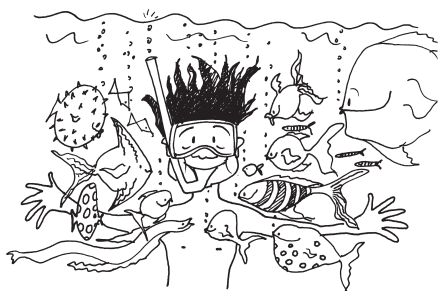


## HOW MANY FISH IN YOUR SEA?



The first step in the plan is to work out **the network of contacts that has God already given you**. Let me illustrate what I mean.

I enjoy fishing. It isn't by any means the greatest passion of my life, but we do try to take two weeks' holiday each September when we head off to the south Donegal coast, me with my fishing rods and Phyllis with a pile of books. In fact, my one claim to fame is that I taught Tony Blair to fish, right there in south Donegal, in the early 1960s. It's a long story that hasn't yet earned me a place in the New Year's honours list!

But back to fishing. There's a small pier that I enjoy fishing off and if I catch four or five fish in a couple of hours, I'm delighted. But I don't go to that pier because there are only four or five fish there. I go because I know that there are potentially hundreds of fish in that area. I just hope that a few of them might take a fancy to whatever bait I pass in front of them.

Working out your potential is equivalent to working out how many fish are in your sea. This isn't an exercise in trying to identify who might support you or who you should contact about support. It is simply trying to work out the extent of the relationships God has given you. We can work out later where would be a good place to start in terms of contacting people about supporting you, but that's further down the line.

For now, **👉 take some time and list all the Christians you know or who know you**. There will probably be non-Christians who'll want to support you also, but for now let's concentrate on Christians. As well as supporting you financially, they can pray for you and get involved in other ways that have a direct spiritual impact on your work in ways that non-Christians can't do.

**👉 Don't be tempted to edit your list at this stage**. Just because you haven't seen the person for a few years or because you wouldn't really call them a good friend is no reason not to include them.

Remember, this isn't a list of people you'll contact for support, so feel free to **👉 add as many names as you can think of**.

If you end up with 100 names or fewer, you have probably left out names that you could have included. Go back to the list again, taking your blinkers off, and see how many others you can add.

To help you get started, I've drawn up a list of categories (see below). They might not all apply to you and you may well be able to add other categories that I haven't thought of. But **start with this list and add as many names to each category as you can.** Don't add people just for the sake of it: *'The old man with grey hair who sits near the back of the church'* isn't good enough! It helps if you know at least their first or last name.

You'll notice that I've put family at the end of the list of categories. All our other contacts are, to some extent, relationships of choice. With family, we don't have much choice who we get! You may be part of a great Godly heritage where your family is very supportive of your decision to go into Christian ministry and would be delighted to support you. On the other hand, you might be the only Christian in your family and the rest of them think that you're completely crazy, making the biggest mistake of your life and they have no intention of doing anything to help you throw away whatever career you've had up to now. Or you may be somewhere in between. **Add family members to your list regardless.** You can work out later what might be the best approach to take with them on an individual basis.

The very exercise of drawing up your list will jog your memory and will dig up names from your past. Enjoy the exercise. This is a list of the Christian network God has placed you in. What a privilege to live in a society where we have the freedom to develop such a large group of Christian contacts!

**Note: Don't read beyond this point until you've drawn up your list!**

Use the page opposite or a sheet of paper to start compiling your list.

- friends
- current and former churches/pastors/Youth Groups/Sunday School and Bible class leaders
- those who have had a spiritual impact in your life
- those in whose life you have had a spiritual impact
- parents of those in whose life you have had a spiritual impact
- former employers/work-mates
- old school friends/teachers
- former college/university lecturers
- student friends
- dentist, doctor, solicitor, bank manager
- business men and women
- neighbours/former neighbours
- wedding list (if you're married!)
- youth club/youth organisation leaders
- address book (electronic and paper)
- parents' visitors' book
- your visitors' book
- Christmas card list
- close family and other relatives