

# The Tipping Point

The tipping point is that magic moment when an idea, trend, or social behaviour crosses a threshold, tips and spreads like wildfire. Just as a single sick person dying of "Bird Flu" started an epidemic of wearing masks, taking extra-ordinary measures to ensure the threatened pandemic never happened, so too can a small but precisely targeted push cause an almost unstoppable flow-on effect.

Malcolm Gladwell alleges the story of Hush Puppies is a classic illustration of "Tipping Point" phenomenon. In 1994 Hush Puppies sales were down to 30,000 pairs. In 1994, 430,000 pairs were sold and in 1995 four times that many and in 1996 still more when they won the prize for the best fashion accessory! What caused this sudden explosion of sales, what triggered this fashion trend? A few kids started wearing Hush Puppies because no one else would wear them. The fad spread to two fashion designers who used the shoes to peddle something else - haute couture. Others designers followed suite. Suddenly everyone wanted a pair of thirty-dollar Hush Puppies.

The story of "Sesame Street" which targeted three, four, and five year olds is similar. What made it such an educational success was its stickiness factor. Lester Wunderman used a "treasure hunt" to turn around the fortunes of Columbia Record Club account. In every "TV Guide and Parade" ad a little gold box was placed in the corner of the order coupon. His firm wrote a series of TV commercials that told the "secret of the Gold Box." Viewers were told that if they could find the gold box in their issues of "Parade and TV Guide," they could write in and name any record on the Columbia list and get the record free. It worked. "Viewers suddenly became participants . . . With Gold Box support, every magazine on the schedule made a profit, and unprecedented turnaround." (Malcolm Gladwell: "The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference.")

The story of Acts demonstrates the pervasive power of the "Tipping Point" theory. In thirty years the world was changed forever. What was the "Tipping Point?" Those first Christians turned the word upside-down in the space of a generation! What caused the message to stick? Is there a "Tipping Point" we can use today to cause a similar volcanic eruption of the Christian faith?

The first century "Tipping Point" is a word of mouth contagion. "The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples increased rapidly," Acts 6:7. ". . . those who had been scattered went about preaching the word, Acts 8:4. "But the word of God continued to spread and flourish" Acts 12:24. The disciples simply share, preach, speak, teach the Word of God. (see Acts 2:42; 4:29, 31; 6:2, 4, 7; 8:4, 25; 10:36; 11:1, 16, 19; 12:24; 13:5, 7, 44, 46, 48, 49; 14:3, 25; 15:7, 35, 36; 16:6, 32; 17:11; 18:5; 19:10, 20; 20:32).

Will just a few of us become the "Tipping Point" by sharing the Word of God via social media, Twitter, Facebook, You Tube, just in ordinary conversation?