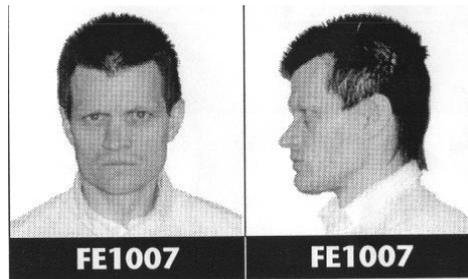


# Inside Story



*by Ian Warelow*

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## Preface

There are a number of reasons why, at this time in my life, I have decided to put pen to paper. Many things have happened to me over the last 10 years since being drawn to the love of Christ. Most have been encouraging, others, at times, have left me discouraged and disillusioned with the church.

Over the years I have observed that the church, here in Hull, has very little awareness, and, therefore, even less understanding of the lifestyle of the average man in the street.

This, I believe, dramatically affects any outreach to these people. How can we answer their questions if we don't even know what those questions are? What is it that makes these people tick? How can we scratch if we don't know where they itch?

'Friendship' evangelism is very effective in reaching our friends, providing that we openly live out our faith before them. But this evangelism will only reach our friends - those that are close to us in our social and employment settings. There isn't any problem with this, except that, because the church is largely a 'middle class' body of people it will predominantly be reaching out to those of the same social status.

So, what happens to the working class man in the street then? Or the working class non-Christian woman? How will they, and thousands upon thousands of other people i.e. the elderly, the homeless, young people at school or in prison, the handicapped and the unloved hear the Gospel? Well, it's an easy answer really. Jesus told his disciples "to go" on a number of occasions, "and do likewise". Jesus, our example, showed us the way. Time after time he spoke with and ministered to the poor and needy, the widows, the orphans, and why not? That is, after all, what He was commissioned for, according to Luke 4. Provocative it might be, but for me, true followers of Jesus don't just follow his words they also obey them (yes, even at our own personal cost). True followers have compassion and concern for the needy and more vulnerable members of society. "The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern." Proverbs 29:7

Through my own experience of life I hope to draw out many of the difficulties of becoming a Christian and the cultural differences encountered.

Apart from pin-pointing what I see as weaknesses in the church, I want to offer practical advice on how we, the body of Christ, can be effective in this area.

Because of the many mistakes I have made in reaching out to my own kind, it is important for me to say that I am not an expert on this subject. What I can say, with confidence, is that God has taught me much. Learning from past mistakes, I want to move on in order to be more effective in the future.

If any of my past offends you, please forgive me. God has!

Ian Warelow 1991

# Part 1

## Chapter 1

### DEATH BEFORE LIFE (Pre-conversion days)

#### Family background

My family consisted of mum, dad and 3 brothers. My brothers and I were all born within a 3 year period. Mine was the most entertaining birth; I was born in a bucket (it's a long story). Our home was, what they called in those days, a 'two up and two down'. My parents used one of the bedrooms and we 4 lads had to make do with the other. It was a bit squashed as you might well imagine. Our bunk-beds had to cater for all 4 of us, 2 on the top and 2 on the bottom. I remember well my older brother's feet stuck in my face throughout the night.

Home life for us in those days was very stable. Our parents were always there and they cared for us very well. My childhood memories are of very happy days. I can't remember mum and dad telling me that they loved me; but I never doubted it. The security of the small 14 house terrace, in which we lived, brought a close, warm community feel.

Both of my parents were employed as labourers in local factories. My dad worked full-time during the day and mum worked in the evening while dad looked after us kids. This was the only way of getting any extra cash. Money was scarce but all our basic needs were met. My parents only socialised once a week, on a Saturday night, down at the dog-track. Apart from this one time, when a sitter came in, I do not have any recollection of being left.

Church played no part in our family life. It's a subject that for some reason was never discussed. Sadly, my only contact with church was pretty abysmal. The local cub-scout group, of which I was a member, was expected to be at services every now and again. Some vague memory of attending a Sunday school during the afternoon also haunts me. It's easy to remember this because I was annoyed with my parents for making us go, especially as we missed the afternoon film, with the likes of George Formby.

When I reached the age of 11 there was a number of big changes in my life. Firstly, we moved from the close community we had known and went to live on a very large estate where we didn't know anyone (except one family). Looking at this positively, at least we children were able to spread out a bit, no more 4 in a bed. Our brand new council house had 3 bedrooms, I shared one with my younger brother, we had to sleep in a double bed. The room was only just large enough for the bed itself.

The second big change took place when I was 11, this was the age to go to the senior-school. This brand new comprehensive school that hadn't been built long was some 3-4 miles from our new home. This was 'big' school and also a big threat, with what appeared to be giant sized people all around me. Both of these changes brought unsettledness to the security I had known up to that time. Both of my parents were working full-time by now, still labouring in local factories.

These new beginnings soon went sour. Some of my new friends were not the type my parents would have chosen for me. One in particular had had some trouble with the police for a number of years, spending a couple of stays in approved-schools.

This was also the era of the skin-head. It wasn't long before I had gone home with my head scalped, giving a big shock to my parents. This whole craze was one of aggression

clearly evident by the way we presented ourselves: our dress, 'bovver' boots, and the anti-social behaviour. Largely, this would be expressed through gang fighting, football hooliganism and rampages through the city centre.

Like most youth sub-cultures, music and discos played a big part. In fact, it was at a city-centre disco that I was offered my first bit of 'Buzz'. 'Buzz' was the street name given to solvents that gave you a 'buzz' when inhaled; this was long before glue-sniffing started. Drugs, parties and alcohol became a priority in my life, this was the way to cheap and easy kicks. Solvent abuse became a big problem for me, leading to very poor health.

Another feature of this culture was the appalling way in which we would sexually mistreat girls. It was a big mistake for any girl to hang around with us and especially to invite us in whilst they were baby-sitting. We had no regard for people, property, and, especially, any kind of authority.

School certainly had no part to play in this way of life. It wasn't long before truancy became a regular event, this obviously led to poor achievement, and, eventually, a giving up and non-attendance, I don't think I even sat any exams. It was during this period of truancy, and the boredom that went with it, that most of the crimes that I committed took place. It wasn't easy to fill a full day - with nothing to do - and nowhere to go. Most of these crimes were theft with the odd burglary. One house that we had broken into, at about 10 o'clock in the morning, was occupied by someone sleeping in the upstairs bedroom. What I remember the most about this incident, is my friend and I not being able to control our laughter as we were scurrying to get out the house.

When I was 15 I (officially) left school after some months of absence, it was a few months before I found any employment. The first job I managed to secure was as an apprentice welder for a local engineering firm. The apprenticeship didn't last long because I couldn't hack going to night-school once a week. My reason for this was simple; I preferred to be out on the streets with my mates (and the girls) and I was frightened of being left out. I remained employed there for a couple of years as a semi-skilled welder/labourer.

This new adult environment that I had entered was far from being a positive change. Many of the men there were involved in and encouraged sexual permissiveness and heavy drinking bouts. This employment was terminated when one of the work force walked out on strike for better working conditions and pay.

Some months of unemployment followed. During this time I had become reliant on my friends to pay for my drinks when we went out. After getting up at dinner-time, most afternoons and evenings were spent in the boozier. I had become a parasite, feeding off my friends.

A few months later, I was taken on at another factory, as a semi-skilled welder/sheet metal worker. I didn't even want the job but the unemployment office were putting the pressure on.

A large number of the employees at this firm were about my age and of similar background. Occasionally I would go out with the lads from work for a drink around the town instead of with my usual mates. In any case the evenings were very similar in aim. The purpose in going out was simple and that was: to get drunk, have a fight and pick up a girl to 'screw'. This, apart from playing football, was my sole purpose in life

Vanity was another big problem, tied into this way of life. Following the trend was an expensive way to live. I went through (in the space of a couple of years) the 'skin' phase, the 'mods', 'smoothies', and the 'Bowie' freaks. My hair has been coloured, permed and spiked, long, even completely chopped off. And all of this simply because I wanted to be accepted by my peers and to be seen to be one of the lads. The name of the game was to 'act' cool and to look cool, but all this cost money.

I wonder if it was a teenager that said "Money is what makes the world go round." This statement is true of my teen years. As a thirteen year old I noticed that other kids seem to get things i.e. clothes, push-bike, extra cash, much easier out of their parents than I did. This is not to sound like a complaint but just to give an example for what I am saying. Like a number of children, particularly if brought up in a large family, hand-me-downs were the usual way of getting things. If you happened to be third in line, like I was, often before any item reached you, it had out-lived its usefulness. This did not match up to the macho image that I was trying to portray. I decided even at this age that somehow I needed to get hold of money. It was at this time that I started to deliver news papers both in a morning and evening. The shop I worked for was some 2 miles away from where we lived. The initial problem was that I didn't have a push-bike. Nevertheless, I continued that job until I had enough money saved to lay down a deposit on one. This new spending power also allowed me to purchase clothes on a club-cheque, things were looking up.

Starting work at the age of 15 was good for this reason alone. All I wanted was more spending power, but if I wanted it, I was expected to work for it. Eventually though the money was soon used to create other problems. It's alright having spending power if you have a little common sense, I lacked even that. Before not to long, more and more of my money was used for alcohol and cigarettes.

When I reached 18, I met the girl that I was to eventually marry. Lynn and I met in a night club and made arrangements to meet again. Like many girls before her, I used and abused Lynn. This was now a way of life for me, it was all I had really experienced with the opposite sex.

After some years, working as a welder/sheet metal worker, I was asked to be a charge-hand on one of the production lines. This was my first position of responsibility. The line was made up of about 8 workers, mostly about the same age as me. Because of my aggressive nature it wasn't long before I blew this opportunity to better myself through arguing with one of the lads who had boded an important rush job. As we continued to argue we attracted a crowd that began to jeer him on. He was a cocky young lad of about 17 years of age. I remember him playing to the crowd and foolishly lunging forward with his fist as if to hit me. My spontaneous reaction to this was to clobber him over the head with a mallet, that just happened to be in my hand. Everything appeared to go into slow motion from that moment, he fell to the floor as a massive purple bump emerged almost immediately on his forehead. I thought I had killed him, he just laid motionless. The manager came over and asked what had happened. I just simply justified my action by saying that he deserved it. So I was sent home pending an inquiry. My position never changed, I refused to be told that I was in the wrong. The charge-hand position was taken off me and my punishment was to work on the lathes.

It would be fair to say that I was extremely irresponsible. Lynn and I were married when I was 19 years old. Our second child, Neil, was born 10 days after we were married. Get the picture?

When we met, Lynn lived with her mum in a flat. This became our home for a number of months until we eventually moved into rented accommodation. For the first few years of our marriage my life changed very little. I didn't have any idea how to handle my new responsibilities; it was almost like playing at 'mums and dads'. Having to give up my money for food, bills and clothes came as a massive shock to me. I mean, this was my drinking money we are talking about. This was not the idea of marriage that I had. But, then again, I hadn't really thought about it. Marriage for me represented freedom from parental authority, having someone to sleep with every night (this was a fantasy I had from the age of about 8), even being able to choose what I would and would

not eat. From these comments it is easy to pick up how immature, selfish and irresponsible I really was.

Our marriage was marked by disagreements in those days. It was simply a war between 2 very selfish people that were struggling to adjust to a new and committed way of life. I still wanted to be out drinking with my friends and Lynn was more concerned for the children and home-building. Finances were always tight but when it came to a night out or needing fags, money was no object, these things were my priorities.

Many said that another irresponsible move I made was when I quit my job because I couldn't hack the boredom of the lathes, and the low wage I was earning anymore. I determined that I couldn't be any worse off financially even if I was unemployed, things could only improve, so I quit my job. This turned out, however, to be a good move. After a few months of unemployment I was interviewed by a caravan firm hoping to start a factory making their own trailers. They employed me immediately because of the experience I had for this kind of work, with the promise that the factory would open in a couple of months. Starting off in the woodshop as a labourer I was earning the same as my previous employment. After a few months had passed, I was told that the factory plans had fallen through, so they offered me a job in the sheet-metal shop. My earnings doubled over night. Watching the experienced workers on the production line, 'tinning' the vans, looked like easy money. They were earning twice as much as I was. Using a bit of initiative I applied for a job as a tinner at another firm. Having succeeded in getting a job, I was let go after 4 hours, for not being fast enough, I'd blown it once again.

Some days later I was told of another vacancy as a tinner at ABI Caravans. Due to a good word my friend put in for me, I was taken on. This job paid just over 3 times what I had previously been earning, working those horrible lathes. With the help of some good men in the tinning gang, I managed to quickly pick up the job routine and I worked on tinning the roofs.

Now about 22 years old, working with a good bunch of older men, I began to grow up a bit. For the first time we had found ourselves to be flush with money. A few years later, by now use to a higher standard of living, we made a purchase on a private house. Materialism had crept in and was taking over. The more we had the more we wanted. Lynn had been working part-time for a number of years and I was also working part-time during the evening. Our joint earnings in the late 70's would have been £250 a week, a goodly sum in those days.

Most of our new found wealth was spent on our home and car. The children were well catered for and we ate well. Socially we went around the town for a drink and made regular visits to our local club. Our house was always well stocked with alcohol, ranging from most shorts you could mention, a variety of wines (won through my part-time sales work) and a fridge full of beer.

As I look back this seems to be the most successful time of my life. The part-time sales work Lynn and I did together was selling a waterless cookware product. The task was to get between 4-6 couples together, and to demonstrate how versatile the cookware was by cooking a full two-course meal for them. Lynn would arrange the table and make everything look nice, while I performed the demonstration in the kitchen. This product was sold in 38 different countries. Our claim to fame is that during an international sales push week, Lynn and I finished as the top British couple, with sales of over £7,000. Internationally we were placed tenth.

In those days football was one of the great loves of my life. During a drunken stupor I can remember telling some friends, that we often drank with, that I loved football more than my wife and kids. The crazy thing is, that at the time, it was probably true. Many years of my life revolved around football. If I wasn't watching it, managing or acting

secretary, then I was playing. When I trained a team I trained it well. Aggression was evident in the way I played, trained and even captained a team. Before a match we would normally meet in a pub. My advice to the players was to drink 1-2 pints quickly before getting to the football ground in order to give 'Dutch Courage'. In the first 20 minutes of any game it was important psychologically to establish who were the hardest team. The aim was simply to put the frighteners on. "Get stuck in"! "Break their legs"! would be heard through my gritted teeth.

I'm reminded of quite a funny story of when I nearly strangled one of my football managers for wanting to play me out of my favourite position. This manager was an alcoholic, a very good friend and drinking partner. As I was the secretary for the team, we would often discuss together the tactics etc over a drink in the club we played for. It was an important cup-match and he wanted to punish the centre-forward for not being able to make the mid-week training. I completely disagreed with him, not just because he wanted little old me to play that position but also because we needed him. Eventually this broke out into an argument and he threatened to "screw me" (Scottish for giving someone a good kicking). As I left the club that evening he was waiting for me. Immediately as I stepped out of the door he started shouting and cursing and headed straight for me like a wild bull. He was swinging and biting, scratching and kicking, giving me I suppose a good screwing. After rolling around for a while I managed to pin him down by his throat. His face was deep red, almost purple but no way was I going to let go. One of my brothers eventually broke it up after all three of us were rolling about on the floor. You might ask why I said this was a funny story. Well, it's because at this time my brother's leg was in plaster up to his neck (slight exaggeration). We only stopped fighting because of his yelping, in pain, every time we rolled onto his leg. The centre-forward got to play but I was suspended.

It was during this time of my life (about 24 by now) that I noticed some very odd things. Our new home was situated down something like a cul-de-sac. Right opposite our house there lived a family that were odd or just very different, they were hard to weigh up. Little did we know that this family was going to be used to dramatically challenge our whole concept of life.

The most noticeable thing was that for some reason this family, the Marsdens, were very friendly towards us. Every night Eddie would come home from work, park his car or work-van opposite our house, and without doubt he would look across and wave. Now at the time, considering the culture I was from, that was odd.

Another thing that was very odd was that whenever I had a problem with my car Eddie would come across and ask if everything was alright. After diagnosing the problem he would then give me instruction on what to do in order to repair it. Eddie very rarely repaired my car but he spent hours on teaching me how to do it for myself. Two things stood out to me: He never once took any money I offered him and I never felt as if I was a nuisance. It was apparent that this man was prepared to put himself out for others (a concept I knew very little about). And it wasn't just Eddie, the whole family were pleasant, polite and helpful.

On a Saturday night a very strange thing happened. It would normally start around 7.15pm. Quite a large number of people would drive down the cul-de-sac, park and head for the Marsdens' home. As this was happening music would begin to drift out of the house. Almost immediately singing and clapping would fill the air and then within something like half an hour it was possible to make out that people were dancing and having a good time.

In trying to work this family out, we surmised that they were religious. Every Sunday morning and some evenings they would get all dressed up and disappear somewhere.

Before not too long Toni and Neil were invited to go along to the church with them. We had no objections, they were a nice family and it gave us a break. Eddie never once directly told me about Jesus but in so many indirect ways he did a great job. Their example as a family was impeccable.

Some time later, early one Sunday afternoon, my seven year old son, Neil, and I was having a kick around with the football up against the garage door. I remember being in a foul mood due to the fact that the night before Lynn and I had gone out with our best friends at that time, some neighbours that lived just two doors away. As usual, after a drink, arguing started and I got very aggressive with Lynn. Our friend a very tall, well built man jumped to her defence and started on me. After a bit of pushing and shoving our wives managed to separate us and we went our different ways. So, back to the story, I hadn't just lost my best friend but I blamed Lynn for it. Lynn and I hadn't spoken to each other all day. Neil was complaining that I was kicking the ball too hard at him and I had a stinking headache.

It was a warm day and Lynn was sun-bathing in the garden overlooking the cul-de-sac. A man, I had only seen once before, came out of the Marsdens' house and placed his suit-case in the boot of his car. He casually strolled across and told me that God had told him to tell me that He loves me. If I say that I was flabbergasted it would have to be the understatement of the year. I was completely taken unawares, floored with one statement. After trying to gain my cool I made a feeble attempt to justify my lifestyle making claims that Christians are weak and can't have fun. I remember saying that I enjoyed drinking and fighting but the more he spoke, the more I defended, the more uncertain and challenged I became. Lynn was bobbing up and down wondering what was going on. She had a worried look on her face, understandable considering the mood I was in. At one point I could hear myself lying. For the first time in my life I realised that my life was a sham - all front. He continued to speak of things that I knew nothing about, like love, joy and peace. In the space of just 10-15 minutes I heard of things that I wanted and my hardness began to melt. He concluded by offering me a booklet but it meant going across to the Marsdens' house to get it.

As we walked in Nancy was playing the organ. Brian went upstairs to get the booklet without Nancy knowing that I was there. She continued to play and sing. It wasn't long before I found my foot tapping to the music and enjoying it. The door was slightly ajar and after finishing that piece of music I asked what it was that she had just played. I was astounded when she replied that it was called a chorus and that they sung it in church.

When Brian returned with the booklet and a bible I made my way back across the road to our house. Lynn was still sun-bathing and by now was very inquisitive as to what was going on. My face must have had the expression of a Cheshire cat that had just had the experience of a lifetime. Lynn humbly broke her silence because she couldn't handle not knowing what was going on.

She asked, "Whats he say to yer?"

"He's just been telling me about JJJJesus." I nervously replied. The name Jesus just got stuck in my throat, it didn't seem natural to my tongue. Lynn then told me that Brian had told her about Jesus that very morning when they arrived back from church with our children. I showed Lynn the booklet but we were too embarrassed to discuss the subject any further.

## Chapter 2

### BORN INTO LIFE

#### The big challenge

The booklet was called "Journey into Life". This title amply sums up my feelings at that time. It was as if for the first time in my life the very reasons for living were being challenged. This really was the beginning of a new journey. The booklet and the bible would just sit there at the side of the bed. For some reason they had a drawing power, the message contained wasn't just new, it was also very different. As I read these books a number of times, they began to take root, becoming more and more constant in my thoughts. This new message contained truth and hope for the future, not just for me but for the world. I was gradually being convinced that I had been missing out on something. I thought I had experienced what life was all about, I had never been more wrong, I hadn't yet begun to live. My life and relationships were empty of real love, a concept of which I had no understanding, ever seen, or experienced. It seems so sad that up to the age of 25 I had never heard this Gospel message of the power of God to change lives.

During this month of challenge Lynn and I had not discussed this issue. After plucking up the courage I asked Lynn if she had read the booklet and what she thought about it. Lynn's response was one of embarrassment, not open at all. She kind of shrugged her shoulders and said, "I don't know".

Time moved on regardless of our silence on the subject. External circumstances were just the same, but on the inside, the challenge remained. Eventually the time came when I decided I would do something about it. Prayer was something that I knew nothing about, I only recall once or twice in my life when I cried out in anger or disappointment to someone who I couldn't see. The prayer written in the back of the booklet was helpful, I just wouldn't have known where to begin without it. Kneeling down by the side of the bed I read and prayed the prayer more than once, my heart was open, I wanted to believe. This was a very threatening thing to do, even in the privacy of my own bedroom. I remember being concerned in case Lynn should walk in. Although it was a simple, short prayer, I felt good after it. It was a feeling like satisfaction after achieving something for the first time. Because of the sincerity of heart, I believe that simple prayer of repentance, and turning to God, was the time I had my first personal encounter with Jesus. It wasn't the few words that I had spoken, it was the surrendering of my will and life to him; I meant what I had said.

#### The big change

It was the time of Harvest Festival, it had meant absolutely nothing to me in the past. The children came home from church, as usual, with the Marsden family. This time though, they came home bearing an invitation from the church for parents to attend the Festival service. I managed to convince Lynn that we should attend the service as an encouragement to the children.

Priory Road Baptist is the church that Eddie and Nancy had been regular members of for some years. It was a reasonably modern building that catered well for the needs of its small congregation.

As we set off in the morning for the service, there was a buzz of excitement, a little bit like when getting ready to go out for the day. We followed behind the Marsdens in

convoy style to the church. The closer we got to the church the more nervous I got, even to the point of reluctance.

Shyly entering the building we quickly found that the people were very friendly, in fact, a number of fellas actually shook my hand and said they were pleased to see me. Strange! A subtle threat!!

The atmosphere of the place was so different to anything I had been used to. It was, kind of, warm and friendly. Not noisy, smelly, or aggressive, like some of the joints I had normally experienced. The service wasn't too bad either. The children took part by taking their gifts to the front. It wasn't as boring as I imagined.

As the service finished a couple of people started to move some of the floorboards of the platform away. Being inquisitive by nature, I whispered to Lynn, "Ask Nancy what's going on". Nancy explained that the evening was planned to be a baptismal service. In our ignorance we had no idea what she was talking about, so we prodded deeper. We decided that it would be interesting to attend the service and have a look for ourselves (for a laugh of course). This was another indirect way of looking deeper without giving any appearance of real interest.

We arrived with Nancy that evening feeling threatened by being in church twice in one day. The last thing I wanted was to give anyone the impression that they had made me religious. As a form of defence, I suppose, I started to make sarcastic comments about the bath, the temperature of the water and to what kind of bath salts they used. During the service I noticed those being baptised and their families appeared very happy. I thought they must have been so embarrassed parading around and making a spectacle of themselves. Leaning over to Lynn, I said quietly, "You'd never get me going that far".

To everybody's surprise, the following Sunday, we got ourselves ready to go to church; it was the least we could do to encourage the children. Later, Eddie and Nancy told us that when they saw me getting the car out of the garage they couldn't agree as to whether I was going to football training, as normal, or taking the family to church. They were pleasantly surprised.

Lynn and I eventually admitted to each other that we had prayed the prayer from the back of the booklet and that we felt different. For me, it was a strange feeling. I guess it was a feeling of being forgiven, a knowing that I was able to start life again with a certainty and hope for the future. Our little understanding of what was happening to us caused more embarrassment and prevented us from talking openly.

Lynn thought it would be a good idea for her to pop across and see Nancy, to see if she could shed any light on how we felt. When Lynn returned she attempted to explain, in a confused state, that Nancy had said we had been 'born again'. Not really understanding Lynn's interpretation we arranged to go and see them together. This was the first of hundreds of nights across at the Marsdens' home as they were willing to answer the thousand and one questions that we had.

Through all of this I still appeared very cynical, questioning everything I was told or read. For about a year it seemed as if I was after finding a flaw in this belief. The truth of the matter is, that if I was going to commit absolutely everything to Jesus, and that meant going public, even risking my reputation, then I needed to check Him out good and proper. The last thing I wanted was to place my whole life in someone's hands only to be let down miserably, looking a right fool. During that year I became utterly convinced that God loves me; that He sent His Son, Jesus, to forgive me of all sin; and that He had filled me with the power of His Holy Spirit to live a new life, His way. I have been forgiven of so much, how could I fail to love Him.

## **Part 2**

### **Chapter 3**

#### **LIVING A NEW LIFE**

##### **Learning to walk**

It's amazing how quickly things began to change. Without a doubt I felt different. I knew God was doing something in my life. Everything around me seem to take on a different meaning; it was like looking through different eyes.

...Our first impression of Christians was very good. We began to meet more people through the Baptist church. They were nice caring people that were very good to us and made us feel special. But there weren't any real surprises at this church, it was what we had expected. The Sutton Park Christian Fellowship, on the other hand, was very different. All that we didn't expect to happen in church, did. So many of this crowd seemed different. They smiled most of the time with a fixed grin. When singing the choruses, their faces expressed what came out of their mouths. Dancing, raised hands, kneeling and tears were common features of worship. One lady, in particular, made me feel so good. She would look across the crowded room and give me a smile from ear to ear; not just once, but all the way through the service. These kind of people made the Marsdens look more normal. It didn't take long before we realised that we were the ones who were different.

Everyone spoke about Jesus so naturally. He appeared to be the centre of every conversation. Although I had begun to believe in Christ, to talk about him was very difficult. It took months for me to be able to say Jesus without being embarrassed.

The world that God had created so beautifully had never grabbed my attention in 25 years. Now, for the first time, while driving through a small country lane my eyes were opened. For so long I had failed to see and appreciate the colour, shape and wonderment of my Father's handiwork.

My life, having been centred around jobs and money for so long, was to take a dramatic redirection. The love of money just disappeared, its hold on me had gone. I gave up the part-time sales work because I didn't feel comfortable manipulating people for sales anymore. Although well paid, I had no intention of going back to the rat race of the caravan trade. My new convictions would not allow me to steal, cheat, manipulate or grab for money any longer. This left us financially stable for a few months only, living off savings.

Many of our feelings were mixed. We had some new friends, new hopes, future purpose and a sense of well being. Intermingled with these positive feelings came some of the biggest challenges of my life, giving rise to depth of emotional feeling I had never encountered.

##### **Unconfident steps**

In the church, amongst people that believe in Christ, it wasn't so bad to live as a new Christian, after all, everybody made a fuss over us. Having said that, there are a number of areas that we did find hard on entering the church scene.

Becoming a Christian isn't just a case of entering into a new life with Jesus, it also means entering new relationships with people. Church people seemed different from us. Most of them spoke 'proper' English, sounding and looking really clever. They often

asked threatening personal questions like "Are you saved, brother?" or talked using language that was not always easy to understand. Certain words and phrases just rolled off the end of tongues. It appeared as if Christians used certain words like, Amen, Glory, and Hallelujah as a substitute for what we would commonly call swear words. My bad language and vivid imagination meant that my repertoire of words were as bad as any bodies. In certain annoying situations where I would have cursed or swore, Christians popped out a 'Glory' or 'Praise the Lord'. This different language created a barrier at times causing some embarrassment. I became wary of talking to people because of the threat. It took me months to get my bad mouthing into anything like social. Another problem with language, was during a service when bible readings and prayers took place, it was like going back in time when 'thees, thous and whences' were mentioned (after 10 years I still hear this language and have no idea what it means).

For some strange reason there appeared to be a lot of touching, hugging and kissing amongst Christians. I coped pretty well and enjoyed this to some degree when it came to the women but struggled when the fellas grabbed me in a bear hug and plonked a big smackerouser on my cheek. This was brotherly love being exercised by a Holy kiss. Up to this time, this kind of activity had been reserved for my wife only, even my mother only got a kiss if I was in an exceptionally good mood.

Many things posed a threat that most people would not even realise. For instance, when it came to dress. I was brought up with a wearing your 'Sunday best' mentality. As children, every Sunday, without fail, we would have to put on our best clothes no matter whether we were going out as a family or not. It was unheard of for us to be able to play out on a Sunday. All 4 of us would then form a line and my dad would Brylcreem our hair one after another. Now, this is the kind of thing that you stop doing as soon as you can, or so I thought! But at the Church we were attending the majority were still doing it. There stood the men in their suits and ties, the ladies in their posh frocks (dresses) and the children all done and gift wrapped, everyone was wearing their 'best gear'. So what? I hear you ask. Well, take Lynn for an example; Lynn's best clothes were only fit for the kind of place they were bought for and that was the night clubs. Since becoming a Christian Lynn has altered or stopped wearing certain kinds of clothes. Initially this is because no one else wore those kind of clothes to church. Personally I hate wearing a suit and tie and much prefer to dress differently to everyone else. Was we to conform to the church image or not? At the time, facing the pressure of these issues, it crossed my mind on a number of occasions whether I actually fitted in.

It would be easy for some Christians to say that these things are not important, but to the individual, couple or family that are new to the church scene, first impressions make a big difference. Conforming to the church image (mans image?) is vastly different to what God requires in conforming to His image. When God does the challenging and convicting real heart change is the result.

Outside of the church, of course, life had to go on. Trying to explain to our friends family and neighbours exactly what we had done was difficult and embarrassing. We were very often misunderstood as getting 'religion'. One evening Lynn and I had gone out for a drink with one of my brothers and his girlfriend. We mentioned in passing that we had been to church and quite enjoyed it. The girlfriend asked lots of questions and showed some interest. My brother got very annoyed and after following me to the toilet threatened to knock my head off my shoulders. Out of all my brothers this one was a good drinking partner and has very often made an impression on me (especially on my nose). He was almost always guaranteed to end up fighting with someone. I found it hard to understand why he felt so offended just because I'd enjoyed going to church. There was a very definite sense that I was a traitor or a deserter. No longer was I going to

be accepted as one of the lads - I'd crossed sides. As time went on this did actually happen, my habits and way of life altered more and more alienating me from those that were closest to me. This was not deliberate, it just happened as I became more active in the church. Many people didn't like me because of the loud, foul mouthed, foolhardy type I was, but when I 'got religion' - they liked me less! Eventually, it was easier and less threatening to stay away sooner than take the flak.

Many times I've asked myself "Is it all worth it?". "Have I made a big mistake?" Through these difficult times and questions my new relationship with God and His people, the church, were of paramount importance. I often weighed up what I had lost against what I was gaining.

One of the first really difficult challenges that God put my way was learning to apologise. This was a hard one to overcome because I had felt very definitely that God had convicted me about my broken relationship with my neighbour (the one I had argued and nearly fought with). Time after time I tried to convince myself that God was not challenging me about this and that it was just my imagination. But the lack of peace remained, I couldn't escape this one, not if I was going to be obedient. The time came when I was under so much conviction that I just determined that I would do it. My heart was absolutely pounding. The only time I had been anywhere near this nervous before was when I got hitched to Lynn. My knees began to play that same tune. Our eyes had not crossed for a number of months. What would he say? What's his reaction going to be when he sees me standing before him? Will he clobber me? My mind was full of questions as I knocked on the door. My eyes began to fill up with tears even before the door opened, I knew I was in the wrong and it had to be done. I simply told him through the tears that I was sorry for my action all those months ago. There was no need to say anymore, he knew how hard it was for me. His reply was just a simple "alright then". I came away feeling good, I had been obedient to God. Apologising still doesn't come easy but it's an integral part of being obedient and walking with God.

Occasionally I felt that in becoming a Christian I had volunteered for a life of hardship. In teaching me to live His way God had to teach me some hard and embarrassing lessons. The most embarrassing has to be the time when I was due to have my hair permed. It was during the bubble-cut phase when everybody had an Italian gigolo haircut (even Kevin Keagan). I'd been having my hair permed at the same uni-sex salon for a number of years, it always looked good and the perm took very well. After booking to have it re-permed I began to come under conviction about having my hair done in this way. I had been challenged before, but, as usual, I ignored what I really knew to be true because I wanted to have it done in order to look cool and sexy. God was challenging me this time about vanity, and boy was I vain. I shrugged all of this off quite easily by thinking I was convincing others that my hair was in this style for convenience sake. After playing football and showering, all I had to do was shake my head and run my fingers through and my hair was presentable. If this did convince others it certainly didn't convince God.

The appointment time came around, the conviction had left me and I went with a (reasonably) clear conscience. The men's area was very small, if you tried to swing a cat around it would come out very badly bruised. There was two of us in the room, I was having a perm and the other man was waiting for a trim. My hairdresser, Julie, knew me very well and knew that I was a clown, always cracking jokes etc. After the wash and cut Julie proceeded to put the perm rollers in. When she had got about half way through, guess what? God decided to remind me about my vanity. I remember saying to God "Fancy telling me now". If you have ever had a run in with God like this, then you will know that God always wins. During our little discussion while I was sat there I became

more and more under conviction as Julie continued to put more and more rollers in. I told God that I didn't think much to His timing and God continued to remind me that he had chosen better times and that I had refused to listen. Meanwhile, Julie was doing an excellent job, only a couple of rows left to do. I thought I would sound Julie out and ask her if she had ever had a customer that changed their mind about having their hair permed. It probably goes without saying what her answer was, no, she hadn't. I was feeling pretty bad by now, hoping that the floor would open up and swallow me - it didn't. My next attempt to stop her was just as feeble, I asked how long it takes for the perm to activate.

"More or less straight away" she answered. As she started the last row I cried out in desperation "I've changed my mind, I don't want it doing!" Julie just giggled and carried on, thinking I was joking. She soon stopped, though, when I lunged forward and told her "I'm not joking, I've changed my mind, I don't care if you have to chop it all off, I'll pay full price for the perm but I don't want it finishing." Poor Julie, she looked as if her brains had stepped out for a walk. Her response was slow and cautious, eventually she said "Well, I'd better go and get Judy to see what she says". A few moments later there was a loud burst of laughter rocketing out of the ladies' room. She must have told the whole salon at once. Both Julie and Judy came back snivelling in their hands, holding back the tears like a couple of giggly school-girls.

Judy continued the drama by saying "Well, we'd better have a look then Mr Warelow". As she began to take the rollers out all I could hear was, "ooh,..... oh" eventually I was put out my misery and told the perm hadn't taken. This was the first time in a couple of years using the same salon, hairdresser and perming lotion that my hair had not taken. Although highly embarrassed I felt some relief. I thanked God and told Julie that I was in her hands and to cut my hair in a style that she thought would suit me. I then said under my breath "Help her Lord". As if all this wasn't bad enough, I still had to go and pay - guess where the till was - yep, you're right. Like any noticeable happening in your life, you've got to be willing to take the questions, sarcastic comments and even the mass of misunderstanding. I'd begun to learn this lesson in many ways from day one of becoming a Christian, I'm still learning today to be obedient as early as possible, it's less painful.

Once again the Marsdens were good examples when it came to personal devotions (spending quality time with God). Both Eddie and Nancy arose in a morning at 6.00am. This just became the normal pattern for us to meet with God. Praying together was a massive step forward for Lynn and myself, it was another area that was very embarrassing and didn't always go to well. We made the effort simply out of the teaching that we had been given by Eddie and Nancy. Our hunger for the Bible was insatiable - we wanted to learn so much. It helped us enormously when the Marsdens gave us a paraphrase of the Bible. This was written in a much simpler English. Any struggles we had from our personal devotions were soon ironed out by Eddie or Nancy.

One of the most difficult areas I had to learn to walk in was praying or speaking out in public meetings. My mind flits back to a small prayer meeting one evening. Everyone was stood up holding hands (remember what I said about all the physical contact?) this in itself was threatening enough but eventually everyone had prayed out aloud but me. The room was totally silent - not even the sound of a ticking clock. I knew that everyone in the room was waiting for me to splutter out my first public prayer. How I wished my knees could play a different tune. My concerns were that I didn't know how to start or finish, what if I made a mess or got stuck half way and dried up? It really seems silly looking back, but, at the time I struggled. Another area was when asked to read the Bible in public, what I recall is my quivering voice under the stress of nervousness. These areas I have outlined speak clearly of a very unconfident person entering an environment

that is very threatening. Other experiences of this nature were just as difficult for me. For example: being asked to tell others in a public meeting about how I became a Christian; when I eventually succumbed to the infilling of God's Spirit and when I took the plunge in believers' baptism. I was also asked at this very early stage to be involved in a Christmas production that a local church was putting on - "no way" was my reply. I definitely didn't have that kind of confidence.

One overt spiritual challenge I faced, after being a Christian a few months, left me absolutely paralysed with fear. A number of things had been said about the spiritual realm including things about the devil. Whenever any of these things were mentioned I went cold all over and a fear came over me. This fear became stronger and began to cause me to have panic attacks. I believed that the devil was after me for turning my back on him. Things got so bad that Lynn couldn't leave the room without me following her around. One evening, Lynn wanted to pop across to Nancy's for some reason and told me I would have to stay to keep my eyes on the children. On her return she found me sat in the corner of the room, close to tears, frightened like a little child. I sat in the corner because I couldn't bear the thought of having anything behind me. Eventually the Marsdens decided that they should pray with me asking God to release me from this fear.

The evening we had planned arrived and I was in fear and trepidation - but it had to be done. As they began to pray my body began to shake - I had absolutely no control of myself. After some prayer, confession and renouncing of things in my past they prayed specifically binding certain powers and cutting me off from past occultist activity. As this prayer was being verbalised the shaking continued until various spirits were addressed personally, at that point, a cool sensation passed through my body starting at my toes and leaving through the top of my head. This dealt with the shaking and released me from the fear. From that time on I knew that the devil and all my past was dealt with. This whole experience opened my eyes to the spiritual realms. Today I have no doubt that the devil and his evil little cohorts are out to destroy and hinder the relationship between God and the pinnacle of His creation - man.

Standing up for Jesus was equally as hard. I had begun to help Eddie to service, repair and perform pre-M.O.T. tests on cars that belonged to full-time Christian workers and evangelists. Being a mechanic, this was a service that Eddie had performed for Christians for a number of years. The Marsdens' sold their own private car to purchase a mini-bus for the Fellowship's use. We painted the mini-bus white and then had a professional sign writer paint 'Sutton Park Christian Fellowship' on the sides; 'Our God Reigns' on the front bonnet and 'Trust God' on the back doors.

Every motor vehicle, once a year, must have a test to make sure it is road worthy. That entails taking the vehicle to a garage in order for them to be able to perform this necessary duty. Guess which mug had to take the mini-bus for its test? You got it in one - me! The writing on the bus was in a very flamboyant red and blue - you could see it for miles! Please try and imagine this situation:- a young unconfident Christian driving around in a mini-bus that had the 'colours nailed to the mask'. As if that wasn't enough, I'm in a position where I have to take this mobile tract to a working man's environment - the garage. Do you feel the apprehension that I had yet? As I drove in to this massive garage (Hull Corporation Transport Garage) I felt as if every pair of eyes were on me. Soon after reporting to the office, my turn arrived. I drove the bus onto the ramps and tried sneaking out of the bus. As soon as the door shut behind me a voice chuckled "Where on earth did you get this one from?" My casual smile (that was false) did not suffice.

"Whose is it?" followed question number two.

"Oh, it belongs to a mate of mine", I defended.

Then came the ridicule: "Is he religious then?"; "he must be a right nutter driving around in this"; "didn't you feel daft driving it?" Out of all of these questions I never once defended my 'mate' or God. I just chuckled along with them, smiling and nodding in agreement, yet, inside, I felt an awful failure. This is just one of my first failings at standing up for Jesus. I'm so grateful for understanding people that helped me through these times but most of all for an understanding Father in Heaven.

As I continued to grow, in Christ, my faith and obedience continued to be tested. My love of football was extremely strong. Many thought that I was obsessed. Trying to keep fit was a difficult task but very necessary for someone who had lungs that had been damaged due to solvent abuse and limited breathing apparatus (broken nose in two places) due to teenage fighting. Every evening possible I would go for a two mile run against the clock and wind down gradually just outside our back door, in the cul-de-sac. After this came a number of exercises, indoors, for another twenty minutes. To put it mildly no one understood how important all of this was. Secretly Lynn and the Marsdens thought I was nuts and probably killing myself. But, more than that, they thought this obsession was hindering my spiritual growth.

Lynn and I had both felt that God had been speaking to us about working with young people. Both Eddie and Nancy, as our leaders, agreed that God would start to use us in this area. As far as I was concerned, we needed more confirmation. I was looking for the impossible - the message in the sky type confirmation - in order to put things off. This wasn't lack of faith or fear of the task before us, it was simply disobedience. Without a shadow of doubt we believed that the Father wanted us to start up a youth group on a Saturday afternoon, offering teaching and worship, eating together and ending by socialising. My playing football was the only hindrance to this happening because I played football on Saturday afternoons. In my rebellion I allowed time to drift on. I knew that Lynn and Nancy were praying about this situation but I defended my position well, until one day.....

It was one of the coldest days I can ever remember, it was hail stoning golfballs by the bucket. The pitch we had been allocated was nearly half a mile away from the changing rooms. Regardless of the bad conditions; the frozen toes, the stinging of the massive hailstone on bare flesh and the frozen pitch shredding legs to pieces, I was having a great game. The team we were playing were easily outmatched and we were queuing up to score goals. After receiving the ball deep in the mid-field I went forward slicing through their defence like a hot knife through butter. The goal was in my sight, only one more defender to get around and the goal keeper to beat. No problem! I left the defender eating dirt - I could feel oozing confidence - I just knew I was going to score. After picking my spot I pulled back my leg and then CRACK! - it happened. What should have been a fantastic goal was instead a terrible foul from behind that took me completely out of the game. Instead of feelings of elation I was in great pain. The game continued after they had carried me off the pitch. We only had the twelve players present. There wasn't anyone to help me to get back to the changing rooms. That half of a mile seemed endless, I couldn't walk, I had to virtually crawl all the way. The cold had set into my bones causing me to shake, my teeth were chattering. I kept saying to myself how crazy I was. I convinced myself that I had had enough, I vowed never again. Eventually I reached the changing rooms and they were locked. After searching for and finding the attendant he let me into the changing rooms. I couldn't move, I was frozen solid. That afternoon my love of football disappeared. A few weeks later we started the youth group as God had directed.

## Chapter 4

### HICCUPS IN SHARING LIFE

The youth group started with just one person from our own little Fellowship and a small number of teenagers whose parents came along to the Fellowship meeting on a Saturday evening. It was very much a mixed bag consisting of male/female, young teens/older teens, those that were well and truly churched (in a religious sense), those that were the children of the 'ultra spiritual, born again, truly sanctified' and even one or two that had no interest at all (bribed by parents). This mismatch bunch, seemingly poles apart, were actually quite similar in background. All but three of them were from Christian homes'. One of these was an older teenager that had been to Bible College and had a very strong personal faith. The other two were, our niece who had been baby-sitting for us, and her brother.

Looking back, Lynn and I were as green as cucumber when this group was formed but we had hearts that wanted to serve God in obedience, therefore, the Lord was at work.

Our first hiccup was in the form of an 11 year old who, at times, questioned our teaching and theology by repetitiously stating "Mum and Dad said....." Our biggest problem came, however, when there was a clash between our niece and one of the 'churched' girls of a similar age. Although they had started out on quite friendly terms, probably due to the fact that they were the only two teenage girls of that age, the more they got to know each other the more they grew apart. During our investigation of this problem we found out that they just had very little in common - they were from completely different backgrounds and our niece felt threatened and insecure refusing to come anymore, taking her younger brother with her.

As time went on the group progressed, some stopped coming, others started coming including a couple of students. After some time I felt a very strong leading to reach out to my own kind - young people that had not been brought up to go to church.

Eddie and Nancy were happy for me to begin reaching out as long as someone else was willing to come out with me. I put it to the Fellowship but had no response. After putting it to the youth group a twelve year old boy reluctantly said he was willing. His reluctance was because he thought that he had nothing to offer and assumed I would reject him.

We ventured out together, one evening, equally nervous. The estate on which we both lived was quite large and we had no idea where to find the kids. It was winter, cold and dark, so we decided to drive around in the car to suss things out. We saw a number of individuals and couples hanging around but had no real inclination to go and speak to them. Before not to long we drove past a large group of older looking teenagers, some sat on motor bikes and some stood and sat around talking. There were about 16 of them and most of the lads were big. I stopped the car just past the group and said to Paul, "What do you think?"

"I don't know." He replied

We decided we would pray and then go to speak to them and tell them about Jesus. We got out of the car and strolled over to them; I had no idea what I was going to say. As we got closer to them they one by one began to look our way. Man, the closer we got the bigger they grew. My 5'6" stature and Paul's skinny little 12 year old frame must have appeared like dots before their eyes. When we had got close enough to speak to them every eye was fixed on us looking us up and down. I still had no idea what to say. In return I stared back at them one by one. As my eyes went from one to the other catching

their eyes I could sense their intimidation, they seemed ill at ease and threatened looking across to each other for support.

At what appeared the right time I asked "Yer alright lads, how yer doing?" (translated means - "Are you well, gentlemen, how are you today?")

Beginning to relax they answered "ye..yaaaah, okay"

I then introduced myself and Paul to them and explained where we were from and what we were about. We had a good conversation with them, although one or two lacked a few manners. Our almost instant credibility with this group was aided by a small number of them knowing a local lad who had become a Christian and had changed quite dramatically.

The streetwork continued in this way with Paul and then Helen (also about 12 years old) started to get involved. We had met many different groups over a couple of months and performed a kind of on-the-spot survey finding out as much information from them as possible regarding what they thought about God, the church, their hopes and aspirations of life etc.

We concluded that we would start up a 'coffee bar' as a way of maintaining and building relationships. This 'coffee bar' ran for years based at our house. Hundreds of kids passed through our overt Christian presentation. Many stayed for years almost becoming part of the family. On an average night we would have had as many as 30 strewn all over our living room. On occasion we had to limit the numbers to 50.

I have taken time to outline this progression from our earliest days in youth work to the streetwork and coffee bar work for a specific purpose and that is to emphasise the difficulties encountered in youth work when trying to incorporate the unchurched into our existing church activities. Let me first bring you up to date with more background information.

The coffee bar had been running a number of years. For about a year, a Christian friend and I had been going into all the local Junior Schools (9-13) and the only local Senior School, as well as many of the other Senior Schools in and around the city, taking assemblies, lessons and Christian Union meetings. The streetwork and coffee bar were an integral part of our overall youth program. The youth program was something like this:

#### Week 1

Tuesday evening	- Christian discipleship i.e. teaching, worship etc
Friday evening	- streetwork
Saturday evening	- social

#### Week 2

Tuesday evening	- practical Christian discipleship i.e. open coffee bar
Friday evening	- streetwork
Saturday evening	- social

This model was repeated without fail apart from when other planned activities replaced the existing ones e.g. trips and football matches replacing streetwork or coffee bar.

As a part of the discipleship program our Christian young people were expected to be at the coffee bar and to have at least tried streetwork under the guidance of a mature

leader. It's in this setting that I want to recount the story of a 14 year old girl to emphasise my point.

We'll call this girl Jackie, she had been a regular attender to the coffee bar. She was small in stature - maybe about 4'10" but had a large bust. The skirts she wore came up to her belly-button and she had quite nice legs (so I'm told). All the lads claimed that she was an 'easy lay' and really just used her sexually. Jackie was a pleasant and very bubbly character and tended to think for herself.

This girl made a decision to follow Jesus and was seen to be making headway by attending growth groups and the youth discipleship evening of teaching and worship. She knew most people in the youth group already through their involvement in the coffee bar. Apart from Jackie, there was also one 17 year old lad, from the same gang, who had made a commitment to Christ some months earlier. He had been coming to the youth group for some time and had started to feel accepted. Jackie, however, struggled tremendously. She coped very well in the coffee bar when surrounded by those she was familiar with, those that knew her and understood her. She felt safe in their company because it was clear what they expected of her. They knew her as she really was and accepted her on that basis. She could be herself, short skirts and all; no heirs and graces were necessary.

Not so, though, when it came to the youth group night. In our ignorance we were putting her under all kinds of pressures. For a start, the safety and security of her friends around her had gone. Now she was swamped by well meaning people trying to make her feel part of the group. After a few weeks she told me "I'm nothing like the rest of them, I can't be like them, they talk different, dress different, they're all really nice people - I'm not." She was not able to relate to the rest of the group. Instead of being the lively, bubbly girl that we all knew, she had become subdued and very insecure. She just didn't feel that she could fit in. She was convinced that she could never be like the others. Time after time I tried to get her to understand that she didn't have to be like them - that God accepted her as she was. Her problem wasn't so much with God as with how she felt about herself and how she thought others judged her. Did we accept her as she was? Did any of us look down our noses at her, making her feel uncomfortable? The young ladies that we had in our Fellowship naturally dressed nicely and appropriately. They spoke well and their better use of the English language showed. It wasn't anybody's fault really, everyone had tried, although in vain. Maybe it was just naivety on our part - not realising the massive gulf that stands between the unchurched and the churched. It was evident that she was much more at ease when her non-Christian friends were around. Her identity was locked away in the safety and security of who she had been. Those former years that made up her background had given her a very distinctive view about herself. To step out of that familiar territory was too threatening, sadly, we watched her fall back into her old ways. It wasn't the Gospel she was rejecting but the pain of being the odd one out.

Although I have revealed this dilemma specifically in the context of youth work, I must point out that children are very much the product of their background, culture and their parental models. We produce, to some degree, our own kind. We affect our children in good ways and bad ways.

Sadly, the older people get, the more set they become in their ways. A basic human need is to feel secure. Most people find their security in what they have always known and in what they have always done. Familiar people and surroundings help us towards feeling safe and secure. A pattern can easily develop that becomes our lifestyle. It is in this home environment that our children are fed our thinking, desires, and beliefs. They

see, and hear, first hand, our attitudes, habits and behaviour. They observe our strengths and weaknesses and know of our fulfilled and unfulfilled aspirations. In this respect most of our values and moral standards are grown into us. In non-Christian homes another generation is birthed away from Christ, not just in time, but also from accepting him. It is against this kind of backdrop that we can understand, more easily, what was going on in the youth group between these two girls from very different family backgrounds. As time goes on the differences between the churched and the unchurched become more and more set in concrete. There are many possible differences that could be outlined, although, it goes without saying, that no two family situations will be identical. Many might argue that I am talking about extreme differences in black and white terms. What I would say to that is, although some of the differences are extreme and can be cross cultural i.e. a drug user might be from a middle class family background were no real love was shown, it is, nevertheless, a clear problem within that culture I have placed it in. The simple point I want to make is, that a person's history will have a direct affect on our evangelism and discipleship. Therefore, it would serve us well to try to see and understand some of the hindrances that stand in the way of the acceptance of the Gospel and the fulfilling of the great commission "to go into all the world making disciples of all nations" (starting with our 'Jerusalem'). I have found that the biggest hindrance is not theological i.e. the difficulty in believing in and accepting God. Rather, the hindrance is a cultural and social problem (they cannot relate to those claiming to be Christians). "Note this important crucial principal; the greatest barriers to successful evangelism are not theological, they are cultural" - Joseph Aldrich

It may be difficult for some to identify the differences between these cultures. Please do not fall into the trap of thinking about your own church situation. My outline is of those well-and-truly unreached by the church, living on council estates and needing to hear the gospel. If you know of any council estate in your area and have some idea how the majority live, then compare that with how the majority of your church friends live.

This list represents not just my own family background, and experiences of life outlined in earlier chapters, but also 10 years of involvement in reaching out to the unchurched/working class young people and their families through many different methods including prison work.

Let's have a look at some of the cultural and social differences i.e. type of accommodation, the area one might live in, employment, and the type of places we might socialise in.

## **Family background differences**

### **Unchurched/Working class      Churched/Middle class**

Employment	Labourer/unemployed	Professional
Salary	£6-10,000/benefit	£10,000 plus
House	Council premises	Private ownership
Comforts	Bare essentials	Mod. cons. and appliances
Holiday	If lucky	Family holidays (abroad)
Car	Maybe 1 banger	1 each (or 1 new one)
Education	Nearest school	Best option
Speech	Common (slang)	Eloquent/Queens English
Socialising	Pub (darts etc), bingo out with lads	Restaurant/club home with family, office
Tipple	Lots of beer	Wine, sherry, halves, shorts

Smoking	Rolls, civvy cigs.	Cigars, pipe
Pastimes	Betting office	Golf
Offspring	Less privileged	Material needs met
Money	Paper round	No object
Education	Little encouragement	Encouraged
	Leave A.S.A.P./Y.T.S.	College, university,
	Delinquency	Private tuition (dance, music)
Care	Latch key kids	More protection/control
	Street kids/let loose	Hobbies/home computer
Food	School dinners	Wider choice
Clothes	Cheaper trend	Top gear/leather jacket
Motor bike	Buy your own	present
Motor car	Joy riding	Driving lessons/present
Employment	Labourer/unemployed/	Professional
	Theft for living	Work for living
Socially	Inadequate	confident
	Drugs for thrills	Courtship
	casual sex/permissive	
Results	Unwanted children	Start family
	Prison	Wealth
	Distraught parents	Proud parents
	Homelessness	Welcome

The differences are endless. No one knows how I have struggled to educate myself over the years. Yes, it was my decision to quit school at the age of 14. But is a 14 year old wise enough to make a decision like that for himself. Yes, it was my fault that I mixed with the wrong crowds and got into all kinds of trouble, but I never knew anything else. My friends who lived in the same vicinity were all like me. I thought life, as I knew it, was normal. There was never any mention of university, it was not an aspiration of the culture I was from. My culture destined me to be a low paid factory worker just like my friends and parents.

Thinking is for the clever. Before becoming a Christian I had never even thought about politics or considered any of the issues of my day. Future prospects never entered my head. It all just passed me by. Life consisted simply of work and play until it was complicated by a pregnant girlfriend. Even then I was just swept along by what was seen as the right thing to do.

There is a real frustration in powerlessness. For the better educated, this frustration is often seen in petitioning and the challenging of legislation. For the less educated, it is worked out through aggression in what would be termed as anarchy, as the so called rebels show their distaste for what they believe is an unfair social system. This highlights a very important point. How do the unchurched view the church? It is often said to me by the more disadvantaged people I work with that the church is the wealthiest organisation in the whole world. More specifically, those who have done any kind of reading on this subject, point the finger at the church, which includes you and me, and are saying "why are you not doing anything about sharing your wealth with those who are in need?" This is only one question out of many that I get asked. It is very important for us to listen to the questions people ask, and the anger in the comments they make, if we hope to understand what they think about the church. These are some of the most common statements that come my way.

- The real thieves are the rich.
- All vicars are nonces (sex offenders).
- Church is boring.
- Christians are all weak.
- Everybody has got to believe in something.
- God is a crutch
- I don't know any Christians
- Church people are all hypocrites
- A bunch of interfering do-gooders
- It's wrong for a Christian to have sex.
- Christian's are not allowed to drink.
- I know a Christian who is.....and he is a right creep

As a Christian, how many of these statements do you believe about yourself? If the cap fits, wear it! If it doesn't, can I suggest that you consider ways of changing these opinions, if not for your sake, then for Christ's.

It's about time the church took to the streets with proclamation, celebrating the name of Jesus. Thank God for the 'March for Jesus' initiatives that gets the church out into the streets. Thank God for the renewed initiatives in social action, alongside the preaching of the Gospel. The 'world's' view of the church needs to be dramatically changed if anyone is going to want to be a part of it. The responsibility belongs to every individual that is in the body of Christ - we must be effective at the grass-roots level. (Remember the instant credibility of the first group I spoke to on the streets. That was due to the grass-roots witness of my friend in his school.)

Jesus spoke at great length about the church being a light set on a hill. About being salt. He himself gained credibility by being among the people - not just sharing the good news about the kingdom - but also demonstrating it through meeting needs with signs and wonders following. Just like us, Jesus had to grapple with cultural and social problems. It's interesting that the religious people of Jesus' day would have classed him as an individual from a working class background in the poor area of Galilee. Many of the Gospel accounts speak clearly of social differences between the pious religious leaders and the publicans, outcasts and sinners; the Jew and the Samaritan.

The absolutely fantastic news is that Christ himself has torn down all cultural and social barriers by the demonstration of His own life, death, bodily resurrection and ascension. If we follow His lead, in the areas of exercising compassion and obedience to the will of the Father, we will undoubtedly gain credibility among the unchurched as Jesus did.

Much of what Jesus did was in the way of changing the damaged opinions of the common people, towards the religion that was being propagated by the 'uncompassionate' Pharisees. Likewise, we as a church body must not be seen to be displaying cold religion, but rather a practical demonstration of the warm love of the Father for His prodigal (wayward) children.

One of the biggest hindrances that I have observed in this area is that the church gets caught up in its own religious activities - it becomes self perpetuating. Just like God cannot be put in a box, so too the church should not be in a box. The danger is that the church becomes so privatised or exclusive that no one outside the box will ever feel like trying to get in. I wonder if we realise how difficult it is for someone to cross the threshold of a church meeting place for the first time. We might think that we have open doors and all are welcome. But how many of us stare at a new face that appears? How many go out of their way to make that person feel welcome? What would be the reaction

of some if their seat had been taken by a stranger? Would a newcomer to the church know where to sit? When to stand? How would they cope with trying to follow a service book? What reaction would they have to raised hands, dancing, shouts of hallelujah or Amen. Would they be frightened by 'tongues', people being delivered from evil spirits and those being 'slain' in the spirit. I know of a number of Christians that get jittery during this kind of ministry. Would it be more so for the non-Christian?

What is very important to understand is, that although joyous singing and dancing, raised hands and constant exclamations of praise to God are marks of liberation in worship for the Christian, it can however be very off putting for a total stranger. If it is real praise and worship, then I believe it will only have a positive affect. If not, however, and it is more of a shindig or a whoopee time then the kind of negative comments I often hear are, "They're a load of nutters", "They were all freaking out." The interesting thing about this, is that many will be put off; particularly the older person who is or has been into religion, the middle-aged more professional type, the introverted and those easily embarrassed. On the other hand, the younger generation appear to 'buzz' off it - but not with lasting affect. There is a real problem within the charismatic move at the moment that must be handled and monitored very carefully. And that is, that in trying to bring the church into the twentieth century we put ourselves at risk of taking in too many of the 'worlds' patterns and trends thereby putting ourselves and the church at risk of the 'worlds' culture conditioning.

The danger is that as we move away from archaic forms of worship and worship content, outdated dress sense etc, we move into new trends that could well be less than Holy.

I'm thinking from the perspective of the Skin-head, Bowie Freaks and the Smoothies phases that I was very involved in. We dressed a certain way, wore our hair in a set style. Music had a very strong affect on our thinking, in one sense we were like a bunch of zombies. Many of the younger generation of Christians, not only follow these trends by looking like them and listening to the their music, they adopt consciously or unconsciously the thinking and if not careful the lifestyle.

As the church of the future grapples with some of these tensions, it is imperative that she maintains her purity, being without spot or blemish. Holiness and reverence must remain as foundations of the future church. If we aim to attract people by adopting their trends we make a grave error. We serve a creative God, we are a creative people. We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that we may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light. (my paraphrase of 1 Peter 2:9) We are different! We are of a different nature. Although we are to be in the world we must not be of the world.

## Chapter 5

### TACKLING LIFE'S PROBLEMS

If the church is going to be effective in reaching out to the totally unchurched, it is going to have to take a very close look at a number of these issues that I have raised. The pitfalls are many. Good intention and enthusiasm are necessary qualities in order to start the pioneering process, but fall far short of what is needed to affect the lives of these people. Let me try to fill this out for you.

As I have just stated in the previous chapter, Christ has already broken down the barriers. God is not limited by social or cultural differences, rather, it is us that have the struggle. We need to see these barriers for what they really are. They are no more than traditional differences that have become the norm in present day society. Through salvation we are released from the prison of powerlessness and prejudice. Although social differences do cut deep in contemporary culture, causing real problems in our society; we as Christians need to see that we are set free from anything that would bind us. Christ has set us free from all things. God is not bound by cultural differences or nationalistic pride. The Gospel is 'Good news' for every man and every woman, in every culture, in every nation. There is absolutely nothing wrong with our God or our message. The wrong is with us, the church. We are the people that have failed miserably, in this day, to communicate the fullness of the Gospel - Life with a capital L - with our fellow man. This 'Life' tackles and deals with all of man's problems. When we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit there should be a beginning to the automatic expulsion of our differences, prejudices and selfishness. "The old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17b). This process may take years if we rebel against God and His word. But if we truly love God and aim to obey Him in every area of our lives - which is the true meaning of giving your life to Christ and accepting him as your Lord (boss or master) - then this change of mind, heart and action is dealt with as God reveals the truth to us. The teaching of Christ is so clear on this. For instance, He taught about loving God with all you have and in the same breath said "love our neighbour as you love yourself. (Luke 10:25-28). The story of the 'Good Samaritan' teaches that even our traditional and cultural differences should not stop us from helping someone in need. (Luke 10:30-37). The religious Jews, the priest and the Levite saw the need and did nothing. This was probably due to their 'Holier than thou' attitudes that had sprung from their interpretation of the law. The Samaritan, however, although despised by the Jews, exercised compassion breaking the chains of cultural prejudice. The Samaritan's action was highly commended by Jesus to his Jewish hearers ending the story by telling them "to do likewise."

Jesus also taught that we should love, bless and pray for our enemies and for those that persecute us. (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27-35). Judging by the context, Jesus is referring to the occupation of Israel by the Romans and the oppressive regime of the soldiers and the tax collectors forcibly demanding payment of taxes.

People are loved by God whether they are black, yellow, brown or white; Samaritans or Jews. God loves every single one of them not wanting one to suffer unjustly at the hands of the rich, the powerful or those that perpetrate evil. We as a church must heed the rebuke of Jesus to the Pharisees found in Luke's Gospel 11:42. "Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God." From this warning, and the message from the story of the Good Samaritan, it is fair to deduce that God wants those that love

him to also serve him by demonstrating His love in action. It is an integral part of our repentance towards Christ to put right those things that we have failed to do.

As the church - the Body of Christ - our task is to obey the Head - Jesus. To live by His example, to obey His teaching, to adopt the standards that He himself lived by. To love as He loved. To care as He cared, demonstrating real compassion for the less privileged in our society, just as He did. Jesus understood His Father's love for these people and sacrificially gave himself to helping them find this fullness of 'Life' that he spoke about. John 10:10b. Jesus' ultimate giving was of His life. Many have understood this 'love of God' for the lost, and have gone to alien lands to take the Gospel to the unreached. For many it cost them their lives. Most of the Apostles, in serving Christ by taking the Gospel to the unreached, gave up their lives in martyrdom. If we truly belong to Christ, we give up our own lives in order to become one with Him. Our modern day, British-cultured, middleclass Christianity knows very little of this real cost of serving Christ. As generations have past we still hold on to those historic beliefs and traditions of our heritage that allow us the greatest measure of comfort. The church is in grave error, sat back, relaxing, not yet convinced that we do not live in a Christian country. Our aim in serving the Lord should be to make Britain great again; not great in wealth and prosperity, but great by being a nation that loves and serves the Lord, treating each individual with the greatest respect and dignity, whether rich or poor, able bodied or disabled, young or old, black or white. Is it too much to ask those claiming to follow Christ, to follow him His way, and not the way they themselves prefer? Unless we are willing to open our eyes and see the reality of the situation, I fear very much that as a church, and as a nation, we will be subject to God's wrath because of our hard hearts, disobedience and rebellious obstination. Isaiah 58; Matthew 25:31-36; James 1:27, 14-18, 24.

Jesus understood people. He understood their pain and anguish. He deliberately put himself in situations in order to experience the pain and grief of others. The death of Lazarus (John 11:1-12:19) and Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:41-56) are good examples. The episode of the woman at the well (John 4:4cf) shows that he cared very little for what others thought as he crossed cultural and social barriers by talking, not just with an unclean Samaritan, but also a woman of ill-repute.

Even though, at times, Jesus mixed and socialised with the wealthy; and, no doubt He could have made a lot of money as a faith healer and miracle worker, he always maintained a simple lifestyle. Only on very rare occasions do we see a glimpse of extravagance, e.g., when He was anointed by Mary of Bethany before his death. Mark 14:3-9. Even these times were to fulfil a greater purpose. For the majority of time Jesus was as good as homeless with "no place to lay his head." Matthew 8:20.

Materialism, and our need for comfort, play a major part in blinding us from seeing the needs of others. It is almost impossible to see their needs through our own juggled up set of self created needs; needing to earn more money in order to pay for a larger mortgage, a decent car, the new video and television, the expensive holiday etc, etc. We live in a upwardly mobile society. Jesus never stepped onto the ladder of upper classness, but was content to eat and socialise with those rejected by such a class. Matthew 11:19.

Poverty is not the issue here. Many Christians in other countries experience poverty on deeper levels than we could ever imagine in our country. Although poor, many Christians still manage to love and serve God, grateful for what they have. The enemy I'm speaking of is materialism and the way it has closed our eyes to the physical and spiritual needs of others. Materialism puts my home, my family's welfare, my car, my needs and my wants before the abject poverty of others. This can never be classed as Christian lifestyle. Jesus said, "love your neighbour as yourself". The fact that some

have had better opportunities in life, or managed to secure a good job, therefore, earning higher wages, does not excuse us from our responsibility to the genuinely poor. James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17.

The simple lifestyle that Jesus lived must be the example that we follow. We can choose to be poorer, or putting it another way, choose to have a lower standard of living. The big question really, is, how many are prepared to give up some of their comforts in order to meet some of the real needs in our society? Where is all this good stewardship of resources that we often hear about in the church. How much more is a building worth than people? I would challenge any church to look at its last 5 years' financial accounts to see how much money has been spent on evangelism or social action. The affect we have had on the community over the last 5 years, in which we are suppose to be salt and light, speaks as a testimony for, or against us. The amount of concern shown through specific prayer and action also demonstrates, in real practical terms, the state of our hearts and our willingness to serve in obedience to the Gospel.

As a Christian, in the city of Hull, I can say that in the last 11 years (1980-1991) the preaching of the Gospel to the unreached has hardly taken place. I know full well that not one church has released a paid full-time or even part-time evangelist. It baffles me how, with such a poor sowing record, we have an expectancy to see people converted at reaping events. Unless we are prepared to cover the ground with seeds, there is nothing for God to water, how can there be growth? It will take full-time evangelists to train and equip the church to be able to effect communities of unchurched people through the schools, evangelistic and social initiatives. The frustrating thing for me is that 10, average waged, tithing people in the church could support a full-time evangelist. And that is only taking into account the tithing principle. If we were cheerful givers, giving extravagantly, just think of how many more full-time ministries could be released!

This is not just theory. It probably needs to be said that for the last 11 years, since Lynn and I have been Christians, I have never been paid more than the national minimum wage level. We have always been in a position of needing government benefits. I mention this only because I want to make it clear that we have adopted a simple lifestyle, we have no interest in chasing money. We are content in our circumstances and have never felt that we are missing out, or worse off than others. Our testimony to the world is that God is faithful in providing for all of our needs just as He promised. Every part of our lives is given over as a sacrifice to the Lord, that includes the car, the house, our time and money.

You may be asking, is all this relevant? The answer is, Yes! Extremely relevant. The church must release full-time, gifted communicators into the city, more specifically into the communities they are a part of. The Gospel must be preached or communicated through some medium. There is a place for social action alongside this preaching. The church must be trained up and equipped to communicate the Gospel to friends, neighbours and family. It is imperative that those unreached by our normal contact have opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel. Finance must be released in order to release those gifted communicators. All of this must start to happen. This is what the Gospel is all about, sharing the Good News with those that need to hear it. Unless we do this, we fail the commission that Christ gave to us and we hinder his return. I, for one, refuse to be found guilty as I stand before the Lord, at the great judgement, when each one of us will have to give account of our lives to God. Mt 25. We must begin to infiltrate these areas incarnationally bringing God's presence among them. This is one way of bringing God's kingdom to this earth and to these communities because the kingdom of God is within us. Luke 17:21

## **Whose class are you in?**

Earlier I marked out many differences I have observed, since becoming a Christian, between the church and the unchurched. No one should feel condemned in any way by these differences. But, we as the church need to find ways in which we can bridge that gap if we ever hope to communicate the Gospel.

If, as a Christian, you take an honest look at yourself, I am very confident that you will fit better into the middle class slot. The reason being, and it's the same for me, is that the majority of mature Christians will be much wiser with their money and will not be spending pounds and pounds on alcohol and tobacco. What money I earn pays the mortgage on my 'middle of the market' home, the car expenses and maintenance, bills, food, clothing, etc. Just by the one simple fact that I don't waste any of my money, buying only what I have a need for and not what I desire, means that I can afford to pay my bills and run a car, dressing decently and modestly. It goes without saying that anyone who uses his money wisely will be better off than if he were care free.

Many who would be proud to be called working class, would take one look at me, my home, my car, and would almost immediately state that I live in the middle class. The truth of the matter is, for years I have never earned more than the national minimum wage level. Anyone, in my position, with a wife and 3 children, receiving government benefits because they are low waged, can achieve with their money what I have. It all depends on how they use their finances.

The class argument is endless. I have tried to point out in the last two paragraphs that our accumulated wealth does not show clearly the difference of the classes. The real difference is in attitude. When one man looks down on another because he is poorer. When one man can eat and drink in his luxurious dream-home until he is full while another man starves to death in the slums of a shanty town. Jesus, himself, spoke out many times against this exact situation where the rich looked down on, and uncompassionately ignored the needs of the poor. Here is one of those accounts as told us by His disciple, Luke:

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in the fire.'

"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' Luke 16:19-26.

Poverty can hit a person or a nation like a tidal wave. One minute everything can be fine and going well and suddenly calamity strikes and every security and possession can be swept away. For the individual, many situations that we find ourselves in could lead us into poverty. It might be unemployment, the death of a loved one, bankruptcy, being thrown out of home, it could even be a medical or psychiatric problem. Many nations today are experiencing extreme poverty because of war, earthquakes, and lack of technology. In either case, what is necessary is compassion towards those less privileged. I know that if I found myself in any of these circumstances I would be asking the question: Who cares?

The answer to this question is that God does. The whole Gospel proves this as the Father gave up the most precious thing to Him, His Son, Jesus; so that every need that mankind has could be met. "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19.

A second answer is seen in the life and example of Jesus. He gave himself completely to those around him. He met all the needs of those that came to Him. Steadfastly, He went on to be the final sacrifice, giving up His very life in death on the cross, in order to pay the penalty for each and every sin, past, present and future ever committed by mankind. Hebrews 9:23-28.

Thirdly, those that love Jesus should not be able to turn a blind eye to those in genuine need. It is not good enough to leave this in the hands of our government. The social service is an animal that lacks the Godly compassion necessary to meet the very deep needs of many in our society. There is a massive difference between an inadequate emergency hand-out and the love and compassion shown by Jesus. As Christians our attitude should be the same as Christ's (Philippians 2:5-11), not some heartless computer. If we have anything of the fruit of God's Spirit growing in our lives we must know of the Holy Spirit's prompting to "act justly to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God." Micah 6:8. The nature of God's Spirit, and the 'fruit' He produces in our lives is: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness faithfulness and self-control." Galatians 5:22. A Christian cannot wash his hands and say the problem is not mine because God's word to us says the opposite.

No man has the right to look down on another as if he is a lost cause. It is not right for us to judge a person's position whether he is homeless, unemployed or in prison. It is a fact that in different circumstances anyone of us could have been in this position of need. It is simply by the Grace of God that I have been saved from some of the pitfalls in life.

The 'rights' we have been given, as the church, is to put right all wrongs and evils on the face of the earth. We do this to the best of our God-given ability trusting him with those problems to big for us to handle.

The story of Job is a good example of God's Graceful provision, it being stolen away, and later returned. Job's poverty was not his fault. Likewise, many are not at fault for the material or spiritual poverty that they find themselves in.

Many righteous men and women claim that because of their background, lifestyle and devotion to God they could never end up in this awful predicament. I wonder if the blameless and upright Job who feared God and shunned evil thought the same. Job 1:1. He soon found out that God's enemy was also his enemy (Job 1:6cf) and has the power to steal, kill and destroy. (John 10:10b).

Not one Christian should be so pre-occupied with his own family and church life, that he fails to see the needs in our society. Our Christian forefathers initiated the many caring professions of today. What right do we have to abandon their pioneering work completely to the management of secular organisations. Christians today are not exempt from caring as Christ cared. The whole Body of Christ needs to be a living demonstration and expression of the love of God. We are completely surrounded by spiritual poverty. Only the church can take the responsibility for changing this. This problem cannot be put on to the shoulders of the secular government but can be placed fair and squarely on the shoulders of those governmental powers over the churches resources.

To be effective, then, we need to be in a class of our own. It is called the Jesus class; disciples learning to live the way he taught, putting into practice all that he has shown, and allowing the Holy Spirit to touch our hearts and pockets in order to release the true gospel of Good News that is for every man and every woman, whether poor or rich. This

gospel treats everyone as an equal. It crosses cultural as well as social differences. It is a gospel that promotes fairness and justice to all men by sacrificially demonstrating the love of Jesus and Kingdom principles. No one else has the answer to the destitution of mankind except Jesus and His Body - the church.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any comments you would like to make on what you have read. I don't always communicate as clearly on paper as I would like.



God bless

Ian

Contact:  
Ian Warelow  
RESPECT/Eternal Benefits  
104-106 The Quadrant  
HULL  
HU6 8NS  
Tel 01482 805525  
e mail: [respecteb@gmail.com](mailto:respecteb@gmail.com)  
Fb messenger: ian warelow