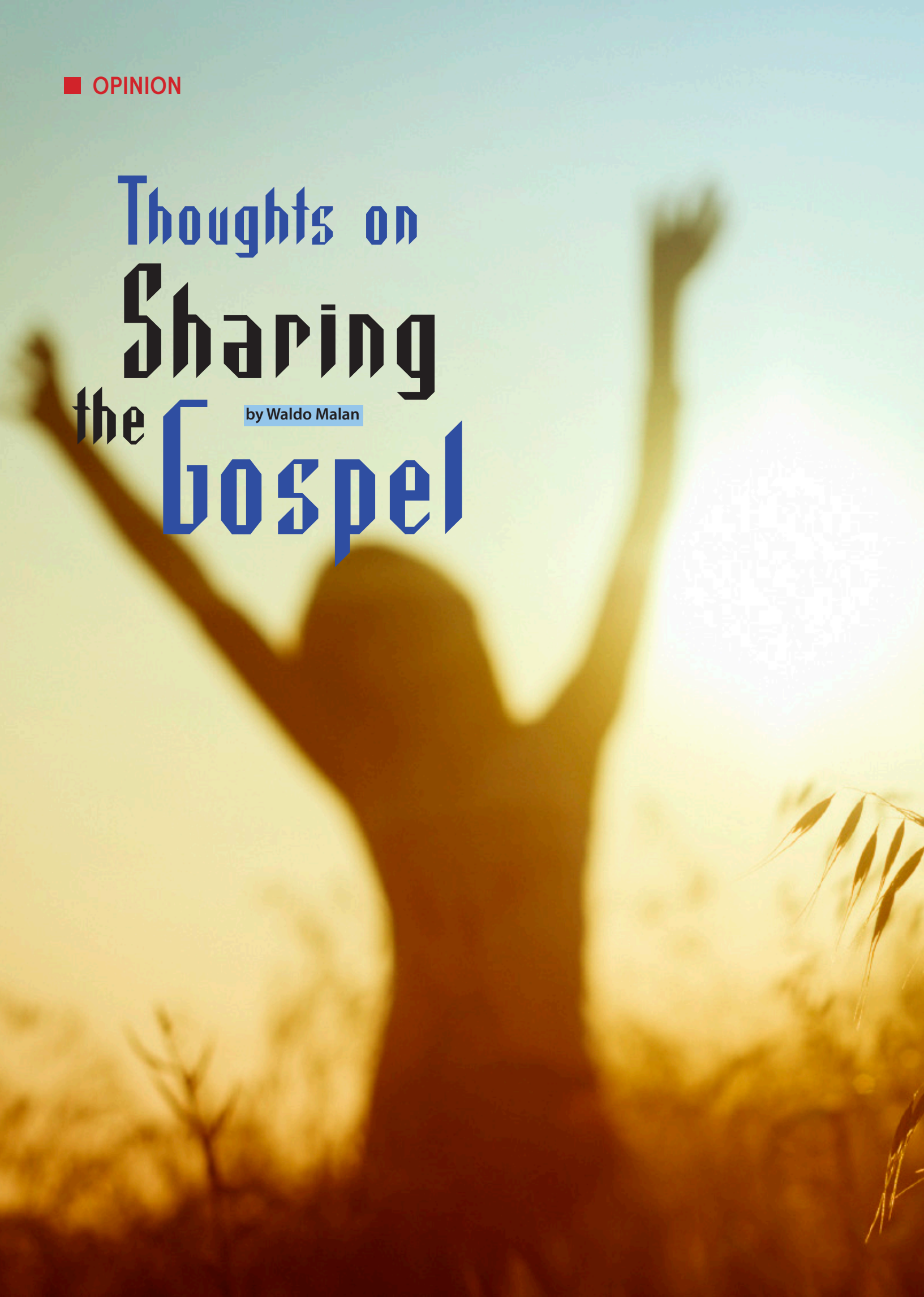
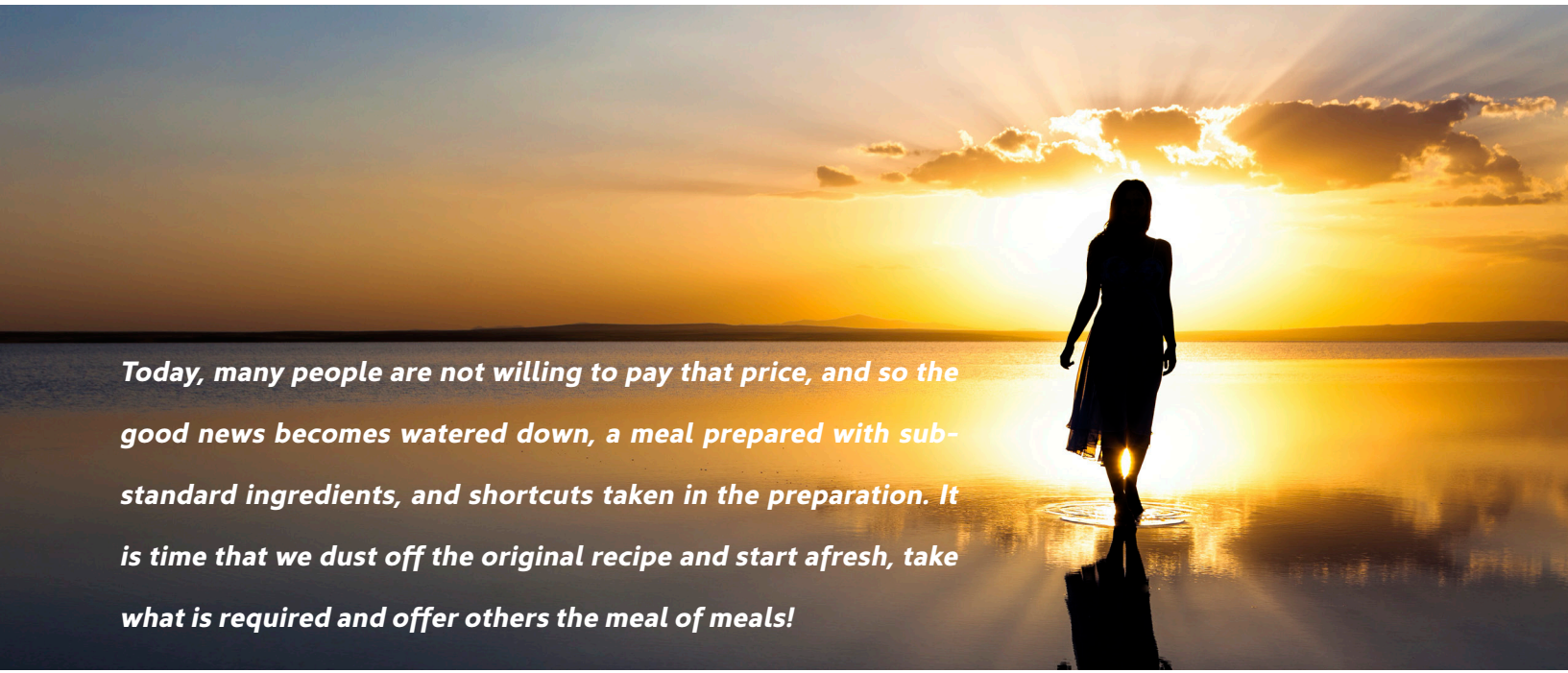


■ OPINION

Thoughts on Sharing the Gospel

by Waldo Malan





Today, many people are not willing to pay that price, and so the good news becomes watered down, a meal prepared with sub-standard ingredients, and shortcuts taken in the preparation. It is time that we dust off the original recipe and start afresh, take what is required and offer others the meal of meals!

We have this great commission from Christ to go into the whole world and share the Gospel. Before we are able to respond the commission we have to respond to Christ Himself, since the commission will just be another job if not motivated by a personal relationship. This simply means that if we even attempt to abide by the instructions of the commission without first having a personal experience with the giver of the commission we have already failed. We can storm the streets with tracts and Bibles, stand on corners with bull-horns and speak about Jesus, compare the numbers of "souls saved" from the records we keep, and still remain ineffective in connecting those very same people on the street with the love of God. The commission without Jesus is just another task to be done, and ultimately devoid of power.

The word "gospel" is taken from the Old English word godspel, which is made up of the word god (good) and spel (story, message); literally it means "good message" which is sometimes translated in moderns English as "good news." Essentially the gospel is good news and not doctrine; it is not a set of rules, a behaviour thermometer, or an attitude gauge... it simply is good news. Jesus defined the message of good news rather simply - it is to show people that there is freedom to be truly loved, truly valued, and truly estimated in a relationship with God. The good news is simply to show people that they can be free from fear, disappointed, rejection, sickness and worthlessness by accepting the love and grace from a Father burning to give these away as a free gift. The good news in essence is simply a call to be loved and to love in return.

Once the good news has been tasted it sparks a response in us to serve it to others as a gourmet meal. We have an option here in the way in which to share this. Firstly, we can open the recipe book and read to others the precise ingredients to use, the exact measurements of the ingredients, the ideal temperature of the stove, the time it will take to prepare, the garnishes to complete the meal, and even show them a photograph of the finished product. Alternatively, we can present people with the finished product, let them taste it first and as a bonus send them away with the detailed recipe so they can continue to make the same meal for sharing with others. I can guarantee you that the people most impacted by our interaction with them would be the ones who actually tasted the food first.

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It would be silly to deny that Jesus called us to spread the gospel. So we don't. But it is really up to us how effective we will be in fulfilling the commission successfully. I

can think of no better way that to look at the example of Jesus on how to "do" this commission - after all, Jesus was simply asking us to do what we have already seen Him doing.

Jesus offered Himself as the 'meal of all meals' and the "dish above all other." And I mean no disrespect by this analogy. It was Jesus who said He is the 'Bread of Life' (already proclaimed in the Holy Place in the temple), and it was He who offered His disciples His blood to drink. Since He was the ultimate sacrifice, obviously we cannot offer exactly the same. However, we are called to offer ourselves to Christ, forsaking even our very lives. In this way, we too can offer others what Christ had first offered us. No greater love has man than to lay down his life for others. And so, we need to offer up our very life in order to 'do' as Christ 'did.' We then share His suffering, and in so doing, share His love.

To 'do' the commission of Christ will require everything from us, and it will require us to be nothing in ourselves so that we can be everything in Christ. In essence, the good news we bring is totally dependent on us obeying Christ until death. And in our death Christ is glorified, and this is the good news.

Today, many people are not willing to pay that price, and so the good news becomes watered down, a meal prepared with sub-standard ingredients, and shortcuts taken in the preparation. It is time that we dust off the original recipe and start afresh, take what is required and offer others the meal of meals!