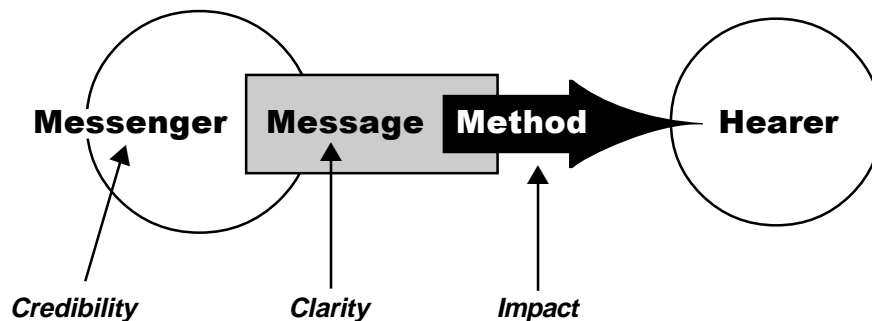


A Crash Course in Evangelism

5

Honing the Method II

In this lesson, we continue to examine the Method – the “how” of evangelism. As we saw in the last lesson, the aim of any Method is the impactful communication of the Gospel.



But before we continue with the practical examination of this important aspect of evangelism, let’s be reminded of the indispensable foundation of evangelism – your own personal walk with the Lord.

This is absolutely imperative to evangelism. It is from the overflow of your relationship with God that all evangelism flows. This is a promise from Jesus. In **John 7:38**, he declared:

“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”

Where do these “streams of living water” come from? In **John 4:14**, Jesus gives us this clue:

“...Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eter-

Seeing the Harvest

Making the Messenger

Clarifying the Message

Honing the Method I

Honing the Method II

Honing the Method III

Witnessing in Power

Entering the Battle I

Entering the Battle II

Keeping Appointments

Making Disciples

Reaching Your Community

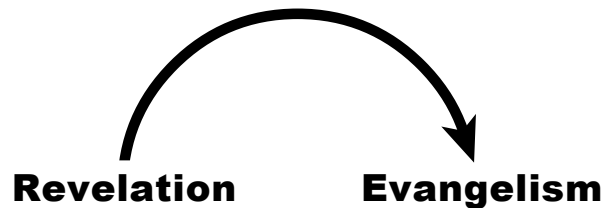
nal life.”

What we see here is a direct relationship between the quality of your experience in Christ and the quality of your evangelism. Unless there is a quality of life – which Jesus describes in **John 7:38** as “living water” and in **John 10:10** as life “to the full” – welling up in our hearts, there can be no “streams of living water” flowing out from our lives. Here’s the promise from Jesus, rephrased with evangelism in mind:

“If you believe in me, you will experience my love, my joy and my peace in excess. In fact, I will pour so much of my life into you, it will continually overflow, flowing out in streams that will bring abundant and eternal life to those around you.”

That’s some promise, isn’t it? But it doesn’t end there. Evangelism itself has an extraordinary effect upon the life of the one who evangelizes. It drives you deeper into your relationship with God.

You may remember that at the very beginning of the Biblical Studies Course we



established a basic principle of the Christian life: *Revelation fuels growth*. But that’s not all revelation fuels. It also fuels evangelism.

This is the basis of all effective evangelism. Evangelism is not just something you *do*, it is something you *share*. The more you discover about the Lord, the more you will want to share this with others. But this relationship between revelation and evangelism also loops back on itself.

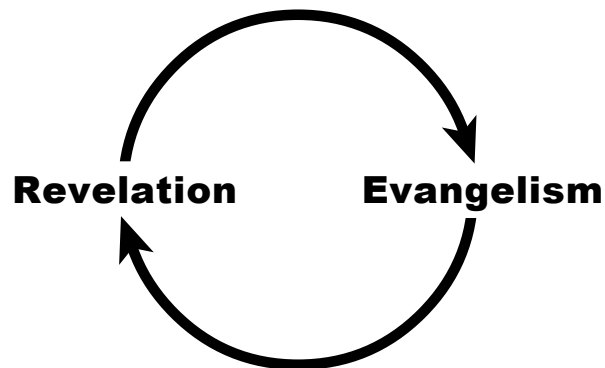
Do you remember the ninth evangelistic principle? It went like this:

Evangelistic Principle #9 – You can only share with another what you have received yourself. You are a witness to what you have seen, heard and experienced.

This principle emphasizes that what you receive is what you pass on to others. The next principle of evangelism is similar, but takes it one stage further:

Evangelistic Principle #10 – Evangelism enhances the Christian experience, resulting in an overflow of Christ’s life in you, which in turn enables you to reach out more effectively to others.

Do you want to grow in your relationship with Christ? There is no better way than to step out in witness! For just as we saw in **ES111-03** that there is a Mes-



senger-Message Loop, so there is also a Revelation-Evangelism Loop. That loop looks like this:

As long as you are in the Revelation-Evangelism loop, your growth in Christ will be rapid and your evangelism will be effective.

Evangelism With Impact

There are two ways in which you, as a Messenger, can have impact on those who hear the Gospel from you.

A contagious life

No matter how you study evangelism, God always has a way of bringing the focus back on the Messenger. *You* are the starting point for evangelism. As Paul Tournier commented:

“Our task is to live our personal communion with Christ with such intensity as to make it contagious.”¹

Bill Hybels has popularized this concept of “contagious Christianity.” In his excellent book, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, he writes:

“God wants us to be contagious Christians – His agents, who will first catch His love and then urgently and infectiously offer it to all who are willing to consider it. This is His primary plan, the one Jesus modeled so powerfully, to spread God’s grace and truth person to person until there’s an epidemic of changed lives around the world.”²

There is a term for this infectious evangelistic style. It is called Lifestyle Evangelism. Sheldon Vanauken laid it on the line:

“The best argument for Christianity is Christians: their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians – when they are sombre and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug in complacent consecration, when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths.”³

There are times when, as the old proverb says: “Actions speak louder than words.” Peter, for example, advised the wives of unbelieving husbands in **1 Peter 3:1**:

“Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be *won over without words* by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.”

This “without words” aspect of evangelism is foundational. But don’t think that people actually commit their lives to Christ without words. They may be “won over without words,” but words still play a crucial role. For if your Christianity is truly contagious, people will ask *you* about the Gospel. As Peter instructs us a few verses later, in **1 Peter 3:15**:

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone *who asks you* to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

A divine message

Some Christians might breathe a sigh of relief. “Whew!” they may say, “I’m so glad I don’t actually need to *tell* anyone about Jesus. I can just live a Christ-like life and they will come to me!”

But is that the whole picture? Hardly. As Dan Armstrong, in his book *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel According to You*, points out:

“Primarily, ‘to evangelize’ means ‘to proclaim.’ I want to emphasize that, because I’ve been to so many seminars and conferences on evangelism which have repeatedly taught that evangelism is *doing* something. We are told that evangelism is what we *do*, not what we *say*; it’s the living of the life that counts. On the surface that sounds pretty good. There’s only one problem – it isn’t true!”⁴

He goes on to explain:

“Good living and social concern are important [to the cause of evangelism], but they are not uniquely Christian graces...I’ve met a lot of fine Hindus, Muslims and atheists. Just *living* the life is not going to bring someone to Christ. There is much more to it than that. We must help people, certainly, but we must also share with them *why* we are motivated to do so. We must stand against injustice, poverty and need, but we must at the same time point to the One who brings justice and who can meet the deepest need. Until they know our reasons, how can they come to know our Lord?”⁵

As important as our lives are to the Messenger-Message-Method framework of communication, unless there is a verbal communication of the Gospel message, evangelism simply doesn’t take place. For this reason, God is in the business of not just *shaping* you as his Messenger, but also *equipping* you as his Messenger. In **1 Timothy 3:16**, Paul instructs his protégé:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and *training* in righteousness, so that the man of God may be *thoroughly*

equipped for every good work.”

In **2 Timothy 2:15**, Paul amplifies on this instruction with these words:

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who *correctly handles the word of truth*.”

Isaiah recognized the important of this preparation of the Spirit in his life. In **Isaiah 49:2**, he described God’s training in this way:

“He made *my mouth* like a sharpened sword...”

God doesn’t want you to be a blunt sword. He wants to sharpen you – your life *and* your words – so that those who hear the message will be “cut to the heart” (**Acts 2:37**). For this reason, in this lesson we will now focus on the ways by which our communication can be sharpened.

The Art of Communication

For some strange reason, most Christians think of evangelism as only one style of communication. In their mind, “witnessing” means that there is one person (the evangelist) who speaks exclusively and there is another person (the unbeliever) who listens exclusively. For this reason, much Christian witness is stilted, as if the evangelist is preaching a carefully prepared sermon to an audience of one.

But in order for us to understand how to communicate effectively, we need to realize that there are, in fact, *three* styles of communication, each with a different type of audience and a differing level of impact on the hearer. These three styles of speaking are:

- Monologue-style speaking
- Dialogue-style speaking
- Parologue-style speaking

Let’s look at each of these in turn.

Monologue

Monologue literally means “solo speech.” Monologue is what most people call “preaching” or “lecturing.” Whether preaching a sermon or witnessing, if one person does all the talking, this is called a monologue. The speaker speaks, the hearer hears, and at the end of the speech, the hearer is supposed to make a decision based on what he/she has heard. The only problem is that this generally doesn’t happen as expected, because monologue is not the most effective form of communication. Unless there is real interest in the speech, the hearer tends to switch off, because he/she is not *participating* in the conversation.

Monologue does have its place – for example, when a speaker is talking to a large crowd. But when monologue is used in a one-on-one situation, it usually only brings to a decision those who are very “ripe.” In fact, monologue is often counter-productive in one-to-one evangelism, because it forces the hearer

into a false, unnatural setting, as if he/she has suddenly been transported to a large evangelistic meeting, except that he/she is the only one there.

Think about it for a moment. People generally do not use monologue style in everyday conversation. Let's just say that you know someone who is a specialist in monologue. Whenever you talk with him, he hogs the conversation, with barely room for you to get a word in edgewise. If you see him across the room, what is your instinctive reaction? Isn't it to slip away before he notices you?

Here's another example. Let's say you go to a friend for counselling. But your friend immediately begins "preaching" at you, telling you what you should do. You have no opportunity to explain your situation. All you can do is listen. But inside you are uncomfortable and more than a little annoyed. At what point did you "switch off"? At what point did you begin staring blankly at the wall?

As you can see, monologue is not the most effective tool in personal evangelism. This doesn't mean that it can't be used. It has a clear place in public evangelism, and even in personal evangelism it can be used sparingly. But when we are witnessing one-on-one, monologue-style speaking does not have great impact.

Strength: The speaker has control over the direction of the conversation.

Weakness: The hearer feels uncomfortable and easily "switches off."

Value: Best used in public evangelism, or in personal evangelism where there is a sense of urgency or the need to confront the hearer with the truth of the Gospel.

Dialogue

Dialogue literally means "dual speech." Dialogue is a more natural form of conversation, where the speaker and hearer change roles frequently, and there is a natural flow of discussion. Dialogue, however, only works in a relaxed setting, and best between friends.

In the last lesson we gave this example of how to explain the concept of repentance without actually using the word "repentance."

"You can't just inch your way into relationship with God. The Bible says: 'In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands *all* people *everywhere* to repent.' That includes me and it includes you. Do you know what repentance means? It means doing a 180° turn. It means making a deliberate choice to turn away from everything that displeases God and to turn to Jesus..."

This is in monologue-style. Even though a question is asked – "Do you know what repentance means?" – no real opportunity is given for the person to answer. But let's change it slightly into a dialogue style of communication. Here we find Chris (a Christian) and Bill (a non-Christian) in conversation:

Bill: "Yeah, but I think I'll just take things slowly. You know, test the waters. God's in no hurry, is he?"

Chris: “That may sound OK to you, Bill, but God doesn’t work that way. You can’t just inch your way into relationship with God. The Bible says: ‘In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands *all people everywhere* to repent.’ That includes me and it includes you. Do you know what repentance means, Bill?”

Bill: “I don’t know. Turn over a new leaf, I guess.”

Chris: “It actually means doing a full 180° turn. It means making a deliberate choice to turn away from everything that displeases God and to turn to Jesus...”

As you can see from this sample dialogue, Bill is a full participant in this conversation. But there is also a side-benefit to a dialogue-style approach to witnessing. Chris is getting a window on how Bill thinks and responds to the challenge he is bringing. Chris knows that Bill is open to a relationship with God, although he thinks it’s something he can put off into the future, and he also knows that Bill doesn’t really understand what repentance is. All this comes because of Bill’s participation in the dialogue.

In order to create an effective dialogue environment, there are two things that Chris needs to do:

- **Ask questions** – Chris needs to ask Bill questions as he progresses in his witness. This helps to make sure that Bill’s interest is maintained and that Bill is understanding the Message. But it also helps Chris see more clearly Bill’s frame of reference, so that he can enter that frame of reference in order to communicate the Message more effectively.
- **Steer the conversation** – Because Chris is giving Bill more involvement in the conversation, there is always the danger that Bill will steer the conversation in a different direction. He may throw out a “red herring.” A red herring is a question that is designed to deflect the attention away from himself and onto an irrelevant issue (like “Yes, but where did Cain get his wife?”). Chris needs to decide whether Bill’s questions are important or not. If they are important (such as “But hasn’t science proven the Bible wrong?”), they should be answered quickly but sincerely, and the conversation brought back to the Message. If the question is a red herring (an insincere question from Bill), then Chris needs to answer something like, “Well, Bill, I don’t know about that, but let me ask you an even more important question...” There are no set rules. Always seek to answer sincerely, but bring the topic back to the Message.

One little secret in dialogue-style witnessing is not to over-speak. If Bill feels Chris is hogging the conversation, he will tend to switch off, and suddenly it’s become a monologue again. Bill must feel that Chris is genuinely willing to listen, not just to speak. For this reason, questions are the most effective tool in dialogue-style witness. By effectively using questions, Chris can steer the conversation and keep it in dialogue style. In the next lesson, we will look at this in more detail.

Strength: Dialogue witness is more natural and engages the unbeliever in conversation about the issues of life.

Weakness: The unbeliever has more control over the direction of the conversation and may steer it off on less important tangents.

Value: Best used in personal evangelism, in a relaxed setting, where both the Christian and non-Christian feel free to speak about the issues of life. It can also be used in small-group settings, but best when the group is friendly.

Paralogue

Paralogue (as we have coined it) literally means “alongside speech.” Paralogue is not just a one-time conversation, but a long-term interaction between two people in everyday life. It’s the kind of interaction we have with our family, our workmates and our closest friends.

Paralogue-style witnessing must also, of course, incorporate dialogue-style witnessing, in order to communicate effectively the message of the Gospel.

Strength: This style of witness is extremely effective, since all barriers have been demolished through long-term friendship and interaction.

Weakness: This style of witness is long-term, and at some point the issue of Christ must be raised in dialogue. This style can also only be used within a relatively small circle of friends, family and associates.

Value: Best used with close friends, family, workmates, schoolmates and neighbors.

Monologue	Dialogue	Paralogue
One-off	Open-ended	Long-term
Formal in style	Relaxed in style	Familiar in style
Emphasizes <i>speaking</i>	Emphasizes <i>asking</i>	Emphasizes <i>living</i>
Based on <i>convincing</i>	Based on <i>steering</i>	Based on <i>proving</i>
No interaction	Verbal interaction	Life interaction
Minimal reinforcement	Limited reinforcement	Daily reinforcement

Monologue tends to demand fast results. At the end of the speech, an appeal for a decision is usually made. Monologue is often associated with high-pressure witnessing – high pressure for the Christian to get results and high pressure for the unbeliever to make a decision now. Monologue is the *least effective* of the three witnessing styles, but is still useful in specific situations.

Dialogue is *more effective* in communication, because the unbeliever is a participant in the communication process. Not only does he feel it more natural, but you are also getting a lot of feedback about where he is coming from. Dialogue involves more time than monologue, and pressure tactics are usually absent.

Paralogue is the *most effective* way of communication. Families are paralogue-style learning grounds. Notice how behavior patterns are passed so easily from

one generation to the next. This is because behavior is learned “alongside” over an extended period of time. Paralogue is life-involvement. It is the concept behind apprenticeship and discipleship as means of learning.

Jesus used all three styles of communication. He used monologue when communicating to the crowds, dialogue when communicating with individuals, and paralogue when communicating with his disciples. When we examine his approach to the proclamation of the Gospel, we discover the next evangelistic principle:

Evangelistic Principle #11 – Use a communication style – monologue, dialogue or paralogue – best suited to the situation.

The next principle follows on closely:

Evangelistic Principle #12 – No matter what communication style you use, seek to ask questions of your hearer.

The Importance of Feedback

Communication requires an understanding between the one speaking and the one listening. It’s important to know that while you’re witnessing to an unbeliever, he is not just sitting there, absorbing all you are saying. Assuming that he is listening at all, the hearer is busy interacting with you on three levels:

In his mind

While listening, the hearer’s mind is not passive, but very active in two ways. Firstly, the hearer is being selective in what he is hearing. He is picking and choosing what he hears, and interpreting the meaning of your words according to his own background and experience.

Secondly, while you are speaking, he is framing in his mind the response he will make. If it is a monologue-style witness, he will not have an opportunity to interject, but that will not stop him from holding a “virtual” conversation with you in his mind, unheard by you. If it is a dialogue-style conversation, then he will speak his thoughts and you will have a window into what is happening in his mind.

With words

When the hearer responds to your words, you get what is called “feedback.” Don’t just use the time he is speaking to frame your next response. Pay close attention to what he says, because it will show you his frame of reference, and will help you to see how much he is understanding the Message.

With body language

Feedback is not limited to verbal response. Body language is as important a means of communication as words. Fidgeting, glassy eyes, grunts, avoiding eye contact, smiles, frowns, nods – all these things reveal whether the hearer is responding positively or negatively...or whether you’ve simply lost him.

Always remember: The person you are witnessing to is not a passive hearer. He is selective in what he hears. Just because you have him pinned down doesn't mean he will listen. And what he actually *understands* from your words will depend on whether he is positively or negatively disposed to you. And so, breaking down any negative disposition the hearer has can be just as important as the actual sharing of the Gospel.

It is important to “keep in touch” with the hearer in three ways:

- Watch the hearer's body language
- Listen to the hearer's verbal responses
- Pray and ask the Lord for insight into the hearer's frame of reference

This leads us to our next important principle of evangelism:

Evangelistic Principle #13 – Always be sensitive to feedback (whether physical or verbal) from the Hearer. This feedback can also come directly from the Holy Spirit.

Breaking the Stereotypes

A stereotype is a caricature of a person. If an unbeliever “stereotypes” you, he has made an assumption about you based on what he *thinks* you are, not on what you *really* are.

Here's an example of how stereotyping works. When you think of “politician” what comes to mind? Someone who kisses babies, lies through his smile and compromises to stay in power? What about a “teacher” or a “salesman” or a “Japanese” or a “lawyer” or a “homosexual” or a “pastor”? All these have their own popular stereotypes. In fact, people generally don't take the trouble to get to know people who are different from them. They usually pigeon-hole them in a stereotype and keep their distance.

And guess what! People also tend to see Christians in terms of a stereotype. If you look and act like the stereotype they have in mind (in terms of clothes, mannerisms and jargon), the average person will close their mind to the stereotype. They have not rejected the Gospel; they have rejected the stereotype.

Jesus broke the stereotypical mold. He went against people's expectations. He acted unpredictably, refusing to conform to stereotypical behavior. He went to the home of Zacchaeus, a pariah in Jewish society (**Luke 19:1-10**). He ate with sinners (**Matthew 9:10-12**). He forgave prostitutes (**Luke 7:36-50**) and adulterers (**John 8:1-11**). He treated women with respect and value (**Luke 10:38-42**). He overturned the tables of the dishonest moneychangers (**Matthew 21:12-13**). He refused to be crowned king (**John 6:15**). In fact, he was totally unlike what anyone expected a prophet, or rabbi or Messiah to be.

God wants us to have that same kind of godly unpredictability. *The Message's* version of **Romans 12:2** implores us: “Don't become so well-adjusted to [this

world's] culture that you fit into it without even thinking." But equally, we might say: "Don't become so well-adjusted to *Christian* culture that you fit into it without even thinking." In the misguided concept of *separating* themselves from the world, many Christians have *segregated* themselves from the world and created a Christian ghetto culture.*

Stereotypes create an "us-and-them" mentality. People don't want to become what the stereotype represents. When we challenge a non-Christian to become a Christian, we are, whether we like it or not, challenging them: "Become what I am." But if the non-Christian sees you as a stereotype, an apt reply might be: "Why on earth would I want to do that?" So how can we break the stereotype?

We break the stereotype by avoiding to be boxed, by not being predictable according to the terms of that stereotype. Have you ever heard someone say, "Oh, you don't act like a teacher!," or "You're not what I thought a policeman was like." What has happened? This particular teacher or policeman has broken the stereotyped expectations. They have somehow acted differently from what was expected of a "teacher" or "policeman." The teacher and policeman had revealed themselves as *real human beings*, not stereotyped personalities, and this had caught the person by surprise.

So, in people's minds, the opposite of a stereotype is a real human being. You are either a "politician" or you are a human being; a "teacher" or a human being; an "Chinese" or a human being. The breaking of a stereotype is in the exposure of the humanity of that person, which elicits a feeling that, "Hey, she's not that different from me!" We break the stereotype of "Christian" when we act as real human beings in a real human world. It is only when a non-Christian can identify with the humanity of the Christian that the differences between the Christian and non-Christian suddenly have life-changing impact.

This leads us to the next principle of evangelism:

Evangelistic Principle #14 – Don't act in a stereotypical manner. Be natural in your speaking style, mannerisms and behavior. In short, be you.

The Cycle of Identification

If we following Christ's model of evangelism we discover that evangelism is essentially about active identification between the Messenger and the Hearer. In fact, in order for a person to commit his or her life to Christ, a *dual* identification must take place.

Step 1 – The Christian identifies with the non-Christian

To have true communication, the Christian must identify with the non-Christian. You must put yourself in his shoes, enter his frame of reference, and be in touch with his humanity in the same way Jesus was in touch with yours.

* Remember, however, that we are also called to be different from the world. We are "in" the world but not "of" the world. This should reflect in the modesty of our clothing and the purity of our language. But that doesn't mean that we should be so different from the people of the world that they cannot relate to us as real people.

Step 2 – The non-Christian identifies with the Christian

For the cycle of identification to be complete, however, the non-Christian must identify with the Christian. In his thinking, he must say: “Hey, I’m just like this guy!” The end result of this reverse identification is that the non-Christian takes the final step of identification: he commits himself to long-term relationship with the Christian and with Christ.

This brings us to our last principle of evangelism for this lesson:

Evangelistic Principle #15 – Successful witness requires a mutual identification between the Messenger and the Hearer. The Messenger must identify with the Hearer, and the Hearer must, in turn, identify with the Messenger. Only then will the Hearer accept the challenge of commitment to Christ.

Discovering Your Style

There are many different styles in evangelism – styles of approach, styles of presentation and styles of challenge. In the next lesson, we will examine these different styles with one goal in mind – to help you find the evangelistic style that best suits your personality and skills.

Exercise #5

- **Pray** – Ask the Lord to guide you to speak with at least one unbeliever this week.
- **See** – Watch the feedback from the unbeliever. Note things like body language, eye contact, verbal responses.
- **Act** – Just ask questions. If you feel challenged to lead this person to Christ, of course do so. But that is not the specific aim of this exercise. All we want you to do is ask questions. Ask about his/her life, family history, personal interests, etc. You are not trying to “take this anywhere.” This is simply an exercise in learning to ask questions and read the feedback you get.

¹ Paul Tournier, quoted by Edythe Draper, *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0.

² Bill Hybels & Mark Mittelburg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p.23.

³ Sheldon Vanauken, *A Severe Mercy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p.85.

⁴ Dan Armstrong, *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel According to You* (Homebush West, Australia: Anzea Books, 1988), p.13.

⁵ Dan Armstrong, *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel According to You* (Homebush West, Australia: Anzea Books, 1988), pp.13-14.

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