



A Mazing Grace

Questioning Evangelism at it's Best

By Bill Blomquist

Prologue

I was catching rays on a crowded beach in Fort Lauderdale when a clean-shaven man wearing a three piece suit showed up with a 10 pound KJV Bible under one arm.

It was *Spring Break* and beer was flowing like wine in Aspen, oiled bodies were glistening on volleyball courts, and college girls in thin-bikini's were clustered across the hot shoreline like seals on a Southern California beach (but they were thinner).

The clean-shaven man in the three-piece suit walked to the shore, turned to face the crowd, and proceeded to shout at us, waving his Bible in the air and pointing his finger, telling us God was doing to damn us to hell if we didn't believe in Jesus Christ and take him as our personal Savior. He said that we were all adulterers, pagans, and that God hated all that stuff (which he does). Right there with the beautiful ocean behind him, his voice rose higher than the boom boxes of the spell-bound people around me.

I was a fairly new Christian at the time and while I subscribed to everything he was saying (or, should I say, shouting) there was something uneasy about the way he was doing it.

Is this how Jesus did it?

I sat up on my towel and looked at the crowds at all the spring breakers, curious to see how they would take this guy. Some simply turned over and faced the other way. Some laughed. Others mocked.

"We came here to get away from this crap!" They shouted.

Others tried to drown him by turning up their boom-boxes. Problem with that was, the louder they got the louder he got.

Interesting.

I could feel the angst in the atmosphere. These kids didn't come to the beach to judged and yelled at by a Bible-thumper. They were there, enjoying the sun, surf, waves and beautiful vibe of the day - a day that the God of the Bible-thumper had created for our own good pleasure.

There's gotta be a better way to do this, I thought.

Twenty minutes into the thing a group of college boys couldn't take it any longer. Four of them rose from their beach towels and made their way to towards the fire and brimstone Bible-thumper. He saw them coming, with widening eyes. The closer they got, the louder he preached, furiously wiping sweat from his forehead. When the college boys arrived on scene, two of them took him by the arms, the other two picked him up by his feet, and dragged him into about knee-deep water and, on the count of three, through him into the ocean, which caused the crowd to roared with laughter and applause.

Admittedly, I was of two minds. I thought the whole thing was pretty funny - and even laughed with the rest of the scoffers. Yet a part of me ached, not for Bible-thumper (now trying to get out of the water and looking like a wet cat),but for the *integrity of the message* he

was preaching. Where was the part about God's love poured out upon us, or that he even liked us? Where was the, "I do not condemn you?" Where was the "Lord loves you?" Or the, "Is any of you sick, broken-hearted," or feeling abandoned in life?"

In short, where was the Good News?

I dropped to my towel and looked around. The Bible-thumper was recomposing himself on the beach. Boom boxes were still booming. Volleyball players were still volleying, skinny bikini girls were still being skinny bikini girls. Nothing had changed. Nothing had changed at all.

I got back to my dorm, climbed the ladder to my loft, put my hands behind my head and stared at the ceiling.

There has got to be a better way to do this. People need to be honored. God's Image is in everyone. Sure, it's harder to see in some more than others, but it's there. How can a person invite others into the good things of God and not heart of God come off looking like an absolute jerk?

Recently our church sponsored a showing of *Jesus Revolution* in a secular community facility. The movie depicts the life of Pastor Chuck Smith and a revival which happened up and down the California coast in the '70's. Long-haired hippie's and their bra-less girlfriends who, by their usage of acid, hash, rebellion, and "free love", were perceived by the then culture as pretty much the underbelly of society and the dregs of the nation. They hated "the man," turned on, dropped in, and tuned out - with "peace, love, and dope" being their mantra.

Then something strange began to happen. All their longings began to be met - but not in anything they were doing. Their longings were met in **Jesus**. He was pouring out the love of the Father through the Holy Spirit. Every day more and more hippies - the dregs of society - were becoming purified and washed in the Blood of the Lamb.

It turned out to be a real problem.

Because when they got saved they decided to go to church. They showed up with long hair, no shoes, patches on the jeans and guitars. Many churches shunned them. Church's like Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa were rare. They made way for what the Lord was doing. The movement continued. It flourished world-wide and - if your a lover of contemporary Christian music - you can thank God that it did, as this revival (called the *Third Wave* by some), and the hippies that found Jesus, built the foundation for the stuff most of us sing in church today.

At the end of the movie at the community center we had a discussion. Most of the twenty or so people gathered were committed church-going Christians. Conversation went along the lines like this:

What an inspirational story!

What a wonderful pastor - that Chuck Smith - for not caving into his leadership and for doing what was right in the sight of the Lord.

Yep. Pretty remarkable. All those hippies getting their lives together. They sure needed it.

And so it went.

One woman stood and faced us. "You know, I wonder. I look at the way God singled out the a people group like the hippies... a people group living on the fringes of society - indeed, considered a nuisance to our country. Who would have known God would have chosen *them* to turn the world around and use *them* to begin a revival!"

"Amen, amen." Most people nodded.

"It makes me think." She paused and touched a finger to her lips. "If God was to do the same work today, I wonder who he would with."

Awkward silence.

Some of us squirmed our chairs and cleared our throats.

"When I look across the face of American culture for a demographic that is as culturally ostracized to us as the hippies were back in the 70's, I can only think of one people group." That's when the penny dropped. "It would have to be the *trans community*."

A pin may have dropped. But I didn't hear it. Neither did anyone else.

That was one of those "wisdom of God is the foolishness of men" statements that I'll never forget.

"Of course," I thought. "That would be *just like God*."

"What would we do - us Christians - if God was to move amongst the *trans community* and they start showing up at our churches?"

Driving home that night, sensing the shift in the atmosphere of the room, I was reminded of that Bible-thumper dressed in the three-piece suit with the KJV Bible on the Fort Lauderdale beach that Spring break.

About this Book

Since my conversion and surrender to Christ on November 1 1977 I have seen and participated in just about every kind of evangelistic enterprise imaginable. I still have a passion to present the Gospel to just about everybody I see. I love it when God opens a door for conversation and am the first one to ask others about their life, their experience, and their faith.

This little book, *A Mazing Grace* incorporates a prophet parable to make the point. It's a little game I used to play as a kid. It's not the best parable, I know. But it's the one that seems to describe where I am today when I have the opportunity to share the Kingdom with others.

The model I propose takes everybody just as they are, where they are. It assumes that God is already working in their lives before you met, and will continue to do so after you're long gone. It's invitational. It honors people, hears all people, and invites all people to "come and see" a bit into the heart of our Father.

A Mazing Grace presents of model of sharing salvation in Christ without compromising orthodox Christianity, in ways that promote honor and openness which are necessary if we are to attract and invite others into the Body of Christ.

Chapter 1

A Maze of Grace

People are all over the map spiritually. Some are intentionally apostate; others are flourishing in the new life of Christ. Some are on the outskirts. Others are as close to ground zero as a person can get.

When I was a young kid I spent hours playing with a maze game. It was about the size of one's hand. The idea was to tilt the thing this way and that way in order to get the silver ball around a series of curves and thresholds until it dropped into a hole at the center of the maze.

Each ring has its challenges. Sometimes the maze needed to be tilted counter clockwise just to drop the ball from one ring and down to the next. Other times it seems as if the ball naturally knew where it wanted to go.

The Parable Explained

Jesus often spoke in parables and questions. He did this to stimulate discussion and to get his hearers intellectually engaged in the thing.

I can imagine he and his disciples plopping down at the end of a long day around a crackling camp fire in the Jordanian desert and recalling the day gone past.

"And then that was that teaching about the maze," Thomas blurts out. "What was with that?!"

"Good question, Thomas." Jesus picks up a stick and digs it into the fire, causing orangey-red sparks to rise into the night sky. "You see, the maze is the whole of a persons life - from conception to death - and the silver ball is the person. Throughout the person's life he travels this way and that way, always headed for the Kingdom, dropping from one threshold to another, until finally arriving at the heart of the Father."

It is God's desire to "roll" each of us into the Kingdom of Heaven. He holds the maze in his hand and tilts our world this way, from one groove to the next, passing through one threshold to the next, until, by God's grace, we plop into heaven.

Our lives, our planet, the entire universe - as well as all our movements - are in the hands of our sovereign God.

But lets stick with this planet for now, specifically how the Lord gets us moving from the top rungs (most distant from God) through the thresholds and down to the center of the thing.

How does this happen?

Guardians of the Thresholds

Essential to the makeup of the maze, there are thresholds, gateways where people have divine

encounters. Threshold moments are times when God has maneuvered the person to the threshold but they have their own autonomy whether to drop into the next groove, or continue spinning through life until another threshold comes along.

So much for free will.

God doesn't do it alone. We are essential in his desire to move his people out of darkness and into his magnificent light. While he may have the whole wide maze in his hand, he has given us the privilege in assisting people out of their old world and into their new worlds.

Thus we are guardians of the thresholds. When that silver ball comes rolling our way it is time for us to spot the thing, engage with it, and pull it through to the other side, not unlike spiritual midwives.

How do we do this? How do guardians of the thresholds invite others from one level to the next - to the next, to the next, and to the next - until finally arriving at the sweet spot of the Father's heart?

With *questions*.

God has designed pivotal turning points in all our lives. These divine encounters are times when we are called to think, to question, and explore a deeper way of living. In the best case scenario, we meet a person at their threshold, they consider the questions, and agree to explore the thing further. They drop into a new groove and continue life in the new awareness. Over the course of their life, they will encounter many threshold

moments, all geared to escort them into the heart of God.

As we will see, it is the combination of God's sovereign hand on their maze and our availability to meet people at their threshold moments that make the thing happen. Both God and humanity are involved in evangelism. Some might even say one can't happen without the other.

Regardless, the thing that makes it all happen (from our point of view) is our ability to listen, to discern where the people are coming from, to know where they are going, and the wisdom to ask prophetic questions which will challenge them to take the leap and roll into the next groove.

Questioning Evangelism?

It's not what you may think. We're not questioning evangelism with suspicion. We are people of the Great Commission. We have been *called* to go into the world and spread the Gospel. We're calling it *Questioning Evangelism* because it's all about asking questions in order to evangelize.

As we move from one chapter to the next, you will see how asking the right questions to the right person at the right threshold is a surefire way to engage others and convince them to move from one ring of the maze to the next.

In Jesus' day, asking good and timely questions was the way people were invited through their thresholds. God set up the appointment. He rolled the people into his

atmosphere. But if not for the questions delivered, chances are the individuals would still be standing there.

With the man at the Pool of Bethesda he asks, **"Do you want to be healed?"**

To the blind man at Jerico he asked, **"What do you want me to do for you?"**

To the woman on her face after all stones had been dropped and it was just she and he, **"Where are your accusers?"**

And so on down the line.

His questions weren't just idle conversation. They were geared - some would even say engineered - to intentionally bring a new awareness, a forward movement, and deeper growth to the individual. Many, after hearing questions and comments, entered through the particular threshold and rolled a bit nearer to the heart of the Father.

The goal of questioning is ask questions which invite others to move through one threshold and onto the next run, or groove. Their sole intent is to bring others to the point of choosing (or heavily considering) what life would look that if they had chose to step into the deeper run of the maze.

This means, among other things, that questions need to be crafted. We'll look at this later. But, at the end of the day, your job is to craft questions of invitation from a place of authority, experience, and "having been there already."

Incarnational Thresholds

Isn't it uncanny that we meet people with exactly the same history as ourselves? Or, even more apropos, people who are [today] where once we have been [yesterday]?

This is no accident. It is the intentionality of God.

Embedded in our common history is the invitation to others to grow deeper towards God's love. (Who else better to take them by the hand and help them through the thing?) Thus, the more in tune we are with our own maze, its runs and threshold moments, the better we will be able to circle back and meet others who are now standing in places where we used to be. These meetings are called threshold moments, or *incarnational thresholds*, intersections in the maze where God arranges us to meet those uniquely fitted to our stories, to who we used to be, for the purpose of helping them roll off their existing groove, through the threshold, and onto the new groove, with your able assistance.

These *incarnational thresholds* are powerful interactions which God uses to foster creation to his heart. They provide prophetic moments where the Spirit can do what he does best - pour out the love of God on his child(ren). We are uniquely gifted to meet others at their threshold moments. We have been there. We ask the right questions. We may even look like them, and have the same demeanor.

As we encounter others in their thresholds two things occur. First, we become immediately grateful for the work of God in our lives. It doesn't take long to realize that the person before us used to us - as, not so many years ago, we were at that that same threshold, too. This is an extremely grateful and humbling experience, which makes the encounter all the more sacred.

Secondly, and since we are speaking to a younger version of ourselves, we are able to share life, listen, and ask questions with a level of authenticity uncommon in their world. It is in these moments when the Spirit anoints the encounter with a prophetic loveliness that is most attractive to the one we're speaking with.

In short, they are blown away and may even confuse you with, or misidentify you as, an angel. Yet, in reality, you are no angel. God has gifted you with a particular empathy for them at that time and place in their maze. You are simply being you. This is what makes the incarnational threshold so invitational (and so very authentic), captivating and impossible to ignore.

A couple of examples:

You find yourself speaking with a woman who has been serving in the church for years, yet has no evidence of a saving faith. She is bitter, hardened, and seems to be going through the motions with no sense of joy. As you listen to her (and perhaps even work with her on the same ministry team) you remember, "I was once just like that - working myself to the bone in the church. But, today I know the joy of Jesus. He has become the reason I serve."

In time, as you serve with this woman, you begin to take advantage of this threshold. You spend time with her, and ignite discussions leading to a deeper awareness of the living God. You share your joy of serving, and how God has brought you closer to him in the doing of the thing.

As the relationship builds, she may walk away one day thinking, "That person seems to know me better than I know myself!"

But that's only because she used to be you.

Recently I was giving away food with my church at an outdoor park when a young meth addict came up with a certain familiar desperation in his eyes. I remembered that feeling. In an all grateful moment I realized, I was looking at me. It was a few decades ago, but it was me.

As I poured him coffee with *Swiss Mix* (and four additional teaspoons of sugar) I met him, shared love, and ask the same questions that someone had asked me when I was in his shoes. I was him with him, in effort to share God's heart to him. Since then, whenever he comes around, he e a beeline to me. I pray one day my friend Matt will step through his threshold, as I had the grace to do many years ago.

Mid-Chapter Summary

Let's take a mid-chapter pause and get our minds around this maze of grace."

The maze itself is akin to the life of an individual. Actually, since God is God, and he's got the whole world in his hands," the maze could be the whole of creation

with a kazillion little balls interfacing and rolling this way and that way merely with the tilt of his hand. But let's keep it simple. In our discussion, the maze has one silver ball. The "Maze Holder's" desire is to get that ball into the hole at the bottom of the thing and, as noted, he uses people like us to do it.

At various thresholds in the grooves, and in the mystery of the sovereignty of God and free will, we ask invitational questions to those stepping closure to the center of the maze. Of course, since people have free will, they may not want to leave the old groove for the new one. That's okay. God has all the time in the world. Besides, just around the corner he has prepared another threshold moment in which further consideration can be done.

If a person chooses **not** to leave one groove for another, a number of things can and do happen. God may choose to stunt one's growth until we get the picture. He does this by refusing to toggle the maze. It's that simple.

Most often, however, when a person chooses not to seriously entertain the invitation to pass through any given threshold God jiggles the maze this way or that way until the person rolls to a stop before yet another threshold leading to the same place as the one before. (After all, life does go on.) Perhaps 10, 20, or even 30 years down the road, he or she may be facing the same challenges and listening to the same invitations as before. This time, however, the invitation may be accepted and the individual blessed by the opportunity of getting out of the same old rut and escaping the life that was only running around in circles.

option to get out of that same old rut.

The ultimate goal of all this is, of course, God's passion to get humanity through the maze and smack-dab in the center of the thing, where new life begins.

Chapter 2

The Landscape of the Groove

In order to ask questions that invite others closer to the heart of the thing, we need to know what the grooves are. In this chapter we will look at the particulars of a certain maze.

We'll begin the outer-most rim of the maze. We'll first describe the groove, then share ideas on questions that could be asked in a threshold encounter. Remember, the goal of it all is to escort others as deeply into the heart of the maze as possible.

Let's take a drone's-view look at the maze and, specifically the make-up of those people living in the grooves. We'll be looking at them in detail as we go along. For now we'll take a quick look.

Beginning from the outside rim and funneling to the center, groove to groove, let's describe them thusly:

- Groove 1: Fringers
- Groove 2: Cultural Whatever's
- Groove 3: Ecclesiastical Entitlements
- Groove 4: Creedal Comforts
- Groove 5: Practitioners

Let's take a deeper look.

Groove 1: Fringers

The outer rim of the maze is where we all begin. The good news here is that people here actually are included in the good hand of the Lord!

This demographic of "fringers" include people who are either checked out spiritually, honestly deceived or, more dangerously, intentionally rolling against the grain.

They include:

- Agnostics and atheists
- Cult and Occultists
- Humanists and the spiritually defiant
- Non-committed humans
- Sincerely unknowing
- Apostates

Groove 2: Cultural Whatever's

Cultural Whatever's lead a "any way the wind blows" existence. They have no problem with, nor intentionality, in living in a community built on judaeo-christian principals. They are fluid people who honor "your truth" as anyone else's truth.

These beautiful people are naturally spiritual and live within a culture which express honest spiritual mores, and they will often be found participating in civic causes with strong spiritual undercurrents.

In the States, we have many towns exhibiting the fruit of religious principals. The church on the corner may have an Easter Egg Hunt. There may be a statue of the "1-Commandments" on the commons. The Friday night High School Football game may begin with a prayer from the local Rabbi, or minister. *Chick-fill-a* may be closed on Sundays. While some may call this "cultural baggage," these institutions provide invitational opportunities where people are exposed to the deeper life of community and honor.

Their demographic may include those who:

- Make decisions on matters of conscience
- Understand the need to be ethical and even moral for the sake of the greater good
- May be deeply committed to social justice and issues of human welfare
- May be highly respectful church, synagogue, and serve on community councils of the school board, hunting club, etc. A certain personal satisfaction will come from one's involvement in civic affairs.

Groove 3: Ecclesiastical Entitlements

Passing through the next threshold, we now have rolled into (what I believe, anyway) to be the most difficult groove of the maze.

Like the Eagle's *Hotel California*, "You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave," this particular groove of the maze is easier to roll into than out of.

Getting into it is easy, it's getting out of it that's the problem.

People seeped in the groove of Ecclesiastical Entitlement are the worse. I know. I used to be one. They walk the fine line between personal dedication and idolatry. And America is full of them.

These were the people that, above all others, were the thorns in Jesus' saddle. He knew them as Pharisees and Scribes but, above all, as Sadducees. Today we would know them as denominational snobs, hard-nosed theological whizz-kids, liturgical fundamentalists, and the religious elite. Some may say that after they rolled into religion, they became so heavenly minded that the became no earthly good.

Since this is by far the groove the requires the most energy to pass through and roll out of, let's look into it a bit deeper.

Before we plop into it, it must be remembered that this particular groove isn't evil, or bad, in it's existence. It's what we do in it that taints the thing. Additionally, the mere fact this groove exists within the maze itself is important, as we'll see later.

Pitfalls of Ecclesiastical Entitlements include:

Denominational Bias. Denominations aren't the problem. The Body of Christ comes in many different flavors, colors, and distinctions. The more we choose to embrace our diversity, the closer we will get to the unity that Jesus prays for in John 17:21.

The problem becomes a deadly groove when folks in one denominations set themselves up and against those in another denomination. There are over 200 Christian denominations in the states. And, I know (we've all heard it before), mine is the only real one.

They baptize infants, we dedicated them. They have guitars in church with a praise band, we have a paid choir that is educated. We pray to the saints, we have only one mediator. We are a mega church, you are a little church. We have the Spirit, you do not.

So it goes.

To acknowledge and bless other ways of doing church is movement towards the right threshold, as it speaks to the heart of the maze, which is the heart of the Father. To be sure, there are true believers in rolling around this ecclesiastical pavement, yet be careful; these grooves are notorious for wrapping their vines around our feet so we can no longer see anything beyond our own denominational trappings. Or, worse yet, they have the ability to create in us an interior disposition that forbids healthy acceptance of those worshipping in other denominations. In this sense, a person religiously embracing an inflexible denominational bias is no better off than a person who is a member of a cult.

Liturgical Snobbery. This probably never happens in your church, but I have known people who place such an emphasis on doing things the right way that they forget who they are trying to do things the right way for in the first place.

This savviness goes far beyond that grumpy old man seated in the back of the church clutching his 1928

Episcopal Prayer book, who will only take communion once a month and is known to all the others in the church as the old guy in the back who shakes a boney finger against change and says, "*We have never done it that way.*"

We are talking about honest to God liturgical snobs, fundamentalists who would be hard-pressed to see the beauty of the Living Christ within the Eucharistic Prayers unless the candles were burning evenly, the wine was *Tawny Port*, the altar linens were wrinkle-free, and the prayers were said with impeccable precision, preferably with an English accent, perfectly, decently, and in good order. Heaven forbid if the Priest was to forget to elevate the Sacraments, or if he (or she - what a *woman* at the altar?!) expressed a smidgin of joyful emotion during the *Agnus Dei*. That would disqualify the integrity of the rite altogether and completely ruin his day. It would have been better just to sleep in and watch *Meet the Press*.

When liturgical snobbery gets so big that it traps Jesus behind a veil and he can't get out, something is very, very wrong.

Theological Astuteness. This is another characteristic of those rolling around in the groove of Ecclesiastical Entitlement. It is akin to Liturgical Snobbery with the added punch of using Holy Scripture to justify one's immovable positioning.

I met a guy once who was unable to believe that the Spirit of God could give him a true experience of the love of God. No matter how emphatically I shared that God longed to hold him in his arms, he just couldn't buy it.

"Romans 5:5 says that the love of the Father is poured out among us," I said.

"It can't happen." He retorted. "The experience - and the need for the experiential manifestation of the Spirit stopped after the Bible was written."

And so it went.

He got up from the table and left. But I know the Lord will roll him around to another threshold moment where someone else like me will share the same thing with him. For it is God's desire to love and be loved by his children.

Theological Astuteness really know their stuff (a good thing) yet have walled themselves in with such a leak-proof theological perspective that - outside the grace of God and his hand bending the maze of their life - they would never budge (a bad thing). On the outside they are well put together; on the inside they are as dry as a bone, always searching for something more fulfilling. They dream of life in the Spirit, and what that would look like, but their adherence to "sound doctrine" and theological presuppositions that just "make sense" act as self-fulfilling prophecies barring them from the very heart of the Prophet himself.

Groove 4: Creedal Comforts

As we work our way to the heart of the matter we see that the grooves are becoming more and more "Christian", which is the intent of the Maze Holder. We are all rolling into a vibrant and living relationship with God.

Folks rolling around in the groove of "creedal comforts" have a high percentage of having a personal relationship with Jesus. Most likely, if they are serious worshippers, they are reminded of the creeds of the Church on a weekly basis. The creeds provide intentional thresholds which invite the participant closer to the heart of God. Said weekly, their words marinate deeply into our hearts and, through time, shape us into saints deeply anchored in the theology of the church.

That being said, many well-meaning "churchmen" can repeat the creeds time and time again and miss out on the the heart of the matter. It happens to the best of us. When something is so repetitious, week after week, there is always a danger of losing meaning. In the best case scenario, engagement of the mind, imagination, and heart can be intertwined with the recitation of creeds. Unfortunately, if not careful our brains will check out, our thoughts rolling elsewhere until the great "Amen" at the end of the thing.

That being said, the creeds provide "no-brainer" opportunities and leverage points wherein questions can be asked to invite the participant more deeply into the heart of the maze.

Groove : Practioners

Now we've come to the smallest groove of the maze. When the silver balls reach this area they are fully engaged, fully alive in the life of the Spirit and fully walking the talk.

People here have made their way willingly through the outer rings, stepped through countless thresholds, and

have dropped into a groove that promotes God's guidance and fellowship into the heart of their existence. In short, they love him. They know their gifts, they are being transformed into the image of God - his character, fruits, compassion, and sacrificial life-styles.

They are most likely people who are caught up in the mystery of God as revealed in the Spirit, drink deeply from the waters of the Word, and find solitude and grounded-ness in the rituals of the Church. They are right where God has all of us headed. Here, in the heart of the maze, we find fulfillment and purpose in the very hands of God.

Chapter Summary

We've come a long way from the upper grooves of the maze - those places where we weren't even sure there even was a god - and landed in the heart of the matter. Through God's magnificent tilting this way and that way of our lives. In his mysterious ways, and at the end of the day, he has maneuvered us to where we have been headed all along.

Some may say he has even pre-destined path for all of us. I would say he probably does, at least his desired goal is union with him at the center, as indicated by the tilting of his palm. Others might say the journey is completely up to us. I would say, it probably is, at least in the sense that - far from being silver balls - we are people, people created in his image. We have minds, we think, we have intuition, we have free will. These characteristics work in a strange dynamic with God's persistence to accomplish his desires. Even when the maze is tilted and 90 degrees and we are dangling there

at the threshold of another groove - feet dangling in the air - we still have the ability to hold on, or let loose. Even this, in God's mysterious ways, rolls into his desires for us.

Chapter 3

Guardians of the Thresholds

God continues to roll us back into places where we used to be.

Three years after I have been converted to Christ a strange thing happened.

Get Back to Where you Once Belonged

Up to that point I had been expressing my newfound joy in Christ everywhere I went. I was completely unattached to any church, rather having a "me and Jesus" sense of spirituality. I had been baptized, confirmed, and grown up in the Episcopal Church, yet was disenfranchised with the denomination for a number of reasons. Now that I was a full-fledge Jesus Freak," I have no need for such man-made institutions.

One day I was hitchhiking around, pretty much minding my own business when I sensed the Lord's voice. The conversation went something like this:

"Bill?"

"Yes, Lord?"

"You've been trippin' around for the last three years completely unattached to the church..."

"Well, maybe a little. But I do visit a lot of them."

"I think it's time for you to get rooted someplace?"

"'Rooted?' Why, sure Lord. What did you have in mind?"

"I want you to return to the Episcopal Church."

I remembered my days at *St. David's by the Sea* where I was the number 1 acolyte. I sat through numerous services, recited numerous creeds, and tried to be as good as I could. But the whole time I was in the ocean, on a surfboard, getting barreled in a four-foot pipe. Everything was so boring.

"Really. Lord? The 'Episcopal Church?' But you don't even live there."

[Awkward pause.]

His last words were to the point. "You should check it out."

And so I did. And I've rarely been happier.

A funny thing happened after my roots began to grow in the church. The Lord began to move me out into life, to many of the same people I used to "be" with before Christ. I didn't know it then, but it was as if he was

tilting my life and rolling me back into the places I used to be.

"If you can't talk their language, who can?"

I have since found this to be a phenomenon of all of us who have made it through life's maze into the heart of the Father: He sends us back into the world.

I took issue with this at first. Why would I want to rehash the traumatic memories in my life? It took me a long time to get home to Jesus.

Heck, even the songs, "No turning back, no turning back.

The problem is is that this isn't about us. It's about those who have yet-to-be-us. Remember the pain, the addiction, the sin, condemnation, and shame? There are people still out there - lost in a maze of works righteousness, theological heresy, the cult and occult - just like that.

"Who better to meet them than you?"

I began to get it, something about the Great Commission.

Some of us, when finding our home in Christ, need not venture into the nose-bleed sections of the maze. We need to sit, to heal. And it may take years.

But for all of us there comes a time when it's time to get back to where we once [though we] belonged. When we're least expecting it, the Lord tilts our lives outwards, back into the grooves where we meet up with others,

rolling endlessly around in circles, in very deliberate diving encounters.

With the command of the Great Commission rolling around in our heads and having God's compassion in running through our veins, do we really have a choice not to ascend to the grooves of yesterday and engage with the people we used to be?

What Goes Up Must Come Down

This is where the parable of the maze can go either of two ways. It can go multi dimensional, superimposing itself upon itself with varying movements frontwards and backwards in a single tilt, or it can be dismissed.

The reality is the hand of the Lord is not only tilting it this way or that way to get the little silver balls of humanity into the center of the thing, but - at the same time - those same movements are moving us out into the maze as well, rolling us back up threshold to threshold, groove to groove, in order to meet people for whom we can invite into the heart of the thing.

When we arrive at another woman's threshold moment, sparks fly. The grace of God descends and conversation happens. Invitations are offered, and sometimes even embraced. At the end of the day, we have the privilege of bringing a single person one step closer to Jesus.

Here's a recent example:

Last week I was in praising God with my guitar, alone in the church. It was so rich - so much so I could almost feel his heart thumping all around me. I was definitely in the sweet spot, the very center of the maze.

The door opened up. A disheveled 40-ish year old man appeared.

"Do you have time, Pastor? I really need someone to talk to."

Really Lord? Right now?

What was happening? God was tilting my maze so that I would have to leave my peaceful little sanctuary in order to meet someone at their threshold moment. I had a decision to make. Do I say I don't have time? Or, do I flow with the roll, lay my desires down, and spend time with this guy?

By God's grace, I chose the latter. He walked down the aisle and sat on the pew before me. Rubbing his face with trembling hands he looked up and said, "I think I am losing my mind."

As he poured out his heart it dawned on me: God had led he and me to a threshold. Indeed, many of the things he was saying I could personally relate with. Why? Because I too had once struggled with the same things he was struggling with now.

What Goes Down Must Come Up

God uses people like you and me, after being redeemed, to rise up and tell others like you and me about Jesus. This means, once having been tilted this way and that way and found in the center of the maze, the hole is not our home (not now anyway). After discovering God in the heart of the matter, he sends us back into the world, where we encounter others at their threshold moments.

Having said that, there are times of the seasons. God may be keeping you sequestered from the world for good reason. It may be unsafe for you to get back into the maze. You may just have to sit out for a while.

Take, for example, a hippie having passed through the threshold of addiction, the occult, the world of sexual promiscuity. It would be unwise for a person such as this to roll back into the old neighborhoods and win their friends to Christ. He or she would be putting themselves in real danger - not only because of their own human ties to that stuff but because of Satan's intent to get them back into his sinister clutches. Only after a time of healing would the Lord's hand roll them back into the world for his glory.

Many of us love being in God's presence that we could never ever think of leaving it for the sake of others. We'd be perfectly content to let the Billy Grahams of the world do the hard stuff of interfacing with the scum of the earth.

Let God sort it all out." We say. "As for me, I'm staying right here. I've been called to sit at the Father's feet and worship him for the rest of my life."

We forget God has maneuvered our lives this way and that way to bring us to him and now he is maneuvering us this way and that way to others to bring them to him.

While it's a necessity to know that we were saved to save others, it is often a spiritual discipline for us to linger in his presence for him to heal us, empower us, and broaden the mind of Christ in us before going back into the world (this is called "discipleship"), otherwise we

can really set ourselves for failure and even embarrassment.

When doing ministry in Echo Park, LA, an heroin addict who came into our Saturday morning gathering. Jill had been a believer in elementary and high school but then got into drugs. One morning the Spirit convicted her through instrumental worship and she once again turned her life to Jesus Christ. She dropped her heroin addiction and within a year actually became a member of our leadership team. Still covered with demonic tattoos stretching across her wrists and needle scars like craters across her arms and breasts, Jill's face was the face of an angel, transfigured with the gratefulness and glory of God. Yet, in her passion to tell others, like she used to be, about the beauty of God's love, I sometimes wondered if she was rolling along to fast.

One day we were praying for a man who was tormented by demons. Jill rose to the occasion. She stood behind him with hands on his head, shaking with the power of the Holy Spirit. At the peak of the prayers (and at the top of her lungs) and in the full authority of the Lord of Heaven and earth, she prayed, "Satan in the Name of Jesus Christ I command you to lay your fucking hands off this man!"

I looked at Dan, a fellow co-leader, and smiled.

So that could have gone better.

The point illustrates the other extreme. Some rush into the world too soon after coming home to Jesus (in the fervor of their own strength), while others never want to leave the sheepfold ever again. To these people, who ask:

Why would I want to return to a people group that caused me such pain? Why would I want to affiliate with my past again? That part of my life was like living nightmare - and now you're telling me to get back into that thing?

I suggest you can expect the Lord to get you back into the grooves of the maze for at least three reasons.

1. God told us to do it (through words of the Great Commission).
2. In God's way of thinking, nothing is wasted. His desire is to bring you to the demographic of your redemption because you share a common language.
3. The idea that a Christian (having rolled from one threshold to another until finally coming into a living relationship with Jesus) has no concern or compassion or interest or care about the others struggling to find a spiritual home is, in a word, selfish.

How to Recognize Threshold Moments

As alluded above, the maze is a world where multiple silver balls are interfacing with one another all the time, and all under the mysterious tilting of his hand. In fact, most times, it's difficult to discern whether anyone is coming or going. You may think you're being sent out into the world to invite others to Christ, but discover that it is you that is standing at a threshold being invited by someone else inviting you into deeper sense of the Father's love.

I don't know how he does it.

Whether coming or going, threshold moments have discernible characteristics.

- A sense that your meeting has been somehow foreseen, or brought together by God.
- A certain level of connection - be it words, experiences, empathy, or common history - with the person(s) involved.
- Certain "aha" moments throughout the encounter.
- The ease of God's grace and light-heartedness within the conversation of the threshold.

When realizing a person is in a threshold moment, it is firstly important to recognize it as such, then to carry on conversation with humility and a certain sense of adventure - humility to acknowledge God's will in the meeting, and adventure to see where it will take you. It could be two threshold moments are simultaneous at play.

Last Words

Before moving along to the next chapter, keep in mind that that God may be bringing you to someone's threshold moment - that is, the extension of an invitation to roll from one groove to another - and that threshold moment may be yours.

In God's glorious and mysterious ways, he make all moments relevant for all parties involved. Knowing this, it behooves us to roll humbly before our God in all our

days, as he is working all things for good for those who love him and are called according to his purposes.

Chapter 4

Groovy Questioning

Leading others by Leading Questions

Assuming that *you* are the one sent up from home base to meet a person questioning weather or not to pass through a threshold onto a more intimate groove with the Father, you have the ability to invite them into something they are merely curious about. After all, you've been there, they have not.

Questions have the real ability to bring others through their thresholds. An intelligent questioner will consider the answer before even asking the question, and will ask the question with the destination in mind.

I once was rolled from the heart of the Father to speak with a woman. I was studying Marketing at Florida Atlantic University and she was in my *Economics 101* class. As we talked in the parking lot I sensed in her eyes a familiar unease, a sense of utter guilt. I had never spoken to her, yet somehow knew what was going on in her life.

As I stood before her I was reminded that I too had known that same shame and guilt.

Could it be Lord that you have rolled me here because we share the same experience?

After a bit of conversation I knew where she was, and I knew she was where I had been. In a mystical way you could say that I was me, looking back at myself through the eyes of redemptive love.

I was reminded of the time when I fathered a child out of wedlock, the surprise, shock and awe of it all. And I was reminded of the guilt I bore when the decision to abort it happened. Since I had been in the heart of the Father and dealt with this, I still had the memory, but not the sting. I was then able to share freely, and invitationally about the Father's forgiveness from the heart of the matter.

"He forgives you." I told her. "Your aborted baby. He forgives you. And if he forgives you," I added. "You should, too."

"How did you know about that?" She questioned.

I simply nodded. Sometimes threshold moments have no words.

Her response was interesting. She told me that "just last week" another person came "out of the blue" and told her the very same thing.

This was a true threshold moment. God was seeking to roll her through the threshold of self-forgiveness. He had tilted her world one way last week, but she rolled on from it. This week, now further around the groove, she was now standing at another threshold, with me, saying the same thing.

Knowing the answer to the question, and having a sense of what the Lord was doing in her life, I was able to invite her into a deeper awareness of forgiveness. It wasn't rocket science. It was just me humbly expressing to her the same forgiveness wherein I myself had received.

"Do you think God may be telling you something?"

And, with that, I smiled lovingly and walked away.

Feeling Groovy

Let's review the grooves from the original maze. It's imperative to know the grooves (including those grooves above and those grooves below) and their basic makeup, so we are able to ask the right questions which, hopefully will bring them through their thresholds and into a groove closer to the center of the thing.

We defined the as such:

- Groove 1: Fringers
- Groove 2: Cultural Whatever's
- Groove 3: Ecclesiastical Entitlements
- Groove 4: Creedal Comforts
- Groove 5: Practitioners

Ideally, questions are geared to invite others closer to the Lord. However, people rarely will accept invitations at first encounter. In these cases, they will roll along until God grants them another encounter. Again, he's got all the time in the world.

I'm making up relevant questions that will help you escort, or shepherd, your person from one groove to the next. When asking questions, you'll want to validate where the person is and seek to bring him or her onto the place you're speaking from.

Let's briefly re-define the grooves and suggest questions which will challenge the hearer to draw closer to a living relationship with the Lord.

You will notice the questions will acknowledge where they are and invite them into a more substantive, qualitative life.

FRINGERS

This demographic includes those who are either checked out spiritually, honestly deceived or, more dangerously, intentionally rolling against the grain.

Scenario. Here is a person who curious about spiritual matters.

- **Questioning Where They Are.** Do you have a sense of "something more?" What are some of the phenomena you're experiencing? Do you see any patterns to them? How is it happening?
- **Questioning What They are Thinking.** How does it make you feel - seeing these things happening again and again? Do you think there's something behind it all, like a "Some One" out there?
- **Questioning What Could Be.** If you could harness these coincidences, or the times when you feel like you want to cry and you don't know why, do you believe they are telling you something - something

about yourself, or something you're being invited more deeply into?

Thematic Pull. The culture around a fringer may be the greatest witness that "something more" may be "out there." Additional questions may be asked about government, holidays (such as Christmas or Easter).

CULTURAL WHATEVER'S

Cultural Whatever's lead a "any way the wind blows" existence. They are fluid people who honor "your truth" as anyone else's truth and are naturally spiritual and live within a culture which express honest spiritual mores,

Scenario. The person before you is feeling guilty because he has been living with his girlfriend with no intent to marry. He has friends who have told him it is not right to do so. Seems as if he, too, has rolled to a threshold.

- **Questioning Where They Are.** You say you've been living with your girlfriend for a couple of years now but have recently had feelings of guilt. Is this a moral issue? Where do you think these feelings are coming from?
- **Questioning They Are Thinking.** It seems as if your conscious is telling you things contrary to what you've always believed. What do you think about the idea of "conscious" - you know, where it comes from, how people with different belief systems do life in the world?
- **Questioning What Could Be.** When you see people attending church, or hear of faith communities, are you intrigued by that? If you were to be attracted to a faith

group, or a group expressing a common morality here in town, what would you look for in a community like that?

Thematic Pull. *Knowing that God wills this person to move through the threshold into the next groove of Ecclesiastical Culture, your job is to phrase your questions in that direction. If I were to give this young man some parting advice, I'd suggest he check out a church here or there in town where he can explore his convictions more freely.*

ECCLESIASTICAL CULTURE

People in this groove are church-based, yet the vitality of a living relationship with Christ is clouded by religious activity.

Scenario. Here is a woman who has served in the church for a lifetime and is only now really finding a deeper meaning in the work she does.

- **Questioning Where They Are.** You tell me that there are times when you are setting up the flowers for the altar that you just begin to cry for no reason... Do you think that God is saying something in that? If so, what?
- **Questioning What They Are Thinking.** Have there been times in your work in the church when you've been overcome with emotion, or times when you had a sure feeling that something or someone was in the building with you. How did it make you feel. How do you recognize these things?
- **Questioning What Could Be.** When we say that God is omnipresent through the Spirit do you think that

could actually be true? When this event happens again, how could you posture yourself, seeking to hear what the Lord may be telling you?

Thematic Pull. *Knowing that God wills this person to move through the threshold into the next groove of Creed, you'll want to phrase questions in that direction. If I were to give this woman some parting advice, the next time she is doing religious work and senses that "something" out there, to stop and say, "Here I am Lord. Your servant is listening."*

CREEDAL COMFORTS

People know the tenants of the creeds and thus creeds provide "no-brainer" opportunities and leverage points wherein questions can be asked to invite the participant more deeply into the heart of the maze.

When the creeds of the Church come alive in a person's heart, it has got to be one of the wonderful things in the world. Some say it's like the stuff in the head moving 18 inches to the stuff in the heart. The late actress, Anne B. Davis - who was a life long Episcopalian said as she passed through this threshold and landed in a new groove (the groove of Praxis - see below), "After I got born again I had no idea how much of the Prayer Book was in the Bible!"

- **Questioning Where They Are.** You have expressed a deep concern for the poor living on the streets of Franklin. What is it that is captivating you about them?
- **Questioning What They Are Thinking.** What do you think the Lord is relating to you through this? WOULD you think the Lord is inviting you to walk the talk?

- **Questioning What Could Be.** How would you do this?

***Thematic Pull.** Knowing that God wills this person to move through the threshold into the next groove of Praxis, your job is to phrase your questions in that direction. If I were to give this person some parting advice I would invite her to re-read the Prayer Book with an eye of what it says about service and loving neighbors as oneself.*

PRACTITIONERS

People here have made their way willingly through the outer rings, stepped through countless thresholds, and have dropped into a groove that promotes God's guidance and fellowship into the heart of their existence. In short, they love him.

Scenario. Here is a person seeking to discern God's leading in their life.

- **Questioning Where They Are.** You say you feel like God is leading you away from leading the ministry you've been doing for five years? Share with me a bit of why you feel that way and some of the ways he's been revealing himself?
- **Questioning What They Are Thinking.** When you feel as if you are smack-dab in the center of what God is doing, how does that feel? What are the indications you sense? How would you like to see him leading more so in your life?
- **Questioning What Could Be.** It's a gutsy thing, but what IF you were to move away from something you have been so familiar with and into the unknown? How

would that look in your life, the life of your family and friends?

Thematic Pull. *If I were to give this person some parting advice I would encourage them in their exploration.*

How Does One Know The Right Question to Ask?

Now that is a great question.

This is where a real knowledge of the different grooves in the maze comes in. When you can pinpoint where a person is in their threshold, and you know the characteristic of the threshold through which they are being invited, that's all you need to know.

Questions can be closed-ended or open-ended. Closed-ended questions have real answers, usually one or two words, usually "yes" or "no." Closed-ended questions are questions to avoid. Examples of closed-ended questions begin with:

- *Is it true that...*
- *How long has this been...*
- *How many of these are there...*

Open-ended questions are designed to stimulate, reflect, and dream. These are the questions to employ. Examples of open-ended questions begin with:

- *What would you think...*

- *How do you feel about...*
- *How would it look if...*

A Good Question

A good question has the capacity to linger far after the conversation has ended. Questions extend the invitational fragrance of the Father. They inspire depth. They arouse faith and implore adventure.

A good question takes into account where the person is and entices the person to a place you know they need to be. In short, you know the turf. Since you yourself have been in their shoes, and you can remember how life was when you were in their shoes, you have the uncanny ability to invite them closure to God with vocabulary, cultural awareness, and foreknowledge - not unlike the same vocabulary, cultural awareness, and foreknowledge that was extended to you when you were in that same person's shoes.

Should I Give Them the Answer?

Probably not.

Of course you may know the answer, but half the battle is self-discovery. When people learn to hear God on their own, in their own ways, and come to their own personal "a-ha" moments, they will pass thru their threshold with integrity.

And there are no short cuts here. If you see the silver ball and its rolling this way and that way across the maze as the whole of one's life (even still rolling through

eternity, I'd presume) then speed rarely matters. Depth is where we want to be. And - heck - if you're there with them at any given threshold and they decide it's too much, they want to bail, or "this stuff is too weird for me" (like the followers of Jesus did when he told them they'd have to eat his flesh and drink his blood), that's okay. God's got the whole maze in his hand and he's already liked up the next threshold for your person to consider.

The Heart of the Matter

The heart of *Questioning Evangelism* lies in a paradigm shift in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ from a stance of telling, declaring, and authoritatively judging others to an approach that can be summed up in four words: *Would you like to come and follow me?*

It is the opinion of this writer that most people are preached out, rebuked out, guilted out, condemned out, and judged out and an open-minded conversation based on questions that honor and invite best impacts those seeking more out of life.

Impressive smoke pots run dry. Carefully orchestrated swells of blue and green swelling lights fall dim. Stages, sound-systems, echo loops fall flat. Campaigns, revivals, movies, songs, and NFL Players giving the knee to God all leave us on the outside looking in rarely move others into an authentic relationship with Jesus.

Only when real people, authentic saints, encounter others in their own humanity will eyebrows raise and hearts melt. Many times, authenticity means a

knowledge of where you've been, where you are, and where you are going.

Here are a couple of takeaways needing to be embraced as we mature into authentic questioners.

God calls us so we can call others.

God's work of redemption in your life, however wonderful and dramatic, is not for you and for others. This is not all about you.

Once we have arrived in the heart of the matter (i.e. a personal relationship with Christ) he will often tilt the maze, a little here, a little there, to return us to the same places he called us out of.

Some may scoff. *Why would I want to go back to that pig sty. God redeemed me from that.*

To be true, he may indeed not want you to return. This would be for a variety of reasons. However, the norm is, after we've been saved, delivered, and walking as wounded healers, he will send us back to where we were when he first called us.

Memories Promote Compassion

Remembering is HUGE.

We are to remember who we were before redemption. We are to remember the miracles, the rites, and the ways that God intervened in our life to take us out of darkness and into his magnificent light.

When we remember who we were and then see people who are where we were, an automatic compassion arises in our hearts towards them.

When that compassion arises, a strange thing happens. If only for a moment, we *become them*. In that magical moment, we are granted a holy gateway into the issues of their heart and - along with that - carry a life-giving invitation spoken with true authority and a demonstrative demeanor (be it through dress, vocabulary, spirit, or mysterious camaraderie) that leaves the people thinking after the threshold encounter, "Wow, he really gets me."

And we do really get them. We share a common past with them, and they share a common future with us.

Some seek to discard the magnificent ways they are made, actually hating "the flesh." But I say, don't discard the beautiful man or woman God has created you to be. Some if it is pretty cool. Everything from your physical stature, thought patterns, to your sense of humor, your accent, your dress, and so on right down the line has been redeemed and perfected in Christ. Who you are speaks prophetically in your uniqueness in ways that *only you* can communicate to others and in ways only they can hear.

This means your experiences and hard knocks in life - before and after conversion - can be brought before others in transparency and hope. Open your book of God's transformation for others to read.

Know, Remember, and Bless God For Your History

As we come to understand and embrace the pathways of life which led us to the throne of Grace we become all the more equipped to be authentic carriers of God's invitation to others.

God's love for you didn't begin the moment you surrendered your life to him. He loved you and was "mazing" you to his heart from the moment you were conceived.

Some think that anything before one's conversion or baptism to Christ didn't count for anything and can be easily written off. But God is the God of the whole of life - past, present, and future. All of it works together for his good pleasure. Someone told me recently that I was saved 2000 years ago, but only found out about it recently.

When we discount our BC (Before Christ) life as completely good for nothing we nail our foot to the floor and cripple the ways we can be used in the lives of others who really need to hear from someone who used to be where they are. The horrors of our BC life have been redeemed. They stand as trophies of grace and redemption of the merciful intervention of Christ.

In Christ, God takes our wrinkles and changes them to storylines, our stumbling blocks to stepping stones, and he changes our bitter waters to living springs. If the Lord reminds you of your redemptive past while intersecting a person at a threshold, share it, humbly, hopefully, and invitationally.

You Wont Always Get it Right, But You Can Always Be Real

There is a fine line with being your authentic self and your Christian "witness." When people know we are disciples of Jesus they watch us. They observe how we do life, how we handle difficulties. We want to be modelers of Jesus's life, and by God's grace that can happen.

At the same time, we do have to be mindful of offending others in our authenticity. The Scriptures remind us that we are free from the Law, for example, yet have the freedom to keep the Law, especially if breaking the Law would offend or cause bewilderment to another.

In this spirit, if we are out with friends who are vegetarians, we have the freedom to order a vegetarian dish, so not to be drooling the life-blood of a cow from our lips and offending them, even if we would really really really really really really really really want a steak.

The point is, just as Christ came out of heaven to be all things for us, we too have the freedom to be all things to all others.

He's Still Got the Whole World in His Hands

In the mystery of God, he is sovereign. He is the way maker, the promise keeper, and the maze holder.

If we blow it, there will be another opportunity. If we withheld a question, and the person goes and kills himself, that is not on you.

God is bigger. In his sovereignty, our deepest regrets are graced away simply by the tilting of his hand.

He is that big.

Knowing he's still got the whole world in his hands gives us freedom to dream big, to take risks, and to really enjoy our life and the people who come and go away from us.

Some think that it is up to us to make the world Christian, bring America back to God, convert a family member, or work our way into the core of God's heart by doing religious things.

But that's not true.

It is authentically encountering others in grace and invitation that will win the world for Christ. And who better than to be "that guy" than you?

We certainly are commanded by Jesus to be go into all the nations and make disciples. But you've got to start somewhere. And meeting others at their threshold moments is where it all begins.

Run to the Water

Finally no matter where God rolls you, remember: you know the land. You know the maze. You know the thresholds. And at the end of the day you can - and should - always make roll back to the heart of the matter to rest at your watering hole. Even the priests in the Tabernacle needed to wash after doing ministry before going home.

God may lead you into some particularly scuzzy places, for particularly long lengths of time. A wise saint will never loose one's awareness of who she is and who's

she is. At the end of the day, get back to the heart of the matter - the cleansing Blood of Christ and the washing of the water of the Word. The Spirit will refresh you, restore you, and "shalom" you. Then, when you wake up, you'll be all the more ready to roll into the world again!

Summary

Questioning Evangelism is a nonjudgemental way of encountering culture. It does not point fingers, condemn, or Bible-bash.

Questioning Evangelism's primary directive is to cooperate with God's passion for the world to bring us all into the Life and love of the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It assumes God is always moving, always rolling people deeper into worldly purpose and heavenly pleasure.

We, who choose to move into the world under the banner of *Questioning Evangelism* need to be authentically grounded in the love of Christ, committed to a healthy community where repentance can be celebrated and the Word of God is established as a Living Word and the compassion of God for the nations carries an upmost priority.

People who choose this style of evangelism depend on God to maneuver their lives anywhere he chooses. They identify divine encounters, and seek God's wisdom when conversing with thresholders at every turn of the bend.

People who choose *questioning evangelism* need to be patient, for they may be in conversation with a fellow thresholder for hours, days, years, or decades and not see any movement. On the other side of the coin, they may be bombarded with thresholders, all seeking salvation and the Father's heart at the same time.

For this reason, they need to know the turf of the maze, and how to mentor others in the Holy Faith.

The Invitation

Above all, thresholders are incarnationalists. They have the uncanny ability to meet people right where they are, without judgement or pretense. In short, they roll with the flow, with the tilt of God's hand on the maze.

I once heard a story of a young man seeking God and walking into the sanctuary of a cathedral. He immediately caught the attention of the ushers because he wore a tattered t-shirt, dirty jeans, and flip-flops. The usher scowled at him as he walked past them, continued right down the aisle and sat un-presumably on the the steps leading up to the altar. The tension in the church palatable.

The head usher smiled and assured his startled team.
"I'll take care of it."

He left the narthex and made his way to the steps of the altar. He approached the young man and asked, "Excuse me, but may I sit with you?"

"Sure!"

And the usher sat with the young man for the duration of the service.

This is what we're called to do.

Are you ready? Are you tired of *Bill Bright* tracts, pulverizing people with pointing fingers, hell-fire damnation sermons, and spending way too much money on the razzamatazz of smoke pots and Christian celebrates - and all that with no lasting results?

Invite others into who you used to be. Take others as they are, where they are, and roll with them into the heart of God.

This is our chance. Let's do something different for a change.

Let's *Question Evangelism!*

About the Author

Bill Blomquist serves as an Anglican priest, Spiritual Director, singer/songwriter, Holy Land tour leader, and Gospel storyteller. When he's not teaching on the continuing coolness of the Spirit, you can find him listening to jazz with his wife Cinnamon, or sailing on Webster Lake, New Hampshire.

For more information on teaching, tunes, and travel check out his website.

www.blomquistian.com