

Rebecca Manley Pippert

OUT

 of the 

SALT

SHAKER

 & into the World 

Evangelism
as a
Way
of Life

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Foreword by
Walter Trobisch

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*To Wes who is gentle, strong
and insatiably curious
about God's world*

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Foreword

This is a book about the second turning.

In the first turning, a Christian experiences the transformation from a natural person to a spiritual person. Instead of "self" being the center of life—exploring, cultivating, adoring it—God becomes the center. This miracle is brought forth by the Holy Spirit giving us new life in Christ. It is a necessary, indispensable, basic step.

But it is only a first step. The work of the Holy Spirit should not stop here but lead to a second turning in which the spiritual person again becomes natural.

It is this second turning which enables Christians to communicate their faith. Not as a duty they must add to their many other Christian duties. Not as a program they have to adopt, a special technique they must learn. Not as a must at all, not as something they should do or may do or can do or will do.

The second turning makes the communication of faith—evangelism—something they are unable not to do. Something they cannot help but do. It flows out of Christians without their even realizing it. It arms them with contagious

health. It becomes—to use Becky Pippert's word—*natural*. It becomes a way of life. To use a biblical term, it becomes *automatic*.

This term is used only once in the Bible. In Mark 4:28 Jesus tells the parable of the self-growing seed. To describe this process he uses the Greek word *automatos*.

Communication of faith thus becomes automatic, natural, something which happens even though the communicator—the sower—“knows not how” (Mk. 4:27). Something that goes on even while he sleeps or goes about his work. This is the result of the second turning—as indispensable as the first.

The second turning is what this book is all about.

I first met the author (who was then single) as a participant of a family life seminar in Oregon which I conducted with my wife, Ingrid. God has given Becky an outgoing, captivating personality.

I am haunted by this thought: what might have happened to her if she had never taken the first turning? Would she be using these gifts as a beautiful young woman for her own self-glory in a destructive way?

But I am even more haunted by the thought: what if she had stopped at the first turning? What if after becoming a Christian she had—out of a misunderstanding of the concept of holiness and spirituality—denied her natural beauty, her natural radiance, her natural gift of communication instead of using those gifts for the service of the Lord and becoming “natural” again?

Captivated by her Lord, her way of life became captivating. Disturbed by her Lord, her way of life became disturbing.

This is a dangerous book you are going to read. The same thing might happen to you. Evangelism might become your way of life.

Walter Trobisch

Preface

This book had its beginnings before I became a Christian. Even then I had definite thoughts about the way people communicated what was most important to them. I remember once encountering a zealous Christian. His brow was furrowed, he seemed anxious and impatient, and he sounded angry. Then he told me God loved me. I couldn't help notice the difference between his message and his style. His message was arresting (*me*—a sinner?) but ultimately appealing (a just and holy God who loves me deeply). But his style put me off. I recall thinking, "If God is so good and loving, then why is this guy so uptight?" Surely, the way we communicate a message of good news should be as marvelous as the message itself. This book is about getting our message and our style together.

Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount that we are the salt of the earth. And he challenges us not to lose our savor—our saltiness. This means—among other things—that we are to be active in the world as his representatives. We are to get out of the saltshaker and into life itself. Not to be trodden

down, but to be zestful witnesses to Jesus as Lord and Savior, as the one who alone gives life and meaning to a dying world.

I owe many people for their contribution to this book. My family gave me a joy and zest for life that were perhaps the greatest foundation I could have ever received for reaching out to others. They taught me how to celebrate.

It was Mrs. Ethel Renwick who first introduced me to Christ by reflecting both the love of God and the truth of the gospel. Her life illustrates what this book is all about.

My experiences as an undergraduate student in Spain were also critical to my growth and understanding of evangelism. There I met Ruth Siemens. She demonstrated Christ's love to me and to all of my friends whom I would drag over for a meal. But it was the way she lived that taught me more than anything else about lifestyle evangelism. I respect her profoundly.

My experiences in the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship chapter at the University of Illinois shaped me too. But most important have been my nearly seven years as a staff member with Inter-Varsity, both in the Pacific Northwest and presently in Washington, D.C. The teaching I have received from experienced Christians has been stimulating and substantial. I often bat around ideas with fellow staff. These have molded my life. I have especially appreciated the freedom to develop ideas and put them into practice. I have never had the slightest restraint put upon me because I am a woman. Rather I was constantly encouraged to use and develop my gifts. For this I owe great thanks to Fred Wagner and Jim Berney, as well as the Northwest staff team, all remarkable people. I have also been influenced by the teaching of Rev. Earl Palmer and inspired by the wisdom and lives of two very special people: Gene and Gerry Thomas.

My thanks go as well to several people for their help as I prepared this book. I bent several ears because of my fascination with, and unanswered questions about, the Pharisees.

Tom McAlpine was a real help as was Richard McClelland. Conversations with biblical scholars, Dr. Bernard Ramm and Dr. J. Barton Payne, were enlightening. I pulled all of this together in many hours of research and reflection at the Library of Congress, happily one block from my home. I want to thank Vicki Crawford who suggested the title as we dined over an Indonesian meal in Amsterdam. My newly wedded husband and I spent hours in highly animated discussion over the finer points of Judaic theology, modern evangelism and the art form of the written word. His help and skill and persistent love have been invaluable.

A note about other people whose names appear in the book is also in order. Except for Mary (in chapter one) and Stephanie (in chapter ten), the names of all of those whom I mention by only a first name have been changed to preserve their privacy.

The book itself springs from a deep-seated conviction: I believe that much of our evangelism is ineffective because we depend too much upon technique and strategy. Evangelism has slipped into the sales department. I am convinced that we must look at Jesus, and the quality of life he calls us to, as a model for what to believe and how to reach out to others. This basic assumption underlies both the content and the structure of this book.

The first six chapters look at Jesus' life, values and lifestyle with a view toward helping us be so Christlike in our own way of life that evangelism will come naturally. Chapters seven and eight focus on practicing the presence of Jesus. The final four chapters discuss the very practical issues of learning conversational skills and taking advantage of the good reasons God has given us for worshiping Jesus as Lord and Savior.

It is my hope that those who read this book will indeed be freed to live as salt and light, that they will be Christ's agents of healing in a broken world.

Uptight in Barcelona

1

CHRISTIANS AND NON-CHRISTIANS have something in common: We're both uptight about evangelism. Our fear as Christians seems to be, "How many people did I offend this week?" We think that we must be a little obnoxious in order to be good evangelists. A tension builds inside: Should I be sensitive to people and forget about evangelism, or should I blast them with the gospel and forget about their dignity as human beings? Many Christians choose to be aware of the person but then feel defensive and guilty for not evangelizing.

A Year Abroad

I certainly felt that way during my junior year abroad at the University of Barcelona, Spain. Of course, I wanted my friends to know God. But every time I got up courage to be vocal about Jesus, an image leaped into my mind of an ag-

gressive Christian buttonholing an unwitting victim. As a nonbeliever I had thought many Christians were weird, spreading leaflets on street corners and nabbing strangers. I was terrified that if I said anything at all about Christ, my friends would consider me just as strange. And I would agree with them. There was a part of me that secretly felt evangelism was something you shouldn't do to your dog, let alone a friend.

To evangelize, it seemed, required insensitivity and an inclination to blurt out a memorized gospel outline, without inhaling, to every stranger you met. It never occurred to me that my pre-Christian, unredeemed, almost common-sense understanding about how to relate warmly to people might be valid. For instance, I knew how offended I had been as a non-Christian when someone tried to push religion on me, without even discovering who I was or what I believed. That was a proper response, I see now, for I should be offended when I'm being treated as someone's evangelistic project instead of as a person.

Yet when I became a Christian I thought I was supposed to toss in my common-sense perceptions in order to be spiritual. I thought I was called to "offend for Jesus' sake!" How I *thought* I was supposed to evangelize went against my very grain. But, I felt, with a somewhat twisted logic, "Is it really so much to ask that I turn people off as soon as I meet them, when you think of all that Christ has done for me?"

Still, I knew Christians were called on to do hard things. And because it was so hard to do I thought such evangelism had to be spiritual. The result was that I would put off witnessing as long as possible. Whenever the guilt became too great to bear, I overpowered the nearest non-Christian with a nonstop running monolog and then dashed away thinking, "Whew! Well, I did it. It's spring of '74 and hopefully the guilt won't overcome me again till winter of '75." (And my non-Christian friends hoped the same!)