

Encouraging and Inspiring... Biblically Based Business

Publicising & Engaging Interest

Excerpt of Chapter 2 of Workbook 0

*(Please be aware that this excerpt may contain traces
of references to other parts of Workbook 0)*

Author: Michael Clargo Reconxile.org

2 Publicising & engaging interest

Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares

Proverbs 1:20

Simply put, the overall impact of this work is proportional to how many projects are initiated, and the number of projects initiated is proportional to the number of people who hear, understand and respond to the message.

And, based on the way that God has worked with us to cascade messages over the past 2000 years, the number of people hearing the message and feeling inspired by it is to some degree proportional to the number who recognise that God is calling them to proclaim and share the message, and who get on and commit themselves to doing it to the best of their ability.



2.1 Personal understanding and calling

In short, if this is what you truly sense God is nudging you to share with others, then the number of people who remain in poverty, or who are helped out of it, is down to what you do with the information you have received. But before you put yourself on a guilt trip, as we Christians are so often prone to do, please consider the following questions:

Is this really the focus God wants you to have at this time?

Our Christian world is full of God's servants who have basically burnt themselves out by overdoing it. Somewhere in their thinking they have become indispensable in some aspect of God's plan, and they are beginning to believe that if they don't do it, it won't happen – that God is in some way dependent on them rather than the other way around. If that is sometimes you, then here is something you already know, but need to hear again: "Our God is a **GREAT BIG GOD!!!**" and if He really wants it to happen, guess what ...?

Our problem, at times, can be that we confuse *'what needs to be done'* with *'what we need to do'*, and perhaps we need to gain a new perspective on Paul's comments on the body in Chapter 12 of his first letter to the Corinthians, because sometimes we seem to try to be whatever is needed, rather than what we were called to be.



So the first question for you is "*Lord, is this what You are placing on my heart?*", and, if you are anything like me, it may also be the second question, and the third, and the fifteenth, because I am not always good at separating the still small voice from my own hopes (*in either direction*) the first time around. Some things to place before God and also think about in your own mind as you are waiting on an answer, are ...

Are you gifted or positioned to do it?

"*For such a time as this*" is the most remembered phrase between Esther and her uncle (*Esther 4:14*) and through acting on it, Esther was the agent of God's will in preserving the Jewish nation. So you might reflect on whether you are well positioned to gain the ear of those who have the

But if you can answer them, you will be seen to have a persuasive case, if only by virtue of your own informed commitment to it. But, more than that, you will feel inspired by your understanding, and true passion is a powerful influence in those who observe it.

As a start point we would encourage you to read through Workbook 1 and complete the exercises within it – this can be a surprisingly engaging activity, and you never know you could also end up with a new business as a result. After that, we would suggest you read through the materials highlighted at the end of this chapter. This will help you understand the key messages in terms of engaging people’s interest.

What are your answers to these?
(the cynical challenges from the prev. page)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Maintaining options and flexibility

And your understanding can help you to tailor your message to the needs of your listener. By understanding the whole story, you will know the bits that are most relevant to your listener’s current hopes and concerns, and you can emphasise those. For instance: you can angle your responses to the sort of role that they are most likely to consider playing in taking things forward; you can aim their thinking to parts of the world which you know are already on their heart; and you can deal with their concerns by helping them to think through what the options might be, particularly in respect of finding a practical way forward and in inspiring and engaging others.

In fact, there are many options for how people get engaged, where people get engaged, when people get engaged, why people get engaged, and which people get engaged. But the really big question is *“If people get engaged”* and people often look at reasons to reject things before they look at reasons to accept them, particularly where they involve a commitment to change. By fully understanding the options, you can help people navigate past their objections, and to consider the possibilities in a fair light before they come to a decision.

Keeping your focus - what is the core, and what is added on

Key to understanding the flexibility of the approach is knowing what is at the core of it. And that is seeking to honour God’s will through mobilising people in churches and communities in the developed world: to equip and inspire the poor in churches and communities in the Developing World; to use business as a sustainable solution to their poverty. Beyond that, virtually everything is flexible. For instance, while we would *(for a number of reasons)* argue that this mobilisation is best done through the materials on the Reconxile site *(cascadability, transferability, proven nature,...)* this is not core to the approach, and if a group feels they are better served by a different model, then that is what they should use.

2.3 Using channels appropriately - let go and let God

In many Churches, publicity is often one of the most amateur of activities. Little thought is put into it, apart from the normal channel of notices and leaflets, and some ad-hoc word-of-mouth exhortations. But if you discover

that this is something God has placed on your heart, then we would recommend that you consider a more systematic and strategic approach.

Understanding all of the channels that are available to you

The first step in this is to understand all of the channels of communication that are open to you, both direct and indirect, in moving understanding and commitment to this work forwards. Many of these channels will probably be within and to your own Church community, but you may also have channels to people outside of your immediate community, some of whom may be quite influential in moving the message forward.

The first thing to understand is what you want to use the channel for. What do you want to publicise? What do you want people to engage with?

I have come to the conclusion that the first and most important thing to do is to seek people's engagement in informed prayer. Early on in thinking these things through I was wondering how I could tell people how important this is and persuade them of their part in making it happen. And then I realised that I was barking up the wrong tree – what I should have been seeking was for God to persuade them of their part (*or not*) in making it happen.

But to achieve this, they need to have an understanding of what to place before God in prayer, and that is where the first element of publicity is key; communicating clearly to people the power of this work, its potential to transform lives, the central principle of personal involvement, and the way God has been blessing it and the people who have engaged in it. Once people understand these things, they can ask the questions to get the answers they most need to know, and they can lay the whole thing out before God in prayer and understand the bits He is pointing out to them personally.

After that, publicity is very much an on demand thing; answering the questions until people feel they are committed to move things forward by engaging directly with the materials and the information.

So what channels are open to you? With whom can you share what God is doing in this area, and raise the need to mobilise prayer to support it and seek His will for how it is taken forward? Perhaps the following list might help you create your own list of the channels which are available to you:

- Your immediate circle of friends; share with them what you have found and what you feel called to do through it
- Your church leadership team; make an appointment to lay out what you have discovered and what you see as the potential for your church, its work and its vision
- The bishops and overseers of your church; contact them by letter to ensure they are aware of this work and are considering its relevance to them and their other churches
- Church media; write an interesting article on the work and why you think it is important and submit it to your local Christian media, or even to national Christian media (*if you have contacts there*), or write a letter to the editor for publication

Who can you share the message with?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

issues which surround them? What is their *vision*? What seems to *pique their interest*? What are their *values*? If you understand the answers to any of these questions, you understand the sorts of words which get past their filter of *'this isn't relevant to me, I can think about something else'*.

So your start point is to find a form of words which will engage your audience, something in which you are reasonably confident they have an interest and will at least pay attention for the first 20-30 seconds. How you keep their attention after that largely depends on how you use that 20-30 seconds, and for that I am indebted to Barbara Minto who proposed the following excellent approach in her book *'The Pyramid Principle'*.

Start with a **'statement'** in which you introduce a topic which you know is both of interest to them and relevant to the idea you want to promote. Ensure the 'statement' is something they will agree with and, by inference, feel some alliance with you. This is essentially about building engagement through rapport. For instance, with a Church leadership committee you might begin with the words in the box on the right.

Having got their initial attention, we now need to raise their interest up a notch and move closer to the idea we want to present. To do this we introduce a **'complication'**; a thorn in the smooth flow of their thoughts which alerts them to a mutual threat to your (*now jointly owned through the 'statement'*) hopes. For instance, and carrying on the example, see the words on the right.

The 'complication' clearly should raise a **'question'** in their minds: *'How do we deal with this thorn which threatens our hopes?'* And this 'question' may be so obvious that it does not need voicing. But if you feel you need to gather people's thoughts at this point, you can introduce the 'question' explicitly. For instance, see the box on the right.

And this 'question' is the springboard for the rest of what you want to tell them about; the **'answer'** – your idea. At this point you will have their attention because they feel they need to know what you are talking about, because they believe it will have real value in helping them pursue their hopes. And so you might continue with the words to the right.

But as you can see, it does require that you think about: the topics which are engaging your audience (*even at a subconscious level*); the complications which threaten to derail them (*even if just a little bit*); and the link to how this material can help them. And in fact you probably need to think about them in reverse order: What can this material do for your church and its hopes/plans/calling? What are the problems and unanswered questions in the church which it will help to overcome? What currently important and

Example of an approach based on Minto's Pyramid Principle

Statement

"In Matthew 24, Jesus is very clear on our responsibility for engaging with the poor. And, as a Church, we seek to work this out very effectively. Every year we apportion a significant amount of our funds to the work of missionary agencies and charities who enable us to fulfil Jesus' command, not just locally, but globally ..."

Complication

"But, for many within our Church, they have little involvement with this decision in either time, effort, or mental engagement. And I wonder whether, as a body, we are in danger of facilitating them in fulfilling the letter of the law while entirely missing the spirit of what Jesus intended"

Question

"Should we be doing something different? And, if so, what?"

Answer

"I have recently become aware of an approach which might offer us a way forward in this area – something in which the whole Church can become more engaged, and which relies on the strength of the Church as a body of different parts ..."

topical hopes (sometimes implied and unspoken) of our Church do these problems threaten? How do I begin my message (What is the 'statement')?

Having understood the approach that you want to take to sharing the message, you may now be in a better position to think through which channels you want to share it with – possibly because you do not have access to the right information on some of the channels. In any event, this is probably a good time to offer the whole thing up before God and seek His guidance on who to speak/write to and what to say.

Avoiding unnecessary conflict

Not all channels will be productive for you however, and you need to be mindful about whether your approach is proving counter-productive. For instance, I joined my local PCC (*Parochial Church Council*) because I wanted to see things change, but all of my attempts to change things through the PCC were beset with conflict and argument (*much of it of my own making*). I stuck with it, but on my tenth anniversary, as I was reflecting on my position, God asked me two questions: “*What has been the fruit of your time on the PCC?*” and “*Do you really think this was my plan for you?*” My answer to the first was “*Very little except some antagonism and smouldering resentment*” and the answer to the second was “*Well, ... maybeeee,... Okay, no, probably not!*”, and I felt God smile His wry sympathetic smile at me, just at the point I was about to say “*But...*”.

Just because something is a ‘*good idea*’ does not mean it is God’s idea, or at least not His timing anyway. God has given everybody free will, and paid an immeasurable price for doing so, and it is not something which He will act against.

This work is both ‘*a good idea*’ and ‘*doing God’s will*’, and so, as we have discovered, the Devil is keen to obstruct it and set up obstacles against it, and these need to be overcome. But we need to be able to discriminate between those conflicts which are the natural spiritual response to pursuing God’s will in areas where the Devil does not want us to venture, and those conflicts which arise from a body which is not yet ready to hear God’s calling in this area (*or, to be fairer, and less likely to create conflict, ‘our interpretation of God’s calling’*). Our hope is that in engaging in this work, Church communities will grow in a number of different ways, but these will prove difficult if we have alienated most of the people in the process. To avoid this we need to push forward sensitively and prayerfully, being true to our calling while honouring God’s priceless gift of free-will.

Trusting God's power in His own plan

Something which will help you in that, and which we are all prone to lose from time to time, is real confidence of God’s power in His own plan. We are called to: act justly; love mercy; and walk humbly with our God (*Micah 6:8*). But humility is not just about obedience, it is about recognising His true power and our true place. If we convey the message accurately, intelligently, appropriately, compellingly, truthfully, wisely, sensitively, consistently, humbly, and prayerfully, and we are sure people have heard it in its best light, then we have done all that we can, and it is time to ‘*Let go, and let God*’. If it is part of His plan, it will happen. If it is part of His *immediate* plan, it will happen NOW! And if it is not part of His plan, then

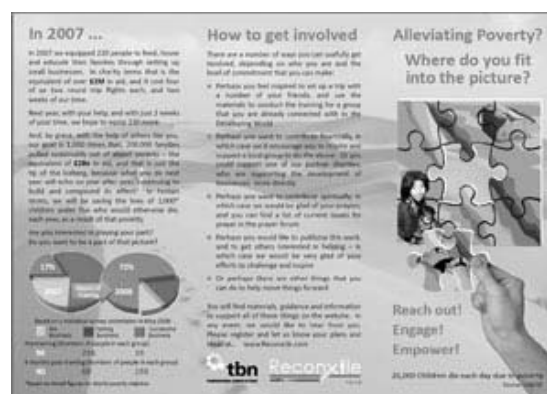
this would be a good place to stop anyway! We just need to be obedient to the best of our ability, using the gifts He has given us.

2.4 Materials to help you

When you think about how you might present the message, it is important that you present it personally wherever possible, and in that way adjust it to best suit the people you are sharing it with. However, once you have gained people's attention, there are a number of materials on the Reconxile website which can help you fill in some of the gaps and answer some of the more obvious questions. For instance ...

Leaflets and flyers

We have produced a general tri-fold A4 leaflet which can be used as an introduction to this work and a means to begin to get people thinking through how they might participate in it. While the leaflet can be used on its own, it is clearly much more effective as a summary following a personal presentation. We have drafted some posters and fliers, which can be modified easily, and be used to advertise and invite people to an organised presentation on this work. And to help you with the presentation side of things we have developed ...



Presentation packs

These are PowerPoint slide decks which can be used to present the ideas to a group of people, and get them thinking about whether and how to take this further. Each slide deck can be modified so that you can tailor your presentation to what the audience most needs to hear, and so that you can best prepare them to take the information prayerfully before God, and seek their part in it. Of course the biggest resource in helping them think through how to take it further is the ...

Website and materials

Which gives them access to the training materials themselves, to this guide, and to all of the information on trips to date which have been posted on the website.

Finally, there are ...

Activity and talk outlines

These provide basic ideas on things that you can get your Church engaged in to take them a step forward on their thinking.

All of these materials may be freely downloaded from reconxile.org

