

## INTRODUCTION

Physically, this is a small book. However, it comes to you after a long journey that began over twenty years ago.

There are a few men out there who know me really well. In fact, they know me warts and all. These are the blokes I really laugh, cry, wrestle (verbally and sometimes physically), and row with. I'm not sure what they would say if you were to ask them what I am really like, but I do know they see me as very far from perfect. I get quite a lot wrong, quite a lot of the time. I am, however, passionate about Jesus and seeing the Kingdom of God at work.

The day I met Jesus (on 22 April 1990 at about 7 p.m.) was simultaneously shattering, devastating, life changing, exhilarating, heartbreaking, and totally awe-inspiring. Forty-five minutes later I got up to leave the little chapel where I had just met Him. Standing on the steps outside, I had tears streaming down my face as I looked at a half-dead small tree on the other side of the road. It was as if I had never seen leaves on trees before. The colours just hit me. I remember driving home, looking at people and feeling overwhelmed with emotion.

*“These are people that God has made... and He loves them...”*

I knew then that I would dedicate all of my energy and efforts to making Jesus known to people. I distinctly heard God call me to “fight a different sort of battle” – which resulted in my immediately giving up a boyhood dream of joining the armed forces. This wasn’t because of any moral conviction about fighting: I just knew that God was calling me to something very different.

And so the adventure began – and at times it’s been really tough.

My life of faith has been punctuated by significant ups and downs. I find it hard to be the man I know I ought to be. I find it hard to keep my life pure. I find that passion ebbs and flows as I deal with disappointments, opposition, and apathy in others and myself. The rogue in me often rises to the surface, and I haven’t always made my frustration my friend in a way that empowers and brings life. All too often I’ve let frustration eat at me rather than using it to compel me to action.

I can, however, honestly say that since that day in April 1990 I’ve wanted to be a man of devotion and prayer as well as action. I’ve wanted and pursued a deeply close walk with my brother, captain, and friend, Jesus, but I

have fallen short so many times. Like many men I've felt guilty over missed, snatched, or hurried times of prayer and reading the Bible. Like many men I've struggled silently in church settings (even when I was a leader), and like many men I have gone through long periods of feeling like a fraud. You need to know that I'm not what you might think I am. I am a weird mix of things, from loving playing the piano and writing poems to shooting things and burning stuff and doing mad endurance challenges! I like nothing more than laughing with mates and chilling out with my girls (wife and daughters). I'm competitive, can lose my rag, can be a bit intense and at times noisy and chaotic. Within all that, I follow Jesus with a passion. It's just that working out what it is to be a man and a Jesus-follower can sometimes be tricky.

But several things have kept me going through the ups and downs:

1. I prayed to Jesus, the day I met Him, that I would go wherever He asked me to go and do whatever He wanted me to do... no matter what. I try to be a man of my word, and I think in turn God loves that kind of prayer and has intercepted me at times when I have been wavering.
2. My mates who journey with me have picked me up when I needed it.
3. Jesus loves me.

4. I believe completely in the power and reality of the gospel and in the fact that the only way to God is through Jesus. How can I stay silent?
5. God has given me a vision for reaching men.

But still I struggled... And then, after a number of years in financial sales, and time spent first as a church planter on a tough estate and then as a senior pastor, I found myself as part of a men's ministry team.

I joined Christian Vision for Men (CVM) from being the senior leader of a large church. It was a period of time which gave me much to thank God for. I had far too much ego, pride, and self-belief, and God, in His wisdom, knew I needed it knocked out of me. So for two years I was no longer "the leader" and spent my time passionately seeking to serve another man's vision.

Some men have subsequently told me that they could never lay down senior leadership to work under someone again. In my opinion, these men should not be in leadership. Serving another man and his vision was a special time that contributed hugely to what follows.

About three years ago, just after I started to lead CVM, I was standing in the shower

when I felt God speak to me with a clarity and certainty that I have rarely encountered. I was actually praying at the time, asking God for the key that would see at least 1 million men in the UK come to faith. And then it happened. I had what I can only describe as a “download” moment.

Stepping out of the shower, I dried off and immediately wrote down on a scrap of paper: “THE CODE”.

This was followed by four hurriedly written statements, which I had barely begun to think through.

I had the vision but not the detail.

The vision that swept through my heart and mind was of a viral, mass movement of men based around a kind of new faith order, a Jesus-centred rule of life.

I took the vision and the rough details to my team and got the following response: “This is of God... but the statements you have written are from you; and to be honest, mate, they’re not very good!”

Humbling, or what?

And so began a two-year journey of trying to unpack the Code and write something that

would be a catalyst, helping men to come to faith through the actions of believing men who were empowered, fired up, and full of faith.

We wanted to write something that would cover the essential elements of words and actions when it came to communicating the gospel. We wanted to look at critical areas in life, from leadership to tackling injustice. What you have here is the end product. It's birthed out of years of debate, conversation, and a fair amount of passion to see the kingdom come. I hope you are engaged by what God has given us. And so the Codelife movement has begun. As I write this in Cape Town, we are hearing requests from men who want to launch the movement in South Africa, Canada, and Europe. We didn't expect that!

Sometimes people ask me what it means to actually join the movement. Well, read on. But be assured: this is a movement for men who want to make their lives count, even if it means one day laying them down. It is a movement of men who are unashamed of the cross and who are deeply committed to doing whatever it takes to be a man of the Kingdom. It is also a movement of men who know that they are likely to mess things up. Passionate, full-on men tend to mess things up quite a lot! So if that sounds like you... read on. If you wish you were like that but aren't quite sure... read on.

To all those men out there who have joined this movement, I salute your courage and welcome you to this amazing brotherhood. Welcome to the movement of the unashamed. May boldness be our friend and Jesus our commander.

**Carl Beech**