



# 40acts 2014 individual challenge



**Lent 2014: March 5<sup>th</sup> until April 19<sup>th</sup> 2014**

Follow the 40acts campaign at: [www.40acts.org.uk](http://www.40acts.org.uk)



Brought to you by: **stewardship<sup>®</sup>**  
transforming generosity

# ACT 1: START A JOURNAL



Create a journal, and begin Lent with a gratitude list. What things are you thankful for today? Next, write a wish list – but not the usual kind – this is a list of the people you'd like to specifically bless throughout 40acts. Take a picture of your journal or your gratitude list, upload it to [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) or [Pinterest](#), and tag it with #40acts.

*'He went out to the field one evening to meditate' Genesis 24: v63*

Knowing where you came from seemed to matter a lot when I was younger. Like my father, I was born and raised in New York City and loved it. But my mother was born in Ireland so growing up I was constantly reminded of my Irish roots. Much to her annoyance, I could (and still do!) easily slip in and out of a near-perfect Irish brogue.

From an early age, my mother and I would fly to Ireland to spend the summer on the family farm where we were joined by my cousins from London. I don't have a single memory of it feeling chaotic, but it must have been. Once old enough to run, I disappeared with my cousins for hours on end enjoying a way of life that seemed centuries away from life in New York City. Such freedom was not to be found in NYC. On the farm the only danger seemed to be the nettles, but in the city the dangers were more real.

I can so easily see the influence those times have had on my life—from my sense of cultural heritage to being an overprotective father—but I wonder about how else those times shaped me. What lessons did the eight-year-old me learn on the farm or in the city that have slipped from my memory today? How have they shaped my view of the world?

I was too busy having fun to keep a diary in those days, but there's a part of me that wishes I could go back and read some of the thoughts, feelings and lessons that dominated my early years. Not because I'm feeling nostalgic or because I'm yearning to recreate the past. But because I want to better understand the present.

That's why this first act is such a practical one. Keeping a journal might not sound like the kind of fireworks that you'd expect at the start of a campaign like 40acts, but after following 40acts for the last three years, you can trust me when I say that together we're in for a wonderful adventure in self and (new this year!) group reflection.

So whether you're going to use your phone or a proper paper diary, whether you're going to post it to Facebook or keep it entirely between you and the Lord, commit today to keeping a record of what comes next—the challenges, the surprises, the life-changing experiences and the still small voices. Get ready to chart the adventure of generosity, and I guarantee that God won't leave you disappointed.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=WKSsZaDUcW4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=WKSsZaDUcW4)

1) For all the men out there here is proof that journaling is indeed a manly pursuit! It's also an inspiring read for women too: [click me](#)

2) Here is a truly inspiring collection of generosity stories that example just why we should record our adventures: [click me too!](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

Mike O'Neill - CEO, Stewardship - <http://www.stewardship.org.uk> - @michaeljoneill

Mike is Chief Executive of Stewardship. He is passionate about simple acts of generosity and encouraging others to develop a generous lifestyle. Mike is married to Donna and they have three young children.

## CHARITY

RZIM - <http://www.rzim.eu/>



RZIM primarily exists to communicate the gospel effectively and to engage meaningfully with the heartfelt objections and concerns about Christianity in a manner that is relevant to contemporary society. We also seek to equip Christians to do likewise, through our range of training programmes.

## ACT 2: CREATE A GENEROSITY JAR



This Lent, set aside a generosity jar and commit to putting in a small amount daily or whenever you have spare change. You'll be invited to use the contents later in the challenge, but if you prefer you could save it up ready for a generous event over the Easter weekend. No change today? Then fill your jar with written 'generosity promises' instead, and invite guests to pick one when they visit. Show us what your generosity jar looks like using #40acts on social media.

*"And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land." Jonah 2:10*

A classic line!

I love the story of Jonah. It's after this fishy encounter that Jonah begins to follow God's call on his life. This brush with death helps him get his priorities right.

You commonly hear people use phrases like "now I can start to live again..." when they recover from a serious illness. They appreciate the gift of life.

Too often it takes tragic circumstance to help us realise this gift. This gift of life—the air we breathe, the food we eat, the friends we have—with which we are blessed.

And as Jonah had a calling on his life, we have a calling on ours. A calling to love, to heal, to speak out, to be generous. As we have been blessed, we are called to be a blessing.

What are the things that we have taken for granted?

How have we forgotten this call to be generous?

I don't want to wait until I encounter tragic circumstances to get this perspective. This Lent period, I want to be both more thankful for what I have and more generous with what I have. So this Lent, I am going to create a generosity jar to sit on my kitchen counter. Each day I am going to commit to put some money into the jar to use in an act of generosity at Easter.

If I have some loose change in my pocket, I will put it in the jar, thankful for God's provision.

If I choose to skip the afternoon cappuccino, I will put that money in the jar, thankful for the gift of life.

This is a choice to get perspective, to be thankful and to be generous. Will you join me?

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2d7gXN\\_XC4o&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2d7gXN_XC4o&feature=player_embedded)

Here is a Pinterest board filled with beautiful arts, crafts and personalised designs to inspire you. [click me to see them](#)

The cookie jar fund have a host of stories to inspire you that have used a virtual generosity jar! [click me for some happy reading](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

Andy Frost - Share Jesus International - [www.sharejesusinternational.com](http://www.sharejesusinternational.com) - @andythefrosty

Andy is the Director of Share Jesus and [Crossing London](#). He loves to surf, travel and write.



## CHARITY

Share Jesus International - <http://www.sharejesusinternational.com>

SJI is passionate about communicating the good news about Jesus in our ever-changing times.

## ACT 3: TOOL UP



Each of us has a toolbox, and no two are alike. They are full of the things that make us unique: our experiences, our skills, our faith, our resources, our intelligence, our passions, our networks. Create a list of the tools you have at your disposal: it might include your creative mind, your enthusiasm, your computer skills, or your savings. Then, use one item on your list to bless someone today, and then tell us which one you used using the #40acts hash tag.

*“Certainly you made my mind and heart; you wove me together in my mother’s womb.” Psalm 139:13*

Last year the world said goodbye to author, preacher and all-round work of grace, Brennan Manning. Throughout a lifetime of ups and downs he dedicated himself to inspiring others to accept the ‘furious love of God’ - a love that keeps on giving to us, no matter what.

Manning’s retelling of Shel Silverstein’s classic book [The Giving Tree](#) highlights an important point for all of us. We can only give because God has first given to us.

While we might like to think that generosity is largely about what gets given from our own hands, the truth is different. Generous people understand that giving is inseparably linked to receiving, that we can only begin to be used by God to meet another’s need because we have begun to allow Him to meet our own.

And so, just 72 hours into the 40acts challenge, and before we get on with the business of unleashing some God-infused generosity on our neighbours near and far, it’s time to pause and think about what it is that we have been given. It’s time to look up at the giving tree and remember.

Bring to mind all the things that God has blessed you with; your money, resources, skills, relationships, opportunities and influence, your character, your friends, family and neighbours. If you can, ask other people to help you compile the fullest list possible of things that you have been entrusted with. Help others to realise their giftings too. Be thankful for the tools in your box, and prepare to use them all in the 37 days ahead.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=6lkZmR1hDNU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=6lkZmR1hDNU)

1) Gallup’s Strengthsfinder is an excellent book that helps us that helps us to look at, identify and utilise our key strengths in order to be most productive. With the book comes an access code to an online test that will help you identify your key strengths. [click me](#)

2) Are you awesome? [click me to find out](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

BARONESS COX OF QUEENSBURY –

Member of the House of Lords; CEO of HART ([Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust](http://www.hart-uk.org)) - <http://www.hart-uk.org>



## CHARITY

HART is not just 'another aid organisation'. We are distinctive in that we combine aid with advocacy, working for peoples suffering from oppression, exploitation and persecution who are generally not served by major aid organisations and are off the radar screen of international media.

<http://www.hart-uk.org/>

## ACT 4: CONNECT



We can live on the same road for twenty years and never learn the names of those we share a street address with. We can use the same corner shop every time we buy a newspaper, and still have no idea about the man selling it to us. Today we invite you to become aware: to look up, look around and really notice those you come into contact with. Strike up a conversation in the process, and learn their name. It'll be important later on...

*'And the second commandment...you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.'* Mark 12: 31

Neighbourhoods are changing; people connect less and look to the floor more. In my own community people are lost in their iPods, news streams, Twitter and Facebook. Outside my kitchen window as I eat breakfast I see 25 people waiting for a bus and they don't speak, smile or connect. There is no need – they can connect virtually with people around the world and never connect with their neighbour with whom they stand shoulder to shoulder.

Jesus was asked who his neighbour was and his response was surprising. For the Jews their neighbours were all the people like them. Jesus rattles their little religious cage and claims their neighbour is in fact the people unlike them. Jesus tells a story about a man who creates space and time in his busy life to stop and serve a neighbour who is left for dead in the road. The story is surprising because the man who behaves the most like a neighbour was an unclean non-Jew. The Priest and Levite had looked down, ignored the man and focused on their 'twitter' account. "If I don't touch him then I don't need to engage with him".

Jesus calls us to engage, touch, get involved with peoples lives and not protect ourselves. We have systemically sterilized our lives from anyone that causes us offence, challenges us or asks something of us.

My church is located in the heart of London's East End, surrounded by poverty and chaotic lives. We are passionate about being engaged, real and involved, remembering all the time that a new neighbour is a potential friend. We have friends who have relocated here to make new neighbours. To not live in the comfort of their own existence, but to become aware of others' existence. As a church we have partnered with [The Eden Network](#) and experienced the amazing work they do, inviting people to relocate to the poorest communities to see lives transformed by the good news. Eden help people connect – maybe you could work with them to engage with the poorest neighbourhoods?

The church can't be like the rest of the world, disengaged and self focused. Because of Jesus we need to get to know and engage with the lives around us because resurrection is only around the corner.

How can you become more aware of your neighbourhood and neighbours?



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## LINKS WE LOVE

1) Open Doors is a community project set up by local volunteers from LifeLine Community Church in Dagenham. After noticing isolated women in their community a handful of mums took it upon themselves to offer English lessons rather than sugar to their neighbours. [click me for more](#)

2) And now, an important lesson in how **NOT** to introduce yourself to your neighborino's! [click me for the lesson](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

CRIS ROGERS  
ALL HALLOWS CHURCH, BOW

Cris took on the leadership of an Anglican church which had shrunk to seven people and is situated in one of the toughest estates in London. The church has now grown and is a thriving community church. Cris and his family moved to Tower Hamlets with the desire of restarting the church and see lives transformed. Cris is an author, speaker, pastor and church visionary.

[www.crisrogers.co.uk](http://www.crisrogers.co.uk) [@rabbirogers](https://twitter.com/rabbirogers)

## CHARITY



We want to be a people who move into the neighbourhood and bring life and light, attracting others to Jesus and allowing the Holy Spirit space to work miracles.

<http://eden-network.org/>

# ACT 5: AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE



There's something rather wonderful about genuine gratitude: it impacts both the person who says thank you and the person who hears it. Try this before you do anything else today: grab a pen and write a thank you note to someone. Thank someone who doesn't usually get thanked: your bus driver, local postman, that one guy that always puts a fresh pot of coffee on or empties the dishwasher at the office. These people need to be appreciated, and being thankful is a great way to start the week! Show us your thank yous using #40acts.

*'Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will in you in Christ Jesus.' 1 Thessalonians 5:18*

Someone scared me once by saying, "what if you woke up today with only the things you thanked God for yesterday?" For a while this panicked me into praying a 'thank you' for everything I could possibly think of, but I was saying thank you for the sake of it, not because I truly meant it.

God tells us to be thankful for everything, 'Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus' (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Gratitude isn't just for when things are easy; sometimes it is hard to be thankful for anything at all, this is when we need to stop and remember that God is with us in all circumstances. Life and every good thing in it is a gift from God – we have a lot to be thankful for.

However, we have to mean it. A casual 'thanks mate' is often a throwaway comment, something we say without thinking. But a genuine thank you has power; it adds value to an action, reflects kindness and even lifts our mood. If you are thanked you feel appreciated, just as if you thank someone else you are reminded of good things in your life. Saying thank you inspires and prompts generosity; the more someone thanks you the more you want to please them. The more you thank God the more you want to praise him.

Imagine if by simply thanking someone you encouraged them to do something nice for someone else. The ripple effect of two straightforward, yet powerful, words has the potential to go a long way and make a lot of difference.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6lg&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6lg&feature=player_embedded)

1) Here is an inspiring collection of journals that focus entirely on gratitude. [click me](#)

2) Join the #thankyoutoday movement. [click me to say thanks](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

EMILY OWEN

Recent-ish English Literature and Creative Writing graduate aiming to live life to the full and embrace all that God surprises me with. I am addicted to making travelling plans, am trying to learn Spanish and if I could, I would only eat pancakes for the rest of my life.

[@ec\\_owen](#)

## CHARITY

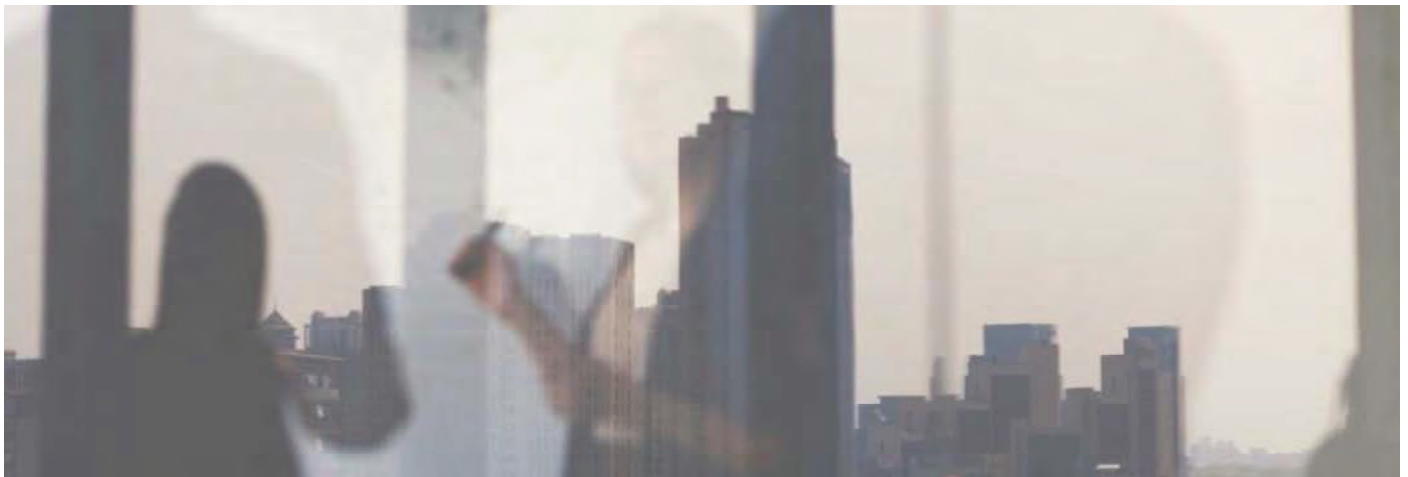
SCRIPTURE UNION

Scripture Union is an international mission movement that was founded over 140 years ago. We work in over 120 countries making God's good news known to children, young people and families and encouraging people of all ages to meet God daily through the Bible and prayer. Our goal: that all may come to a personal faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, grow in Christian maturity and become both committed church members and servants of a world in need.

<http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk/>



# ACT 6: REACH



Whether you're the pastor of a church, a single parent, a Twitter superstar or a self-confessed technophobe, the fact is that to someone, somewhere, YOU are an important voice and what you say and do matters. Consider your 'reach' today, and write a list of the spheres of influence you have in your journal. Pick one sphere (it might be your church, your child's school, or an online community) and choose a positive message of generosity, love or kindness to share with them today. You might pick a YouTube video, or a story that inspired you. If you share it online, share with us too using #40acts.

*'Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person'*  
*Colossians 4:6*

Most people are way more influential than they truly understand. Understanding the true width and depth of your influence and being willing to unleash it in ways that can make the world a better place will not only have a profound impact on your life, but it has the potential to greatly impact the people and causes that most desperately need your support.

Here's the problem, though: too often we confuse influence with celebrity status or Twitter followers, but very few of us have much of either of those. Consequently, the average person regularly concludes that they have no 'influence capital' to spend.

Let me throw some questions at you that may help you reassess your influence:

1. Who would help you change a flat tyre or give you a lift in an emergency if you called them?
2. Who do you expect would attend your wedding? Your birthday party? Your funeral?
3. How many numbers do you have programmed into your cell phone?

If somebody would show up for you in an emergency situation, you have influence!

If somebody would attend the big moment events of your life, you have influence with them!

If somebody has given you their cell phone number and the access that comes along with it, you have influence!

Influence begins with you first assessing who the few people are who would show up for you in a tough spot; it is followed by assessing who would be there for you in big moments, and then finally it is assessed by simply gauging who you could reach through a phone call or text.

Too often we skip past the essential step of gauging precisely WHO we are influential with for HOW we can be influential. First who, then how.

I dare you to really assess who you are influential with and then prepare to personally ask each of those women and men to join you in a simple way to make the world a better place. You'll be amazed at the results.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V74AxCgOTvg&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V74AxCgOTvg&feature=player_embedded)

1) Here's how to crowdsource hope to make a change. [click me to see](#)

2) Here is an inspiring example of how a simple use of our reach can change a person's life. [click me to be inspired](#)

## CONTRIBUTOR

SHAUN KING

Shaun King is one of the most respected social entrepreneurs and humanitarians in the world. His social media and web projects have raised over \$5,000,000 for charity, received over 100 million web hits, and recently won the Mashable Award for Most Creative Social Good Campaign

[www.shauninthecity.com](http://www.shauninthecity.com) - [@shaunking](#)

## CHARITY

HOPEMOB



HopeMob is exactly what it sounds like - a mob of people bringing hope. Just as Flash Mobs dance and bring spontaneous joy and laughter, HopeMob will bring caring strangers together to create sudden, yet organized relief and hope all over the world! We see a need and swarm it! Together...we are POWERFUL!

<http://www.hopemob.org>

## ACT 7: REDIAL



We think the humble telephone may possibly be the most neglected appliance in our households. Almost ornamental, in fact. Your act today is simple: pick up the phone and reconnect with someone you've not spoken to in a while. It might be a best friend, a distant relative, or just someone you've lost contact with. Give the phone call the time and space it needs - devote your attention to reconnecting with someone today.

*'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'* John 13: 34 – 35

In these verses Jesus is pretty clear how we will be identified as his disciples; it's not the number of 'friends' we have on Facebook or the number of followers on Twitter or Instagram, it's by our love for each other. Social media is a great way to observe the highlights that are happening in someone's life—I say the highlights as most people only post things that make them look good—although I'm sure you have a friend or two who likes to inform everyone what they had for breakfast or how many cups of coffee they have had since they got up!

We say we are 'connected' and that 'they are our friends', but just observing someone's life/highlights via social media doesn't mean you know how that person is REALLY doing in their day-to-day life. To know that requires a conversation; it requires time; it requires action; it requires love. A love that is a choice to properly get involved with people on a real and personal level. Most people will be oblivious to what is really going on with someone they say they are connected to but a true friend will know. They know because they actually speak to that person.

Do you want to be known as a disciple of Jesus? Do you want to be known as a true friend? Then the next time you feel the urge to click 'like' on Facebook or Instagram or the need to re-tweet something, why not give that person who posted it a call and see how they are really doing—it might just be the thing they need most.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZIQUb-d4GQ&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZIQUb-d4GQ&feature=player_embedded)

1) Daniel Shaw has taken to seeing every one of his 730 Facebook friends in person during the year. [click me to follow his journey](#)

2) Ring, Ring... Ring, Ring... [pick up the phone](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

JASON STRATHDEE  
HILLSONG, LONDON

Jason Strathdee is a Pastor at Hillsong London where he leads teams of volunteers with the purpose to ensure that the welcome everyone gets as they come to church is warm, genuine and allows them to see a glimpse of Gods love towards them.

[www.hillsong.co.uk](http://www.hillsong.co.uk) - [@jstrathd](#)



## CHARITY

VISION RESCUE

Vision Rescue is a registered non-profit charity involved in feeding, providing non-formal education, medical help, skills training and other kinds of assistance to the addicted and abused street children.

<http://www.visionrescue.org.in>

## ACT 8: O.T.T.



Alright, time to step it up a notch - we're headed into the deep-end of generous living. Today's challenge is to get right out of your comfort zone and do something a little bit wild for someone else. For some, this might be a really extravagant treat or gift for someone who needs cheering up. You might offer free hugs in the high street or buy flowers and give them out to everyone you meet. The point of this one is uncomfortable, over the top generosity. Go for it!

*'Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.'* Romans 12: 10

You won't hear me admitting it often but I'm an embarrassing man; to be more specific, an embarrassing Dad. I frequently humiliate my children by giving myself a new name in Starbucks to be written on my coffee cup. I get disproportionate delight when they call out "Coffee for Chip!" and I can call back "That's me!" When travelling through a MacDonald's Drive Thru, I try to engage the faceless voice in a meaningful conversation and call them 'Buddy'.

My kids die a little.

But, whilst my kids shrink down in their seats and hide their faces, I like to talk to the people who are serving me. I always read their name badges and call them by name. I want them to know I see them as a person, not just an extension of the franchise.

Recently though, I've taken it a step further; I've totally upped my game. Having discovered that Sybil, the lady from Iceland (the frozen food superstore not the country), preferred the iced buns from the bakery down the street, I went out and bought her a wrapped box of them. When I handed them over and said, "Thank you." she welled up; no one had ever done anything like that before.

You see, as Christians, we know we should be polite, we know we should do 'what Jesus would do' but, often, we stop short at just not doing what he definitely wouldn't.

Jesus was extravagant. He didn't just feed five thousand he had food left over; he went the extra mile. It says in Romans 12:10 that we should honour others above ourselves. That means we should go out of our way for them.

So, buy the stranger a cake, pay back more than you borrowed, give a gift to say thank you when you return what you borrowed. In short, give more than you get. We're called to live our lives extravagantly – just like Jesus.



## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4enUE8qt\\_Q&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4enUE8qt_Q&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) What if you spent all of your wages on a giant shopping spree... for someone else? [click me](#)
- 2) How about honouring someone who dedicated their life to protect you by restoring their dignity.. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

STEVE LEGG  
SORTED MAGAZINE

Steve is a British evangelist, author and founder of The Breakout Trust, a Christian mission organisation based in Littlehampton on the south coast of England. For over 25 years he has travelled throughout the UK and 20 countries overseas using a crazy mix of comedy, trickery and mystery to communicate the Christian message to young and old. These days much of his time is spent on the ground breaking men's Christian lifestyle magazine, Sorted, which has 100,000 readers in 16 countries. It is now also available in WHSmith – another first for a Christian magazine. Steve is

married to Bekah and together they have six children. In his spare time he enjoys triathlons... Yeah right!  
[www.sortedmagazine.co.uk](http://www.sortedmagazine.co.uk) [@steveleggUK](#)

## CHARITY

BREAKOUT TRUST

The Breakout Trust is a registered charity, committed to communicating the relevance of the Christian faith. Its Founding Director is Steve Legg, a well-known Christian performer, speaker and writer.

<http://www.breakout.org.uk>



# ACT 9: LISTEN, ACTUALLY



Last year we put a man and a sofa in the middle of a town square with a sign that said 'I will listen'. You don't have to make quite such a bold statement, but hold the sentiment in mind. Do people think of you as a good listener? Do you actually give that person your whole attention, and are you non-judgemental? You will be surprised by how many people around you are desperate simply to be heard. Make a mental note of the things the person says, and any needs they mention...it'll be helpful later on...

*'What a person desires is unfailing love...'* Proverbs 19:22

'The boring, the stupid and the weak'

As spaghetti westerns go, that probably wouldn't be an instant box office smash. As people go, they're not the ones we'd instantly choose to listen to - and that should probably change.

## The boring

You know what I'm talking about. Or, rather, who. The well-meaning individuals with long, irrelevant tales and a seemingly superhuman knack of catching you when you just don't have time to hear them. Time-vortexes who struggle to remember details you don't care about in stories you never asked to hear. You know: lonely people.

People who we laugh about or even at, people we try to avoid, not because they're unkind or bad, but because, fundamentally, they just don't entertain us. If they were on fire, we'd put them out. If they were homeless we would put them up. But if they look like they want to talk to us, we put in our earphones and pretend not to see them.

They may not be 'the least of these' in a global sense, but when we perpetually ignore them, we are ignoring Jesus, just as surely as if they were hungry, thirsty or in prison.

## The stupid

The stupid are the ones we meet or read or see on TV with ridiculous, unconsidered, appalling opinions. They're easy to identify because, by a curious quirk of fate, their views are almost always different from our own.

Listening to them would certainly be pointless. After all, if they were right, wouldn't we agree with them? We certainly couldn't learn anything by taking seriously their objections to our own positions. No, sir. Then we might be challenged. Then we might admit where we were wrong. And that's just not what Lent is all about. Is It?

## The weak

The poor, the addicted, the sinful. They need to be spoken to, advised, educated and fixed. The mentally ill, the fanatics and failures. The crucified. What could they possibly teach us?

*Teach us, Lord, to listen generously.*

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaGpai2nHlo&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaGpai2nHlo&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) Here are 5 ways to listen better. [click me to hear more](#)
- 2) Whoever said maths wasn't useful after school was wrong. [click me for proof](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

JONTY LANGLEY  
HUFFINGTON POST

Jonty Langley is a Christian writer and editor with a passion for truth, justice and Hunter S Thompson.

<http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/jonty-langley/> [@jontylangley](#)



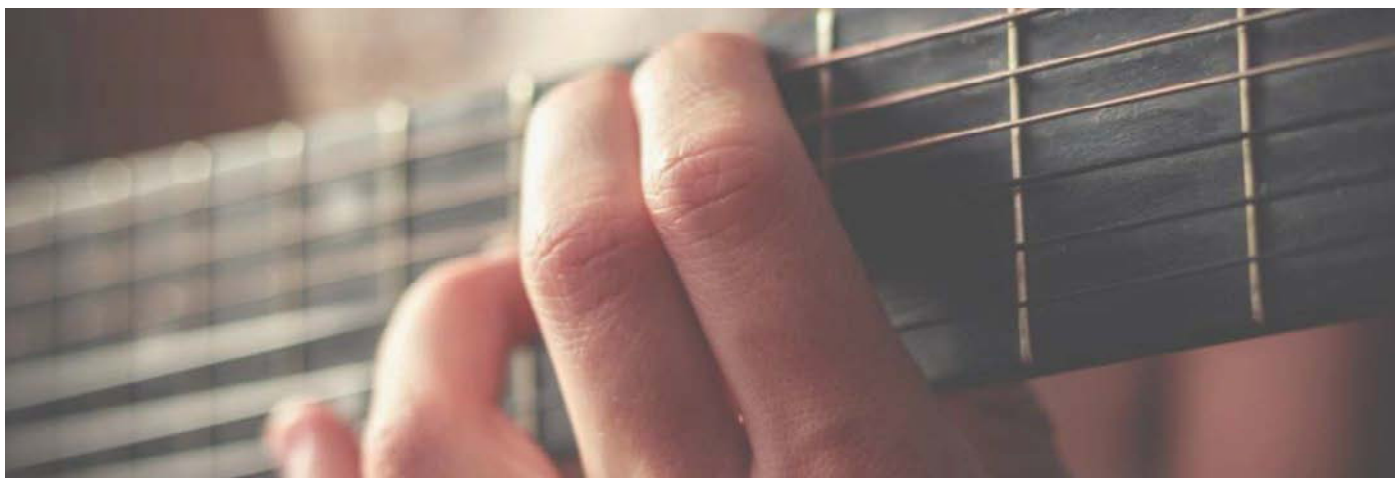
## CHARITY

WAR ON WANT

War on Want fights poverty in developing countries in partnership with people affected by globalisation. We campaign for human rights and against the root causes of global poverty, inequality and injustice.

<http://www.waronwant.org/>

# ACT 10: TALENT SHOW



Look at that list you made for [act #3](#). Your toolbox will probably include a few skills that you've had up your sleeve for a while and never really had the chance to use. Your challenge for today is to TELL SOMEONE about your secret talents. Post your list online as a Facebook status or share it in your 40acts Together group, and then offer to teach someone how to do what you can do. Teaching and mentoring is generosity multiplied, because you give them something they too can give away. What skill will you share today? Share it with us too using #40acts and we'll see if we can match some skills to some needs!

*'Whatever your hand finds to do, do with all your heart...'* Ecclesiastes 9: 10

Priscilla and I had landed in London from NYC in December 2013. After visiting a number of churches, we had settled in at St. Luke's in Kentish Town. The Vicar and his wife met with us after the morning service. They wanted to know what skills we had and could share in our new community.

Pause. I thought of our previous community – Redeemer Presbyterian. I served there as an elder for 17 years; counselled many individuals and couples; taught a number of courses and given talks, messages and sermons. So, with all this in tow, I said the first thing that popped in my mind.

Cleaning. I would love to help out cleaning the church building.

I love seeing things clean. I wash; scrub the mould out; sweep and organise and it's done. It takes time, but you see immediate results after. I know that working with people in any capacity takes longer. And no immediate results.

Jon looked at me. He repeated, "cleaning?"

I quickly added that although St. Luke's was clean maybe they could use some help on the cleaning team? But I also added that I was willing to help out in any way.

"Let me have a think. I will get back to you."

Two weeks later Jon called me for a cup of tea to follow up our discussion. He spoke.

"What I would really like to do Charlie is to meet with me for prayer and mentoring."

Pause for prayerful thought: God is this really what you want me to do, here, in this new place? Work with people, again? Breathe. Pause.

"Oh, you sure you don't want me to help out with cleaning?"

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykcVImF\\_dN4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykcVImF_dN4&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) We travelled to Scotland to check out these skill sharers. [ay! click me for more](#)
- 2) How about a matchmaking site that didn't want you to date but instead helped you to serve? [click me for more](#)

## CONTRIBUTOR

CHARLES OSEWALT  
CURRICULUM SPECIALIST, STEWARDSHIP

Charles Osewalt is a husband, father of four children and former elder at Redeemer Church NYC. He has worked in schools for the last twenty years as principal in the Morrisanna section of the Bronx. He is currently working as a content and curriculum specialist for Stewardship.

[www.charlesosewalt.com](http://www.charlesosewalt.com) - [@charlesosewalt](#)

## CHARITY

KIDS CLUB KAMPALA

In 2010 by Sam Wambayo, Corrie Fraser and Olivia Barker with a vision to see children's lives changed. Since then KCK has expanded from working in two communities with a hundred children to working in 17 communities and reaching over 4000 children in Uganda every day.

<http://www.kidsclubkampala.org>



# ACT 11: ONE GREEN THING



Most of us aren't eco-warriors all of the time, but we can take time to educate ourselves on the best ways to preserve God's creation, and we can commit to doing one green thing. Change something simple, like switching from plastic bags to reusable ones, or walking to work a few days per week instead of using the car. Today is St Patrick's Day and green is everywhere, so use that as a reminder! And if you've got any other simple green ideas, feel free to post them on the [Facebook page](#).

*'You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet' Psalm 8: 6*

One of the things that brings me the greatest amount of pleasure in life is looking out my kitchen window and seeing dog walkers picking up litter on the green that my house looks onto.

Why? Because it shows me how much has changed around here.

19 years ago, as newly weds, we moved onto the Whyke Estate in Chichester with a vague sense that we wanted to live somewhere where we could try to outwork locally our growing understanding of what it meant to worship a God of justice. The estate was not a nice place to live on, with all the usual sorts of anti-social behaviour that accompanies a lower-income housing estate that has been neglected by the local authorities.

All that was to change though, thanks to the dedication of a team of local residents. About twelve years ago a group of us set up The Whyke Estate Community Association, which I have co-chaired since its first meeting, and set about transforming our area into a lovely place where people want to live.

Changing the environment changed the heart of the estate, and picking up litter has become symbolic of the pride that people now take in where they live.

So what about you: is there something you could do to change the place you live for the better? Why not get out with a bag and a pair of plastic gloves and pick up some litter? Or take a trowel and plant some flowers? Do something visible in your neighbourhood today as a sign of hope.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSp9LAApu2M&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSp9LAApu2M&feature=player_embedded)

1) How can we be a little greener and why? [click me](#)

2) What would it look like if we combined 'ninja' like stealth and some serious community spirit? [click me for guerrilla gardening](#)



### CONTRIBUTOR

DR RUTH VALERIO  
A ROCHA

Churches and Theology Director, A Rocha UK

[www.ruthvalerio.net](http://www.ruthvalerio.net) [@ruthvalerio](https://twitter.com/ruthvalerio)



### CHARITY

LIFECENTRE

We were and still are, a grass roots response by some passionate individuals who are committed to providing a specialist service to those who through no fault of their own have suffered the human rights atrocity of sexual abuse.

<http://www.lifecentre.uk.com>

## ACT 12: #NOFILTER



Young children have no filter a lot of the time: they say the first thing that pops into their heads, without worrying about how it will sound first. They also crucially lack the preconceptions, judgements and assumptions that most adults default to. Over time, they'll learn discernment; but is there something we can learn from them today? Can we, for one day, try to disentangle our discernment from our small-minded, preconceived ideas about people? Today your challenge is to treat people as equals – to assume nothing about their lives, but to show them love and generosity and friendship regardless.

The cops are coming. We have a reliable source that tells us in twenty minutes the squad car will enter our road. Twelve hundred seconds to sort everything out: move stuff; rearrange furniture; grab supplies from the loft.

But this is no raid. Two children have been found abandoned in their home. Two children have spent fretful hours in police custody. They are not even five years old. And they need a bed for one night so a parent can be located and helped.

There's a special moment when a new foster child comes into our house. Despite the tragedy of what they have experienced, a small kindness from a stranger can make a big difference. We too are humbled as each child teaches us something of resilience, trust, love, patience, sacrifice, heartache.

Jesus declared:

'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'" Matthew 18:3-5

In the ancient world children had a very low status, with little or no rights and no influence or power. Jesus' disciples had been arguing about who would be the greatest in the coming Kingdom but Jesus subverted the argument by picking up a child and encouraging his disciples to be childlike. According to Jesus, those of us who follow Him need to forget about chasing power and influence, rather we need to become childlike by foregoing fame and significance in our pursuit of Christ. Servanthood and humility are the true traits of Jesus' followers.

We can learn a lot from those children in our society who are deemed most insignificant: the vulnerable children in the care system. Jesus insists that if we offer hospitality to children in need we welcome Jesus himself into our midst.

Today take a childlike approach and offer to do those jobs that you might consider are below you. Taking the rubbish out? Doing the coffee run? Taking the minutes in the meeting? Holding the door open?

Can you challenge your default perceptions about the world around you, and remove the filters that can often taint your interactions? Childlike generosity is one of the most wonderful kinds.



## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSJ5LPym80o&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSJ5LPym80o&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) 15 things that we can learn from kids! [click me](#)
- 2) A pep talk from the one and only Kid President. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

KRISH KANDIAH  
EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

Dr Krish Kandiah is a husband, father, foster carer and adoption champion. He is Executive Director for Churches in Mission at the Evangelical Alliance and leads the "Home for Good" initiative trying to find loving homes for the 6000 children waiting for adoption in the UK.

<http://www.krishk.com> @krishk

## CHARITY

HOME FOR GOOD

Home for Good aims to change the culture in local churches throughout the UK, to make adopting and fostering a significant part of their life and ministry. It is a fantastic opportunity for the Church to be good news in society, change our communities and transform the lives of some of the most vulnerable children in the UK.

<http://www.homeforgood.org.uk>



## ACT 13: GO LOCAL



Get down to your local shops today if you can. Those local businesses are a community hub and they're brilliant places to meet people, strike up conversations and support home-grown trade. Perhaps you could choose an independent coffee shop over a chain, or use your local greengrocers rather than a supermarket this week. For those on social media, upload a picture of your favourite local shop using #40acts, and let us (and them!) know why it's your favourite.

*"As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen." Matthew 4:18*

He greeted me with a grin and said that he was glad I was ok. It had been a while.

When I moved away, it hadn't occurred to me to say a proper goodbye to my local shopkeeper. Although I'd popped in regularly for years, I just didn't think he'd notice my absence from his world.

His warm welcome reminded me of the preciousness of being part of that neighbourhood. In that patch of common ground, some people had put down deep roots while others shot up just for a time; all blossomed and yielded fruit in season and together formed a dependable grapevine of knowledge and resources. Shopping locally was a great way to get to know that community and be known within it.

Going local is pretty trendy these days. The problem is I can't afford my new neighbourhood's version of it. I've heard that my local butcher, estate agent, and independent wine merchant have their fingers on the pulse and know everything that's happening on my doorstep. But regular game pie, property and fine merlot are currently too high a price to pay.

Instead, I've simply decided that every time I need a pint of milk I'll go to the same shop to buy it. The people on the till may not own the business or know everyone and everything, but they'll be there every day and hopefully, over time, the transactional will become relational as we get to know each other.

As Jesus was walking along in time and place, he interacted with those around him. This was no abstract incarnation but a God who, as the over-quoted paraphrase goes, moved into the neighbourhood and chatted to the local fishermen.

What does it look like for us, in our own little corners of the world, to go and do likewise?

Why not choose a shop in your neighbourhood which will be the one that you'll go to most regularly. Start getting to know the people who work there and think of some good questions to ask them about your shared local community.

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## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAoOXZD3hwx&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAoOXZD3hwx&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) Scout out your local businesses. [click me to search](#)
- 2) Join streetbank and get plugged into what's going on in your neighbourhood. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

EMILY BOWERMAN  
REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORK

Emily lives in West London and loves exploring ways of creating real community in diverse urban contexts. She's part of the team at Refugee Support Network which works to enable young asylum seekers and refugees to access and progress in education and she's always grappling with how the global and local hang together. Emily blogs sporadically at [emilyintheworld](#), is a regular contributor to Breathe Network, enjoys pottering round with her camera.

<http://www.emilyintheworld.wordpress.com> @BowermanEmily

## CHARITY

REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORK

We work with young people affected by displacement and crisis, enabling them to access, remain and progress in education at all stages of their migration journey.

<http://www.refugeesupportnetwork.org>



## ACT 14: SHHHHH!



Leave an anonymous gift for someone! Remember [act #9](#), when we encouraged you to listen to someone and make a note of something they needed? Well, today's the day to meet that need as best as you can – anonymously. Don't let them know that you've done it. You could use the contents of your [generosity jar](#) if you need to.

*"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:3-4.*

I love giving by Gift Aid! I'm one of those people who will hunt out the Gift Aid envelope, and make sure the charity will get more cash as a result. But the charity knows who has given, and all too often, it sends me lots of further messages asking me to give more. So what's best? Giving anonymously, or giving with my name attached?

The twelfth century Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, described eight levels of giving. He was clear that anonymous giving is right up the list – with giving anonymously to a known recipient at number three, and one place higher, giving anonymously to an anonymous recipient, where the giving is described as "solely for the sake of heaven".

It seems to me that what matters most is my motive – why am I giving? If I'm giving anonymously, then only I, and the Lord, will know about it. And even I shouldn't take much notice, for Matthew records Jesus teaching: "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:3-4.

Jesus is teaching us to avoid the trap of praising ourselves for our own generosity, and massaging our egos. But as I've mentioned earlier, if we never attach our name to the gift, charities cannot claim Gift Aid – and for churches that will represent a significant loss. But the good news is that it isn't always one or the other. The web can be a real blessing here – as through the many giving portals, such as [give.net](#) you can give anonymously and use Gift Aid at the same time. So why not bless a charity or someone you know in need today – and do so anonymously?

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjCGznH-N6c&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjCGznH-N6c&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) You can give anonymously online to your favourite charity through give.net. click me for online giving
- 2) Here is a Facebook page for you to like. click me
- 3) Blessed are those who GIVE. click me to watch a great video from Sevenly.



### CONTRIBUTOR

JOHN PRESTON  
NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP AND RESOURCES OFFICER, CHURCH OF ENGLAND

John is the Church of England's National Stewardship and Resources Officer. Living in Shropshire, John is a keen Rugby fan.

<http://www.parishresources.org.uk>



### CHARITY

VISION PEOPLE'S IN MISSION

The VPM UK Trust raises funds for Vision Peoples in Mission, a non-profit, charitable Christian organisation registered in Kenya. VPM exists to help those living in one of Nairobi's poorest slums by meeting their practical, medical and spiritual needs. We provide primary schooling, a health centre, and orphanage, church and vocational training programme, as well as a housing programme that provides better accommodation to those who can afford it, and also provides the charity with a local income stream.

<https://my.give.net/vpm>

# ACT 15: STAND UP, STAND UP



**What causes make your heart race? Which injustice makes you angry? Today's the day to be an ambassador for a charity or a cause you love. Your mission is to let someone else know about that charity; whether you do that face-to-face or online is up to you. Stand up for something today, and use your voice for good. If you're using social media, use the #40acts tag to spread your message far and wide.**

*'And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.' Micah 6:8*

I love being an ambassador. There is nothing I would rather do than help those facing injustice. It is my greatest PASSION and DESIRE to see this world changed, to see the broken-hearted made whole, to see the captives set free and to see people healed and restored.

As UK Director for the A21 Campaign, an anti-trafficking organisation that works with victims of sex trafficking, it has been a privilege to see hundreds of girls rescued, restored, healed and set free through our work. The charity recently celebrated its fifth birthday and at present has ten offices running in nine different countries.

None of this would be possible without the support of thousands of people just like YOU. It is because of people's generosity, prayers and passion to make a difference in the lives of those in need that we are able to deliver the work that we do today.

I love that everyday people have taken the attitude of 'I may not be able to do everything but I can do something'. It is because of the collective response of many individuals that A21 has in turn been able help and rebuild the lives of so many. A small sacrifice by a single person, of time or money, can be amplified many fold.

All throughout the Bible Jesus instructs us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly (Micah 6:8). This is a God mission for all of us. Whenever there is ONE suffering we are called to go, with what's in our hands, to do what we can.

So ask yourself, what do you have in your hands? What can you do in your sphere of influence? How can you be an ambassador and make a difference right where you are in the lives of those in need?

I am so glad that God has put me where I am today; I'm so glad He placed the least, the last and the lost on my heart as it is this, and only this, that has moved me in to action and led me to do what I do today.

Let's all pray for a fresh passion to see this world changed. Pray today that God puts the least, the last and the lost on your heart.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=nC\\_vXAF-pBM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=nC_vXAF-pBM)

1) In your ambassadorial duties have you considered fundraising for your cause? [click me to find out](#)

2) Just how much impact has social media had on charities? [click me to see](#)



### CONTRIBUTOR

CHARLIE BLYTHE  
UK DIRECTOR, A21 CAMPAIGN

I am 27 years old, married to Dan Blythe and live in London. I am the UK Director for The A21 Campaign and a pastor at Hillsong Church London. I am passionate about seeing this world changed and building the local Church.

[@charlieblythe](#)



### CHARITY

THE A21 CAMPAIGN

The A21 Campaign exists to abolish injustice in the 21st century through a comprehensive system of preventative measures, victim protection, prosecution of violators, and strategic partnerships.

<http://www.thea21campaign.org>

# ACT 16: BAKE IT, MAKE IT, TAKE IT



Most people love cake. And if they don't love cake, they'll probably still appreciate the trouble you've taken to make something. Use the simple recipes we are providing on the [Facebook](#) page today and bake some cupcakes. Give them to your neighbours, give them to your colleagues, give them to strangers on the high street. Show us your creations using the #40acts tag.

*Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, 'The LORD has done great things for them.' The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Psalm 126: 2 - 3*

I've been making cakes for what seems like a lifetime. I first dipped my fingers in the cake mix at the age of 16 when I was asked to help ice a birthday cake for our church youth group and haven't stopped since.

When my children came along I started making their birthday cakes. Those early attempts—like the train for my eldest son's first birthday—were probably very amateurish but kids don't mind and you find ways of covering any mistakes you make.

As the years went on, the kids' birthday cakes turned into wedding cakes then back to the grandchildren's birthday cakes and even their wedding cakes too! Tot them all up and add all the other occasion cakes I've done and I lose count!

My favourite memory is making cupcakes with my 18 month-old granddaughter. What she didn't eat or get over herself finally made it into the oven. She loved it and it is an experience I treasure. Now aged 8 she can make them on her own and has made cupcake pigs for her whole class at school. A chocolate chip off the old block!

My daughter's wedding cake was a test of ingenuity: a purple three-tiered cake with gold wire borders holding crystals round each tier. The purple icing had to be made in one go to ensure consistency of colour. Then our 'mission impossible' was to find 9ct gold wire—thankfully a local factory came to our rescue, letting us have it for nothing when they heard it was for a wedding cake. The end result was stunning and worth all the effort.

Cakes are of course made for eating but I remember one retirement cake that nearly dodged the knife. It was a desk-shaped chocolate cake complete with computer, piles of paperwork, telephone and an exhausted man sprawled out asleep. The recipient refused to cut it. Instead he ferried it across London by train and insisted his wife come to collect the cake by car while he cycled home on his bike. He wanted to show it to his grandson. I think he was chuffed.

People say 'how do you make such nice cakes, I could never do that?' But my response is 'Give it a go and have fun with it'. It doesn't matter what they look like—they'll still taste good!

So come on get baking and spread some joy. Make some cupcakes and share them with others. Give some to a neighbour or invite them in to share some tea and cake with you. If you're brave enough you could take them onto the street and just give them to strangers. Maybe you could even give them anonymously—the list is endless!



## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfhDYpILUz0&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfhDYpILUz0&feature=player_embedded)

1) Here are some great baking recipes for you to use. [click me](#)

2) Here is the wonderful Meggie's Cupcakes who helped us put together the above video and who provide delicious cakes throughout London. [click me to find out more](#)



### CONTRIBUTOR

SHEILA CANTALE  
STEWARDSHIP

Sheila works for Stewardship and is part of the Gold account team. Sheila is married to Tony and has 3 children and 5 grandchildren.

<http://www.stewardship.org.uk>



### CHARITY

RESTORATION OF HOPE

Restoration of Hope began as a dream in the heart of Donatien Nahimana (Honda). After working for six years with African Revival Ministries as a driver, administrator and house parent to orphan children, in January 2004 he established Restoration of Hope with a vision to help the streetboys of Bujumbura – the capital of Burundi.

<http://www.rofh.org/>

## ACT 17: PS AND QS



Politeness is actually quite simple, but often we're so busy that we forget the basics. Smile at people today. Hold open doors and let others go first. Be kind on the roads, courteous in the gym and show grace to those you think deserve it least.

*'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. Matthew 5: 13*

It's so easy to do life thinking we are the centre of the Universe. We can get so caught up in our own activities that we forget that there are others around us.

The daily commute to work is a great example of this. We can find ourselves burrowing away into our own little world and staying there for the duration of our journey. Avoiding any form of interaction. In London especially, it's as if there is an unspoken rule—avoid eye contact, do not smile and keep to yourself. The idea that a stranger would come up to you and have a genuine conversation without asking for directions is alien. It's as if we fear interaction!

We were made for connection. To be connected, in relationship with God and connected to people. Yet we often disconnect ourselves from this reality when we are in a public setting. It's in the everyday activities like our commute to work where Christians need to be the salt of the world. Salt adds flavour to the relatively bland and mundane.

I like to see being courteous as one poignant way of being salt to the world. It's an extended hand of generosity and it goes a mighty long way. You just have to smile at someone to see the impact something so simple has.

Being courteous tells people that you value them and because you do you are going to carry out an act that puts them first or at the very least positively acknowledges them. It's one of the simplest ways of sharing God's love.

In a society where the focus has shifted away from 'treat others as you would like to be treated', and is much more about how can I better myself, we need to work extra hard at being courteous. Today's challenge is exactly that: be courteous. I want you to interact with a stranger in a way that positively acknowledges them. Ask how can I show God's love to this individual in the simplest of ways? It may be a smile or it may be about asking them how they are? It up to you! Interact and show love today in how you act!

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5yCOSHeYn4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5yCOSHeYn4&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) Here is a great quote to inspire you. [click me](#)
- 2) How do you fare with global etiquette. [click me to take the quiz](#)



### CONTRIBUTOR

CALEB MEAKINS  
MY 40 DAYS

Caleb is Co-founder of Shift UK ([shift-uk.com](http://shift-uk.com)) and pioneer of My 40 Days ([@my40days](http://my40days.com)).

<http://www.my40days.co.uk> @CalebMeakins



### CHARITY

TEARFUND

We're following Jesus where need is greatest, working through local churches to unlock people's potential and helping them to discover that the answer to poverty is within themselves. When disasters strike, we respond quickly. We won't stop until poverty stops.

<http://www.tearfund.org/>

## ACT 18: #CHARITYTUESDAY



**#charitytuesday** is a weekly event on [Twitter](#), where thousands of people tell others about their favourite charity and encourage people to donate to them. Join them! You might choose the cause that you championed for [act #15](#). Go one step further this week: give to them. You can give online using [give.net](#), or via the charity's own website. Or you could go to your local charity shop and donate that way. If you can't think of a charity you'd like to support, you can simply support the featured charity for today.

*"God loves a cheerful giver" 2 Corinthians 9:17*

Not too long ago I went with A Rocha's Singaporean genius film-maker, Mel to talk to a Christian business friend about supporting our projects in Asia. We knew he was sceptical of 'charity' and that he had seen how investing in businesses in poorer countries often brings far greater benefits to poor communities than simple aid. We also knew that he was wary of fundraisers. So as we drew up outside his house, Mel said quietly, "Just ask him for a donkey" and once I worked out what she meant, I did.

On this occasion, the friend wasn't persuaded and I confess I was a bit downcast, feeling the lack of the smart business idea that would get his support and solve our funding challenge. But Mel explained that even Jesus, faced with a basic transport need as he planned the entry into Jerusalem, didn't put the wheels on the gospel wagon. He could have appealed to the entrepreneurial disciples to earn them enough to buy the necessary transport. Instead he asked them to ask someone else to give him something: a donkey.

Jesus knew that giving and receiving is good for us. So here's today's good news and good idea – neuroscience tells us we love giving and it gives us a buzz. We are literally made for it. So just give something away today. Or, even more creatively, ask someone else to give to your favourite charity. By my reckoning, after thirty years of following the Christian calling of fundraising, 10% of the vital things that need doing in the world are funded in that way, and that's the way God likes it.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=1ONxZYVrM\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=1ONxZYVrM_A)

- 1) You can give online to your favourite charity through give.net. [click me for online giving](#)
- 2) Here is a Facebook page for you to like. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

PETER HARRIS  
FOUNDER, A ROCHA

Founder of A Rocha International, having spent over 20 years in Portugal and France, Pete and his wife Miranda are now back in the UK from where they work to support the A Rocha family around the world while being closer to their own, and not least their grandchildren



## CHARITY

A Rocha is a Christian environmental and nature conservation movement. Our name is Portuguese for 'the rock' - our first initiative was a field study centre in Portugal.

Our projects are frequently cross-cultural in character and share a community emphasis, with a focus on science and research, practical conservation and environmental education.

<http://www.arocha.org/>

# ACT 19: DON'T HOLD BACK THE WONDERFUL



Our words can have a wonderful power for good. Leave a note of encouragement in a random place for someone to find. Alternatively, you could leave your favourite book - a Bible or a book of psalms, perhaps – in a public space with a note explaining that it's a gift for whoever picks it up. You could even write #40acts on the envelope or inside the book cover if you like.

*"Kind words are like honey - sweet to the soul and healthy for the body." - Proverbs 16:24*

I opened my mailbox to find a hot pink envelope. I opened it, intrigued, in the middle of a busy day. The letter itself caused me to focus. It was just a simple little note, with pretty handwriting, given to make a girl smile. But for me, the letter was heavy. It had a message of affirmation that my life made a difference for those around me, those watching me, and those intertwined with me. It was anonymously given.

My life at that moment was running out of control. I was quickly becoming intimate with pain. I kept a good face on it, because I didn't know how to articulate the pain to most around me at that time. I was knee deep in my muddy mistakes, trudging through my past, and searching for healing. While I was on that journey, I needed little reminders like that hot pink, prettily lettered note to remind me that healing is possible and just around the corner. Nearly a year later, I still have that note tucked away in a safe place.

Not too long after I received that note, I joined the tribe of women over at More Love Letters. I was moved by their passion for encouraging others and their ability to love fiercely and selflessly. We believe in scripted love. Oh, how we do. We believe in writing and writing and writing, until the receiver of the letter feels nice and cozy and safe with you. We believe in a generation that rises above the negativity of the world around us, and creates a space of vulnerability and healing. We believe in people. We believe in you.

You know, sometimes it takes something simple like a little hot pink envelope to show you a new aspect of Jesus' love. It takes something simple to remind you that He reaches into the margins to give grace and healing. But maybe it takes that something simple to remind you that you can, too.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVFVaWCV1TE&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVFVaWCV1TE&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) Check out moreloveletters here. [click me](#)
- 2) How to make your own love notes. [click me to see](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

KATELYN COLLISON  
WRITER, MORELOVELETTERS.COM

Gypsy with a heart on fire for the Kingdom.

<http://www.Katelyncollison.blogspot.com> @KVCS shutterbug

## CHARITY

TUTAPONA

We are a non-profit organization committed to addressing the pain and trauma associated with war and violence. We have taken rehabilitation services to the most severely traumatized individuals in the heart of war zones. We take the love of Jesus Christ through trauma rehabilitation to victims of rape, mutilation, abduction, former child soldiers, and anyone affected by the horror of war. We train leaders on the ground in local regions affected by war and develop local teams of indigenous workers to carry on the effort within their own culture. We partner with local churches & organizations to bring healing to as many people as possible.

<http://www.tutapona.com/>



# ACT 20: ALWAYS TALK TO STRANGERS



Today your challenge is to turn an old adage on its head. Don't ignore strangers, make a point of talking to them. Just a simple smile, a comment about the weather and a 'how are you doing today?' can open up a really interesting conversation.

As children, our parents and teachers always told us never to talk to strangers; don't make eye contact, don't smile and mistrust anyone who approaches you. Good advice for small children, but when does that 'mantra' change? As adults, new people, strangers and casual conversations can cause anxiety and we can put up social barriers and mark out boundaries.

But isn't that sad? All our friends were strangers to us once. New conversations, interesting messages, advice from unbiased people, conversations on buses, in shops, on planes, in moments of adversity and hilarity, can all lead to a richer and more compelling life. And while they share, we can listen and also share.

When I share my story with strangers I want them to be filled with questions:

I want them to wonder why I trust a God I can't see!

I want them to wonder why I give when I have little to give!

I want them to wonder why I'm peaceful in a situation that should leave me in a mess!

When they ask me why? That's leading them to the gospel.

Then we can share the wonderful news of all God is and has done in our life, we get to make disciples, inspiring, encouraging and intriguing just as Jesus said and did. Jesus always spoke to strangers. The Bible is full of incidents: the Samaritan woman at the well, greeting Andrew under the tree, Levi sitting in the tax collectors booth. All kinds of people in all kinds of different situations.

So next time, you end up sitting next to a stranger or someone new, don't ignore them, don't preach at them, listen and learn from them and they may well listen and learn from you.



## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfHV4-N2LxQ&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfHV4-N2LxQ&feature=player_embedded)

1) Robbie finally proved his mum wrong. [click me to listen why](#)

## CONTRIBUTOR

DARRELL TUNNINGLEY  
HOPE CORNER & UNREACHABLE MINISTRIES

While serving a sentence in HMP Wolds, former drug dealer, addict and armed robber, Darrell, attended an Alpha course and everything changed. For the last 13 years Darrell has been at the forefront of community mission, founding projects such as Hope Corner Academy, the only church run special educational needs school in the North West rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. He is now an AoG minister, evangelist and international speaker. Darrell is also the author of the best-selling book, Unreachable.

<http://www.unreachable.org.uk> @DarrellGB

## CHARITY

UNREACHABLE  
Our vision is simple... To equip the church and reach the lost...

We believe that the local church is Gods plan. We want to equip the church in mission, following the commands of Jesus and through that, reach a broken world.

[www.unreachable.org.uk](http://www.unreachable.org.uk)



# ACT 21: PRAY



Prayer is generous because when we speak to God on another person's behalf, he hears us. It's also generous because when you offer to pray for someone, it instantly shows them that you care about their well-being and their circumstances. Offer to pray for someone today – either a friend or, if you're feeling brave, a stranger. It doesn't need to be elaborate: a simple, thoughtful prayer is a powerful thing.

*'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.'* John 17: 20

I don't know why, but God seems to like answering prayers in a dramatic fashion for people who are not yet Christians.

Like Bill, who last week had stood out in the wet and cold for six hours calling out for people to buy the 'Big issue' but had only sold one copy all day. He was miserable, so I got a couple of hot chocolates and we stood together in the rain sipping on the sweet brew. I asked if I could pray that more people would buy some magazines from him. "Whatever you want Chris" he gruffly said, "It won't work."

Five minutes later, having sold two copies and received a big bar of chocolate from a complete stranger, Bill was now laughing. "Can I keep you here as my good luck mascot?" Bill asked.

I explained how I wasn't the one bringing any fortune. That it was God answering my quiet prayers, and that he is the best Father we could ever have wanted or hoped for, and that he loves us and hears us.

Today, seek to show the outrageous generosity of God through praying for ONE person. Be intentional about it and ask if they would like you to pray for them, a situation or miracle that they need in their life. They may say 'no thank you' and that's OK. Respect how people respond to you. Most of the time I find people are happy to know that they are being prayed for! I always ask them if they would like me to say a prayer there and then, or later on. Remember, when we pray, God works.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVHQZ-Ue7M0&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVHQZ-Ue7M0&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) Here is a fantastic resource for anyone new to or who doubts the power of prayer. [click me](#)
- 2) How about joining a global movement of 24 hour prayer? [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

CHRIS DUFFETT

Chris lives near Cambridge with his wife Ruth and three young children. He is a street evangelist, artist and poet and blogger who founded The Light Project - a growing network of people who actively demonstrate the Christian message and train others in theology and evangelism.

Chris currently serves as the city centre chaplain in Peterborough, and trains others in evangelism all over the UK. He is part of The Pioneer Collective, a vision to see 400 new baptist pioneers over the next 5 year.

<http://www.chrisduffett.com> @revduffett



## CHARITY

THE LIGHT PROJECT

The Light Project is a bunch of people across the UK have a heart to demonstrate and relate the most amazing message of all time to our generation: *the good news of Jesus*.

<http://www.lightproject.org.uk>

# ACT 22: UNPLUG



40acts is normally about giving out, but today it's back to giving up. Spend the day without any screens. Phones, tablets, laptops and TVs are off. Use today as an opportunity to connect with people face-to-face. Whether it's over a board game or a walk in the local park, building a fort with your kids, or visiting your grandparents. Unplug and reconnect. No beeps, no buzzes. In the age of the black mirror, we invite you to rediscover Real Life for a day.

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another . . . Hebrews 10: 24-25*

I've never actually met some of the people I work with. I don't know what they look like. Weird, right? Through my computer screen I communicate with people all over the world. The thing is, I rarely speak to them, and it's unlikely I'll ever meet them.

Outside of work, it's a similar story. I haven't seen some of my best mates for a while. I don't need to... I can text them. I upload snippets of my life on Facebook and Twitter and I catch up with them via their profiles. The shiny screens on my computer and phone are my gateway to the world.

And it's a safe world too. I don't have to speak to anyone. I can ignore the awkward silences and pauses. No one can tell if I'm in a bad mood and I don't have to deal with their moods either. - Brilliant.

Well, maybe not. Despite the benefits, life through a screen isn't all it's cracked up to be. Life is supposed to be about interruptions and interactions (and not of the retweet or 'FB Like' kind).

My real-life friends inconvenience me. They ask me to do stuff I don't really want to do. And that's the stuff that builds friendships. I've never bonded with anyone over a status update, but I have through a gig, a party or simply having a chat over a cuppa.

So today, just for a day, the challenge is to go screen free, and instead create some real life interactions. Call (don't text) a mate and hang out. Turn off your emails. Ignore the social profile updates. Reconnect with the real world. Explore your local park. Climb a mountain. Do something that widens your sense of wonder at the world. Go on, create some moments worth posting about.

## Some things you can do now:

Why not try a bit of real life social networking to make your time away from the screen a little less daunting?

**Like it:** Like something you see. Take some Post It Notes with you into the real world. Write 'like' on them and stick them on the things and people you like!

**Comment:** It's easy to have an opinion online, but why not chat with some friends and have a proper debate. Choose an issue, make a point and defend it.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OINa46HeWg8&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OINa46HeWg8&feature=player_embedded)

1) Jarrid Wilson explains why he is having a messy separation. [click me](#)

2) Get outside: find out [what's going on](#) where you live.

3) Stay indoors: crack out the boardgames and [mix it up a bit](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

DAN ETHERDIGE  
OPEN DOORS

Dan works with Open Doors, a charity that supports the church in countries where following Jesus comes at a massive cost. Between 28-30 March, Open Doors are encouraging thousands of young people to get involved in the fundraiser, Blackout. By staying quiet on social networks or fasting from all kinds of things, the point is to silence ourselves to stand with those who are silenced for their faith.

<http://www.opendoorsyouth.org> @opendoorsyouth

## CHARITY

OPEN DOORS UK



Open Doors is an international ministry serving persecuted Christians and churches worldwide. We supply Bibles, leadership training, literacy programmes, livelihood support and advocacy services. We also seek to mobilise the church in the UK & Ireland to serve Christians living under religious persecution.

<http://www.opendoorsuk.org/>

## ACT 23: MILK, NO SUGAR



Tea. Coffee. Hot Chocolate. Bovril (maybe). Find a friend, neighbour, or co-worker and make them a hot drink. Bonus points if it's someone you don't usually speak to a great deal.

Just 10 minutes with a work colleague or a neighbour can have a massive impact. You can probably remember a time when you've been cheered up by a warm drink with a friend. See if you can make that happen today, and send us your [latte art photos](#) with the #40acts tag!

*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. Matthew 25 v35*

So many of my friendships started with a simple cuppa and, as a shy person, I'm forever grateful to those who took that first step towards making friends. Now, many of those friendships are maintained by regular coffee dates, where we catch up, cheer up, encourage or commiserate with one another. Sometimes, when relationships have become strained, an invitation to have a quiet cuppa has helped to resolve a difficulty or to build a better working relationship. It's amazing what a difference a cup of tea can make!

One of my friends makes hospitality baskets to give to new people moving into her neighbourhood. A keen baker, she adds homemade biscuits to a selection of tea, coffee, sugar etc and they are always well received. She now knows practically all her neighbours and has built some good relationships by this simple act of hospitality.

However, if, like me, you're not the gregarious type, it can be quite daunting to take the initiative, so start with something simple. Why not offer to make/collect the drinks for those in your office at work or sign up for the coffee rota at church? It gives you the opportunity to say hello, introduce yourself and discuss tea and coffee preferences. And once you've broken the ice and perhaps discovered someone else with a taste for Caffe Macchiato or whatever, it's easier to invite them to your favourite coffee shop or to try the new shop that just opened.

From such simple beginnings, great friendships can be made.

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## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgObFrVrL9Q&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgObFrVrL9Q&feature=player_embedded)

1. Ever wondered how to make perfect latte art yourself? [click me to find out](#)
2. For the Brits among us (or just the tea lovers) - the definitive, scientific guide to a perfect brew. [click me](#)



### CONTRIBUTOR

JACKIE HARRIS  
EDITOR, WOMAN ALIVE

Jackie Harris is the editor of Woman Alive, the magazine for today's Christian woman. Married to Ray, she loves film, theatre, afternoon tea and visiting historic houses.

<http://www.womanalive.co.uk> @WomanAliveUK



### CHARITY

RSPCA

The RSPCA as a charity will, by all lawful means, prevent cruelty, promote kindness to and alleviate suffering of all animals.

<http://www.rspca.org.uk/home>

## ACT 24: GRINNING = WINNING



Sorry to crash your April Fool's Day - today, any pranks are going to be of the uplifting and not of the ritual humiliation variety. So turn the tables. Crack a joke that isn't at someone else's expense. Cheer up someone who looks bored. Make a point of not doing the grumbly British thing if someone pranks you. Your challenge is to make someone else smile on April Fool's Day. Be sure to share your groan-inducing one-liners with us on Facebook or Twitter using #40acts today.

*"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22*

"Laughter is the best medicine", they say. There are times that insulin or penicillin trump that, so I'll side more with Proverbs 17, that a cheerful joyous heart is a good medicine, if not best.

But then I'm British, where our outlook reflects the weather, so of course I'm already downgrading laughter from being 'best'. In exotic climates, sure, the smiles seem more visible. Optimistic Americans beam their beautiful teeth, African churches contain more joy and song than Brits could ever dream of, and sunny Australians guffaw a joke and pop another shrimp on the barbie. Here on our drizzly island, we're even happy negatively: "How are you?" "Not bad." "I hear you brokered a million-pound deal at work?" "Mustn't grumble." Brits at their most positive say, "Cheer up, it may never happen." Defying Proverbs, we display more than our fair share of crushed spirit.

Yet if you're a Christian and believe in the beautiful beyond, then surely it's: "Cheer up, good things are going to happen!" In many respects, they already have happened, cemented in a couple of thousand years ago. Our lives and futures are in safe hands.

So cheer up! Not only yourself, but those around you. Laugh and the world laughs with you. See how many smiles you can get reflected back to you today. If you're normally a closed shop, fling open those doors – imagine that today you're Scrooge on Christmas morning, so metaphorically go and get that goose. Family members, shop assistants, train 'guards' (they're not guards; I've never seen them do even the tiniest bit of kung fu or fencing), baristas, barristers for that matter... smile, joke with and entertain the lot. Today the world is your audience. Wipe away the crushed spirit. And as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us, every one.



## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63rcdLeXiU8&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63rcdLeXiU8&feature=player_embedded)

1) Here are some of the BBC's top comedy top moments of all time. [click me](#)

2) The funniest joke in the world. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

PAUL KERENSA

Paul Kerensa is a stand-up comedian, comedy writer and author. His new book *Genesis: The Bibluffer's Guide* (book 1 of an optimistic 66-part collection) is just out. He performs on the comedy circuit and in churches, and writes for TV shows like *Miranda* and *Not Going Out*.

<http://www.paulkerensa.com/> @paulkerensa



## CHARITY

HOME START GUILDFORD

Home-Start Guildford is part of the UK's leading family support charity, which has 334 schemes in the UK and over 16,000 volunteers who visit families with at least one child under five in their own homes.

<http://www.hsguildford.org.uk/>

## ACT 25: TREASURE HUNT



Let God lead you for half an hour. Put aside your lunch break, go to a public place (a park, a pub, plant yourself in a Tube carriage...) and ask God to do something through you.

Start small and see what happens. You might end up buying a meal for a homeless person and eating it with them, or offering to pray for someone. Pray for those around you, and conversations will follow. This is about seeing what God can do with a chunk of your day, when you give him the space to work. Tell us your stories using #40acts on social media.

*'The gifts you've sent...they are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.'* **Philippians 4: 18**

Treasure comes in so many different shapes and sizes, but not all treasure is equal. Some of the things the world values might promise to make us happy or fulfilled, but their appeal can only ever last so long.

Despite what the advertisers would have us believe, there's only one treasure out there which is truly timeless, only one treasure which never fades. It is the joy and satisfaction that comes from knowing, following and serving God. Nothing else comes close.

Whether you've been a Christian for decades or have only just decided to give your life to Christ, every single one of us faces an adventure that is just as exciting today as it ever was. You, me and the millions of other followers of Jesus can all choose to follow the Holy Spirit as He guides us today. All of us can go treasure hunting—being open to what God has in store for us every single day.

It's as simple as that; deciding to take a risk, to make a fool of yourself, to put aside your own agenda and say to God, "here I am, use me." It's Spirit-filled treasure hunting, with God as our guide. We can't begin to imagine the people and places He will take us to with Him as our compass: the chance conversation, the unlikely encounter; the unexpected detour.

God loves to involve us in His in miracles, and so often all it takes us our willingness to say 'yes' to God that opens up the door for healing, love and mercy to flow out to others.

Doesn't that sound like a treasure worth hunting?

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w\\_b2B15037U&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_b2B15037U&feature=player_embedded)

1) Want to hear a testimony of what happens when we go on a treasure hunt with God? [click me](#)

2) Here is the 'White wooly hat' testimony. [click me to find out more](#)

## CONTRIBUTOR

MIKE PILAVACHI



Mike Pilavachi is founder and leader of 'Soul Survivor', an organisation seeking to disciple, equip and empower young people to make a difference in their generation.

He is also an author, international speaker and pastor of Soul Survivor Watford, a congregation aiming to reach out to the young people there.

[@mikepilav](http://www.soulsurvivorwatford.co.uk)

## CHARITY

SOUL SURVIVOR



Each summer we run four events (three Soul Survivor events and one Momentum event) which last five days each and between them host around 30,000 young people. The rest of the year we keep busy with lots of other events such as retreat weekends, equipping days and Saturday celebrations (see 'other events'). Plus we run Soul Action in partnership with Tearfund to put God's heart for justice into action.

<http://soulsurvivor.co.uk/>

# ACT 26: DOMINO



Likely to be visiting a coffee shop today? Buy the next person in line a latte (or a panini. Who doesn't like a panini?) Or heck, go bigger. Pay for someone's shopping or petrol.

The generosity of God is constantly being passed along: The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Spirit. We are loved, and then we love. 'Paying it forward' can be a micro-version of this abundant grace that we get to be a part of. Generosity begets generosity. Start something you won't be able to finish, and feel GOOD about it. Show us what your domino looks like using the #40acts tag!

*'Generosity begets generosity. Stinginess impoverishes' Mark 4:25*

True generosity is investing in someone who has little to offer in return. I'll never forget what my elementary school teacher, Mrs. Liles, did for me. My family had just moved to a new city. Being at a new school, I didn't have a single friend. The anxiety that I faced each day was almost unbearable for my 8 year-old little body. But it was the small gifts that Mrs. Liles placed in my desk each day that helped me bravely walk through that phase of life.

A pack of baseball cards or a piece of bubble gum may not sound like much to you, but it meant everything to me. These little gifts represented tokens of hope. They communicated, "You're going to make it today. I believe in you." Looking back, I now understand the significant impact an individual can have by simply choosing to pay it forward.

You might not be able to change the whole world, but you can change someone's world.

There are people all around you who will never walk through the doors of a church to hear about the grace of Jesus Christ. Your actions and words may be the only Jesus they'll ever see.

In John 13:7, prior to washing the feet of his disciple Peter, Jesus made this profound yet often overlooked statement:

"You don't understand now what I am doing, but some day you will."

I'm convinced that much of our earthly impact will not be realized until we reach eternity. Only then will we understand how the acts of kindness we do today reaps an eternal harvest.

With that in mind, answer these questions. What act of kindness can you do today to touch the soul of someone around you? Who needs to experience your loving generosity the most?

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJsUvYjkVxM&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJsUvYjkVxM&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) Check out the Pay it Forward Foundation. [click me](#)
- 2) The Drivethrough Domino Theory. [click me to watch](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

LARRY POOLE

Larry Poole serves as the Director of Generosity for Northpark Church located in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA. He coaches pastors, churches, and individuals on the spiritual discipline of generosity. His passion is helping the local church become fully funded so that it can more effectively accomplish the Great Commission.

<http://www.larrypoolespeaks.com> @tweetlarrypoole



## CHARITY

THE JOSHUA FUND

The Joshua Fund is a non-profit educational and humanitarian relief organization to bless Israel and her neighbors in the name of Jesus, founded by Joel and Lynn Rosenberg.

<https://www.joshuafund.com>

## ACT 27: BLOOMING MARVELLOUS



Roses, geraniums, peonies, zantedeschia, euphorbia marginata. Say it (more simply...) with flowers. Flowers usually make such an obvious statement that we usually wait for a special occasion to give them to someone.

Today's challenge is to give someone flowers just because you care. Snap a picture of the flowers you choose and upload it to the social networks using #40acts – let's make everyone's day a little more colourful today!

*"Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these." Luke 12: 27*

Last Sunday was Mothering Sunday, or Mother's Day, in the UK. A national day of flowers, slushy sentiments and washing up delegation. Mothers *do not* wash up on Mother's Day. Those are just the rules.

The day before pretty much always follows the same annual pattern for my sister and I.

**Me:** What have you got for Mum tomorrow?

**Sister:** (mild panic) Is it her birthday?!

**Me:** Oh rubbish, you haven't bought anything either. It's Mother's Day. I was hoping I could pay you half towards the gift, and we could put my name on it too.

**Sister:** Are florists still open at...(checks watch)...8.58pm on a Saturday?

**Me:** ...

It's maybe a mild exaggeration, but it's not far off. The truth is that we're quite awful at making a fuss of Mum on the days that the world says that we're supposed to.

Mum, on the other hand, is a wonderful giver. She buys me flowers regularly for no reason other than just because. She knows I'm the kind of person that appreciates the beauty of nature, and so she's learned to give me the stuff that she knows will make me smile – without being prompted by a red date in the calendar. God's like that too: He pours out generosity that we don't expect or even ask for, just because.

Maybe you've already bought flowers once this week. Why not buy them and give them again? You don't need to wait for a special occasion before you make someone feel special. In the words of the wonderful Mr Magorium: *'Your life is an occasion'* – and so is theirs. Celebrate it.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifUB1oSj4vM&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifUB1oSj4vM&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) Give the guys in your life some verbal flowers. [click me](#)
- 2) Give the women in your life some verbal flowers too. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

ALEXANDRA KHAN  
DIGITAL MARKETER, STEWARDSHIP

Alexandra is the digital marketer for Stewardship, which means she gets to help create generous projects like 40acts! She also writes for *threads* and *UCB*. By day she tweets for a living; by night she writes and edits for fun.

<http://www.alexandrablogs.com/> @alxkhn



## CHARITY

CHARITY: WATER

charity: water is a non-profit organization bringing clean and safe drinking water to people in developing nations.

<http://www.charitywater.org/>

## ACT 28: GO GUERRILLA



Today you're going to be a well-kept secret. Try to find a way to meet somebody's need without telling them. Clean a neighbour's car when they're not looking, do a bit of gardening in a public place (as long as it's not illegal!), pick some litter on the high street. The spontaneity is key (and also generally adds to the fun). Guerrilla generosity is all about catching people off guard and doing something unexpected.

*"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16)*

In the student world that I work in, NekNominations are rife. This is a phenomenon where people film themselves downing a pint of alcohol or something worse, do something outrageous, then nominate some of their friends to raise the bar. It has already led to two deaths in the UK and more further afield.

Some of my friends responded to this by starting a new phenomenon called RakNominations (Rak stands for Random Acts of Kindness). My friend Tom filmed himself **buying dinner for 5 people** in ASK restaurant. As a student, he couldn't afford this generosity but he did it anyway. He nominated my friend Miriam who filmed herself **giving roses to people** on the bus and telling them they are loved and appreciated. She nominated others and the acts of generosity spread like wildfire.

Some people have struggled with the public nature of this kindness, and it won't suit everyone. But let's remember that Jesus says, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). He also lived out a very public ministry where he served the needs of others overtly.

Why not be a guerrilla in a good way and use a Random Act of Kindness to bless someone today? Dinner, roses or your own take on it - spread surprise and delight as you go.



## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoreBiMeVFM&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoreBiMeVFM&feature=player_embedded)

1) Check out these Guerrillas as they keep London pretty. [click me](#)

2) This is not what we mean by Guerrilla serving. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

LUKE SMITH  
FUSION

Luke Smith lives in York where he and his wife Hannah have a family. They are part of G2 (a church in York) and Luke works for Fusion helping churches in the UK to engage with university students.

<http://www.honourblog.wordpress.com/@Luke20Smith>

## CHARITY

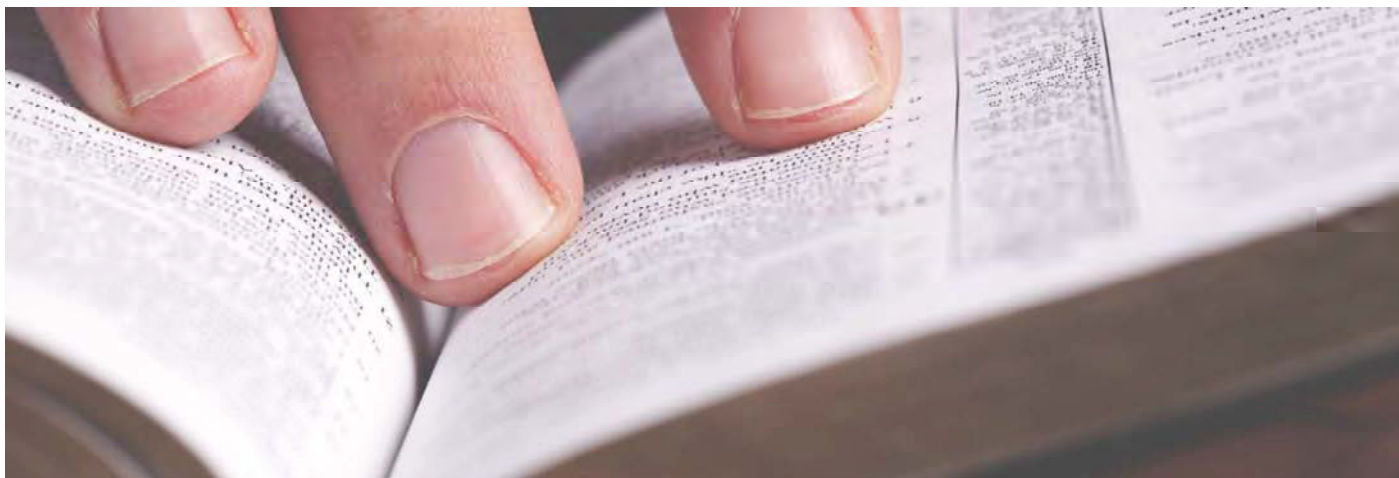
FUSION UK



The ministry of Fusion emerged in 1997 as a response to a shared vision across the Church to address the challenges of a changing student world. We believe God's passion is for a dynamic student movement, one that will see universities and colleges won for Christ.

<http://www.fusion.uk.com>

# ACT 29: WELL VERSED



Hop on to any social network and post your favourite Bible verse, along with a brief message to say why it means something to you (remember to use #40acts so that we can see it too!). Alternatively, drop a friend or relative a line with a verse and a word of encouragement. This is a great way to get conversations going. You're getting God's word out to your friends - opening a door for chat with people who are interested in why you're a Christian, but might well have never had the reason to ask.

With Easter around the corner, the real challenge is how to keep that door open and the discussion ongoing.

*'For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.'* Matt 18:20

I was once a member of small group that was an interesting mix of enthusiastic Christians and what I call 'explorers'—people who have some kind of faith but who rarely attend church. One evening a member who had been gaining in spiritual confidence, looked across the room and said, "I went to church on Sunday but there was communion and I didn't know the magic password."

Puzzled, we asked her what she meant and she described witnessing the people kneeling at the front and then hushed whispering between the congregation and the clergy. "You need to know the password," she said, "before you get the wine." A part of me wanted to laugh but another part recognized the vulnerability of our friend who had so wanted to 'belong' in that service. What followed apart from laughter was a wonderful Bible study on the Lord's Supper. Small groups should be a place where people can express their confusions and reveal their vulnerabilities; such is a community of belonging and truth.

You may never have gathered in such a group and long to do so—why not start one yourself? Keep it simple, get together with friends over coffee and ask everyone to share their favourite Bible passage and why. Or take a step into today's virtual communities and share a verse with a thought, although be careful, in the virtual world you never truly know who your audience is!

We face a challenge in today's church because we have become individualistic Bible readers and yet the Bible was written to be read aloud in public. Why not look online at some of the ways you can experience the Bible in community?

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I2uakqM4OI&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I2uakqM4OI&feature=player_embedded)

Experience the Bible as a community. [Click me to find out how](#)

Find your favourite verse online. [click me](#)

## CONTRIBUTOR

FIONA MACDONALD

Fiona has worked for the Scottish Bible Society as Director of National Ministries since 2009, having followed an indeterminate career path via the NHS, Abernethy Trust and St Paul's and St George's Church (Edinburgh). Best described as a Gospel opportunist, Fiona is deeply concerned about those outside the church who live each day knowing nothing of God. She is passionate about red shoes, the Tour de France and Cadbury's chocolate buttons, probably in that order.

[@scottishbible](http://www.scottishbiblesociety.org)

## CHARITY

SCOTTISH BIBLE SOCIETY

Since 1809, we have sought, under God, to put the Bible into people's hands and hearts.

We work so that all people can have the Bible in a language they understand, a form they can access and at an affordable price, to aid genuine encounters with God.

<http://scottishbiblesociety.org/>



## ACT 30: MEET A NEED



Do you know where the local needs are in your area? Foodbanks are a fantastic way for churches to be involved in the frontline of the community. Get in touch with the one nearest to you today and find out if you can donate any stuff that they're low on. There are other ways to get on board with today's challenge. You could also volunteer your time at a homeless shelter, or help out at a youth club. Go beyond your usual boundaries and see where you can join those who are meeting bigger needs across your community

*Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed. Proverbs 19:17*

When was the last time you were in need?

I don't mean in need of an early night, or in need of a snack—I mean truly in need. The kind of need that affects your mood, shapes your patterns of thought and changes the decisions you make; the kind of need where you don't know what you're going to do, unless something changes, and soon.

No-one likes being needy. We can feel ashamed to be in need or insulted that someone thinks we are in need. We can feel exposed or vulnerable because our need was so apparent, or even entrapped and obligated because we might be put upon to repay it.

In our church recently, one of the leaders spoke on the subject of generosity. In response we were asked to write our needs on a scrap of paper with an attached email address. By the end of the day we had over 104 needs which we posted anonymously on our Facebook community page. The response was overwhelming!

By the end of the week many of the needs had been met: couples who wanted marriage counselling were connected with couples who could counsel. A careers evening was arranged for the many that needed vocational guidance. One man even wanted a dog to walk, so he could get some headspace and sure enough, within the church there was a family who needed help walking their dog!

Often, whoever Jesus encountered, his first act was to meet their need. The man in John 9 who was born blind received new physical vision but with it came a new vision for his life. He could now live as part of a community again and he could now work, no longer having to beg to survive. Jesus lived out the Kingdom of God in word and action and so he calls us to follow Him in more than just words—to meet the needs of those we meet.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=xiiUQsyiDnk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=xiiUQsyiDnk)

- 1) Find your local foodbank. [click here](#)
- 2) A story of making homeless backpacks. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

JON MARCH

Jon is married to Sus and they have three rather energetic children. Together they have the privilege of leading St Luke's church in Kentish Town, North London. St Luke's was closed in 1991 and remained closed until Jon & Sus were asked to reopen it in 2012 with a team from Holy Trinity Brompton. The vision of St Luke's is to be centred on Jesus, transforming communities one life at a time. When time allows, Jon enjoys the Camden music scene, craft beer and the trials and tribulations of Tottenham Hotspur.

[@jonmarch](http://www.slkt.org.uk)

**WILLIAM  
WILBERFORCE  
TRUST**

## CHARITY

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE TRUST

The William Wilberforce Trust works through the local church to confront injustice and poverty and care for those in need. We run projects that tackle the needs of the vulnerable and marginalised in the community, and help to resource and equip churches around the UK and the world to support those in their communities.

<http://www.williamwilberforcetrust.org/>

## ACT 31: BE CRAFTY



**Pritt Stick at the ready, folks. We're about to make a mess and create some smiles. Need some ideas for a crafty gift? Mixtapes aren't just for high school. Think back and remember a friend who you were close to once, but haven't spoken to in a while. Put a playlist together and send it their way, digitally or physically. For the more craft-stall-minded out there, you could go down the scrapbook or photo album route. You don't need a bunch of specialist equipment to make something special. Post a picture of your creation on your social network of choice using the #40acts hash tag.**

When we were young we slaved over works of art, painted as though we were Michelangelo and gave our majestic creation to mum, dad or granny for their birthday card. So much love and care went into that drawing of 'me and mummy'.

Years pass and we lose the habit of creating something special for someone else. We lose too the special something that happens when you give and receive a gift that has a small financial cost but priceless terms of time and creativity. How much more valuable and precious is a gift of someone's time and thought in creating a gift especially for you? There is not another 20 of that product in a shop that others will buy, there is only one and it was given to you.

I have been exploring the idea of homemade gifts that show love, look great and help me to be generous to the planet as I use fewer resources and use recycled or ethically traded materials where possible. It has been fun and brought great pleasure to hear people say 'you made this for me!'

Today let's make something and share some creativity. Below are a few ideas to choose from.

- 1: make a CD compilation for a friend (the mix-tape art form is not dead – let's bring it back!)
- 2: papermaché some wooden coat hangers with newspaper or old wrapping paper to **create personalised hangers** for your friend's favourite jumper.
- 3: **customise some tea lights** by wrapping patterned tape over the silver base. This is so easy and produces a fab result.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iHxfmQyPrc&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iHxfmQyPrc&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) Get involved with some craftivism. [click me](#)
- 2) Here is a very Pinteresting list of crafty gift ideas. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

DOT TYLER

Dot is part of Tearfund's Youth and Emerging Generation team. She is part of the Rhythms community who invest in patterns of lasting change through small regular actions. When she's got any spare time, you will find her in a coffee shop or with her sewing machine.

You can read her blog here:

<http://www.brightlightsandbuttons.wordpress.org>

[@Dot\\_Tyler](http://www.rhythms.org)

## CHARITY

TEARFUND

We're following Jesus where need is greatest, working through local churches to unlock people's potential and helping them to discover that the answer to poverty is within themselves. When disasters strike, we respond quickly. We won't stop until poverty stops.

<http://www.tearfund.org/>

The logo for Tearfund, featuring the word "tearfund" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font on a dark teal background.

## ACT 32: CLEAR OUT



Meggings are so over (thank goodness). Time for a clear out! Don't stop at the fashion howlers, go through your wardrobe and take out any good quality clothes that you no longer use or never cut the tags off and re-gift them to a charity shop. If you've got friends or family who are low on clothes, send them in that direction.

Or – and here's a bigger challenge for the fashionistas among us – pick out a couple of items you're too attached to and give them away too.

*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. Acts 4:32-35*

Most mornings, I have a fight with my chest of drawers. It is heaving—groaning under the weight of all the clothes that have been stuffed inside it. Some clothes fit me. Some clothes never have. Some clothes might in the future, I say to myself, as justification for keeping them. Some clothes were a mistake even on the day that I bought them. Some of them have never seen the light of day. Hundreds of pounds wasted in that quest to find that elusive outfit that might make me feel good about myself.

This quest for beauty has been with me for as long as I can remember: as a little girl, I wanted to be beautiful like Disney princesses were, as a teenager I longed to look 'right'—to look just like my friends. As an adult (by the time you read this, I will have celebrated my big three-o), I am bombarded by images of what a successful woman looks like, what a successful, beautiful woman wears.

As I look through my wardrobe, my clothes tell the story of the years: they are symbolic of different seasons in my life, of the many faces of me. It's the nostalgia about the years that makes it so hard for me to let go of some of these clothes. They tell stories of the past, or of what could be in the future.

But these are just clothes. They are not me, nor do they hold my hopes and dreams. Those are found only in Him in whom all things hold together.

And letting go of them can lead to blessing. All over the city in which I live are people who can't afford to buy new clothes; who count their pennies and have to make difficult decisions and choose basics over luxury. By donating these clothes to good causes, I am possibly becoming someone's answer to prayer. And it'll get rid of the daily wrestle with my wardrobe.



## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cb78mzlpJU4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cb78mzlpJU4&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) Check out this site for becoming minimalist. [click me](#)
- 2) Here is a helpful 'how to' for donating clothes to charity. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

CHINE MBUBAEGBU

Chine Mbubaegbu is head of media and communications at the Evangelical Alliance, which includes being editor of [threadsuk.com](#) and [idea magazine](#). She is a trustee of the Bible Society, the Christian Enquiry Agency, the Church and Media Network and her local church. She is the author of 'Am I Beautiful?' (Authentic, 2013).

[www.amibeautiful.co.uk](http://www.amibeautiful.co.uk) [@ChineMbubaegbu](#)



## CHARITY

COMMUNITY MONEY ADVICE

CMA is a charity that is driven by the desire to help people whose lives are being blighted by debt and money problems. To this end, we have helped over 100 churches and other locally based organisations establish high quality, free, face-to-face money advice services.

<http://www.communitymoneyadvice.com/>

## ACT 33: SOAPBOX



Find a petition for change that resonates with you and sign it. The online ones usually have a social media sharing feature that we rapidly scroll away from; today, let the world (or your 300 followers) know. Alternatively, write a letter to your local councillor about an overlooked wrong in your area. Whatever you do, today, wear your heart on your sleeve about an injustice that gets you riled up.

*Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy. Proverbs 31:8-9*

As someone who is terrified of flying, the film Gravity definitely put an end to any fantasies I had of becoming Starfleet's next Captain Janeway. Many of us will never get the opportunity to travel into space but it seems that for the human beings who have been catapulted out into the void beyond our atmosphere, the most profound experience space exploration offers is the chance to look back in awe at our own fragile, blue sphere. When viewed from space, astronauts tell us our national boundaries vanish, the conflicts that divide us become less important, and the need for unity becomes both obvious and imperative.

I've watched almost enough Brian Cox documentaries to know what they're getting at but seeing the images of pain and suffering on news every day can make this vision of our world seem very far away. As Christians we are called to take a giant leap for mankind, to believe that the world can be better. Doing all we can to make that a reality means being more than just passive passengers during our time on this planet. We are called to speak out, challenge injustice, champion the rights of the oppressed and love our neighbour as ourselves - scary stuff!

Like putting a man on the moon, real change takes vision, planning and most of all commitment. Sometimes, hard though it is to accept, the changes we wish to see may not happen in our lifetime. But we shouldn't give up. Many people living in poverty around the world are already doing all they can with the resources they have available to stand up for justice, peace and unity, often at great risk to their own lives. History has shown that when we speak out as a courageous, prophetic community we can achieve some truly amazing things. It all starts with one small step...

Your next step

1. Becoming an armchair activist is easier than ever with online petitions making it possible for you to create change from the comfort of your own home
2. Already a seasoned clicktivist? Why not take your campaigning offline and start a group to raise awareness and inspire action in your church
3. Embrace your right to be heard and meet and tweet your MP with issues you're concerned about. If that is a little too far out of your comfort zone why not meet your MP with a group of friends or invite them along to an awareness raising event.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=vDU1A6uvJkU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=vDU1A6uvJkU)

1. Hannah Malcolm found out that her iPhone was potentially a killer, so she decided it was time to get the soapbox out. [click me to find out more and sign a petition.](#)
2. Create or sign online petitions. [click me.](#)
3. Pursue justice with other Christians. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

STEPHANIE ATKINS

Steph is a west country girl, feminist and film geek who lives in Stockwell, London with her husband Jim and his ever-expanding Lego collection. She has been campaigning since she was knee high to a space hopper and now works in international development.

[@stephieatkins](#)

## CHARITY

ALL WE CAN



All We Can exists to help people in the world's poorest communities become all that they can. We work with talented local partners – community organisations, churches, and individuals – people rooted in poor communities, who understand local problems and are passionate about solving them. Poverty is personal. So is the solution.

<http://www.allwecan.org.uk>

## ACT 34: DATE IN THEIR DIARY



**Heads up! Next Saturday – Holy Saturday – we’re going to ask you to throw a party, or some kind of generous event, for your immediate community. Today’s the day to send out invites and start thinking about the kind of event you’d like to host. If you’re doing 40acts Together, you’ll have been planning this since the very first week, so now it’s down to checking last minute details. For the rest of us, it’s time to share ideas and get our thinking caps on. Tell us your ideas using #40acts on any of the social networks.**

*'Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.' 2 Corinthians 13: 11*

Getting to know others, and allowing them to get to know you, to one degree or another involves taking a risk. I was brought up knowing those who lived in our road. I don't think I appreciated just how important the sense of community and the feeling of belonging was until I moved out into my own home, and I knew no one. So back in 2002, I was keen to be involved in the street party organised for the Queen's Golden Jubilee. It was a brilliant day and enjoyed by everyone! In an attempt to build on its success, and the tremendous community spirit that it engendered, I came up with a 'girls from the Avenue' Christmas night out plan.

I put a note through each house inviting the 'girls' to my house for a pre-dinner drink, followed by a walk to a local restaurant for a meal together. That first year, there were nine of us who all had a really enjoyable evening.

Looking back, I did take a risk—there could have been only two of us in the restaurant that evening!

It was, however, a risk well worth taking. Now, twelve years on, the first Friday in December has become a firm fixture in everyone's calendar and nearly 30 of us 'girls'—the oldest being 87—gather in a different home each year and enjoy a really good night out together.

Over the years, there have been great friendships formed; neighbours have linked up go to concerts, classes, to go walking, running or for a coffee together. We look out for the elderly, and are there to babysit for the young!

So if you have a plan, an idea, or just a fleeting thought and you're wondering if it's worth the risk, why not give it a try and see what happens?

We'll keep inviting new neighbours to our annual event. As one 'new girl' said: "that was such a lovely, lovely evening—I'm going to enjoy living here!"

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5yT4NCG0z0&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5yT4NCG0z0&feature=player_embedded)

- 1) A group of young people who invited their neighbours. [click me](#)
- 2) On being neighbourly - for men. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

FIONA GREEN

Married mother of three; Daniel 28; Adam 24 and Josh 19 – all still living at home! Daniel suffers from cerebral palsy and requires 100% care.

## CHARITY

WHIZZ-KIDZ

We're working hard to transform the lives of disabled children across the UK, supporting them to become confident and independent young adults.

<http://www.whizz-kidz.org.uk/>

**Whizz-kidz**  
*move a life forward*

## ACT 35: GOSPEL



Here we go then. The big one. Share the Gospel today with somebody that you meet, work with, or are friends with. No special technique required. You can start with your own story, with the other person's need, with a breaking news story, whatever. Or you could just wear a placard all day. Go modern, go old school – get the Gospel out there. It's Good News that has life-changing consequences; sharing it is probably the most generous thing you'll ever do.

*My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak . . . James 1:19*

It's one thing to share the gospel with people you don't know, it's quite another to talk with people you see on a regular basis. If it goes badly with strangers, you walk away. If it goes badly with your friends, you still have to live with them! That makes gospel conversations with friends potentially more risky and causes many of us to shy away from even starting them. Here are 6 things you can do to change your conversations.

Honour the context: If you are mates at work, be a friend. If you are family at a wedding, keep conversations appropriate to the context. You are sharing life with others and to do that you want to honour the context you are in. These are on-going relationships; you don't have to say everything today!

Be real: don't try to be a super Christian. If you fail, admit it. If the joke is funny, laugh. If you're frustrated, acknowledge it. Don't worry about having to make a spiritual point in every encounter. Just be yourself. Remember, your faith is also a genuine part of who you are, so approach your faith the same way you do everything else. Stay consistent.

Listen well: Often we are thinking of what we could or should say and we stop listening. Conversations require two people. Don't fall into a monologue. Learn to ask questions and actively listen to what the person is saying.

Respect perspective: You don't have to prove everyone wrong. Respect what they think. People do not share your faith, your world view or your understanding of truth; but they do have their own. Conversations are about sharing perspectives in the context of a friendship.

Share your story: Share your thoughts and experiences. You have the opportunity to engage with them from your perspective. Do so.

Listen to the Holy Spirit: While you are conversing, keep your ears tuned to the Holy Spirit for things He knows or wants to say. This enables you to cooperate with what God is already doing in the lives of your friends. We are partnering with the Holy Spirit as we share the gospel.

Engaging friends in on-going gospel conversations is one of the most rewarding parts of being a follower of Christ. Enjoy!

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=K48-Li7IfA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=K48-Li7IfA)

1) You can buy Mark McGraths 'a forgotten gospel' here. [click me](#)

2) Talking, texting or conversation? [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

MARK MCGRATH

Mark is an American communications expert. He is the founder and owner of McGrath Communications Group where he enjoys sharing his knowledge and imparting his skills for others to use.

<http://www.aforgottengospel.com>



LifeLine  
Network

## CHARITY

LIFELINE NETWORK INTERNATIONAL

LifeLine Network is a growing and dynamic group of grassroots community organisations and NGOs spread out all over the world.

[www.lifelinenetwork.org.uk](http://www.lifelinenetwork.org.uk)

## ACT 36: LUNCH BREAK



Re-appropriate your lunch break. Make or buy your lunch as usual, then, Matthew 14 style\*, use it towards a greater end than your own full stomach. Perhaps even make an extra sandwich, just in case.

It could be to build a friendship over food with someone who only had time to grab a Twix from the office cafeteria. Maybe you'll find yourself feeding a hungry person you meet on the street. The key is to be smart and compassionate with the normal food that you're blessed with every day.

\*the feeding of the 5000 bit, not the John the Baptist bit...

*He picks up the poor from out of the dirt, rescues the wretched who've been thrown out with the trash, Seats them among the honoured guests, a place of honour among the brightest and best. Psalm 113 v7-8 (The Message)*

The starting point of Psalm 113 is a litany of praise, focussed on the glory of the Lord. Its purpose is to help the worshipper tune into the wonderful Creator.

*God is higher than anything and anyone,  
outshining everything you can see in the skies.  
Who can compare with God, our God,  
so majestically enthroned? (The Message)*

It is from this position of worship we can begin to see the way forward. God 'picks up the poor' and 'rescues the wretched'. He is slow to anger and abounds in love. We know he is like that because he has rescued each one of us. Each of us has been made in the image of God. And each of us has 'fallen short'. This is true for all of us - the 'poor and wretched' and the 'brightest and best'.

And just as God is willing to meet and eat with each one of us so he asks us to meet and eat with our neighbours, whoever they are.

There is a challenge for us all here. Are we willing to sit down with those we consider the poor or the wretched, whoever they are? Or indeed, with the brightest and best, whoever they are? What changes does each of us need to make in our attitudes towards others? There is no need to 'look down' on others or to have a 'chip on the shoulder'.

Will we consider it an honour and a privilege to sit and eat with any of God's children for whom He abounds in love? If we do, we will find life richer for it.



## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fg6iifscEsw&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fg6iifscEsw&feature=player_embedded)

1) Here are some shareable recipes if you get the time. [click me](#)

2) Don't be like Joey. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

PAUL SOLLY  
DIRECTOR, THE GENESIS TRUST

Director of the Genesis Trust; a Bath charity supporting those who are homeless or otherwise vulnerable in Bath. The Genesis Trust enables churches and Christians across Bath to work together in the field of social action (loving our neighbour).

<http://genesistrust.org.uk>



## CHARITY

GENESIS TRUST

The Genesis Trust has been working to alleviate poverty and hardship for local people in Bath for the last 20 years.

<http://genesistrust.org.uk/>

## ACT 37: BE SECOND



Ring up a friend, co-worker, or neighbour. You could pick your spouse or child if you'd like. Tell them you've got some free time and let them know you'd like to spend time with them. Arrange to meet up wherever they fancy. Let another person lead your schedule. For today, or for a block of today, another person's priorities are going to be above your own.

*Love from the centre of who you are; don't fake it; ...Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.'*  
*Romans 12:10 The Message (MSG)*

I am a lists person! I have lists of birthdays, lists of paint colours on the walls of my house, lists of health vaccinations my girls have received, lists of exercises to do in the gym. And of course 'to do' lists, home lists, work lists, immediate lists and long-term lists. I am queen of lists and sad though I am to admit it, one of my joys is ticking off my lists.

But what I am really saying is that I have agendas; agendas which revolve around me in order to get stuff done in the time allowed, which with 4 daughters, a part-time job, a home, a dog, a husband, a church and some hobbies (not in any particular order) is not much time at all.

Like a lot of people in our 21<sup>st</sup> century lives, I am extremely time poor. Time runs ahead of me each day, weekend and weekday as I try to get stuff done and tick off my never ending lists. So time—the sharing and giving of it—is probably my most precious commodity. Over the years as my children have grown, I have also learnt an important lesson: that sometimes I need to dump the lists (they will always be there and new ones always to be created) and to spend time with other people doing what they want.

On the surface, these times don't appear to be anything special but they become special as I purposefully, fully engage with what someone else wants to do. I watch pre-teen movies with my youngest daughter, walk around art galleries with another daughter, watch sport with my husband, and take my older two girls out for lunch at their universities. And actually I have found, that by putting others first and me second, these occasions have been some of the best and most enriching times: sharing in new experiences, learning new things, creating memories and cementing relationships.

No, I don't have a 'time' list. Children and teenagers in particular don't ever pick a good time to need to talk or have a crisis, so being interrupted, changing plans, cancelling evenings out or sessions in the gym are all things that happen regularly. I also plan to make time for others, am happy to be interrupted, change plans and ditch my agenda.

The 40acts challenge today is to be second: to put someone else first, to spend time doing what they would like to do. So go to a football match, watch something you wouldn't choose, share the experience and you never know, you may learn something or even become a convert!

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4g4oV8IK4s&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4g4oV8IK4s&feature=player_embedded)

1) Read or watch the great stories at I am second. [click me](#)

2) Whatcha wanna do? [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

DEBBIE WRIGHT  
STEWARDSHIP

Head of content for Stewardship, taxi driver for four children, walking companion to springer spaniel, dinner partner to long-suffering husband and loves making homemade marmalade.

<http://www.stewardship.org.uk> @debwright99



## CHARITY

PATHWAY

Pathway provides quality Christian education for children across North London. Since it was established in 1990, the Pathway team have been invited into an increasing number of primary schools. At present the team are regularly invited into over 60 schools, meeting more than 10,000 children each term throughout Barnet, Enfield and

<http://www.pathwayonline.co.uk/>

## ACT 38: WIPE THE SLATE



Forgive someone. This is a fairly personal challenge, so you may need to take some time alone first to think. Find a place where you feel most comfortable and ask God to bring to mind someone whom you need to forgive. This is generosity of a different, and in some cases more difficult, sort. Acknowledge it, knowing that you're doing it with His help, then get on with your day.

*"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Mark 11:24-26*

We all know how difficult it is to forgive – to really forgive: to stop talking of the hurt; to want the person who did it to us to find restoration; to do what Jesus asked of us: "Bless your enemies." Often, it seems that we just can't do it. We can pretend to do it. We can convince ourselves we have done it. But the second we get the chance to talk about it, it all comes pouring out again.

Without doubt, forgiveness is hard work—sometimes demanding that we forgive afresh today the hurt we thought we had released yesterday. Perhaps only those who have suffered the most crushing hurt can truly understand why it can be so very hard to forgive.

Just occasionally, we cannot let go of our hurt. We go over and over it, perhaps telling others about it, or even going as far as to plan revenge of some kind. It is then that a strange thing can take place. The hurt moves from being something that has happened to us, to being something that possesses us. It becomes so much a part of us that we cannot contemplate living without it. To let go of it would mean letting go of who we are. The cost of this is high—sometimes inflicting a further hurt that can seem even deeper than the original one.

Perhaps that's what's at the root of that old Chinese proverb: "The one who will not forgive must dig two graves."

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO1RpUDLR7M&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO1RpUDLR7M&feature=player_embedded)

1) Check out the Forgiveness Project and read some of the powerful stories. [click me](#)

2) How I rediscovered faith. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

ROB PARSONS  
FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN, CARE FOR THE FAMILY

Rob Parsons OBE is an international speaker and best-selling author. He is the founder and chairman of Care for the Family, a national charity which aims to strengthen family life and help those who face family difficulties. Care for the Family is one of the UK's leading family charities and celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year.



## CHARITY

IGNITE ME

Ignite seeks to work with young people to impact their generation and want to make a difference by providing training opportunities in leadership, discipleship and music. In addition Ignite also offers internships, work experience and have led two major projects in the City called IgniteHope and Street Pastors.

<http://www.ignite.me.org/>

## ACT 39: SHARE YOUR STORY



Lots of us will have come to faith because we saw God first through another person. Today's challenge is to share your story with people. How has God worked in your life? Could this change another person's view of God?

How you do this is of course up to you. The important thing isn't that someone hears an action-packed melodrama but that your testimony honestly gets across how God has worked in your life.

*This is the testimony: That God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.' 1 John 5:11 ESV*

I love Harry Potter, I'm sorry, I do. I'm not embarrassed about it (and neither is my 15 year-old brother-in-law who cried when we bought him tickets to Harry Potter world. Or maybe he is, I suppose I'll soon see). I just love a good novel, a great story, an unlikely hero, a twist, the grand narrative, the humour and the wit.

However, the thing that frustrates me is that there are so many good stories out there that people box up, hide away and completely forget about. I'm talking about our life stories. They are about the transformation that has happened in our lives through Jesus Christ. And if we don't think it is something worth sharing then we might have missed the point. How many times have we gone into work, or University, or school, or to the pub (hopefully not the last two in that order) desperate to chat about the latest news. Yet we are so slow to tell of the great story of our lives. Maybe we don't think our story is exciting enough, there are no drug dealers involved, I haven't been to prison, my 'wild weekends' were spent learning Psalms in Sunday School.

Of course, your story may be like Paul, a Damascus road experience and a complete change of direction. But there's a good chance that your story is like Paul's mate Timothy, who was taught Bible stories by his mum and his gran (2 Tim 1:5). At first glance it's hardly Hollywood, but dig a little deeper and you will find faithful people, answered prayer, changed lives, fresh hope, unbroken promises, and undeniable rescue.

More importantly though, it is part of a much bigger and greater story, a grand narrative that we still read about today. As the Apostle John writes, 'this is the testimony: That God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son' (1 John 5:11, ESV).

And that narrative, the Bible itself, is a truly epic (and epically true!) story, starting in a phenomenal garden, with a dreadful twist yet an incredible plan, heading then into historical cities and hidden caves. We see evil plans, incredible promises, horrific wars and glorious heroes. There are walk on parts for talking donkeys, giant killers, failed kings, stubborn rulers, tiny tax collectors and a bunch of rough illiterate fishermen. But the main character of the Bible is the author himself, he writes himself into every page; he is the world's designer and bricklayer, the battle-winner, the judge and the redeemer. He is the booming voice from the mountain and a small child born into a messed up world. He is a dying man on a chunk of wood and a resurrected one in an upper room.

Ultimately our stories are about Him too. He is the centre of my story, and He is the centre of yours too. So I'd love to challenge you, as part of the brilliant 40acts, to tell your story, and in your story tell God's story. On the bus, on the tube, in the pub, headphones out, newspaper down, mouth open. Just watch out for flies.

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=kWTyKM1vTck](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=kWTyKM1vTck)

- 1) Listen to the incredible testimony of Brian Welch. [click me](#)
- 2) Here are some inspiring young people's stories. [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

SAM GIBB  
SORTED MAGAZINE

Sam Gibb is a twenty-something whose passion is to present the message and teachings of Jesus to lads in a way that makes sense to them. He writes a regular column in Sorted Men's Magazine and works for All Souls, Langham Place in London.

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CHRISTIANITY  
EXPLORED



## CHARITY

CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED

Christianity Explored is an independent UK Charity which originated in All Souls Church, Langham Place, London. It is now also registered as a charity in the USA. We produce courses and other materials to help people understand from the Bible who Jesus is, why he came, and what it means to follow him. Our materials have been translated into 20 languages and are being used in 60 countries in all kinds of churches.

<http://www.christianityexplored.org/>

# ACT 40: CELEBRATE



Most likely you'll have picked up on the neighbour theme we've been running with in this year's 40acts. Surprisingly enough, it's not a coincidence. All of your generosity steps have been leading to today's act.

Throw a party for your neighbour(s), or a curry night, or a drinks night, a cinema night, a draughts and checkers night – have a proper ball and bless the people around you. This is the final act: your chance to celebrate the journey you've taken and Jesus' incredible generosity on the cross.

"If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead." Tim Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Scepticism*

Two thousand years ago, thanks to the generous act of a wealthy man, the body of Jesus lay in a borrowed tomb. Though dead, the body was still guarded by Roman soldiers who were fast approaching the end of their shift. In a matter of hours, everything would return to normal and the guards would be free to leave their post.

Jesus claimed he would rise from the dead on the third day. The chief priests and Pharisees, experts at following and interpreting the law, could not accept his heretical claim. The Romans thought it crazy. A body couldn't rise from the dead. Or could it?

They knew that on the morning of the third day nothing, or everything, would change.

Our final challenge today is to gather with your neighbour(s) and celebrate. It could be a party, dinner, movie, walk etc. How you gather is unimportant. The goal is relationship. After all, The Father's goal in sending Jesus was to restore relationship with us.

But what about tomorrow? And the days after?

Tomorrow, believers in Jesus will gather the world over. Some will gather in cathedrals, churches, halls, cinemas, warehouses, and front rooms. Others will gather secretly in basements and back rooms forced into hiding by persecution and intolerance. Others will even gather in cars to avoid suspicion, and drive around with no destination in mind other than to worship The Lord in safety with other believers.

Some of the previous 39 acts have been easy. Others were more challenging. Some were light-hearted and fun, whilst others were deeply personal. Just like our authentic relationships should be.



For those of us who believe in the resurrection, our goal in the days ahead is to live each day deeply rooted in the significance of the resurrection and to consider the daily opportunity to be generous in our relationships. As Jesus taught, I hope it has become easier to joyfully share our possessions and build habits of generosity. But, has it become easier for us to share the reason for our hope, our joy and generosity? Perhaps now is the time to take a risk and share that reason with those you'll be with this weekend and in the weeks and months to come.

Many of you who have joined 40acts are not believers in Jesus, or are unsure of what you believe, and we're so pleased that you've joined us on this journey through Lent together. I suspect something about the campaign was attractive. Something about living for others spoke to you. Something about the message of generosity sparked an interest. May I urge you to consider the resurrection? I believe Jesus did rise from the dead on the third day and by doing so gave us the opportunity to come into a very real relationship with God, the Father and creator of the universe.

What about you?

Did everything, or nothing, change on the third day?

## LINKS WE LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBC8Yy8Wlqk&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBC8Yy8Wlqk&feature=player_embedded)

1) Why not come and celebrate with us in person? [click me](#)

2) Congratulations! Want to keep living generously beyond Lent? [click me](#)



## CONTRIBUTOR

Mike O'Neill - CEO, Stewardship - <http://www.stewardship.org.uk> - @michaeljoneill

Mike is Chief Executive of Stewardship. He is passionate about simple acts of generosity and encouraging others to develop a generous lifestyle. Mike is married to Donna and they have three young children.



## CHARITY

YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

Today we invite you to give to your local church. You can set up a Stewardship giving account, where you can manage all of your tithing and charitable giving from one simple, secure account online. Find out more here: [www.stewardship.org.uk/give](http://www.stewardship.org.uk/give)

Alternatively, you can fundraise for your church using [www.give.net](http://www.give.net). Visit this page to get started.

<http://www.stewardship.org.uk/give>