Excerpts: Chapters 16, 15 & 14
(not for reprint)

Spiritual Waypoints
Helping Others Navigate The Journey

© by Bob Whitesel

With Interviews and Personal Stories from ...

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Larry Osborne
Richard Peace
Ron Sider
Mike Slaughter
Len Sweet
Al Tizon
Stan Toler
and Lauren Winner
Acknowledgements

“Anyone who sets himself up as ‘religious’ by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.”

- *James 1:26-27 (The Message)*

To my friends for candidly sharing personal stories about your spiritual journeys. The waypoints you have experienced have illuminated the road for others.

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WAYPOINTS, GPS AND GEOFENCING.

U.S. government satellites have created a Global Position System (GPS) that allows users of hand-held GPS units to track their position within 30 feet. In addition, increasingly smaller GPS units now allow hikers, bikers, commuters and tourists to individually track their journeys with remarkable precision.

When using a GPS unit, a location that a traveler wants to remember can be designated a “waypoint.” The GPS unit will assign a precise longitude and latitude coordinate to this waypoint. This location can then be shared, so that others with GPS units can find the exact location too.

As an avid hiker, I find the capability to designate and share a waypoint a useful metaphor for marking one’s spiritual journey. When a person on a spiritual journey encounters a special place on their route, they can designate it as a waypoint and share it with others. Through marking and sharing spiritual waypoints, fellow travelers can share the joys as well as note the similarities in their journeys.

In addition, in the sport of “geocaching,” hikers post waypoints (in GPS coordinates) to lead other inquisitive trekkers to a hidden stash or “cache.” While the stash may include any combination of valuable and odd paraphernalia, the enjoyment lies in the ability to follow waypoints to a treasure. In similar fashion, the waypoints on our journey lead to a cache where immeasurable good fortune awaits.
FOREWORD:

WAYPOINTS: Two Complementary Books

In this book you will encounter the spiritual waypoints of leading thinkers such as Sally Morgenthaler, Tony Campolo, Shane Claiborne, Dan Kimball, Len Sweet and others. And, the reader will personally know many people who are on this spiritual quest. To help all travelers navigate the journey, I have written two complementary books:

Book 1:
SPIRITUAL WAYPOINTS: Helping Others Navigate The Journey
- Topic: This is the book you are reading which introduces and explains “Spiritual Waypoints,” and includes the stories of well-known leaders.
- Purpose: Written for the “helper” who wants to assist other travelers.
- Style: Longer, including an exploration of each “waypoint.”

Book 2:
WAYPOINTS: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey.
- Topic: A short companion booklet.
- Purpose: Written for the “seeker” (first half) and the maturing disciple (second half).
- Style: A self-help book, it helps travelers understand their spiritual quest. Shorter and inexpensive, it can be given away

BONUS:
The WAYPOINTS Course

Book 2 includes a schedule and agenda for a 17-week “Waypoints Course” allowing readers to join together in groups to share their travel experiences and encourage fellow trekkers. Churches and religious organizations have told me that they want a weekly course that can help their leaders better understand their spiritual journey and how they can help others. In addition, travelers new to the journey can take this course as an introduction to the basics of Christianity.

START WITH THE BOOK YOU ARE READING...

But, if you are new to the idea of “Spiritual Waypoints” start with the book you are reading. This book is an introduction and explanation of each of the spiritual waypoints that lie behind … and ahead.

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WAYPOINT 16:
NO AWARENESS OF A SUPREME BEING

I was at this time living, like so many ... in a whirlwind of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing. I was equally angry with Him for creating a world.

- C. S. Lewis

President of the Atheist Club

Richard was not your typical new seminary student. A former Electrical Engineering major at Yale University, he enrolled at Fuller Theological Seminary in preparation for a career as a missionary. There Richard encountered four students who shared his passion to share the Good News in relevant ways. Together they started an innovative missionary agency they called African Enterprise. And, while working in South Africa, they developed a new form of media outreach that combined rock music, multiple slide images and lighting effects into what they called a “light show.” The response was beyond their expectations, as crowds nightly jammed the University of Cape Town auditorium.

The message of the light and media show was twofold. The first half employed dark images and hard-edged rock music to underscore the lack of purpose, confusion and pessimism that modern youth were experiencing. The second half was more hopeful, portraying the selfless and positive message of Christ’s Good News. This juxtaposition of hopelessness with the unconditional love of Christ made a journey changing impression.

Many told Richard and his friends that the good news of the second half had changed their outlook and given them hope. But, Dick was not prepared when one student responded, “this has really changed my mind. I am president of the Atheist Club of the University of Cape Town.” The student’s subsequent statement initially confounded Dick. “Because of this,” the student continued, “I am no longer an atheist, but now I am an agnostic.”

Richard knew that an agnostic had an awareness of a supreme being, while an atheist claims no awareness of God. In other words, the good news of the second half of the show had helped this traveler move from W16 (no awareness of a supreme being) to Waypoint 15 (awareness of a supreme being). Yet initially, Richard’s heart sank. Richard had been thinking that this person was ready for the New Birth experience (Waypoint 7) and that this former atheist might give a testimony of his new birth at the following night’s presentation.

But then Dick’s disappointment gave way to a more holistic understanding of what God was doing. Richard recognized this person was on a God-ward journey, and the presentation had helped this person move in a positive direction. Richard began to pray for this young man, for he knew the student’s journey was not finished. And, Richard knew that he and his friends had helped this wayfarer cross to another waypoint on their spiritual journey. “So my prayer was that other people
and other influences over time would help move him along his spiritual journey until he committed his life to Christ,” recalled Richard.

Richard later became professor of evangelism and spiritual formation at the very seminary that had prepared him. And Richard Peace is known today for his research and writings on the journey of evangelism.²

Waypoint Characteristics:

It is Crowded At Waypoint 16

Today there is a growing skepticism regarding the value, purposes and civility of religion. Christopher Hitchens, as a leading spokesperson, states in God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything that, “the whole racket of American evangelism was just a that: a heartless con run by the second-string characters from Chaucer’s “Pardoner’s Tale.” (You saps keep the faith. We’ll just keep the money.)”³

And, William Cavanaugh in his book The Myth of Religious Violence convincingly argues that while erroneous, skepticism about what motivates Christians is on the rise.⁴

In such a cynical environment, many are moving away from God on the journey of which we speak, perhaps from W15 to W16. In other words, many people are beginning to question their belief in a supreme being, and thus more people might be leaving Waypoint 15 (awareness of a supreme being) to regress to Waypoint 16 (no awareness of a supreme being). The 2008 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) appears to confirm this trend, stating “the U.S. population continues to show signs of becoming less religious, with one out of very five American failing to indicate a religious identity in 2008. The ‘Nones’ (no stated religious preference, atheist, or agnostic) continue to grow.” The 2008 American Religious Identification Survey.

“...the U.S. population continues to show signs of becoming less religious, with one out of very five American failing to indicate a religious identity in 2008. The ‘Nones’ (no stated religious preference, atheist, or agnostic) continue to grow.”

In this growing environment of doubt, the community of faith must increase her efforts to engage disbelief with two parallel thrusts. In this chapter, and each following chapter, we will look at actions that churches can undertake to help travelers at each waypoint. But before we consider these actions, let us look at signs that can alert us that travelers are at Waypoint 16.

Signs of Travelers at Waypoint 16

Wayfarers at this waypoint exhibit a host of characteristics. Four that are prevalent include:

• The unselfishness activist. Some travelers at Waypoint 16 may excessively fill their life with good works, such as social action and/or scientific inquiry. Their purpose may be to live a good life by helping others or
advancing knowledge. But, they tend to overfill their lives often resulting in academic or vocational obsession. Any obsession that robs a person of balance in their life, even religious mania, is unhealthy. But here the obsession is so all consuming, that it leaves little time for family, friends, recreation or relationships. This over emphasis can be a sign that a person is avoiding the supernatural, by preoccupying themselves with the present.

- **The confrontational activist.** This is a sudden and activist zeal for defending one's belief that there is no God. Often these may be people who once claimed an awareness of a supreme being, but through physical, intellectual or emotional dichotomy have rejected their former belief of a supreme being. These travelers are challenging to assist on their journey, because often they possess emotional baggage. A person that engages these wayfarers must be slow, rational, understanding and filled with grace.

- **The self-absorbed artiste.** Though there are many signs a person is at Waypoint 16, the last of three recurrent behaviors is acute egoism. Egoism is different from egotism, where the latter means a self-centeredness and selfishness. Instead, egoism indicates that an individual sees things only from their own viewpoint. They may be passionate, caring and loving, but they tend to look at the world only from their view. Thus, they may unintentionally trample others’ feelings or go in directions that are good for them, but not for others. Egoism indicates that a person sees the world from only their standpoint, and thus they are the center of their universe. The idea of a God may threaten their position, and thus they can repress the thought. Because the existence of God may threaten their position, they can bluntly react to religious messages with severe contempt, antagonism and even fury. However, because they are so self-absorbed, they can develop their talents to amazing levels and thus are some of the most creative artists of a generation.

**Actions That Help W16 Travelers**

At Waypoint 16 a Christian must offer assistance to wayfarers via two avenues, intellectual engagement and social modeling. Let us look at intellectual engagement first.


Most faith communities are weak at explaining their belief in God to someone who has rejected the very notion of God’s existence. However, in such communities of faith there are individuals that are skilled at intellectual analysis and engagement. They are the ones who gleefully teach Sunday Schools and Bible Studies, for the
mental stimulation of the task. The Bible mentions around two dozen “gifts of the Spirit” (c.f. Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28, Ephesians 4:11) and these people may have the gift of teaching (Romans 12:8, 1 Cor. 12:28, Eph. 4:11-14, Acts 18:24-28). The gift of teaching has been described as an ability “to communication information ... in such a way that others learn.” Yet, the gift of teaching is not the same as entertaining oratory or cheerleading, for the last phrase “that others learn” reminds us that listeners will gain knowledge. Michael Griffiths states, “traditionally too much Christian teaching is pulpit soliloquy and nobody ever checks up to see where anyone takes notice of whether teaching produces any action.”

In the field of political science such gifted communicators are called “organic intellectuals” for they naturally understand people and are able to help the average person understand difficult concepts. Antonio Gramsci, the political activist who coined the term organic intellectual, emphasized they were not just academics, but were playwrights, media professionals, novelists and journalists.

C. S. Lewis was an organic intellectual who is best known as an eloquent champion and writer on Christian themes. Yet, in his memoir Surprised by Joy he tells how he began life as an atheist. It was through intellectual analysis and mentorship (via Christian fantasy writer George McDonald and friends like J.R.R. Tolkien) that Lewis became a passionate advocate of Christian belief. His, Mere Christianity has been heralded as “...not the shouting, stomping, sweating, spitting televangelist fare so often parodied; Lewis employs logical arguments that are eloquently expressed” While some of his writings were directed at mostly Christian audiences (e.g. The Screwtape Letters, The Problem of Pain, Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer), Lewis wrote many books for people without an awareness of the supreme being (i.e. God in the Dock and The Pilgrim’s Regress).

And, through Lewis countless young people have been introduced to the rationale for Christ’s sacrifice through the childhood eyes of Lucy, Edmond, Susan and Peter as they witness the savage death and resurrection of the kindly, yet kingly lion named Aslan. In a similar organic fashion J. R. R. Tolkien’s Ring Trilogy exemplifies to adolescent readers the nobility of sacrifice, obligation, lineage and inter-reliance.

I knew one such organic intellectual named Linda B. She has risen to the top of her profession: president and general manager of a large television station. As such, one magazine named her the “most powerful woman in Minnesota.” Her gift was communication (after all she was in the media business) and in her church she started a Bible study that grew rapidly due to a sharp intellect and easy to understand style. However, most of the attendees were Christians. Now, there is nothing wrong with such gatherings. But, often we keep our best intellects ministering to Christians and do not release an equal number to engage our mission field.
If your church has leaders possessing organic gifts of teaching, whereby they can readily and convincingly explain difficult concepts, it is time we send them out to start book studies, readings and discussion groups with people that are, as C. S. Lewis once was, "very angry with God for not existing." Libraries often host book studies and are looking for communicators, service organizations have leadership training and seek gifted trainers and poetry readings engage hearers with challenging yet prosaic ideas. These are all valid venues for a church’s ministry. But remember, when leaving the confines of cloistered halls, all opinions are welcome and appreciated. Such external venues are not a time to stifle opposing viewpoints, but to welcome them. The organic intellectual welcomes new ideas, and appreciates the skillful and probing mind that fosters them. This is called fostering an ask-assertive environment, and we shall study it further in the following section.

**Action 16.2: The A, B, C & D of Social Modeling**

Social modeling is exactly what it asserts, modeling behavior that is inter-relational and social. Here we are speaking about Christians modeling the positive attributes that Christ exhibited. The very word for Christian means “little Christs” and should remind us that when we use it we are envoys and ambassadors of Christ. Even detractors such as self-avowed atheist Christopher Hitchens acknowledges the power of social modeling, stating, “the good effects of Christianity are neither to be denied, not lightly esteemed, though candidly I will admit that I think them overrated.” It is toward ensuring that such modeling is not overrated, but authentically affirmed, that the church must set her sights.

While social modeling can be helpful at all waypoints, it is especially important at Waypoint 16. At this waypoint a person has no awareness that a supreme being exists and thus social modeling can be the first encounter with Christ-likeness. To be effective, social modeling has two premises:

First social modeling must be based on a “mutual relationship.” This means that a two-way personal connection must be established before modeling has any power. Research has shown when outreach is conducted in an impersonal manner that it can create three to ten times as much negative as positive response.19

Secondly, social modeling is only effective if the one modeling is admired, i.e. it is based upon a “positive and mutual relationship.” The church that is reaching out at this waypoint will realize that it’s people must act in such a way that their lives attest to a belief in a God that is eternal, compassionate, loving ... and just. Therefore, let us look at four things a church can undertake to redemptively exhibit social modeling.

**Action A: Truth telling.** This means telling exactly the truth and not embellishing it. Communities of faith can become cultures of exaggeration and overstatement. Such amplification often occurs when attendance figures are bantered about, or conversion statistics stated.20 An organization can become so...
infected with exaggeration that budgets will be inflated beyond what is needed, because amplification is expected. For example, truth telling is waning if a department always has to ask for two new employees to be assured they get one. The entire organization often mutates into an unhealthy environment of overstatement and hyperbole. To an outside word that is watching and having financial dealings with the church, it appears that we have no respect nor concern about the retribution of a God who demands truth telling ("Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'” Matthew 5:37). The result is that churches say they believe in God, but by fudging on the truth give an impression to a watching world that His requirements and retributions do not really matter.

Action B: Fair dealing. This is when a church has two sets of standards, dealing with Christians in a more honest and fair manner than they deal with people who are not. By breaking contracts, not paying bills, finagling for the lowest price, etc. churches may feel they are stretching God’s money at the expense of the un-Godly. But in actuality Christians are modeling a lack of fair dealing and equality. People observing this behavior may conclude that because Christians are a reflection of God, then their God must be a deity that does not deal fairly.

Action C: An Ask-assertive Environment. This is an environment where questions are not only welcomed, but also encouraged. Churches that are reaching out to people who have little awareness of God will want to demonstrate God’s approachability by being open themselves to questions, and never offended. In a church this environment may be manifest in questions arising from the floor during a sermon or on the street during the week. It was C. S. Lewis’ questions that peppered his conversations with friend and colleague J.R.R. Tolkien that led Lewis to Waypoint 7: new birth. Yet, in many churches questions, if allowed at all, are organized into tidy little segments after a long lecture. The lecture format of most church preaching keeps this practice entrenched. Asking questions however is encouraged in an ask-assertive environment. This is especially important since we model a supreme being who personal engages His creation from the Garden of Eden (where He was walking and conversing with Adam, Genesis 3:8-9) through the New Earth (Revelation 21 where He shall be among his creation again).

Action D: Imagery of Hope. This final action is exemplified by Richard’s story. This story captures the image of utilizing organic intellectuals crafting an aesthetically pleasing and emotionally engaging media presentation of the hope and help that God offers a floundering world. Recall how the first half of Dick’s presentation emphasized the lostness and estrangement of the youth culture. But, then the second half lauded how God provides hope and meaning. This tension between despair and hope is reflected in the quote by C. S. Lewis that began this chapter. Lewis lamented, he was caught in “a whirlwind of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing. I was equally angry with Him for creating a world.” Lewis was exasperated because the world needed hope and he saw none coming, until portrayed in the writings of fantasy writer George Williams. Whether the fantasies of Williams or the light and music presentation of Richard Peace, the imagery of hope can be so powerful and so needed, that it will propel a traveler on their journey forward ... and God-ward.
Interview with Richard Peace
Author and the Robert Boyd Munger Professor
of Evangelism and Spiritual Formation
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Whitesel: You were in South Africa, engaged in an evangelistic ministry in the cities and at the universities. How did you feel when you realized the president of the Atheist Club said he was no longer an atheist, but an agnostic?

Peace: At first my heart sank. I was thinking he was going to give his life to Christ right then and there; and then he could give his testimony the next night. But then I realized what had actually happened was powerful. To be an atheist is a faith position, and he had just taken a bold step of faith in a new direction. His faith was moving in a God-ward direction.”

Whitesel: What did you do next?

Peace: I prayed for him, for I did not know where his journey would take him. So my prayer was that other people and other influences would over time help him move along his spiritual journey until he committed his life to Christ.

Whitesel: To most people this is a different understanding of conversion. Most people think of conversion as something that takes place at just one point in a person’s life.

Peace: I think we’ve limited our understanding of the unfolding process that conversion often takes. It takes time for people to come to the place where they can recognize who Jesus is and what he has done for them. We need to take seriously where a person is on their faith journey and then help that person take the next step in a God-ward direction.

Whitesel: But this requires a clearer understanding of where a person is on their journey. We cannot just assume everyone is at Waypoint 9, ready to accept Christ.

Peace: That’s right. We must become spiritual diagnosticians. We must travel with them, understand their position on the journey and connect with them to help them on the next segment of the God-ward journey.

Whitesel: So, what can a person do to help others navigate these waypoints?

Peace: It is a matter of modeling Godly behavior, building a relationship and talking to people about spirituality. It is not about condemning them for where they are on their journey, or using a canned witnessing plan.

Whitesel: Then our job is the build relationships and to begin two-way dialogue if we are to help them navigate their journey?

Peace: Right. My job is to tell stories of how God loves us and wants a personal relationship with us, that can only come from repentance and faith in Christ. This pattern of reaching out is conversational. The old pattern was
productive. To rush straight to must model Christian love and share how our story intersects their story. Are, be with them there and be sensitive to what they are wrestling with. Should not be leading or manipulating the process. We must understand where they are, be with them there and be sensitive to what they are wrestling with. Then we must model Christian love and share how our story intersects their story. We tend to rush straight to commitment to God. And if we do it too soon it is counter productive. It can turn people off to the wonderful Good News.

Questions for Group and Personal Study

1. Who are the people in your congregation that are skilled at explaining difficult concepts? What Bible studies do they teach? And, how well are they attended?
   - Could these people be better utilized reaching out to people who have little or no knowledge of God?
   - What venues might be available: libraries, book studies, community forums, discussion groups, poetry readings, etc. for such outreach.

2. Does your church have a problem with truth telling, often using amplification, overstatement and/or exaggeration?
   - Do church leaders often exaggerate their budgetary needs because they expect their requests to be cut back?
   - What will you do to fix this?

3. Does your church have a problem with fair dealing? Do you treat Christians and/or members of our church better than others? Do you pay our bills on time. Are you generous with your secular venders, neighbors, etc.?
   - What can be the results of modeling this social behavior?
   - What impression are we giving a watching world regarding the character of our God?

4. Are there examples where you as a church are living like there is no punishment for your wrongdoings? Has sin been permitted or glossed over; inadvertently giving the impression to a watching world that you do not believe in divine retribution?

5. Are their artists in song, sculpture, painting, drama, dance, mixed-media, etc. in your church who can put into artistic expression their encounters with a living God?
   - Are these artists just focused on ministering to predominately Christian audiences?
   - Or are they encouraged to use their gifts to engage those struggling with disbelief.

6. Finally, do you permit questions … anytime and any place … during the sermon or at the cafe? Too much dialogue in churches is one-sided with information being lectured to submissive and compliant audiences. Those who have no awareness of a supreme being, or who have relinquished it, need hospitable and
receptive environments for their questions, concerns and options. What will you do to foster an ask-assertive environment?

Footnotes:

6 See for example Paul’s admonition to the Corinthian Church whose zeal had mutated into ostentatious and brazen immorality and status seeking, 1 Corinthians 1-14.
7 An example could be Marjoe Gortner, c.f. the film on his life titled, *Marjoe*, which won a 1972 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.
8 Bertrand Russell’s essay in *Why I Am Not A Christian And Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon And Shuster, 1965) might be an example of this perspective.
9 C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1979), 120.
13 For a glimpse of George MacDonald’s influence upon C. S. Lewis, see Lewis’ compilation of 365 sections of McDonald’s writings in *George McDonald* (HarperOne, 2001).
15 Lewis was influenced by fantasy writer George McDonald, who often framed spiritual lessons in fantastic dream worlds. For the development of the connection between these two organic intellectuals, see C. S. Lewis’ stepson’s account in *Jack’s

16 C. S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy, 111.

17 New Testament theologian Everett F. Harrison points out that the name “Christian” or “little Christs” originated among non-Christians who were describing the followers of Christ in Acts: The Expanding Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 185. Thus the use of this term underscores the importance of social modeling for Christians were first labeled such because non-Christians noted that followers of Christ were acting in the same selfless and gracious ways that Christ, Himself exhibited.


20 Here again, as pointed out in the first two chapters of this book, placing too much emphasis upon the conversion event, and not an equal emphasis upon helping the person navigate the route to that waypoint, and then beyond, can lead to an infatuation with new birth numbers, and not travelers you are helping on the journey.

21 This scripture addresses the problem with truth telling which the Jewish people were having in regard to oaths. Though directed here toward truthfulness in oath giving, the principle that God requires of truth telling is evident.

22 This may be indicative of Church cultures that live like they have nothing to fear from God’s displeasure or retribution. Christians often take advantage of people not part of the church, ignoring that God loves these people too and died for them (“for God so loved the world...” John 3:16) and being made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27) He longs to restore His relationship with them (Matthew 23:36-38).

23 For more insight on Lewis’ conversion which took place in stages and in conversation with his Christian colleagues J.R.R. Tolkien and Victor "Hugo" Dyson, see George Sayer, Jack: A Life of C. S. Lewis (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2005), 217-226.

24 C. S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy, 111.
WAYPOINT 15:
AWARENESS OF A SUPREME BEING,
NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOOD NEWS

Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

- Teresa of Avila, Carmelite reformer, mystic and author

Love Dayton and Let Her People Participate

“This is how you love a town Bob.” And so began Mike’s story. “Today we call it ‘Love Dayton’ and it’s what we have been doing for a long time, meeting people’s needs right where they are. We provide recycled medical equipment to people unable to acquire the equipment themselves, sponsor Anna’s Closet for gently used clothing, offer J. J’s Furniture to pass along furniture to those in need, and host the Gateway Café to provide a full-course meal at no charge in conjunction with our Monday night food pantry. This is how the Good News starts to grow in a town. We’ve tried programs like seeker services and the attractional model. But, this is the soil out of which our church grows: serving the needy.”

“You know what is the most remarkable thing,” continued Mike, the pastor of this formerly small rural Ohio church. “Many of the people who help us serve the needy are not yet Christians. But, they resonate with our care for God’s creation. They see their own passion for helping others, reflected in us. That’s how we introduce a lot of people to the Good News. They join us in serving others and see that our love is authentic and relevant. They can’t see God in your life, unless they’re traveling with you.”

Waypoint Characteristics:

Waypoint 15 signifies travelers, that though they are aware of a supreme being, have no knowledge of God’s Good News. According to the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) 24 percent of the North Americans may be at this waypoint or higher. ARIS concludes, “the U.S. population continues to show signs of becoming less religious .... The “Nones” (no stated religious preference, atheist, or agnostic) continue to grow.” Let us visualize this growing segment on the map of our journey (Figure 5).
Figure 5: North American Population & Whitesel’s Waypoints

![Diagram](image)

**WHITESEL’S WAYPOINTS**

16 No awareness of supreme being
15 Awareness of supreme being, no knowledge of the Good News
14 Initial awareness of the Good News
13 Awareness of the fundamentals of the Good News
12 Grasp of the implications of the Good News
11 Positive attitude towards the Good News
10 Personal problem recognition
9 Decision to act
8 Repentance and faith in Christ
7 NEW BIRTH
6 Post-decision evaluation
5 Incorporation into the Body
4 Spiritual foundations (conceptual and behavioral growth)
3 Inner-life growth (deepening communion with God)
2 Ministry emergence (spiritual gifts emerge)
1 Impact emergence (life influences others)
0 Convergence (experience, gifts and influence converge into a life of integrity and inspiration)

**Signs of Travelers at Waypoint 15**

The needs of travelers at Waypoint 15 are best understood through the assessment grid of Abraham Maslow. A psychologist, Maslow was concerned that care-givers often misperceive needs, attempting to address higher needs that are not yet felt by the recipient. He suggested that the recipient may have basic needs that are unmet, and since these basic needs are not yet met the recipient is not interested in the fulfillment of higher needs. When a.

Figure 6 is a diagram of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Let us look at each level, working upward from the basic needs at the bottom.
Figure 6: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

- **Self-esteem Needs**: Need to live up to one’s potential.
- **Esteem Needs**: Need for personal competence and independence; along with esteem and respect from others.
- **Belongingness and Love Needs**: Need for love and to be loved; and to belong and be accepted.
- **Safety Needs**: Need to feel safe, stable and secure; and that the world is predictable.
- **Physiological Needs**: Need for food, water and other biological requirements.

**Unmet physiological needs.** These are travelers with needs for the basics of sustainable life, such as food, water, etc. People who are without work, incapacitated by illness, emotionally or mentally abused, etc. may be consumed by worry about how to meet these basic needs. For example, a need for food to put on their table (or in their mouth) will supersede all higher needs. The person at this stage may not care about housing, joining a faith community, or bettering themselves. They only want to have a sustainable and ongoing source for food, water, etc. Churches can and should develop ministries for people at this level of need, though this will require extensive effort because these needs are pervasive and long term.

Examples of ministries that churches to fulfill physiological needs include:

- Family emergency services
- Medical emergency assistance
- Food and domestic hunger ministries
- Housing and residential programs
- Hunger/housing loan and grants programs
- Disaster relief services
- Addiction and recovery counseling and support

**Unmet safety needs.** These are needs for long-term security and a sense that the future is now predictable. Once a person feels they can meet their hunger and thirst needs, they turn their attention to Security Needs, such as a place of their own (i.e. housing), long-term employment, learning a job skill, etc..

Churches that only address short-term physiological needs will not fulfill long-term safety needs. Too often churches offer short-term places to stay, short-term food staples, short-term loans, etc. These offers will sound hollow and incomplete for travelers at this waypoint, for they are looking for assistance that will ensure long term survival.

Examples of self-sufficiency and sustainable development programs are:
• Job Training. A homeless person once told me “I am at home on the streets...I’ve learned to survive and that’s the only thing I’m good at.” Helping such people acquire marketable skills is key toward helping them meet long-term needs for safety and security. Examples can include:
  - Job skills evaluation and training
  - Vocational rehabilitation
  - Congregants can hire out of work individuals to give them an opportunity to learn new job skills
  - Community service work at the church can provide references for future employment
  - Scholarships provided by the church call allow for training to improve employability

• Job Placement. Oftentimes a predictable future begins with dependable employment. Churches that help community residents attain secure and long-term employment will often help them meet long-term safety needs, including:
  - Employment counseling and networking
  - Career research
  - Mentoring for application and resume writing
  - Personal hygiene, clothing and conversational skills to help prepare for job interviews
  - Networking the under- and unemployed with potential employers
  - English as a second language (ESL) assistance
  - Support for GED and equivalency education.

• Health programs. Insecurity about the future can arise from an illness with an uncertain or vague prognosis. Helping people at this stage means assisting them in finding adequate health care, information about their illness and specialists in their malady. One church was located adjacent to a large hospital. When patients and family visited the church in search of solace, the church prayed for them. While this was an authentic and beneficial act, the patients often left with less inspiration than the parishioners. The church discovered that in addition to prayer, they could offer a patient advocacy ministry. Soon the advocacy ministry had fostered a connection and cooperation with the hospital. The church now not only offered prayer, but also patient help for those suffering from an unpredictable future.

Unmet belongingness and love needs. These needs have to do with acceptance into a community of inter-reliance. At this waypoint, the person realizes that living in a symbiotic relationship with others will enhance their life. A person may join a faith community, volunteer for a ministry and/or seek acceptance. It is at this point that Christians often exhibit their most energetic efforts. There is nothing wrong with this, for travelers at this stage want to belong and be accepted. But, when churches focus only on incorporation they appear manipulative and self-absorbed to
people who have been struggling with safety or physiological needs.\textsuperscript{5} Therefore churches must have a robust ministry to meet both physiological and safety needs before they can legitimately offer (and campaign for) assimilation.

At this stage of belongingness and love needs, recipients are also seeking unconditional acceptance and love. But, because they may have an unstable and inconsistent background they may have habits that test Christians’ acceptance. Foul language, addictive habits and ignorance of church traditions will often perturb Christians accustomed to a more genteel church environment. The church must not allow itself to be agitated because people are early in their God-ward journey. Instead, travelers need to feel a different love from the church than they have experienced in the secular realm. To demonstrate this, Christians must offer unselfish love. The Old Testament word for this love, chesen, conveys a “kindness, especially as extended to the lowly, needy and miserable.”\textsuperscript{6}

Other levels of Maslow’s needs will be explored in the appropriate chapters of this book. Thus, the reader may want to bookmark Figure 6 for future reference.

**Actions That Help W15 Travelers**

There are two missteps to which churches often succumb when helping W15 travelers. The first is to implement a pre-fabricated approach by merely adopting ministries that other churches are using. Even the illustrations in this book are given as examples, not as models. Effective ministry requires that each church grow a local and contextualized ministry to W15 wayfarers. Actions 15.1 and 15.2 will examine how to address this.

Secondly churches often simply experiment with multiple ministry tactics, until one works. Such experimentation can have tragic results. No church should experiment on needy travelers. This does not honor the imagineo Dei in which all humankind was created (Genesis 1:26-27). Actions 15:3 and 15:4 will assist in ensuring this misstep does not occur.

Yet, these actions should not be delayed. A church must embrace both urgency and preparation. The following four actions are designed to move the need-based process forward at a judicious pace. All four actions are required, because of the breath and depth of the needs. But, any size church can undertake these, though in more limited fashion.

**Action 15:1: Research Needs**

The type of research conducted is important, for some research is more helpful than others. Primary research occurs when information is gathered firsthand. Secondary research is when someone gains insights from another’s research. Secondary research is helpful, but often pales in potency to primary
research where a researcher is personally immersed in a local mission field. How can a church gather first-hand information on the needs of its community? Let us look at three actions that can produce primary research.

Action A: Live Among Them. To ascertain community needs it helps to live among them, eating where they eat and shopping where they shop. In fact, one of 10 major factors in halting church growth is when leaders become distanced from their constituency.7 If this occurs church leaders will be only guessing at community needs.

Action B: Meet With Them in Group Settings. Informal gatherings, focus groups and Town Hall meetings are ways to connect with community residents. Often when people are interviewed one-on-one, they hold back their feelings. Research into group dynamics tells us that people will often expound more deeply ... and expressively in groups.8 If the purpose is to ascertain needs, then understanding can be enhanced by group intensity. However, churches must be very careful to only solicit input and not to politic for the church’s viewpoint. To do the later will result in immediate distancing and suspicion. Guidelines for hosting effective focus groups are described in a previous book.9

Action C: Don’t Clone Another Church’s Ministry. Unless necessary, don’t merely reduplicate ministry that other churches are utilizing. To do so will rob you of a locally developed and contextualized ministry. However, if your church is too small it can partner to expand its ministry. Look for other churches that are reaching out at adjacent waypoints and partner with them.10 Success often depends upon doctrinal and historical factors. But, if the needs of a community can be met by collaborating with another ministry, then pursue this option.

Action 15:2: Design Your Ministry from the Bottom Up

As a consultant with church clients of all sizes, I have found that the most helpful ministries are those that emerge from a collaborative effort between church leaders and needy residents. There are two elements for designing a contextualized ministry.

Action A: Inclusion. Include non-church goers in the planning and design of your ministry. <any will reject this offer because they are not yet ready to volunteer, even advice. But those who are emerging out of lower need stages may be entering the Belongingness and Love level. They will want thus to contribute, and at least give their thoughts. Yet, a natural inclination of Christian leaders is to reject such offers, feeling that the emerging person needs more time to grow or to gain more secondary knowledge (e.g. book knowledge, theological knowledge or doctrinal knowledge). But, once a traveler has had their physiological needs and safely needs met, they must be allowed to contribute, even minimally, to the ministry of a faith community. Churches can help wayfarers by inviting them to

Churches can help wayfarers by inviting them to participate in the ministry planning process, and this invitation must be extended much earlier and more earnestly that most churches realize.
participate in the ministry planning process, and this invitation must be extended much earlier and more earnestly that most churches realize.

**Action B: Allocate Sufficient Money.** As noted in the first two chapters, churches customarily err on the side of either the Cultural Mandate (social action) or the Evangelistic Mandate. It was also shown that God’s intention for His church is a more holistic approach where a church ministers at many waypoints, rather than just in a narrow range. Narrow ministry becomes entrenched because churches tend to budget based upon history, rather than forecasts. A church that understands it should reach out at early waypoints will also understand that it must allocate sufficient funds to do so. Churches must evaluate what percentages of its budgets are going to support the Evangelistic Mandate and the Cultural Mandate. And, a plan can be brought about to create a balance, where roughly 50 percent of a church’s budget goes to support the Cultural Mandate and 50 percent goes to support the Evangelistic Mandate. Regardless of intentions, these mandates will never be brought into parity until finances are allocated with equivalence.

**Action 15.3: Connect Your Ministry to the Community.**

For a community established to communicate good news, communication is one the weakest skills in most churches. Many congregations design fantastic ministries only to have them marginally attended because residents do not know they are available. The following are three basic actions for successfully telling the community about ministries that can meet their needs.

**Action A: Have a Trial-run.** A church should initiate a trial-run with little initial fanfare. This will give the church an opportunity to try out the ministry without being deluged by community needs. To communicate that you are hosting a test-run, use word-of-mouth communication.

**Action B: Use Indigenous Communication Channels.** Church leaders often do not understand how community residents communicate. In one church’s community, fliers in self-serve laundromats communicated better than online advertising (few needy residents had regular or easy access to the Internet). Each community has developed different communication channels. If a church invites residents to participate in the planning process, then residents can share the veiled yet influential ways that news travels in their community.

**Action C: Be a Good-doer, not a Do-gooder.** The difference between a do-gooder and a good-doer was revealed to me ten years ago. Dan was auditioning to be the drummer in a worship team I led. Though he was more than suitable for the task, I was confused because he looked familiar. “You visited me last Christmas,” Dan responded noticing my bewilderment. “Brought a lot of nice things for the kids.” Each year our church visited needy residents, giving them gifts and singing carols. “You were nice

A church that brings food a couple times a year to a needy family does little to minister to their long-term physiological needs or safety needs. Such churches in Dan’s mind were comprised of “do-gooders.”
enough to come,” Dan would say to me later. Dan and I had become friends, and now our team was planning to visit needy households. “You go, I won’t,” Dan stated. “I want to be a good-doer, not a do-gooder.” Further conversations revealed with Dan saw a difference between “do-gooders” and “good-doers.” On the one hand, Dan saw do-gooders as people who go around doing limited and inconsistent good deeds. He perceived that they were doing good on a limited scale to relieve their conscience. Thus their good deeds were perceived as self-serving, insincere and limited. A church that brings food a couple times a year to a needy family does little to minister to their long-term physiological needs or safety needs. On the other hand, Dan saw “good-doers” as those who do good in a meaningful, relevant and ongoing manner. And, he was right. In hindsight I had been striving to do good, not trying to do good better. Therefore, a church should connect with its community by offering ongoing ministry and not just holiday help.

Action 15:4: Evaluate the Results

Donald McGavran called the church’s aversion to analysis the “universal fog” that blinds the church to her mission and effectiveness. And, McGavran preferred the term “effective evangelism” as the best way to describe what we should be measuring. The term “effective evangelism” has much to commend it. Evangelism, as we noted in Chapter 1, means “Good News” or a heralding of “unexpected joy.” Thus, if we are embarking as fellow travelers and guides on this journey of Good News, shouldn’t we want to travel that route more effectively? And if so, how do we measure progress?

Some mistakenly perceive that counting attendance is the best way to evaluate effectiveness. Yet, there are four types of church growth mentioned in the Bible, and growth in attendance is cited as God’s task (and not the job of the church). In two previous books I have looked at measuring these in detail, but let’s briefly examine four types of church growth and a Church Growth Metric that can measure each.


Growth A: Growth in Maturity. In verse 42 Luke notes that the followers were growing in a passion for the apostle’s teaching, fellowship and prayer. Our first metric is to ascertain if, as a result of our need-based ministry, wayfarers are increasing in their participation in Bible study, fellowship and/or the practice of prayer. One way to measure this is to measure if people are becoming increasingly involved in study groups, fellowship networks (i.e. informal small groups) and/or joining with others for prayer. If these numbers are calculated as a percentage of overall attendance, growth in maturity may be estimated.
Growth B: Growth in Unity. Verses 44-45 describe how the church grew in unity and trust. This is much harder to measure, for it requires subjective evaluation. But, if people open up, much like Doug did about “do-gooders” then these and similar actions can indicate that ministry is creating deeper and more honest levels of communication. Unity often results from deepening levels of communication.15

Growth C: Growth in Favor in the Community. Luke emphasizes that the church was increasingly “enjoying the favor of all the people.” Here is a metric often overlooked, which asks: is the community increasingly appreciative of the ministry the church is offering? Asking community residents for regular feedback is a way to accomplish this. One church crafted an online survey and gave away coupons for free coffee at a coffee shop for those that completed the survey. This survey was not designed to augment the church database, but was used only to ascertain if community residents felt the church was doing-good better. Another church regularly polled socially sensitive community residents such as school principals, public leaders, community organizers, business-people, etc. about how effective the church was in meeting community needs. The results were that these churches could gauge effective ministry by observing changes in community appreciation.

Growth D: Growth in More Christians. Luke concludes this paragraph about early church growth by reminding his readers that “...the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Luke was pointing out that because it was a supernatural intersection, it was God’s task to bring people to and through the experience of salvation. But in the preceding verses Luke emphasized that it was the church’s role to grow people in the other three types of church growth: maturity, unity and favor in the community.

Church Growth Metrics16 remind us that we are engaged in a task that is not about large cadres of attendees, but about the inner growth of God’s creation into 1) a deepening relationship with Him, 2) more unity among His children, and 3) in such a way that a watching world rejoices.

An Interview With Mike Slaughter
Author, advocate for Darfur, and lead pastor of Ginghamsburg United Methodist Church, Tipp City, Ohio

Whitesel: What is the Love Dayton Initiative all about?
Slaughter: It’s all about loving a town by first meeting their physical needs and then meeting their spiritual needs. Too many churches focus on meeting just spiritual needs, and many people aren’t ready to respond because they’ve got basic needs going unmet. Like you, we’ve found it useful to use a journey metaphor. Our ministry is called New Path. And, its goals are to assist families and individuals in financial crisis. We do this by not only meeting immediate needs, but also by creating an environment that supports long-term stability, empowers individuals and fosters transformation. But, we need a lot of volunteers to do this. So we let people who aren’t even sure who God is, to join us and volunteer.
Whitesel: *Is there a danger inviting those who are not yet sure who God is, to work alongside of you and represent your church?*

Slaughter: I suppose there is. But people in need are very forgiving. They are just happy someone is helping them. And, they can tell that people are at different places on their spiritual journey. I think we give needy people too little credit for discernment. It doesn’t bother them. In fact, they can probably relate to them better.

Whitesel: *It sounds like some people journey with you for some time, before they reach the next waypoint.*

Slaughter: Most people seem to need multiple experiences before they want to know more about the Good News. They want to grasp the implications of the Good News by seeing Christians live it out in our lives. Working alongside of us let’s them see this firsthand.

Whitesel: *Can you give me an example?*

Slaughter: Sure. Right now we have volunteers going to the Gulf of Mexico to help people recovering from the recent hurricanes. Five of the people going are currently unemployed. They are working through some pretty big issues in their lives, but they still feel compassion to help others. They are not involved in the church worship services, but they are growing. As part of that growth we want them to see that serving others is what it means to follow Christ. Thus, they are finding their place on the journey through practical service. The Christian practice of good deeds, sometimes precedes belief. And, this helps them see the good in the Good News.

Whitesel: *You seem very passionate about this. From where does this passion come?*

Slaughter. Its because we’ve got a lot of work to do. For example, our church has been very involved in helping the people of Darfur. The next thing you know, George Clooney blogged about us and said ours was a Christian response. Someone replied “Christians care about genocide and Darfur?” That is mind blowing to me. Perception is reality. Bob, we’ve got a lot of work ahead of us if we are to change perceptions that the church only cares about salvation and not about the quality of people’s life too.

Questions for Group or Personal Study

1. Do people who are not Christians participate in your ministry to the needy? If so, what roles are they given? What roles are they not given? Are you exempting them from some roles because they are neophytes, not well known and/or rough around the edges? Ask yourself the following questions and write out your reply.
   - Do you welcome people who are not Christians involved in planning your ministry to the needy?
   - What will you do in the next six months to involve people who are not Christians in the planning of ministry?
2. What ministries do you offer to meet physiological needs? List each, and appraise if they are meeting long-term needs for food, water and biological requirements, or are they only meeting short-term needs. If they are meeting short-term needs, what will you do to adjust them to meet long-term needs?

3. What ministries do you offer to meet safety needs, i.e. to meet the need to feel safe, stable and secure, that the world is predictable? List and appraise each.

4. Do you have a balance between ministries that meet physiological needs and those that meet safety needs? Use the following chart to measure your balance between physiological needs and safety needs. If they are not balanced, what will you do to ensure that both needs are met and the route of the Good News is unbroken?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physiological Needs (Need for food, water and other biological requirements)</th>
<th>Safety Needs (Need to feel safe, stable and secure; and that the world is predictable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Family emergency services  
  ○ Housing  
  ○ Food/clothing  
  ○ Counseling  
| • Job Placement  
  ○ Employment counseling  
| • Medical emergency assistance  
  ○ Financial help  
  ○ Information  
| • Career research  
  ○ Application and resume writing  
  ○ Preparation for job interviews  
| • Food and domestic hunger ministries  
  ○ Food pantry  
  ○ Meals  
| • Networking for under- and unemployed English as a second  
  ○ ESL assistance  
  ○ GED education.  
| • Housing and residential programs  
| • Job Training  
  ○ Skills training  
  ○ Vocational rehabilitation  
  ○ Learn new job skills  
| • Disaster relief services  
  ○ Housing/food  
  ○ Food/clothing  
| • References for future employment  
  ○ Scholarships  
| • Addiction and recovery counseling and support  
  ○ Professional counseling  
  ○ Mentoring  
  ○ Friendship  
| • Health programs  
  ○ Patient advocacy  
  ○ Medical equipment  
|
5. When have you been a do-gooder? And when have you been a good-doer? What will you do to enhance the latter and cancel out the former? List four ideas that you will undertake good-doing within the next year.

6. Read Acts 2:42-47. Describe each of the four types of Church Growth. How could you measure each in your local church? Put together a plan that can be implemented in the next six months to measure all four types of church growth.

Footnotes:

3 Kosmin and Keysar, American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) 2008, p. i.
5 The church’s enthusiasm for primarily meeting belongingness and love needs sheds light on how churches grew during the post-World War II economic expansion. The Builder Generation (b. 1945 and before) was basking in unrivaled prosperity and a church-friendly milieu. Thus, tactics that meet belongingness and love needs such as membership classes and assimilation standards were touted (see Finke and Stark’s The Churching of America as well as additional factors discussed in Laurence Iannacone’s 1994 essay, “Why Strict Churches Are Strong” in American Journal of Sociology (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), vol. 99, no. 5, 1180-1211.
7 See “Missteps with Staff Influence” in Bob Whitesel, Growth By Accident, Death By Planning: Missteps With Staff (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 17-29.
10 Ideas and examples for partnering can be found in Ronald J. Sider, John M. Perkins, Wayne L. Gordon and F. Albert Tizon, Linking Arms, Linking Lives: How Suburban Partnerships Can Transform Communities (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2008). Though this book is largely about partnering suburban churches with urban ones to create an economy of scale and scope, the dynamics of partnership that are discussed can be relevant for all churches seeking to expand their coverage of waypoints.
13 Thought there may be some who misperceive the focus of the Church Growth Movement, there is a growing cadre of scholars who understand that the Church Growth Movement is viable, but needs to be more holistic in its theology and application. I am one such person. I agree with my colleagues in “The Gospel and Our Culture Network” who point out that the Church Growth Movement has been weak in engaging postmodern culture. I have written two books (2000, 2006) to strengthen this connection. And, I concur with Gailyn Van Rheenen that the Church Growth Movement has been weak in determining effective strategy. My upcoming editorship and contributions to *Foundations of Church Administration* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Publishers, 2010) as well as a 2008 book and this present book address this strategy link. Finally, I am especially in agreement with Howard Snyder and his critique that the Church Growth Movement has been too narrow in its perception of the Kingdom of God. This current book is written to put forth a more holistic emphasis upon the journey of the that Kingdom news. Gary McIntosh has done a great service by sorting out these perspectives in his seminal book *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan 2004).
16 For examples of evaluation tools that can measure each Church Growth Metric, see “Measuring Four Types of Growth” in Whitesel and Hunter, *A House Divided* (2000), 207-221.
WAYPOINT 14:
INITIAL AWARENESS OF THE GOOD NEWS

“Today the sinfulness of the social order offends thoughtful Christians everywhere ... the great inequalities of wealth and poverty among the have and have-nots, and the revolting treatment meted out to oppressed minorities, are clearly contrary to the will of God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- Donald A. McGavran

A Universal Offense

Ron was intrigued by the young man’s political connections in this, one of the world’s most volatile countries. It was 1979 and South Africa simmered with rage over the inequalities of apartheid, a system of segregating white and non-white people through forced removals, loss of citizenship, repression and state-sponsored violence. James was a young Jewish politician, who keenly grasped the opportunities and imperfections of his South African homeland.

Still, Ron was taken back when James suddenly blurted out, “God told me that if I come to this conference, He will tell me things about his son.” Ron was a speaker at this Christian leadership conference, and felt more than prepared to address James’ yearning. Ron was known not only known for a sharp intellect, but also for his ability to explain difficult Biblical concepts in a clear manner. After all, Ron was a Yale trained academic who participated in Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, a college ministry with a tradition of campus witness and thoughtful dialogue.

Ron and James struck up a conversation that lasted several days. For Ron, James’ political insights provided a glimpse into the potential of one of the African Continent’s most populated countries. And for James, Ron was able to rationally explain Christ’s resurrection, the fundamentals of Christian faith, and God’s purposes for humankind. After a three hour conversation Ron sensed James was ready to act. But James responded with an unexpected retort that almost derailed the journey.

“But what I’ve seen is that Christians just like to sing happy songs and talk about Jesus. They are not committed to abolishing apartheid or helping oppressed minorities,” came James’ reply. For James, the God that Ron described seemed so different from how Christians acted.

This view was not new to Ron. Since his college years he had been passionate about sharing his faith in Christ. But, he had also seen the church’s lack of holistic ministry create misperceptions, skepticism and often rejection of the Good News. He observed that in most people’s minds the Good News was divorced from good works. This misperception had led Ron to write a book titled Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study. In it Ron recounted how concern for the whole person, both physical and spiritual, was a hallmark of Jesus’ ministry. As
a result Ron slowly helped James negotiate Waypoint 14, assisting James in understanding that his initial awareness of the Good News had been skewed.

While James was right that often times Christians focus on the joy and celebration in knowing Christ, the Good News is much greater than just conversionary festivities. The Good News includes the fact that Jesus stands in solidarity with the poor, the disenfranchised and the oppressed. The Lausanne Movement, whose goal is “to reframe the Christian mission of evangelization in a world rife with social, political, economic, and religious upheaval” states in its Covenant that “the message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.”

Ron and James met a number of times over the next three days. Slowly James initial awareness of the Good News came into perspective, and at one meeting James asked to personally meet the Son of God of whom he had been told. James accepted Jesus as Messiah, and Ron recalled “all I could do was walk around my room praising God... I wish this would happen to me once a week!”

Waypoint Characteristics:

**Signs of Travelers at Waypoint 14**

*Skeptic travelers.* These are wayfarers who are skeptical that the church really deep down cares for the needs of others or the world. This may occur because churches sometimes feign care for the poor because of their own need of survival or for numerical increase. We shall see shortly that churches which care for the needy because of selfish goals have poor theology, especially when it comes to a theology of God’s creation. And, the lack of a clear theology of social ministry only confirms in skeptical minds that the church is self-serving rather than serving humanity. One participant in the Lausanne Conference summed up, “If we turn a blind eye to the suffering, the social oppression, the alienation and loneliness of people, let us not be surprised if they turn a deaf ear to our message of eternal salvation.”

*Travelers that ignore the problem.* Research into how people handle new ideas has led some researchers to conclude that people react in one of four ways, called the EVLN paradigm. Some people when confronted with a conflicting idea, such as the Good News exit the situation. These people run away from the thought of discussing spiritual matters. They may be best reached by the principles outlined in Chapters 3 and 4 (Waypoints 16 and 15 respectively). Other people voice their objections. These people are often the skeptical travelers noted above. Still others remain loyal, not wanting to rock the boat, and thus they quietly agree. The most difficult segment to engage however is those who react to new news by neglecting or ignoring the problem. These are those that nod politely in affirmation, but do not yet recognize the seriousness of the situation. They hope to avoid new ideas because they reject things that cause a change in their lives. Travelers that ignore the problem of their eternal destiny must be gently and logically led to understand
the momentousness and seriousness of their journey. Let us look at how ministry to both of the above kinds of travelers can take place.

Actions That Help W14 Travelers

Action 14: News You Can’t Ignore

Let us look at the last category of travelers first, the traveler whose initial awareness of the Good News results in a neglect of it. There are two steps for helping someone deal with such a difficult issue. The first is to help the person grasp the seriousness of the subject, and the second is to visualize the future.

Point 1: The Seriousness of the topic. C. S. Lewis, an organic intellectual, skillfully illuminated grand biblical themes. Regarding the seriousness of the Good News he stated, “...Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.” What Lewis meant by this, is that if the claims of eternal life (John 14:1-3) are true, and if the parallel claim that only through Christ can eternal life be reached (John 14:6), then Christianity holds the all important key to infinity.

Point 2: Picture the future. But, how does a congregation emphasize the importance of the topic. For most travelers it will not be enough to just logically explain (as Lewis did) that eternal life if a possibility and attainable. Instead, most people will need a mental picture. Alister McGrath analyzed how the Bible and Christians have looked at heaven and summed up, “The Christian concept of heaven is iconic, rather than intellectual (heaven is) something that makes its appeal to the imagination, rather than the intellect, which calls out to be visualized rather than merely understood … It is much easier to reflect upon an image than an idea.”

This fact was driven home to the American medical community when a study on heart patients found scaring patients into changing their behavior did not work. On the one hand, when future illness was graphically described only 10 percent of the patients changed their behaviors. On the other hand, 77 percent changed their behavior when they were given a mental picture of a healthy future life (e.g. enjoying life with their family, friends and grandchildren). In other words, describing the poor health associated with heart disease only motivated one in ten people to change. But, describing a bright future enjoying children and grandchildren was almost 80 percent effective in helping patients change their lifestyle.

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The Bible is replete with Scriptures that visualize eternal joy. Jesus underscores the communal and residential nature of heaven when He states, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” John 14:1-3. Peter knew the Jewish people pictured their “promised inheritance” as Canaan (Numbers 32:19), but Peter suggested they visualize this everlasting inheritance as eternal life, stating “In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4). And, throughout Scripture it is emphasized that Jesus is the only way to this bliss. When Thomas asked Jesus to clarify the above statement about “going to prepare a place” (John 14:2b) Jesus decisively and authoritatively responded, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

How then can Point 1 and Point 2 be fostered in our churches? A good place is in what we read and discuss. Many popular books today are inspirational guides aimed at Christians, and there is nothing wrong with this. But, when a church wants to engage travelers at Waypoint 14, the church may need to recast its reading lists. There are many books that give descriptive and positive images of heaven and Christian life that could become book studies in our churches and our community. C. S. Lewis’ books The Chronicles of Narnia (especially the last book), The Great Divorce (especially the sections on heaven) and The Space Trilogy (again, especially the last book) are but of few of his books that paint inspiring pictures of the future. Lewis’ friend and Christian mentor, J. R. R. Tolkien, painted pictures of an idyllic world where good triumphs over evil, sacrifice leads to nobility, and ultimately humankind and nature conspire to overthrow evil (The Lord of the Rings). John Milton’s classic Paradise Regained illustrates in luminous words the worlds that lie ahead (and in Paradise Lost those luminous realms that lie behind). Even modern stories such as Trudy Harris’ Glimpses of Heaven: True Stories of Hope and Peace at the End of Life's Journey and Piper and Murphy’s 90 Minutes in Heaven: A True Story of Death & Life can help travelers at Waypoint 14 focus on the promise of the Good News.

Action 14:2: The Good News That God Cares

A church also must understand and articulate a theology regarding God's concern for His creation, if its congregants are going to help people move beyond Waypoint 14. Yet, a theology of creation must be a holistic theology and include not just God’s creative activity but also humankind’s woeful response. For in response to God’s gracious creation of a paradise on earth, humans chose a selfish route disobeying God’s directives and forfeiting paradise. Thought there are many elements to a theology of creation, let us look at five points that bear upon our current conversation.

Point 1: Injustice, poverty, etc. are the result of human activity, God does not desire it for his creation. When Adam and Eve forfeited the paradise of Eden, they embarked upon a journey of selfish arrogance. The Scriptures tell us their journey led to self-centeredness, injustice and greed (Genesis 3-5). Ron Sider reminds us that
this disappoints God, stating “the Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that God is at work in history casting down the rich and exalting the poor because frequently the rich are wealthy precisely because then have oppressed the poor or have neglected to aid the needy.”

**Point 2: This injustice was not always so.** God provided Adam and Eve an Eden of goodness and wholeness in every aspect of their life. Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemmann pointed out that the Hebrew word shalom comes closest to describing this “wholeness in every are of life, where God, creature, and creation enjoy harmonious relationships.” God had warned that disobeying him would result in a loss of this life of shalom (*Genesis 2:15-17*). But, Adam and Eve picked selfish choices putting to an end this world of balance, bless ... shalom (*Genesis 3*).

**Point 3: Humankind was put in charge of caring (i.e. stewardship) for God’s creation.** Yet early on in the *Genesis* story, before the fall of humankind from the era of shalom, God had given humankind a task, to take care of the garden and to be a steward of it (*Genesis 1:26-30*). This requires Christians, to be good stewards of God’s earth and life upon it.

**Point 4: Humankind was put in charge of caring (i.e. stewardship) for the needy, oppressed and disfranchised.** Proverbs 19:17 says “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done.” Judah was punished in part because of her mistreatment of the poor, “Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? (Isaiah 10:1-3). King David said, “I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy” (*Psalm 140:12*). And, Howard Snyder reminds us that “God especially has compassion on the poor, and his acts in history confirm this.”

**Point 5: God requires his people to sacrifice for this task.** Adam and Eve were put in charge of caring and cultivating the garden (*Genesis 1:26-30*), and this required sacrificing their own will to taste the forbidden fruit. From this beginning, serving a loving, creative God required self-sacrifice. At this sacrifice, Adam and Eve failed. In doing so they condemned their children and their children’s children to laborious toil, hostility, repression and ultimately death (*Genesis 3:16-24*). Still God’s desire is that His children serve and sacrifice for others. Jesus stated, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors…. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (*Luke 14:12-14*). This sacrifice for others is exemplified in the sacrificial actions of Godly men and women in the Bible, ultimately culminating in the sacrifice of Jesus for humankind’s disobedience.

When a congregation grasps the five points above, wayfarers will understand that evil, oppression and the like are not God’s doing, but human doing. And wayfarers such as James can see that God wants Christians to help the oppressed, disenfranchised and neglected. The church must help travelers at Waypoint 14 see
the Good News is that "...the sinfulness of the social order offends thoughtful Christians everywhere."17

An Interview With Ron Sider
President of the Evangelicals for Social Action, and professor of theology, holistic ministry and public policy at Palmer Theological Seminary.

Whitesel: How did your experience with James renew or challenge your view of the Good News?
Sider: While at Yale in the 1960s I felt a call to be a social activist. I resolved very early on that I would not make the same mistake of the old social gospel movement that developed a poor theology and lost its compassion for evangelism. Both passions, good news and good works are needed to change the person for the better, and the world for the better, too. My conversations with James reaffirmed my thinking.

Whitesel: How are churches doing on this issue of balance today?
Ron: Thirty years ago it seemed the primary mission of most evangelical churches was saving souls. If you had a little money and a little time left over, you could do a few good works. I don’t think that’s biblical. I’m committed to loving the whole person as Jesus did. Now, evangelism is central, we don’t want to lessen that. But a theology of creation means we want to see the people created in God’s image cared for and their needs met. And, we’ve made some progress. Many evangelical leaders today understand that we should do both. Its growing everywhere today. Churches are doing both social ministry and evangelistic action: holistic mission.

Whitesel: What do you say about criticism that social action can be manipulative, that you are just leading them to Christ for your own need for scale?
Sider: You re right, this is a danger. The way to avoid that is to first of all be clear that a theology of creation tells us that it is important to assist people in attaining a good wholesome life. It is a good thing to take care of people’s physical needs. Jesus showed us that dramatic conversion restores families, overcomes despair, heals relationships and changes lives for the better. But, if you care about them you will also want to do more that just meet their physical needs, you will want to help them with their eternal destiny. Walking with Jesus is a good deal now, and an even better deal later!

Whitesel: Are there churches we can learn from?
Sider: The Salvation Army has continued to do an excellent job. The Booths (William and Catherine) knew that social structures were unfair and needed to be changed. And the Salvation Army passionately carries on that care today. The result is that they are respected because they do it. Vineyard Fellowships are increasing in holistic ministry. And, the Church of the Nazarene is working on this, creating Good Works.
Samaritan Congregations who balance their ministry by reaching out to help the poor.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Whitesel: Any final thoughts?}

Sider: The Pentecostals may be the ones to watch. Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamor wrote a book on the emerging movement for social concern in global Pentecostalism.\textsuperscript{19} If the global Pentecostal movement embraces this then the next 20-30 years will be a remarkable time for the spread of the Gospel and social ministry. I’m pretty excited about the journey!

Questions for Group or Personal Study

1. Have you read or watched a story, movie or narrative that impressed you with the momentousness of the Biblical Good News? Do you know of others that have read or watched the same narrative, and was their experience similar to yours? If so, what elements of that story made it so memorable?

2. What books, poems, movies, short stories, passages of Scriptures, etc. have helped you visualize heaven? Have you shared this experience with someone that only had a limited awareness of the Good News? If not, what will you do? If so, what was the outcome?

3. What changes have you made as a result of a mental picture of the future? Did you change some habit, go in some different direction and/or change your outlook on some topic? How helpful was visualizing the future? Could telling a story help you explain your faith to a person that is new to the Good News? If so, create an explanation of some facet of the Good News and share it with your Christian friends. Ask them to help you fine-tune it to increase clarity.

4. Pick one of the following books, explain your most memorial image and tell why it lingers with you. If you have not read one of the books below, decide to read the one that most appeals to you in the next three weeks, and then complete the above task.

   - \textit{C. S. Lewis}, \textit{The Chronicles of Narnia} (any volume)
   - \textit{C. S. Lewis}, \textit{The Great Divorce}
   - \textit{C. S. Lewis}, \textit{The Screwtape Letters}
   - \textit{C. S. Lewis}, \textit{The Space Trilogy} (any volume)
   - \textit{J. R. R. Tolkien}, \textit{The Lord of the Rings} (any volume)
   - Charles Williams, \textit{War In Heaven, A Novel}
   - Charles Williams, \textit{The Place of the Lion}
   - John Milton, \textit{Paradise Lost}
   - John Milton, \textit{Paradise Regained}
   - John Bunyan, \textit{The Pilgrim’s Progress}
   - Trudy Harris, \textit{Glimpses of Heaven: True Stories of Hope and Peace at the End of Life’s Journey}
   - Don Piper and Cecil Murphy, \textit{90 Minutes in Heaven: A True Story of Death & Life}.  

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5. How does your church care for God’s creation? How energetically and enthusiastically do you care for the oppressed, the poor, the estranged, the outsider, the lonely and those suffering from health issues? What percentage of your effort is directed toward meeting the needs of these disenfranchised individuals? And, how does this percentage compare with the time, effort and money your church directs toward the Christian community? Is there a balance? Should there be?

Footnotes:

1 McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, 25.
4 An anonymous member of the “Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility” quoted by John Stott, Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, 1982), 23.
5 For more information on the EVLN paradigm and the church, see Bruno Dyck, and Frederick A. Starke, “The Formation of Breakaway Organizations: Observations and a Process Model” in Administrative Science Quarterly (1999) 44:792-822. The EVLN paradigm was first introduced by Albert O. Hirschman, Exit, Voice and Loyalty (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970). While much of the research looks at how the EVLN paradigm affects organizational members, its principles can also apply to stakeholders who are considering linking with an organization.
7 Alister E. McGrath, A Brief History of Heaven (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley Blackwell, 2003), 166-169. McGrath also points out that worship should reflect heaven on earth, and thus “for this reason that the place of Christian worship is of such importance in connection with Christian understandings of heaven” (ibid.).
12 To gain a mental picture of the magnificence and splendor of Eden, see Milton’s masterpiece, Paradise Lost (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003).
13 Ron Sider, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger, 84.
16 Howard Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins: Church Structure in a Technological Age* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 39.
18 For more information on The Church of the Nazarene’s “Good Samaritan Churches” initiative, see http://www.ncm.org/min_goodsam.aspx
AFTERWORD:
ARRIVAL ...AND BACK AGAIN

"Anyone who sets himself up as ‘religious' by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world."

- James 1:26-27 (The Message)

As the reader has noticed, the journey of the Good News never ends, it just leads to more responsibility. Successfully traversing a waypoint only affords the trekker an opportunity to help others navigate that same waypoint. My friends and colleagues have contributed their personal stories for this purpose.

A companion book:
WAYPOINTS: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey
by Bob Whitesel

To provide a clearer map of this route I have written an important companion book titled: Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey (The Wesleyan Publishing House, 2010). The companion volume is designed to help the person who is presently struggling with the obstacles, challenges and detours of this spiritual road. This companion book is for non-Christians, new-Christians and Christian-leaders alike. If you know of someone on this journey, Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey is the roadmap they have been seeking.

THE WAYPOINTS COURSE
by Bob Whitesel

Additionally, to help people come together and traverse this route, I have written a 17-week course that can be used in Sunday School classes, home groups, Bible studies, small groups, leadership committees and home fellowships. The companion book, Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey, provides an agenda for each of the 17-weeks. In this course travelers will share their experiences, help others, make an impact on their community. Weekly agendas of the WAYPOINTS COURSE are included in the companion book: Waypoints: Navigating Your Spiritual Journey.

For more information on either the companion book or the course see:
www.Waypoints-Book.com