

FOREWORD BY TIMOTHY KELLER

DANIEL STRANGE

Making Faith Magnetic

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

And How to
Connect Them
to Christ

These next pages are based on the book *Making Faith Magnetic* in which Daniel Strange unpacks and applies J.H. Bavick's missiological framework of five magnetic points to the current Western world. This practical guide also includes Dan Strange's principles from his book *Plugged In* to help in formulating possible ways to engage in missional conversations.

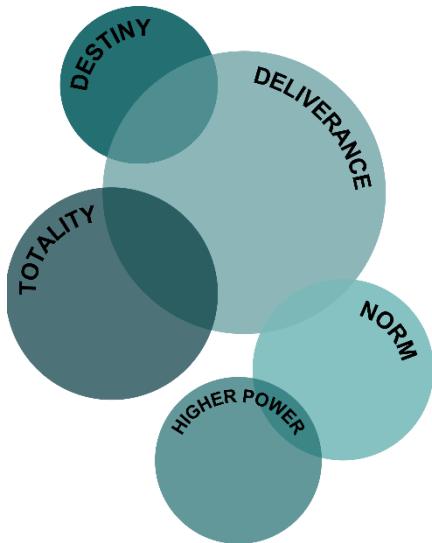
CONTEXTUALIZING WELL

What does it mean to be in the world, but not of the world? What shall we as citizens of the kingdom do when confronted with the values and perspectives of the world?

Do we FLEE ?	Do we FREEZE ?	Do we FIGHT ?
<i>"We stick our heads in the sand, get into our holy huddle and Christian bubble, and hang on for dear life. We put our fingers in our ears so that we can't hear the noise outside, while at the same time singing loudly to one another about Jesus coming back soon when all the outside stuff will go away. Until then, we keep ourselves safe from worldly influences by only ever reading Amish romance novels or the latest releases from our favourite celebrity pastor."*</i>	<i>"Whatever the motivation, our lives—and our cultural diets—are indistinguishable from the neighbour's next door, and our churches end up looking not much different from the local sports club. Maybe it's a well-intentioned drive to be "relevant". Maybe it's a reaction against judgmentalism. Maybe it's simply an indulgence of our sinful nature. Whatever it is, we struggle to be recognised as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Peter 2 v 9). We have become experts at conforming "to the pattern of this world" when we've expressly been told not to (Romans 12 v 2)."*</i>	<i>"We get all huffy, red-faced and finger-pointy at the culture around us. Or we just tut and roll our eyes at sex scenes in films or the bad language on TV. At its worst, our healthy belief in judgment turns into an ugly judgmentalism. Our proclamation of the good news of Jesus is heard as a rant on morality. And then we wonder why people "out there" don't want to come and be with us "in here"."*</i>
But then we lose our CONNECTION [1 Cor 5:9-10]	But then we lose our COUNTERCULTURE [1 John 2:15-17]	But then we lose our CALLING [1 Peter 2:9]
So instead we ENTER&EXPLORE	So instead we EXPOSE	So instead we EVANGELIZE
Because we have HOPE	Because we have FAITH	Because we have LOVE

*Daniel Strange, Plugged In: Connecting Your Faith with Everything You Watch, Read and Play

5 MAGNETIC POINTS



„There seems to be a kind of framework within which human religions need to operate. There appear to be definite points of contact around which all kinds of ideas crystallize. There seem to be quite vague feelings—one might better call them direction signals—that have been actively brooding everywhere ... **magnetic points that time and again irresistibly compel human religious thought.** Human beings cannot escape their power but must provide an answer to those basic questions posed to them. They can answer them with foolish myths, with fairy tales, with totally unique thought-forms, but they cannot ignore them. They impose themselves on people, and in one way or another people must come clean about them.“

J.H. BAVINCK, Missionary and Theologian (1895-1964)

1st MAGNETIC POINT: „TOTALITY“

Is there a way to connect?

“Who are we as human beings? What’s our place in the universe? Are we worth more than just the elements of our body, which if added up and sold wouldn’t even give me enough change to buy two flat whites? Are we worthless specks, or are we inherently valuable? Is there...a universal bond which connects us all?... Is there a way to connect? What is my relationship with the rest of reality and what does that relationship mean for my identity, individuality and my significance? How is it that I’m both part and apart, a speck and special, nothing and noble? These are the questions to which we keep returning.”

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EXAMPLES:

- **Ubuntu** – (south)african concept of belonging „humanity“
- **Satori** – Enlightenment in Zen Buddhism: „Insight into one’s own true nature“
- **Brahman** – the impersonal all-divine and we as drops of this sea
- **Ummah** – the community in Islam, also called "Allah's Ocean"
- **Social Media** – Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, ...
- **23andMe** or other DNA test kits to investigate your origin
- **Tinder** – and other dating apps and the search for "meaningful connections"

ENTER/EXPLORE: Where do you find this search for connection, relationships, participation in the whole in the people around you?

EXPOSE: How are the people around you disappointed by these things? Where is the longing for connection and belonging not being met (completely or long-term)?

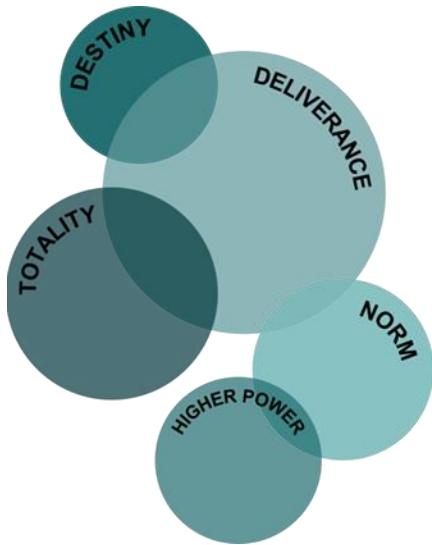
EVANGELIZE: How does the Gospel respond to this longing for an identity-forming or meaningful connection and involvement in something big that gives meaning to life?

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

- John 15:5-6 -

How have you yourself experienced the search for this and how have you personally found Jesus to be the ultimate answer? Write down your personal story about this magnetic point and practice telling it:

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2nd MAGNETIC POINT: „NORM“

Is there a way to live?

„[Is there a way to live] and how we know what that is. As human beings, we know there are rules to be obeyed. We accept that there are “norms”—moral standards and codes—which come from outside of us but to which we must adhere. Even after we’ve tried to explain them, and even explain them away (in terms of biology, evolution or anthropology, say), there remains a vague and nagging sense deep down that there are norms of behaviour which apply to all people. One could say they are “transcendent” in that they originate from somewhere beyond life as we know it. The idea that things are ordered on a cosmic scale brings with it a sense of responsibility and also freedom: will we choose to live up to those norms or not?“

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EXAMPLES:

- **Sharia** – Islamic sacred law - „The term shariah is derived from the Arabic word 'Shari' which literally means way, path or "the clear, well-trodden path to water".
- **(other religious laws and commandments)**
- **Sustainability** – Rejection of goods/products that do not comply with certain standards
- **Tolerance** – as a new law of expressive individualism
- **Social Justice** – Racism/discrimination, unfair distribution of rights/wages
- **Employee evaluation** – in business organization theory, a component of the employee reward system
- **Fashion** – Dress style of a subculture or among youth; what (or who?) is "in"/"out"

ENTER/EXPLORE: What rules or norms do the people around you build their lives on? Where do they get these references for the “right way” to behave?

EXPOSE: Where do these sources for rules and norms not make sense? How do people fail to follow these norms and what does that mean for them? How do people around you respond to the breaking of norms in others and in themselves?

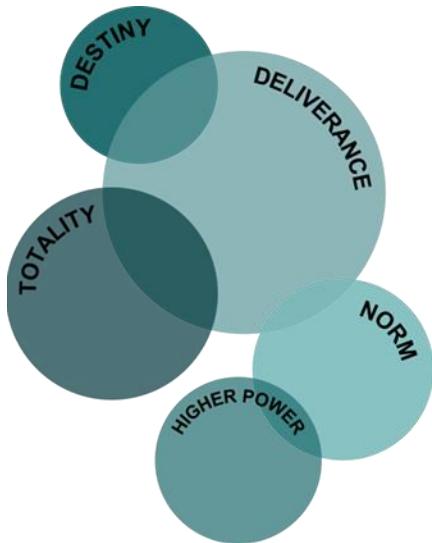
EVANGELIZE: How does the Gospel respond to the longing for order and the question of rules and norms?

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

- John 14:6 -

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3rd MAGNETIC POINT: „DELIVERANCE“

Is there a way out?

“We know there is something not right with the world. The problems of brokenness, wrongdoing, suffering and death consistently confront us. Sometimes we look forward to a future where things will be better. At other times we look back; we mourn for a “paradise lost” and yearn for deliverance from these evils, craving release and redemption... What do we need to be delivered from? What is this new, redeemed state we long for? Can I bring it about myself? Can we bring it about together? Or will we only find deliverance in coming to terms with the fact that we can't be delivered?”

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EXAMPLES:

- **Psychology/Self-help**
- **Coaching** - we are the problem, but the solution is also within us
- **Science** - the problem is e.g., a disease
- **Education** - the problem is ignorance
- **Nationalism** - the problem is identity
- **Health** - the problem is death

ENTER/EXPLORE: What brokenness do the people around you notice? What are things in their lives that remind them that the world is not as it should be? Where do they look for solution or redemption? What does the redeemed state look like to them?

EXPOSE: Where have they been disappointed by this hope? Is this redemption not as liberating as they think it is, or is it perhaps out of reach?

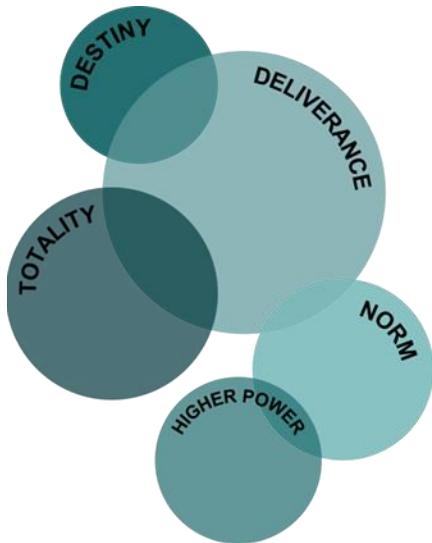
EVANGELIZE: How does the Gospel respond to the longing for deliverance and offer a hope out of brokenness?

I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

- John 11:25 -

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4th MAGNETIC POINT: „DESTINY“

Is there a way to control?

“We both “lead” and “undergo” our lives. Isn’t that a description of so many people we know or how we ourselves feel? This magnetic point is about the need to be in control and yet knowing we are somehow captive to events. It’s about freedom versus fate... So are we active players in the world? Or are we merely avatars moving under the thumbs of someone or something else? We feel like it’s both—but how can that be?”

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EXAMPLES:

- **Astrology/Horoscope** – the attempt to interpret the connections between astronomical events or constellations and earthly processes
- **Fortune telling** – reading coffee grounds, tarot cards, palm reading,...
- **Superstition** – Whether in sports (lucky charms, rituals), in the theater (don't say "Good luck!" or "Macbeth") or in the hospital (never say "The phones are quiet today.")
- **“It was meant to be”** – soul mates, divined by the universe, ...
- **Karma** – a spiritual concept according to which every action - physical and spiritual - inevitably has a consequence. (One of the significant controversies of the doctrine of karma is whether it always implies fate and what effect this has on free will).
- **Qadar** – the belief in the predestination of Allah is one of the six articles of faith in Islam.

ENTER/EXPLORE: How do people around you try to have control over their lives, to control their destiny, and how do they express that their lives are perhaps rather controlled by someone or something else?

EXPOSE: To what extent do they fail to have control? Where do they feel more at the mercy of their fate and fear the future and the unknown?

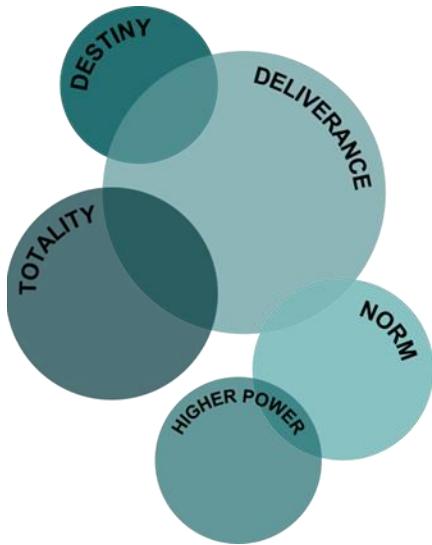
EVANGELIZE: How does the Gospel respond to the longing for control and the search for the author of my story?

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

-John 10:11 -

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5th MAGNETIC POINT: „HIGHER POWER“

Is there a way beyond?

„[Is there] a way beyond the realm of our normal experience—a way to connect with someone or something higher than ourselves. Another word for this is transcendence. On some level, all of us perceive that behind our reality stands a greater reality. This greater reality is variously conceived but is always a superior power. There is also a sense that humans stand in some sort of relationship to this higher power, or at least, that they should. This understanding creates the expressed desire to seek connection with this power—but what is it? Who is it?“

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EXMAPLES:

- **God/Gods** – Allah, Shiva, Odin,...
- **Homeopathy** – Homeopathic medicines are prepared by potentizing basic substances. Potentization is a strong dilution with simultaneous "dynamization" (shaking or trituration). Samuel assumed that through the special procedure a "spirit-like power hidden in the inner essence of the medicines" would become effective.
- **Maria Kondo** – Kneeling down when entering the house and addressing the home. When cleaning up, thanking an object for its protection and care.
- **New Age/esotericism/occult** – The concept of a secular Europe on the one hand and the deeply religious United States of America on the other needs to be revised. Particularly in Western Europe more humans believed in an undefined "higher power" than in a personal God, as the sociologist Detlef Pollack of the University of Muenster explains.
- **Guardian angels** – An online survey conducted by YouGov in 2016 concluded that one in two Germans believes in angels.
- **Supernatural experiences** – "feeling something" in nature or at religious/sacred sites.

ENTER/EXPLORE: How do people in your surroundings perceive the notion of God? Do they believe in a higher power of some sort (personal or impersonal)? Have they had experiences with the supernatural?

EXPOSE: How has the search for the transcendent with people in your surrounding been disappointing or unsatisfying? What uncertainty remains about who or what is to be found beyond?

EVANGELIZE: How does the Gospel respond to a longing or for a higher power and the desire to find a way to connect with the transcendent?

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

- John 8:12 -

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