

RESCUING THE LOST ONES

Ron Christian, Compiler

**“Growing A Godly Life” - Devotional Series
Book 10 - “Witnessing”**

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As compiler of this series, I wish to express my deep appreciation to Shirley J Ruiz, who dedicated her great skills, abounding energy, and many hours of her time in typing the entire manuscripts of this devotional series. I feel certain that her committed hands will bring great blessing to many persons.

‘GROWING A GODLY LIFE’ - Series (13 Books)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

BOOK 1. ENCOUNTERING THE LIVING GOD (Salvation)

Introduction To Book 1

- Chapter 1. Consider The Need For Salvation (1)**
- Chapter 2. Understand the ‘Plan’ Of Salvation (2)**
- Chapter 3. Receive The Gift Of Salvation (3)**
- Chapter 4. Enjoy The Grace From Salvation (4)**

BOOK 2. PRACTICING THE MEANS OF GRACE (Means of Grace)

Introduction To Book 2

- Chapter 1. Experience Corporate Fellowship (5)**
- Chapter 2. Explore Biblical Truths (6)**
- Chapter 3. Enjoy Holy Communion (7)**
- Chapter 4. Practice Personal Disciplines (8)**

BOOK 3. PURSUING A HOLY LIFESTYLE (Holiness)

Introduction To Book 3

- Chapter 1. Visualize The ‘High Calling’ (9)**
- Chapter 2. Make The ‘Full Surrender’ (10)**
- Chapter 3. Cultivate A Christlike Character (11)**
- Chapter 4. Pursue A Constant Growth (12)**

BOOK 4. BATTLING LIFE’S MULTIPLE TEMPTATIONS (Temptations)

Introduction To Book 4

- Chapter 1. Conquer ‘Personal’ Temptations (13)**
- Chapter 2. Overcome ‘Circumstantial’ Temptations (14)**
- Chapter 3. Model Humility and Confidence (15)**
- Chapter 4. Discover Restoration and Victory (16)**

BOOK 5. PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD (Divine Communion)

Introductions To Book 5

- Chapter 1. Contemplate His Majestic Personhood (17)**
- Chapter 2. Appreciate His Constant Presence (18)**
- Chapter 3. Anticipate His Compassionate Intervention (19)**
- Chapter 4. Follow His Careful Guidance (20)**

BOOK 6. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH (Growth)

Introduction To Book 6

- Chapter 1. Forgive Others Quickly (21)**
- Chapter 2. Serve God Enthusiastically (22)**
- Chapter 3. Treat Yourself Honestly (23)**
- Chapter 4. Handle Life Positively (24)**

BOOK 7. REFOCUSING ON LIFE'S PRIORITIES (Priorities)

Introduction To Book 7

- Chapter 1. Esteem People Above 'Things' (25)**
- Chapter 2. Reject Corruption Of 'Worldliness' (26)**
- Chapter 3. Embrace 'Simplicity' Of Spirituality (27)**
- Chapter 4. Appropriate Power Of 'Kingdom' Resources (28)**

BOOK 8. APPROPRIATING THE POWER OF PRAYER AND FAITH (Prayer)

Introduction To Book 8

- Chapter 1. Practice Discipline Of Prayer (29)**
- Chapter 2. Acknowledge Conditions Of Prayer (30)**
- Chapter 3. Celebrate Benefits Of Prayer (31)**
- Chapter 4. Relish 'Perks Of Faith' (32)**

BOOK 9. MANAGING LIFE'S VARIOUS STEWARDSHIPS (Stewardships)

Introduction To Book 9

- Chapter 1. Realize 'Rationale' For Stewardship (33)**
- Chapter 2. Correct 'Attitudes' For Proper Giving (34)**
- Chapter 3. Recognize 'Potential' Of Generous Giving (35)**
- Chapter 4. Encompass 'Dimension' Of Total Stewardship (36)**

BOOK 10. RESCUING THE LOST ONES (Witnessing)

Introduction To Book 10

- Chapter 1. Understand Preparation For Witnessing (37)**
- Chapter 2. Stimulate Motivation For Witnessing (38)**
- Chapter 3. Experience Power In Witnessing (39)**
- Chapter 4. Expect Results From Witnessing (40)**

BOOK 11. REACHING OUT IN HOLY LOVE (Service)

Introduction To Book 11

- Chapter 1. Take Time For Empathetic Communication (41)**
- Chapter 2. Build 'Bridges' For Effective Witness (42)**
- Chapter 3. Serve Humbly For God's Glory (43)**
- Chapter 4. Perform 'Actions' Of Practical Compassion (44)**

BOOK 12. SURVIVING LIFE'S HARD TRIALS (Adversities)

Introduction To Book 12

- Chapter 1. Trust God Amidst Adversities (45)**
- Chapter 2. Process Grief For Healing (46)**
- Chapter 3. Rejuvenate Life Following Defeats (47)**
- Chapter 4. Transform 'Losses' Into Gains (48)**

BOOK 13. MAINTAINING THE LIFE OF FAITH (Perseverance)

Introduction To Book 13

- Chapter 1. Avoid 'Drifting' From Grace (49)**
- Chapter 2. Maintain Faithfulness To God (50)**
- Chapter 3. Honor Spirit For Victorious Living (51)**
- Chapter 4. Keep Focus On Heavenly Goal (52)**

**SUMMARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS ON
'PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS'**

**LIST OF WRITERS AND THEIR RESPECTIVE CONTRIBUTED
DEVOTIONALS.**

BOOK TEN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1.
CHAPTER 1. UNDERSTAND PREPARATION FOR WITNESSING	15
CHAPTER 2. STIMULATE MOTIVATION FOR WITNESSING	32
CHAPTER 3. EXPERIENCE POWER IN WITNESSING	51
CHAPTER 4. EXPECT RESULTS FROM WITNESSING	67

INTRODUCTION

By

Ron Christian

There was nothing that thrilled me more, when I served as long-term pastor of the Free Methodist Church (1967-1994) in Fort Collins, Colorado, than personally to witness precious persons repenting of their sins and turning their lives over to Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ into the lives and families of seeking souls always spelled divinely-wrought transformation! Even though I never felt I had the God-given ‘gift of evangelism’, I did, as a pastor, take Paul’s exhortation seriously: “*Do the work of an evangelist.*” As a young pastor of 22 years of age (in 1967), I determined that, in spite of my ‘natural timidity’, I would ask God to discipline me to “reach out in love” to hurting and spiritually-hungry people who desperately needed Christ. Since I grew up in a small local church (where there were hardly any men in the Church), and since my own father did not become a Christian until very late in his life (about four years before his death), I decided that I would always try to lead both husband and wife to Christ together in their homes in the evenings. I dedicated three evenings a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday evenings) to go into homes to witness and hopefully to lead some couples (and entire families if possible) to a saving knowledge of Christ. In spite of my fears and hesitations, mistakes and human weaknesses, God saw fit to allow me to be His ‘mouthpiece’ to speak to hundreds of unsaved persons about their need for Christ. On an appointment basis (what I called ‘Salvation By Appointments’), I had the glorious privilege of personally leading several hundred adults to Christ. Only about 20-40 new converts per year, but over a period of some 25 years the Lord performed many transforming miracles right before my eyes! These included older persons in their 60’s, 70’s, 80’s, as well as teens and young adults and middle-agers. A short time after I left the ‘pastoral ministry’, I had the thrilling experience of a 93 year old lady repeating after me the sinner’s prayer. That woman (at this particular time) is still living, and I have observed during these last few years that she has grown much closer to God. She still evidences faith in Christ, and she anticipates making heaven her ‘eternal home’. A short time after I prayed with this 93 year old lady, I prayed with a 78 year old lady (who, according to her own confession, had not attended church for 30 years). After reading the story of Nicodemus (John 3), I asked her if she wanted to make sure that she was ready to meet God in peace (if - or when - she would die). I asked her if she wanted to repeat after me ‘a prayer of confession and faith’. She quickly answered, “Yes, of course!” Less than two months after this woman prayed to accept Christ as her Savior, she died of a heart attack (on November 1, 1996), and I conducted her funeral service. This woman manifested such glory and joy in her countenance, the last moments before she died, that her two children (neither of whom were known for their personal faith in Christ) both testified that they believed the ‘holy angels’ came and carried away their beloved mother! The woman’s ‘unsaved’ son said to me: “If I ever doubted that there is an afterlife, I no longer doubt it now, after seeing the peace and joy on my mother’s face as she died!” This 78 year old woman (who prayed the ‘sinner’s prayer’ only a few

“Growing A Godly Life” - A Devotional Series

weeks before her death) is only one of several older folks whom it has been my privilege personally to lead to Christ. (Don't 'buy into the myth' that 'older persons are unreachable as far as salvation is concerned, for their hearts are too hardened by sin'. Thousands of older ones are waiting for someone to lead them to the 'foot of the cross' before it is too late! Reach out to them, and lovingly talk to them about the compassionate and forgiving Christ!)

Of course, there have been several hundreds of young adults and middle age couples whose hands I have held (around their own dining room tables at the conclusion of a “Salvation By Appointment” Bible Study), as they repeated the ‘sinner’s prayer’. After pastoring for nearly 27 years, I left that wonderful pastorate, but I have not left my blessed memories behind of the nights in the homes of hundreds of couples who humbled themselves in my presence as they repented of their sins and turned in faith to the merciful Savior. Some years ago, I recall being in the presence of a family of seven (father, mother, four children and an elderly grandmother), all of whom opened their hearts to the Living Christ! For several years (until this family moved to another community) all seven of these ‘beautiful persons’ were actively and joyously involved as ‘workers and servants’ in the local church where I pastored.

The local church where I pastored for so long never was a very large congregation. It grew numerically from about 35 to 350 worship attenders (on Sunday morning) during the years I pastored, and, because there was considerable mobility in this professionally oriented (college) city, I was actually pastor of several ‘different congregations’ (because hundreds of people ‘came and went’ through the years). I felt God’s presence so often as I preached, taught, visited, organized, and carried on the multitude of pastoral tasks in a small but growing local church - but I never felt the power of the Holy Spirit’s presence as strongly as I did when I was in the hundreds of homes of ‘unsaved people’, leading them to Christ through my “Salvation By Appointment” Home Bible Studies. When I left this long-term pastorate, my ‘Church Directory’ had about 170 names and addressees of families which composed my small ‘flock’ of parishioners. Out of these 170 families, there were 60 of these families with whom I had personally prayed to accept Christ (in their homes through the SBA Bible studies). Many of the local church’s strongest and most active leaders came from these persons who had been converted and disciplined through our church’s ministries.

Many local churches throughout America, like our own local church, have primarily increased in size because of consistent and solid ‘Convert Growth’. Of course, there is nothing necessarily ‘wrong’ with other kinds of growth in a local church - i.e., ‘biological growth’ through babies being born to church members, or ‘transfer growth’ through believers who join your local church after they move to your community from another community, or ‘side ways growth’ as a result of believers who leave another local church in the same community to join your local church - but the most important growth is ‘Convert Growth’ (i.e., growth as a result of your own local church’s soul-winning

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efforts).

Jesus Christ chose twelve men through whom to spread His teachings and to establish His Church in the world. He commanded His disciples to take the Gospel to all nations. The command primarily involved spreading the Gospel in lands which were under the rule of the Roman Empire. To obey Christ’s command (to make disciples in all nations) meant to endure harsh persecution, separation from family, and even death (martyrdom).

Christ showed a tremendous trust in the disciples when he assigned such an immense task of world evangelization to them! Christ spent many months with his disciples instructing, preparing, and encouraging them. He knew that He would soon be gone from the earth (at least in his physical ‘form’), and the disciples must carry on His work and His teachings. Christ chose the twelve to be his ‘instruments’ through whom a world could be won for Him. Jesus said to His followers, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”

The disciples whom Jesus chose were ordinary men. They had no formal college or seminary education, and they enjoyed little or no ‘social distinction’. It was to these men that Jesus commanded: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matthew 28: 19)

Matthew 28:19 (just quoted) is Jesus’ ‘Mandate to the Church’. The dictionary defines ‘mandate’ as ‘command, edict, statute, commission’.

It is not an option, it is a mandate! A command! A commission!

This is a mandate to every Christian! Every Christian is to be about the ‘Father’s business’ - i.e., making disciples of Jesus! Yes, ‘disciples’, not ‘mere converts’.

The Holy Spirit is the ‘motivating power’ by which the ‘mandate’ can be fulfilled. The Spirit who empowers the ‘yielded believer’ is the same Spirit who applies the transforming ‘message’ to the lives of convicted sinners whom the Spirit-filled disciples reach out to. The creative Holy Spirit also shows the creative believer the ‘manners’ and the ‘methods’ in spreading this important message.

The believer who sincerely seeks to be a participant in helping to fulfill Jesus’ ‘Great Commission’ (and every believer, without exception, should desire to be a participant), needs to understand the ‘basics’ regarding Witnessing. Let us, therefore, briefly look at (1) The Mandate for Witnessing; (2) The Motivation for Witnessing, (3) The Message for Witnessing; (4) The Methods in Witnessing; (5) The Manner in Witnessing.

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Think, First, of the Mandate for Witnessing. Jesus told his disciples, *“I have been given all authority in heaven and earth. Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this - that I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”* (Matthew 28: 18-20, Living Bible) Making ‘disciples’, not mere ‘converts’, is the central task of the church. In Matthew 28: 19-20, the ‘main’ verb (with its ‘object’) is ‘Make Disciples’. There are three ‘supporting verbs’ (i.e., participles) - ‘Going’, ‘Baptizing’, ‘Teaching’. When disciples of Jesus are prayerfully involved in the activities of ‘going’ to win sinners to Christ, and of ‘baptizing’ new believers, and of ‘teaching’ growing believers, then the result is ‘maturing disciples’ of Christ! Think briefly of each of these ‘supporting verbs’. There is ‘Going’ - i.e., make contracts with sinners and ‘build bridges of friendship’ with them. Don’t expect the ‘sinners’ to come to your church building, any more than you would expect a Christian (yourself or any other believer) to ‘take initiative’ to walk into a tavern. As a Christian, it is your responsibility to ‘go after’ the sinner - i.e., to take the initiative to contact the sinner. Jesus went to people as a shepherd goes after his lost sheep (Luke 15). Note Luke 14: 23 - *“Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full”* (not coercion, but the compulsion of caring and persuasive love). Says Matthew 13: 3 - *“Behold a sower went forth to sow seed.”* Matthew 14: 14 - *“And Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude.”* Mark 6: 7 - *“Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.”* If you remain in your church (waiting for sinners to come to your church), you will likely be disappointed, but if you reach out to them and eventually lead them to Christ, many of these converts will come to ‘your church’. The second ‘supporting verb’ (participle) is ‘Baptizing’, which is the activity that naturally follows a person’s conversion to Christ. Water baptism is simply (and wonderfully) ‘an outward sign of an inward work of grace’. It is a public ‘induction into the Christian Faith’, and, as such, can be a powerful ‘witness’ for Christ to the ‘unsaved’ friends of the new convert. The third ‘supporting verb’ is ‘Teaching’. Everything we do and everything we teach in the local church must be evaluated to determine if the activities and subjects (courses) are helping to carry out the “Great Commission’ (directly or indirectly). It is our job (as church leaders) to ‘produce’ committed members of Christ’s Church! It is our responsibility to help believers to become disciplined in their total lifestyle. In thought, in attitudes, in actions, in priorities, in habits, in Christian service.

Think, Second, of the Motivation for Witnessing. What is the motivation for heeding the Mandate (command) of Christ to ‘make disciples’? Our motivation is the blessed Holy Spirit who *‘sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts’*. (Romans 5: 5). Without that special love - a divine-type love - we will not have the desire (motivation) or the power to witness effectively. Said Jesus, shortly before His ascension, *“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit... You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you: and you will be my witnesses in*

Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1: 4, 5, 8)

Acts 2: 1-4 records the fulfillment of this promise. ***"When the day of Pentecost came they (the followers of Christ) were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."*** The significant thing about this passage is not the 'tongues', or the 'flames of fire', or the 'mighty rushing wind'. The all-important and lasting truth is this: Those who wait for and pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit shall surely be filled. Filled with love and power and boldness to witness.

Note the specific instructions which Christ gave to His disciples before He ascended: ***"Don't leave Jerusalem, wait for the Father's promise."*** (Acts 1: 4) Before the disciple goes, he must wait. ***"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."*** (Isaiah 40: 31) Says William Barclay, "There are times when the Christian may seem to be wasting time, when he must wait in a wise passivity! Action without preparation must of necessity fail. There is a time to wait on God and a time to work for God." (Daily Study Bible; William Barclay; Luke; pg. 312)

The disciples who waited were filled with the Spirit. The result? Great power in witnessing and in preaching. Peter, the very one who earlier had denied Jesus, was now 'Peter the Bold', preaching to the very 'enemies' who were responsible for Jesus' crucifixion. The result of his preaching? Look at Acts 2: 38-41. ***After Peter preached his powerful sermon, he said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call."*** With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them. 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."

What 'explains' the dynamic ministry of the 'great soul-winners' throughout the ages? It is true that not all Spirit-filled persons are 'great soul-winners', but it is also Biblically - sound to declare that no person (believer) can be a great soul-winner unless he is first 'Filled with the Holy Spirit'. Notes William Barclay, regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts: "The Holy Spirit was the source of all guidance. All the leaders of the Church were men of the Spirit. The Spirit was the source of day to day courage and power. The Christian's courage to meet the dangerous situation; the Christian

eloquence was needed; the Christian joy which was independent of circumstances are all alike ascribed to the work of the Spirit. In the first thirteen chapters of Acts there are more than forty references to the Holy Spirit. The early Church was a Spirit-filled Church and precisely therein lay its power." (Daily Study Bible; William Barclay; Acts;

“Growing A Godly Life” - A Devotional Series

pgs. 12, 13)

The effective soul-winner is a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who is the ‘great motivator’ for witnessing, Dr. A.B. Simpson, founder of the ‘Christian and Missionary Alliance’ Church, speaks of this ‘crisis’ of Spirit-filling in his own life: “The Lord Jesus revealed Himself as a living and all-sufficient presence, and I learned for the first time that Christ had not saved us from future peril, and left us to fight the battle of life as best we could; but He who had justified us was waiting to sanctify us, to enter into our spirit, and substitute His strength, His holiness, His joy, His love, His faith, His power, for all our worthlessness, helplessness and nothingness, and make it an actual living fact.”

Have you been ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ since you became a Christian? Here are the important ‘steps’ to take (to ‘be filled’ and to ‘stay filled’ with the Spirit): (a) Confess all known sins to God and accept His forgiveness; (b) Surrender all known areas of your life to God, to allow Him to exercise His sovereign and ‘rightful’ control of your life; (c) Believe in the Father’s ‘Promise’ to fill you with the Holy Spirit; (d) Obey every known command which God reveals to you in the Word; (e) Receive, by faith, the fulness of the Holy Spirit into your mind and soul and spirit and body as God’s greatest Gift to you; (f) Daily receive the available (divine) resources from your loving God, that you might live a consistently victorious Christian life.

Think, Third, of the Message of Witnessing. Understanding the Mandate for witnessing and receiving the Motivation for witnessing (namely, the fullness of the Spirit), one must ask ‘What is the Message which is to be communicated in preaching and witnessing in the world?’ What was the ‘basic message’ that was ‘declared’ to sinners during the days of the ‘Early Church’? As learned from a study of the ‘messages’ in the *Book of Acts*, here is, in summary form, the essence of that ‘declaration’: (1) God’s purpose in history is to establish a ‘new order’ - an order of grace to replace the ‘order of law’; (2) God has inaugurated that ‘new order’ through Jesus Christ, whose life and death and resurrection have made it possible for all persons to become members of the community and family of God; (3) Because Christ has been exalted to the ‘right hand of God’, He is the Christ of the Ages, forever contemporary and ‘a very present help in time of need’. Christ is not a historical remembrance but He is the present reality and the personal Savior; (4) Christ is not only the Savior of all mankind, but He is also the Judge of all humanity, before whom all persons must eventually give an account of their lives (at the end of the ‘present age’); (5) Because one’s response to Christ determines one’s personal destiny, it is imperative that one repents of his sins, and that he accepts Christ’s standards (‘way of life’) for his life. To do so results in a rich reward - present forgiveness and new life and future hope and eternal life. God demands that all men repent - i.e., turn from their wicked ways and in faith turn to God.

“Growing A Godly Life” - A Devotional Series

The ‘content’ of our modern-day preaching and witnessing (to sinners) must be based on the message of the Bible (as preached in the Early Church), but the method and the approach in presenting that message must be ‘adapted’ to the modern-day ‘thought patterns and forms’.

One popular (simple) approach in presenting that ancient ‘message of salvation’ is as follows:

(1) Fact of Sin. Notes C.S. Lewis: “A sense of sin is almost totally lacking. Our situation is thus very different from that of the Apostles. The Pagans to whom they preached were haunted by a sense of guilt and to them the Gospel was, therefore, ‘good news’. We address people who have been trained to believe that whatever goes wrong in the world is someone else’s fault - the Capitalists’, the Government’s, the Nazis’, the Generals’ etc. They approach God Himself as His judges. They want to know, not whether they can be acquitted for sin, but whether He can be acquitted for creating such a world.

“I cannot offer you a water-tight technique for awakening the sense of sin. I can only say that, in my experience, if one begins from the sin that has been one’s own chief problem during the last week, one is very often surprised at the way this shaft goes home. But whatever method we use, our continual effort must be to get their mind away from public affairs and ‘crime’ and bring them down to brass tacks - to the whole network of spite, greed, envy, unfairness and conceit in the lives of ‘ordinary decent people’ like themselves (and ourselves).” (God In The Dock; C.S. Lewis; pgs. 95, 96) We, as witnesses, must ‘identify’ with sinners; we are not to ‘judge’ them, but only to share Christ with them. We must say something like this: “If Christ can save a sinner like me, He can save anyone including you.”

(2) Seriousness of Sin. So many people make ‘light’ of sin, sometimes even denying its existence. You, as a witness, cannot persuade people that they are ‘sinners’; only the blessed Holy Spirit can do that (John 16: 8). Unless and until the Holy Spirit ‘awakens’ sinners to their true moral condition, and brings ‘deep conviction’ regarding the serious consequences of unrepented sin, these persons will continue to ‘rationalize’ their sins: ‘all humans make mistakes’, and ‘no one is perfect’, and ‘I am as good as those hypocrites in that church’, and ‘it is his/her fault that I am as I am’, etc., etc. When there is a failure to take personal moral responsibility for one’s actions, there is no repentance.

(3) Insufficiency of ‘Good Works’. Even ‘good actions’ are tainted with pride. “All of us have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” (Isaiah 64: 6) Pride is the ‘mother’ of all sins. Notes Donald Demaray, “Man commits no wrong which is not traceable to pride; to put it

“Growing A Godly Life” - A Devotional Series

another way, every sin man commits is the product of a desire to protect the ego or self. Murder, adultery, stealing, falsifying, and any and every sin that man has ever committed or ever will commit is the result of pride...It is an amazing fact that every sin does, in fact, issue from pride. If a man commits adultery he does so to gratify self; he is doing what selfish desire dictates rather than respecting personality. If we covet we are aggravating the temptation to take what is not rightfully ours but something we imagine will make us happy. If we tell an untruth we are really ‘covering up’ to prevent humiliation.” (Basic Beliefs; Donald Demaray; pgs. 51-53) Our ‘good works’ are not good enough to save us. If we could save ourselves, there would have been no need for the coming and the death of Jesus Christ on a cross. It is because we were helpless that Christ came to save us.

(4) Jesus Christ alone can save a sinner. Why? Because He is the Son of God. Because He alone is sinless. Because He paid the penalty for our sins (satisfying the ‘justice’ of God). Because He loves us (sinners) supremely and He is not willing that any should perish!

Think, Fourth, of the Methods of Witnessing. Bishop Donald Bastian suggests four specific ways to witness effectively:

(1) Informal and Spontaneous Witnessing. Every Christian likely knows someone who is not a Christian. Many people (unbelievers) give you ‘leads’ (‘openings’) to talk to them about God. You, as a witness, can use a ‘lead question’ that you address to an unbeliever, to begin to talk to him about God. Here are a couple ‘lead questions’: (a) “Do you presently have peace with God, or are you in the process of finding peace with God?” (b) “If you were to die tonight, would you know for sure that you were going to heaven?” Simply share honestly what Christ has done for you and how you ‘found’ God. Don’t preach. Don’t judge. Don’t be ‘unnatural’. Be relaxed and sincere and honest. Be humble and approachable and ‘vulnerable’. Be personable. Point people to Christ, not to yourself or to your personal ‘religious experience’. Don’t be afraid to talk about your ‘experience’ of finding God (and the life-changing results from such an ‘encounter’), but don’t make your ‘experience’ (with all the emotional aspects from that ‘experience’) ‘normative’ for everyone else. Don’t ‘force’ your experience or your personal ‘convictions’ on others, but simply and joyously share Christ (as He is clearly revealed in the Word of God). Ask God to reveal to you the ‘natural opportunities’ for witnessing in your routine ‘contacts’ with your friends and relatives and business associates and neighbors, and ask God to enable you to witness as a ‘way of life’ (naturally, informally, regularly, spontaneously).

“Growing A Godly Life” - A Devotional Series

(2) Organized Witnessing. Ask God if it is His will for you to participate in your local church's 'outreach programs', such as 'visitation teams', door-to-door literature distribution, or 'Salvation By Appointment' Home Bible Studies. One 'simple' but 'saintly lady' whom I knew for several years before her 'heavenly home-going' had a rather 'unique way' of witnessing to the unsaved persons in her life. She purchased a new Bible each year and, after she read that particular Bible (sometimes a different 'translation' each year), she would give away (as a gift) that Bible to a friend or relative, as a witness to them. Of course, the Bible often was filled with 'special markings' noting those passages of Scripture which meant so much to her. Some persons use 'tracts' to witness (either passing them out 'in person' or sending them to unsaved friends when they write letters). My wife's sister and her husband (members of the 'Gideon International') have distributed many hundreds of New Testaments (which include a clearly outlined 'plan of Salvation') to waitresses in many restaurants, in motels, in doctors' offices and hospital rooms, on college campuses, to service stations, etc., etc. To cultivate 'discipline' in witnessing, and to receive encouragement from 'fellow witnesses' as well as 'accountability', many Christians have found that being a regular participant in an organized (local church) 'outreach' program has been very 'worthwhile'.

(3) Supplemental Witnessing. This is the witness of 'good-deeds'. We are not saved By good works, but we are saved FOR good works (according to Ephesians 2: 8-10). It is recorded of Dorcus (Acts 9: 36) that she was "a believer who was always doing kind things for others, especially for the poor." A consistently 'good life' (full of 'good deeds'), combined with a 'clear verbal witness' regarding the saving power of Christ, greatly 'impacts' sinners, convincing them of the 'reality' of God and of their personal need for His wonderful salvation.

(4) Unconscious Witnessing. Notes Donald Bastian, "Undergirding spontaneous, organized, and supplemental witness, Christians at their best bear an unconscious witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ. From the start they are called to take seriously not only God's free and gracious offer of the forgiveness of sins but also His call to holiness of heart and life. Holy people - saints - are never conscious of their own holiness, but their lives take on a quality which the world cannot help but notice." (Adventures In Belonging; pg. 83)

Think, Fifth, of the Manner in Witnessing. The following is a 'list' which can help persons to prepare themselves for an effective life of witnessing. (1) Be sure you are a Christian (that you have truly been 'born again'); (2) As a believer, be sure that there is no unconfessed sin in your life; (3) Be sure that you are 'filled with the Spirit' and that you are daily 'walking obediently in the Spirit'; (4) Be prepared to share your faith, using a 'simple plan' to do your witnessing; (5) Make a 'prayer list' of those with whom you would like to share the 'plan of salvation' (and your personal 'testimony') this

“Growing A Godly Life” - A Devotional Series

coming year, and pray (‘faith believing’ prayers) every day for those whom you have listed. Specifically ask God to ‘embolden’ you and to guide you (at the appropriate time) to witness; (6) Put ‘feet to your prayers’ and actually GO and make contact with your ‘sinner friends’. Set up an ‘appointment’ to share the ‘Good News’ of Christ with them (usually ‘on their own turf’ - i.e., in their own home or office). When you share the ‘simple plan’ of salvation with them, remember to be courteous and ‘discreet’, but also ‘open’ and ‘honest’ and ‘frank’ and ‘bold’. Keep your ‘presentation’ clear and concise and appropriately ‘brief’ (without sacrificing accuracy); (7) Depend on the Holy Spirit (not on your own ‘brilliance’ or ‘articulation’ or ‘experience’ or ‘training’) as you present the wonderful ‘plan of salvation’. You are in your friend’s home, not to ‘impress’ your friend with yourself, but to uplift the ‘beautiful Christ’ and to introduce your friend to the Greatest Friend of all (the Lord Jesus); (8) Talk about Jesus primarily, and only about your church and your own ‘spiritual experience’ secondarily. Don’t try to ‘sell’ your church (even though you ‘love’ it very much). If people come to know your Christ, they likely will want to enjoy your local church (and will probably become a ‘member’ of your church) eventually ; (9) Expect God to use you! God can and will transform lives through you (your love and your ‘witness’). God greatly desires to use you as His ‘effective instrument’. But remember, your ‘success’ in witnessing is not determined by mere visible or ‘quick’ results. It is your part to be obedient; it is God’s part to give an increase (i.e., a spiritual ‘harvest’). Don’t grow weary in well-doing, for in due season you will reap if you do not faint. Be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of God, for your labor is not in vain in the Lord. “Success in witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Spirit, and then leaving the results with God” (Campus Crusade For Christ); (10) Establish a ‘Follow-up plan’ for the young Christian. This is vitally important! Take care of the young converts. Either you or some other believer must meet weekly with your new converts (for at least eight to ten weeks) to share the ‘basics’ in Christian living. There are many excellent ‘follow-up’ booklets designed especially for new converts. Use them!

Wrote Paul to young Timothy: *“The Holy Spirit, God’s gift, does not want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong, and to love them and enjoy being with them.”* (2 Timothy 1: 7, Living Bible) A fear, unique to many Christians, is the ‘fear of witnessing’. We Christians are too often close-mouthed when we should be verbalizing the Good News to spiritually-needy people. In the name of ‘tact’, we sometimes fail to ‘speak up’ for Christ. Because of our fear of rejection or our fear of being misunderstood, we remain quiet and passive, hoping that in ‘some way’ our lives will ‘speak’ for Jesus without our offering a single ‘word’ for Jesus.

Paul declared, *“I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is God’s powerful method of bringing all who believe it to heaven. This message was preached first to the Jews alone, but now everyone is invited to come to God in this same way.”* (Romans 1: 16, Living Bible)

“Growing A Godly Life” - A Devotional Series

Paul requested his friends to pray for him, that he might remain bold in his witness for Christ. *“Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”* (Ephesians 6: 19-20, Living Bible)

Our ‘guilty silence’ regarding our communication of the forgiving grace of God to sinners, must be broken! We Christians must boldly proclaim from the ‘housetops’ that God is alive, that He is a saving God, that He invites everyone to repent and to find new life in Christ! *“For God was in Christ, restoring the world to himself, no longer counting men’s sins against them but blotting them out. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others. We are Christ’s ambassadors.”* (2 Corinthians 5: 19-20)

We must not be bound by our fears regarding our call to witness to unbelievers. God’s power is able to give us deliverance from our bondage to fear. Said Jesus, *“But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power to testify about me with great effect.”* (Acts 1: 8, Living Bible) As a sincere believer, open your life anew to the Holy Spirit each day, to receive a ‘fresh outpouring’ of holy love and compassion for the ‘lost ones’ all around you.

When we are released from the fear of witnessing, we will see God’s church grow in an unprecedented way! Multitudes will be added to the Church of Jesus Christ (and this is already happening all around the world). When we are delivered from our fear of people and our fear of witnessing to people, we will begin confronting people lovingly with the claims of Christ. “Witnessing’ results in ‘soul-winning’, and ‘soul-winning’ results eventually in new and dynamic local church growth. It is still true that ‘convert growth’ is the best kind of growth for a local church. Notes David Mains, “Conversions always ‘work’ the church during times of revival. Church growth is not through transfer of membership, it is not through people fleeing the churches of the city to come to the suburbs, but the growth is because many new people bow before the King and say, ‘Please accept me as part of your kingdom, Jesus.’”

To get over the fear of witnessing, a believer must ‘die’ to his own reputation. You may be considered foolish in the eyes of the ‘world’, if you try to witness. It is said that once a bold ‘witnessing Christian’ walked down the street of a large city, with a placard hanging from his neck which read “I’m a fool for Jesus! Whose fool are you?” Wrote Paul, *“I know very well how foolish the simple message of the cross of Christ sounds to those who are lost. But we who are saved recognize this message as the very power of God.”* (I Corinthians 1: 18, Living Bible)

The effective soul-winner is one who is ‘dead’ to self-centeredness and selfish interest. George Muller was one whose goal in life was to please God. He wrote: “There was a day when I died - died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will. I

“Growing A Godly Life” - A Devotional Series

died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.”

The effective soul-winner is one who is daily dedicated to his task of winning souls. This is the ‘passion’ of his life! Said one of John Wesley’s contemporaries regarding Wesley’s ‘passion’ for souls: “To one great purpose he dedicated his power of body and mind; for this he relinquished all honor and preferment. At all times and in all places, in season and out of season, by gentleness, by terror, by argument, by persuasion, by reason, by interest, by every motive and every inducement, he strove, with unwearied assiduity, to turn men from the error of their ways and awaken them to virtue and religion. To the bed of sickness, or the couch of prosperity; to the prison or the hospital; to the house of mourning or the house of feasting, wherever there was a friend to serve or a soul to save, he readily repaired. He thought no office too humiliating, no condescension too low, no undertaking too arduous, to reclaim the meanest of God’s offspring. The souls of all men were of equal value in his sight and the salvation of the immortal creature unutterably precious.” (Quoted in ‘Goodly Heritage’; J. Paul Taylor; pg. 69)

One time Kipling was on a world tour, and he saw General William Booth (founder of the ‘Salvation Army’) board his ship amidst a horde of tambourine-beating ‘Salvationists’. This scene revolted the ‘sensitive’ and ‘sophisticated’ Kipling, and when Kipling later got to know General Booth, Kipling told Booth of his disapproval of the incident. Booth replied to the disapproving Kipling: “Young man, if I thought that I could win one more soul for Christ by standing on my hands and beating a tambourine with my feet I would learn to do it.”

When a modern-day saint, Toyohika Kagawa, first became acquainted with Christianity he cried out: “O God, make me like Christ.” To follow Christ’s example, Kagawa went to live in the slums, although he himself had tuberculosis. He lived in a six foot by six foot hut in a Tokyo slum. Cecil Northcott tells what Kagawa did. “On his first night he was asked to share his bed with a man suffering from contagious itch. That was a test of his faith. Would he go back on his point of no return? No. He welcomed his bed-fellow. Then a beggar asked for his shirt and got it. Next day he was back for Kagawa’s coat and trousers, and got them too. Kagawa was left standing in a ragged old kimono. The slum dwellers of Tokyo laughed at him, but they came to respect him. He stood in the driving rain to preach, coughing all the time. ‘God is love’, he shouted. ‘God is love. Where love is, there is God’. He often fell down exhausted, and the rough men of the slums carried him gently back to his hut.” Only in heaven, when the ‘Books of God’ are opened, will we know the number and quality of this godly man’s ‘good-works’ - the ‘works of love’ which pointed many to the ‘Christ of the Ages!’

Kagawa himself wrote: “God dwells among the lowliest of men. He sits on the dust heap among the prison convicts. He stands with juvenile delinquents. He is there with the beggars. He is among the sick. He stands with the unemployed. Therefore, let him who

“Growing A Godly Life” - A Devotional Series

would meet God visit the prison cell before going to the temple. Before he goes to Christ let him visit the hospital. Before he reads his Bible let him help the beggar.”

**Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o’er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.**

**Though they are slighting Him, still He is waiting,
Waiting the penitent child to receive;
Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently,
He will forgive if they only believe.**

**Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,
Cords that are broken will vibrate once more.**

**Rescue the perishing, duty demands it -
Strength for your labor the Lord will provide;
Back to the narrow way patiently win them,
Tell the poor wanderer a Savior has died.**

**Rescue the perishing, Care for the dying;
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.**

Fanny Crosby

“Then I heard the Lord asking, ‘Whom shall I send as a messenger to my people? Who will go?’ And I said, ‘Lord, I’ll go! Send me.’” (Isaiah 6: 8, Living Bible) Will you be a “Great Commission” Christian? But (come to ‘think about it’), is there any other kind of Christian? Isn’t a ‘non-witnessing Christian’ a ‘contradiction in terms’?

A WORKING FAITH

**Give me the faith which can remove
And sink the mountain to a plain;
Give me the child-like praying love,
Which longs to build thy house again;
My every sacred moment spend
In publishing the sinners' Friend.**

**I want an even, strong desire,
I want a calmly fervent zeal,
To save poor souls out of the fire,
To snatch them from the verge of hell,
And turn them to a pardoning God,
And quench the brands in Jesus' blood.**

**I would the precious time redeem,
And longer live for this alone,
To spend, and to be spent, for them
Who have not yet my Saviour known;
Fully on these my mission prove,
And only breathe, to breathe thy love.**

**Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart
With boundless charity divine!
So shall I all my strength exert,
And love them with a zeal like thine;
And lead them to thy open side,
The sheep for whom their Shepherd died.**

Charles Wesley

CHAPTER ONE
UNDERSTAND PREPARATION FOR
WITNESSING

Romans 12: 1- 8

FOCUSING OUR VISION – Part I

“I can’t get my eyes focused! I’m having a terrible time trying to read! I must get my eyes checked!”

These were the words of my father several months ago when he began to notice a marked difference in the quality of his vision. A visit to his doctor quickly confirmed that there was a problem. But the good news was that the problem could be corrected. A surgical procedure could potentially restore his vision.

The procedure was scheduled and completed as an outpatient with very little discomfort involved. In just one week the doctor confirmed that his vision in that eye had been restored to 20/20. What was involved?

In simple terms, the surgical procedure involved the removal of the old lens tissue which had been damaged by cataract growth. A new lens material was inserted to replace the old. The result was, at age 82 his vision was restored.

I have been reminded through this experience that we also need a renewal of vision if we are to effectively focus on the needs of the people, the communities, and the world for which we are responsible. How can that be accomplished?

Many years ago, I learned in Physics 101 that if you were to place a frog in a pot of cold water and slowly increase the heat, the frog would eventually die of the heat without ever recognizing that a change was occurring which required a lifesaving response.

There are many things that gradually affect our lives that often require rather severe discomfort or distraction before we are compelled to respond. Our eyesight or vision is one of those things. There are several diseases that work that way and can even be fatal when the early warning signs are ignored.

The same is true with our spiritual vision. Even though we know the serious consequences of any failure to fulfill the Great Commission, there are so many distractions which cloud our vision and dull our vision and dull our sensitivities to the ultimate task:

1. We become so engrossed in building and maintaining our own comfortable lifestyles; we tend to lose our focus on the fact that God-given resources need to be dedicated to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. It’s easy to ignore the scripture directive to “not be conforming to this world” by justifying our lifestyles by community standards. When vision is dimmed, our giving is diminished.
2. We can become so busy in trying to stop the tide of evil that we forget to rescue the victims. Our sensitivity to the “lostness” of the “beautiful,” “happy,” and “comfortable” people around us has been diluted because we forget about the eternal consequences. When we lose the sensitivity of the “lostness” of people without Christ, our vision for evangelism is clouded.

The bottom line is that nothing is going to change until we individually, as well as corporately, recognize, accept, and admit that our vision is not what it ought to be.

“Dear Lord, please remove the obstacles that cloud my vision today.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: A vision of the lostness of people will surely motivate me to make application of all my resources to assure their safety.

- Edward Rickman -

NOTES:

Romans 12: 1-8

FOCUSING OUR VISION – Part II

When we admit there is a vision problem, there are basically two options: 1) We can continue to live with the problems; or 2) We can submit to the obvious solution.

Although most of us would agree that we need to catch a new vision for doing God’s work, the fact is that it will only happen as individuals submit to God by praying: “Let it begin in me!” It’s hard to make ourselves so vulnerable as submitting to a surgical procedure because there is:

1. Uncertainty
2. Lack of Control
1. Risk
2. Potential Change

It’s impossible for us to pray for renewal of vision without submitting ourselves to God’s scrutiny of our personal vision and pray: “Fulfill the renewal vision in me!”

When the vision is blurred because the lens of the eye has become clouded, no amount of strength in new lenses will correct the problem. The old lens must be removed and a new one inserted.

What we need in our spiritual lives is to experience a Holy Spirit surgery which will transform our vision.

I am reminded of the words of the Psalmist: *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”* (Psalm 51: 10)

My prayer is that God will begin to restore the vision in each of our personal lives as we submit to the “sending” eye of God. May we commit ourselves to His ability and willingness to restore and renew our passion for the fulfillment of His work in us.

“Dear Lord, do a work in me that will renew a vision in me and cause me to submit my whole self and resources to you.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: A renewed vision will require renewed action and renewed urgency.

- Edward Rickman -

Proverbs 11: 30, Daniel 12: 3

RESCUE THE PERISHING, CARE FOR THE DYING

Many of us are afraid to share our faith. A good rule to follow is “Talk to God about your neighbors and talk to your neighbors about God.” Years ago a believer put it this way: “God hasn’t retained many of us as lawyers, but He has subpoenaed all to be His witnesses.”

The call came into our medical center on the island of Kyushu, Japan. A helicopter had crashed into the Yellow Sea. I was called to go on the rescue. The pilot’s body had been recovered: the copilot was never found. My Japanese driver arrived just as a small fishing boat was bringing the body to shore. First, I searched for a pulse, but found none. A larger helicopter was there ready to transport the victim and me to an American hospital. I was exhausted when we arrived, having administered artificial respiration continually during the trip. Even though I thought it hopeless, I refused to stop in hopes life might be restored. A doctor was waiting as we landed and immediately took over the procedure. Neither of us was able to revive him. We tried, but our efforts were futile. It is better to have tired and failed, than to have failed to try.

Witnessing and soul-winning are not to be measured by success but by our faithful endeavor. The fourth verse of the song “Rescue The Perishing” reads as follows: **“RESCUE THE PERISHING; DUTY DEMANDS IT. STRENGTH FOR THY LABOR THE LORD WILL PROVIDE. BACK TO THE NARROW WAY PATIENTLY WIN THEM; TELL THE POOR WAND’RER A SAVIOR HAS DIED.”**

A man who raised cattle once remarked, “If one of my prized animals was lost, my friends would go to great length to tell me so I could get it back.” He went on to say, “In twenty-five years not one of my friends has said a word to me about my spiritual welfare.” Are cattle more important?

In the small country of Wales, a business man spoke to his young employee about his soul. From that witness, the entire office staff became Christians. One man spoke to one boy about the Lord which resulted in many conversions. The young man later became a minister. I wonder: if you or I were to witness to someone today, who might they witness to tomorrow?

“Dear Lord and Savior, please help me to witness for You. Give me the opportunity and courage to speak to someone today.

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will cease being so heavenly minded, that I am no earthly good.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

Matthew 28: 19-20; Acts 1: 8

IS CHRIST ‘CHAINED’ TO YOUR CHURCH’S PULPIT?

The Great Commission of Christ (Matthew 28: 19-20) was given to all believers - not just to Church officers and leaders. Every Christian, without exception, is called to witness - to share the Good News of Salvation with lost and dying world of sinners!

“A minister approached his church to find it thronged by a struggling, shoving mass of people who seemed bent on getting into the sanctuary. The steps of both main entrances were tightly packed. To enter himself, the minister had to go to the back of the building and use the door to the furnace room. As he crossed the basement toward the stairs leading to the vestibule, he heard a commotion overhead similar to what he had witnessed outside. Feet shuffled incessantly and a babble of voices tumbled down the stairwell to meet him. When he had finally wrestled his way through the vestibule and into the sanctuary, he found things much the same - aisles were jammed and pews lined with standing, straining people. What was at the front of the sanctuary that could cause such restless commotion?

“Finally struggling and coaxing his way to the platform, the perplexed minister discovered the reason for the crowds and great surge into his sanctuary. Christ was in his pulpit. On closer examination, he found that Christ was chained to his pulpit.”

An improbable situation? It was really a minister’s dream but one with such an impact that it brought him struggling to the surface of consciousness much as a nightmare does. And when its moral broke upon him in full force, there was no returning to sleep that night.

“Christ is chained to the pulpit in many fine churches these days. Is Christ chained to the pulpit in your church? If you assume that evangelism is what your pastor does when he preaches either Sunday morning or evening, then Christ is chained to the pulpit. Or, if you consider evangelism as something that goes on twice a year when a special evangelist is hired by the church, then, in your church Christ is chained to the pulpit. Or, to put this still more broadly, if you assume that evangelism is something you are paying your pastor to do, then in all probability, Christ is chained to the pulpit. If Christ is chained to the pulpit in your church, it is you and fellow laymen who have shackled Him there. You may be startled at the thought in view of your tithing habits and your blameless life. You may well be one of the most faithful members of your church. It is for you then to remove the chain and see to it that Christ gets where the hungry masses are. Then He will evangelize through you.” (By Donald Bastian, taken

from GO by George Delamarter; pgs. 28-29)

“Father, speak through my lips, express your compassion through my feelings, reflect the light of your love through my actions - all for the purpose of helping to fulfill your ‘Great Commission’ in this age.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: All are not called to ‘preach’ and all do not the ‘gift of evangelism’, but all believers are called to share the Good News of God’s forgiveness!

2 Chronicles 7: 14; Ephesians 6: 19

PREPARATION FOR ‘GOING’

Personally I do not recall any scripture which commands ‘sinners’ to come to church, but I do recall that there are several scriptures which command believers to GO to sinners - to witness to the love of Christ and the transforming power of God! The Great Commission to go and to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 19-20) must not become the Great Omission of the Church! To GO to sinners with the Gospel message is not an option for believers, but it is a command given by no less of a person than Jesus Christ! If Going is a command, then how can you prepare yourself to GO?

First, make sure you are a true believer (a born-again Christian). One cannot begin to be concerned genuinely in the salvation of others if he himself is not saved from sin. Make sure you have personally accepted the Savior into your life by faith. He who calls upon the name of the Lord in sincere faith will be saved.

Second, confess all unconfessed sins to God. The Psalmist wrote, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”* (Psalms 66: 18) As a Christian, have you relapsed into sin or disobedience? What are some sins to which Christians are susceptible? Idle speaking (gossip), negligence in church attendance, wastefulness in the use of time, indulgence in eating, negligence in daily devotions such as prayer and meditation and Bible reading and fasting, failure to pay the tithe to the Lord, cooling off in zeal for the Lord’s work. Each sin must be faced and confessed to God. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins. (I John 1: 9a)

Third, make sure you are filled with the Holy Spirit. Notes Bill Bright, “From the moment of spiritual birth, the Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit at all times. Though all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all Christians are filled (controlled and empowered) by the Holy Spirit.” The evidence that a believer is filled with the Spirit? (a) Increased love in the believer’s cleansed heart; (b) Increased boldness and confidence in witnessing.

Fourth, make a prayer list. Pray specifically and daily for individuals whom you would like to help lead to Christ.

Fifth, determine to make ‘witnessing’ a high priority in your daily life. A believer must not witness simply on the basis of feelings or conscious desire, but rather systematically, out of a sense of obedience, responsibility, and faith. This is ‘way of life’ witnessing - with or without ‘conscious desire’ to witness!

“Spirit of the Living God, ‘fall fresh on me’. Without your indwelling and empowering presence, I am a ‘mess’ (powerless and ineffective) but with you I am a ‘message’ (winsome in personality and convincing in witness). Please use even me, dear Lord.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: “He who wins souls is wise.” I want to be a ‘wise’ person!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Matthew 5: 13-16

YOUR LIFE IS ON ‘PUBLIC EXHIBIT’!

Christian values, tenets, and concepts are recorded in the Bible. But will your associates read the Bible? Your neighbors, friends, and colleagues will read you. And they will understand. Frequently they will understand you better than you understand yourself. They may know, better than you do, what you really believe about the sufficiency of Christ. They get clues in deliberate and in unguarded moments.

Early in my adult life I was impressed with the need and value of deliberately identifying with Christ in relations with non-Christians. I recall the defense of my master’s degree thesis at a Midwestern state university. Through comments in graduate social science and educational philosophy classes, I had been clearly identified as an evangelical Christian. During that fifty-minute defense, the panel spent nearly the entire time asking questions about my religious beliefs. They were determining whether I held inconsistent beliefs and whether, with my values, I was worthy to bear the seal of that university as a master’s level public school teacher. Both concerns were resolved in a positive fashion and the degree was granted. Five professors heard the witness of a life, speaking to their concerns. That exchange would not have occurred had I not deliberately and verbally identified with Christ.

If you obey the first commandment, Christ is the major interest and the emotional focus of your life. You feel deeply about Him and spiritual concerns. How natural, then, at a luncheon, to tell of the Christian book you are reading, the pastor’s sermon outline, or the relevant points of your Sunday School lesson. Your comments will be accepted in the friendly conversational mill along with last night’s party or sporting event.

As you share Him out of your life experiences, you should exhibit:

- (1) An open personality. You will listen, weigh the evidence, and consider alternate views.
- (2) An unshockable attitude. Regardless of what is said or done, your God knows all about it.
- (3) Graciousness. God gave man the choice to accept or reject Him. Therefore, you cannot force Jesus on anyone. Do not try.

- (4) Love. This is without condition. Jesus loved and died for even the most despicable person.
- (5) Tolerance. Do not force on others your religious beliefs.
- (6) Boldness. Do not be apologetic. If you have Jesus, you are a winner, you are an overcomer. Jesus had a strong comment about those ashamed of Him (see Mark 8: 38).
- (7) Positiveness. You know how things will turn out. Jesus will triumph. Every knee sooner or later will bow to Him.
- (8) Humility. You are a beggar showing another beggar where to find bread. As he observed a drunk in a Chicago gutter, Dwight L. Moody remarked, “But for the grace of God, there go I.”
- (9) A servant spirit. Jesus said greatness is found in servanthood.

“Precious Savior, enable me to be as ‘light’, ‘yeast’, ‘salt’, that I might permeate society in the marketplace, on the road, and at home. Then I will fulfill my mission in life!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: By His grace, my life will speak normally and naturally of Him!

- Dorsey Brause -

NOTES:

Psalm 57: 7-11

ON BEING A WORLD CHRISTIAN

Eugene Mthiyane was a tall, slender high-school student in rural Zululand, South Africa. He, along with several other youths, found salvation through the tent campaigns of a Zulu evangelist. I was blessed to be asked to come and stay for a month to teach the Bible to these bright young people. Each day I began with reading about a different ethnic group somewhere else in the world that needed to hear about Jesus. Then we prayed. I wanted these students to become world Christians right from the start. After one session, Eugene spoke to me saying, “Miss B., I want to be a world Christian.” That brought joy to my heart.

Are you a world Christian? We learn a lot about our world today through the news. Did you know about Bosnia and Kosova, Albanians and Serbs before the fighting there?

But God has a better way to learn world geography! You can do it through hearing and reading missions, and presentations about people groups like the Khmau tribal folk in Northwest Laos, or Kabala Berber in Morocco, or Uyghurs in western China.

It is exciting to learn that new ethnic groups are finding Christ and forming churches in the C.I.S. countries like Kazakstan. Prayer is needed for church-planting young Mongolians. Did you know that Navajos, whose language has many similarities to Mongolian, helped start the great movement to Christ that is happening in Mongolia?

This is fun! With your Bible, a prayer notebook, and atlas, and resources like Patrick Johnstone’s ‘Operation World’ you can be a world-Christian too! You can pray your way through the National Geographic or your newspaper also. Right now I’m learning about the Kalahari desert and Okavango river because a friend of mine is in Botswana to help the nomadic Bushmen (the San people) hear the Good News for the first time. Just think, one day in heaven I’ll learn from a Bushman how he found Christ and I’ll say, “I prayed for you!” Wow!

You can be a world-Christian right here and now as you share God’s love with international students and refugees who come to our land. They’d love to tell you about their people. As they find Jesus they can be the best missionaries to tell their own people, and they won’t need visas and cross-cultural training to do that!

“Heavenly Father, You so loved the world you sent your Son. Stir my heart to join you in this work. Help me to be a world-Christian.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Today I am looking at the world’s peoples through God’s eyes.

- Beth Stewart -

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Suggest possible reasons why many Christians become dulled in their ‘vision’ for lost people and lose their passion to fulfill Jesus’ ‘Great Commission’ (Matthew 28: 19-20).
2. What can a believer do to once again become concerned about the lost condition of dying sinners? (Note Psalm 51: 10)
3. Give your interpretation of the following statement: “God hasn’t retained many of us as lawyers, but He has subpoenaed all to be His witnesses.”
4. Tell why you agree (or disagree) with the following statement: “Witnessing and soul-winning are not to be measured by success but by our faithful endeavor.”
5. Put a ‘check’ by the following statement which most accurately describes the Biblical understanding of ‘Evangelism’:
 - _____ a. Evangelism is what my pastor does when he preaches either Sunday morning or Sunday evening.
 - _____ b. Evangelism is something that goes on twice a year when a special evangelist is hired by my church.
 - _____ c. Evangelism is something I pay my pastor to do.
 - _____ d. Evangelism is an activity in which every Christian must be involved for Christ gave the “Great Commission” to every one of His followers.
6. Tell if you think the following statement reflects a Biblically-accurate understanding of ‘truth’: “All Christians are not called to ‘preach’ and all Christians do not have the ‘gift of evangelism’, but all believers are called to share the Good News of God’s forgiveness!”
7. Why do you think that too often the “Great Commission” (Matthew 28: 19-20) has become the “Great Omission” of the church of Jesus Christ? What can you (as a concerned and compassionate follower of Jesus) do to help sensitize the fellow Christians in your local church to the need to “reach out in love” to lost and dying sinners with Christ’s ‘saving message’?

8. In your personal preparation for ‘intentional witnessing’, put a ‘check’ by those following statements which describe a special ‘need’ in your life:

- _____ a. I must make sure I have truly repented of my own sins and have in faith accepted Christ as my personal Savior.
- _____ b. As a believer, I have certain sins which I need to honestly confess to Jesus Christ, in order that I might experience forgiveness and peace and assurance and a ‘clear conscience’.
- _____ c. I need to surrender my body and mind and spirit wholly to Christ, and pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit that I might experience inner cleansing and empowerment for witnessing.
- _____ d. I need to make a ‘prayer list’, and pray specifically and daily for individuals whom I would like to witness to and eventually lead to Christ.
- _____ e. Amidst all the ‘good activities’ in which I am involved, I need to make ‘witnessing’ a high priority in my life.
- _____ f. I need to make witnessing a ‘way of life’ - i.e., I need to witness, not on the basis of ‘feelings’ or ‘conscious desire’, but rather systematically and out of a sense of obedience and responsibility and faith.

9. In your attempt to be an effective witness for Christ, put a ‘check’ beside those following characteristics which reflect attitudes that you desire more greatly to cultivate in your own life:

- _____ a. An open personality (ability to listen to troubled persons, with honesty and transparency).
- _____ b. An unshockable attitude.
- _____ c. Graciousness (treating all persons with respect and courtesy).
- _____ d. Love (acceptance of all persons, regardless of the kind or degree of their sinfulness).

- _____ e. Tolerance (refusing to ‘force’ Jesus on anyone, but respecting their ‘different viewpoints’ and their ‘free will’ in making their own decisions).
 - _____ f. Boldness (openly and unapologetically sharing the message of Christ’s unique person and His universal transforming power).
 - _____ g. Positiveness (sharing the fact that, in spite of the inequities and injustices and mysteries of life, Christ and His Kingdom causes will ultimately triumph).
 - _____ h. Humility (expressing your own personal unworthiness and that, as a witness, you are “a beggar showing another beggar where to find spiritual bread”).
 - _____ i. A servant spirit (communicating that you have no desire to exploit or to ‘hurt’ anyone, but that you desire to be available at all times to listen and to counsel as best as you can).
10. What can you (as a believer) do to ‘catch a vision’ for the many ‘spiritually-hungry’ people throughout the world (i.e., what can you do to become a ‘world-Christian’)?

CHAPTER TWO

STIMULATE MOTIVATION FOR WITNESSING

I Timothy 1: 15-16

GRACE GREATER THAN OUR SINS!

The first and greatest motivation in the life of the soul-winner is recognition of God's loving heart and saving desire towards every sinner in the world. To understand something about the character and qualities and attitudes of God, is to be motivated to become godlike in our own attitudes and actions and reactions towards others. The Bible makes it very clear that God loves all persons (all sinners among a fallen race), and that it is not His will that any person should perish eternally. God sent His Son to earth to die for all sins of all sinners of all times. God's Spirit convicts all persons and seeks to draw all persons to the living Christ through whom all can be forgiven and all can receive God's eternal life. God loved the entire world of mankind, and Christ died for all persons. All persons are savable, although, because God created every human being with a free will, only those individual sinners who choose to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus will actually be personally rescued from sin and spiritual death and eternal destruction. Objectively-speaking, God is reconciled to the entire human race (because of Christ's 'finished work' on the Cross), but subjectively-speaking, only those sinners who personally repent of their sins and surrender to Christ in faith are actually and personally reconciled to the almighty and holy God. The 'gift of eternal life' which Christ 'purchased' with His blood on Mount Calvary must be accepted by a person (sinner) before he can personally experience and enjoy the gift.

The second reason a believer is motivated to remain patient with people is because he is convinced that God's power is great to change human nature. Confidence in God's power to transform human nature, both instantaneously and gradually, gives a basis for patience in working with people. God has the power to made a 'bad' man 'good', to transform a passionate persecutor - Saul - into a powerful preacher - Paul! Wrote Paul *“How true it is, and how I long that everyone should know it, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - and I was the greatest of them all. But God had mercy on me so that he could use me as an example to show everyone how patient he is with even the worst sinners, so that others will realize that they, too, can have everlasting life.”* (I Timothy 1: 15-16, Living Bible) The wicked slave trader of many years ago, John Newton, was transformed into a beautiful saint of God! He wrote the famous song, “Amazing Grace”.

**“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.”**

“Thou mighty transforming Christ, I thank you that there is ‘no sin stain so deep but what your blood goes deeper yet’! Where sin abounds your grace super abounds!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Because God loves all persons without exception and Christ’s blood was shed for all, I resolve to broaden my ‘circle of love’ to include more persons!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Luke 15: 1-7

WHAT MAKES YOU MOST HAPPY IN LIFE?

God is willing patiently to work with people in order to produce great spiritual and moral changes, and therefore we too (as believers and as witnesses) can learn to be patient with people while they are in the process of being changed by God's transforming power.

Christ said that He came to seek and to save the lost ones and that he came not to heal the healthy ones but to heal the spiritually sick ones. Said Christ, *“Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”* (Luke 15: 7) As a believer, do you find yourself rejoicing about the thing that greatly rejoices the heart of God - a sinner repenting and coming to the Savior for forgiveness and new life? What makes you most happy in life? Would you rather win a lost person to Christ and bring back a backslidden person to the fold of God than do anything else in your Christian life? Are you ‘lost in wonder, love, and praise’ as you contemplate the power of God to transform human beings?

God's transforming power was wonderfully manifested in the lives of the Corinthian people to whom Paul preached the Gospel of Christ. The contrast between what they were before they met Christ and after they received Christ is indeed great! Wrote Paul, *“Don't fool yourselves. Those who live immoral lives, who are idol worshippers, adulterers or homosexuals - will have no share in his kingdom. Neither will thieves or greedy people, drunkards, slanderers, or robbers. There was a time when some of you were just like that but now your sins are washed away, and you are set apart for God, and he has accepted you because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God have done for you.”* (I Corinthians 6: 10-11, Living Bible)

Christ takes the despised woman of Samaria and makes her an honored messenger of love. Christ takes a demon-possessed outcast and makes him a respectable citizen. Christ takes a high brow Pharisee and makes him a humble and a faithful follower of Himself. Christ takes a doubting Thomas and makes him a flaming evangelist. Christ takes a thieving Onesimus and makes him a faithful servant. Christ takes an adulterous outcast and makes her a pure and respectable lady. Christ takes the dying thief and makes him a son of paradise. He takes the guilt-ridden publican and makes him a free and justified believer. Christ restores a wandering prodigal to the stature of full sonship. Christ breaks the shackles of sins and sets the prisoner free. Christ seeks and finds the lost sheep. He applies his healing salve to the sores of sin, and restores the

downtrodden to wholeness and health. Christ came to seek and to save the lost.

“Thank you for your indescribable power to transform human nature. You can make the weak strong, the selfish selfless, the defeated victorious, the worried serene, the bad good! Continue to change me from the ‘inside out’. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: ‘In Christ’ I am not merely a better person, but a new person!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

John 3: 16-17; 2 Peter 3: 9

GOD’S LOVE INCLUDES EVERYONE!

God loves every person without exception! He desires that none perish but that all should come to repentance and be saved!! He has a place prepared in heaven for every single human being, and He wants to take all persons to heaven! None are ‘predestined’ by God to be lost, but every single person (past and present and future) is ‘chosen by God to be saved’! Romans 2: 4 talks about God’s great patience with sinful mankind. *“Don’t you realize how patient he is being with you? Or don’t you care? Can’t you see that he has been waiting all this time without punishing you, to give you time to run from your sin? His kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.”* (Living Bible) When Jesus’ disciples were rejected in a certain Samaritan town, they wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the inhabitants, but Jesus said that their spirit of vengeance was very wrong! (See Luke 9: 51 ff). Jesus suffered long with even those who rejected Him. Even with those who refuse to repent and who finally perish, the Bible says that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (see Ezekiel 18: 23,32).

Jeremiah suffered in unbelievable ways because of persecutors who rejected his prophecies regarding impending ‘doom’ for unrepentant sinners. He was called the “weeping prophet”. Are you able to weep over the lost ones rather than impatiently to reject them? What is the greatest motivation that believers can have in their work as soul-winners? Realization that Almighty God - who is absolutely holy in character - is the God who cares infinitely for a sinful, fallen race of people! God loves everyone, and He wants to save everyone. *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* (2 Peter 3: 9, NIV)

Christ has provided an atoning sacrifice, when He died on the cross, that is capable of forgiving every sin of all mankind. Christ’s atonement is unlimited in its scope and power - in its breadth and width! Wrote Paul, *“He (God) longs for all to be saved and to understand this truth: That God is on one side and all the people on the other side, and Christ Jesus, himself man, is between them to bring them together, by giving his life for all mankind.”* (I Timothy 2: 4-6, Living Bible) The apostle Paul also wrote: *“He (Christ) died for all so that all who live - having received eternal life from him - might live no longer for themselves, to please themselves, but to spend their lives pleasing Christ who died and rose again for them.”* (2 Corinthians 5: 15, Living Bible)

“O thou God whose ‘justice’ allows the exclusion of none and whose ‘love’ has provided an atoning sacrifice for every single person in the world, fill me with so much of your love that I will see the ‘saint’ in every sinner, and enable me by your Spirit to love each sinner with the very persistence of divine-like love. May love be the single ‘note’ that runs through my life. Then my life will have been worth living.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: As an ‘imitator’ of my loving Father, my goal in life: To condemn no sinner, to condone no sin, to love all persons unconditionally and persistently!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Luke 15; John 10; Isaiah 40: 11; Ezekiel 34

MICHELANGELO OF THE MANSE

I have a special picture hanging in my hallway. I call it The Michelangelo of the Manse. Before it hung there, it hung first in my grandmother’s house, then in my mother’s. It is not a priceless work of art. It’s a cheap print my grandmother bought in Nixon, Texas at the local five and dime for \$10.00 around the turn of the century. I keep it for two reasons. First, I have a sentimental connection to it. Second, it gives me a warm, comforting feeling. In it, a barefoot Jesus moves away from a small lake with a shepherd’s staff in one hand and a lamb in the other. A flock of sheep circle Him, but all of His attention is focused on the tiny, helpless creature in His arms. My picture is an artistic rendering of “The Good Shepherd” of Isaiah 40: 11, who *“gathers the lambs with His arm, and carries them in His bosom and gently leads those that are with young”*.

Among the most beloved images in the Bible is this gentle Shepherd. Luke pictures Him leaving ninety-nine safe, healthy sheep in the wilderness while He scales cliffs and scours caves searching for one lost, desperate creature. John labels Him “The Good Shepherd”, and in verse 15 describes a shepherd so devoted that he would even “lay down his life for his sheep”. According to Ezekiel 34, he doesn’t send a subordinate. He becomes personally involved. There we read: *“I myself will search for my sheep”*. Note his actions toward his people in 34: 11-16: *“I will pasture them. I will tend them.”* (Vs. 15) *“I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. I will shepherd the flock with justice.”* (vs. 16)

The shepherd image in the Old Testament and in the New Testament is an unlikely metaphor in today’s world. *“To gently carry the lambs in His arms”*, to seek and search for one lost sheep when most are safe is not a logical response. It’s not good business to risk a well-trained shepherd’s safety for one wayward lamb. It’s hard to believe in the value of one in our day and age. Human life is cheap. Babies are aborted. Old people are drugged and robbed and raped. The poor are used and thrown away. The youth are exploited and sold cheaply. We choose only to spend money and time and effort on the good, the intelligent, the rich, the powerful, the popular, and the perfect. Like the poor shepherds of Ezekiel 34, we would not have risked our flock or our lives for one ordinary, disobedient sheep.

Not so with The Good Shepherd. It is this idea above all else that draws us to Jesus and pulls us away from all other gods. What we all long for is someone who doesn’t throw

us away and forget we exist when we make mistakes or grow old or ugly or useless or penniless. The heart cry of every man is pictured in The Good Shepherd, an advocate who searches into the wee hours of the night and refuses to rest until we are safe again in the fold. It brings tears to our eyes and smiles to our faces and comfort to our hearts and seems almost “too good to be true” that the Almighty God, the crowned Savior and Lord, the Breath of the Universe, would go out of His way to save one lost sheep.

“Dear God, thank You for Jesus, Your living masterpiece, etched across the canvas of my life.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: There may be times when I feel lost, but I am never abandoned.

- Loretta Jenkins -

NOTES:

2 Corinthians 5: 17-21; Galatians 6: 9

SEEING POTENTIAL FOR CHRIST IN EVERY PERSON

A healthy church is a Spirit-filled church, a church which is greatly increasing in the manifestation of the “Fruit of the Spirit”. *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”* (Galatians 5: 22-23) One of the several ways in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in the life of a fully committed follower of Christ is seen in the virtue of longsuffering. Longsuffering or patience with people is an indispensable quality in the life of an effective soul-winner. Patience is one of the many rich dimensions of Love (agape). Patience is love which can wait without despair and which can endure without resentment. The man of patience is the man whose spirit does not give in to despair.

Patterned after the patience of God, the Spirit-controlled person keeps on hoping, believing, and working with people, regardless of the odds and the obstacles, and the oppositions. Patience means persistence in loving people, regardless of despairing circumstances. Growth in love as a Spirit-filled believer is growth in patience. To love truly means to wait persistently. Patience with sinners until they respond to God’s call of repentance. Patience with God’s patience with an unbelieving world which seems bent on self-destruction.

A love-possessed person can wait on God and can wait on people, and, while waiting, can work persistently as God’s tool of redemption, as God’s minister of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5: 20). Notes William Sangster, “The saint never gives up. He goes on serving, loving, helping. He aches for souls. Neither indifference, nor slander, nor injury can stop him. He does not make a motive of gratitude. His great motive is his utter love of God.” (Daily Readings; pg. 134) The Christian must cultivate the fruit of patience in his life if he is to work effectively with people in general, and with sinners specifically. Patience is a distinctively Christian trait, resulting from being controlled by the Holy Spirit. Without the cultivation of this Spirit-given fruit, a would-be disciple will soon despair in his attempts to work with people - especially sinners.

John Wesley spoke to this need for a steadfast spirit which will never give in to despair Said Wesley: “You that are diligent in this labor of love, see that you be not discouraged, although, after you have used your best endeavors, you should see no present fruit. You have need of patience, and then, ‘after ye have done the will of God’ herein, the harvest will come. Never be ‘weary of well-doing: in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not’”.

Copy after Abraham, who ‘against hope, still believed in hope.’ ‘Cast thy bread upon the water, and after many days thou shalt find it again’.”

“Dear Lord, help me to believe in people, looking beyond what they are to what they can become in Christ! As you have suffered long with me, O God, help me to be longsuffering with others. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Because my longsuffering Lord never gave up on me, I resolve, in my ‘work of outreach’, never to give up on anyone else!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Psalms 103: 8-12; I John 4: 7-11

“LOVE NEVER FAILS!”

In working with people, you, as a ‘witness for Christ’, must always remember that ‘love never fails!’ So, when you truly love people (unbelievers) ‘in the Spirit’, you are always successful, regardless of the tangible (visible) results of your loving and witnessing!

Patience is that Spirit-given quality of life, cultivated by the earnest Christian, which enables the believer never to give up in his care for people, regardless of the imperfections in ‘saints’ or the outright oppositions of ‘sinners’.

The truly great soul-winners throughout history have always been those persons who learned to love people, in spite of their sins. Notes William Sangster, “God gave this mighty love to Catherine Booth. Even as a girl, she said that she was willing to die for her father’s salvation. She said that the all-absorbing question of her husband’s life (and it was no less true of herself) was how best to reach and save the masses. Many a time she cried, ‘O! the value of souls! They are worth all the trouble and sacrifice involved - - yea, a thousand times over’...Or consider the life of John Woolman, the Quaker saint. His biographer says, ‘The keynote of his message was always and ever love. Love to God and love to man. This single note runs through his life and writings like a silver thread.’ It was still true of him when he came to die. On his deathbed he had no pre-occupation about heaven: no mention of crowns, harps, raptures ‘but the same tender and touching concern for suffering humanity, relieved only by the thought of the paternity of God, and His love and omnipotence’.” (Daily Readings; pg. 134)

Do you wish to have a passion for lost humanity, a faith in the potential in every sinner’s life, a love that is all-encompassing for the broken people all around you? God’s long-suffering with sinful mankind is your strongest motivation to practice patience with people. God patiently spares His wrath and extends His mercy, calling men and nations to repentance. God delayed His judgment many times throughout history, providing opportunity for men to repent of their sins. God loves the loveless; He suffers long with unregenerate mankind. “*The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.*” (Psalms 103:8) God waited 120 years before sending the flood, to allow Noah’s generation to repent! God suffered long in giving Sodom and Gomorrah opportunity to repent. He would have saved those cities if only ten righteous souls could have been found (Genesis 18)! God spared the ancient pagan city of Ninevah from destruction when the inhabitants repented of their sins under the powerful preaching of

Jonah.

“Help me, all-patient and merciful God, to weep over the erring ones, to lift up the fallen, to tell them of Jesus the mighty One to save! Help me to bear with the insults of the ungrateful and to love the loveless for Jesus’ sake.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: When, as a soul-winner, my patience grows ‘thin’ with people, I only need to take a closer look at the eyes of Jesus, and then I will be motivated anew to be longsuffering with lost sinners!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Matthew 9: 36-38

WITHOUT JESUS PEOPLE HURT!

We are made for fellowship with God. Without a right relationship to Him we have a lack and we hurt. Of all God’s creation, only human beings have a spiritual dimension. (Have you ever seen a cow pray?) We are spirits. Our bodies are temporary tents which are housing, for a time, our eternal spirits. In worship we relate to God in spirit and in truth. Our spirits communicate with His Spirit. We are the most complete, the most rational, the most in tune with reality when we are engaged in some form of worship to Almighty God!

Many non-Christians do not know that this expanded dimension of life, this fuller life, is a possibility for them. They do not know the historical facts about God’s progressive revelation of His nature, about Jesus and the apostles, and about the development of the church. They do not know the Christian view of reality including the meaning of life, the nature of man, and the path of fulfillment. And they are interested only in an eyeball-to-eyeball explanation in non-theological and non-psychological terms.

I vividly remember a six-hour discussion involving the facts and tenets of our faith during a return bus trip to our college campus from a skiing weekend. The interest and questions were astonishing. They did not know - and wanted to know. I also remember the only time I was applauded for lecturing in a college course. A psychology class invited me to present the Christian view of reality. At the conclusion there was extended and enthusiastic applause. They had never heard, or at least had never understood, before. They had seen someone who believed in something, and they experienced an understandable glimpse of what that was, and it was attractive. Jesus said, *“And I, if I be lifted up...will draw all men unto me”* (John 12: 32).

Your Christian commitment is based on a threefold authority: the historical, the experiential, and the collective. God’s historical record of His progressive revelation of himself and His pursuit of real men, at actual places and at specific times, is contained in the Bible. Our religion is based upon facts, not on philosophical propositions. The second authority is the authority of experience - your personal experience with God. You know He is real because you personally experience Him - at conversion, during moments of worship or meditation, and through fellowship with His Spirit. The third authority is the collective authority. The great hosts of believers, past and present, who have bowed the knee to Jesus comprise the collective authority. They are a testimony

to Christianity’s validity. These three authorities reinforce each other.

“Father, I thank you that the ‘blessed assurance’ of salvation, which I offer to the ‘unsaved’, is based on the ‘solid foundation’ of historical facts, experiential realities, and collective testimonies!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: The commitment which ‘Christianity’ requires of me is not a ‘blind leap into the dark’, but it is a ‘leap of faith’ into the arms of the self-revealed and loving Father who seeks me with a persevering love!

-Dorsey Brause -

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Put a ‘T’ (for true) beside those statements which you believe to be Biblically accurate, and a ‘F’ (for False) beside those statements which you believe to be Biblically inaccurate:

- _____ a. Before the creation of the world, God chose some individuals to compose His ‘elect group’, and all others He chose to reject and condemn.**
- _____ b. God loves all persons (all sinners among a fallen race) and is not willing that any person should perish eternally.**
- _____ c. God sent His Son to earth to die for a ‘select group’ of persons (i.e., only those persons whom God, before the creation of the earth, had chosen to compose His ‘elect group’ of children).**
- _____ d. God sent His Son to earth to die for all sins of all sinners of all times.**
- _____ e. Only those persons whom God has chosen to be His children are capable of ‘true repentance’ (i.e., are capable of being eternally saved from sin).**
- _____ f. God’s Spirit convicts all persons and seeks to draw all persons to the living Christ through whom all can be forgiven and all can receive God’s eternal life.**
- _____ g. Because God is reconciled to the entire human race (because of Christ’s atoning death on the cross), every human being is automatically forgiven of all sins and will eventually enjoy heaven as his eternal home.**
- _____ h. Objectively-speaking, God is reconciled to the entire human race (because of Christ’s ‘finished work’ on the Cross), but subjectively-speaking, only those sinners who personally repent of their sins and surrender to Christ in faith are actually and personally reconciled to the almighty and holy God.**

- _____ i. All persons are saveable, although, because God created every human being with a free will, only those individual sinners who choose to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus will actually be personally rescued from sin and spiritual death and eternal destruction.**
- 2. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “To understand something about the character and qualities and attitudes of God, is to be motivated to become godlike in our own attitudes and actions and reactions towards others.”**
- 3. What does I Timothy 1: 15-16 reveal about God’s attitude toward sinners?**
- 4. Is there any sinner too wicked that God’s grace is incapable of forgiving and transforming him/her?**
- 5. In ‘light’ of the fact that God loves all persons without exception and Christ’s blood was shed for all sinners, what should your reaction and response be to all persons (regardless of their moral condition)?**
- 6. Would you rather win a lost person to Christ and bring a backslidden person to the ‘fold’ of God than do anything else in your Christian life? Are you ‘lost in wonder, love, and praise’ as you contemplate the power of God to transform human beings?**
- 7. According to I Corinthians 6: 10 - 11, what kind of persons is God capable of forgiving and transforming and ‘saving’?**
- 8. Tell with what degree of conviction you believe the following statements: “God has a place prepared in heaven for every single human being, and He wants to take all persons to heaven to enjoy their prepared place. None are ‘predestined’ by God to be lost, but every single person (past and present and future) is ‘chosen by God to be saved’.”**
- 9. According to Romans 2: 4, why is God so patient with the sinful human race (i.e., why does God restrain His holy judgment against sinful mankind)?**

- 10. According to Ezekiel 18: 23, 32 what is God’s attitude towards sinners who refuse to repent and who finally ‘die in their sins’?**
- 11. According to 2 Peter 3: 9, what is God’s desire for every sinner?**
- 12. According to I Timothy 2: 4-6, what is Christ’s ‘function’ in affecting a reconciliation between sinful humans and the holy God?**
- 13. According to 2 Corinthians 5: 15, what is God’s intention (i.e., God’s perfect will) for every person in the world?**
- 14. According to the ‘picture’ of the Good Shepherd (as recorded in Luke 15), how much value does God place upon one human being?**
- 15. As you reflect upon your own inner ‘feelings’ and ‘yearnings’, tell to what extent you ‘identify’ with the following statements: “What we all long for is someone who doesn’t throw us away and forget we exist when we make mistakes or grow old or ugly or useless or penniless. It is Jesus’ unconditional love that draws us to Him and pulls us away from all other gods.”**
- 16. What is the Christian’s greatest motivation to remain patient (without despairing), as he seeks to win to Christ the lost persons around him who seem so unrepentant and unresponsive to the appeals of the Gospel message? (Note 2 Corinthians 5: 20; Galatians 6: 9; I Corinthians 15: 58)**
- 17. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Love never fails, so when you truly love people (unbelievers) ‘in the Spirit’, you are always successful, regardless of the tangible (visible) results of your loving and witnessing.”**
- 18. Is it your earnest desire to have a ‘passion for lost humanity’, a faith in the potential in every sinner’s life, a love that is all-encompassing for the broken people all around you?**

- 19. From your own personal experience and from your general observation of human existence, and from your knowledge of the Scriptures, tell if you believe the following statement reflects ‘truth and reality’: “We are the most complete, the most rational, the most in tune with reality when we are engaged in some form of worship to Almighty God.”**

- 20. Define and describe the threefold authority (i.e., the historical, the experiential, the collective) upon which a solid Christian commitment is based.**

CHAPTER THREE

EXPERIENCE POWER IN WITNESSING

Acts 1: 1-8; 2: 1-4

THE ‘SECRET’ TO WITNESSING

The great soul-winners throughout the history of the Christian Church have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Whether they were highly educated persons (like the apostle Paul) or ‘blue-collar’ persons (like Simon Peter who was a fisherman), the ‘secret’ to effective witnessing has been the infilling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1: 8). In his helpful book ‘How You Can Pray With Power’, Lowell Lundstrom shares a vivid example of this truth. He writes: “Dwight L. Moody was a great success as an evangelist. He drew large crowds to his church, but he says that many of these early victories were accomplished ‘...largely in the energy of the flesh.’ The change came when two humble Free Methodist women, Auntie Cook and Mrs. Snow, attended his meetings. They sat in the front row and prayed as he preached. Moody appreciated their intercession so much that he spoke to them about it. ‘Yes,’ they said. ‘We have been praying for you.’ ‘Why me?’ the evangelist inquired, surprised. ‘Why not the unsaved?’ His pride was a bit hurt by the implication that he personally needed prayer. ‘Because you need the power of the Spirit,’ was their answer. Several weeks later, Moody invited the two ladies to his office to talk more about his need for power. ‘You spoke of power for service. I thought I had it,’ Moody said. ‘I wish you would tell me what you mean.’ Auntie Cook and Mrs. Snow told him all they knew about the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Then they prayed with Moody and left. Moody said later, ‘From that moment, there came a great hunger in my soul. I really felt that I did not want to live if I could not have this power for service.’ He continued to pray for a special infilling of the Holy Spirit. Then one day in 1871, the evangelist went to New York on a fund raising mission. As he walked the streets of New York, his soul became hungry for God. Suddenly the Spirit of God swept over him, and his companions could tell something was happening. To his companions, Moody said, ‘Get me in a room, and get everybody out and leave me by myself!’ Afterward, Moody said that waves of God’s power poured over him until he cried out, ‘Lord, You will have to stop or I will die! I’ve got all I can hold! God, it is about to kill me!’” (pgs. 139-141)

Here is how Dwight Lyman Moody described the experience of being ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ - and the permanent results in his ongoing ministry. “I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it, it is almost too sacred an experience to name...I can only say God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world; it would be as small dust in the balance.”

“My blessed Father, I desire not only to be ‘indwelt’ by your Spirit, but I desire also to be ‘filled’ with your Spirit. Give me the courage to ‘pay the price’ - full surrender!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: It is my Father’s good pleasure to give me what I most need and desire - namely, the gift of the Spirit’s fullness! Inner purity and outward power!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Matthew 16: 13-20

THE AUTHORITY OF KEYS

While pastoring in a city, I was employed for a brief time with a janitorial service for floor maintenance in a department store. Keys to the front door permitted me to enter at 5:57 - 6:03. Wells Fargo, a security agent, took it for granted that it was I who entered the building within those six minutes, when the light lit on their downtown monitor. Once inside, I was not to leave until the manager arrived, nor could anyone else enter, including the manager, prior to 9 o'clock, unless granted permission.

There was a knock one morning on the glass door at 7:45. A well dressed man with a satchel wanted in, but was denied. He showed me his I.D. as an employee of the franchise. A call to security revealed that they had no one by that name with permission to enter the store at that hour. I refused his entry; and he said he would report this to officials; then left with curse words ringing in my ears.

I reported this incident to the manager, who wondered the intent of the man wanting to enter at that hour; and further, stated that I was right in refusing him entrance. The case was closed, except for spiritual lessons.

Keys are symbolic of authority and knowledge. Permission, entrance, ownership, ex/inclusion – are included in the use of keys.

Jesus said to Peter, *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”* Dr. Harold Lindsell in the Harper Study Bible, commenting on this verse says: “Thus men of God have the power to declare that God has forgiven the sins of those who have repented and received Christ by faith.” The hypocritical teachers of Jesus’ day were shutting up the kingdom; actually keeping people from entrance. But Peter used the keys to unlock the door, as stated in the Book of Acts. He, by the Holy Spirit, convinced people that Jesus is Lord and Christ, telling them to repent. In one day 3000 people were brought into the kingdom.

At the Beautiful Gate of the temple, Peter, with authority said to the lame man, *“...in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”* And the man stood and walked. Arrested, along with John, and brought before the Sanhedrin, Peter boldly proclaimed, *“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* Later, Peter used the same keys to unlock closed doors.

Christians hold the same keys when they proclaim the terms of salvation in Christ. You do too, as a praying, interceding Christian. Guided by the Holy Spirit and the Bible, we will not lose the keys through neglect, indifference, or misuses.

“Dear Jesus, many people are bound by sin’s habits, unable to find release. Enable me by the Holy Spirit to share with them the good news of repentance and salvation. Amen!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I do not have the power to forgive sins, nor can I pronounce absolution, but today, as opportunity comes, I can exhort people to repent and receive Jesus Christ.

- Floyd Cooper -

NOTES:

Jeremiah 4:22; I Corinthians 16: 15

SKILLED SINNERS AND ADDICTED SAINTS

The title seems paradoxical in inference to society’s battle with addiction. And “skilled” is more in alignment with the positive aspects of the work force. But an examination of the two above scriptures reveal the title’s correctness.

Jeremiah, writing of the spiritual and moral conditions of Judah in the seventh century, says that “they are skilled in doing evil” (RSV). The people are idolatrous, rebellious, wicked; they have forsaken God, they practice injustices. “They are skilled in doing evil.”

A skilled person is one who has the ability in a particular trade or occupation. By practice, repetition, and devotion that individual becomes skilled in that trade or business or occupation. It may have been learned in an apprenticeship, or by a observation, practice and experience.

So Jeremiah says: “They are skilled in doing evil.” “They are experts at doing what is evil” (GNB). Daily they practiced idolatry; repeatedly they rebelled against God; their mode was that of wickedness, even to the forsaking of God.

Society today is akin to that of Jeremiah’s day. Repeated offenders, majoring in sin and crime, bound by destructive habits. Wickedness, evil continually, corruption, and violence describes our world today as it did in the antediluvian period. (See: Genesis 6: 5, 11-12)

Skilled sinners, one people; addicted saints, another. Tucked away in a parenthesis and amidst concluding exhortations and salutations is this observation: “*(You know the house of Stephanus, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints)*” (I Corinthians 16: 15)

Addicted is to be devoted or given up (to a practice or habit, esp. a bad habit). Addiction is a habitual inclination. (Web. Dict.) The drug scourge has given a bad connotation of the word “addicted.” An addict is one who is apparently controlled by something.

Was Stephanus appointed by the church to this work? No. How he fleshed out his addiction is not known. He lived out Chapter 13. Problems in that church did not deter his addiction. Converted to Christ, he yearned to express his love for Christ. How? So “Stephanus and his family...are spending their lives helping and serving Christians everywhere”. (TLB)

Through an inner change by Christ, skilled sinners can become addicted saints.

“Dear Jesus, enable us to snatch the perishing from sin; to weep o’er the erring one; to lift up the fallen; to tell them of Jesus. Amen.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: By God’s grace I will be vulnerable to needs and hurts of others whom I meet on life’s pathway.

- Floyd Cooper -

NOTES:

Matthew 4: 18-22

LEARNING TO BE ‘FISHERS OF MEN’

Jesus called some of his disciples from the life of being fishermen. Jesus based his call upon what they knew so well - *“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”* What does it mean to be ‘fishers of men’? To answer this important question, we must simply look at what good fishing involves. In his Daily Study Bible (commentary on the book of Matthew), William Barclay points out five characteristics of all good fishermen, and relates these qualities to the life of a good ‘fisher of men’.

First, “he must have patience. He must learn to wait patiently until the fish take the bait. If he is restless and quick to move he will never make a fisherman.” Paul said he learned to be all things to all men, that by all means he might win some to Christ. The Scriptures exhort us as believers ‘not to grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not’. That spells ‘patience’! Adapting to meet the needs of all. A private (in the military) who was a Christian was abused badly by a rough and big sergeant. One night when the private came in very tired and wet, he got down on his knees to pray. The sergeant took his heavy boots, wet with mud, and “let him have a boot on each side of the head”. The private patiently endured this cruel treatment and did a most unusual thing, in response to this abuse. Next morning, the sergeant found his muddy boots beautifully polished and standing by his bed. That gentle reply of the private by kind action broke the heart of the rough sergeant and, as a result, the sergeant was wonderfully saved and he became a beautiful Christian.

Second, a good fisherman “must have perseverance. He must learn never to be discouraged, but always to try again.” During his long (and oftentimes, difficult) ministry of preaching and teaching and organizing, John Wesley demonstrated this wonderful quality. John Wesley preached 42,000 sermons. He averaged 4,500 miles a year (which means that he rode about 60 to 70 miles a day on horseback). He preached three sermons a day on an average. When he was 83 he wrote in his diary, “I am a wonder to myself. I am never tired, either with preaching, writing, or traveling.” Barclay describes the rugged virtue of Christian ‘perseverance’ as follows: “It is that determination, unshaking, and unrelenting, unhurrying and yet undelaying, which goes steadily on, and which refuses to be deflected. Obstacles will not daunt it; delays will not depress it; discouragements will not take its hope away. It will halt neither for discouragements from within nor for opposition from without.” (Hebrews; pg. 196)

**“O for a faith that will not shrink, though pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink of any earthly woe.
A faith that shines more bright and clear when tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear, in darkness feels no doubt.
Lord, give us such a faith as this, and then, whate’er may come,**

We’ll taste, e’en here, the hallowed bliss of an eternal home.”

(W. H. Bathurst)

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Perseverance will enable me not to swerve from my God-given task, however difficult it might be!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Luke 5: 1-11

BECOMING A ‘COURAGEOUS’ FISHERMAN

Which is more exciting to you - catching fish from a large pond or ‘catching men’ in a needy world? To certain fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James, John) Jesus said, *“From henceforth thou shalt catch men.”* (Luke 5: 10) In our devotional yesterday, we looked at two of the several qualities which all good ‘fishers of men’ possess. Let’s continue.

Third, a good ‘fisher of men’ must have courage. Let’s remember that, especially in the ancient world of Jesus’ time, a fisherman faced the tempestuous sea in a small boat. That took a lot of courage! It is also true that the ‘fisher of men’ must possess a lot of courage. He must be willing to risk, if necessary, his very own physical life that he might share Christ with the unsaved. Never forget, more Christians have died for the sake of Christ in the 20th century than in all the other centuries together, since the time of Christ! Remember also that the word ‘witness’ (when it was first used by Jesus) meant ‘martyr’! Every one of Jesus’ original disciples died a ‘martyr’s death’ except the apostle John (who died as a very old man, after he had been exiled on an island as a form of ‘punishment’ because he was a follower of Christ). To follow Christ, during the first centuries of Christian history, took considerable courage. But, amidst all the abuse and persecution in our modern-day world, followers of Christ now must also exercise great courage! It is not easy for a believer to ‘stand alone’ in the midst of a sneering crowd of unbelievers! But remember, *“any dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a live fish to swim upstream!”* The follower of Christ must be willing to ‘swim upstream’ against the ‘current of popular atheistic culture’! It takes courage (as it did with Noah who preached so long to his unresponsive world) to continue to speak up (witness) for Christ, even when no one seems to be listening or repenting.

George Fox (1624-1691), who was the founder of the Society of Friends (Quakers), was a man of unusual courage (a great ‘fisher of men’). Listen to his own account (in his old-fashioned English) of what happened to him at Tickhill. He writes: *“I found the priest and most of the chief of the parish together in the chance! So I went up to them and began to speak, but immediately they fell upon me; the clerk took up the Bible as I was speaking, and struck me on the face with it, so that it gushed out with blood, and I bled exceedingly in the steeple-house. Then the people cried, ‘Let us have him out of the church’; and when they had got me out they beat me exceedingly, and threw me down, and over a hedge; and afterwards they dragged me through a house into the street, stoning and beating me as they drew me along, so that I was besmeared all over with blood and dirt...Yet when I was got upon my legs again I declared to them the word of life and shewed them the fruits of their teachers, how they dishonored Christianity.”*

“O thou most courageous Christ, you ‘never answered back when insulted; when you suffered you did not threaten to get even; you left your case in the hands of God who

always judges fairly’. (I Peter 2: 23, Living Bible) Give m courage to follow in your steps!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: By God’s grace, I ‘dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone! Dare to have a purpose firm! Dare to make it known!’

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Mark 1: 16-20

ARE YOU READY TO ‘GO FISHING’?

Let’s continue to look at those qualities which you must possess in order to be a good ‘fisher of men’.

Fourth, a good fisherman “must have an eye for the right moment. The wise fisherman knows well that there are times when it is hopeless to fish. He knows when to cast and when not to cast.” The good ‘fisher of men’ knows when to speak and when to remain silent. He is a man who is sensitive to ‘good timing’. There is a time, when, if you spoke (to a sneering person about Christ) you would be ‘throwing away your pearls’. There are times when wisdom would ‘dictate’ that you (as a witness) should ‘keep your mouth shut’ and ‘simply pray’ (for a rebellious person). Said Jesus *“Don’t give holy things to depraved men. Don’t give pearls to swine! They will trample the pearls and turn and attack you.”* (Matthew 7: 6, Living Bible) During a part of His so-called trial (which was a ‘mockery of justice’), Jesus remained ‘silent’. To some of Pilate’s questions (and accusations) Jesus ‘opened not His mouth’. A good ‘fisher of men’ is wise and discreet. Yes, Jesus was the wisest of all soul-winners. There were times when he was silent in the face of opposition and there were other times when He was very verbal. Jesus sought for ‘points of contact’ with people. For instance, with the woman of Samaria (John 4), His ‘point of contact’ was water. Jesus began with the physical and material and then He made an application to the spiritual. Jesus always had ‘an eye for the right moment’, and so must every good ‘fisher of men’.

Fifth, a good fisherman “must fit the bait to the fish. One fish will rise to one bait and another to another.” Jesus, the master soul-winner, fit the bait to the fish. He could speak philosophically to the intellectual, as demonstrated in the discourses in the Gospel of John. Or Jesus could speak illustratively and in parables to the more simple (and illiterate) as shown in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The message of Christ’s grace is always the same, but the methods by which we present the Gospel must be adapted to the ‘kind’ of person (or group) to whom we are speaking (witnessing). There are intellectually-orientated persons who may need a witness which contains more of a ‘reasoning approach’ (apologetic approach) than the person who is more emotionally-oriented or more volitionally-oriented. The latter ‘type’ may respond more to the great ‘challenges of a cause’ which Christianity offers - for such a person is ‘looking’ for a ‘great cause’ to which he may commit himself. Adapt your methods (bait) to the ‘type’ of person to whom you are speaking.

Sixth, a good fisherman “must keep himself out of sight. If he obtrudes his own presence, even his own shadow, the fish will very certainly not bite.” The ‘fisher of men’ is concerned in attracting people to Christ, not to himself. Focus on Christ alone!

“Lord Jesus, You are the Physician and I am only the ‘instrument’; You are the Destination and I am only the ‘pointer in the way’. You must increase; I must decrease!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: My ‘glory’ is found in being able to point people to ‘the Lamb of God’ who takes away the sins of the world!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Acts 2: 20

HELPING PEOPLE GET READY

I was surprised by this morning sunrise. It was very red and very beautiful. As I was not usually an early riser, I'd forgotten that sunrise could be as glorious as sunset.

Growing up at the foot of the sage-covered Horse Heaven Hills of southeast Washington, I saw some dramatic skies over the hills. As a child, I was sometimes awed or even frightened by them. Did you, like me, grow up hearing of (and sometimes fearing) the awesome signs in the heavens of end times. Did you associate that with the coming of Jesus? Did you wonder if you were ready for His coming?

One afternoon I came home from school and my mother didn't answer my calls around the house and yard. I thought of the skies and wondered. Did Jesus return? Had my godly mother gone to be with Him and I was left behind? My mother soon returned from a visit to the neighbors. But these experiences were part of God's preparing me to be ready for Jesus' 'first' coming. Oh, not the one at Bethlehem but the one when I asked Him to forgive me and come to live in my heart, when I was not yet twelve.

Receiving Christ as my personal Savior prepared me for the awesome signs of His second coming still ahead. Yes, I am still awed by great natural phenomena. Storms and earthquakes seem to be increasing in number and intensity these days. It's scary. How do I prepare myself for Jesus' second coming?

When Jesus left this earth he was taken up into heaven before His watching disciples. Angels asked them “...*why do you stand here looking into the sky?*” (Acts 1: 11).

In Mark 16: 20, we are told “*then the disciples went out and preached everywhere and the Lord worked with them and confirmed His word by the signs that accompanied it.*” That brought much joy and excitement to them.

If we, like the disciples, are busy helping others get ready for Christ's coming we'll be ready for the awesome signs of His second coming. “...*the great and glorious day of the Lord.*” (Acts 2: 20)

“Dear Jesus, I want to be forgiven and to serve You, and to be ready for your return.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: Helping others to be ready for His return helps me to be ready too.

- Beth Stewart -

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. After carefully reading the devotional about D.L. Moody (entitled “The ‘Secret’ To Effective Witnessing”), share your personal insights, ‘feelings’, and responses (or reactions) to his testimony.**
- 2. As a witness for Christ and as a soul-winner, do you have the ‘right’ (‘power’) to declare that God has forgiven the sins of those who have repented and who have asked Jesus to come into their hearts, during a time when repentant persons are troubled and doubtful that God could accept them into his ‘forever family’? Why or why not? (Note Matthew 16: 19)**
- 3. Even though you (as a follower of Jesus Christ) do not have the authority (power) to forgive sins, what God-given authority do you possess and can you exercise? (Note Matthew 16: 13-19; Acts 3: 1-10)**
- 4. Give your interpretation of the following statement: “Through an inner change by Christ, ‘skilled sinners’ can become ‘addicted saints’.” (Note Genesis 6: 5, 11-12; Jeremiah 4:22; I Corinthians 16: 15; Acts 9: 36; Acts 11: 22-24; I Thessalonians 1: 6-10)**
- 5. As a skilled ‘fisher of men’, why is it important to wait patiently until the fish (sinners) take the ‘bait’?**
- 6. From a Biblical viewpoint, how would you define and describe ‘Perseverance’ especially as this virtue applies to soul-winning efforts? Do you think that this Christian (God-given) virtue is one of the most difficult virtues for Christians (soul-winners) to cultivate in their lives? Why or why not?**
- 7. Do you think it takes a lot of ‘courage’ for Christians to continue to speak up (witness) for Christ, even (as in the time of Noah) when no one seems to be listening or repenting? In addition to Noah, can you think of other faithful believers (as recorded in the Bible or throughout the ages of the Christian church) who courageously ‘stood up’ and ‘spoke up’ for Christ, amidst times of great persecution? (Note Daniel 6: 1-23; Daniel 3: 1-30)**
- 8. During Christ’s earthly lifetime, share ways and ‘occasions’ in which He manifested unusual courage. Do you believe that (like Christ) the most courageous persons (believers) are those who “return good for evil”, who continue to trust God even when “wrong seems so strong” and when “right goes unrecognized and unrewarded”? (Note I Peter 2: 20-23)**

- 9. Give your ‘explanation’ of the meaning of the following statement as it applies to the life of a skilled ‘fisher of men’ (witness): “The good ‘fisher of men’ is sensitive to ‘good timing’.”**
- 10. As it relates to ‘good timing’ and to discreet understanding of the ‘context’ (and the ‘spiritual condition’ of the person to whom you are witnessing), how would you apply Jesus’ teaching as recorded in Matthew 7:6?**
- 11. After reading the 4th chapter of the Gospel of John, how would you describe Jesus’ ‘point of contact’ with the Samaritan Woman? What have you discovered to be some of the most effective ‘points of contact’ (‘openings’) with unbelievers to whom you have witnessed?**
- 12. From your own personal experiences in witnessing, and from your observation of other effective soul-winners, and from your study of God’s Word, give examples which illustrate the truth of the following statement: “The message of Christ’s grace is always the same, but the methods by which we present the Gospel must be adapted to the ‘kind’ of person (or group) to whom we are speaking (witnessing).”**
- 13. Practically-speaking, what does it mean for a ‘fisher of men’ to “keep himself out of sight” when he is witnessing and seeking to lead a person (sinner) to a ‘saving knowledge of Christ’?**
- 14. What affect does one’s personal knowledge that his sins are forgiven have upon him, as he becomes increasingly sensitive to the calamities (catastrophic) happenings throughout the world, and as he sees the ‘signs for the last times’ and realizes that Christ may soon return to earth?**

CHAPTER FOUR
EXPECT RESULTS FROM WITNESSING

CHRISTIANITY IS A ‘LAY MOVEMENT’

Among the original twelve disciples whom Jesus called to follow him, not one of them had attended a ‘Theological Seminary’! And there were several of the Old Testament prophets, whom God called boldly to declare His message, who were also ‘laymen’! Like Amos ‘a herdsman’ who sat on the hillsides all day watching his sheep, keeping them from straying (Amos 1: 1). Or like D.L. Moody who “was a man of very ordinary appearance, unordained by any ecclesiastical group and quite uncultured and uneducated - even uncouth and crude to many.” (Dallas Willard) It is important to be grateful for the great intellectual ‘giants’ (the so-called ‘professional religionists’ and ‘Church leaders’) throughout the ages - like Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley - but it is also important never to forget that Christianity (from the very beginning) was a ‘lay movement’. It was lay men and women through whom God most amazingly worked - to spread His Kingdom far and wide - during the days of the Early Church! Part of the ‘genius’ of the great Evangelical Revival that took place in England over a period of several decades during the 18th century (under the leadership of John Wesley) can be attributed to the emergence of hundreds of ‘lay ministers’, most of whom had no ‘formal’ theological training.

There are thousands of lay persons whom God has ‘called’ to special ministries, to build His Kingdom in the ‘far flung reaches of the earth’. Like my cousin, George Christian, and his talented wife, Drucilla, who have been serving God as missionaries to the Ukraine since shortly after the ‘fall of Communism’ in 1989. When they sensed God’s call, they were sent to the Ukraine by their Southern Baptist Church in Texas, to pass out ‘food boxes’, and (most importantly) to share a simple witness for Christ. During the last eight years they have been in the Ukraine, they have had the joy of leading many to a saving knowledge of Jesus! I knew George as a cousin who never ‘darkened a church door’, but George was wonderfully converted as a young adult (at a ‘Billy Graham Crusade’) and latter married a dedicated Christian wife. After he worked as a mechanic for many years, he obeyed the call of God to leave America to serve as a missionary in a most needy country. Just a ‘middle-aged layman’ (with no ‘educational credentials’ - except a high school diploma) - but a ‘called and anointed’ layman, deeply in love with God and with a ‘total focus in ministry’ and a great compassion for the ‘lost’. Nothing gives him and his wife more joy than to win souls for Christ! He witnesses to prison inmates, organizes crusades, conducts baptism services (I saw a video in which he was once baptizing 80 new converts!), purchases ‘old buildings’ to ‘house’ their several newly-formed congregations, founded a ‘training school’ for new ministers, and uses his skilled hands in manual labors. He loves the God of life - the One who totally transformed his character and who gave him a reason to live! This ‘called’ man is a ‘man of destiny’ - one of the happiest persons I know!

“O God, thou who art the Source of all Life, give me a strong desire to bring the

Message of Life (Jesus Christ) to the lost ones - both near me and far from me!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: While on others God is calling, He will not pass me by! I will respond: “Here am I, Lord, please send me to reach the lost ones”!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

2 Timothy 1: 1-14

REACHING TEENS FOR JESUS CHRIST

I have a friend in whose home, several years ago, I conducted what I called a “Salvation By Appointment” Bible study. After I carefully shared the ‘plan of salvation’, my friend and his wife and his son all prayed the ‘sinner’s prayer’. Dr. Gil Carbajal, who, at the time, was in his later ‘40’s, was wonderfully converted ! It was not long until both he and his wife, Linda, began to ‘reach out in love’ to many needy teens in the public schools where they both taught. Eventually, Gil received a call from God to start a ‘Teen Bible Club’ in the public Junior High school where he served as a school counselor. With three or four teens, this Spirit-filled educator began to meet weekly with these Christian teens for Bible study and prayer and a few words of encouragement. It was not long until other teens (both Christian and non-Christian) began regularly to meet together with their beloved public school counselor, Gil Carbajal. In a few months there were as many as one hundred teens (and even a few public school teachers) meeting each Friday morning before the school day began. The Bible Club in this Junior High was so successful that several other public schools (including the High School where Linda Carbajal served as a counselor) adopted this plan and program and started their own Bible Club. Today, there are scores and scores of teens who meet together each Friday morning, to fellowship, to sing choruses, to share burdens, to pray, and to get their ‘spiritual batteries recharged’. I am aware that at least one public school teacher prayed for salvation, at the conclusion of one of those Friday morning ‘fellowships’. Now that teacher is ‘on fire for Christ’! Both Gil and his wife, Linda, have witnessed firsthand for many years the mighty movement of God in the lives of hundreds of spiritually-open teens!

Wrote Paul to Timothy: “Oh, Timothy, my son, be strong with the strength Christ Jesus gives you. For you must teach others those things you and many others have heard me speak about. Teach these great truths to trustworthy men who will, in turn, pass them on to others.” (2 Timothy 2: 1-2, Living Bible) Dawson Troutman, the founder of the Navigators, used to say, “Christians are ‘born to reproduce’”. After I led Gil and Linda to Christ, they in turn (through their personal witnessing and by means of their Friday morning Bible Clubs) began winning others to Christ (perhaps I may call these whom they led to Christ my ‘spiritual grandchildren’).

Proverbs 11: 30 says: *“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”* Who are the wise? Soul-winners! What shall the wise (soul-winners) enjoy? *“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.”* (Daniel 12: 3)

“Give me the love that leads the way, the faith that nothing can dismay, the hope no disappointments tire, the passion that will burn like fire. Let me not sink to be a clod: make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.” (Amy Carmichael)

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: For even a small investment of time in witnessing, the benefits are so great!

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Proverbs 11: 30; Matthew 4: 19

RESCUE THE PERISHING – MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

For several years I served as a police chaplain. It was not uncommon to hear an officer refer to a person who habitually caused trouble, as a Slum-Bag. I’m quite sure Jesus would never have used that term for those who need Jesus as their Savior. Today I want to share the story of a man I know. He was an alcoholic. When he was under the influence of alcohol he became very wicked. It was not uncommon for him to hit his wife, who was crippled from polio. She was unable to defend herself and suffered many attacks. He also had an eleven year daughter who was a Christian and loved to attend church. She was allowed to go with people from the church, but one night she got home a little late. Her father was so angry with her, he whipped her with his belt buckle until blood ran down her legs. After leaving her room, he stood outside her door and listened as she cried out to Jesus in prayer. Her prayer was this: “Please, dear God. Save my daddy. He really isn’t a bad daddy. He just needs You”. Can you imagine how this cut into his heart?

In Riverside, California, there was a pastor of a small church. His heart became burdened for this ungodly man, and he set out to Rescue The Perishing. After much prayer and effort on the part of the pastor, the day came when the alcoholic agreed to come to his church. The man made this stipulation, however. He would come, but if anyone tried to get him to go to the altar to pray, he would take that person outside, and beat him up. He was adequate to carry out his threat. What he had not planned on was the convicting power of God. He did not know that the Holy Spirit was going to change his life that day. No one asked him to go to the altar to pray. He went forward of his own free will and asked Jesus to come into his heart and change his life. An ex-convict, an ex-alcoholic, an ex-ill tempered man, now a new creature in Christ Jesus! As a minister of the gospel for almost 40 years, he now, too, Rescues the Perishing. God alone knows how many converted “mean men” have come to Christ as a result of his conversion.

I am convinced that Fanny J. Crosby was divinely-inspired when she wrote the hymn, “Rescue The Perishing”.

“Rescue the perishing. Care for the dying. Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave. Weep o’er the erring one. Lift up the fallen. Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save. Rescue the perishing. Duty demands it. Strength for your labor the Lord will provide. Back to the narrow way patiently win them. Tell the poor wanderer a Saviour has died. Refrain: Rescue the perishing, care for the dying. Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.”

SOUL WINNING

**Are you seeking out the lost ones Whom the Saviour died to win?
Are you showing them the fountain That can wash away their sin?
Are you looking by the wayside For the weary ones who fall?
Do you win them to the Master Who has promised rest to all.
“Author Unknown”**

“O God, lay some soul upon my heart, and love that soul through me, and may I humbly do my part to win that soul for Thee.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will endeavor to live today in such a way that either through my witness in word or my witness through living righteously, I will influence someone for the kingdom of God.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

Acts 8: 1-8; 26-40

A MODERN DAY ‘PHILIP’

I have a close friend, Art Fowler, who has been used of God for many years as a witness to hundreds of people across the Nation - professional athletes, educators, government officials and politicians, doctors and lawyers and law enforcement officers. Through his simple and forthright witness to the saving power of Christ, many have accepted Christ - including truck drivers, policemen, airline stewardesses, celebrities, and business persons. I call Art a “modern-day Philip”, for like Philip (in the Book of Acts), Art often witnesses to total strangers whom he senses the Holy Spirit is leading him to. The manner in which he “finds his contacts” is nothing short of miraculous! Art loves to read biographies of famous people or to read about ‘high profile’ personalities in magazines (especially PEOPLE’S Magazine). There, as he senses the moving of the Spirit, he will begin to build “bridges of friendship” with these people by phoning them, and eventually, he will set up a personal appointment with them at which time he usually leads them to Christ. During the last few years since I have known Art, I have heard him share God’s miracles in action through his witnessing, resulting in the salvation of scores of persons - including the governor of South Dakota (who, a year after Art led him to Christ, was killed in a plane crash). The list of persons whom Art has led to Christ is long, including over 200 patrolmen whom Art has personally led to Christ (after Art “pulls them over” by flashing his car lights at night to get their attention!) Yes, there is only one Art Fowler, and no one should attempt to “pull over” police cars unless he is definitely led by the Holy Spirit to do so! His personal evangelism has been so unusual and fruitful, that Dr. James Kennedy has featured Art Fowler several times on his weekly national television program.

Every month (along with many others) I receive his monthly Newsletter - a single one page summary of ‘God At Work’. The following ‘excerpts’ from the most recent Newsletter are ‘typical’ of all the other Newsletters. But what is ‘typical’ is certainly not ‘business as usual’! The Newsletters usually give a brief account of one, two, or three persons (usually ‘strangers’) to whom God has led Art. Most of the times, these ‘encounters’ (call them ‘divine appointments’) result in amazing conversions. Writes Art, “God led me to stop at a local car dealership, since I know a man who works there. I did not see this man, but I did see one of the secretaries. When I spoke to her she started to cry, so we went into another office where I could talk to her. She told me about some personal hardships she was experiencing. I shared Christ with her and she accepted Him into her life...The same day I was driving down a main road in Denver and saw a policeman with a radar gun. I pulled off the road and went up to his window to talk to him. He was very open, and I shared the plan of salvation with him. About 10 minutes later he was praying and inviting Christ to be his Savior.”

“Lord, I don’t have the special ‘gift of personal evangelism’, nor do I have the dynamics and daring personality like that of Art Fowler, but I do want you to use me in the great spiritual harvest of precious souls in these days of unprecedented reaping!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: *I will look around me, for there are vast fields of human souls which are ripening, and are now ready for reaping!* (John 4: 35)

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Proverbs 11: 30: 1 Corinthians 13: “...the Greatest is LOVE.”

A GREAT SINNER BECOMES A GREAT SOUL-WINNER!

There was a time when I enjoyed fishing. The enjoyment increased when I felt the tug of the line and knew there was a fish for me to reel in and take home. While all fishing trips are not successful, not all ‘FISHING FOR MEN’ trips are successful either. We must not quit. Proverbs 11:30, Amplified Version reads: *“And he who is wise captures human lives for God (as a fisher of men)—he gathers and receives them for eternity.”*

There was a skid row mission that had the following custom. After the evening gospel service, anyone who received Jesus Christ as Saviour, was given coffee, a hot meal and a place to sleep for the night. One of the regular attenders was an old man they called “Old Major”. Every night, after the preaching, he came to the altar in order to get his cup of coffee, hot meal and a place to sleep. This continued over a long period of time. The Mission Minister grew weary of the game “Old Major” was playing. He sent Old Major out into the dark, cold night without his coffee, hot meal or a place to sleep. As night lengthened, the minister kept thinking of Old Major and how he had sent him away. Sleep just would not come, as his conscience continued to trouble him. Out into the streets and alleys the minister went in search of the old man. He found him lying beside a garbage can. Old Major did not respond when the minister tried to talk to him and invite him back to the mission. Finally the minister knelt down beside the intoxicated man. He spoke directly into his ear: “Old Major, I LOVE YOU.” I want you to come back to the mission with me and have some food and a bed to sleep in.” These words brought tears to the old man’s eyes. He had not heard the word “I LOVE YOU” for many years. Old Major opened his eyes, got to his feet and followed the minister back to the mission where he was given a cup of coffee, a hot meal and a warm bed to sleep in. That night before he went to bed, Old Major asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart and to forgive him of all his sins. Old Major lived only 6 months after that night, but before he died, he lead approximately 200 persons to Christ. Persons living as he previously had. What if that mission worker had not gone out that night to find “Old Major”?

For many of us, soul winning is not our forte; not our strong point. With God as our helper we should at least try casting out our lines and try to lead some soul to Christ.

“Oh God, lay some soul upon my heart, and love that soul through me. May I humbly do my part to win that soul for Thee.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I may never win 200 souls for thee Lord, but lay some unsaved person on my heart. I will bring that soul in prayer to you, and, if the door opens, I’ll do my best to be your witness.

- Lowell Weller -

NOTES:

John 4: 1-39

RESULTS OF ‘GOING’

What should you do when you ‘Go’ to sinners? Simply talk about Jesus! In talking about Jesus, you can expect to see many wonderful ‘results’.

First, ‘bridges of friendship’ will be built. Many people today are lonely and depressed and in need of friends. When you take time to visit with people, people are impressed that you are a person who really cares. In being attracted to you, they will eventually be attracted to the Christ whom you love and serve. Try to read some scripture and have prayer in every home you visit. Be a good listener. Cultivate friendship.

Second, souls will find Christ as Savior. If you consistently show concern for people, there will be many who will eventually respond to the call of Christ and who will become genuine followers of Christ. The greatest privilege in life is to lead someone to a personal knowledge of Christ!

Third, the ‘Kingdom of God’ will be expanded. The existence of a kingdom depends upon two factors - reign of king and a realm with subjects. God is the King. Christians are the subjects that compose the King’s realm. Christ is very interested in the realm of God’s Kingdom being increased and expanded. This expansion comes when Christ receives the loyalty of another human heart. As a Christian, you are given the ministry of reconciliation - influencing people to give their lives to Christ. To change the analogy, you are given the opportunity to be a harvester in the Lord’s vineyard. When you go forth, you are going forth for an ultimate purpose - to harvest souls for Christ. Sometimes you will sow the seed of God’s Word. Sometimes you will water the seed with inner tears of intercessory prayer. Sometimes you will ‘warm the soil’ of men’s hearts through acts of thoughtful friendship. Sometimes you will have the great joy of actually harvesting souls for the Savior (praying with a sinner to accept Christ).

Fourth, your local church will likely become enlarged with the attendance of new believers. A new Christian needs a place to fellowship and to worship. What more ‘natural’ place is there for him to fellowship and to worship than in the local church of the one who led him to Christ?

Fifth, you will become a ‘fulfilled Christian’. During John Wesley’s search for spiritual reality, one counselor advised him: “Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.”

“Heavenly Father, nothing brings greater satisfaction and delight than sharing Christ with needy persons. Never allow the ‘passing pleasures of life’ to replace the ‘greatest joy of life’ - bringing precious souls to Christ!”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: “*They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.*” (Daniel 12: 3)

- Ron Christian -

NOTES:

Mark 4: 35-41

ON GOING TO THE OTHER SIDE

When I sat in my seat in the tiny one-room schoolhouse in a pleasant hollow in the Huckleberry Mountains of north-eastern Washington State, I was fascinated by the old globe of the earth that rested on the bookshelf at the front of the room. The seas did not interest me, but what lay across the seas was full of mystery.

The seeds of a yearning to ‘see the other side’ were planted in those early days of learning. I hoped, with my wife, to see what lay ‘over there’ when we applied to our Mission Board to be sent to China, and there to trace the steps of my Aunt Grace. Grace had gone to China in 1914 as a missionary nurse. Her work put her life in danger, and two years later she succumbed to a virulent strain of typhoid fever, and God called her home.

I wanted to be an evangelist/teacher in China, but when the Board examined our health records, they said “Not now.”

Jesus led his disciples to the other side of Galilee and natural forces seemed ready to thwart His mission. The ‘Prince of Darkness’ is not mentioned by the name, but he was there to challenge the Son of God in His purpose.

I think Jesus knew the needs that awaited his little party: a panic stricken crew, a profoundly disturbed man, a despairing woman, a grief-stricken family. His preparation for ministry was to speak peace to the life-threatening storm that arose.

We have a call to the ‘other side.’ This is in many ways the crux of our experience of God. ‘Others’ are always on the other side - of the room, of the house, of the town, of the county. Of the country, of the world.

Today career missionaries do only part of the work. Part-time short-termers often go to do a specific task, but they go, paying their own way, taking their own time, then returning to their home fields richer for having gone.

After one ten-week experience, I vowed to return to live abroad at least two years so I might know what it was like for Christians to live in hostile cultures. And then - I found that some were simply isolated and ignored. Others were profoundly opposed and harassed unmercifully because they tried to walk with Jesus. No two places treated Christians the same, and that was why we had to go.

Jesus was on the go constantly: to the other side, up to Jerusalem, to the garden, to the court of Pilate, to the cross and the tomb, to Olivet. Every move he made was for us, His followers and disciples.

When will you go ‘to the other side?’

“Heavenly Father, take us with you to the ‘other side’. Only then can we discover the needs of our brothers over there.”

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: I will go where He leads me!

- Eugene Stewart -

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Among the original twelve disciples of Jesus, how many of them were either ‘college educated’ or ‘seminary trained’?**
- 2. According to Amos 1: 1, what was Amos’ type of work? Why do you think that God was able to use Amos so effectively in ‘Kingdom Work’?**
- 3. From the beginning, what kind of ‘Movement’ was Christianity?**
- 4. Briefly share the ‘story’ of the life and ministry of a ‘lay person’ whom God has ‘called’ to a special ministry (either in the United States or in another Country).**
- 5. Is there any ‘special group’ of persons (like children or teens) to whom God has given you a ‘call’ to minister? What have you done (or what do you intend to do) to better prepare yourself for the ‘ministry’ to which God has called you?**
- 6. Without speaking disdainfully or insensitively about ‘formal education’, why is it true that such education cannot adequately prepare you for the ministry to which God has called you? In addition to ‘head knowledge’ of propositional truth (data and information), why is it imperative for you also to experience ‘heart knowledge’ of living truth (as found through a daily and vital fellowship with Christ), in order to fulfill your God-given ‘call’ and to develop an ‘effective ministry’?**
- 7. Have you taken considerable time for reflection and time to receive ‘godly counsel’, that you might discover how you can effectively use your God-given talents and spiritual gifts to minister to God-revealed needs in your ‘hurting society’?**
- 8. According to 2 Timothy 2: 1-2, what does it mean for you to develop a ‘multiplication ministry’?**
- 9. According to Proverbs 11:30, who are the ‘truly wise’ persons in our world today? According to Daniel 12: 3, what rewards will God give to these ‘wise persons’?**
- 10. Can you think of any ‘down-and-out sinners’ whom God has miraculously transformed, the results of which is that people (both Christians and non-Christians) have been greatly ‘amazed’ and God has been greatly ‘glorified’?**

- 11. Do you ever feel ‘intimidated’ (i.e., do you ever feel ‘inferior’ and ‘inadequate’) when you observe the skill and the results from the witnessing by ‘great soul-winners’? How have you learned to ‘cope’ with such feelings (i.e., how have you learned not to despair or to be embittered when you unfavorably compare yourself with much more skilled soul-winners)? Even if you have not been given the special ‘gift of evangelism’, is it nevertheless your responsibility to involve yourself in the ‘work of witnessing’?**
- 12. In light of John 4: 35, how would you evaluate the degree of receptivity to the Gospel message in the lives of many persons (sinners) in our modern society?**
- 13. Have you ever contemplated the exciting thought that some person (sinner) whom you lead to Christ, might in turn eventually lead many other persons to Christ (many more persons than you could ‘lead to Christ’, because ‘your convert’ was given the ‘gift of evangelism’)? Does the possibility of this kind of ‘multiplication evangelism’ increase your motivation to be actively involved in witnessing and in soul-winning? (Note 2 Timothy 2: 2)**
- 14. As you focus your thinking on one person with whom you have shared a ‘witness for Christ’, put a ‘check’ beside those following statements which describe the ‘benefits’ which were derived as a result of your witness to your friend:**
 - _____ a. A ‘bridge of friendship’ was built to a needy (lonely) person.**
 - _____ b. An ‘eternal soul’ was converted to the Living Christ.**
 - _____ c. The ‘Kingdom of God’ was expanded and increased, as a result of a new ‘subject’ who is now serving the ‘King of Kings’.**
 - _____ d. The local church where I (the soul-winner) attend is the happy recipient of a new participant and member (the new convert).**
 - _____ e. I (the soul-winner) am a more ‘fulfilled’ Christian because I have obediently responded to Jesus’ call to ‘fulfill the Great Commission’.**
- 15. Have you ever considered the possibility that God may someday ‘lead’ you to spend some time (a few weeks or even a couple years) in another country of the world, where you can learn to appreciate another culture and observe firsthand the work of ‘native Christians’, and where you can use your own talents and gifts to lovingly minister to hurting people ‘on the other side’?**