The making of an evangelist

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Although this is a short Chapter on the people who have come to Christ through my ministry, particularly in a remarkable way, and to make it abundantly clear, that all Glory in these things belongs to God.

In the New Testament, particularly in the Acts of the Apostles, there are numbers of 'Converts' mentioned, it is very obvious in the matter of those saved at Pentecost, the focus is not meant to be on Peter and the other apostles, even though they are mentioned, but on the marvellous work of God in bringing people to Himself.

So it is designed in this Chapter not to put the preacher in the Spotlight but to focus all attention of the Almighty's wonder working power.

I have never kept an account of the numbers who have come to the Lord in decision, because only God Himself knows truly how many there have been. At an educated guess there have probably been some thousands who have made decisions of one kind or another, but it is not my purpose to write about all those, even though they have been important in the rolls of heaven, where rejoicing over one sinner returning home takes place.

To encourage the readers in their walk and witnessing for Christ, I have chosen a few outstanding stories of true conversion as it would appear to me, but what is more wonderful is the way in which God is shown to care for the souls of men and women.

Without putting them in any special order or date of their coming to the Saviour, I intend to do two things. First, I would like to list those whose decision could be of great importance to others. Second, then I want to take from the list a few of the very remarkable ways in which God brought people to the ones who could help them. These steps underline the fact that God “really” cares.

Dealing with the first section, viz the list of very interesting responses, I refer to the steps God used to help the writer of this book, when really in great need. Some things have been mentioned earlier in the book, but I summarise some outstanding matters.

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Not only were the steps to my conversion very wonderful, but later in my early Christian life, I had a number of problems to solve which were a trouble to me. I decided after prayer to go to an elderly lady in the Methodist Church to which she and I belonged. She said she couldn't help me, but her daughter-aína-law, who was a very fine Christian, probably could. When I contacted this lady she said, 'No, I can't help you with your problem, but I know a man who almost certainly can'.

She sent me to see a retired evangelist, J C Sloan who was known for his tremendous knowledge of the Word of God. Later I found out that it was reputed to be a “daily” practice, for him to scan the whole New Testament very quickly so that it would be fresh in his mind, as he scanned the very familiar passages. Although this seemed an almost impossible task, my informant who had had Mr Sloan staying at his place,
was a very reliable man not given to empty talk. He told me of this with almost a sense of stunned surprise. I could see why Mr Sloan was called the "Chapter and Verse Man", for when I visited him he was almost like a human concordance. Naturally, he knew how to help me with my problems, which seemed so big to me, and to him so easy to solve, and to give God's Word and direction to me.

To this dear old evangelist, a great warrior for Christ and later to a young Baptist Pastor, a Welshman whose family had roots in the Welsh Revival, and who later became my Pastor, I learned how to have a deep concern for the Lost.

Strangely enough both these men were converted Champion Boxers á-á Mr Sloan, Heavy Weight Champion of Scotland, Rev G J Morgans, Light Weight Champion of Wales.

God is wonderful in the way he works behind our lives to His Honour and Glory.
Now to turn to some great encouragements seen in the lives of others. I will list them out for you and then expand on what happened. They are not in any specific order.

?Opera Singer
?Pop Singer
?Karate/Judo Expert
?Professional Boxers (2)
?Former T.V. Celebrity
?Two Brothers in I.R.A. Bombings
?Pastor of a Satan Church
?The Arrogant High School Lad
?Two Organists in a Crusade
?Aboriginal Social Worker founded Hostel
?Would Be Suicide, Townsville
?The USA Soldier home from Vietnam
?Kilkeel Convert, Northern Ireland
?The P.A. Man, in Portrush Northern Ireland
?Two Dutch Beach Converts, Amsterdam
?Indonesia Meetings, (Solo City)
?Upper Mt Gravatt High School

I do not intend to tell a complete story of each one of the above people who accepted Christ. Some I will mention in passing, and others deal with more fully. In them all, can be seen how God worked in a marvellous way to bring them to Himself.

Ú "The Opera Singer• and Ú "The Pop Singer• were invited along to sing a christian song, and like Charles Alexander of the Dr Chapman Crusade of many years ago, who went along because Dr Chapman didn't have a musician, all these men were called by the Saviour to Come to Him, and they did.

Ú Ú"The Champion Karate and Judo Expert• who came to a Crusade held in a Small Country Church, because his friend a Professional Boxer had been there the night before and got interested in a nice young lady. The Judo Expert only went along to help his mate out. There was only about 30 people in the midweek meeting, and when the Evangelist made his appeal the boxer said to his friend á-á "I want to answer the appeal; will you come with me". The Judo Expert didn't fancy the idea at all, but, because the boxer was his friend, he decided to walk down the aisle. They loomed up in the aisle, and came towards me as I called for people to come to the Saviour. They looked a bit menacing. There faces seemed to be set in hard lines. I wondered for a minute should I think of an 'escape route', because although I was about the same height the nearer they came, the smaller I seemed to grow. Then, I learned afterwards, as they came down to the evangelist, the Judo Expert, had an encounter with the Holy Spirits convicting power, and gave his life to the Saviour.

It was a wonderful decision for Christ. He became a strong christian, and a Missionary to Japan; married a fine dedicated christian girl. He is an acceptable Convention Speaker. Praise God, for His over ruling power and wonder working ways. Later, he wrote me from Japan. He called me `his spiritual father', and informed me in his letter, that I had now
become a 'spiritual grandfather' to a young Japanese man, whom he had just led to Christ — his first convert in Japan. Some of you readers will know the Karate/Judo Expert. His name is Barry Potter of W.E.C.

Ú Ú"The Professional Boxers•. It has been my privilege under God to lead to Christ many men, and a number of boxers. One of these mentioned in this section set me back a bit when he said á¬"You know when I saw you sitting up there I thought you looked like 'a Con Man'”. I felt I'd better seek to tone up my spiritual life considerably, as I didn't think it was exactly a compliment to tell an evangelist that he thought he was 'a Con Man'. This is about the last thing a true evangelist would want to be. I only can hope that though he had started out with the widely held, but erroneous view, that all evangelists were 'Con Men', but later as I followed him up to help him grow, it wasn't that I was trying 'to Con' him into anything, but to introduce him to Christ.

Ú Ú"T.V. Personality•. This lady had wide experience in the field of Television, and although at the time of her conversion to Christ she was working elsewhere, it was indirectly through her ability in the field of Television that she was converted. For some time she had been seeking a spiritual experience, which was both satisfying and meaningful. She had been through a period of ill-á¬éhealth, and had gone to India to sit at the feet of the teacher and exponents of Yoga. She had sought out some of the top leaders. She learned both the philosophy and physical sides of Yoga. On her journey (to or from) India she was waiting for a plane and she noticed that she and another man were the only two who were not Asians. Later, on the plane she found that she had been seated next to this man, and so they started to talk. He was Dr John Haggai. He had told her his name, but felt it wise not to say what he was doing. You see he was an international evangelist, and he felt at the time it would be wiser to keep that out of the conversation.

Later in this story, Dr John Haggai was to visit Brisbane where this T.V. Personality lives. I had been asked to head up the organisation by the group who had invited him to take a Brisbane Wide Crusade. Brisbane had just experienced the worst flooding for decades, and much of our preliminary organisation had been upset. The hall we had engaged, had had about 10 feet of water in it. Many of the voluntary workers on our Committees had their houses go under the flood. Consequently we had to re-á¬éorganise, because many of the Committee Members were so busy putting their homes right, and trying to get the mud out of them.

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We battled on, and tried to regather our administration and organisation. Even the Motel where Dr Haggai and his team where to stay went under water, and still bears 'a high tide' mark painted on one of its pillars to show what happened.

After the flood subsided and the flood waters receded from our Crusade Headquarters office, it became obvious that we would have to work both fast, sure, and very prayerfully, so as to have a worthy Crusade.

One of the things we had planned besides the Brisbane Crusade was a series of meetings on The Gold Coast in Queensland, and to publicise the meetings we decide to seek a T.V. Personality to interview the evangelist.
I knew of a few T.V. Personalities but finally decided on Miss Robyn Power. I had no idea that Robyn had met Dr Haggai on a plane sometime before. I went to her work place, which happened to be the Motel where Dr Haggai was to stay. I asked her whether she would interview him and she consented and told me that she had written to Dr Haggai, as he had given her his address, and so she knew he was coming to Brisbane, and that she now knew he was an evangelist.

She asked me the question. "What is an evangelist"? There was more to the question than just the words, and I judged that there was a cry for spiritual things behind it. I not only told her what an evangelist was, but also what the gospel was. As I spoke to her about Christ tears filler her eyes, and ran down between her fingers as she held them up to her eyes. As some people in the foyer were looking at her, I suggested that because it was her lunch time, that we should go to a suitable place outside. I spent the whole of her lunch time, with her in her car parked outside, and she came to Christ and was thoroughly converted to him.

This afternoon as I was writing this section, I felt I ought to ring her about a couple of matters concerning this story, as she was preparing to go to Singapore to the Haggai Institute in Singapore, a school for the training of Asian leaders (men and women) in the practice of evangelism and the training of those in their care. Robyn is a very dedicated servant of the Lord. She is greatly talented and has worked in various positions with the Haggai Institute (Australia) since about 1975, a period of 15 years as at the time of my writing this story.

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Her story I have told at some length, because it is a wonderful example of how God hears the heart cry of the human soul. It is amazing how he can shift circumstances and human beings like pieces on a giant chessboard, and finally get his 'needy one' to places where heart cries are healed.

At a High School she and I spoke to 700 young people and about 258 of them responded to an appeal prayer she gave. Now God has called her to do evangelistic work with about 500 people answering the call of Christ.

There is a further happy ending to this story. Robyn's widowed mother came to Christ, after I spoke with her about the Saviour. Isn't God wonderful? Later on I baptised both Robyn and her mother.

Ú “The Two Brothers engaged in Northern Ireland Bombings,” came to Christ in the somewhat infamous Crumlin Road prison in Belfast, Northern Ireland. I was working as the Associate Evangelist to Dr John Haggai Ú “In the All Ulster Crusade” and in the Belfast section we were part of the Team Ministry, and I was asked to do the prison work, because of my position as a Prison Chaplain. My wife was the featured speaker to The Belfast Women's Crusade Meeting.
I visited Crumlin Road Prison with its very tight security and the bomb ravaged area surrounding it. There was a machine gunpost outside the prison, double locks on doors, soldiers and prison officers to control it, closed circuit T.V. to keep an eye on prisoners and visitors, plus other security measures. On my first day there, one of these brothers came to Christ, and he asked me to pray with him for his brother. We did this and on the last day this other brother who I was given to understand, drove trucks with bombs on, gave his heart to Christ. There was great rejoicing over this and thankfulness to Almighty God for His transforming power.

"The Pastor of a Satan Church". When the Apostle Paul was arrested by the Saviour on the road to Damascus, it seemed unbelievable that he who was so antagonistic should turn to Christ. It was the same with the leader of "a Satan Church". He was brought around to reconsider his ways in a marvellous manner.

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He had been with the members of his group, very antagonistic to the things of Christ, having a parody of the Lord's supper Table, and turning the Holy things upside down in an unholy way. But because God is neither deceived, and will not be mocked, he used a car accident to cause this leader to think about God. He was badly injured and bleeding profusely and in danger of dying. He called out to God, if there was one, to help, and God in his unfailing love had arranged that the first car to the accident, and just passing through the area, had both a Doctor and a Nurse on board. They got out to help; had the necessary equipment on board to save the injured man, and his life was spared. He had made a vow of sorts, to God that if he would save his life, he would seek to know more about him.

He met a christian girl who invited him to a convention being held at Mt Tamborine just outside The Gold Coast area. I was one of the speakers, and the young man came to me for spiritual help. He said he would like to know God.

However, I had a battle on my hands, as the reality of Satan in his life was evident. He wanted help, but when I told him I would read the Bible and pray, he drew back and didn't want me to do that. I understood that Satan is afraid of the power of God's Word, and of the power of God's mighty strength shown to weak mortals when they pray.

It took me about 1 hour to convince him to let me read and pray, and when I did he was shaking as though greatly afraid.
At last though, he prayed a prayer for salvation. And during the rest of the convention showed some evidence of deliverance and spiritual change.

Through a set of circumstances I lost track of him, but kept praying for him. The last I saw of him, he still seemed to show something had happened in his life.

The scripture came to me at that time with renewed force, which we find in Ephesian's 6 verse 12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places".

Despite all this the Biblical question still remains, "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14).

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Ú "The Arrogant High School Lad•. I no sooner got into the classroom, where I was to talk to the High School lads about the Saviour, when one young lad said with an arrogant tone, "You prove to me there is a God" I sent a telegraph prayer upwards, and this was my reply, "You prove there isn't a God, you've got the problem not me". He go so angry at that reply, I found out later, that he bought a Bible to prove there was no God, but God saved his soul and so he became a devout believer. God can even make the wrath of man to praise Him. Now isn't that a great thought?

Ú "The Two Crusade Organists•. In a Crusade I was holding in North Queensland, there were two musicians who were rostered to provide the music. At different times during the Crusades, they both came up to me, and told me that God used me to bring them to Christ, and they had been active christians for years. One of them had come to the Lord as a young girl, and according to her mother, she had been soundly converted, and had been busy for the Lord ever since, and even up to today as I am writing this years later.

Ú "The well known Aboriginal Social Worker•. The coming to Christ of this well known lady, who, with her husband's help, had opened their home to homeless aborigines was marvellous. This lady had a tremendous burden for the people, and was in a sense as far as I can make out, one of those who founded the One People of Australia League (OPAL). I was holding a Crusade in a suburban Church in the Brisbane area, and we had been getting big crowds including 'packed houses' on occasions, but there seemed to be resistance to gospel. We had gone from Sunday to the following Friday each night, and I was greatly troubled.

I had done a lot of heart searching, and spent much time in prayer. Friday night came and the hall was packed with many local people, and parents of Sunday School children who were said to be non-á-áchristian. Again nothing seemed to happen, that is, until after the service a Deacon came up to me and said á-á "You are disappointed brother aren't you?" 'Yes', I said, 'especially as I didn't seem to be able to reach those
people who needed Christ, in tonight's meeting'. He said "Brother, its not you, but it is some of us here who need to put things right with God. Tomorrow morning, the Deacons will be meeting for prayer to pray this matter out, and to seek to put some things right!" He said "You are welcome to come, but you don't need to". I did go and what a prayer meeting it was. There was confession, tears, and great humility shown amongst that group of the Saviour's dear people. That night when I came to the meeting, the air of the meeting seemed electric. There was great expectancy. When I made an appeal there was a response of people, stretching from one side of the hall to the other side. Among them was this famous lady (Mrs Wilding and a helper). God heard the cry of those dear brothers in Christ, upon whose hearts God had put the burden of the meetings, and from then on in the remaining meetings there were responses every night.

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"Would Be Suicide, Townsville, North Queensland". This was one of the most remarkable stories of the caring heart of God, that I had come across. It happened like this. At the time, I was heading up the organisational side of some Crusades held in different parts of Queensland, to be conducted by one of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Team Members.

I had been invited to hold a Preá-Crusade Rally in the large Northern City of Townsville about 800 miles North of Brisbane. I had had a very busy time in the organisational side of the Crusades, and was physically exhausted. As I travelled north in the plane, I was telling the Lord that I had little time to prepare for this important meeting, and asked Him to guide my mind and to fill my mind and heart with an effective message from Himself.

The night came to hold the Rally. A crowd filled the largest Presbyterian Church in the city. We had only got started and then the lights failed. Inspection revealed that the lights round about were on, and that the fault was in the electrical supply to the Church. It was agreed to transfer the crowd over to the large church hall next door. This was done. The lights were working and the meeting got under way without further incident until the time of the appeal. God spoke to the congregation through His message. Some people responded to the appeal, and then an amazing thing happened. There was a man who had been trying to sleep under the church hall. This was not known to anyone. He had just decided to stay the night there. He had heard the preaching, was convicted by the spirit of God; came out from under the hall, went up the front steps, and down the aisle and joined others at the front answering the appeal. Then the story came out, and what a story it was. He had come from somewhere West of Townsville that day, with the firm intention of committing suicide. He had come to Townsville where he was not known. Something seemed to say to him don't take your life today, leave it till tomorrow. He had nowhere to stay, so he bedded down under the church hall.

This no doubt was a clear indication of God's care for a bewildered and discouraged lost soul. That night he was saved from eternal damnation, and he was saved from self inflicted violence. Instead, he was found by God, and he lost the desire to commit suicide. Blessed by the name of such a caring God.
“The USA Soldier from Vietnam”. I was conducting a Crusade in a country town in the south of the State of Missouri in the U.S.A. A man who had been granted compassionate leave by the US Army in Vietnam, had come home to see his dying father. One night whilst home on leave, he decided to attend the Crusade although he was not a christian. That night God met him, saved his soul, and did something else marvellous for him. From the time he gave his heart to Christ, his dying father started to recover from his illness. Not long after, the father was well enough for the soldier to go back to his posting in Vietnam.

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God showed His great and loving interest, so that a man was brought thousands of miles to the place where he could find Christ. The thing that impresses me as I tell you these stories is that God shows he is not limited by time, distance or motives used, and can bring the needy person to the people who can help, even though some of these helpers have been thousands of miles apart. Nothing á-no obstacle, no circumstances, no desperate situation, can frustrate God in His plans for the lost and needy.

“The Determined Kilkeel Convert, Northern Ireland”. My wife and I were ministering in Northern Ireland along with Dr John Haggai of Haggai Institute. We took some Crusades on our own and then in Belfast we worked together. The Crusade was known as "The All Ulster Crusade".

After doing a Crusade in Portrush in the North of Northern Ireland (Ulster) we travelled to the southern border area of Ulster, near 'The Mountains of Mourne which go down to the sea'. We were stationed at a little Presbyterian Church holding around 1000 people. God was working, and this was especially evident in the growing interest in the prayer side of the Crusade. The Prayer meetings were growing all the time.

One night a young woman brought her sister to the Crusade. I understand the young woman responded but her sister didn't, and she went home convicted by the Holy Spirit. The next day she had to travel in her work up to the North of Northern Ireland. Probably, she had to travel 150-200 miles each way, because she felt impelled to get back to the Crusade to hear more of the gospel story. This second night she responded to the appeal to decide for Christ. When God really moves on the heart, this story reminds us, he makes us take notice.

“The Portrush P.A. Man”. This man came to the Crusade in a different fashion from most attending. He came because he was told to. He was the man responsible for looking after the Public Address System etc, for the Crusade Meetings. One might say he was a type of 'Captive Audience'. His position reminded me of those chained to the arm of the Apostle Paul, they couldn't get away from hearing the Gospel, even if they wanted to.

The meeting progressed, and one night after the conclusion of the meeting, when he was putting some of his equipment away, he beckoned me over, and I was able by God's grace to lead him to the Saviour. This was a practical demonstration of the statement "by all means save some".

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The Dutch Beach Converts Amsterdam. Those attending the 1983 "International Congress for Itinerant Evangelists", held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, included my wife and I. One Sunday afternoon quite a large number of buses, 30 in all took delegates to various beaches, with some copies of the "Do You Know The Steps To Peace With God", written in Dutch, plus one or two in English. We went to a nearby beach and commenced witnessing to people in the street. It seemed an impossible task because the people I met couldn't speak English, and I was very deficient in the Dutch language. My whole vocabulary consisted of about 2 or 3 words, plus some written down in our programme.

However, God guided me to a method which brought great results. I gave one dutchman a copy of The Steps to Peace With God in Dutch, which was the same colour and shape as the English version. I opened my English one at the first page, and by means of sign language got the man to do the same in the Dutch version. I pointed out various things that I felt should correspond with one another, and we got on famously, going through page after page, and pointing to the diagrams. I went slowly so he could read and digest the message and then I pointed to the suggested prayer of commitment. Having let him read a bit, I pointed to him, and said 'Yes' or 'Ja' (Dutch for 'Yes'). He nodded his head, signifying that he understood and had prayed the prayer. Somehow there appeared out of nowhere it seemed to me, because it was so sudden, a christian dutchman who spoke English. He started to talk to the one who had made a commitment, while I turned to another dutch person nearby. Then the same procedure started all over again, and the English speaking christian dutchman came to check up this second person. Later he told me that both those who made commitments were clear on what they had done, and they had really 'come through' for the Lord. When we got back to the Congress, we had to make a report on our efforts, and later I was called to the Congress platform to tell the story of how God guided me to use "The Steps to Peace With God" so effectively.

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Indonesian Meetings, Solo City. I was over in Indonesia with some Australian Evangelists, and my second Crusade was at a place called Sumbertirtayasa, Baptist Church. I spoke through an interpreter and had a soloist who was appointed to work with me, a Mrs Wendy Chudasko. Each night the Baptist Church was filled with overflow crowds sitting outside on forms of some kind. The response of those making commitments was exceptionally good, and consisted of Moslems and Animists. Later on, I
learned that after 3 months regular counselling and follow up work, the church membership had doubled its size, and the church building had to be extended to accommodate the number of people attending. Although Wendy and I ministered for only five nights in all, I was shown a Photo Album from the church, which had every page showing people being baptised as a result of the Crusade. From some other Christian who visited the area later, he told me that the blessing of the Lord was still going on in the lives of people because of the Crusade.

God certainly did a wonderful work of grace, using frail human vehicles, and despite the difficulties experienced in working through an interpreter. To His name be all the honour and glory.

“A Brisbane Suburban High School”. An experience showed me how God could take the weakness of a Christian messenger, and make him strong through the power of the Lord. I was scheduled to speak to a beginning of the Year Parade, with about 700 High School Students attending, and I didn’t feel like going at all because I was coming down with a heavy dose of the Flu. I got to the school, and had to ask God’s help in two things— to give me the strength to present the message, by holding on to the pulpit, so as to keep me upright, and to present clearly, and with power, the message God had given me to deliver. I got to the end of it and made an appeal for commitment, and was both amazed and overjoyed to see approximately 200 young students respond to The Call of The Lord. Paul was so right when he said ”When I am weak then am I strong” and God was so right when he promised, ”My grace is sufficient for Thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness”.

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Of course in the stories of victories won in this Chapter, it was God who did it all, but I am so grateful to Him for His guidance, and the privilege I had to be a messenger of the Lord who told the story of the Matchless Son of the Everlasting Father. Praise be to His name!

This brings us now, to the end of Part I of this book in which I set out to tell the story of how God took my life through all its ups and downs, and let me see that it was God who was working in me, both to will, and to do of His good pleasure.

Part II is meant to be a sharing of ways and means which can be used to present the good news of Christ, and can be adapted not only for Crusades, but in any way in any Christian group which seeks to reach the lost ones for the Saviour. May God bless you in the study of these methods.