

NOTES ON WITNESSING

A. Failure to teach and preach repentance. How can we neglect Luke 13:1-5 in which Christ twice commands repentance and states that without repentance we will all perish? What are we going to do with Acts 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; and 26:20? All of these Scriptures demand that we teach repentance, not only for the Christian, but for the unsaved also. And repentance is for this age; it is not relegated to the past only. What will we do with chapters two and three of Revelation, where five times in the messages to the churches, we are told to repent? In some cases this message is to the lost.

In true conversion there are two aspects--repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). This is the message God expects us to bring to the lost person. There must be turning from sin as well as turning to God for salvation. The saved at Thessalonica turned from idols to serve the true and living God. Our message must include the necessity of repentance. When we leave this out, we cannot expect the unsaved to see the seriousness of sin nor the necessity of turning from their past lifestyle.

Probably over ninety percent of the tracts written today omit this important truth. The great preachers of past centuries preached the necessity of repentance. It is only in the past ninety years or so that we have had a gradual turning from this emphasis. Could it be that many of the spurious decisions of recent decades are due to the neglect of this necessary ingredient? If the unsaved fail to see the need of turning from their sinful past, why should we expect them to follow through in baptism, church membership, and desire to serve the Lord? A poor, unbiblical beginning will seldom be followed by true conversion.

B. Failure to understand the need of discipling others as a major thrust in a witnessing ministry. We are all called to be witnesses (Luke 24:44-48)--none of us is exempt. But we must also understand what Christ commanded in Matthew 28:18-20 where we are told to "make disciples" of those whom we are seeking to win to Christ.

What does it mean to disciple others? If we are unsure what discipling means, or do not see its importance, our message will be diluted.

A disciple is one under the control of another--one who has relinquished his personal rights to live under the direction of another. If the lost understand that in the act of receiving Christ as Savior, they must now (as an outcome of being saved) begin to live for Him, perhaps far fewer would make empty decisions. We are not talking about "LORDship salvation," for most Christians do not fully comprehend the Lordship of Christ. Certainly, it is a concept beyond comprehension to the unsaved. But there should be an understanding that "Now I want to begin to live for Christ; I want to learn more so that I might truly be His disciple." This should be the heart response of a person at the time of salvation, and this should be an integral part of our witnessing message.

There are three elements in the command of Matthew chapter twenty-eight. First, we are to disciple all nations. That first Greek word translated "teach" means to win them to

Christ and see them become a disciple by faith in Him as Savior. Then we must help them follow through both in baptism and in teaching them the Biblical truths that will show them how to live for Christ. Christ said that a disciple will continue in His Word (John 8:31).

Have we thoroughly studied Luke chapter fourteen? A strong salvation message is given in verses fifteen through twenty-four which is immediately followed by an important discourse on discipleship. A great multitude of unsaved people were following Christ, but He did not use their interest to garner

in the masses--instead, He laid down HIS strong demands. Why? He wants us, as workers, to understand the "why" of such demands. He has a building to build and a battle with Satan to be won; and in verses twenty-six, twenty-seven, and thirty-three He requires committed people to accomplish these tasks. When we endeavor to win people to Christ, we must help them understand that they are receiving a PERSON into their lives to live for that PERSON and to be used by Him for His glory.

Probably we would not study this kind of Scripture portion with the unsaved person, but our understanding of what Christ desires would affect the content of our witnessing. Lost people must understand that being saved means to belong now to Christ and to want to live for Him and to serve Him. If this is not understood, they may possibly accept what we have to say merely as a "fire escape" from Hell, or an "insurance policy" for eternity, planning all the while to live as they please in this life. Far too many make professions of faith merely as a means to satisfy a later need, with no intent to live for Christ now. Could this be because we have a poor understanding of the Biblical issue of God's glory and honor in our lives?

One of God's basic purposes for discipling others is to reproduce a "**reproducer.**" God expects us to build their lives in a follow-up ministry so that they can reproduce in the lives of others as they win and disciple them. This is what the command of Christ means and what Paul practiced (II Timothy 2:2).

C. Failure to understand the basics in reaching the lost (Psalm 126: 5, 6; Matthew 13; Luke 9; John 4:34; I Corinthians 3:1-9). In these Scriptures there are some facets of the harvest of souls for Christ that we seldom take into consideration.

Christ often used everyday physical activities to portray spiritual truths. He compares winning souls to bringing in a harvest on a farm. Four basic things are involved in the harvest--**cultivating** the soil, **sowing** the seed, the **water** (or rain) from Heaven--and then, as God prospers, **the harvest**. So it is in winning the lost. There must be the **cultivating process**. The soil of the heart must become soft, receptive to the Word of God and tender to the truth. In many cases this cultivating takes time. When we are successful in leading a person to Christ, we will usually find that someone has sown the seed in times past. Surveys tell us that a person must hear the Word of God regarding salvation at least three or four times prior to their acceptance of Christ. If they are Roman Catholic or from a Protestant persuasion which bases salvation on good works, we will

no doubt need to win their confidence and their friendship before we can gain a "hearing for the gospel." Over the years I have found it important to spend much time with many of those I have won to Christ. There was labor needed to first "cultivate" the heart, to see a softening attitude, before I could proceed to sow the seed (cf. the four soils in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8.) Without cultivating the heart, the gospel was usually rejected.

When hearts are tender and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, one can begin to **sow the seed--the Word of God**--and expect that it will take root and begin to bring about conviction of the need for Christ. Sowing the seed can take place gradually even as we are seeking to win their confidence in the cultivating process. This can be done by tenderly, lovingly sharing with them how we came to receive Christ as Savior and what He means to us. The cultivating process can include giving them a tract, praying for the person, and checking back with them about the content of the tract.

We may participate in this process, but God alone can open hearts to saving faith. We are merely the instruments used to guide the person to a "hearing and heeding" of his need. God must have control of our lives in this process. It is not our work, but His. We need the compassion and the broken heart of Christ. As He was moved with pity on the crowds in the villages and as He wept over the city of Jerusalem and its sin (Matthew 9:36-38; 23:37), so there must be the "**watering**" with tears for the lost that they might come to Christ. There is a battle being waged, and Satan will continue to blind the minds of those who are unsaved. No one is saved without being "snatched" from the devil's control (II Corinthians 4:3, 4; Ephesians 2: 1-3; Jude 23).

This preparation of the heart takes time. It is a far cry from the five-minute presentation to an unknown person followed by mind and will manipulation, putting words into his mouth, or getting him to repeat certain words after us--and then telling him that he is saved. In this scene the worker never expects to see the person again. If we should attempt to disciple such a "convert," we would soon realize that no work of God took place in the life of this lost person.

Finally, **we have a harvest**--the saved coming to Christ. Even that term presupposes that something very definite took place in the life of the person. A harvest for what purpose? To live for self, to live the same kind of life as before?

Christ spoke of the fourth kind of soil (or heart) which brings forth thirty, sixty, or one-hundred fold. These receive the Word of God and go on to demonstrate its results in their lives. It would be good for us to study often the heart responses as portrayed in the parable of the sower and the soils. It would help us to understand that our responsibility is to carefully sow the seed, even when we know that there will sometimes be premature, inadequate responses. We are not accountable for the response of the heart of the lost person, unless our message has been weak, incomplete, or carelessly given (cf. Matthew 13, Mark 4; Luke 8). **We are not accountable to get professions of faith in order to feel good about ourselves or to feel accepted or obedient.** Our obedience is fulfilled by going, sowing the seed, and allowing God to use us to bring the person to Christ. He does

the work in the heart. If we are thorough and Biblical in our methods and in our message, we will reap a harvest of "fruit that remains."

D. Failure to understand WHO the soul winner is. The Holy Spirit must convict of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come (John 16:6-8). The way we view ourselves, the lost, and our witness depends upon our view of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. What we think about the Holy Spirit's ministry will greatly affect our outlook, our methods, our message, and our motivation. If we see ourselves as failures when we don't get decisions, or if we think winning the lost depends upon our persuasive abilities or pleasing personalities, then we will be discouraged when there is a poor response.

The Holy Spirit is the soul winner; we are but the vessel He wants to use. As we labor in this God-commanded task, our total dependence must be upon His power, ability, and enablement. We are the vessel He desires to use, for He wants our minds, our hands, our feet, our lips to do the work of winning the lost.

It must be the work of the Holy Spirit, for no one can be saved unless God draws that person to Himself (John 6:44; Acts 16:14). No one is saved without being a "prepared person" in whose heart the Holy Spirit is at work to bring about conviction and understanding of the need for Christ (Acts 8:26-40; 10:30-48; 13:1-5). In all of these Scriptures the Holy Spirit is set forth as the LORD OF THE HARVEST. He is the One who brings together the lost soul and the vessel who is willing to give the witness and bring the message of salvation. Often we hear Romans 10:13 quoted. While we all believe the Word of God as stated there, who can call upon Christ for salvation? To believe savingly in Christ necessitates having a prepared heart. In every conversion recorded in the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit was at work to bring about conviction of need in a prepared heart. A vital part of the ministry of witnessing is to help prepare the heart of the lost to be willing to hear the gospel message. The Holy Spirit, as the Lord of the Harvest, wants to use us for that purpose (cf. I Thessalonians 1:9, 10).

We must be the "prepared witnesser!" We must come with hearts cleansed and filled with the Holy Spirit. We must come with a sincere, God-given burden for the lost. We must come with a sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to the needs and feelings of the person to whom we are witnessing. We must recognize that others may be involved in the ultimate results. Someone else may have sown the seed previously; we may be used to "water" the seed with compassionate love, prayer, and even tears; and then another person may be able to "bring in the harvest." Whatever step we are privileged to take in this wonderful process, we must cooperate with the Holy Spirit. We must allow Him to control our lives. Then He will wonderfully use us as a vessel for God's glory.

E. Failure to understand the lostness of the lost. For many centuries theologians have debated and disagreed about the lostness of the lost. The dichotomy is seen in the difference between the views of those who emphasize the sovereignty of God and the views of those who emphasize the free will of man. Our understanding of this issue will have an effect upon our methods of dealing with the lost.

If we believe that the lost cannot be saved without God's intervention, we will depend completely upon the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life of the person we are seeking to win to Christ. We will not feel that the success of our endeavor depends upon our pressure, manipulation, etc., to bend the will of the person toward Christ and salvation. If we primarily stress the free will of man (that being our theological bent) then we will be prone to feel that the salvation of the lost hinges upon our ability to do a job good enough to convict and bring the person to faith in Christ. If we are unsuccessful in bringing the person to a positive decision, we will feel great guilt, and may even give up trying to reach the unsaved for fear of doing an inadequate job.

Are the lost totally depraved? (Ephesians 2:1-3). Can the lost be saved without God's intervention? Is salvation dependent upon the Holy Spirit's conviction and His bringing faith to believe and accept Christ? I think "easy believism" is based on a theological tenet that rejects the terrible extent of the lostness of the lost. As we deal with the person who is unsaved, we need to consider that 1) unless God, the Holy Spirit, quickens the lost, 2) unless He brings deep conviction and a sense of total lostness, and 3) unless we bring to focus the Word of God upon the subject of his lostness, we labor in vain.

- The lost are . . . totally depraved, for they are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1).
- The lost walk . . . *"according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air . . . are the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation [manner of life] in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath"* (Ephesians 2:2, 3).
- The lost are . . . without hope, without God, and without Christ, according to the clear teaching of the Scriptures (Ephesians 2:12).

In Acts 15:14 we are told that God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. Then in Acts 14:27 Paul, upon returning from a missionary trip, rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. Who opened the "door of faith"? God did, for even the faith to believe in Christ or "on" Christ unto salvation is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8, 9). It is a difficult saying and hard for many to accept, but in Acts 13:48 we read, *"And when the Gentiles heard this they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."* It is obvious from many portions of the Word of God that the lost are totally lost, with no ability to be saved without the intervention of God Himself. In Acts 18:10 the Lord was encouraging Paul not to be afraid, for *"I have much people in this city."*

Christ taught in John 6:44 that *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37).

Do we truly believe what the Bible says? Are we biblicists? A biblicist is one who embraces all the Word of God and realizes that man is accountable for his choices and is commanded to accept Christ as Savior and to obey the gospel (Romans 10:16, 17; II Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:9). Yet there is the other side of the issue, the sovereignty of God. Without God's work in the heart and life, salvation would never take place. To the human mind these two aspects of the truth are irreconcilable. They seem to us to be diametrically opposed. But this is because of our inability to totally comprehend. Man is responsible, and yet God must first move on the heart of the lost person before he can make a rational choice in accepting Christ as Savior.

At the point of God's enlightenment, man is accountable for his decisions. A biblicist is one who does not overemphasize the will of man or the sovereign work of God, but understands the balance between the two.

How lost are the lost?

Here are seven "**un's**" of man's lost condition.

- They are **under sin** (Romans 3:9), under its power, domination, and control.
- They are **unrighteous** (Romans 3:10) "for there is none righteous, no, not one."
- They **understand not** (Romans 3:11) "for there is none that understandeth."
- They are **unconcerned** (Romans 3:11) "for there is none that seeketh after God."
- They are **unable** (Romans 3:12) "for they are all gone out of the way."
- They are **unprofitable** (Romans 3:12) for the lost are like spoiled fruit that is totally without worth.
- They are **ungodly** (Romans 3:12) "for there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Then the Scriptures go into further detail about the seriousness of the condition of the lost. This could all be compared with Isaiah 1:4-6 where the lost (of Israel's day, so today) are likened to a sick body full of sores. In Romans 3 God speaks of the effect of sin upon the tongue, the mouth, the lips, the feet, the eyes, and the heart which is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Mankind is commanded to repent and to believe. How do you reconcile this with the fact that God must do the work in the heart and bring the lost to Himself?
2. Since the work in the heart of the lost must be totally of God, how should the soul winner or witnesser respond in his inner being while working with the lost person?

3. How serious is it for the lost to be manipulated into a decision? Is there such a thing as picking "green fruit" by pressuring people into salvation who are yet unprepared to accept Christ?
4. Since it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring people to Christ, can we then relax in His control of our lives, rest in His leadership and ability to use us, and just be a surrendered "vessel" to give the message?
5. Since the lost are totally lost, without personal ability to do anything to save themselves, will this fact affect what we share with them and the thoroughness of our witnessing message?
6. God commands repentance. Will the fact of such a command help us to bring to focus the right Biblical truths while dealing with the lost person? Does it make any difference whether they understand that in accepting Christ they are receiving a PERSON into their life, and accepting His work on the cross for them?
7. Since we are commanded to "disciple" others, how does this affect the content of our message in witnessing?

LESSON 2

PREREQUISITES FOR WITNESSING

A. A boldness in Christ. Boldness to witness is a work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:29-33). *"The righteous are bold as a lion"* (Proverbs 28:1). We must give the message with much love and with holy boldness in Christ. We must have that kind of boldness today if we are to be free to share the gospel message with the lost.

Possibly the factor that is lacking most in the lives of Christians today is the boldness of the Lord, giving them a fervency and joy in sharing their faith with the lost. Far too often our lips are sealed, and we are at a loss in sharing our testimony of salvation. The Holy Spirit would give us the needed boldness if we would allow Him to fill and control our lives (Acts 1:8; Ephesians 5:18).

B. A reality of salvation, an assurance of being saved. If we lack the assurance of our own salvation, we will lack ability and desire to share the message of saving grace. The effective witness must have an absolute assurance of his own salvation (John 5:24; I John 5:13). We are to know that we are born again, and we are to know that we are passed from death unto life.

The new birth is a spiritual birth that God alone can produce. It is effected by acceptance of Christ as Savior and is the result of the seed (the Word of God) planted in the heart (I Peter 1:23; 2:2, 3). The new birth involves an act of acceptance that takes place at a certain time, at a definite place. While we may not be able to give the exact date, or the exact hour, we will know that we are trusting Christ alone.

C. A growth in grace, in maturity (John 14:15; 15:16; II Peter 3:18). The growing Christian will become a fruitful Christian. He (or she) will desire to bring forth fruit. Our growth depends upon obedience to His will and Word. He has "saved us and called us with an holy calling" (II Timothy 1:9). The growing saint of God will desire to memorize the Word of God, to meditate on His Word, and to apply it to the life (Psalm 1). We are to draw our inner life from Him, who is the vine, receiving life and daily sustenance in order to live the life He desires. Just as in the agricultural setting a branch must abide in the vine to be fruitful, so we must abide in Him.

D. A life that shows forth Christ (II Corinthians 3:2). *"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men."* It is important that we live a godly life before the unsaved. They will watch our lives, and they must see a difference there. We are the only Bible that many will ever read. The Christian cannot be used of God to bring the lost to Christ if he does not live a godly, separated life. We do not have anything to share with if we are not living for Christ. (Examine John 17; Romans 12:1, 3; II Corinthians 6:15-7:1; Titus 2:11-14.) The person who knows he is saved, is growing in grace, and is

demonstrating salvation as a living epistle is in a position to witness for God. God's commands are given for us to obey.

E. A willingness to "GO," taking the gospel message (Romans 1:16, 17). The great commission, as we often call it, is given over and over again. We find it in Mark 16, Luke 24, John 21, and Acts 1. It is a command to be obeyed. Let's examine the commission as given to us in Matthew 28:18-20.

1. Christ's authority: all power is given unto Christ. Christ has the authority to command us to go; we are under His command. We are His ambassadors and have His authority to proclaim the message of salvation (II Timothy 1:7). We are to go to the lost with His power and authority upon our lives. The gospel is the "power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Romans 1:16). God's power is given to the saved by the filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). We have the "dynamite" of God to enable us to be effective witnesses for Him. The question is, are we willing?

2. Christ's command to go: Go ye therefore (Matthew 28:19), or more literally, "as we are going" we are to take the gospel message to others. God assumes that the Christian will go because he has God's command, His authority, and His power. We are urged to "come to Christ" for salvation and then to "go for Christ" with the message to others. If we are wise, we will seek to win souls to Christ (Psalm 126:5, 6; Proverbs 11:30). In these verses God sets forth the commission, the compassion, the conviction, and the consummation of soul winning. The witnesser, who meets the conditions of these verses by going with the compassion, can claim the promises given there. He will be used of God! We are to go to our world--our Jerusalem, our Judea, and our Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). But we must begin right where we are, where God has placed us, at home in our Jerusalem, whatever city or place that might be.

3. Christ's program: to teach all nations, baptizing and discipling them, and teaching them "all things." We first must win or evangelize the lost by taking the gospel to them (Romans 10:17; II Timothy 4:5). Then we are to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Baptism is for those who are saved (Acts 2:41; 8; 10). This ordinance is observed in the local church.

But that is not all, for then we are accountable to disciple them and to teach them to observe all things that Christ has commanded. They must be taught to continue in the apostles' doctrine, etc. (Acts 2:41, 42). The newly saved must be taught how to study God's Word, to pray, to witness, to live for God, and to grow toward maturity. The goal is to produce a "reproducer" who will win and disciple others (II Timothy 2:2). God desires the new convert to become a multiplier, and whether this happens or not depends in large measure upon our training of those who are saved. There must be a "follow-up" ministry to bring maturity to their lives.

4. Christ's presence is promised: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [age]" (Matthew 28:20). The promise is conditioned upon our obedience to the "go." We must go boldly, depending upon the Holy Spirit to do the work in the life of the

lost person. Christ has promised His presence with us as we go forth for His glory (Hebrews 13:5).

D. A total dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is the "Lord of the Harvest," and He desires to fill, anoint, and control our lives, it is imperative that we be fully yielded to His control (Acts 1:8; 4:29-33; Ephesians 5:18). The early church witnessed to the resurrection of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit upon their ministry, and so we must have that power today if our ministry is to be effective.

The result of the Holy Spirit's power upon the early church was a boldness, ability, compassion, and power to reach the lost. They turned the then-known world upside down! Christ spoke much of the purpose, power, and prerogative of the Holy Spirit. A thorough study of John 7:37-39 and John 14-16 would cause us to understand the necessity of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through our lives.

In reality the book of Acts is not the "Acts of the Apostles," but the "acts of the Holy Spirit" through the apostles and the early church. The Holy Spirit is referred to nearly a hundred times in the book of Acts, and He is specifically named about sixty times. It is evident that the early church was moved, directed, and empowered by the Holy Spirit as they labored for Christ. They gave the Holy Spirit the "right" to direct and control their lives (Acts 13:1-4). The Holy Spirit is designated as "the promise" of the Father. He was sent to anoint and empower for witnessing, and to assure victory and control toward godliness in our daily lives. (Study Acts 1:2, 4, 5, 8, 16; 2:4, 14-18, 33, 38; 4:31; 5:3, 9; 6:3; 7:55; 8:16-18; 9:17, 31.) If we are going to be used of God with a powerful witnessing message, it is imperative that the Holy Spirit has control of our lives.

QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. How can we have boldness when most of us are reticent, fearful, shy, and withdrawn? Does fear keep us from witnessing?
2. If we fail to speak to the lost about their need of Christ for fear we will drive them away from the Lord (or perhaps say the wrong thing, causing them never to come to Christ), can we make them "more lost" than they already are?
3. What are the basics that are needed for maturity in our lives so that God can use us to reach the lost? (Memorization of the Word, meditation, a prayer life, etc.) Name and consider areas of need in your life.
4. What verses will you claim in which God promises He can and will use you? (cf. John 15:16; 20:21; Hebrews 11:6). Are we sent to fail?

LESSON 3

WHAT IS A WITNESS?

A witness is someone who simply testifies to that which he has seen or heard. A witness of a car accident is asked to clearly state in his own words what he experienced or saw.

As you study the book of Acts, it will be apparent that the early church gave witness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and its purpose and powerful effect in their own lives. They told of who He was (and is), of what He did, and of the dreadful things that He endured at the hands of the Jews (Acts 2:32-38; 3:12-16; 4:7-13, 29-33).

The book of Acts describes two methods to be employed in witnessing for Christ: 1) public witnessing, and 2) private witnessing. Acts 5:42 states, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Paul further stated in Acts 20:20, "I . . . have taught you publicly and from house to house." There must be the public proclamation of the gospel message, but most Christians have received Christ through private confrontation by a loving person who brought the message of the gospel to them. Therefore, it follows that personal, private witnessing is the most effective means of bringing the unsaved to Christ.

The record in the book of Acts shows that the strong emphasis of the message shared by the early church was upon the resurrection of Christ. These first-century Christians set forth clearly the message of the remission of sins through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12, 33; 20:43; 13:38, 39).

Personal evangelism can be conducted anywhere--in the home, on the street, on a public conveyance, on the job, or anywhere there is an opportunity to talk face to face with someone about the Lord Jesus Christ. Why, then, do we not see more unsaved people being brought to Christ?

A. The apparent neglect of many. It is obvious that many Christians have neglected giving the message of salvation. It is said that less than ten percent of those who profess to be saved have ever led a person to the Lord. These probably never try because of the "fear of man" which is a great snare to many (Proverbs 29:25). Satan has deceived many a sincere Christian into thinking he (or she) does not possess the ability to witness. The Christian feels that he is not equipped with the proper gifts or tools to speak to others about Christ. Many excuse their neglect by saying they do not have that particular gift. But it has nothing to do with gifts. When the Word of God speaks of gifts, soul winning or witnessing is never included. It is a command equally to every saved person. In Acts 8:4 we read that those scattered abroad went everywhere preaching (or proclaiming) the Word. Some may have abilities that others do not have, but all of us are commanded to share the message of the gospel to the lost around us.

B. The apparent poor (unbiblical) methods of many. There are many methods used by soul winners today which are contrary to God's will. Some of these actually drive people away from the desire to be saved.

1. Some are manipulative, coercive, and nothing but "mind control," which may work for the salesman but is always very damaging in the witnessing process. In this method (espoused by many) we are urged to totally control the conversation, overwhelming the persons and not allowing them to express themselves regarding their interests or concerns.

2. Some are very inept methods which only bewilder and confuse the listener. The witnesser may fumble from one thought to another without trying to keep the conversation focused on the central theme--the sinner's need for salvation.

3. Some methods may magnify the ability of the soul winner and become merely a display of his knowledge.

4. Then there is the so-called "shotgun" method which is without aim or purpose, and without a knowledge of the beliefs, misbeliefs, etc., of the lost person.

5. Yet others use methods that primarily bring about an argument.

6. And there are those who attack the lost like a hunter stalking a deer, pouncing on the person, showering him with a barrage of Scriptures, and "bullying" him into a spurious decision.

7. There is also the "sledgehammer" approach in which the witnesser tries to frighten the lost into salvation, with the Word of God being used as a cudgel. Such a person will take the lost by the collar (so to speak) and threaten him to get saved NOW or he will be in Hell immediately.

In all of these methods the Holy Spirit has little if any control. In most of them the witnesser is at the center of it all--not the needs of the lost person.

C. The apparent disregard of God's purpose. It is imperative:

1. That we witness with God's unconditional love (Romans 5:5;

I Corinthians 13; II Corinthians 5:14).

2. That the Scriptures are the directives for the message and the methods

(II Timothy 2:15).

3. That there is total dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit to bring the person to Christ, with no dependence upon our ability, persuasiveness, or control of the

circumstances by thought manipulation (Philippians 1:6; 2:13; I Thessalonians 5:24; Titus 3:5).

We must have a method (note subsequent chapters), but the bold witness of the soul winner will take into account some basic principles:

1. **We don't need to defend the Bible, just use it.** It is the power of God unto salvation. The Holy Spirit will drive the message home to the heart of the lost person, so we don't need to try to overwhelm him. The Holy Spirit will use the weapon, the Word of God, to probe and convict the hearts of men to show them their need of Christ; but we must use the weapon carefully. The objective in witnessing is to introduce the sinner to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God must be used in the right way to show him his lost condition and God's remedy for his dilemma. As we share the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will apply the truths, convict the heart, and enlighten the mind of the lost person. That is something we cannot do, nor are we called to do it.

2. **God has given us a plan!** The Word of God is very clear about the gospel message to be shared, the content of our witness. God desires that we use HIS plan. As a carpenter needs his tools and needs to know how to use them, so the one witnessing for Christ needs both the tools and the knowledge of how they are to be used.

3. **The witness must be clear!** We must take into account what salvation means to God, as shared in previous chapters. The content of our message and the methods we use will be weak or strong depending upon our concept of what salvation is in the mind of God. If we have a weak concept of salvation, then we will not fully share what takes place when the person accepts Christ and why such a decision must affect the total person--his or her goals, lifestyle, priorities, will, etc.

4. **We must realize that God's glory and honor in the life of the lost person is at stake.** The purpose for wanting to see the person saved is not that he (or she) would have a better life, have more joy, more fun, etc. (all of which is man-centered). Our desire must be that God may have the honor in that life which was previously a life of total dishonor to God.

5. **In the final analysis the purpose of the content of the witness is to bring the person to God.** So much of the thrust in modern books on soul winning is "man-centered" and not "God-centered." When sin entered the world, man not only lost his relationship with God, but God lost man as one who would worship HIM and live for HIM. To bring people to Christ is to bring them under the Lordship of Christ for His glory.

QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. How would you define a witness? What does it mean to witness to the saving faith that is in Christ?
2. Why are methods so important? What methods have you observed others using? Were they Biblical--if not, why?
3. Do you think that possibly the biggest problem is that we have so much "tact" that we never "attack?" (Of course "attack" in the right sense).
4. Write out your personal testimony. Put Scripture in it, as you write it and be concise. It should be short enough to be shared in two to three minutes. Be sure to include the essentials the lost need to hear. Practice giving your personal testimony of salvation. Get used to hearing your own voice sharing the gospel message. Determine to get rid of fear!
5. Why do we need to comprehend what salvation is from God's viewpoint? Does it really make any difference? If so, why?

LESSON 4

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE GREAT COMMISSION?

It is imperative that we understand God's plan in the Great Commission as given in the gospels (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21).

In Matthew 28:18-20 we have the breakdown of God's intent and plan. Although this has been referred to elsewhere in this book, we want to reiterate and reemphasize the necessity of our fulfilling the Great Commission. Far too often we are only doing one-third or two-thirds of what God has planned. If we are to be true disciples, and if we are going to "produce reproducers," then we must fulfill all three components of His commission, as outlined in Christ's command here.

A. We are to win them to Christ. In the original language the meaning of the word "teach" found in Matthew 28:19 means to make a disciple, or literally to bring lost ones to a saving knowledge of Christ. This is a command to give the gospel message and to thus win the hearer to Christ. This is the part of the threefold thrust that would impel us to witness, to be a soul winner, or to labor to bring people to Christ, or whatever terms you might use to describe the process. This means literally to "make Christians of all nations," and this is done by sharing the gospel message clearly and fully so that the person hearing it can comprehend and make a rational, heartfelt decision.

B. We are to see them baptized. It is obvious from Acts 2:38-42 that as soon as people were saved, they also obeyed the command to be baptized. This truth is also clearly taught in Acts 8:12, 34-38; 10:34-48. This is part of the Great Commission. It is a witness to the world of the regeneration that has taken place and a public testimony of what Christ did to make that regeneration possible.

It is not my intent to go into the doctrine of baptism here, for that is done elsewhere. But suffice it to say that baptism is a step of obedience which one takes after salvation because he is saved and not in order to be saved. The person who wins an individual to Christ should also share this part of the Great Commission with the newly-saved person. To fail to do this is a failure of one-third of the commission as given by our Captain and Commander.

C. We must teach them to observe all things. The word "teach" in Matthew 28:20 is a Greek word that means "formal teaching" with the view of helping the newly-saved person to obey and to observe whatsoever Christ has commanded us. This process demands a ministry of follow-up of the new convert. The early church went door-to-door not just to give the gospel but also to teach (Acts 5:42; 20:20; I Thessalonians 2:7-13).

The Word of God wonderfully and dramatically sets forth a ministry of helps to the new converts so they will be able to live for Christ and observe all that is commanded.

The epistles were basically follow-up letters written to the churches to minister to needs among the new Christians. Paul was burdened for Timothy, Titus, and others and was careful to minister to their need of growth and maturity. One of the most exciting ministries we can have is to labor with new converts to help them "grow up" in Christ.

QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Make a list from I Thessalonians 2:7-13 that shows Paul's concern for the new convert and his investment in their lives.

2. In what way does II Timothy 2:2 fit into this subject?

3. Why did Christ set forth the Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:18-20? How do we relate to this in the United States?

4. Are we as accountable to fulfill the Great Commission as are the missionaries whom we help send to some other country?

5. WHO are the "sent ones"? (cf. Matthew 16:24, 25; Luke 9:23; John 15:16; II Timothy 1:9.)

6. How has the lack of fulfilling the Great Commission had an impact on the way we do our soul winning today? Where does the failure lie?

7. Since Christ has promised to make us "fishers of men," what should be our response to His promise?

LESSON 5

A PLAN OF APPROACH IN WITNESSING

Can we have an approach that is consistent with Scripture, Biblical in its content, and effective in its use? Why do we need to have a planned approach anyway? Is it evident in Scripture that Christ had a different approach with different individuals or with the masses based upon where they were in their own thoughts, ideas, religious backgrounds, etc.? Did Christ use the same methods or have the same conversation with each person or groups of people?

There are those who tell us to use the same approach and the same content with each person to whom we witness. Is this right? Possibly they would tell us to use the "Romans Road" and that only. Most of these same people would encourage us to control the conversation--to move rapidly from point to point, memorizing every word, and to put pressure on the lost in order to secure an immediate decision. Basically, this is mind control. (I am not against using Romans, but there are other Scriptures that are also vital to a clear understanding of the plan of salvation.)

A. Some basic considerations. Before we deal with suggestions, ideas, etc., about usable approaches to guide our conversations with the lost, let's look at some important considerations.

1. Every lost person has some misbeliefs. We cannot meet their true need until we find out what those misbeliefs are. If we overwhelm them by the method of our approach, we may possibly get a profession of faith, but will we have lasting fruit if their real need is not met? What about the person who is trusting in baptism? What about the persons who have basic misbeliefs stemming from their Roman Catholic, Protestant, cultist, materialistic, humanistic, or secularist backgrounds? What about honest questions which must be answered before the person is ready to listen to the gospel message?

What is the progress in our lives that brings us to our behavior? Whether saved or lost, consider that we have:

- **Programming**--which produces **beliefs** (often **misbeliefs**)--which in turn produce **attitudes**--from which we then have **emotions**--which finally produce our **behavior**. When we work with the lost and understand something of their past programming and the progression as given above, then we can begin to know how to deal with them honestly, openly, and lovingly to bring them face to face with Christ.

- **Many lost people have strongholds of sin** in their lives. These problems must be faced (John 4). The woman at the well was confronted about her many marriages, etc.

Unless there is deep conviction about their need of Christ, the lost may only make a decision to "get us off their backs" or as a "fire escape" from Hell for use at a later date.

• **We must build need and desire.** In the process of witnessing, we are endeavoring by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to take the persons from where they are to where they need to be. If they do not sense need, if they do not have desire, we might get a profession of faith, but will it be short of saving faith? Judas had neither a sense of his need nor a desire to put faith in Christ. Yet he was in the circle of the apostles. Would we be fooled by his seeming faith?

• **There may be false professions.** Many will make professions of faith for reasons short of heart acceptance of Christ and a yielding of their will to Him. Many will make such professions in order to feel better, some to improve business, some for the sake of the desire of relatives or to make a friend happy, and still others to get the soul winner "off their backs." Some will make a profession of faith hoping thus to be set free from some horrible event or circumstance. Often this, too, is merely an "out" for some personal end. When the crisis is over, they are never seen again. Is this faith that is short of saving faith?

• **Ability to understand demands variety.** Another reason why we cannot use the same approach with each person is that people vary in their ability to understand. Those to whom we witness will have varied backgrounds, and many times Biblical terms are very foreign to them. We must be careful that the gospel message is clearly understood. The approach and content of our witnessing presentation will be predicated on the ability of the hearer to understand the message.

I think of the many whom I have dealt with over the years, and I was amazed with the varied backgrounds, interests, abilities, desires, etc., that I saw in those lives. It is so important to be led of the Holy Spirit. And it is important to realize that no one is truly saved without the work of God in his life. We must be led of Him in every step of the presentation. The unsaved will have to be led from where they are to where God wants them to be, and that takes time, understanding, and much patience on our part.

B. Some methods to use in the approach. How we begin does make a difference. Knowing what we are going to say and having some basic principles to guide our conversation from the first will help alleviate fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of what to say, and fear of how to begin make many a Christian give up and not witness at all.

My intent is to share some varied ideas of how to begin, things to look for, and suggestions that will help your approach to be more natural and allow the listener to be relaxed with you. Later we will share detailed helps toward the soul winning conversation itself.

1. Use the F - O - R - M plan. You will need to memorize the suggestions given here. These four letters can give you the guidance toward knowing how you are going to open the conversation after introducing yourself, entering the home, etc.

F -- amily: It is important to talk about their family, about their children, where they moved from, where they have lived in the past, their backgrounds, etc. If you show genuine interest in people, they will sense your love and concern. If the conversation takes place in their home, you will want to note on the way to their door if there are toys in the yard or other telltale signs which give you clues about the family.

O -- ccupation: You will want to do all you can to set them at ease and make a friend. Find out where they work, what they do, special aspects of their work, their interests, etc. Sometimes you get a clue about their personality and needs from a knowledge of their occupation.

R -- eligion: Showing interest in their religious background can take away some of the threat they may feel. Talk about where they go to church. This will be a clue to some beliefs which may hinder their understanding of Biblical salvation and give you an understanding of where their faith is placed. Knowing their religious preference, background, etc., will give you insight into how to share the gospel with them. Also from this knowledge you will be made aware of some "strongholds" of doctrine which Satan might be using to control their lives. Never ridicule their beliefs. In fact, try to be positive in your approach and build a bridge toward them by sharing some aspect of belief they hold which you also embrace.

M -- essage: At this point, you will want to share the message that you came to give them. If the person is unsaved, the message will be the gospel. Sometimes your visitation call is to someone already saved, so you will want to share the message about the church, its ministry, pastor (s), etc., and challenge and excite their hearts about attending your church. Or the message may be to a backslidden or carnal, wayward saint. You will want to stay on track concerning the appropriate message for the situation. At times your message will be a continued study with a new Christian for his growth and development as a disciple.

2. Different types of calls to be made: There are different types of calls to be made both toward the unsaved and toward those who know Christ.

- The **get-acquainted call** is, of course, to become acquainted with the person being visited, perhaps a new neighbor. Your goal is to work at building a bridge toward them in friendship so you can get a hearing for the gospel.
- There is the **church-centered call** to explain your church program and its different ministries.
- The **Christ-centered call** (which is particularly what we are dealing with in this book) is to take the gospel to the person and seek to win him or her to a saving faith in Christ. The Christ-centered call is the most important of all.
- The goal in the **follow-up call** is to establish the new converts in the faith, to see them become grounded in the Word of God and have a strong, consistent walk with Christ.

This is an ongoing ministry over many weeks with the new convert or the young Christian.

Approach steps in the soul winning conversation. Witnessing is simply a conversation between a Christian and a lost person about the plan of salvation. How that conversation begins, what is said, and how it is handled will make a vital difference in the effectiveness of the effort.

The best approach is the indirect method. It is best to gradually build up to the topic of personal salvation through a series of steps. We want to look at a number of different approaches that I have used and that others have found helpful or have shared from their experiences. All of these are for the purpose of leading up to the actual soul winning conversation and sharing of God's Word. You will want to memorize these steps.

There are **six approach steps** that build a thought pattern. These can be used in any kind of setting, under any circumstance, and without any previous mention of spiritual topics. If he has a simple plan, the most timid person can witness without fear. This plan produces no resentment or defensiveness in the unsaved person to whom you are witnessing. It is a gradual working toward their need, without offense, and can be cut off at any time if the hearer becomes resistant, defensive, or is just not ready to listen. One can use the above **FORM** to begin with and then gradually use these six approach steps to lead to a discussion of personal salvation.

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STEP 1: "Do you ever give much thought to spiritual things?" Be relaxed as you ask the question. Don't be so serious that you make the unsaved persons feel threatened. Keep your voice at a natural pitch. This is a general question to broach the subject of their need.

The purpose of the question is to center their thinking on spiritual values without bringing up the topic of personal salvation. You will want to lead up to that gradually. You will find it easier to speak of Christ and salvation when you have first spoken in more general terms. Be natural, speaking without tension and without building tension in their minds.

You might say, "We came to visit tonight because we wanted to get to know you. and I like to go visiting together, for we love people. I've been a Christian for years, and it is really wonderful. I never realized before I became a Christian the difference it makes in one's life. Have you ever given much thought to spiritual things (or religious things)?" Or, "Have you or your wife thought much about the future and spiritual things for your sake and for the sake of your children?"

Rule: Expect an answer. It may be a long or a short one. Do not interrupt or add to their comments by telling of your own experiences. Put your emphasis on them. Say as little as

possible, allowing them to share with you, and thus getting to know them better. Be a good listener, so you can earn the right to be heard later. You will go right on to the next question no matter what they have said. However, you will want to note carefully what they have said so you can have a better idea of where they are spiritually. Continue to guide the conversation, but don't try to control or manipulate it.

STEP 2: "What would you say is man's greatest spiritual need?" Your purpose is to continue the soul winning conversation. You will want to help the person concentrate on the topic of spiritual matters. He will not find your indirect approach too personal. You will need to continue to be both free and relaxed. You are seeking to build confidence that the person can speak without threat or pressure. You might say, "We surely give a lot of thought these days to physical and material things. What do you think is man's greatest spiritual need?" Depend on the Holy Spirit to guide you in matching this step to the varying needs of those you are dealing with.

Rule: Listen carefully to the answers. They are clues to the person's beliefs, ideas, attitudes, etc., and will determine how you share the gospel message. You need to know how the person thinks. You will still continue on to further questions regardless of how this question was answered. Be attentive to the person and to his answer, and do not argue or ridicule in any way. Be sensitive to the person with whom you are speaking.

STEP 3: "God tells us that a man's greatest need is the experience of salvation. Was there ever a time in your life when you seriously thought about your personal need of salvation?" The purpose in this question is to get the person to think about past experiences of conviction. His answer will often help you to know his religious background in a more concrete way, the possibility of his being totally secularized, and the extent of his spiritual needs. You are not directly asking if he is saved, but you are finding out about any past spiritual event or experience he has had. The person will probably relate some incident, if he has any interest at all. Or the person may at this time determine that you should speak no more of anything spiritual, which of course you will need to heed.

STEP 4: "If your child (or some other person) asked you how to get to Heaven, what would you say?" The answer given at this point will help you to understand the person's ideas about the way of salvation. This will make a big difference in how you deal with him. You will also know by his answer if the person is saved or not. A lost person will almost always give a legalistic answer, a salvation by works solution like, "I would say if you do your best, are honest, and do not beat your wife that you have as good a chance as anyone." Or they might say, "Well, I would say believe in God and do the best you can."

You will want to be careful again that you do not ridicule or show criticism of their answer.

STEP 5: "Yes, you are right, everyone ought to do those things. But what I really had in mind was: How do you go about receiving salvation?" Regardless of the

answer, you will want to agree with them--only partially. In the second sentence you are asking again how one can be sure they are going to Heaven.

NOW you move into the next step without actually waiting for an answer. They may say at this point, "Well, I don't know what you do to have salvation; what would you say?"

STEP 6: "Would it be all right if I took a few verses of Scripture and look with you at what the Bible says about getting to Heaven, or what we must do to have salvation? Could we do that?" This should be asked in such a way that you expect a positive answer. You know that it must be the work of the Holy Spirit, and you are trusting HIM to create desire in that person's heart. At the same time you reach for your New Testament as you say, "Would that be all right?"

Note: Some people at this point will be defensive and show their defensiveness in different ways. Don't force the issue, but don't give up easily. You must be led of God in this; no one can explain all the eventualities that you could face from the reactions of various individuals.

It is very important for you to realize that the Holy Spirit must be at work in the heart of the unsaved person. You cannot force salvation! You can force a false decision if you are a good salesman and the person with whom you are working is vulnerable to a "sales pitch."

The only people who receive Christ with real saving faith are those whose hearts are prepared. God says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:18). Remember, the person who calls with saving faith is the prepared person. When the Scripture relates salvation experiences, you will note that invariably there was preparation of the heart prior to the decision to trust Christ (Acts 8; 10). Very few people are saved the first time someone speaks to them about Christ.

And I strongly doubt that anyone is saved without the Holy Spirit's work of conviction prior to their decision to accept Him.

In another chapter we will deal with the soul winning conversation that should take place at this point. We will give many suggestions of Scripture portions to use, the thoroughness that is essential, and the importance of using the Word of God wisely.

Shorter approach:

I have used the following shorter approach as I began the witnessing conversation. I have found over the years that it was quite workable and yielded very good results.

1. Have you been thinking about spiritual things? (And then no matter what the answer would be, I would still go on to the next question. However, there needs to be a smooth, natural flow of conversation.)

2. What church do you attend now, or what church have you attended in the past?
(My purpose was to know something about their background. At this point you must be very careful not to be judgmental about their church background, but they must now understand that the church is not the source of salvation.)

3. If your child (or someone else) came home today and asked you, "Dad (or Mom), how can I be sure I can go to Heaven when I die?" what would you say to them?
(With this question you can find out what they understand, where their faith lies, and whether they have any anticipation of Heaven.)

4. Or I have used the question: "Has anyone ever opened the Word of God and shown you how to know you are going to Heaven?"

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't be afraid of their asking questions, and don't feel that you should do all the talking or so control the situation that they are overwhelmed by your control.

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QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Why is it important that we understand something about the programming, misbeliefs, and attitudes in people's lives?
2. Since the unsaved have "strongholds" of sins and misbeliefs as even Christians sometimes do, why do we need to understand something about the unsaved person's background, etc. In what way will this help us work with them as we share the gospel?
3. What is the chief problem that keeps Christians from witnessing? What can we do about this problem of fear?
4. Have you worked on memorizing the **FORM FORMULA**? Do you see the importance of having something in mind that will guide your conversation so you can visit without fear and without wondering what to say next?
5. Have you worked on methods of approach to aid in getting the gospel message to individuals? Do you see the need of using an approach that does not offend but helps the unsaved to see their need?

LESSON 6

THE ESSENTIAL CONTENT IN WITNESSING

In this chapter we desire to share a number of different outlines to use in witnessing and also some components of the content of the witnessing conversation. These are but guides, for one must be led of the Holy Spirit in each instance. They are not perfect outlines or methods because individuals have individual needs and "hang-ups" about which we must be aware and to which we may need to speak. For instance, if I were dealing with a strong Roman Catholic, based upon their doctrines I would use a different approach and different verses in sharing the salvation message than if I were speaking to an unchurched person.

Some organizations have very elaborate and detailed methods of working with the unsaved. For the person who desires such a study, other materials are available. Most of the time, we learn to better present the gospel message to people by doing it. It does not come just from books, or theory, or mastery of methods, but principally we become a good instrument that God can use by the **practice** of giving the gospel. The salesman becomes proficient by effort and by being out in the "swim" of the work. He would never succeed by staying on the shore, as it were, wishing and reading but never doing.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TELLING THE GOSPEL STORY

A. Getting the opening to give the gospel message.

1. You could use an appropriate gospel tract as an attention getter, but be sure you know its contents well.
2. Ask permission to speak to people about Christ, possibly by using the ideas from the foregoing chapter.
3. You could say, "May I tell you about something that has meant a lot to me?"
4. Be courteous, straightforward, and very kind. Don't be devious or distracted but stick to the point.

B. Some Do's and Don'ts in giving the gospel message.

1. Don't assume a negative response; instead assume a positive one.
2. Bring the individual face to face with the person of Christ. Avoid unnecessary doctrinal disputes or peripheral issues.
3. Use your Bible in such a way they can see the Word of God for themselves.

4. Don't try to force a decision or use sales tactics to try to get a decision; you cannot do the Spirit's work. But be sure to give them an opportunity to accept Christ if the situation is conducive.

5. Never argue; keep it simple so that even a child can understand.

6. Be sure to give the gospel clearly (Romans 1:16; I Corinthians 15:3, 4).

C. Explain the implications of the gospel thoroughly.

1. Explain truths about the comparison of the physical life with the spiritual life. Be very familiar with the first two chapters of this book (John 3:1-7).

2. Help them to see before they accept Christ that certain things will take place if they truly allow the Lord to save them.

3. Help them to understand that they will be a "babe in Christ" and that you or someone else will come to their home to study with them and help them grow in Christ. (Lay the groundwork for the follow-up ministry even prior to their salvation decision.)

4. They need to understand that being saved means receiving a person (Christ) into the life with expected **change**. It is receiving a Person with the desire to be saved **from** sin and to life **for** Christ.

5. One cannot be too thorough. The unsaved need to understand the issues-- that salvation is to be saved from something (sin) and to begin to live for Someone (Christ) whom previously we had practically ignored and rejected.

TELLING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

A. The condition of the lost.

1. The fact of sin (Romans 3:9-18, 23).

2. The condition of the lost (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:9-8; Ephesians 2:1).

3. The source of sin (Romans 5:12).

4. The penalty of sin (Romans 5:12; 6:23).

5. The lost must repent (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 20:21).

B. Christ paid the penalty for sin.

1. He paid for all our sin (Acts 4:12; Romans 5:6, 8; II Corinthians 5:21; I Peter 2:24).
2. He is the only way of salvation (John 1:29; 14:6; Acts 4:12).
3. He paid for sin once for all (Hebrews 9:26-28; I Peter 1:18).

C. We are accountable to accept His death on the cross.

That death was for the atonement of our sins, to pay for sins totally. We are responsible to accept what He did as the payment for personal sin. He must become our personal Savior.

1. As we accept Christ, we must be willing to turn from sin in repentance

(Luke 13:1-3; Acts 17:30; 20:21; II Peter 3:9). We must desire to have a change in our lives, and there must be a desire to turn from sin unto Christ to live for Him.

2. We must accept Him, take Him as personal Lord and Savior, receiving what He did on the cross as the covering and the forgiveness of personal sin

(John 1:12; 10:9; Romans 10:9, 10; Revelation 3:20). We must be reconciled to a Holy God who hates sin fully.

As we attempt to share our faith, we must give the gospel, not our opinions. It must be given in all its simplicity, without argument and in the power of the Holy Spirit. What is the gospel? (I Corinthians 15:3, 4).

We can know the facts, but we must go further and appropriate Him as our very own. The lost person must understand the necessity of this. To "believe ON" Him means more than an intellectual assent. It involves turning from sin and receiving Christ as our own Savior. It means repentance from sin, a change of mind, heart, desire, will, and a change in what we love and hate. There must be a change of mind about ourselves, our life, our sin, and about God. It means we acknowledge we have sinned against a Holy God. All of this is involved when someone is truly saved.

It is important that we memorize many of the verses as given above, even though we probably would not turn to all of them when witnessing to the lost. But we want to be familiar with the Scriptures so that we can support the truth we are sharing.

THE NEWLY SAVED PERSON RECEIVES:

1. Forgiveness, redemption (Ephesians 1:7).

2. Sonship--is put into the family of God (John 1:11-13).
3. Eternal life--God's kind of life (John 3:14-16; Romans 6:23).
4. Assurance of salvation (I John 5:11-13).
5. A new right--prayer (John 15:23, 24); a new food--the Word of God (I Peter 2:2); a new relationship (I Corinthians 6:19, 20).

We want to share some suggestions given by others for presenting the gospel.

Dr. Will Houghton, famous teacher, taught that we should use the following truths in presenting the gospel to the lost:

- A. Christ bore their sin (Isaiah 53:6; II Corinthians 5:21; I Peter 2:24).
 - B. Christ is alive, raised from the dead (Romans 4:24, 25).
 - C. Christ is pleading for them (Matthew 11:28; Revelation 22:17).
 - D. Christ wants to save them (Luke 19:10; Acts 2:36).
1. Giving assurance of sins forgiven (John 5:24; 6:37).
 2. Bestowing His very life (John 20:28).
 3. Imparting the new birth into His family (John 1:12, 13; 3:3, 18; I Peter 1:23).

Dr. Houghton went on to write the following outline and encouraged the worker not to think of these as four steps, but only one step that includes, implies, and necessitates all four things:

- A. BELIEVE (John 1:12; 3:16-18, 36).
- B. REPENT (Acts 17:30; Romans 2:4).
- C. CONFESS (Luke 12:8, 9; Romans 10:9, 10).
- D. OBEY (Acts 26:20; I John 2:6).

It is clear that the men of former generations taught the need of repentance and were more thorough in their gospel presentation than most of us are today.

Rev. C. M. George, teaching personal evangelism gave the following:

- A. ALL are SINNERS (Romans 3:23).
- B. The RESULTS of sin (Romans 6:23).
- C. God LOVES sinners (Ephesians 2:4, 5a).
- D. God has provided a SAVIOUR (John 3:16, 17).
- E. We must BELIEVE on Christ to be saved (Acts 16:31).
- F. What BELIEVE involves:
 - 1. Repentance (Acts 20:21).
 - 2. Receiving Christ (John 1:12).
 - 3. Confessing Christ (Romans 10:9, 10).
 - 4. Changed life (II Corinthians 5:17).

A five-point outline use by some (another method)

- 1. The fact of sin (Romans 3:9-12, 23).
- 2. The penalty of sin (Romans 6:23).
- 3. The penalty must be paid (Hebrews 9:27).
- 4. Christ paid the penalty (Romans 5:6, 8; II Timothy 2:4).
- 5. Works will not save (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

- 1. Restudy methods of approach toward sharing the gospel message.

- 2. You want to be thorough, so restudy some of the second chapter again and rethink how you can explain the message thoroughly and how you can weave into your presentation some of the evidences of real salvation. (In this you are desirous that they understand what is involved in accepting Christ--it is a birth that brings new life--a relationship as a sheep to a shepherd--a marriage to Christ, etc.

3. Memorize some outlines that will help you organize and present the gospel message in a manner appropriate to each individual contact.

4. Learn to explain what is involved in repentance.

5. Listen carefully, and learn illustrations that will be presented to use in the process of dealing with someone about salvation. Be ready to tell how you would use those various illustrations to good effect.

6. Take notes on this and the following page on suggestions of how to explain various verses as a person is dealt with.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

LESSON 7

BASIC FACTORS IN WITNESSING

In this chapter we want to examine a number of basic factors that are involved in the witnessing process. These will help you to become a sharp tool rather than a dull one. They are very important to the success of the worker in visitation, witnessing, and discipling.

USING OUR PERSONALITY TOOLS THAT GOD HAS GIVEN

We want to learn how to use the natural gifts God has given to each of us to meet the needs of the people we visit. It may seem that we are "polishing the personality" rather than discussing visitation here; but effective use of our God-given gifts is important in any ministry for our Lord.

A. Using the heart. It is almost a miracle to find a person who is truly more interested in others than in himself. It seems almost a miracle to find someone who approves others and who accepts others as they are no matter how they live or what they say or do. This does not mean that we should approve of the sin of others, but we must accept their person. The lost person must sense a feeling that he or she is totally accepted as a person. We will have far more success in reaching the lost if we have a genuine interest in them. People love to talk about themselves and their interests--to find someone who loves them and is interested in them is rare indeed.

Do we really want people? We must face the fact that often we don't really want people. Do we go around looking hungrily at people, visualizing them saved and in our church?

Are we too self-centered? We must cultivate a heart full of interest in others--it will work wonders. In this fast-paced and self-seeking world in which we live today, it seems that people must struggle for any kind of recognition, so we must have and demonstrate genuine interest in others.

B. Using the lips. Here is the most potent of personality tools. While we are usually devoted to self interest, lips used for God can and will bring tremendous results. Those who visit and witness need to learn to seal their lips against self-speaking. Our lips belong to the Lord to bring joy and satisfaction to others. People are never so happy as when they are praised by those about them. Dedicated lips can send the soul of a person toward the road to Heaven.

Few people ever hear the words, "I like you." These words can bring a new friend into your life. "I understand" can bring comfort to another. "You have a lovely home" can bring about joy. Those who discover the power and pleasure in using their lips for the Lord will thrill to go on visitation and witnessing.

C. Using the eyes. Eyes must also be dedicated to the Lord. God can particularly use them for His glory when they are trained to take loving inventory of someone else (Philippians 2:1-4). We can scan others, their homes, children, etc., looking for something worthy of praise. It is a monument to our selfishness that we can look at people without really seeing them. There is always something about everyone that is worthy of interest and comment. We prepare the way for the message we want them to receive by using our eyes to see praiseworthy points of contact and interest.

D. Using the ears. It may seem unusual to speak of ears used for the Lord. But many times a ministry of "hearing with a burdened heart" is what is needed. A dedicated listener can minister for Christ. As the Lord Jesus ministered on this earth, He had ears to hear the cries of the lonely, the burdened, the weary, the sinsick, as well as the physically ill (Matthew 11:28-30).

We need to show unfeigned and sympathetic concern for the burdens and cares of others. Many times it is the listening that brings the first healing and leads to the opportunity to present Christ and the Word of God. People can easily detect whether we are genuinely interested in them or are only speaking to them with some ulterior motive.

USING INTEREST CENTERS AS CONVERSATION BUILDERS

One of the most agonizing features of untrained visitation is to go into a home and then struggle for relevant and interesting conversation. Long silences are but endured. People who are embarrassed because of difficulty in conversing seldom go out on visitation.

To be effective in reaching and conversing with people, we must begin where they are spiritually. We must show an interest in the legitimate things in which they have interest. Here is where we put to work some of the tools we have just written about. Warm, emotional interest in families (when the conversation is centered on them) will bring a pleasant visit. There will be results as we endeavor to bring Christ to them. The other persons and their interests are sure-fire subjects that will help to gain their interest in the message we came to give them.

The interest center visitation technique is very important. As we talk about the things they enjoy and their goals and ambitions, we will find the conversation becoming more and more interesting. This is often an untapped area of conversation. Learning to recognize and use interest centers (especially those that are emotionally connected) will help us gain an entrance into the "heart" of the home.

A. External centers. Notice the house, walkway, car, trees, unusual dwellings, landscaping, etc. As you reach the street, you will need to begin noticing the general appearance of the neighborhood, trees, houses--anything unusual about them. As you pull up in front of the house, eyes should be busy--looking for interest centers about which you can commend the people on whom you are calling. This might include a boat, a trailer, an unusual lawn, a well-kept yard, etc. Also, toys in the yard (bikes, trikes, etc.) will tell you something about the family before you knock or ring the doorbell.

B. Internal centers. Inside the house you may see many potential centers of interest about which you could begin conversation. Often people have unusual homes or display some object of special significance. These might include such things as furniture, rugs, lamps, portraits, stone fireplace, house plants, etc. Our interest in these objects must be **sincere**. We must studiously avoid the appearance of using their interest centers only as points of "sales techniques" for our message.

C. Personal centers. Show genuine interest in the person or persons. Tell them that you care for them or that you love them. Manifest a heart that cares for people. Conversations are like a fire--they burn nicely as long as you keep throwing on "interest logs." To keep a "red-hot" conversation going, the visitor needs only to systematically introduce interest centers that are full of tender meaning to the persons on whom he or she is calling. It does make a difference.

WARNING: You are not there just to make a social call. Always be aware of the ultimate purpose of your call. And also realize that the success of your call is totally dependent upon their acceptance of you and your purpose. Do not force anything. Don't try to do the work of the Holy Spirit.

APPLYING SOME BASICS IN OUR WITNESSING

- Get the person alone if at all possible.
- Stay on target. The witnesser should never get off the subject of salvation to answer an irrelevant question or to demonstrate his grasp of Bible knowledge. If questions arise, you should say, "That's a good question, and we will answer it later. But now remember I am showing you how you can know you are going to Heaven," or "I am showing you what a Christian really is."
- Press for a decision whenever possible. The most critical time in dealing with a soul is the decision time. The Bible emphasized the need for a decision. "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).
- Recognize the difference between slight resistance and real resentment. Some resistance is natural because you are dealing with eternal issues, and Satan is actively seeking to defeat the witness. Resistance will melt away as the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and brings conviction to the heart--if the person is truly ready and responsive to salvation. Even the Holy Spirit will not bring a person to Christ against his will.

Resentment will get deeper and deeper if the person does not want to hear what is being said. If you as the witnesser sense resentment, you should stop what you are saying, thank

the person for the opportunity to speak to him, and leave a good gospel tract. You will want to leave the door open for a future time that you or someone else will be able to work with the person. You may be allowed to pray aloud before you depart. Don't use that time to preach or pray for a lengthy time--be brief!

When there is no resentment but perhaps some resistance, and people are reluctant to accept Christ, give them additional verses to clarify, praying as you do for the conviction of the Holy Spirit. You may want to turn to totally different portions such as John 3, or Isaiah 53:3-6, or perhaps use some other outline of salvation basics.

If the person rejects Christ, then leave him with the knowledge that he did not reject you or your church but Christ. The witnesser must be kind but firm in presenting this truth.

If the person accepts Christ, then share a number of verses with him on the subject of assurance (John 5:24, 6:37, 47; 10:9, 27-29). **Avoid telling the person that he is saved when he makes a profession!** Expect the Holy Spirit to make salvation real to the heart. He must witness to the person's spirit that he is a child of God (Romans 8:16).

- Help them make a public profession. After the newly-saved person invites Christ into his life and has trusted His atonement for his sins, he should be shown the importance of public profession of faith. In Matthew 10:32, 33 we read, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven." Since Christ was not ashamed to go to the cross to die for our sins, then Christians should not be ashamed to confess Christ as Savior. The invitation at the close of a church service gives people the opportunity to confess Christ before men, thereby obeying His command. The command to "**confess me before men**" carries the connotation of confessing before a collective group of people. To do this is to confess Him openly and unashamedly (Romans 10:9-11).

QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Consider the need of using personality gifts. Memorize the list of gifts and work on using them. Try speaking alone before a mirror and note how you may appear to others, considering the impact of your person upon them.

2. Consider the importance of the use of "interest centers." As you visit with friends in the church, with neighbors, etc., begin to make use of such centers and work on establishing a habit of noticing interest centers about you. (Possibly at work you can make use of this and note the impact on others when genuine interest is shown in the things in which they are interested.)

3. Consider the basics as given. Go over them often until many of these skills become a natural part of you.

LESSON 8

GODLY WISDOM IN WITNESSING

Introduction:

We are considering various important Biblical aspects of Godly wisdom in our visitation, witnessing, and discipling efforts.

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT EVANGELISM (OR WITNESSING) IS A PROCESS LEADING TO AN EVENT.

Andrew is seen working two aspects of evangelism. First he brings his brother to Christ. This is the process of evangelism called "stair stepping" a friend to Christ. Second, the event of conversion took place when Jesus beheld him (John 1:42). It takes the process of witnessing or stair stepping to lead a person to the event of salvation--leading the person from one step to another upward and onward toward the conversion decision. Often times this is a gradual process--sharing one time, adding more to another, and continuing to share the gospel story until the person comes to Christ. Some who are effective at influencing a person actually may not be able to lead their friend to Christ, but they have done a very important part of the total process. Those who are not able to lead a friend in praying the sinner's prayer should at least do what they are able to do. They should work at and emphasize "stair stepping" their friends to Christ.

Witnessing should be natural. Witnessing should be happening when two friends have coffee. The Christian talks about his Savior and what it means to him to be saved. The credibility of the Christian is reinforced because his unsaved friend knows what used to defeat him. Witnessing should be as normal as friendship. In this process of sharing we are "stair stepping" the unsaved one step closer to the family of God.

When one goes door-to-door (and we ought to continue this practice) we need to be much in prayer that the Holy Spirit would lead us concerning whom we ought to go back to again and again. Surely, the Holy Spirit can lead us as much in this as He did Peter and Philip in Acts 8 and 10. I personally have experienced being led in this manner. With this burden laid upon me, I continued with the family or individual until they were saved. The majority of New Testament evangelism was centered on witnessing to friends and relatives.

Since we already have established a relationship with our friends, we should naturally use the bridge to share Jesus Christ. Stair stepping the unsaved to Christ is Biblical. This is not a lesser job than actually winning the person to Christ. This is a ministry that is important and a part of the total process. This is not a compromise of the evangelistic outreach. Inviting your friends to services and working with them for a HEARING of the gospel is Biblical and much needed. This method of stair stepping a person to the Savior is found throughout the New Testament. (Study the following portions: Mark 5:19; Luke 19:9; Acts 10:24, 33; 16:31, 34).

There are some basics needed as equipment if we would bring others to Christ.

- You must know the Word of God (I Thessalonians 1:7, 8).
- You must live a life of prayer (Acts 10; Romans 10:1).
- You must have a heart of compassion (Romans 9:2; I Corinthians 5:14).
- You need to have an urgency about you in the matter (John 4:4-34).
- You must listen with a concerned heart. Listening is the cement that holds the bricks of friendship together.
- You must be considerate (John 15:13; I John 3:16; 4:10).
- You must respect your friends' religious views.
- You must be tactful.
- You must move from attitudes to actions.
- You must be bold without being offensive or belligerent (Jeremiah 1:6, 8;

II Timothy 1:7).

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE "SEASONS" OF THE SOUL.

Just as there are seasons to plant and to harvest, so there are seasons in the lives of your friends when they are "ripe to harvest." The phrase "seasons of the soul" describes when your friends or loved ones are responsive to the gospel. This is also described as being receptive. They are receptive to you and responsive to your message.

It is supernatural influences which bring about those times of responsiveness and receptivity.

1. There is conviction of the Holy Spirit where they see their sin and its results in their life. He is the one who through the Word of God brings conviction. The degree of receptivity may be directly related to the amount of the Bible teaching they have heard and understood.
2. Your godly testimony or manner of life before them (or some other Christian whom God has used) can bring conviction to their hearts.
3. God speaks to them through various events and circumstances that He brings into their lives. These natural factors also make your friends receptive to Jesus Christ. These are internal disequilibriums or disruptive events that shake their security. In a crisis or a

disappointment the person can be unsettled and turn to God or would if someone was there to guide them. (Such a crisis can include being fired, declaring bankruptcy, going to jail, a long-term illness, death in the family, or any event that shakes their complacency and shocks their system.)

4. God used the church or various churches over a period of time to effect their lives. We must beware that their receptivity extends to both the messenger and the message. The rich young ruler accepted Christ but did not receive His message (Matthew 19:16-22). Then it is possible that they might be receptive to the message but not responsive to us. We should not take this personally but be careful that our lives, methods, etc., do not turn the unsaved away from the message.

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE BARRIERS TO THE GOSPEL.

Some may not receive Christ because of barriers in their lives, the church, or Christianity in general. Some barriers are real, imagined, natural, and some are satanic. Our prayer life is very important for the removal of barriers (I Corinthians 1:18; II Corinthians 4:3, 4; Galatians 5:11; Ephesians 2:8, 9). In all of these portions we can recognize barriers do exist. These we often must address as well.

Barriers are built by both the church and the unchurched. Some of the barriers are also in our

minds--our own fear of building meaningful relationships toward the unsaved, our prejudice that some will never be saved anyway, or our belief that God cannot use us, etc.

The unsaved have barriers which might include a fear of what they do not understand, conviction in the presence of other people, ignorance, or not understanding church language. They come to church and are fearful that they will be asked to stand up, sing, say something, or sign something (I Corinthians 2:14, 15). We must recognize that barriers will be there and then work to overcome them and remove them.

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT OUR TOTAL DEPENDENCY IS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT.

If we are to have godly wisdom in witnessing or evangelism, we must have total dependency upon the One who is the Lord of the harvest, the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-5). While we have mentioned the work of the Holy Spirit in earlier chapters, I want to again emphasize some aspects of His ministry and our dependence upon His power and leadership in our lives.

THREE BASIC TRUTHS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN BRINGING LOST PEOPLE TO CHRIST.

The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of all lost people. If the Holy Spirit did not work in the lives of lost people, no one would find salvation. His work is absolutely vital to

bringing a lost person to Christ. The "witness" (those who go witnessing) never "takes" the presence of God to anyone. The Holy Spirit does this. He is already there to prepare the person for the witnessing experience. We can depend upon His ministry in the life of the lost. His ministry includes: revealing the truth of God's power and existence, revealing the eternal truths of God, and working in the intellect, emotions, conscience, and the will of the person to bring God- awareness and God-consciousness. The lost have perverted this testimony of the presence of God (Romans 1:18-23).

- **The Holy Spirit convicts.** The Scriptures use the word "conviction" to describe the convincing work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11). The Holy Spirit's work in this regard is actually three phases of conviction. He probes the mind and the heart to bring an uneasy but inescapable understanding of one's true condition. Without the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, man would remain spiritually blind and insensitive to the true nature of his sinful condition (Romans 2:1-12; 3:12-23; Ephesians 2:1-3). He convinces the lost of their lostness, of their need of righteousness, and the fact of impending judgment. The lost person is convicted of the character of his sin.

- **The Holy Spirit enables the sinner to recognize his need of Christ as Savior.** The Holy Spirit is the One who brings the reality of the person of Christ to the consciousness of the lost person.

- **The Holy Spirit brings the sinner out of death into life.** It is His ministry to bring transformation at the moment of acceptance of Christ (John 3:1-7; Titus 3:5). The sinner is reborn, freed from the power of sin and death, and wholly put into the family of God. He acts with enabling power in the life of the lost person.

We must learn to depend upon the work of the Holy Spirit and to cooperate with Him as He does the work in the life of the lost. We can go to the lost person with total trust that He will carry out conviction in the life (John 15:26, 27; 16:14, 15).

- **The Holy Spirit is at work in the life of the witness to lead and empower his witnessing to the lost person.** He is the One who precedes the witness--working to convict and convince the lost to accept Christ as Savior. His leadership is vital and reassuring. It is not our work but His. We merely cooperate with His work.

As we obey the command to share the "good news," the Holy Spirit is there to minister. We do not wait for some special feeling before we go witnessing. Regardless of feeling, one just needs to take the initiative and look for an opportunity to witness. Often the Holy Spirit's leadership is only evident AFTER we have taken the step of faith and begin to witness. When we obey, we can also expect the Holy Spirit to guide us in what to say to the lost person. He will guide the presentation because He knows what He has been doing in the life of the lost person (Luke 12; Acts 8, 9, 10). In all the portions in Acts when people were giving the gospel message, the Holy Spirit was at work in the circumstances, events, and in the conversation. One of the exciting parts in witnessing is the thrill of seeing the Holy Spirit at work in lives and to be guided by Him. He utilizes the training, knowledge, and personality of the witness. We must allow Him to use us.

• **As we witness, the Holy Spirit is at work in the life of the lost convincing of the truth of the message.** As the witness shares, the Holy Spirit will be right there validating the truth. It is as though He is speaking to the heart of the lost person saying, "Listen. What that person is telling you is true. You need to believe" (I Corinthians 1:6). He confirms the truth of the testimony which we give. He is at work not through our eloquence or our wisdom or our persuasion but through the Word of God as we share it. This is great news. The witness is never alone. The Holy Spirit is the active partner in the witnessing process. He will be at work through all the process of cultivating--sowing seed, watering with tears of compassion, and the harvest.

We need to keep in step with the Holy Spirit and be willing to allow Him to lead us, train us, and empower us, as we faithfully obey the command to go. This is called **WITNESSING IN THE SPIRIT**. He is given the freedom to act and to lead. He is given the right to work in the life. He cannot use a "silent witness," even as a silent witness in court would be ineffective. We must allow Him to use us to share the message of salvation in Christ.

IN THE SPIRIT means operating through the control and power of the Spirit of God. Through this power, the Christian gains authority for witnessing, wisdom for witnessing and leadership, and power in witnessing. He will use us to effectively share the gospel message (Acts 1:8). The book of Acts authenticates these truths. They were not perfect nor gifted people, but as they surrendered to the Holy Spirit on the basis of a day-by-day and even hour-by-hour commitment the Holy Spirit used them.

***So today we must enter into such a commitment of surrender
to His work in and through us.***

I, _____, on this day, _____, make a commitment to allow the Holy Spirit to use me as a witness. I will live in the expectancy of the Spirit of God, expecting exciting things to happen. I will work at cultivating, sowing, and harvesting.

I will give myself in the effort of making disciples in the general daily patterns of my life, making use of the opportunities God gives me as *Divine Appointments for His glory*. (Matthew 28:18-20).