

An Evangelist's Journey

Having turned thirty-five this year, I am now the age that my parents were when they became Christians. I was a baby and we lived in Australia. My father, a university lecturer, had been asking deep questions about purpose and meaning for a while when God dramatically broke into his life. Up late one night, marking some of his students' papers, he had an overwhelming vision in which he saw his own life, including all of his regrets, from the perspective of Jesus. At the end of this, he saw Christ on the cross and found himself on his knees. Having been raised by an atheist father, he did not know much about the Bible. The only phrase he could remember was "Lord I believe, help my unbelief," and so after saying this, he got up off the floor a changed man. My mother made her own decision to follow Christ six months later after a lot of questioning and searching. My sister and I were now members of a Christian family.

A couple of years later we moved back to the UK for my father to study theology and prepare for church leadership. He is a gifted and passionate evangelist. Some of my earliest childhood memories are around people discovering Christ for themselves in our home. I still frequently meet people who came to know the Lord through my parents. Sharing what we had discovered as such good news was a completely natural part of our lives. It was something that happened in the course of mundane tasks and daily friendships. It wasn't something I saw anybody worrying about.

When I started school, I remember meeting children and asking them if they wanted to become Christians. Through a couple of them, their whole families ended up coming to know the Lord and we are still in touch on Facebook now! It wasn't until secondary school that I really thought about being an evangelist myself. I remember feeling very nervous on my first day at this new school; I didn't know anyone in my class and I prayed with my family for a Christian friend. On the bus on the way home, I chatted to a friend I had made that day and we started talking about God. She was very open and the next day at school she announced that she was now a Christian. This girl became my closest friend over the next years; God had answered my prayer.

As the teenage years kicked in I became involved with a ministry of YWAM, which was called Kings Kids. We went all over the world doing performing arts and evangelism in the summer holidays. The leaders were absolutely phenomenal Christians who believed that children and young people could minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. In 1991, shortly after the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, a team of us went to the Czech Republic. Thousands were on the streets of Prague and we were performing on Charles Bridge and Wenceslas Square. As a fifteen year old I was given the opportunity to share testimonies and preach the gospel in the open air to these crowds. The leaders seemed to think this was absolutely natural and normal; age was no barrier to seeing the Kingdom of God come. Amazing miracles happened on that trip; we saw God at work first hand. In 1994 a team of us were in Uzbekistan and the national television crew came to film what we are doing. I was to preach in this closed country, God again opening such an amazing door.

Kings Kids laid a foundation of mission in my life and at university quite a few of my friends became Christians. It was at Oxford that I discovered the need for apologetics in evangelism. I remember spending eight hours one day talking to a Jewish friend about the Christian faith. He was terrifyingly intelligent and kept on asking me questions; he had only popped around to my room to borrow something but as we fell into conversation I faced a barrage of questions and objections with no let up. Another friend had grown up in a Christian family but was now studying biology and had become a born-again atheist under the influence of his hero Richard Dawkins. After many late night conversations he confided his despair at the prospect of a godless, hopeless universe but I was unable to convince him otherwise. The need for equipping in apologetics was very real to me. Meanwhile, forty of my friends came to hear Michael Green preach at a mission event and one of the most hardened anti-Christians of the lot secretly signed up for the follow-up course. "Don't tell anyone—but will you come with me?" was the message slid under my door. What an incredible joy to pray with her only three weeks later.

Discovering a passion for evangelism and preaching was a slow process for me; there wasn't really a moment when I suddenly knew this was what I was called to be. But from childhood into my teens and then at university, many encouraged me and gave me opportunities to share the gospel I had so grown to love. For all of those people—and for the power of Christ to change lives—I am incredibly thankful.

Amy Orr-Ewing is director of programmes for the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics and UK director for Ravi Zacharias International Ministries in Oxford, England.