

The Right Tool for the Job – June 2006

Elegance was a foreign concept as far as the maintenance officer on my old Beach Mission was concerned. One evening, following a power failure, he quickly had the electricity flowing (it was 240v in those days). When asked how he did it he simply brandished his tool of choice for fuse box failures – a four inch nail!

Important jobs require the right tools. Top of the important job list must surely be helping people in their relationship with our Loving Heavenly Father. Like all jobs it is a two step process. I must select the correct tool for the job and I must be willing to be shown how to use it correctly. Evangelism is not easy. For those who want some help our first step will be to identify some suggested tools for the job:

For the quick '5 minute encounter' at the shops*

Here are some easy to read give-aways that are self explanatory. None of these should be given away without indicating a willingness to listen to the recipient's comments or feedback. These are ideal for insertion into the back compartment of a wallet or purse.

'Christianity – A Pocket Guide'

'Believe it or not!'

'Two Ways to Live'

'Jesus is for Sceptics'

'What is a Christian?'

For the 'over-a-cup-of-coffee' discussion*

It is hard to go past 'Two Ways to Live' scribbled on a paper napkin. An advantage that this has over other approaches is that it encompasses different learning styles. It is graphic (exceedingly simple drawings), the Biblical logic flows and it is conversational.

A vastly abbreviated 'Christianity Explained' can also be employed here. The illustration of the three-legged stool which is used to highlight the person and work of Jesus can be lifted from the course – and this may lead to a willingness of the recipient to do the course.

For the person who is willing to sit and examine the Bible*

It's hard to go past sitting down with someone and intelligently reading the Bible with them. It gets them reading about Jesus and seeing the source of your information is not your own opinion. You have not made Christianity up.

The pick of the crop are 'Christianity Explained', 'Christianity Explored' (although it is a more detailed course) both based on Mark's gospel, along with 'Simply Christianity' which is based on Luke's gospel.

However there is a danger with these courses. Like the untrained person who uses any tool these can also be misused. Don't use them without undertaking the required training. You will be tempted to omit vital doctrines and to put your own 'spin' on your favourite parts.

For those who need clarity on Christian doctrine and Christian living*

'Just for Starter's' is an excellent series of seven Bible studies employing a helpful educational method and which gets the person used to looking up the Bible. The material is well presented and covers the basics. A more expansive and attractive version entitled 'Back to Basics' is also available. Both are excellent.

For those who are well organised and have reasonable facilities

The well produced and socially acceptable modern tools like 'Introducing God' (based on Two Ways To Live) and 'Lifeworks' are ideal for those who can handle the bigger event and who have access to TV/video equipment. Both products are well produced and fit easily into a contemporary setting. It is envisaged that these programs run over a number of weeks, often set within a social context such as a meal. Once mastered these tools are capable of being used in 1-to-1 situations. However, if used this way, they will require the user to have an accurate understanding of what the material is trying to do.

It is most advisable to have witnessed a presentation of these programs before embarking on running them in a local context. Check their respective websites for more info.

For a surprising number of situations

Always have available a clean, unadorned, easy to read plain copy of a gospel. Funny, isn't it, we think the Word of God is so encumbered that God cannot speak from it without our clever illustrations and commentary.

Warning!

Humility is mandatory in ministry and in ministry training. Link into an apprenticeship and learn how to these tools. Don't be afraid to plan your apprenticeship over 5-10 years. It is much better to learn correctly than to learn quickly. Although video and audio training tapes are available for many courses (for private learning) I would strongly urge everyone to learn in pairs or in groups. Practising on one another and getting feedback is spiritually edifying and helps you to iron out the bugs.

Start assembling the 'tools' for your ministry bag right away, you may never know when you will have the opportunity to use them. In addition, never use a four inch nail in a fuse box!

* Are all available from Evangelism Ministries, Matthias Media or Moore Books

