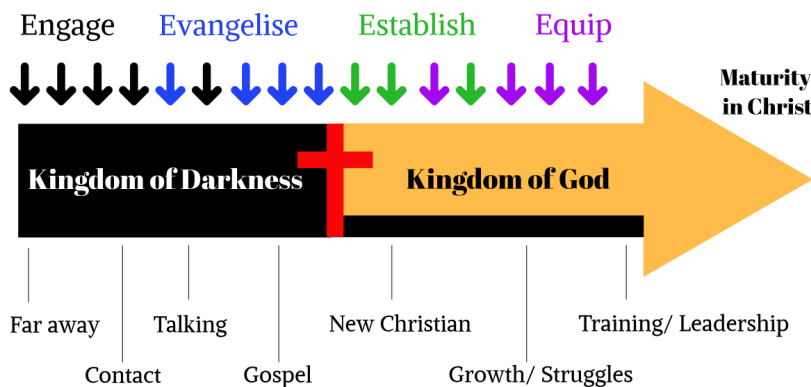


Over the past few months we have been looking at what a disciple is and how we can make more **disciples**.



We spoke earlier about **Try Praying** and Weekend of Invitation and these are things we need to be active in. Statistically if we assume that Prestwick and Monkton has 20,000 people and we take off 2,000 who already profess faith and attend church, that leaves 18,000. 62% already know a Christian – that is 11,160 people. Research suggests that 1 in 5 will respond favourably to an invitation and another will ask some questions about faith. That means if we simply keep on inviting the people we know 2232 will respond – statistically. The thing is, our congregations are not good at inviting. What a difference it would make to Prestwick if 2000 people came to faith. It would be amazing. It only happens when believers pray and invite.

During the GA the Moderator, at the end of the debate on the radical plan, said that it was a significant moment. That **lots of words** had been agreed but unless the commissioners went back home and ensured the plan was carried out it would remain words. I can stand here and talk till I'm blue in the face but it's just words unless we actually do something about reaching others.

There are certain things that we must do because we're a charity, one of which is to present the accounts. These have already been sent to Presbytery having been agreed by the Session so that's why you have just a few pages. There are some copies of the full account at the door for anyone who wants one. Last year, **2018**, our official involvement in POR ended, although there are still some training days for ministers and I am mentoring another congregation now in their second year of the process. Messy Church, BB and GB, Creators Club,

Lunch Club, the Guild, Bible Study, 24/7 prayer and home groups continue, along with Alpha and Talking Jesus courses. We are involved in Holy Week services and Easter Connections with other churches in the town.

You should have a copy of the main pages of our accounts for 2018 and there are some things I want to highlight:

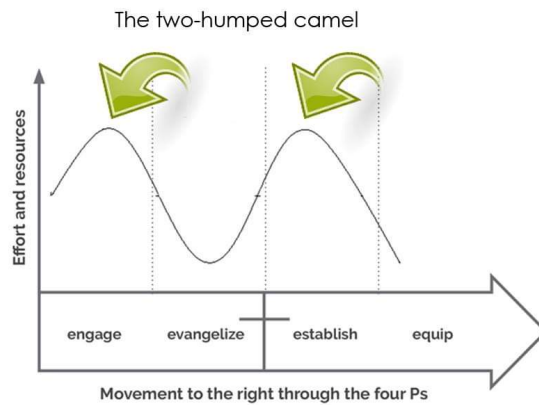
On page 10 you'll see three sections, receipts, payments and excess. In receipts you'll see that our income was down by around 13,000 compared with 2017. You'll also see that our payments (expenses) were down by 12,900 i.e. we significantly reduced our outgoings in line with our income. However we still made a loss of £2031 for the year. Page 11 shows in the top left column that we had money in the bank so we didn't get into the red.

Page 12 shows where that income came from in more detail. Essentially, almost everything except the lunch club brought in less than in 2017. Page 13 shows expenditure in more detail and we have pretty much reached the point where we can't make further reasonable reductions.

Already this year we are £5600 behind in our payments to Edinburgh because our income has continued to go down and we can't afford to pay them. Some years ago we had a Stewardship Campaign where volunteers phoned round members and went out with forms etc. Everyone hated it! Consequently, the Session agreed that I would talk about giving during sermons throughout the year. Each time I do that some people increase their giving and that's great. We are indebted to those who give sacrificially. The problem is that only really works for those who attend. We have given out a booklet explaining what we need, and how to give – it even talks about legacies and leaving money in your will! Hopefully that is going out again in the next few weeks. If you have any ideas about what we might do to improve the situation please speak to Robert Gibson, Sandi or me because this year is going to be a real struggle financially.

What does this have to do with making disciples? I want to suggest it is vitally important. God's people are called to extravagant generosity. We are to love and serve others, introducing people to Jesus, praying and working for God's kingdom to come. We are to be active in the world and all of that takes resources. It doesn't always need to involve money – inviting someone to church doesn't cost money, it costs time and takes commitment to pray. Every congregation needs money, but it also needs the time and talent of its members - we always need volunteers: the AV team is particularly short at the moment and we desperately need someone to assist with catering – something that does actually provide a source of income!

We are at the equip section of the picture – that part where believers are taught and trained to **serve God**.



All too often what happens is that people stay at the establish area, thinking they don't know enough or are not good enough or have no gifts to share. They think they need to learn more before they can move on but we can offer Alpha, Talking Jesus, the Prayer Course, prayer ministry training, or all the bible studies or home groups possible – and it's just words unless we actually DO it.

I want to look very briefly at **Hebrews 13:20-21** ²⁰ *Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,* ²¹ *equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

This is a benediction or blessing from the writer to the recipients of the letter. His prayer is that they would be equipped with 'everything good for doing his will' through Jesus. It tells us a lot about God who is able to do this.

First, **God is a God of peace**. In a world where peace is talked about often but rarely found, we need to know the Prince of Peace, Jesus. To say that he is the God of Peace means that he is the only source of true and lasting peace.

Peace comes by having a right relationship with Jesus – **Romans 5:1** *We have been made right with God because of our faith. Now we have peace with him because of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

John 14:27 *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*

We will experience God's peace if we turn our lives over to Jesus. The more time we spend with him, deepening our relationship, the more peace we will have.

Second, **God is a God of power**. His power defeated death and brought Jesus back to life. He is the resurrection and the life.

We have already been raised to new life in Jesus Christ. **2 Corinthians 5:17** *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* Did you know that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to all who trust in Jesus? Therefore, those who will receive Jesus Christ into their lives will be given new life. If there is anything we may need, it is life. Jesus came to give us real life. Abundant life! Eternal life!

Third, **God is a God of provision**. He brought 'the Great Shepherd of the sheep' back to life. This is the 'good shepherd', Jesus. Looking at different places in the bible when the image of a shepherd is used of God or Jesus we see that he provides guidance, provision, and protection. He delivers us from evil by giving up his own life. He is able to 'equip us with everything good' but notice the writer doesn't stop there – it's not just everything good – it's everything good for doing his will!

Lastly, **God is a God of purpose**. It says, *and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ.* Remember this is a prayer of blessing upon the readers of this letter. He works in us what is pleasing to HIM, not us. We can try and muster up energy and enthusiasm for things but if it is not what God wants for us we will not be properly equipped and end up working in our own strength. God has to do his work in us. We can hinder that work by being disobedient – but what incredible blessing we miss out on. He offers life in all its fullness. How sad then if you and I only get life in small measure because we are disobedient.

Let's trust God, give extravagantly, serve with passion and follow him so that he will 'equip us with everything good' as we go.