

Prepared to make a difference

Going on the EE Leaders Training Course was one of the hardest things I have ever done. But I was so excited at the prospect that I might be able to lead people to Christ that by God's grace I managed to get through. I am so glad that I did, for I am equipped and ready....

The tube doors slammed shut on the Circle Line and we were on our way, myself and the little old lady in the woollen head scarf with the perky face and the Cockney accent, heading east - at last. It was a quiet Saturday morning on the London underground and the trains seemed to have been as asleep as the people. In my anxiety to keep my appointment, I had struck up a conversation with this little person "Were the trains actually running?" During the quarter of an hour wait our talk had drifted from the dearth of trains to global warming, and now, settled comfortably in the train, I was learning that this gentle independent soul was on her way to visit her sister. She was a widow. She had married during the Second World War and immediately her husband had gone away with his regiment.

He had one week's leave and during that week he had been run over by a car on a London street. That had been the end of her marriage. My heart went out with compassion at the irony of this story, but I saw no self pity or anger in her eyes.

Only one stop to go. I wanted to give something to this lady, to make up for all the lonely stoical years that had been her life. But what to give? My experience had been so much happier. I couldn't begin to understand her situation. I had only one gift to offer, and only four minutes within which to pass it on. Up went a silent prayer, 'Lord, speak through me, this is your work – help me share the crucial parts of the outline' Then, out loud, 'Excuse me, but may I ask you a question?' 'Oh no dearie, I won't go to heaven!'

It could only have been four minutes later that I was standing up to jump out of those doors and race up the stairs. The train was drawing to a halt. "I won't see you again, at least not this side of heaven", I said desperately, "but maybe we'll meet in heaven?" I questioned. 'Oh yes dear, she said emphatically, and I'll know you!' I felt a rush of joy for I knew that she meant it. She had taken in every word and somehow miraculously I had left no part of the gospel story out. In my rush, however, I failed to find a copy of Just Grace.

I had been better organised a year earlier when heading once again for an appointment in central London. This time I had a quarter of an hour to spare. I sent up a prayer – "Use this time for your glory, Lord' As I prayed, my heart turned to shopping and I headed toward my favourite department store! This would be fun! Thank you Lord'.

Big Issue – Big Issue' was the cry I heard behind me. I was already ten paces beyond and I had no intention of stopping - after all I only had a quarter of an hour. But I could not proceed. I turned round and started to retrace my steps, my eyes firmly to the ground. I didn't want to buy the Big Issue and certainly didn't want to get involved with its salesman.

I will buy the Big Issue after all I said stoically and gave him my change, all of 80p. There was something about his meek response that touched my Dives heart of stone. *'It's all right'* he said. "What was all right?" He didn't say anything. (The Big Issue costs £1.00.) *'Its all right* he insisted, *"it doesn't matter, please have it anyway.'* Somehow he had become the donor, and I the penitent. *"I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry'* I said. I felt such a hypocrite. Here was this boy making a gift of 20p to me so I could have a magazine that I did not want. What could I give him of any value in return?

I usually find that I am neck deep in these improbable situations before I recognise God's hand of appointment. Yes, I could give two things, my time and the greatest gift ever given.

The young man, Stephen, listened in awe as we went through the gospel. He had not heard it before and at the end he gratefully prayed to receive the gift of eternal life. His nights were spent in a hostel and his days on this street. How would he get into a church that would suit him? I told him of one near the hostel and of a youth worker who would befriend him, and put a contact address in the 'Just Grace' booklet. Surely I could do no more?

Six months later I came across him again in the same place. He had not contacted me and I wondered if his conversion had been real. *"I didn't ring you,* he said *"Too busy".* Disappointment must have shown in my eyes. *"You see, I like to go over to that church over there'. I looked towards a forbidding mausoleum across the square. "That's where I like to go and sit - and they had a soup kitchen at Christmas and they know me now. That's where I like to go!" 'Thank you Lord, you really do look after your new-born lambs!*

You may think that talking to strangers is easier for me than challenging my friends and you would be right! Well I don't want to lose them, and if they're church friends from the traditional denominations I don't want to rock the boat! Better just to pray for them...? But it was just two such friends who recently invited me round to coffee to hear my testimony. I decided to take the opportunity to ask them the two (diagnostic) questions. What became clear was that although they were devoted to God and their church they had no assurance that the promise of eternal life was really for them. I was surprised and then thrilled as they urged me to continue. I could see the hope in their eyes even as they argued, nervous about accepting God's gift too readily. We discussed the implications of transferring their trust onto Jesus alone. Similarly they were encouraged by learning of the Holy Spirit as a guide or navigator. Eventually they agreed to follow me in prayer that they might have the assurance of eternal life. It was exciting. We then talked about discipleship. Being prayerful churchgoers, they already had a good foundation but we considered how they could develop their personal relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Our time together ended with grateful prayer and praise. Since then I have seen a joy and a humility in their characters and an effectiveness and power in the way they reach out to others. EE helps people to find assurance in their faith and this allows the Holy Spirit to work more fully in their lives! What a wonderful gift! I can't help wondering how many more there must be in our churches just waiting to be asked!

The great commission is '*Go into all the world...*' and so another amazing thing for me is that within three months of doing the EE training course I was invited to go to Africa! There the training was invaluable and it seemed that everybody wanted to have the gospel explained to them EE style. The 'Just Grace' booklets that I took with me became precious gifts to those converted. Even Moslems came to faith, in spite of the years of dire persecution which might result. I've learnt to be always well provided with 'Just Grace' when travelling abroad as well as at home.

Since that EE course I try to remember to give the smallest outing or encounter to God so that I am ready and willing to be used to share the gospel. I find that the opportunities do not arise unless I make myself available. Then the meetings are never hard and the presentation never difficult. Once I am with someone I ask God to give me love for them and I order the devil to get lost, under my breath of course! Yes EE does take hard work, commitment, planning and prayer and an awareness that God may change your agenda. But what can compare to the joy of sharing the gospel with people and seeing them saved? I just want to shout to the whole world the glory of it!

Diana Home

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