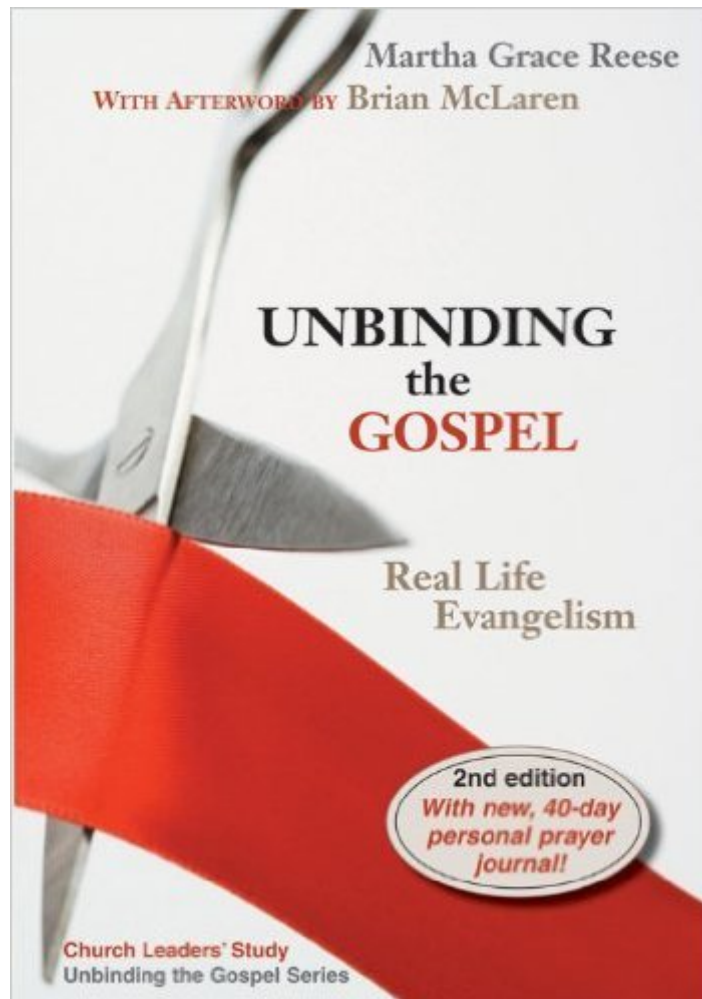


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# Unbinding The Gospel: Real Life Evangelism, 2nd Edition



## Synopsis

Based on a major, four-year study of superb evangelism, funded by the Lilly Endowment, *Unbinding the Gospel* sparkles with life, practicality and spiritual depth. *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism* is a book for pastors who want to know the truth about the state of evangelism. Recently selected by *The Christian Century* as a featured "Take and Read" book (2007 book issue), *Unbinding the Gospel* is a book for Christians who want a hopeful, powerful, joy-filled way to learn to share their faith. (It's also a book for people who cringe when they hear the "E" word!) This book for congregational use has been enthusiastically endorsed by 8 heads of denominations, Brian McLaren, Richard Peace, as well as by countless pastors and church leaders. *Unbinding the Gospel*, 2nd ed. is the foundation of the *Unbinding the Gospel Series*, which can lead to a six-week, all-congregation saturation study with individual prayer, small group study and all-church worship and prayer dimensions. See *Unbinding Your Heart* (the 6 week version of GOSPEL, with a different 40 day prayer journal) and *Unbinding Your Church* (the Pastor's Guide). Follow up your all-church saturation study (the "E-vent") with a small group based Experiment in Christian Prayer & Community using *Unbinding Your Soul*. Small groups will double when members invite their unchurched friends into the Experiment. *Unbinding the GOSPEL* is in more than 12,000 congregations, in 49 denominations, all 50 states and 8 countries. The new second edition contains a personal 40 day prayer journal. Order one copy for each small group participant. From the *Unbinding the Gospel Series*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Unbinding the Gospel, Real Life Evangelism, Martha Grace Reese, Chalice Press, St. Louis, Mo., 2006. Who says mainline churches can't do evangelism? Former pastor Martha Grace began a Lilly grant study to prove some can and do. Several years later she has come to the conclusion that though they can they need conversion themselves, first. The purpose of the mainline evangelism project was to find churches that are doing effective evangelism. What she found was that only 150 out of 30,000 mainline churches were. That's a demoralizing one half of one percent. Enough to dull the edge of anyone's resolve, but Martha Grace was convinced that things could be different, and that there are actions that every church along the full spectrum of theology and styles could take to reverse the sad trend of the last four decades. This book will convince you that she is right! And will (more importantly) inspire you to act on what you have learned. From the bad news statistics we move quickly to "three stories of victory" that show us how evangelism is being done in "real life," in some mainline churches throughout North America. The inspiration these real churches provide help us to understand what new members want and need and how they are finding it in the transformation of their own lives by the gospel of Jesus Christ. What we find here is not more idealistic rhetoric but natural, proven ways and concrete examples of some of our churches that are really touching their communities with Christian hope and making a definite difference in their neighborhoods.

Would I recommend Unbinding the Gospel? Not really. Does it disappoint? In places, yes. Does it excite me? Oh yes. Let me explain. I appreciate the Christ-centeredness of its title and the promise of the subtitle and cover image, a red ribbon being cut with scissors. An apt metaphor, I thought, for 'unbinding the gospel' and practicing real life evangelism. The Greek verb *luo* means 'to loose, to unbind.' So far so good. But for all the red ribbons I perceived, some red flags were apparent as well. Author Martha Grace Reese's main thesis is that mainline churches - of which she used to be a pastor and is now a church consultant - need to recover the practice of gospel evangelism, not just out of a sense of duty, but a sense of joy. Mainline churches have so much to share, so much to offer, that they are doing the world a disservice by functioning in maintenance mode, she maintains. The book's stated purpose is to be used as a seven to ten-week small group study which aims to encourage committed leaders and laypeople to share their faith. Set out in three parts, the first part of the book asks the what, why, and how of evangelism in mainline churches, the second part gives some examples of effective mainline evangelism, and the third part suggests possibilities for churches that have yet to engage in evangelism. First, the red ribbons. It's always a time to celebrate

when any church, movement, or denomination rediscovers the apostolic mandate to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. In the mainline denominations, evangelism has apparently been relegated to a backseat, neglected for decades and often actively discouraged by pastors and seminaries. Reese's book seeks to remedy the widespread desertion of the core commandment in the Great Commission.

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