



KEEP CLEAR

CHANGE
IN PROGRESS

how to

CHANGE THE WORLD

and other handy tips

IN A BID TO REVOLUTIONISE THE WORLD AND BECOME A HERO OF THE FAITH, MICHELLE FARRALL IS LEARNING HOW TO STOP, LOOK, LISTEN AND BEGIN PARTICIPATING IN WHAT GOD IS ALREADY DOING.

I've always known I was going to Change The World.

I was born with the need to fight injustice – from demanding exactly the same sized piece of cake as my younger brother to lobbying my school principal for the girls to wear pants in winter, just like the boys (Principal: 1, Me: 0).

There was never a doubt in my mind that the world was, and is, out of whack – there's way too much poverty and slavery and of course the ultimate injustice of people living and dying without knowing about Jesus. That always gets me worked up.

But in my almost desperate need to do something so profound and so brilliant that the world would be Forever Changed, I think I've actually missed something.

I'm yet to receive that phone call from someone in Africa asking me to bring God to the masses. I'm still waiting for my efforts of hanging out and building relationships to bring revival among my non-Christian friends here in Australia. Something is not quite right.

Enter Habakkuk*: a Global Interaction cross-cultural worker who I've heard is doing interesting stuff in Thailand where Buddhist monks are coming to know Jesus.

"It's amazing how many people 'have the answers' before they even begin. The trap for some people is that they've been trained for years, have heaps of church-based ministry experience and have been oohed and ahned over by their friends for their sacred role as a missionary."

Yes Hab, and what's so wrong with that? We're talking about heroes of the faith, carriers of the Word, shining light in the darkness and sacrificing all to Change The World. Bringing God to the people! They deserve to be oohed and ahned over... surely?

"God was moving in Thailand even before there was one Christian person in the nation," Hab gently explains.

Hold on a second. Are we saying that God is already working in people who don't even know about Him yet?

"God touches people through dreams, yearning hearts and conversations - and then He brings the opportunity to us. I often thank God for letting me come on this ride with Him, as He uses our presence in the community to help bridge the gap with Him."

Hab is quick to explain that it's really not about getting recognised for what we do - God is the one driving mission, its all about Him.

For instance, Hab had been praying faithfully that the monks in a particular Buddhist temple would get to know Jesus. But God didn't seem to answer his prayers at all, despite Hab regularly connecting with people. Then one day he came across another temple he'd never seen before and out ran two young monks who excitedly shared that they had just dreamt that Hab would be visiting their temple that very day. Jesus kept showing up in their dreams and giving them a hunger for His Word. So Hab had the great opportunity to help guide them towards a relationship with Jesus – much like a 'spiritual midwife'.

"Was my 'prayer GPS' out of alignment?" Hab asks. "I don't know, but God certainly showed me that He was indeed working.... maybe not according to my plan or timing, but He continues to bear fruit."

OK, this is definitely a very different take on the whole me-changing-the-world thing.

Barry in Cambodia talks along the same lines as Hab. He reckons we should start by discerning how God is already moving in our neighbours, our friends and family.

"God is alive and active in so many areas," says Barry. "God's embrace of Cambodian people is wide and deep. The key is to remember we are not God's answer to everything. I'd say we're God's co-workers, joining him in the often small opportunities God sends our way."

Let's take a moment for this to sink in. We're a tiny part of HIS story, not the other way round. It's rather revolutionary, isn't it?

"We should sit down and really listen to people," Barry explains. "To have the courage to ask, where is God in it all? To be open enough to reflect honestly on our actions and then see what we might need to do differently."

The rubber really hits the road when I hear about how Barry has recently gone from co-creator and active participant of an organisation bringing peace into conflicted situations in Cambodia, to now stepping back and supporting from the sidelines.

"It's a little humbling to admit how small my contribution has now become," Barry confides. "I'm now tucked away to provide the occasional idea or support. I feel like an odd kind of foreign mascot and cheerleader. Yet God is alive and at work in the lives of these believers. I'm learning that in the end it's not about me, but about celebrating what God is doing through the people of Cambodia."

But what about Barry and Hab (and eventually me!) being recognised internationally as heroes of the faith? I mean, I'm all for being humble (sort of), but it seems like maybe this 'empowering communities to develop their own distinctive ways of following Jesus' has maybe gone a little too far?

It's hard to think of myself as just a piece in the puzzle and to realise that I most likely won't be the one to bring God to someone... because He's already there. It really is about taking the whole 'God is in control' thing seriously.

If I focus on asking what God is already doing among my friends/ family/ colleagues, then I will have a far better chance of seeing them encounter Jesus and empowering them to live out their faith in an authentic way.

I'm small, and that's OK because God knows how to put me and a bunch of other small pieces together in a way that might just Change The World.

*not his real name

