

“Becky and her husband, Dick, have practiced and taught evangelism on six continents, including seven years living in Europe, widely acknowledged to be the most secular region of the world. Becky’s experience and biblical insight have been distilled in *Stay Salt*. This is one of the very best books for encouraging faithful evangelism in the twenty-first century. Buy it by the case, and distribute it as far as you can.”

D.A. Carson, Founder, The Gospel Coalition

“In this generation, no other writer, teacher, scholar, or preacher has a firmer grasp on the power of evangelism than Rebecca Manley Pippert. And no one does a better job of communicating the joys and challenges of disciple-making. Her stories and examples are compelling.”

Liz Curtis Higgs, Author, *Bad Girls of the Bible* and *Thorn in My Heart*

“Fresh, natural, straightforward—Becky Pippert may be one of the most gifted and fruitful communicators today, but she makes evangelism what it should be: the best news ever, for all who know it to share with all who don’t.”

Os Guinness, Author, *The Call*

“I was so thrilled by this book. Time and again I was shown how the great truths about God can be used to equip the church for evangelism. From now on, as I train churches, I’m going to be standing on Becky’s shoulders.”

Rico Tice, Founder, Christianity Explored Ministries;
Author, *Honest Evangelism*

“From the opening pages, I knew this would be a book worth reading, not only because the subject matter is so important but also because the writing style of its author is so engaging—practical, winsome, and gracious.”

Glenn Davies, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia

“As you journey through these pages your mind and your heart will be gripped by the beauty, clarity, and power of the good news. Don’t be surprised if you experience a wonderful sense of confidence to share this news with the world, starting with your neighbor.”

Crawford Loritts, Pastor; Radio Host; Author

“Here is a book that mixes realism, freshness, gospel engagement and the pragmatic wisdom of someone who has ‘lived it,’ and it’s all rooted in a strong biblical gospel base. *Stay Salt* should be a staple for any church bookstall, though copies won’t stay there for very long!”

Hugh Palmer, Rector, All Souls Langham Place, London

“Not just inspirational and heartwarming, this book will renew your sense of both the wonder of the gospel and the privilege of sharing it.”

Lindsay Brown, International Director, The Lausanne Movement

“Becky’s training of thousands of UCCF students and staff kick-started some of the most fruitful personal and small-group evangelism we have ever experienced in British universities. Her genius seems to be the ability to excel in multiple areas simultaneously—*Stay Salt* blends theological precision with humour and vulnerability, and combines the urgency and priority of evangelism with God’s interest in the whole person. Surely a must-read for the whole church.”

Richard Cunningham, Director of UCCF: The Christian Unions

“No one has done more over the years to help me understand—and taste—the saltiness of the gospel than Becky. *Stay Salt* underscores just how powerfully and urgently we need to live and share this good news.”

Mark Labberton, President, Fuller Theological Seminary, California

“Pippert grips us by the throat with the urgency of the gospel and leads us by the hand as we wonder how we might share it more often. This book will shake you. But it won’t tear you down. With stories of fear and failure, as well as those of joyful fruit, Pippert inspires us to speak the truth in love to friends and strangers, be they university lecturers or hair stylists.”

Rebecca McLaughlin, Author, *Confronting Christianity*

“*Out of the Saltshaker* was one of the most important books on evangelism written over the last generation. *Stay Salt* may be the best book on witness for the next generation. I don’t know of a more lucid or penetrating book on evangelism to put into the hands of a Christian.”

Timothy Keller, Founding Pastor Emeritus,
Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Manhattan

“How refreshing to read a book on evangelism that presents the gospel in a way that is refreshingly biblical, joyfully inspiring, and powerfully relevant.”

Ajith Fernando, Teaching Director, Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka

“Joyfully summons us into the new and sometimes daunting landscape of a post-Christian world with practical advice and insights.”

Timothy Tennent, President, Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky

“*Stay Salt* has been written for today’s people, and squarely faces today’s conditions and prevailing secularism. Becky’s enthusiasm, positive attitude, and refusal to be dismayed are infectious. A must-read for everyone!”

Benjamin Kwashi, Archbishop of Jos, Nigeria

“This is brilliant. Pippert guides us on how to tell people about Jesus in a culture that can seem impenetrable to the gospel. This book contains a contagious passion for the gospel, a perceptive wisdom about the world we live in, a profound understanding of God, and a deep practicality.”

J. John, Evangelist and Author

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Stay Salt

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*This book is dedicated in grateful memory
of my beloved mother, Sue Manley:
February 21, 1930 – August 28, 2019*

*And to my husband, Dick: my partner,
my protector, and my joy, whom I love in
a place where there's no space or time.*

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INTRODUCTION

The one thing that unites all Christians, now and throughout history, is our joyful assurance that the greatest thing that ever happened on our planet is the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The message of the gospel is quite simply the best news ever!

So here is my question: if this is so, why do so many Christians struggle to share the glorious news of the gospel? How can we believe that there is no greater news in the world but still feel unable or unwilling to tell others?

My husband, Dick, and I have long been engaged in evangelism ministry in America and around the world. We have worked in every continent, and recently we lived in Europe—parts of which are considered to be among the most secular places on earth—for seven years.

Two years ago, we returned to live in America, and I was interviewed on a national radio show which included a phone-in Q&A session. The producer said before my interview, “Becky, I know you and your husband have done evangelism ministry all over the world, and that recently you have lived and ministered in Europe. You need to know that things have changed in America. To be honest, American Christians are far more interested in living the

gospel and demonstrating their witness by serving the needy and caring for their cities than they are in any verbal expression of faith. To be very honest, I think the light has gone out for that kind of evangelism. So don't worry if no one phones in."

What happened after my interview? All the phones lit up as people called in from across the country!

The callers' comments were very revealing. Every caller spoke of someone they cared deeply about who was not a Christian, but they felt fearful about engaging in a spiritual discussion with them. They said they longed for their friends to come to Christ, but because they felt inadequate in talking about faith, they were praying that another Christian would do it for them. All their fears were similar: *How do I raise the topic of faith naturally? What if I offend them or they reject me? What if they raise questions that I can't answer?* Nearly everyone said they wished their churches would help train them in evangelism—not in a formulaic, memorized, one-size-fits-all approach, but in the way that I had been describing in the interview.

One thing has become clear to me: never has there been a greater need to share Christ with the world, starting with our own neighbor—and never have believers felt more ill-equipped.

Why are Christians, especially in the West, struggling to share their faith? While in most parts of the world Christianity is growing dramatically, this is not the case in the West. Europe and Canada are secular—post-Christian. Statistics suggest that America is moving decidedly in the same direction. Influential voices are increasingly hostile and antagonistic to true Christian faith. The major currents shaping our culture present real challenges for the gospel: the collapse of absolute truth; the shift from objective authority to personal preference; the "designer religion"

approach of picking and choosing what we believe, cafeteria style; the sexual revolution... The list goes on.

Some Christians feel angry about this.

Some Christians feel intimidated by this.

Some Christians feel defeated by this.

I feel hopeful.

Because while we are living in challenging times for the gospel, we are also living in remarkable times that are full of opportunities for the gospel. As my friend, the social critic and author Os Guinness, has written:

“Our age is quite simply the greatest opportunity for Christian witness since the time of Jesus and the apostles, and our response should be to seize the opportunity with bold and imaginative enterprise. If ever the ‘wide and effective door’ that St. Paul wrote of has been reopened for the gospel, it is now.”

(Fool’s Talk, page 16)

FRUIT FROM BURNED-OVER GROUND

Without question, the landscape in the West has changed considerably since I wrote my first book on evangelism, *Out of the Saltshaker*, in 1979. Back then it was a fairly radical idea to call Christians to an incarnational approach to witness, to challenge them to get out of the saltshaker and into the world: that is, to encourage them not to live in a Christian bubble but to genuinely befriend unbelievers, and to share the gospel as part of a relationship rather than using a hit-and-run approach.

Now, 40 years later, I am writing my second book on evangelism—because we need to learn again to share our faith in a confident,

compassionate, compelling way in this new, post-Christian world. I remember when we were planning to move to Europe, and some well-meaning friends of ours counseled against it:

“It’s burned-over ground for the gospel, Becky.”

It wasn’t. The secularized soil of Europe proved very fertile for the gospel. The fruit was tremendous. And this book is really the result of the lessons we learned.

What we have seen in our ministry is that even as our cultural landscape becomes increasingly secular, secularism does not have the power to erase our human longings for meaning and worth. If anything, it increases them. God has placed a longing for identity, meaning, and purpose in all human hearts; so, even if people can’t quite articulate what they feel they are missing, the longing and wistfulness are there. But they will not know where to look unless Christians both live and tell the good news of what God has done for all in Christ.

REACH IN

When we returned to live in America, I found myself increasingly identifying with Lesslie Newbigin, the late British theologian, author and missionary. After years of living abroad in India, Newbigin returned to his home in England and was shocked by two things: first, the level of the secularization of England; and second, the impact that the secular culture was having on Christians.

He realized that the challenge wasn’t only how to reach unbelievers with the gospel, but how to reach believers with the gospel as well! And that is, I believe, the challenge for all Christians everywhere. In the West the challenge comes from living in a post-truth, post-Christian culture that reflects the distortions of

post-modernity.¹ This means we need to deepen our love for Jesus and to discover him with fresh eyes: to allow the truth of the gospel to have its full effect in us and to find effective ways to communicate the gospel for such a time as this.

Our problem, however, is that we have been far more influenced by secular culture than we realize. We are in great danger of believing the gospel in our heads, while functioning like skeptics because we have adopted a more secular view of reality, without recognizing it. We need to recover our confidence that the gospel is truly relevant to secular people today—that God and his gospel still retain the power to change lives. We need to see why we should be involved in evangelism even if we don't feel gifted at it. We need to remember why it is worth putting ourselves in situations where we could be rejected.

If we are going to reach out with the gospel, we also need to reach *in* with the gospel: into our own hearts and minds. This is our double challenge. To be credible messengers of our incredible gospel message we have to understand and truly believe the gospel ourselves! Our emphasis must never be on numbers or techniques, formulas or manipulation, but on authenticity,

1 While much of the emphasis of the book is about dealing with the challenges we face in the secular West, Dick and I have spent significant time ministering in the Global South, where our brothers and sisters have taught us so much. This book will also be relevant even in the countries where evangelism is flourishing, for three reasons: first, because Christian leaders in the Global South speak of their need for a deeper understanding of discipleship and the gospel; second, because even with our deep cultural differences, it is still our common humanity that unites us; and third, because the challenges we face in the West will offer insight and understanding if one day “our” struggles become “your” struggles—struggles which seem to be emerging already in the larger cities of the Global South.

credibility, and spiritual power. And so this book aims to excite us about the depth and beauty of the gospel, even as it equips us to share that gospel.

As we've spoken to and listened to countless thousands of Christians right around the world, helping them to both understand the gospel and to share it winsomely, we've often heard three heartfelt reasons why they are struggling or why they choose to remain quiet. Those three reasons provide the structure for this book.

We Feel Inadequate

We continually hear of the deep sense of inadequacy that Christians have about sharing their faith. They wonder how God could possibly use them in this current era. This is another way of saying that they fear that God may not come through. In other words, they are struggling with pockets of unbelief. They also suspect that evangelism is a specialized call and not for people like themselves. While they don't realize it, what they are really saying is that evangelism is up to them alone, and that is why they panic.

So we'll begin this book looking at the *Means* for witness. We'll see that God has given us all the divine resources we need for life and for witness—that the key is not whether we are great evangelists but realizing that God has empowered all of us through his Spirit to be his witnesses. Accepting our limitations and enjoying our limitless God is a game-changer not only in our walk with Christ but also in our witness.

We Think We Don't Know Enough

Another area of insecurity in Christians is feeling that they lack knowledge. They fear they do not understand the gospel well

enough to explain it or defend it. They don't know how to answer the questions that skeptics will raise. Nor do they know how to help non-Christians see the beauty and relevance of the gospel to their lives.

That is why the second section is on the *Message*. We'll look carefully at each aspect of the gospel: creation, the fall, the cross, the resurrection, and Christ's return. We will remind ourselves of what each aspect of the gospel means and why it's so wonderful. We'll look at the pushback we'll receive from skeptics and some possible ways to answer their questions. And, crucially, we'll see how we can use each part of the gospel message to connect with the concerns and priorities that both seekers and skeptics have, and in ways that show the beauty and the relevance of the gospel.

We Lack Confidence

What we hear repeatedly is “I am just not sure how to do this. I really do want to share my faith—but I don't know where to start.” So our last section is focused on the *Model*: what we can learn from Jesus and the early church about the “how” of witness. We'll explore how we can effectively share the gospel with both people who are spiritually open and those who are spiritually closed.

The purpose of this book is to help us to rise to the challenge of our time: speaking for our Lord in a way that reflects the wonder of who God is; communicating the beauty, depth, and relevance of the gospel that he has entrusted to us; becoming Spirit-dependent so that, through God's Spirit, we may be able to penetrate the resistance and stubbornness of minds and hearts that do not yet believe—in short, to help us find effective ways

to share our faith even with—especially with—all the challenges that today’s world presents.

Are Christians ready for this new age? Can we really communicate the gospel effectively? I emphatically say “Yes!” Because though our context and culture have changed, the power of the gospel has not. The riches and the resources that God has given to all Christians are still the same. Our task is learning how to apply all that we have received from God so that we can witness to the truth about him in ways that are effective and that truly connect with people today. We do not need to get angry, shouting at our culture. We do not need to feel defeated, staying silent in our culture. We can be hopeful, as we share the message that the whole world so desperately needs to hear. To put it another way, we can still be disciple-makers. We can—we must—stay salt!