

18th October 2020 10 am Trained to Share the Gospel

Service led by Revd. Andrew Attwood, "What the Cross Means to Me" by Mike Dayus, Talk by Dave and Liz Johnson

This transcript is only of the introduction, "What the Cross Means to Me" and the talk.

Introduction

[Andrew Attwood:]

Good morning everybody. It's good to see you here. We have some special guests this morning. It's wonderful to have Dave and Liz Johnson with us all the way from Northumbria today. It's great to have you with us. Good morning guys, and how are you this morning? How are you doing?

[Dave Johnson:] Yeah, we're pretty good actually! It was interesting, as that clock ticked down, we were getting all ready, and Lucy has just gone to sleep.

[Andrew:] If Lucy, your wonderful dog, wants to entertain us during the service that's entirely your prerogative! Just in case people don't know who you are, Dave and Liz, could you just give us a minute or so describing where you are, what you're doing, what's your connection to Kenilworth is?

[Liz Johnson:] Okay, so we are actually in Cumbria - so a slight error there, not Northumbria! [Andrew:] I apologize! [Liz:] We moved up here three and a half years ago. And we came with the view to setting up a glamping site, which we have done. And so we started, we opened up last year, Eden Valley Glamping¹, and we have three pods with guests, and in fact two pods have got guests in this morning. So we've warned them that we're not around this morning because we're on Zoom, and yeah, we're really enjoying it, we've settled in a church here, and it's great!

[Andrew:] I'm guessing that it's looking beautiful at the minute with all of the trees surrounding where you are?

[Dave:] Yes, the autumn colours change every time we go out really, so yes, we love the view. We chose the place on the view. We've got some guests on the glamping site right now. And they had a fire pit last night and we get some starry skies as well. So, yes, we're loving it really!

Prayerful introduction

[Andrew:]

Just as a way now, though, into focusing on God, I just wanted you to pause and to have a look at this candle, just as an aid to help us focus on God now. I'm just wanting to have a think about how you're feeling this morning, in terms of settledness or unsettledness. We all know how fragile and how volatile a candle is when it's moving, and the candle flame flickers and responds to all the different breezes around it. But when a candle is held still, the flame begins to settle a bit more. The flame begins to be calmer in its activity. And I just want to pray for a moment. Would you close your eyes and just be self-aware: how settled or unsettled are you feeling this morning? How are you doing?

Take a breath, just become aware that God is here. I'm just going to pray now to prepare our hearts in the presence of God.

Father, we consciously leave with You the things that are on our minds, the things that are going around and around in our heads and hearts: we give those to You, and put them to one side.

1 www.edenvalleyglamping.com/

And Father. We concentrate on You.

We still our souls. We draw into a time of proper stillness inside.

Let's just be quiet for a moment and be open to the presence of God.

Take a breath.

And Father I want to pray that throughout this morning's time, we would be aware of Your presence all the way through. Lord, help us not simply to attend something we watch, help us to be present with You while we watch, while we listen. So Lord, now would You bless, would You encourage us as we move into a time of focused worship, Lord help us to be inspired by the little video Mike Dayus has given us and help us to worship in song after that, so I'll hand over to Mike.

What the Cross Means to Me

[Mike Dayus:]

God's forgiveness through Christ means everything to me. Jesus' sacrificial death on the Cross secured for me God's forgiveness, bringing me into fellowship with my Heavenly Father. Because of this I can experience the love, joy, and peace, together with a promise of eternal life, that Jesus brings when I confessed my sins and surrendered my life to Him. We ask in the Lord's Prayer to forgive us our sins, and Jesus always made it clear that it was the atoning work of the Father, an act of sheer grace, that made this possible. God's forgiveness gives us life to the full, and it has to me. I claim God's promise that says He will never leave me, nor forsake me. I believe that forgiveness unlocks the door to receiving God's blessing through Christ.

[Andrew:]

So let's just pause for a moment and enjoy God's presence in the light of what we've been reading and listening to and even singing along with

Father God, we thank You for Your grace that You have provided through Jesus Christ. We thank You, Lord, for His great rescue, His great saving work, and that message that we can share with others. And Lord, I want to pray for Dave and Liz now, they're going to be coming to share Scripture with us, they're going to be sharing experience. So I pray now, Lord Jesus, that You would give more and more of Your grace to listen to Dave and Liz as they speak to us.

So God bless you guys, I'll hand over to you. [Dave:] Thank you, Andrew.

Reading: Luke 10:1-7

[Liz:]

Okay, well it's lovely to be here. Even though we can't see you, which is a kind-of really weird situation, we're really hoping that you will just really hear God's voice this morning. So we're going to be looking at Jesus sending out the seventy-two. I'm just going to read the first few verses of Luke 10.

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. **2** He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. **3** Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. **4** Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

5 'When you enter a house, first say, "Peace to this house." **6** If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. **7** Stay there, eating and drinking

whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

Talk

[Dave:]
Thank you, Liz.

This last week I listened to Michelle's talk which was great, how God uses ordinary people like us to tell people about the Good News of the Gospel. And I want to look about how Jesus did this, how He got 72 people to go out and just do it. And I've got five points and they all cunningly begin with the letter C.

The first C is Commissioned. Verse one says the Lord appointed 72: who were they? Well, we don't know! They were not professionals, not celebrities. We don't even know their names. We know very little about them, except they were ordinary people, drawn to Jesus. When Jesus asked him to join Him in His mission, they stepped up. They answered the call, and they went in His name, and amazing things happened as a result. Their very sort-of anonymous nature, means that they represent people just like us.

On what basis were they appointed? Well, did they have a PhD in theology? Time-served apprenticeship? Interesting CV? We're not told exactly, but my sense is, Jesus says, if you're passionate enough to pray for workers, then you're good to go. His objective was to bring in a huge harvest. And the problem is lack of labourers, and the solution He came up with was to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest field. And the answer to the prayer is: "Go! I'm sending you!" So, are you willing to pray for workers? And if you're willing to pray, are you willing to be an answer to your own prayer? Well, we know the 72 were willing to pray and willing to go. My sense is, it's on that basis that Jesus commissioned them. When I was talking to Andrew he pointed out that the pep talk Jesus gives to the 72 - 72 unknowns - is exactly the same as the talk given to the 12 apostles, the A-team. So how about that: they get the same instructions.

The second C I want to talk about is confidence. Lack of confidence, I think, is one of the biggest reasons, that although the harvest *is* plentiful, there's a shortage of workers. Many workers are kind-of frightened off by a frown, a sneer, a furrowed brow, a quip, a put-down, imagined or real. Confidence is a key spiritual battleground. We're not just contending against flesh and blood here, we're contending against the enemy, principalities and powers. This is a very fruitful area where the enemy attacks us: confidence is something I've struggled with over the years. I often shy away from responsibility, because of the weight of associated expectation. And the desire to hide away, that changed when Jesus got hold of our life. Before I was a Christian, I went through a year where I didn't really speak to anyone. I was a student at the time, and just living a very hermit-like existence. But Jesus got hold of me and turned me around. He changed me, He's still changing now. And I was reading in Philippians [1:6] and it says,

6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

So how about that? Jesus is a completer-finisher. He's not going to start something and abandon you halfway through, He'll take you through to the finish. So Jesus asks us to share our faith. And I think this means He is confident in me and He's confident in you. And the 72 had confidence that Jesus was confident in them to go straight away. When you invite Jesus into your life, He lives in you by His Spirit and He knows you as a child, and He has confidence in you.

If you feel your story is too boring, Jesus is confident in you. If you feel like you're too new in your faith, Jesus is confident in you. If you feel like the eternal student, needing to listen to one more talk before you're ready, no, Jesus is confident in you. If you feel you're not on the team any more, Jesus is confident in you. Sometimes we think we've definitely blown it – we do make mistakes – and we think we're on the bench. I often like Peter, because I think he must have felt like that, after denying Jesus. But Jesus masterfully reminds him three times, that he's still on the team. And if you remember that breakfast meeting with Peter², where He says “Simon, son of John, do you love me? Feed my sheep.” Jesus sent out ordinary Christians like you. No special training, no special kit, because He believes in you. You get the message? You're on the team. Jesus is confident in you.

The next C is courage. And I think with courage, I also wanted to balance it with consolation. Jesus does say, [in the passage] that Liz read for us, “I'm sending you out like lambs among wolves.” That's a bit scary. Jesus is straight-talking that there is powerful opposition. But there are consolations. First of all, you've got backup. You're not alone. They went out two-by-two. Find people who encourage you. And be brave, and encourage them too. In Hebrews [10:24-25] it says, [ESV translation]

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **25** not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

In fact actually, we don't go out just two by two, we go out three by two (which is a bit of a carpentry term!) because Jesus is with us. He says, when He commissioned us, in the Great Commission, [Matthew 28:19-20]

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’

And certainly not all the people you meet are wolves. In fact you meet some nice people. And they invite you in, and feed you. And Jesus says, “Seek these people out.” He says

5 ‘When you enter a house, first say, “Peace to this house.” **6** If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. **7** Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

But what about opposition? It can be troubling. I used to think kind-of courageous people were people who didn't have that fear gene in them. And I found that that's not true: courageous people recognise fear too. But they allow God to speak to the fears. These are words of King David, mighty man of God, in Psalms. Psalm 6 says,

7 My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes.

In Psalm 38 he says,

8 I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart.

David acknowledged his fears; denial of fear doesn't help us. But when we bring our fears into the reality of who God is, God can help us and work through us and give us courage. Philippians 4:6-7 says,

² John 21:15-19

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Well, at these present times, Liz and I need to know what's going on in the world for our business. And at the same time, we recognise that there's... We need to limit how much time we spend listening to news. We find once a day is quite sufficient really. I was driving home a few days ago, it was a dark night, there's a lot of minor roads near us, and it was the road from the A6 to Armathwaite, and I was reflecting on the black sky and the radio was on, the news was on, all COVID, as we know, all gloomy. The darkness seemed all-pervading and random questions were in my head, "Who will share our Christmas dinner? Will we be able to keep our business open? When can we see Mum again?" And I thought of a word, I saw Psalm 139, where it says

23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

We need the presence of God. Because without the presence of God, I lose perspective, I obsess about the temporal stuff, forget the eternal stuff, fret about the provision but I forget the Provider. I hold on to the cares of my heart, and let the consolations of my soul slip through my fingers. Then I saw the headlights of the car lighting up the way ahead. And I had this sense, "Move forward in the light you have." I knew the Light was always with me, I understood how I could be commissioned to go, which implies moving, and yet at the same time be anchored and rooted, because the Light was going with me. Henri Nouwen writes³ "Our lives are not problems to be solved but journeys to be taken with Jesus our friend, our finest guide. So let our confidence be in the one who journeys with us."

The next C is compassion, and you've already been introduced to Lucy, our Labradoodle. We bought her just before lockdown. Liz and I had one puppy class, and then we went into lockdown. And as a lockdown puppy she not only missed out on the puppy classes, but she missed out on socialisation. So, she's a little bit over-enthusiastic to greet people. So when she does meet people, because there aren't so many people she's meeting as she would like to, she kind-of overcompensates by making every opportunity count. We do understand we need to curb her desire to bound up to everyone and jump up. But she does remind us too that in these times when we're only able to meet a few people, we need to make the most of every opportunity. So, I think love and compassion stands out more in times like this. We're living at a time of uncertainty when leadership is under pressure. And we're in this state, aren't we, of transition. The 'new normal' is a phrase we hear and we're trying to find this new normal. And love stands out more, I think, in difficult times, and is a way in which people see Jesus working in us. We're praying that the Spirit will guide us in compassion, that's our prayer in this time. There are so many needs. You need to pray that the Spirit would guide you to the ones with your name on them.

I had a chance to go to a bird talk before lockdown. And at the end of it there was an appeal for help. And it was a guy in a wheelchair called Mick who stood up and said he'd got a piece of wasteland he wanted to make a nature garden, and he wanted some help. He wasn't sure how he would do this. Something prompted me to help him. So that was something I did. So allow God to prompt you in that way. And to start with, it was just me digging and helping him. But after a bit Mick said, "Do you want a coffee?" And he did a good line in biscuits: he had chocolate-coated Hobnobs – a favourite of mine. After a while, he was providing things for me as well. And it comes out in the 72, so, stay there. When you find somebody who you can work with, stay there, eating and drinking and letting people be generous, because it really builds relationship. Since then, we've got to know Mick a lot more. And he's taken us out for a meal. We've started keeping

3 Henri J.M. Nouwen, Spiritual Direction <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/38208599-spiritual-direction>

chickens, and one of the things: sometimes we have to remind ourselves to go and let them out in the morning, lock them up. It turned out Mick used to work in automation. So he's designed us an automatic chicken opening door, that is light-sensitive. How about that! So that's something that we're looking to build. I've got his strimmer I borrowed at the moment. We build relationships. It's a two-way thing. And in letting people be generous, you're letting God change them. During the course of our conversations and many tea breaks, Mick asked me how I came to faith, and so I've had the chance to share my testimony with him. And he's also asked us about our church where we go to. We go to church in Penrith. (They send their greetings to you guys this morning - the King's Church in Penrith). But it was a chance to talk to Mick about church and what we do there. So God is working this relationship. And, yes, the nature garden's coming along too. So, yes, try and deepen relationships at this time, and spend time with those who you get to know - build on those, and it's quite fun. Don't flit around: Jesus said "Don't move around from house to house." I can't know everybody, but I do know Mick, and he's on my heart right now.

Liz has got a story too, so I'm going to pass over to Liz at this point.

[Liz:]

Yes. Well, I think one of the things for me is when you meet people just by chance, or by someone else asking if you can come and meet them. And we had a call at our church: could we help somebody move house? We were free and it happened that they were moving to pretty close to us from the other side of Penrith, up to a little village called Ainstable which is only 10 minutes away from us, so we said, "Sure, we can help." So we went along to help a lovely lady, Lorraine, move house. So we unpacked, getting all this stuff out. And she was saying how she didn't really know anybody around the area, we were the only people she knew; we said, well, how about coming along to our small group, we have a home group. And she immediately said, "Oh yes, I'll come." Now I have to admit, I was kind-of "Oh, she won't." But she did. And I think that's the thing: when you get a little prompting to just ask somebody to come to something, just try, because God is working. And the thing that really is interesting in this is that she had been helped by 'Christians Against Poverty'. And through that sort of work that they've been doing with her, they'd shared the Gospel, so she'd had some input on faith and everything. And it turned out as we got to know her, that she'd actually been on an Alpha course ages ago but kind-of left halfway through, because she had so many questions. So, when I said, Do you want to come to our group she said, "Well, I've got loads of questions, and I'm not a Christian," but we said, "Great! come along anyway, we don't mind, you can ask the questions, we might not know all the answers, but it doesn't matter." So she came along, and she started meeting with us and asking a few questions. And we said, "Well, do you fancy coming to church?" So we started giving her a lift to church because we went quite close to hers on the way to church. And it was great, because she came along, and with all these different sort of connections, after a while at church, she then committed her life to Christ. And I think the thing here is just, it was a real privilege to be a little part of that journey.

I think that's what we need to remember: that we're not always the one person who God is depending on to share the Gospel with someone, we are probably part of a whole journey, a whole lot of different people who may have said something that will bring that person, draw that person into the Kingdom of God. God is drawing them in, using different people. And it's great because we like a little part of the chain, and the fact that we had an opportunity to help and be part of her life and we've become really good friends now, and she's still coming to small group, and her partner comes along whenever we have a social thing, you know, you have a barbecue or a social or something. And he comes along too, even though he's not a Christian. And it's just being there, isn't it, to be available, to help do something or become friends, and now it's just a matter of being really good friends, and that we can really help Lorraine along with her faith a little bit as well, and help her grow and help her get to know Jesus

herself, really deeply. And that's part of the journey isn't it? We don't just share the Gospel and disappear. We hang around, we have food, we're in the house, we don't move around from house to house necessarily, and that's really, really encouraging. So I just want to encourage you that you can be part of someone's journey, even if it's only a small little link in the chain, but it doesn't matter because that could be really important for that person. So that looks really good – we felt really encouraged by that.

So the last C (Dave was talking about Cs) is 'called and scattered'. Now when we came up here, we started looking for churches, and we came across a church called King's Church Eden, and it met in Penrith, and we really liked it, it was very friendly, met in a hall, which I thought God was having a bit of laugh then, because when we arrived it was very similar to Knights' Meadow: they were plugging in the microphones and putting the chairs out. So that was funny, but we really liked it. And the thing about the King's Church Eden is that it draws people in from the Eden Valley. So people are quite scattered with not all people just from Penrith, so people like us, we're coming from the north, and all these people from the south, the west and so on. So it's a really scattered church, and in fact we joined a small group, a home group. And one of the journeys was a 55 mile round trip to go to someone's house. Well, we thought, I wasn't really much up for that – it was a bit far! So we said to our leader, John, "Well, look – you know we really want a home group near us, preferably in my house," I said, "I'd like it!" Anyway, sure enough, the church has grown, we've started a home group in the north, so people in the north that are near us meet around here. We still have to drive a little, you know, 5-10 miles to people's houses, but up here in the country, that's not far, it doesn't take long. And we've sort of got a different idea of where church is, it isn't just in one centre, it's scattered around.

So, we came across some interesting things from the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity, and it was a book called *Scattered and Gathered*⁴. And one of the things that we really found encouraging from that was something that we introduced to the church called 'This Time Tomorrow'. Basically what the idea was, was to encourage people to really think about where they were, as a church, tomorrow, so not today on Sunday morning at 10 o'clock, but tomorrow at 10 o'clock or Tuesday, Wednesday, and so on through the week. So what we used to do is, we would ask someone from the fellowship, we would warn them ahead of the time, to come up and we'd ask them three simple questions, we will give them five minutes in the service to do this. So we had [three] questions, and it was, "What are you doing this time tomorrow?" So obviously there was a really [big] range of different things. Some people were teachers, we had a doctor, we had retired people, we had children from school, young people at college, all different things, full time mums, people who were out of work. And we were just asking them, "What is it that you are doing? Just very quickly." Then we were asking, "What do you sense God is doing through you and through others in that situation?" When we asked, we just really wanted to see what God is doing, because God isn't just working on Sunday morning when we've gathered together, He's working when we're scattered around in all our different places, all those different places where we spend most of our time. And that's our front line, because we actually spend most of our time not in church on Sunday mornings, but far away in different places. So we asked them what is God doing and then we said "Well, let's pray for you." And so the whole church would then just spend a moment praying for that person to send them out, just like Jesus was doing, sending out the 72. And we've had really encouraging feedback about how God helped someone in a situation at work, whether it was tricky situations or colleagues or children or whatever it might have been. And God blessed people. And I think because the church, they knew the church was praying for them, and praying through the week, we challenged the church to keep on praying for that person, it was really encouraging. And I think that's a really good way to just really be broadening our vision of what church is, that we're not just gathered

4 <https://licc.org.uk/product/scattered-gathered/>

on a Sunday, we're scattered every day of the week. And that's something that I think God really wants us to be knowing, that each one of us is part of His clan, to be scattered around and be working for Him, and meeting whoever it is, we just normally meet, not anything like going out doing anything really special, but just meeting people in the places where He puts us on a Monday morning, so that's something that we were doing, that's very good!

[Dave:]

Thank you, Liz. Yes. So, all our front lines look really different. I mean our front line has changed markedly since we're here. We have guests come on to our glamping site and, yes, we do get chance to pray for them before they come. And one of the things that God spoke to us is about slowing down - we love the candle at the beginning, Andrew, because we're learning to pause. I think the good things in life catch up with you when you learn to pause. It's a quote I had and it's something that we have in our ethos here, slower is a big thing that we offer to people. So, yes, we've caught people looking at that night sky in the autumn colours and just reflecting. So, yes, that's front line. We're surrounded by beautiful trees.

And I wanted to share with you a picture I had just a couple of weeks ago, and we take Lucy out for walks in Eden Brows woods, and it was kind-of replanted with larch many years ago. So these trees are quite mature now. And they're close together. They look quite impressive. But they are really rapidly growing larch trees. And because they're close together, there's competition for height. So they haven't got much in the way of roots. And there's a part of this walk that we come to, where one tree's fallen down a bank, and it's taken out hundreds of trees. And the word came to me kind-of "rootless dominoes" - scary. We've got trees on our site though too in our field, and our field looks out to Cross Fell, so it looks out to the Pennines, the backbone of England, and the highest point on the backbone of England is Cross Fell. And we see snow on Cross Fell, but we get strong weather, strong winds coming from Cross Fell into our field. So, our trees have stood since they were babes against these strong winds. And they've grown slowly, very slowly. They're native hardwoods, oak, beech, silver birch. And because they've stood since germination against the elements, they've got good deep roots. And although they stand together as a group of trees - they are a group of trees in our field - they are also kind-of stand alone. Strong trees, and I was reflecting on this and I found this in Jeremiah: Jeremiah 17 [verses 5-7, The Message translation] says:

“Cursed is the strong one who depends on mere humans,
Who thinks he can make it on muscle alone and sets GOD aside as dead weight.
He's like a tumbleweed on the prairie, out of touch with the good earth.
He lives rootless and aimless in a land where nothing grows.

“But blessed is the man who trusts me, GOD, the woman who sticks with GOD.
They're like trees replanted in Eden, putting down roots near the rivers—
Never a worry through the hottest of summers, never dropping a leaf,
Serene and calm through droughts, bearing fresh fruit every season.

I think the word that God for us is bearing fresh fruit: fruitfulness in every season. That means this season. I think this is a word for us, but I'm offering it as a word for you too. We want to do the best job we can by loving people, we need to trust God and see Jesus in more circumstances, to be those strong trees planted, planted in Eden, and fruitful in every season.

I just wanted to give you a moment to reflect and maybe think again about the candle and calming, staying centred.

You might be listening to this and you might think, "Well, who is this Jesus? I don't know Him," or "I'm not confident that He travels with me and journeys with me," "I'm not confident in my roots." "I don't want to be that rootless tree," "I want to journey with Jesus, a friend and guide." Well, if that's you, Jesus says⁵ "Here I am: I stand up the door and knock. Anyone who hears my voice and opens the door, I'll come in and eat with that person and they with me." Jesus wants to come into your life. Open the door, travel with Him. Go on in, if that's you.

Some of you might be listening and thinking "Well, God's calling me to pray for the scattered church in Kenilworth, the people on my front line who I meet, it might be at the school gates, it might be people that you meet when you're walking the dog, it might be people in your place in work. Yes, whatever your front line looks like, Jesus is calling you to be with Him, travel with Him.

So, to just finish with a prayer. If you want to make it your prayer, say Amen.

Lord, I pray for labourers in Your harvest.

Here I am, send me.

I pray for confidence to serve You on my front line.

Pray for courage to keep going.

Pray for consolations to encourage me.

Pray the Spirit would guide me in compassion.

In this season, and in every season.

[Andrew:]

Thank you so much, Dave and Liz, it's been wonderful to hear from you. It's great to see you. And I'll catch up with you at the very end of the service, so thank you very much. We're just going to continue now in a very brief time of continued prayer, so let's pray.

Lord, just let the words that we've heard today sink in. We're just going to have a moment of quiet.

Just highlight what we need to concentrate on, Holy Spirit.

I do pray, Lord, that we would catch the wisdom and practice that Dave and Liz live out. Thank You, Lord, for their insights and also their good example.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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