



ANDY HAWTHORNE

HOPE

UNLEASHED



SERVING GOD THROUGH
WORDS AND ACTIONS

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transforming lives together

FOREWORD

There are seven qualities I love about this book.

1. Vision: Andy is a person of vision, and yet he is a team player with a wisdom and a balance that are evident throughout this book. Balance is so needed in God's work today. In my own walk with Jesus, now over fifty-four years, I have seen too many people fall into the trap of extremism and unbalance. This message will help people avoid that pitfall.

2. Faith: None of us can walk with God and do his will if we do not exercise faith. The Eden Project story and so many other aspects of ministry that we read about in these pages will help us take steps of faith in our own lives and ministries. It is so easy to just be singers and hearers of the Word and not so much to be doers! I pray this book will help break the barrier and thrust many people into the action.

3. *Grace* is such an important word and concept, in my opinion, and I love the way it comes out in this book. Andy doesn't tie us up in duty but shows how Jesus inspires a life of gratitude and service.

4. Community: This has become a key concept in recent years. Andy wants to see transformed lives that will really bless

and influence the community. We are not talking about Utopia or perfection, but we are talking about reality. Here is a model we can follow, as we contextualize it to our own pilgrimage and experience.

5. Prayer: I so appreciate the emphasis on prayer. We do not hear or see enough of that in this context. The picture of people involved in prayer should cause others to want to get involved with praying people and gather where prayer is a reality.

6. Urgency: I believe this is often a missed reality in the lives of many of the Lord's servants and leads to a massive waste of time with little realization that we are surrounded by lost people who need the Savior. The clear challenge for all of us to share our faith is a vital part of the message of this book. The way God can change lives and use ordinary people should push all of us into action and into a life of redeeming the time to reach more people with the message.

7. *Proactive* is one of my favorite words, and it describes Andy and his team and The Message Trust in general. By faith, love, and action they have made things happen, and many are being transformed and on the way to heaven because of it. This work has gone on for many years and is a proven ministry that is here to stay. At the same time, they need our prayers and support, and we need to ask God to show us what he would have us do about this great message, great vision, and great ministry.

I want to urge you to take time to read this book and other similar books. The neglect of reading serious books written by men and women of God is a huge hindrance to what our God wants to

do in the world today. No wonder we are not seeing many long-term missionaries heading out to the more forgotten and unreached places of the world! Let's get a few extra copies of this message and pass it on to others.

George Verwer
Founder of Operation Mobilisation

INTRODUCTION

TWO PHONE CALLS

I've just had a couple of phone calls that are making me think. Nothing much unusual about that—the phone calls or the thinking. But still, I can't quite shift the feeling that what I've just heard is in some way significant.

For over twenty years I've been leading The Message Trust. We're based in Manchester, England, where we live, breathe, eat, and sleep our single vision: to see the place where we live blitzed, bombed, and overpowered by the good news expressed through words and actions. At the very heart of things you'll find us stirred up about going into the toughest places and reaching the most forgotten people. I'm not on the front lines as much as I used to be, but I keep in touch as best I can. And that's why I've had these two conversations within the last few hours.

The first one was from an excited Lindsay West. That's not a technical term for bad weather; he's the guy who fronts our band LZ7. He was calling to tell me about his week. He's been

in a school since Monday and the week's just peaked with a big evangelistic gig to which all the pupils were invited. Like I said, he was pretty excited, but somehow through the repetitions of words like "awesome," "amazing," and, for some reason, "gangsta, mate," I worked it out: He'd had a very good week. God had shown up, and 160 young people had just committed their lives to Christ.

The next call was from the guy who heads up our mission department, Matt Wilson. He was asking me to pray for two of our courageous Eden workers. They've made the choice to live long-term on one of Manchester's toughest estates, an area the locals used to call "The Bronx." These two girls on our team have given their lives to serving and blessing that community, to living their faith out loud among people the rest of society would rather ignore. The results have been amazing: The church has grown, crime has come down, and the whole community has received a much-needed dose of the kindness of God. But Matt was calling to tell me that our girls had just had their car set on fire by one of their more unbalanced neighbors. The car was a write-off, and the front window of their house had been blown out in the blast.

These two phone calls have got me thinking: Why does it always seem to be like this? The more we push out and see good things happening, the more opposition we run into. Yet again I find myself wondering what our priorities should be. Should we be trying for the "lamp on a stand" approach—bold, unashamed gospel proclamation to thousands of school kids? Or should we be pushing more toward "salt" and "yeast"—serving and blessing the vulnerable and the marginalized with no questions asked?

Both. That's the only answer that makes sense. And of course that can't be true just for us in The Message Trust—it's for every real Christian who has decided to follow Jesus. We must do both.

In this book we are going to look at how we can find that balance. We'll be looking at what works, as well as wondering about what doesn't. And all along we'll be learning from the Master. We'll start by jumping into Luke's gospel. I love the fact that Jesus' whole life's work is based on what we read in Luke 4. There he is, just out of the desert, in the power of the Spirit, entering the synagogue. By one of those God-directed coincidences it "just so happens" to be his turn to read the Scriptures, and the set reading for the day "just so happens" to be Isaiah 61:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18–19)

This is Jesus talking. This is Jesus reaching back into history, rooted in the present and looking forward into the future, holding all things in balance as he goes on to preach one of the shortest but best sermons ever: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (verse 21). That was it, just eight words. And for the next three and

a half years it was precisely what Jesus did. He fulfilled the prophecy by preaching good news, setting captives free, and opening the eyes of the blind wherever he went.

And he's still doing it today.

There's a problem though. Almost from the very moment that Jesus spoke those eight words, people around him have been spending inordinate amounts of time trying to decide what life's priorities ought to be. We're still wondering about it today. The word-only guys argue that our primary aim must be the preaching of the good news. The power-evangelism guys are more likely to emphasize the miraculous healing of the blind. And the liberation theologians say that what really counts is releasing the captives.

But hold on a moment: Surely our role model did it all, in perfect harmony. What's more, when Jesus introduced us to the Holy Spirit, he used the words "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). So, perhaps he really *did* expect us, wherever possible, to explain the good news with our words while also ensuring that we demonstrate the gospel with our actions.

Ever since I was a baby Christian, I've grown up on a solid diet of Bible teaching. My background is full of words, and I was taught to favor them over action anytime. It's hardly surprising that I became an evangelist and that I love to preach. I remember a wealthy businessman in our church saying to me years ago that he couldn't give his money to a Christian relief and development charity because they didn't make preaching the gospel a priority. What he meant was, they didn't necessarily use words to preach the gospel; and to him, therefore, they weren't quite coming up to scratch. Sure, they

were feeding people and helping them live a little longer, but that seemed less important than actually telling the people about Jesus and getting them to convert. “Preach the gospel in season and out of season” was the mantra I had grown up with. As far as I could tell, there was no excuse to stop blabbing about Jesus.

So it came as a bit of a shock to me when around ten years ago, in the buildup to a huge citywide outreach we were planning, one of our partners sat me down and told me he was convinced that at least half the young people involved should be out there performing random acts of kindness. I was surprised. What on earth did washing someone’s car have to do with the gospel? How did painting park benches lead to salvation? I didn’t remember Jesus talking about the importance of weeding communal gardens. Still, I gave in, and our team started organizing around four hundred community action projects across the region.

Nearly decade has passed, and I can now say without a shadow of a doubt (and with only a little frustration!) that he was right and I was wrong. Jesus had loads to say about the way we live, and this model of mission—where our actions matter just as much as our words—has permanently shaped the way many of us do outreach.

There was something remarkable about that time we spent together in the summer of 2000. It was as if we did ten years’ work in ten days. Perhaps some of our earlier attempts at “hit and run evangelism” had led people to believe that we were some kind of foaming-at-the-mouth fundamentalists. But suddenly we had the police and local authorities on our side, seeing us as a real force for good rather than a force to be avoided.

Since then we have learned a lot about “servant evangelism,” as we’ve got involved in around a thousand more community action projects in every corner of Greater Manchester. We’ve cleaned and painted and fixed and helped, and as a result crime has come down, whole areas have been changed, and—yes—we’ve been privileged to have some great new opportunities to share our faith. A national movement of people fired up about doing mission in words and action has been birthed, and gradually, across Britain, the future for individuals, families, and whole communities is changing as a result.

There’s no surprise that young people have really started to get busy in their own communities. Wherever you go, it doesn’t take long before you run into someone who can quote those famous words of Francis of Assisi: “Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary use words.” There’s just a slight problem with this: I don’t really feel that these words from the great man describe the heart of what we do at all. To me, a much better way of describing this out-of-control God movement would be “preach the gospel at all times, using all the best words and actions you have.”

There’s plenty of truth in the saying that you can’t get a ten-ton truck across a one-ton bridge, especially when you apply it to our attempts to preach. Too often we’re heavy with the message but forget that our relationship with the community isn’t anywhere near developed or strong enough to be able to cope with it. However, the flip side is also true: If we build a beautiful, highly polished bridge of kindness and yet never bring the truck of truth across, we haven’t gotten the job done either. Some

churches and youth groups are great at community action and social engagement; some are brilliant at gospel proclamation. For me the secret to success in any ministry is to genuinely combine the two.

I've become increasingly convinced of two things: First, God has given his church more than enough resources to ensure that every man, woman, and child hear the good news of Jesus in language they can understand. And second, every man, woman, and child can experience the kindness of our servant-hearted Savior through his people's actions. I'm praying that leaders around the world will rise to the challenge, follow his example, and take decisive steps to see the gospel demonstrated and hear it proclaimed in every corner of our planet.

In Acts 1:1, Luke starts his follow-up to his gospel. He writes,

In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about
all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach.

Of course, his former book is the very gospel of Luke that we will be looking at across these pages. In one sense Luke's gospel *was* the story of everything Jesus did and said. But as we know, through the Holy Spirit, it is now *we* who are continuing Jesus' work. Look back at the first words of Acts and the word I highlighted—Jesus *began* the work. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, that work is still going on. How? Through people like you and me.

It's both daunting and exciting. One thing I am convinced of is that we must work hard to get the balance right. We have to discipline ourselves to ditch the dualism that says that it's only words that matter, or that actions win out every time. We have to have both. Why? Because that's how Jesus did it.

1

THERE IS NO PLAN B

Luke 1:26–56

Toward the end of a life full of amazing words and actions, Jesus said something that was remarkable even by his own standards. Talking to his Father, he said, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4).

It strikes me that, like Jesus, we really do all have a task to complete on this earth and that the goal of our lives should be to get as close to completing that work as we possibly can. Flip the thought over: Isn't it absolutely amazing to think of all the good works we'll leave behind when we die? What about all those plans and possibilities that were dreamt up for us? Can we really ignore them so easily?

Jesus' good works here on earth didn't start when he came out of the desert in a blaze of glorious healing, teaching, and saving.

It was thirty years earlier that it all started, when he was willing to leave the glory of heaven and humble himself to float around as a fetus inside a little bag of waters in the womb of a young peasant girl. That's how far he had to go in order to get right alongside us, to reach our level and literally put flesh on the bones of God's master plan of salvation.

Throughout the rest of this book we will be looking at Jesus and seeing what we can learn from the way he reached out with words and actions. But first we need to go right back to the beginning and take a look at his mother. What can we learn from her amazing response to the call of God on her life?

There is no doubt that Mary was a remarkable young woman. How many girls in their early teens, as she probably was, would cope in such a faith-filled and chilled-out way in the face of such earth-shattering news? And it wasn't as if the delivery was low-key. There was no email, no gentle chat with a familiar family member; just some forty-foot-tall shining white angel called Gabriel. (Okay, so the Bible might not say he was forty feet tall or shining white, but you've got to give an evangelist a little room to tell a story!)

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his

father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”
(Luke 1:30–33)

Let’s be fair: Mary was a risk. What if she had said “No thanks”? What if she got freaked out by the whole thing and changed her mind? What if she ran off and drank a bottle of gin or had a cold bath or found some other way of getting rid of the baby? There must have been others looking for a way of dealing with an unexpected pregnancy. What if Mary joined them?

The whole thing was a risk, and it’s not much different today. Imagine choosing you and me to share the most glorious news in the world and to deliver the kindness of God to a hurting world! What if we ran in the opposite direction? What if we gave up on prayer, stopped acting in faith, and acted in fear instead? How much of a mess the world would be in!

But that’s our God. He has staked everything on us getting our act together. He has bet the house on everyday idiots like you and me getting involved and taking our faith seriously. How amazing is that? How scary?

There is a folktale of the angels coming before God as Jesus ascended to heaven. They were asking him what the plan was now that Jesus’ time on earth was up. Who was going to carry on the work of building God’s kingdom? God points down to the ragtag bunch of anger-management failures, hotheads, and doubting Thomases. It’s them. They’re the ones to build it.

“But what if they fail?”

“There is no plan B.”

Those first disciples were the plan, just like that overwhelmed teenage mom, just like you and me. We’re the plan. We’re the potential. We’re the way this thing gets built.

Mary may have been young, inexperienced, and poor, but she was no failure. She had what it took to be used by God; she had a heart that pumped for him, a heart that beat in time with his own work. As the eyes of the Lord scanned Israel looking for a girl who would be suitable for the greatest responsibility in the history of the world, they rested on Mary.

I love Mary’s response to Gabriel’s words. I’m convinced that if we were to respond in a similar way when each of us met our own calling, we would see a lot more success and transformation going on down here.

Four things stand out to me. First, there’s the whole sense of urgency that we get from Mary. Luke 1:39 tells us that her response to the overwhelming responsibility was to get ready and hurry to Zechariah and Elizabeth’s house to tell them the good news. Look at the rest of the gospels, and you’ll see a whole lot of hurrying once people have received a word from the Lord. The gospels are littered with words like *immediately*, *suddenly*, and *swiftly*. Wouldn’t it be great if the church of Jesus was a bit swifter to respond to the command of God to *go*? How much better would things be if we were to go out of our meetings with a little more pace and passion and deliver the good news in words and actions to this generation? For Mary there was no option. God had spoken, and she started to hurry.

That hurrying carried on over sixty miles of difficult terrain, but it was worth it. Once she arrived at Zechariah and Elizabeth's house, Elizabeth's baby started jumping for joy in the Holy Spirit. As if she needed it, there was Mary's massive confirmation that this wonderful miracle really was taking place inside her. In one quick trip Mary demonstrated a truth that lies at the heart of all Christian living: We have to understand the importance of sacrifice and obedience. If God puts people on your heart, don't just pray for them; go to them quickly and watch what he does. If God puts an neighborhood or a people group or a country in your mind, go quickly; don't wait until every piece of the jigsaw puzzle is in place and every penny is in the bank. Step out. Do it. Risk it.

After thirty years of doing this stuff, I can testify that if it's the Great Commission you're working on, God really will bankroll the work. Right now his eyes are searching the earth looking for people with a heart for the lost, hurting, or broken of this planet. And when he finds them and sees that they are ready to obey the call and go sacrificially, he will strongly support them (2 Chronicles 16:9).

The second thing that gets me is Mary's excitement. We've just had a few of our team return from a large youth prayer event in America called The Ramp, and to be honest I'm slightly worried they might spontaneously combust. They're so pumped that every talk we give is now greeted with whoops and hollers American style, and they're spending literally hours and hours of every day in prayer, worship, and sharing Jesus with people who don't know him. They're not doing it because they're paid or because they are bored or because they think it might just be a bit of a laugh. They're

doing it because the reality of who Jesus is and what he did has burrowed deep under their skin. And when that happens for real, any aspect of our lives is a candidate for transformation.

I'm quite jealous of their passion right now. Granted, some of it may seem a bit over the top, but I'd rather have overenthusiasm than the numbness that comes from being lukewarm. George Verwer put it better when he said, "It's easier to cool down a furnace than warm up a corpse." I'd rather be a furnace for Jesus, and passion and excitement have always been the currency that young people deal in.

Luke carries on with the story:

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:41–43)

Elizabeth's joy was palpable. She was telling Mary that she was the most blessed person on the planet, that she had been given the most privileged job that's ever been given. Because Mary had not been tripped up or freaked out by the news, nor did she feel lukewarm about it—choosing instead to believe, trust, and

act—Elizabeth could see that things were going well. There's a truth in here somewhere, that when we hold on tight to God's promises and believe that they will come through in spite of all the troubles and opposition around us, then we end up being blessed. So many Christians get disillusioned and discouraged when God's promises aren't fulfilled according to their schedules. It can be tempting to do the opposite of Mary and give in to disillusionment and defeat. But there is no life to be found down that route.

I think Mary knew that, because instinctively she joined in with Elizabeth's excitement, bursting into a song full with joy and optimism.

Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel,

remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.” (Luke 1:46–55)

For most of my life I’ve been a member of my local Anglican church. Just occasionally I’ve had the joy of sitting through the 1662 prayer-book service. As the name suggests, this is a very old bit of kit. Over 350 years have passed since it was scripted by a bunch of evangelists called the Reformers. They were trying to reach people with the gospel, dragging services out of the world of outdated Latin traditions. They used the language of the street, and in its day it was a truly dangerous and radical thing to do. Their motto was “always reforming,” and that’s what they did, constantly bringing the services up to date, refusing to settle and be stuck in a rut. There was just one problem: One by one they were burnt at the stake for their efforts. Three and a half centuries later many churches are still using the same services. I’ve got a sneaking feeling that Thomas Cranmer and his fellow Reformers are in heaven right now slapping their heads, wincing their eyes shut, and shouting, “*Duh!*”

I know I’m on thin ice with some people, particularly those who love the poetry and reverence of the 1662 prayer-book service. And just because it’s not my cup of tea doesn’t mean God doesn’t like it. But I’m sure that what matters more than whether we like the worship service or whether it’s got robed choirs and bells and smells or screaming rock bands up front is whether the people outside the

church can understand and connect with it. If that's not possible, we should do exactly what the Reformers did: Kick it out.

But I'll say this for the 1662 service: It nearly always includes Mary's song, called the Magnificat. This is an amazing collection of words held together by full-throttle joy, passion, and excitement. Sadly, in my experience, it usually gets sung to a miserable tune by people with very long faces, which is weird because this is a song of excitement and over-the-top joy and passion.

"My spirit rejoices in God my Savior..." The word *rejoices* here in the original Greek language is *agallio*. It's the same word that's used in Luke 10:21 when Jesus is freaking out with joy as the disciples return from their first mission and report that "even the demons submit to us in your name" (verse 17). It literally means "to leap for joy, to show one's joy by leaping and skipping, demonstrating excessive or ecstatic joy and delight." Mary is, in short, quite a happy girl at this point! In fact, it would appear that, despite the challenges of her pregnant state, she is beaming with excitement and almost bursting with this song of joy and praise to God.

Let's be fair, even with the hassle and hard work, Christianity is a phenomenally exciting thing. Living on the cutting edge of God's purposes, dealing with all the opposition that comes with trying to reach out into our communities, following Jesus' great commission to tell the world the good news ... these are the ingredients that lead to the most real, most inspiring, most satisfying experience of all. Let's not lose the sheer joy and wonder of what this good news of Jesus can do in the darkest of communities and the most

broken lives. Put another way, the gospel works every time; it's lost none of its power. As Paul says, we're plugged into "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). When you think about that, it's understandable that every once in a while—just like our young men returned from The Ramp—we need to get a little overexcited.

Right now the developed world is suffering from an epidemic of excess that is squeezing all the joy out of so many lives. Look around and you'll see it: an excess of alcohol, drugs, sex, debt, and isolation that is literally killing people. How about confronting that with the excessive, ecstatic joy and delight that only Jesus can bring?

The third thing that is obvious from Mary's response to God's call is her love of Scripture. She is thirteen or fourteen years old, yet she just oozes the Bible. This song she bursts into certainly feels as though it's off the top of her head, but it includes no less than twelve different Old Testament passages.

It's clear that Mary didn't just skim her way through Scripture. She memorized it and held it in her heart, getting to the point where it really was "living and active" and "sharper than any double-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). The same can be true for us, if only we'd get Scripture off the pages of our Bible and running through our blood. Would life ever really be the same again if we managed this? Why not make a commitment today to learn more of the Bible? How good would it be to be able to know it, live it, and breathe it, so that what pours out of us is God's Word, pure and simple—whether we are on the streets or facing times of great excitement, challenge, temptation, or failure?

I've got a feeling that one of the key reasons Mary was chosen for this amazing task was that she loved God's Word. And from the moment she became a mother to God's child, she showed her child how to do likewise.

At her coronation Elizabeth II was presented with a Bible by the Archbishop of Canterbury—just as it has been with all the kings and queens of the British Commonwealth. As he presented it, he uttered these words: “Your Majesty, here are the lively oracles of God, the most precious thing this life affords.”

And that's the truth. We might not spend much time getting into the Bible, and we might completely forget to treat it with the respect it's due, but it really is the most precious thing on the planet. It's the only thing I know of that contains the keys to a worthwhile life here on earth and an eternal one to come. We might want to be used by God for high and holy purposes that last forever, but without immersing ourselves in God's Word, we're never going to make it. It is this, and not our own man-sized dreams and visions, that must direct our plans.

The last thing to stand out, as we look at this passage right at the start of Jesus' life on earth, is Mary's humility. Her song isn't full of arrogance or ego but humility and sacrifice instead. It reminds me a lot of David's song when he was dragged out of obscurity as a shepherd boy to rule a nation:

Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is
my family, that you have brought me this far?

And as if this were not enough in your sight,
O Sovereign LORD, you have also spoken
about the future of the house of your servant.
Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O
Sovereign LORD? (2 Samuel 7:18–19)

Of course the answer is yes—it is exactly God’s usual way of dealing with men and women. Reading the Bible, I get the feeling God just loves to stun the humble with his awesome intervention.

Gideon was the least in the lowest family but went on to defeat the Midianites. Amos the gardener made his status clear with these words:

I was neither a prophet nor a prophet’s son,
but I was a shepherd, and I also took care
of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took
me from tending the flock and said to me,
“Go, prophesy to my people Israel.” (Amos
7:14–15)

There are others, too, and I love every single story. But it’s more than mere entertainment or good drama. If you and I will get to the place where God really does get all the glory—like Mary, David,

Gideon, and Amos—then maybe we'll find ourselves involved in greater things than we've experienced so far.

One thing I'm sure of is that right now the Lord's eyes continue to range the earth. He's not on the hunt for talent, giftedness, or sexiness; just a humble heart and a life willing to react quickly and obediently to his Word. When he comes across that, he'll strongly support it. You won't find yourself giving birth in the way that Mary did, but you will give birth to some God-sized visions for your community. Bit by bit you will stop living a life plagued by small-minded and insular views. Instead you will live large, bearing the fruit that he chose for you on the day he went out of his way to select you for eternal life.

Ephesians 2:10 makes this absolutely clear: "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Maybe some years in the future, when old age has settled upon you, you might be able to inch a little closer to saying to God, "I've brought you glory by completing most of the work you gave me to do."

Isn't that really what life is all about?

HOPE REFLECTED

1. If someone looked at your bank statements, Internet-browser history, or phone records, what would he or she say are your priorities? Try doing the exercise yourself or—if you're brave enough—give someone else permission to do it for you.

2. What place does the Bible have in your head and heart? Do you know it? Do you like it? Do you feel as though you need it to help you through the day? If you've answered no to any of those, don't worry or feel condemned, but do make up your mind to do something about it. Talk to someone at church who is wise and trustworthy and who knows the Bible. Ask him or her to help you get to know it better.

3. Are you feeling as though everyone else has a God-given calling and you do not? Are you still waiting for God to deliver you a dream that matches your hopes and expectations? Stop. Think back over the last seventy-two hours: Have there been times when you have ignored things that God may have been prompting you to do? Are there conversations you avoided, situations you backed out of, or things you simply ignored? If so, you need to repent and rediscover a

little more obedience. Or are you struggling to think of anything that God might have been speaking to you about? If that's the case, you need to know this: God doesn't stay silent for long. Talk to someone about how you can learn to hear him better.

4. Humility is a hard thing to measure—particularly in ourselves. But it's worth having a go. Are there people or places or tasks that—deep down—you know you go out of your way to avoid? Are there areas of your life that you've fenced off from God? Are there dreams and ambitions that you can't let go of? If so, take a look back at Mary's reaction to her unexpected pregnancy. How do you think she would respond in your situation?

What people are saying about ...

HOPE UNLEASHED

“Andy packs his usual pace, energy, and enthusiasm into this fantastic book, urging us to give absolutely everything we’ve got to preaching the gospel. The result is both challenging and inspirational as it unpacks the biblical basis for word and action mission, tackles big issues head-on, and motivates us to keep going when things get tough. For anyone serious about following God’s call, don’t just read this book—really take it to heart and live it out.”

Mike Pilavachi, founder of Soul Survivor

“This easy-to-read book has ingredients of faith-inspiring stories, biblical teachings and images, plus experienced mature observations from a pioneer of the gospel. It deserves to be read by every church member who wants to reach their area and networks with the gospel.”

Gerald Coates, founder of Pioneer

“*Hope Unleashed* is not a theoretical book outlining God’s plans for mission, but is practical, down to earth, and inspiring, full of nitty-gritty stories of God at work in the lives of ordinary people like you and me. It takes seriously God’s love for people and shows how his love can be expressed through both words and actions.”

Steve Clifford, general director
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“The new paradigm—that is not new at all but has a truth that has been lost—is word and action evangelism. Andy’s passion and practical insights *could(!)* cause the transformation we all long for in our villages, towns, and cities. This is a timely, prophetic insight for the culture in which we find ourselves.”

Roy Crowne, vice president of Youth for Christ

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TO BETH

This book is dedicated to you because you're amazing
and because God really does have great plans for your life.