

“A timely and important book that will help many to share their faith more naturally and effectively through connecting their friends to the gospel message.”

GAVIN CALVER, CEO, Evangelical Alliance

“One of the most gratifying trends today is the revitalization of Christian apologetics. Not all is good, of course. But the present volume is more than good: it is superb. This wonderful book is as ‘magnetic’ as its title. Daniel Strange appeals to us from an astonishing variety of sources: popular culture, world religions, social trends and, of course, the Holy Bible. He never does this boastfully but is always sympathetic and persuasive. Required reading for anyone wanting to know the credibility of the Christian faith in a confusing time.”

WILLIAM EDGAR, Professor of Apologetics, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

“Dan Strange is ‘convinced that the church has the opportunity to fill a massive gap in our secular and fragmented market’. Which is why he has given us this perceptive and somewhat unusual book. Using Bavinck, Scripture and an excellent knowledge of contemporary culture, he shows us how we can fill that gap by being magnets for the gospel. The more I read, the more I was drawn to this idea. We have someone wonderful to communicate—but sometimes we struggle to join the dots and make the connections with those around us. If that’s you, then you will find this wee book a stimulating and refreshing guide.”

DAVID ROBERTSON, Director, ASK, Sydney

“How can we reach people who think we’re from another planet? This problematic feeling of disconnectedness in evangelism is addressed biblically, wisely and practically by Dr. Strange in *Making Faith Magnetic*. But he not only gives you helpful direction; he also encourages you in this important work of evangelism, as well. I highly recommend this.”

TONY MERIDA, Pastor for Preaching and Vision, Imago Dei Church, Raleigh, North Carolina; Author, *Love Your Church*

“Building on the success of his first book, *Plugged In*, Dr Daniel Strange provides us not only with a model for evangelism and engagement but shows how Jesus—the way, the truth and the life—answers the fundamental questions, or magnetic points, that all human beings ask. In so doing, this book empowers Christians to engage with people and culture.”

NOLA LEACH, CEO, Care

“Interesting, insightful and inspiring. This is a book that addresses the pressing questions and issues every human person struggles with and must face. And, it points us to the answer to them all! Check it out and see if I am right!”

DANIEL L. AKIN, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“This is one of the best books on evangelism: profound and perceptive and, above all, wonderfully fresh. Anyone who seeks to do evangelism will find tremendous insights here on the different ways in which God’s good news connects to the lives of those around us. A book to read and reread!”

J. JOHN, Evangelist

“The best missional material not only informs the head but also transforms the heart and life of the reader. This is one of those books. A must-read for ANYONE with a desire to effectively reach others with the gospel. This is being added to our training curriculum with thanksgiving. It is as incisive as it is insightful—with a clear applicational paradigm for both the Christian in the workplace and the preacher in the pulpit—while remaining totally accessible and down to earth. *Making Faith Magnetic* will prove to become an old friend and mentor I hope to meet with frequently and whose wisdom I seek to practice often.”

EFREM BUCKLE, Deputy CEO and Director of Training and Mentoring, London City Mission

DANIEL STRANGE

Making Faith Magnetic

Five Hidden
Themes Our Culture
Can't Stop Talking
About...

And How to
Connect Them
to Christ

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Foreword

By Timothy Keller

Dan Strange has written another terrific, down-to-earth book to help believers engage in fruitful conversations with friends about faith.

In an earlier book, *Plugged In*, Dan outlines a way to “enter” another person’s framework of beliefs about life, then to “explore” and “expose”—that is, to both affirm and yet challenge them—and finally to redirect their good aspirations away from idols toward Christ himself. This approach, called “subversive fulfillment,” is the essence of good apologetics in a post-Christian, post-modern society.

In the present book, Dan briefly recaps the “subversive fulfillment” method, but his burden here is to show how this approach plays out specifically in five areas of human longing and need. Using the work of J.H. Bavinck, he argues that there are five fundamental things for which all human beings are searching and to which all of us are inevitably drawn “magnetically”. They are totality (a way to fit into a larger whole), norm (a way to live a moral and good human life),

deliverance (a way to fulfill and fix our incomplete hearts), destiny (a sense of freedom and agency in the world), and higher power (a way to know transcendence and the sacred).

While Bavinck the missionary applied these “magnetic points” to the world religions, Dan helps us apply them to secular people, but that presents a challenge.

As he notes in passing, some have wondered if secularism eliminates these magnetic points. After all, the agnostic or atheist does not believe in any higher power. And in key ways secular culture resists the other four points as well. It tells us to not find our identity by “fitting in” but by looking inside and defining ourselves. It tells us there are no true “norms” or moral absolutes for human life. It insists that we don’t need anything to “fix” us—that we can fix and fulfill ourselves through self-realization. And it asserts that we are already free to live any way we want as long as we do not harm anyone. In all these ways secularism seems to refuse to pose the questions that the religions of the world are answering.

But in this case appearances are highly deceiving. With their “heads” secular people declare that there is no larger spiritual whole to fit into or transcendent realm to contact—that there are no moral absolutes, inner “God-shaped” empty spaces, or divine plans. Yet Dan shows that the ways secular people live, speak, and struggle reveal that they know better in their hearts. They are seeking these things—indeed they are assuming their existence—despite their protestations to the contrary.

To make this case to a secular friend requires great patience, gentleness and love, and a lot of time. But in each area Dan gives readers many cultural examples of these secular-yet-spiritual aspirations that will resonate. He provides tons of

pointers on how to tease out and make visible the operation of these magnetic points in our lives.

Finally Dan turns to how Jesus fulfills each of these universal human longings in ways no other world religion can match.

Jesus gives us an identity that connects us rather than isolating us. He is the only one who can provide a moral norm (his own character) that doesn't descend into moralism. He alone brings a finished, accomplished deliverance rather than one we must perform for ourselves. He is the one thing you can live for that does not enslave but actually liberates you.

And he is the Higher Power, the High and Holy One—who became a human being we can know and love personally.

This little book edified me. It made me keep asking: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Hebrews 2 v 3, ESV).

Thanks to Dan Strange for writing this! Read it to appreciate your own salvation and in order to better recommend it to those you love.

Timothy Keller
Redeemer City to City

1. The Way Ahead

“**Y**ou’re on another planet.”

If I were to say that to you, I doubt you’d take it as a compliment (or, for that matter, as a great way to invite someone to continue reading a book!). It’s a common figure of speech that gives the impression of being disconnected, of not being in touch with reality.

And yet, for many Christians, that’s how we increasingly feel. We sense that our Christian faith is disconnected from the lives of those around us who don’t know Jesus. Our way of looking at the world feels a million miles away from theirs. We’re afraid that were we to say what we’re *really* thinking—or when we open our mouths and try—we’d get some very weird looks: *You’re on another planet*. At the same time we might feel this same disconnect internally—like there’s this uncomfortable gap between what, with a slip of the tongue, we call our “Christian” or “church” stuff and what we might call our “normal” or “real” lives.

We have experienced how Jesus has transformed our lives and the lives of others, and we know that he is the answer to the hopelessness we see around us. But like a car stuck in

the mud, we're struggling to get traction. As individuals and as churches, we're pressing down the pedal, revving loudly, with wheels spinning furiously, but through all the smoke and smell of burning rubber, rather than advancing forwards, we wonder whether we're just slipping further back. People just seem to be getting on with their lives around us. They're going about their daily business and weekend recreation, and we're struggling to connect, let alone challenge them to stop and think. In Western culture, the Christian faith is a receding memory for many. And for a noisy minority, Christianity is a nightmare that we've now woken up from.

So all things considered, maybe it's more comfortable to retreat to another planet and stay safely out of it. The problem is that this is not where Jesus wants us to be. When he prayed for his disciples, he said to his Father, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" (John 17 v 15). Yes, Christians are told to live as "foreigners and exiles" in this world (1 Peter 2 v 11). But we're also called to be the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5 v 13-14)—distinctively different to everyone around us but, to those whom God is calling, magnetically attractive.

So what if I was to tell you that the connections are there—indeed, that the connections have always been there? That it *is* possible to bridge the worlds of our friends and our faith? That there are natural connections that can resonate and penetrate deeply, rather than naff ones that simply bounce off the surface?

These connections are not made by some new sales "technique", recent survey or social-science discovery in our quest to be "relevant". Rather they are profoundly theological

as we look at our world through God's word. This book is about five themes that, consciously or subconsciously, our culture *and every culture* is talking about. These themes are being lived out in our normal everyday lives, because every human is created by God and therefore exists in relationship to him, be it good or bad. However much it seems to the contrary, our engagement with others is not a "cold-contact" call, because by virtue of them being created, they are in a relationship with God. In other words, God's there and involved long before we are.

These five themes are the "being human" itches that every person has to scratch even though often it makes everything more irritable. And, as we'll see, these are five themes that are both subverted *and* fulfilled in Jesus Christ. There is the closest connection between the world of the gospel and the world of, well, the world. By the power of God's Holy Spirit, we pray that understanding and applying these themes will give us that traction we're looking for to call people to come to Jesus.

Exploring these five themes will also show us that we have more in common with our non-Christian friends and colleagues than we might sometimes feel. That's because these themes are part of being human, which gives us an immediate connection to everyone around us. Yes, Christians are radically different and are called to be radically different. Yes, we are "on another planet", or more biblically, "foreigners and exiles", or "born again", or "in the light" (1 Peter 2 v 11, 23; 1 John 1 v 7). However, we're still human beings—human beings along with those who don't call themselves Christians but who call themselves secular, agnostic, atheist, Muslim, Jedi, nothing at all. Our created human-being-ness is what we have in common possession and means we can always

communicate with one another, because our humanity is jointly “ours” and not just “mine” or “yours”.

Engaging people with the gospel isn’t always easy. It’s often hard and painful work. In the amazing, terrifying and Oscar-winning film *Free Solo*, climber Alex Honnold ascends the huge slab of rock El Capitan in Yosemite National Park without any safety aides. There are sections of that climb that are almost vertical and it looks like Alex is walking—Spiderman-style—up glass. But as the camera zooms in, you notice the tiniest little indentation, crack or nub in the surface of the rock, which with incredible imagination and ingenuity Alex turns into a handhold and foothold to make progress. Similarly, in our engagement with our culture we may think it’s like walking up glass (and banging our head against a brick wall!), but we know that our common humanity will mean there will always be something to hold onto—something to get a grip on which we can use as a platform for our witness. It’s going to take imagination and a great deal of patience, but the point of contact is always there.

In this book, I’m going to show you five of these points of contact—five hidden themes that our culture can’t stop talking about, and how they connect to Christ. We’ll call them “magnetic points”, because they’re ideas to which people are irresistibly drawn over and over again. Chapter 2 will outline the biblical framework underpinning this approach. Then, in chapters 3 – 7, we’ll look at each of these points in turn, learning how to identify them in the culture around us. In the second half of the book, we’ll explore how each of these themes is ultimately and subversively fulfilled in Jesus—and how we can use them to share him with others.

What This Book Is Not (Just) About

I hope I've whetted your appetite in telling you what this book is about. Before we start, I need to say what this book isn't about—or rather, what it isn't just about. This is not just a book about “doing” evangelism or apologetics as if these were separate and specialist Christian activities. It's ironic I say this, because most of the material for this book has been percolating in modules I've taught at Bible college with titles like “Apologetics I” and “Apologetics II” (there's creativity for you!). However, in discussions with my perceptive students, I've increasingly recognised that to siphon off and compartmentalise evangelism and apologetics from Christian discipleship and ministry is artificial and even unhelpful. What Jesus in the Great Commission calls *disciple-making* is nothing other than allowing the gospel to transform every part of our lives.

So our evangelism should flow out of our discipleship, rather than being an add-on activity. If we want to be sharing the gospel in a meaningful, connected way—and if we want to encourage other people in the church to be doing that too—then the starting place is how we frame *our* relationship with Jesus. If my whole life is connected to the gospel, and if I'm growing as a disciple in every part of my life, then the task of connecting the gospel to other people's lives becomes more natural, because we all face common struggles. If I'm applying the gospel to my life so that I have a full, rich relationship with Jesus through all the moments of mundane everyday living, then I'll be able to minister to others. If I'm connecting the dots in *my* everyday story, then I'll be much better equipped to connect the dots in *your* everyday story.

So, this book is not about beating you over the head or guilt-tripping struggling believers to do some huge extra thing. I

just want believers to be, well, believers—but in a full, rich way which overflows into and permeates every inch of life, where their love for Jesus just spills out of them. “The mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Luke 6 v 45). So as we follow Jesus, we invite others to join us on the same path. As it’s been said, the Christian is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. When we think like this, we are less likely to come across as morally or intellectually superior or proud but rather as kind and loving. Why? Because our common humanity recognises a solidarity between myself and those with whom I want to share Christ.

The five magnetic points are the longings of our own hearts, not just the hearts of those around us. So as we learn to identify them, understand them and apply the gospel to them, we’ll be more excited about Jesus ourselves—and we’ll be better equipped to share him with others.

If you want to start speaking of and living for Jesus in a way that draws others to him, this book is for you. This is your invitation to make your faith magnetic.