that's a minute or so. But, I mean, if you meet the school teacher, you've got to have a chat with her and ask, oh, how's Annie doing?

Or how are the kids doing? How are you? And you know what it's like in the west of Scotland. You have to go through the litany first. Oh, hello, how are you? And how's your wife? And how's the children? And you go through all that.

And then you talk about other things. And it depends who you meet. And sometimes it could take you an hour and a half. Sometimes it could take you 30 minutes. Jesus says, don't greet anybody on the way.

Don't get distracted from the work. The general lesson, perhaps, I'd make from these is that we do need to look at a number of things that are in our culture and in our culture of ministry, and question them.

[42 : 11] How do we raise our money? Fundraising is a horrible reality within Christian ministry these days.

I hear of churches that want to turn their old church into a building that they can use for more ministry in the community.

And their budget for that is two million pounds. So they're going around looking to raise two million pounds. And maybe there's a church half a mile down the road that's doing it.

I was in one church a while ago that was announcing a rebuilding program. They had a whole range of halls and a big church looked fine to me. They started an appeal for eight million pounds to fund their desire to reach out into the community.

And then we do have problems, don't we, of short-termism. Maybe we get a grant from somebody which enables us to recruit a team to start a ministry.

[43 : 15] But after one year, that grant's going to run out. And, you know, a while ago, a famous, a well-known evangelical ministry began with huge publicity and outreach to the homeless.

Very close to where we have our ministry that's been running for about 70 years. And they had enormous publicity, raised lots of money. Three years later, the whole thing closed down.

And they've now moved into running, taking over schools under these, one of these sort of, you know, I don't know what they call it, school systems where you can sort of buy in or fund a school. Why?

Because there's government subsidies for that. And there's no longer, they could no longer get any funding for the other. Is that right? How do we fund our ministry? What's the balance between relying on God and, you know, doing the business plan, taking all your sandals and your schools, raising your money?

Huge areas there that I think we don't, we need to think carefully about. I haven't got any simple answers, but I think those are some of the things that Jesus challenges us here.

[44 : 21] Then there's another area too with this wealth. Go into the town where you are and if you're welcome to eat what is set before you.

It was part of their culture that hospitality was taken for granted, that you would take people for meal. We have a converted Muslim in our mission team. And if he meets somebody on the streets, one of the first questions he asks when he does sort of open air work is, have you eaten?

Can I take you for a meal? Does horrors on his expenses account and does even worse horrors on his stomach. He looks like it. But that's part of his culture.

You know, you eat with somebody, it's done there. We don't have that same culture. But how do we relate to the people themselves?

Does sometimes us going with all our equipment and with all our tremendously expensive buildings, does that put a barrier between us and the people we're trying to reach?

[45 : 24] To what extent should we identify with the people that we're ministering to? Somebody did a survey a few years ago of ministries to the homeless.

Not Christian ministries, but all ministries to the homeless in London. And this was, you know, 15 years ago. So the salary levels would seem a bit low now, but there was something like 14 ministries with directors earning over £60,000 a year.

And they calculated that if you took all the money, the budgets of all these organisations that were working in London with the homeless, it would be enough to buy every rough sleeper, each rough sleeper in London, a detached house in Tunbridge Wells.

You know, we do need to look at ourselves, but what I'm thinking about here is, what barriers does that put between us and others? David was telling me, we're talking about Peru, and he was telling me of a town where one of the churches was known as the rich church, because perhaps some more professional people went there.

But are there some, you know, we're really trying to reach out to needy people, to people in their needs. And yet, unwittingly, the way we're doing things may be putting a barrier between us and them.

[46 : 47] Questions? Think of. Positive engagement. Let's quickly mention that one. Where have we got to there? Verse 5 following. Yeah, Jesus says, when you enter a town, you enter a house, say, peace to this house.

What that suggests to me is the need to keep asking ourselves, what's our attitude to the people we're ministering to? There is such a thing as sort of ministry exhaustion, compassion exhaustion.

We can become very cynical about the people we're ministering to. Take homeless people. You know, lots of Christians get a real idealistic passion for ministering to the homeless.

But I lead a team of people, some of whom have been ministering to homeless people for 30 years. And when you work with homeless people, there's nothing romantic about most homeless people.

They can be pretty vicious. They can be violent. They can be totally unappreciative of what you've done. And there's a danger that our idealism gives way to a kind of cynicism.

[48 : 01] And there are some people I've met who minister to the needy with a kind of contempt for the needy. Very strange. But how do you sustain that attitude of love and peace?

I want to bring God's shalom into your life. And whenever you greet them, it's, may God's peace be with you. It seems a simple little word on the page of the gospel.

But in the reality of ministry, are we sustaining that sort of attitude? Key relationships. Stay in the house that invites you in. Again, there's partly cultural thing there, but it is interesting that that meant that the evangelist was actually having very intense contact with one person or one family.

They were not only telling them about Jesus, but they were living out the reality of a Christian life in the presence of their contacts. I have a strong belief that, you know, the old idea that you do evangelism and then when people respond to that, you do discipleship, is an oversimplification.

You actually begin to disciple people the first day you meet them. What's discipleship? But teaching people, teaching converts, how Christians live. When you begin teaching a non-Christian that directly you sit in their home.

[49 : 26] Because they see the way you live. And discipleship and evangelism tie together. They see that you've got something that they haven't got. And they're convicted. But when they become Christians, how are they going to start living?

Well, their assumption is they're going to start living like Christians live. And if you've been living among them, if they've seen the way you live in their home, then that's going to be initially the biggest influence on how they live as Christians.

Discipleship and evangelism. And then leadership and evangelism. Every ministry needs to be creating local leaders. And it's very interesting in Acts how often Paul, the people that Paul stayed with, Ananias and Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth, became leaders, ministry workers in their own right.

We need to, you know, when we're working among homeless people, we need to be thinking which of these homeless people are going to become leaders in ministry themselves. I visited the Bowery Mission in New York a few years ago.

And was very impressed that everybody working in, you know, serving the food, teaching the computer courses, managing the hostel. Every one of them, when I talked to them, said, oh yes, I used to be here myself as a homeless person.

[50 : 46] But I came to faith through their ministry, I was sorted out by their programs, and now I've come back to work for them. That gives real authenticity to a ministry.

And you need to start on day one to have that in mind. And I think that's one kind of spin-off of this staying in one house, developing, identifying, perhaps producing those key relationships.

They were there to minister in word and deed. Tell them that the kingdom is coming. And heal the sick and tell them the kingdom of God is near you.

This was Jesus' own pattern. Jesus was mighty in word and in deed. He went around, Matthew tells us, healing the sick and proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Again, a huge topic. But at the very least we need to say that if we don't proclaim the word of the gospel, it is not Christian mission.

[51 : 49] And if we don't care for the needs of people, then it is not Jesus' mission. It's not biblical mission.

The two are inseparable. The two go together because our God is the God of the body as well as the soul. Our Lord Jesus was not a disembodied spirit.

The gospel transforms life. And we need these things. Our deeds authenticate our words. They were the evidence that Jesus was who he claimed to be.

The miracles that he did. The deeds embody our words. The loving care of Jesus with the father of the demon possessed boy, etc.

Show that when he talks about the love and mercy of God, it's real. You can see it. You can feel it as well as hear about it. Deeds attract to our words.

[52 : 51] People came running to Jesus because they heard of the things he had done. And our mercy ministries will attract people to our preaching ministries.

Just as our preaching ministries will empower us and drive us to mercy ministries. One of the big challenges of urban ministry historically is to keep these two in right balance.

I think it's especially difficult in our comfortable society where middle class Christians say, well, physical needs are provided for by the state. And anybody who's needy is obviously just their own fault.

And we don't see those. If we lived in Africa or the third world, we wouldn't have that problem in seeing the linkage. And I do think there are perils on both sides.

I'm sad when I hear churches say, our job is just to preach the word. We're not into social work. And I equally feel sorry and very angry when I hear people saying, if we do good deeds, we won't need to ram the gospel down people's throats.

[54 : 04] And that becomes an excuse for not proclaiming the gospel. My pet hatred. That awful quote from Francis of Assisi, which finishes with, use words if you have to, or speak if you have to.

It's an utterly unbiblical thing. Go out and be nice to people, do things for them, and use words if you have to. One American friend of mine told me that there was a riposte to that, would be America, wouldn't it?

It said that when you get to heaven, see Sir Francis of Assisi and persuade him that he was wrong and use your fists if you have to. But it's a false dichotomy.

Our people need to know about Jesus. There are Muslims going out there doing good works. There's a red crescent as well as a red cross. But there is only one saviour.

And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? Deeds without words are meaningless and pointless.

[55 : 14] They don't take you anywhere. Words without deeds can be cheap and shallow. The two must go together. Dealing with rejection.

It's very interesting that Jesus envisaged rejection. He didn't say, go out and everybody will love you. Go out and accept everybody and whatever they do to you, just keep on doing things to them.

We are not to affirm unbelief. We are not to affirm sin. We are to confront it and to challenge it. And that will lead to rejection.

And if our ministries don't envisage rejection, then they're not biblical ministries. Actually, rejection and unbelief is a weapon that can be turned on the enemy.

That's the references there to John's Gospel. But we must not be so naive. It seems to me that Christians have taken in an unbiblical value that sort of says, well, we just go on ministering to everybody and whether they reject the Gospel or that doesn't matter.

[56 : 21] Well, it's a complex thing and we challenge unbelief but we say, yes, the Kingdom of God is coming. It seems to me that's an ongoing call to repentance.

There's the perspective of judgment. Why are we doing all this? Because the day of judgment is coming when the inhabitants of Capernaum as well as the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will stand before the throne of God.

The people out there today have an appointment before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ and their eternal destiny is our responsibility.

We are the watchmen set on the city wall. That puts urban mission into a tremendously solemn situation. And then lastly, the joys and perils of success.

Don't let us get miserable. We live in a tough society but urban mission produces wonderful results. And Jesus rejoices when the 70 come back.

[57 : 27] And we need to share the successes of our ministries. We need to tell of the lives that have been transformed. The faith that has entered into the realms of unbelief and overcoming.

And we need to encourage one another with these things. But we also need to recognise the perils of success. Don't rejoice that the demons are subject to you.

But rejoice that your name is written in heaven. I take that. I gloss that. Say, if your ministry is successful, don't go trumpeting it all around the world. We've got the answer.

We've cracked it. Buy our manual and you too can have a successful ministry. Don't go Hollywood as the Americans say. Don't get too big for your boots.

Rejoice that God has been pleased to use even such imperfect and unworthy tools as you have. Okay, I'll leave you with the comments and cautions at the end.

[58 : 29] at checkbook.