

City Lives

City Lives

True stories of changed lives
from the workplace

Marcus Nodder

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To my family with love – Lina,
Sebastian, Reuben, Harriet, Nelson.

I would like to thank the St Peter's Barge church family and staff for their generosity in giving me study leave to write this book – and for their ongoing love and partnership. Thank you to the people who are the subject of this book for making time to be interviewed and allowing their stories to be told. And thank you to the team at 10ofthose, especially to Julie Hatherall for her work as editor.

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Introduction

A Serbian friend of mine grew up in Belgrade in a culture in which atheism is the norm. He moved to the UK and is now earning his living as a successful banker. He's not a Christian, but in recent years has found himself asking questions about life, the universe, and everything. When I mentioned the idea of this book to him he wrote back, 'It's perfect for people like me. To me there's something mystical about how one becomes a Christian and I think your book will make it more accessible for many. It will encourage people to try to find God, or continue to explore and not give up if they have started the journey already.' The book tells the true stories of fourteen people who are followers of Jesus Christ and living that out in their city lives. Some were brought up as Christians, but most of them weren't. For some coming to Christian faith was a gradual process of investigation; for others a dramatic experience.

My friend added, 'I think particularly valuable would be stories from people who became Christian without having a major life crisis or difficulty, as in those circumstances some could dismiss their faith as escapism.' The stories in this book actually cover both categories, because for

some it does take a crisis to wake them up to their need of God. But the concern about escapism is understandable. And so the question about whether Christian faith is just a psychological crutch is one the book addresses, along with others that are listed on the contents page.

Not only do the ways these people came to faith in Christ vary widely, but also the spheres in which they have gone on to live out their faith in Christ cover quite a spectrum – from the Premier League to Parliament, from fashion to finance, from music to the military, from baking to business, from singing to sport. Though very different, the people whose stories are told here do have at least two things in common.

Firstly, and most importantly, they are living all-in for Jesus Christ. All of us have a centre circle in life. What goes in that centre circle is what drives us. It's what gets us out of bed in the morning. It's what we are living for. It varies from person to person, but we all have something, or someone, in there. A true Christian is someone who is living for Jesus Christ, the one who died on the cross as their rescuer and was raised to life as their ruler. He is in the centre circle. Let me illustrate this with a question: in an egg and bacon breakfast, what is the difference between the chicken and the pig? The answer: the chicken is involved, but the pig is committed. That is the true Christian – not just involved but committed to Jesus. And that is what this book is about – how people came to such all-in faith in Christ, and what that looks like in everyday life.

Secondly, these men and women are ‘high-flyers’ who have risen to positions of prominence. Given this focus on Christian faith in the fast lane, a couple of qualifications are needed to avoid misunderstanding. The first one is that this is not saying people at the top of the food chain are worth more than others in God’s sight. God’s value system is not ours. But from a human interest perspective it’s fun for those of us on the lower slopes to see what the view is like from the summit. It should also challenge the notion that Christian faith is only for the unintelligent, gullible, or weak. The second qualification is that this is not saying if you become a Christian you will become successful or wealthy. The Bible doesn’t promise that. Countless followers of Christ around the world are at the bottom of the food chain.

Eighteen months ago my Serbian friend and I started meeting up once a week to read a bit of the Bible and discuss it together. Since then we’ve worked our way through John’s Gospel, as well as other parts of the Bible. At the time of writing he’s not become a Christian, but wants to keep exploring. If you’re anything like him, this book for you.