

Is
there
more
to **life?**

voice
to empower
men for life



Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International



From a Distance



Bill Lincoln, Mold, North Wales

At the age of about 10, I didn't get much attention from my parents because they were pre-occupied with my younger sister who suffered from a thyroid complaint causing her to spend many months in hospital. I used to be dropped off at a picture house that showed nothing but cartoons all day long. Whilst being unsupervised by parents and given the right attention I got in with the wrong crowd and began to get into serious trouble with the police so that between the ages of 13 and 29 I spent over half of the time in prisons of one sort or another, for many different offences.

At the age of 16 I was on bail on the condition that I live at my parents house and that I sign in at the police station every day. My father was a strict disciplinarian, an ex-Coldstream guardsman, hard Yorkshire man. One Sunday he said, "I will take you to the police station to sign on." When we got there he told the police that they could keep me because they didn't want me at home.

What followed was probably the worst year of my life. I was remanded in custody again, celebrating my 17th birthday in prison, rejected by my parents and unwanted. Shortly afterwards I was given a borstal sentence and sent to Wormwood

Scrubs prison. I tried to kill myself, I became an even nastier person because I failed. I felt a failure, dirty, everything was my fault, unwanted but I couldn't kill myself, I tried three times.

When I was released and faced another prison sentence, I ran off to France, not wanting to be locked up again. I then joined the French foreign legion, in truth, partly it was fine, it was feeling good because you belonged to a family, belonged to something and they cared, but I was still a man with an attitude. I was eventually thrown out for unruly and uncontrollable behaviour. I used to do a party trick with a hand grenade!

On my return I met a lady, we got married, but despite having two children, it didn't work, so I ran away and again found myself back in prison.

One day a friend came bounding up to me. "I found Jesus", he said. "Why, was he lost?", I replied... That's how cynical I was.

We used go to chapel in prison to get out of our cell for an extra hour, but when the chaplain told us "Jesus died for you a sinner", it didn't do anything to me. We had one curate there who challenged us that he could talk about any subject, so we told him to talk about the pill. The following week he turned up and delivered his message. It was about a pill; the two tablets that Moses was given. He met us where we were at, that was good, but still nothing seemed real...

When I came out of prison my mate said, "Stay at my place," and so I did, I felt duty bound to go to church with him. They all sang with their hands in the air. "Bunch of nutters," I thought, so I turned and walked out again. A dear lady came up to me and said, "Do you know who Jesus is?" I said, "Is? He was, he died," chaplain's told me that in prison." She said, "No, he is alive. All the peace, the joy, the healing, everything you want, Jesus can give you. You just have to give Jesus your life." I thought "He doesn't want mine. What have I got? Nothing, just the clothes I am stood up in." I walked away.

A few days later I was walking down the road and was aware that something was happening to me. Looking round to make sure that nobody could think me mad because I was talking to myself, I said, "Jesus, God, you want me to give my life to you? Okay, you can have it."

Suddenly for the first time in my life I laughed on the inside. I went back to my friend's house, and told him. He said, "Oh, that's good. There is some other good news, there is a job going." I got the job. When I started working, one evening a girl I was working with said, "There is a bed-sit going next to me, your own accommodation." Suddenly things started to take off, I thought it was a coincidence but then I thought, "No it's not." After a few days I had a new job and a place to live.

I went to church and a lady gave me a bible. They used to have bibles in prison. The papers are really thin and great for making tobacco paper with. I

was told to read Ephesians. So there I am looking under 'Ef', then I eventually found Ephesians, a book in the new part of the bible. Ephesians, chapter four, verse twenty eight said, "the man who used to rob must stop robbing and get himself a job to be able to look after himself and help the poor." I thought if it's in the bible I've got to do it.

Many things have happened since I gave my life to the Lord in 1984. I cannot forget the time God spoke to me about drinking.

I had, when depressed, been tempted to turn to wine as the solution. One day when I was actually going to celebrate something, I heard as clear as a bell God saying, "Got a problem, come to me. Don't go to the bottle, come to me. If you want a quiet drink, celebrate, that's fine. But if you've got a problem, come to me, not the bottle." That's stuck with me, because that is important.

Years later and having obtained employment as a security guard (poachers make the best game-keepers!), I remarried. My wife too had come to know Jesus. We lived in Sussex. A major problem was that my wife had for twenty years wanted a child but had been unable to conceive, and this remained the case despite a year's IVF treatment.

But then God told us to move to Wales although we had no

connection there. But we did, in obedience, give up our home and our jobs and move, and within a month my wife was pregnant. Again within a month we had found a house, I had found a business and my wife a job. And the blessings continue.

In May 2004 whilst I was at the National Convention of the FGBMFI I experienced the miraculous healing of my knee. Two years earlier I had damaged the cartilage and I was taking four dif-

ferent pain-killers, I also needed a crutch to enable me to walk. Somehow I knew that God was going to heal me, and so He did. The pain left me, I threw away my crutch, and I was able to jump on and off the stage without pain or difficulty.

With the church and FGBMFI, I have travelled to Sri Lanka and Egypt and my wife has been to Kenya sharing what God has done in our lives. I thank the Lord every day for all that he has done for me, giving me a lovely wife and lovely son, but most of all for his forgiveness, his love, grace, mercy and blessings. I think of the many things that have happened in my life, yes it was hard, it was nasty, it was often painful, but not one thing I have been through has been wasted. That is the sort of loving and forgiving God that we have got.

Somehow I knew that God was going to heal me, and so He did. The pain left me, I threw away my crutch...

Billy Lincoln is a member of the Mold Local Group and works as a part-time debt collector.

Set Free from a Dark Tormenting Shadow



James Ritchie, Wigan, Lancashire

I was born in Wigan in June 1940 into a Catholic family, and so, as a boy, I had to attend church regularly, but it made no impression on me. As a teenager I became a rebel and refused to continue with church going. My decision was final and didn't change for many years. As an extrovert I sowed many wild oats. As a habitual joker I was the life and soul of many parties, always in with 'the lads!' Outside life seemed fairly tough but I could handle it. Inside I was a boy who was struggling with dyslexia (then unrecognised) and yearning for some love and affection from my parents who were not demonstrative that way. Suffering from incontinence from an early age, I went through guilt and self-condemnation whilst medics

never solved my difficulties. Finally I gave up in despair and just accepted the stigma of it.

At the age of twenty I met June, proposing on our third date! I was utterly convinced that I had found the love of my life – time has not changed that inner assurance. But after marrying in 1964 our early years were 'stormy weather'. We had been married her way in the Anglican Church, but for some years attended nowhere. June was inwardly religious, but I myself had no spiritual anchor to hold on to. Jesus was for me just a figure on a cross in a church.

But everything changed when in 1970 on Good Friday afternoon June met Jesus in a real experience in our own home. The result was an inner change for her and a real time of surprises for me! She wanted me to attend church on Sundays and I

agreed to go. We had come through a lot, and I loved her. We chose a new church, where we found other like-minded young couples, and a vicar who really knew God. The timing was right! We began to learn what being a Christian meant and June was set free from the trauma and dangers of the Ouija board she had been introduced to in the previous two years.

By now in 1971 I was quietly convinced that I then knew all about God and left for a Christian youth camp with that proud attitude, expecting to change the lives of the teens too! On a wet Sunday afternoon I attended a meeting led by a Baptist leader who somehow seemed very special, as did his wife. At the meeting a shaft of light attracted me to the wife in the midst of a praise chorus, it seemed to come down straight from heaven and I was soon to know this same glory for myself. Kneeling down, I found myself repenting and weeping, with a vision of Jesus before me on the cross for my sins. A long time later, I arose, a new creature bathed in Christ's love, aware of the peaceful change within me. We left soon after and on reaching home, as June opened the door, she immediately knew from my face that I too had had a personal encounter with Jesus. But incontinence was still my curse and embarrassment.

However, in 1978, while we were in Scotland, God gave me the desire of my heart and I received my healing.

Not in a big church meeting, but in our small country cottage as a lovely Scottish pastor wept and prayed for me to be set free from the endless bind of incontinence. No loud fanfares sounded, just a swift rise up out of its dark, tormenting shadow.

What the medics and specialists could not do, Jesus had done by the compassion of one godly man! God met the need and I felt the freedom and the release of it deep inside.

For many years I worked as a lorry driver and can truly say that God went with me, protecting and helping me in miraculous ways, saving my life on motorways more than once. When one has been saved from a multiple vehicle pile up in a lorry, it then becomes very obvious that the Lord is able, by His power, to overrule what seems to be certain death. Particularly because at the exact moment that I was involved in the multiple pile up my wife was led by the Holy Spirit to pray for me.

Then, as my provider God proved Himself faithful. During the slump years in the '80s I had no job and little to live on as a childless, married man, yet we were wonderfully and sometimes, it seemed, miraculously supplied with the finances we needed.

But over and above all of this I have experienced from my Heavenly Father the love and affection which I had often craved for, but rarely received, from my parents.

James Ritchie is a member of the Ashton, Lancashire, Local Group.

The Man who Didn't Want to be a Christian



Peter Graham, Cyprus

I want to make it clear at the outset that my wife and I did not ask to become Christians, or want to become Christians, or even think about becoming Christians, so in the story we have to tell we have to give all credit to God.

Looking back, I must have been protected in many ways. At the age of 17 I was a soldier in Malaya and survived many scrapes. Also in other places in the world, as a freelance soldier, I came through without a scratch, so I came to consider myself invincible.

One saying has been associated with my life for many years, it is, "Yes OK". which was my regular response to life's challenges. So I spent extra time in Malaya, and I ended up in a foreign country as a soldier on the wrong side. I got married to a lovely girl and had two wonderful sons but, sadly, we were divorced. It was always "Yes OK".

I met my present wife in Bahrain where we were very successful and made a lot of money. We married and returned to England where I

joined an American Company, and everything I touched turned to gold. I earned a very high salary, and we had a wonderful family, two cars, a £150,000 five bedroomed house, the company platinum cards. We could go anywhere, do anything we wanted, La Dolce Vita in every respect.

Then, one day, our life fell to pieces when my wife was diagnosed with a brain tumour. She spent some months in Southampton Hospital, but when she was discharged she could not walk properly or coordinate. Also the operation left her with epilepsy. I had the option to stay at home and look after her or place her in a home. No contest, I stayed at home.

Our life went from bad to worse and our salary, which had exceeded £40k a year, was reduced to £38 a week. Also we were left with the debts from our extravagant life style.

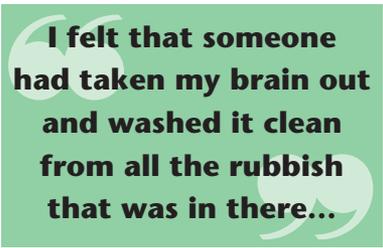
Some time later I became convinced that our house was haunted, and that I should get the house exorcised! I remembered that when Anne was in hospital the people next door to us, Bill and Maureen Smith, told us that they had put a prayer chain round the hospital to help Anne, to which I had replied, "Oh very nice, a bit weird but nice." We had spotted

them as being a bit odd because they had meetings in their house on a Tuesday night where they sang and shouted "Hallelujah". We assumed that they

were 'Jesus Freaks' and so, whilst we were friendly, we kept our distance.

They agreed to come round with their lady pastor Ann, but as I went to walk away Maureen said, "You know what you need in your life, Peter, you need JESUS." I did not say, "Yes OK". I said, "You must be joking, I have walked too close to the devil for too long for any of that nonsense." What I did not know was that for the rest of the day she prayed for me.

Bill and Ann turned up next day. They went round the house, room to room, pausing only to bring certain artifacts to my notice which I had picked up as I wandered around the world for thirty years, including a Lucky Buddha, a Shiva with Cobra, and a dancing Ramah Krishna with twelve pairs of hands. Pastor Ann requested that she should throw these things away. "Yes OK" came into force. Before they left the Pastor



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asked if she could pray for us, “Yes OK,” we both replied.

Neither my wife Anne nor I know what she said. We only saw her extending her hands to us, we do not know how long we sat there after they had gone, we did not notice them leaving but we experienced different things, Anne was crying and smiling at the same time without knowing why. I felt that someone had taken my brain out and washed it clean from all the rubbish that was in there, and taken the huge amount of worry off my back. It was amazing and we went through the rest of the day in a kind of daze

We went through the week with no dramatic changes except that I felt

that I wanted to go to church. Anyone who knew me would have asked where the catch was, the last time I had been in a church, except for ‘earthings’ and ‘birthings’ was in Darkest Africa with my weapons in front of the altar on my knees at a particularly bad time.

We went to Bill and Maureen’s church, and from then on our life took a definite turn for the better, and many mighty works of the Lord showed themselves in our lives. The church prayed for Anne and the epilepsy never occurred again. I joined the FGBMFI and became the President of a Chapter in March in Cambridgeshire, which grew very quickly. Also many other wonderful things happened over the next few years.

Peter with Anne (now healed).



We moved to Cyprus where we were in the process of setting up a Christian television station, when Anne was diagnosed with another brain tumour. She had to be taken back to the UK for treatment. The specialist’s diagnosis was another melanoma in a very difficult position, which would mean a lot of other damage would occur when it was removed.

She was operated on the next day and a massive tumour was removed. She was alive, but she was paralysed down the left side and with damaged

nerves in her eyes that only enabled her to see with reduced vision, and so she was soon back in the operating theatre for further surgery.

At the end of three months with still a long haul in hospital in front of us we were completely broke, I had one penny, and because we had no home in England I had been sleeping anywhere in the hospital I could find a quiet spot, the chapel, waiting rooms, etc. My food was whatever Anne left on her plate. I had nobody to talk to, or to wash a shirt or socks or anything. I was in a very bad state. I could not get any assistance from the government agencies because I had not got an address. I had come to the point when I could do no more.

It was two-o'clock in the morning in the hospital car park; the rain was lashing down and the thunder and lightning clattered all around. I went down on my knees and screamed at God, "Give me a break will you, I have tried to do everything you wanted since you came after me, you signed me up, not me chasing you." Nothing happened except I got wetter!

Yet in the coming days a former

pastor rang and said God had told him to give us his car. Then I saw an ad in the local paper for a bed-sit, and when I went to see it and told the owner that I couldn't pay a deposit he told me to pay the rent at the end of the month. Then a lady from the DHSS came round and she was a Christian and started by saying, "Let's have a prayer time before we start business." I was granted an adequate allowance.

Then, when I went back to the hospital to tell Anne, the Ward Sister told me that they had noticed that I was there all day without anything to eat and offered me meals at the hospital's expense.

In just seven days after my desperate cry to God I had been provided with a home, money, transport and my meals. Who says God does not listen?

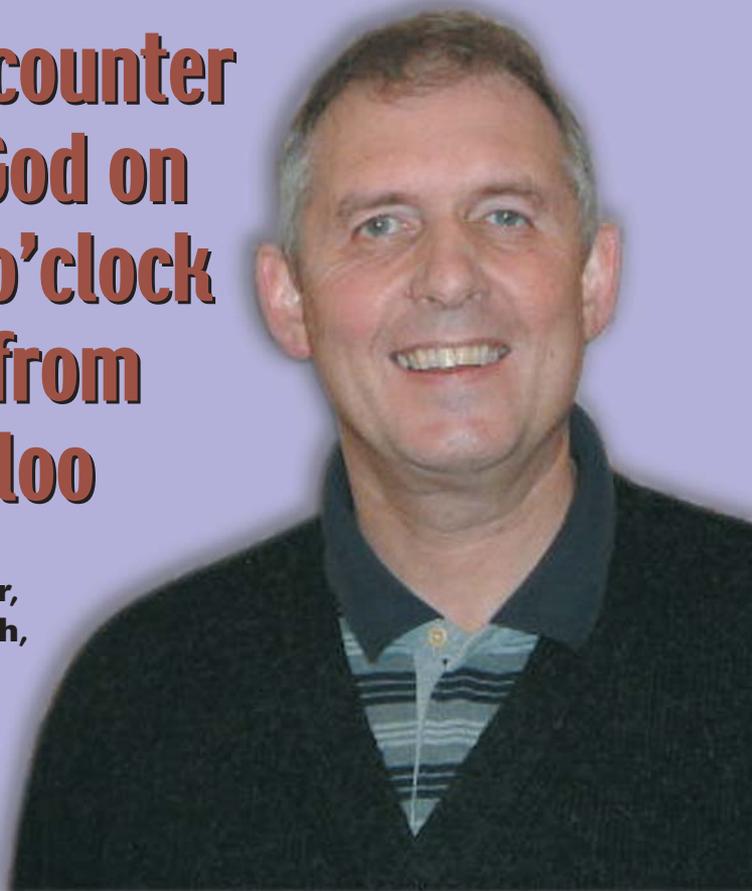
During the next few months her remarkable faith, and prayer from all our friends in church, healed Anne's eyes. Her ability to walk returned when friends of ours from America prayed for her. We have gone from strength to strength with the Lord's help, and we look forward to returning to Cyprus to complete our mission.

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Peter Graham was formerly the President of the March Local Group and he and Anne have recently returned to Cyprus where he hopes to revive interest in the Fellowship.

An Encounter with God on the 6 o'clock Train from Waterloo

**Clifford Grier,
Bournemouth,
Hampshire**



I have the great privilege of knowing the date and time when I became 'born again' by the Spirit of God. It was the 7th March 1973 at 6.05 pm on a train travelling from London to Winchester. The story of my journey however began long before that wonderful day.

I had the good fortune of being born into a loving and God fearing home. I had a traditional and happy experience of the local church where I sang in the choir. As a result I regularly attended services where I enjoyed the bible stories and I even

came to think of myself as a 'good' person.

The time came when I began to be teased at school about attending church, and like generations of children before me I began to drift away. It was the swinging sixties with flower power and the Beatles. John Lennon was my particular hero and I began to grow my hair long, wear outrageous clothes and spend my time listening to pop music. The Beatles were a major influence and when they began to follow Eastern religions and to be disciples of the Maharishi, Christianity became even

less relevant as far as I was concerned. What little faith I had just melted away.

I had one last link with the Church, that of ringing the bells. I was in strong demand particularly during the summer months when weddings were arranged. After one such wedding I found myself wondering if there really was a God and for the first time in my life

I prayed: "God if you really do exist please show yourself to me!" It was a sincere and genuine prayer and one, which the Lord dramatically answered a few years later.

On leaving school I started work with what is now the Crown Prosecution Service in London, which at that time was meant to be one of the most exciting places on earth – 'Swinging London'. Curiously however I found it a rather empty place and the people I came in contact with were just like me. They didn't seem to have the answers to the questions I was asking about life and indeed their lives seemed as empty and meaningless as my own.

I had kept contact with some old school friends who were by now beginning to experiment with the occult, and this awakened a curiosity in me. Friends asked me to obtain books on the occult from a bookshop just off the Charing Cross Road. I bought tarot cards and books on astral travel and such like. I found I

had a great fascination with such things. After discussing one book with my friends we decided to hold a séance using an ouija board. It is something I would strongly counsel against now because afterwards I discovered a spiritual reality, which left me afraid and insecure. In particular I experienced some unexplained and blood chilling occurrences in my home.

This love was so overwhelming that I had to cry out to God to restrain himself as it felt as though I would be consumed by his love.

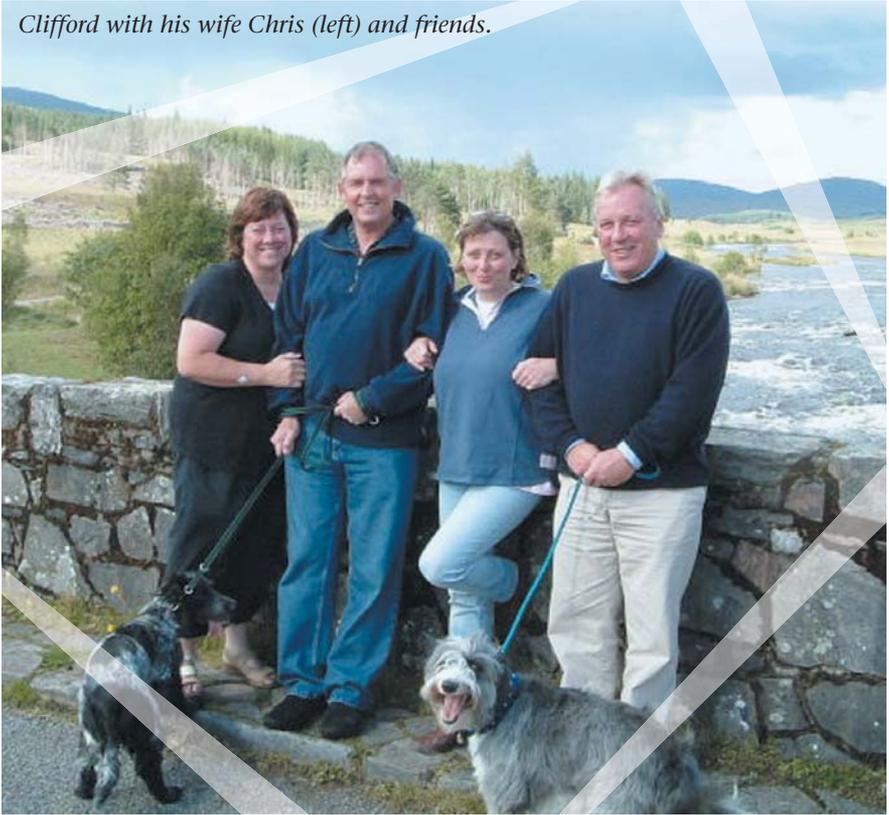
This led me to go back to church; a place I had not visited in a long time, and it was like going home! It happened that I met there an old school friend. He told me that he had become a Christian. There

was something different about Eddy, he did seem to be a different personality from the person I had known at school, and I wanted to know more. Eddy suggested I go up to Winchester the following week to meet some of his new Christian friends and I agreed to go.

Throughout that week I found myself pondering the events of the séance, my chance meeting with Eddy and what had led to his change. A phrase also began to form in my mind, although at that time I didn't know where it had come from. All I knew was that it was a short sentence in the bible somewhere, "Let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no'."

That following Friday Eddy and I met some of his friends in their digs. After

Clifford with his wife Chris (left) and friends.



a simple meal we sat down to a bible study. I felt foolish because I hadn't a clue where to find the chapters and verses which seemed so familiar to them.

After some discussion these young men opened up in prayer. I had never heard such prayers before. Each of them prayed to their Heavenly Father from their hearts and it was clear that each had a real and living relationship with Him; it made a tremendous impression upon me.

After this prayer meeting I asked them the meaning of the verse that I had had in my mind all week. They told me where I could find the verse

in the gospels and explained that it meant that I should be truthful. This was an important word for me as I had a terrible habit of telling lies at that time. I used to exaggerate and embellish everything so as to make myself appear to be a more interesting person. Indeed already that evening I had told them several lies merely to impress.

I awoke very early the next morning. It was a beautiful day, a clear blue sky. I decided to get up and go out to buy some bread for breakfast.

As I walked along the footpath it seemed to me in my mind that the path opened up beneath my feet into

a bottomless cavern. All my insecurities seemed to come into my mind and I heard God speak to me in my heart. He said: "Do you know Clifford, the only reason why you don't fall into that pit is because of my will?" I remembered the lies I had told the previous evening and I was cut through in my conscience.

After breakfast, I got on a train to London, then spent the whole day wandering around the streets and parks alone in my thoughts.

Towards the end of the day I had come to a firm decision that I wanted to follow Jesus as his disciple, just like Eddy and his friends.

I went back to Waterloo and got on the train to go home. There was hardly anyone in my carriage. As the train pulled away from Waterloo station I began to sense a deep peace enter my soul, and then a very wonderful thing happened to me: a

feeling of joy began to fill my heart. The joy began to grow and to fill my whole being. I knew this was not so much joy as the love of my Heavenly Father. This love was so overwhelming that I had to cry out to God to restrain himself as it felt as though I would be consumed by his love. At that moment I looked at my watch and it was five past six. A moment I shall remember in all eternity.

Since then I have read in the scriptures where it talks about the disciples being filled with 'joy unspeakable'. This I believe was the same experience I had that day.

I now work as a Senior Crown Prosecutor in The Crown Prosecution Service, a job that I regard as a vocation, and I have the most wonderful wife who was given to me by the Lord through prayer, but that is another true story that must wait for another day.

Cliff Grier is Vice President of the Bournemouth Local Group.



empower men for life is the purpose and focus of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International. What began following a vision given to Demos Shakarian, a business man, has spread to 160 nations in every continent in the world. The life changing story is told in the book *The Happiest People on Earth*.

Through our meetings we aim to:

- Reach men in all nations for Jesus Christ
- Reveal the power of Christ to men
- Offer Christian fellowship and mentoring for men
- Bring greater unity to the Christian Church worldwide
- Equip men to fulfil the Great Commission

If you have been challenged by the stories in VOICE you may be asking, “How can I become a Christian?”

A Christian is a person who has a personal and living relationship with God through inviting Jesus to become their Lord and Saviour.

To become a Christian there are 3 simple steps you need to take as you recognise that God loves you and wants space in your life to help you live life to the full.

Step 1 **Accept** the love God offers. Acknowledge that Jesus is the only Son of God, that you need His help in your life. Invite Him to help you have the living relationship that God offers you.

Step 2 **Believe** that Jesus died on the cross and rose again to pay the price for your sin to enable you to have a relationship with Him as your Lord and Saviour.

Step 3 **Confess** by saying sorry for all the sin and wrong things in your life. Tell Jesus you want to get rid of those things so that you can have a fresh start and receive His forgiveness.

Why not pray this simple prayer to invite Jesus into your life:

Lord Jesus, I want to thank you for showing me that God loves me, that you want me to know you personally, that you care about me and right now I say yes to your offer of friendship, forgiveness, and a fresh start. Please make yourself known to me as I invite you into my life.

I am sorry for the times I have hurt you and others, please forgive me and help me to change. Help me to forgive those who have hurt me and to become the person you want me to be. Let me know you as my special friend who is always with me, please give me the strength to follow this decision through. Amen.

Please let us know of your decision so that we can send you helpful information to “empower you for life”.

- Please send me details of “**empower men for life**” meetings in my area.
- Please send me “Now that you’ve received Christ” booklet.

First Name: Surname:

Address:

.....

..... Postcode:

Tel: E-mail:

Data information will only be used to send you details of Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International and “empower men for life”. (Full address details overleaf.)

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From a Distance

Bill Lincoln



Set Free from a Dark Tormenting Shadow

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An Encounter with God on the 6 o'clock Train from Waterloo

Clifford Grier



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