



Overflow

by

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Published by First Baptist Church,
Owasso, Oklahoma

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“I still, from my armchair, preach in great revivals. I still vision hundreds walking the aisles to accept Christ. I still feel hot tears for the lost . . . I want no Christmas without a burden for lost souls, a message for sinners, a heart to bring in the lost. May food be tasteless, music a discord, Christmas a farce if I forget the dying millions; if this fire in my bones does not still flame. Not till I die or not till Jesus comes will I ever be eased from this burden, these tears, this toil to save souls.”

John R. Rice, age 85

(Part of a 1980 Christmas letter dictated few days before his death)¹

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Preface

Keep It Simple

A few years ago I taught a group of students the Plan of Salvation that this book contains. Afterwards a high school junior came up to me and said, “For years I have been told that I needed to witness to others but until today nobody every told me how.”

The purpose of this Learner’s Guide is to do just that—to show you how to share in the simplest way possible. There are hundreds of evangelism tools and techniques but sharing Jesus is not about tools and techniques. It’s not about programs and books. It’s not even about visitation night. Sharing Jesus is about a heart overflowing with the love of Christ. It’s about a person who has been with Jesus who can’t help but to “speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). If you are walking with the Lord and know how you were saved, you are ready to lead a person to Christ. You already know what you need to know and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, you can be a powerful witness.

But many believers shy away from stepping out. They don’t feel ready. They aren’t confident. What if they don’t have all the answers? What if the person isn’t interested? What if...That’s where this book can help.

We have purposely kept the teaching in this Learner’s Guide easy and simple—so simple that it could even be taught to children (which it has!). Sharing the Gospel is not as complicated as we sometimes make it. So try not to make it harder than it is. Simply *walk with God*. Let Him fill up your heart. Then *be willing* to share out of the overflow of your heart anytime, anywhere, and use the tips and methods in this book to help you feel more comfortable, prepared and confident in reaching and teaching people of all ages with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Sharing the Gospel is not as complicated as we sometimes make it.

Part 1
Sharing Jesus

Who had the greatest influence in you coming to Christ?

On whose life have you had the greatest influence?

An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip: “Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to desert Gaza.” So he got up and went. There was an Ethiopian man, a eunuch and high official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to worship in Jerusalem and was sitting in his chariot on his way home, reading the prophet Isaiah aloud.

The Spirit told Philip, “Go and join that chariot.”

When Philip ran up to it, he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the Scripture passage he was reading was this:

He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb is silent before its shearer,
so He does not open His mouth.
In His humiliation justice was denied Him.
Who will describe His generation?
For His life is taken from the earth.

The eunuch replied to Philip, “I ask you, who is the prophet saying this about—himself or another person?” So Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning from that Scripture.

As they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, “Look, there’s water! What would keep me from being baptized?” And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

--Acts 8:26-38

Chapter 1 Before You Begin

The following pages contain several tools that can help you lead not only a child, but a person of any age to Christ. These are methods to assist you but always remember that:

Sharing Jesus is not about methods—*It's a lifestyle.*

Also, be aware that:

- Not everyone with whom you share Jesus will come to Christ. Some people will say “No” to the Lord; others won’t even want to listen; a child might not yet be ready. Many times you will plant a seed, someone else will water, but God will cause the growth (1 Cor. 3:6). Speak boldly; speak often; and trust the Lord with results.
- Don’t worry about using the “wrong words” or “What if I mess up?” You don’t have to be a Bible scholar with twelve degrees on your wall to tell someone about Christ. Your only prerequisite is a living, daily relationship with Jesus. If you’re saved and you’re walking with the Lord, then you’re ready to tell the world about the wonders of God. Entrust yourself to Christ and He will give you the words to say.
- After speaking with someone about accepting the Lord, never second-guess what you said or did. Don’t give room to thoughts such as, “What if I would have been more clear...” or “What if I would have said this instead...” or “What if it’s my fault he didn’t want Jesus.” Simply trust that God did in that moment what He wanted to do. In other words, *enjoy* your relationship with God and enjoy sharing that relationship with others without the burden and self-condemnation of a world of “what ifs.”

You don't have to be a Bible scholar with twelve degrees on your wall to tell someone about Christ. Your only prerequisite is a living, daily relationship with Jesus.

Chapter 2

Sharing the Greatest Story of Your Life

Your Story

Your salvation testimony is simply your story about how you came to know Jesus.

- It doesn't have to be "dynamic." Every story of salvation is a story of life-change and the greatest miracle of all. There is no such thing as a "boring" testimony.
- It doesn't have to be long...In fact, it shouldn't be long. Try to keep your salvation testimony to a minute or less. Practice this.

This guide will help you to think through your story of how you came to know Jesus. Write it down but don't memorize it—just learn it. This isn't a presentation; it's a story. Share it from your heart. Let God guide you, and listen to Him as you share it.

Then share your salvation story as often as you can. Try to share it every day. Practice on your family. Practice on your Christian friends. Practice in the mirror. Practice on your dog...he won't get saved. Practice on your non-Christian friends...some of them might get saved. The more you share your story the more comfortable you will be in sharing your story and the more natural it will become.

Finally, understand that there is power in your testimony. People can try to argue anything...but it's hard to argue someone's experience.

So let's begin where you began...

The more you share your story the more comfortable you will be in sharing your story and the more natural it will become.

Story

When I was younger I knew a man who had heart surgery. After being given certain drugs and as they wheeled him down the hall, he said, "I knew I shouldn't have eaten that taco!" My thought, however, wasn't about tacos. What would naturally come out of my mouth if I were in the same situation? It wasn't a judgmental thought; just something that made me examine myself. And I decided that if I was ever in the same situation, I didn't want to be talking about what I just ate. I wanted to be ready to share Christ in any situation, with any distraction, in any amount of pain, even under anesthesia, I wanted my salvation story to be the first thing to come out of my mouth. So I shared it every day for the purpose that I would be ready to share it easily no matter what.

Part 3
What difference did it make?

So what's different now that you are a believer? What difference did it make in your life? What difference did it make in eternity? The best way to end your salvation story is by saying:

"Because of this I know for sure I'm going to Heaven. How about you?"

This simple statement helps you to discover whether or not the person you are talking with knows Jesus also.

If they say, "Sure. I'm going to Heaven," ask them how they know for sure. Are they right? Did they share a salvation experience or an answer that you know, according to the Bible, isn't right? Are they trusting something other than Christ for salvation (i.e., "I'm a good person." "I go to church." "I got baptized.")?

If they don't share a genuine salvation experience, then ask for the opportunity to share with them what the Bible says about how a person can know Jesus and spend eternity in Heaven. *"Can I show you what the Bible says about how you can know for certain that you will spend eternity in Heaven?"*

If they say "Yes," then share with them how God can save them just like He saved you. If they say "No" ask if there would be a better time and if not, try to leave them with a tract or at least try to leave an open door for sharing with them in the future.

Write your thoughts here...

The best way to end your salvation story is by saying: "Because of this I know for sure I'm going to Heaven. How about you?"

wrong things; they just didn't understand the term that I was using. As you are working on your salvation testimony, listen to it with the ears of someone who hasn't been in church. Listen also with the ears of a child. Do you hear anything confusing?

The best way to create an opportunity to share your salvation story is by saying, "Can I tell you about the greatest thing that ever happened to me?"

How do you create opportunities to share Jesus with others?

If you have a friend that is lost, how do you bring it up without feeling awkward or off-the-wall? Here are some suggestions:

- Ask, *"Can I tell you about the greatest thing that ever happened to me?"* If they say, "Yes", then share your salvation testimony, the story of how you were saved. If they say, "No", then it's probably a bad time and there will be a better time later.
- Look for situational opportunities: Is something going on in this person's life that might be making them think about spiritual matters? Did Heaven or God or Jesus just come up in a conversation? Did someone just use God's name in vain and you can kindly explain to them how important that name is to you?
- Pray and ask God to open up doors for you to share His love with others. The single greatest thing that stops people from sharing Jesus is an unwilling heart.

Review

The best way to create an opportunity to share your salvation story is by saying, ***"Can I tell you about the greatest thing that ever happened to me?"***

There are three basic parts to your salvation story:

- What started you thinking about giving your life to Jesus?
- What did you do?
- What difference did it make?

Chapter 3

Sharing the Plan of Salvation

Key Questions

There are several key questions that open the door for you to find out where a person is in their relationship with Christ:

- *If you were to die right now, do you know for sure that you would go to Heaven?*
- *In your opinion, what does it take for a person to go to Heaven?*
- *If you were to stand before God today and He were to ask you why He should let you into His Heaven, what would you say?*
- (Or, if you've just finished sharing your salvation story...) *"Because of this I know for sure I'm going to Heaven. What about you?"*

"No" and "I don't know"

If people express that they don't know for sure that they're going to Heaven or how a person can go to heaven, or like a man in southwestern Oklahoma told me, "No, if I were to die today I would split hell wide open." Then simply offer to show them how by saying: ***Can I show you what the Bible says about how you can know for sure that you're going to Heaven?***

Never Assume

If people express, "Yes", they know they are going to Heaven, never assume that they have given their lives to Jesus. Find out more.

ASK: *How do you know?*

- **If they say share a true salvation experience with you...**ask them, *"So do you have a church that you're actively attending?"* If they share a church name with you but you suspect that

If people express, "Yes", they know they are going to Heaven, never assume that they have given their lives to Jesus.

they might not be actively attending, ask, “*And who’s your pastor there?*” If they can’t tell you, then you know that they really aren’t active there and invite them to your church. But if they seem active at another church and it is a Bible-believing, Christian church, then encourage them to continue following Christ there.

- **If their answer leads you to believe that they have not truly had a salvation experience** (i.e., I’ve been good; I go to church; I’ve been baptized; I just think I will; etc.), then treat them just as if they had said “No.” Just say: ***Can I show you what the Bible says about how you can know for sure that you’re going to Heaven?***

Can I show you what the Bible says about how you can know for sure that you’re going to Heaven?

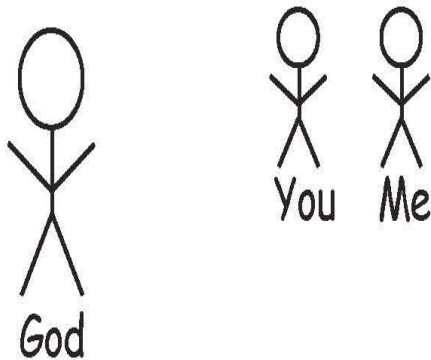
Are they willing to listen?

You’ve just offered to share with someone God’s plan for how they can be saved, but are they willing to listen? Here are few tips in how to respond to their answers:

- **If they say, “No”...** be kind and polite but don’t just drop the subject. Ask, “*When would be a good time for us to talk about this?*” If they are a friend or a relative, let them know that it’s important to you that you can share with them.
- **If they say, “I don’t know”...** assure them that it won’t take long. Say something like, “It will just take a couple of minutes. And we can just sit and talk right here.” By suggesting a nearby place and moving to it, many people will naturally follow.
- **If they say, “Yes”...** begin showing them the Plan of Salvation.

The Plan of Salvation Drawing—Part 1 **God's Love**

Draw the following



Example of what to say:

God loves you and He created you to have a relationship with Him. Even before you were born He loved you and had great plans for your life.

The Bible says,

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

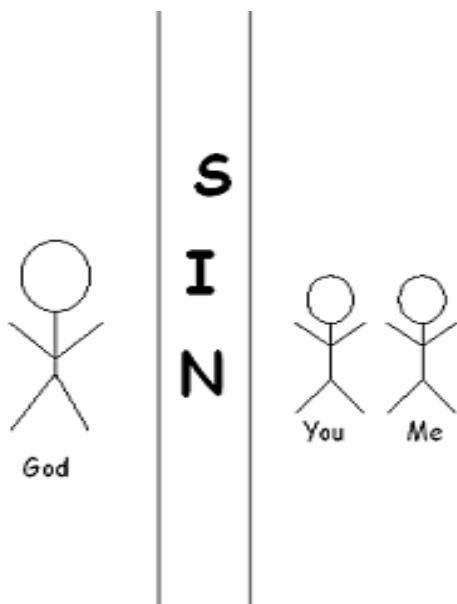
Explain that God loves the person you are talking to and that He wants a personal relationship with them. Instead of writing “You” and “Me” under the figures, write your name and the name of the person to whom you are talking. This will help you not only to remember their name but to keep using their name often as you talk with them.

Talking with Children

You can use this method to share the Gospel on a child's level. Remember, be brief and to the point. A seven year old under the conviction of the Holy Spirit is still a seven year old and will still have the attention span of a seven year old. Be careful not to mistake immaturity for lack of interest or conviction.

The Plan of Salvation Drawing—Part 2 **Our Problem**

Add to the Drawing



Example of what to say:

But we have a problem called *sin* and sin is anything we do that is wrong..

Have you ever done something wrong?

Yes, we all have.

The Bible says,
“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

We’ve all done wrong things and you can picture our sin like a great canyon or huge wall that separates us from God.

God is perfect. He’s on this side. Are we perfect? No, because we’ve all done wrong things. And our sins, the wrong things we do, separate us from God.

Explain that we have a problem. Our problem is sin and sin is anything we do that is wrong and our sins separate us from God.

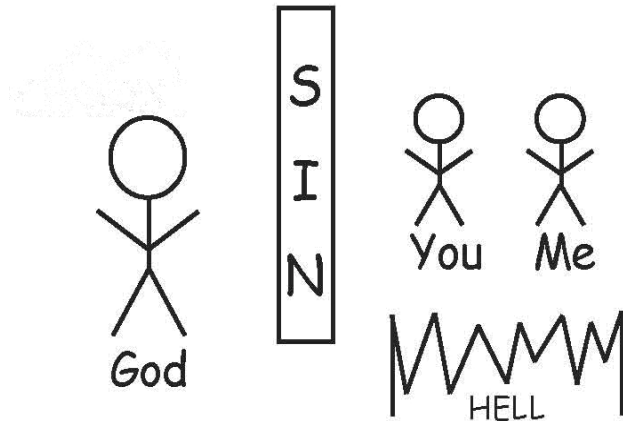
Talking with Children

Be careful not to ask, “Have you ever sinned?” Many unchurched children aren’t familiar with the term “sin.” Ask, “*Have you ever done anything wrong?*” This is an easier question to understand.

If a child says that he has never done anything wrong, it’s possible that he hasn’t reached the “Stage of Accountability.” See chapter 5 for information on this.

The Plan of Salvation Drawing—Part 3 **The Punishment of Sin**

Add to the Drawing



Example of what to say:

Sin has a punishment. It's a place called hell, but God doesn't want you to go there. The Bible says that God created hell as the punishment for the devil and the other angels that rebelled against Him, but when we did wrong things, hell became our punishment too.

And hell isn't just the punishment for *really* bad things—One sin, no matter how small, even the littlest of lies, is enough to keep a person out of Heaven.

The Bible says,
“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”
(Romans 6:23).

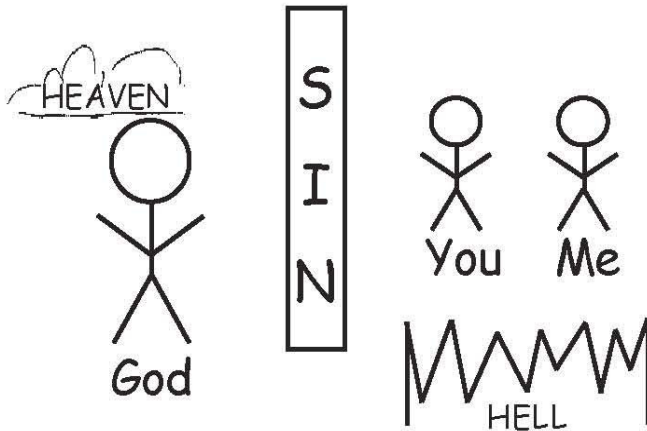
Explain that there is a punishment for the wrong things we do. This punishment is eternal separation from God in a place called “hell.” God didn't create hell for us, but for the devil and the other angels that rebelled against Him (Matt. 25:41). But when we sinned and rebelled against God, this became our just punishment too.

Talking with Children

When speaking with a child, do not omit mentioning hell because this is a part of the Gospel. However, do not focus on it either. Your aim is not to scare the child but to inform them that there is a punishment for sin and a gift that is eternal life. Also, you may need to distinguish with some children that “hell” is a “bad” word if you use it in a bad way, but it's also a place but not a place where God wants you to go.

The Plan of Salvation Drawing—Part 4
The Gift of God

Add to the Drawing



Example of what to say:

But there's more...

ASK: Where does God want us to go? (To Heaven.)

God has a gift for you: Being able to know Him and to go to Heaven when you die. God wants you to go to Heaven. It doesn't matter what you've said or done—it doesn't matter how bad you've been, God still loves you. But just because He wants us to go to Heaven, doesn't mean that we automatically will.

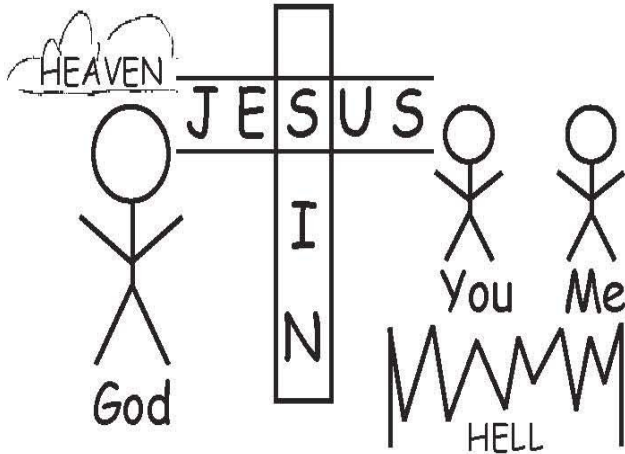
We have to make a choice, but this is what God did...

Explain that just because God wants us to go to Heaven, doesn't mean that we automatically will.

Did you know...
God's gift of "eternal life" is not just going to Heaven. In John 17:3 Jesus said, "*This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*" Eternal life is being in relationship with God and it doesn't begin when a person dies. Eternal life begins the moment a person is saved.

**The Plan of Salvation Drawing—Part 5
One Way**

Add to the drawing:



Example of what to say:

God sent Jesus. Jesus is God's only Son who came to earth as a man. He lived a perfect life, and when He died on the cross, God punished Him for all the wrong things you and I would ever do.

This is how much God loves you and this is the reason Jesus came—to make a way for you to go to Heaven. If sin separates us from God, Jesus built a bridge across it by dying and paying the price for your sins.

But Jesus didn't stay dead. Three days later God raised Him from the dead and He's alive today. That's why He's the only way to go to Heaven.

The Bible says,
"But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us"
(Romans 5:8).

The Bible says,
"Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6).

At this point the drawing part is finished. The drawing shows a person what God did to make a way for us to go to Heaven. Now it's time to explain how a person can give his life to Christ.

Explain that Jesus was God and came to earth as a man. He lived a perfect life, and when He died, God punished Him for all the wrong things you and I would ever do. This is how much God loves you and this is the reason Jesus came, to make a way for you to go to Heaven. (*Refer to the sin block.*) If this is the Grand Canyon of sin, Jesus built a bridge across it by dying and paying the price for your sins, but Jesus didn't stay dead. Three days later, God raised Him from the dead and He's alive today. That's why He's the only way to go to Heaven.

This is how a person is saved...

Jesus has already paid the price for your sins, but for you to give your life to Him, you have to:

A -Admit that you have sinned and be willing to turn from your sin.

B -Believe that Jesus is God's Son who died and was raised from the dead. He did this for me. This isn't just believing with your head, but it is trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.

C -Call on the Lord, confess your sins, and commit your life to Him. This is the willingness to turn from your sins and to turn to Christ as your Savior.

The Bible says, *"If you will confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).*

The Bible also says, *"For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).*

Explain that for a person to receive Christ, they must come to God on His terms and His terms are everything or nothing. To give your life to Jesus means that you are willing to surrender everything you are and everything that you have to Him. It's not enough to just turn from your sins. Many people turn over a "new leaf" but repentance is a step more, because you are turning from your sins and turning to Christ as Lord and Boss of your life.

For a person to receive Christ, they must come to God on His terms and His terms are everything or nothing.

Talking Tip

The A-B-C outline to the left is just a guide. You don't actually have to say, "A...Admit that you have sinned..." This is just a guide for you to follow in your mind.

Asking for a Response

ASK: Does all this make sense to you?

When you ask, “Does all this make sense to you?” don’t be afraid of being asked questions to which you don’t know the answers. It’s okay not to have all the answers. If the person you are speaking with asks you something that you don’t know, just say, “I don’t know about that but what I do know is...” and then come right back to what you know about what it means to give your life to Christ.

The purpose of this question is to give them clarification on how to know Jesus, not to “chase rabbits.” For example, if you are talking to a child who at this point says, “Do animals go to Heaven?” just bring the conversation back to what matters. “Why don’t we talk about that later, but right now let’s talk about how you can know that you’re going to Heaven.” Also, never interpret random questions from children to mean that they aren’t interested about what you’re saying. Remember that kids think differently, so be very careful not to mistake immaturity for the lack of God drawing them to Himself.

ASK: Would you like to give your life to Christ?

Some people, when learning how to share Jesus, choke when it comes to the question, “Would you like to give your life to Christ?” If you feel anxious about asking this, just take a deep breath, swallow, trust God and boldly spit it out.

If the person says, “Yes”, then explain how they can pray and ask Jesus into their lives.

(If they say, “No”, see page 35)

Example of what to say:

You can give your life to Jesus right now by praying and asking Him to take control of your life, but realize that repeating a prayer can’t save you. Words can’t “save” you. You have to mean what you say. You have to be willing to make Jesus the Lord and Boss of your life. God knows what’s in your heart, so if you’re

Talking with Children

Most children who want to accept Christ will want you to lead them in a prayer. A preteen once said to me, “Can you help me pray? I’m scared to talk to God.” After thinking about this, it made perfect sense. Picture a child who is getting ready to talk to God—the God of all power, who made everything, and a God he doesn’t know—for the first time. I understand why he felt scared.

willing to give your life to Christ right now, I can either lead you in a prayer or just let you share your heart with God.

But I would like for you do this aloud. This way I can be a witness to what you are doing.

Sample Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus,

Thank you for dying for me and offering me Heaven. I'm sorry for the wrong things I've done. Please come into my life and be my Lord and Savior. I give you my life. Thank you for saving me.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Praying for Salvation

There are no magic words that save a person. God knows what is in the heart. But to lead someone in a prayer, you don't have to have one memorized. Just remember the A...B...C's again. Let them be a guide to you:

A -Admit that you have sinned and be willing to turn from your sin.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I'm sorry for the wrong things I have done...

B - Believe that Jesus is God's Son who died and was raised from the dead. He did this for me.

This isn't just believing with your head, but it is trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.

I believe that you are the Son of God and that you died and rose again...

C -Call on the Lord, confess your sins, and commit your life to Him. This is the willingness to turn from your sins and to turn to Christ as you Savior.

I give you my life.

Then we always encourage you to have the person end the prayer by saying, "*Thank you for saving me...In Jesus' name—Amen.*" By doing so, even before they finish praying, you are already building in them the

assurance that God has been true to His promises.

There are no magic words that save a person. God knows what is in the heart.

Talking Tip

If a person says he wants to pray on his own but his prayer doesn't mention anything about accepting Christ and it just sounds like a "Thank you for this day" kind of prayer, when he finishes, simply say, "Now did you want to give your life to Jesus? I'm asking because that's not what you talked to Him about. So, if you want to accept Christ, why don't we pray again and this time just tell Him what you want Him to do. I can help you too." Then guide him to help him know how to express what he has told you is in his heart. Situations like this don't mean that the person isn't sincere. A lot of times this person has a history of praying but now that he is trying to express his heart, he falls back into what is familiar and comfortable for him.

Leading a Person in a Prayer

Some people are afraid to ask if the person wants to pray their own prayer. After all, what if they don't say the right words...but are there rights words? God is looking at the heart. When I was saved all I remember saying was "Dear Jesus, please forgive me for my sins." Giving your life to Christ isn't about the words you say but what is in your heart and many times we would rather put words in a person's mouth than just to let them share out of the fullness of a heart that desires Christ.

One of the most beautiful prayers I have ever heard was prayed by an ex-convict who simply said, "God, I got nothing to offer you but if you'll take me, I'll come."

A student I once spoke with wanted to talk to God on his own and simply said, "God," then tears came into his eyes and he stopped talking. What should you do? Well, help them out. I simply said, "Just ask God to forgive you...Tell Him that you want Him to save you...and be the Lord of your life..."

Many people, though, especially children prefer to be led in a prayer. A child once told me when I asked him, "But I'm scared to talk to God on my own." Talking to God was a new idea to him and it was scary. Wouldn't you be scared too if you were getting ready to talk to the God of all power, who created the universe, about whom you knew very little and you were getting ready to talk to Him for the first time, knowing that you had done wrong things?

When you lead someone in a prayer, say one short phrase at a time and give them time to say it back to you. But beforehand remind them that they are saying this to God and not to you.

Dear Lord Jesus...Thank you for dying for me...and offering me Heaven... I'm sorry for the wrong things I've done...Please come into my life...and be my Lord and Savior... I give you my life...Thank you for saving me...In Jesus Name, Amen.

Congratulate the New Believer

Example of what to say:

You've just made the greatest decision of your life! The Bible promises that if you are willing to commit your life to Christ, He will save you and give you a brand new life. All the wrong things you've ever done have been wiped away. You're forgiven and the Lord has given you a new beginning with Jesus as your Savior and God as your Heavenly Father.

Encourage this new brother or sister in Christ to let others know what they did. Ask them to call two or three people they think would be excited about their decision.

Begin growing in your new relationship with Christ by:

- Beginning to pray and talk to Jesus as your friend—tell Him about anything in your life.
- Starting to read the Bible in the Gospel of John to get to know Jesus better.
- Following Jesus in baptism, which is a public statement and symbol that you've given your life to Christ.
- Becoming actively involved in a church where people can support you, teach you, and encourage you as you begin the most wonderful relationship you'll ever have—a friendship with God, Himself.

If you are at church when a person accepts Christ, immediately take them to a church leader. This gives that leader an opportunity to reinforce to them the significance and assurance of what they have done.

If you're talking to a child, immediately congratulate him and give him a big high-five. Let him know how proud and happy you are. Then encourage him to continue growing with Jesus, to tell his parents about what he has done. Let him know that if his parents have any questions about what he has done they can call you or the church.

Talking Tip

The list to the left about growing is not a checklist. Don't lay this out as a "now that you're saved I'm going to burden you with 5,000 things that you have to do. Welcome to the Christian life!" These "outward" things are *NOT* the Christian life. They are an overflow of the Christian life. Praying, reading the Bible, going to church, etc. are the externals that are produced by an internal walk with the Lord. The word "religion" in Latin means "back to bondage." This new believer has not been saved to a "religion" but to a relationship. Help him to understand simply that the more you spend time with someone, the better you know them. The same is true with God. Prayer, Scripture, learning about the Lord at church and fellowshiping with other believers helps a person to grow closer to Him. The Christian life is not about squeezing your life into a set of rules; it's about the Rule, Himself, coming to live His life through your uniquenesses.

Not about emotions

When I first began leading people to Christ, when someone would get saved, I used to immediately say, "How do you feel?" I was excited and wanted to know what they were thinking and feeling. Then one day I led a man to Christ and said, "How do you feel?" A strange look came across his face and he said, "Am I supposed to feel something?" Suddenly, I realized that he had only been a believer for 10 seconds before I gave him his first bit of doubt to chew on. People are wired differently; some cry, some shiver, some feel nothing and don't even look excited. But salvation is not about feelings; it's about the fact that Jesus will save anyone who genuinely calls on Him to be their Lord and Savior.

I remember a child accepting Christ and his response was so unmoved that I wondered if he had really meant it. He prayed and then ran off to play as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. But the next day his mother told me about how he was telling everyone at school about what he had done. As he grew I saw how real his decision really was...even though his emotional response was disappointing to me. I learned that I have no right to judge the sincerity of someone's heart based on the loudness of their emotions.

I have no right to judge the sincerity of someone's heart based on the loudness of their emotions.

Important Note about Safety

In today's society it is extremely important that all of our actions remain above reproach and that in all matters we avoid any hint or appearance of evil or compromise. For this reason, *never deal one-on-one with a child, student or person of the opposite sex alone behind closed doors.* You must never place yourself in a situation where your actions could be questioned or accusations could be made without public proof of visibility.

If they say “NO”...

After asking, “Would you like to give your life to Christ?” what if the person says “No”?

Simply ask, “Why Not?”

From this point the conversation can go a hundred different directions, but regardless of their reason, try to help them understand the importance of not waiting to receive Christ.

At the same time, though, don’t be pushy. Try to leave an open door to talk with them again in the future. Also, let them know that they don’t have to be with you or at church to pray and ask Jesus to save them. There is no magic prayer; it’s a matter of the heart. They just have to be willing to pray and ask Jesus to come into their lives, to turn from their sins and to turn to Christ as their Savior and Lord.

If they AREN’T SURE...

Saying, “I don’t know” is the same as saying “No, for now.” Encourage the person to consider why he wouldn’t want to make this decision. *“What do you think is holding you back from wanting Jesus in your life?”*

Sometimes a person may really want to be saved but the idea of surrendering complete control of his life makes him uncertain. On the other hand, sometimes the person is considering if he really is willing to turn from certain, favorite sins. Either way, let him know what he needs to do to be saved and that he can make this decision any time and any place, “even right now,” but explain the importance of not waiting.

Walking away

After speaking with someone about accepting the Lord, never second-guess what you said or did. Don’t give room to thoughts such as, “What if I would have been more clear...” or “What if I would have said this instead...” or “What if it’s my fault he didn’t want Jesus.” Simply trust that God did in that moment what He wanted to do. In other words, *enjoy* your relationship with God and enjoy sharing that relationship with others without the burden and self-condemnation of a world of “what ifs.”

Encourage the person to consider why he wouldn’t want to make this decision. “What do you think is holding you back from wanting Jesus in your life?”

Chapter 4

Scriptures to Memorize

John 3:16

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”

Romans 3:23

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 5:8

“But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”

John 14:6

“Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”

Romans 10:9

“If you will confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Romans 10:13

“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Ephesians 2:8–9

“For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.”

Hebrews 9:27

“And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment...”

Chapter 5

The Stage of Accountability

"Have you ever done anything wrong?" I asked my four-year old son.

"No," he said.

"Never? Never lied or disobeyed?"

"No."

"Then during nap time," I said, recalling an earlier situation, "do you remember when you snuck out of your bed and hid under the desk in the living room?"

"Yes," he said, lowering his eyes.

"Was that wrong?"

"Yes," he mumbled.

"So, have you ever done anything wrong?"

"No," he said, and he believed it.

He was serious. Although he had come to an understanding that some actions are right and some are wrong, he hadn't reached the understanding that HE had done wrong things. This is the stage of accountability, the stage at which an individual comes to the personal understanding that he is a sinner. This is not a term found in the Bible but is a term used to describe the point in life at which a person can distinguish right and wrong and willfully chooses to do wrong. It is at this point that a person becomes accountable for his sins.

Some call this the "Age of Accountability" but "age" seems to imply that it happens at a specific age and it does not. Some children come to this understanding at the age of four or five but others might not reach this stage until they are eight or even older. It's different for each person.

Nevertheless, if a child cannot yet discern right from wrong or doesn't know that he has personally sinned against God, he is not ready to give his life to Christ. Before a person can be saved, he must first understand that he has done wrong things. For this reason, when you are talking with a child, always ask, "Have you ever done anything wrong?" Notice that I didn't ask, "Have you ever sinned?" A child who has not been in church much may not understand the term "sin." I was sharing Christ with a nine-year old at a camp and asked, "Have you ever sinned?" He answered "No."

"Have you ever done anything wrong?" I said. "Oh yeah."

He had answered "No", not because he had never sinned, but because he didn't understand what I was saying. When talking with a child, be careful to avoid "churchy" language.

If you are talking to a child that has not yet reached the stage of accountability, just plant a seed for the future by saying something like:

"You know, Johnny, there will be a time in your life when you do something that's wrong. When that time comes, know that God still loves you and has made a way for you to go to Heaven. And, Johnny, if you ever start thinking about Heaven and how you can go there, come talk to me (or your pastor or Sunday School teachers, or parents if you know they are strong believers.)"

At this time **DO NOT** pray with him that he'll accept Christ when the time is right. Many people do this without realizing that they are dealing with a young child who may only remember that he talked with somebody about Jesus and someone prayed with him. We don't want to do anything that might give him a false assurance in the future.

I was preaching a revival and about twenty people came forward during the invitation at the end of the service. Immediately my eyes went to two small children. As those seeking to know more about Christ were led out of the worship center, I excused myself and turned the service over to the pastor. It was my first time in this church, I didn't know how well trained their leaders were, and I wanted to make sure that nobody just talked to them for a bit and then led them in a prayer. Scooting through the crowd, I intercepted these two kids and sat down with them. They were both five years old.

"So, why did you come down," I asked.
One shrugged. The other said, "Because I love Jesus."
"That's great," I said. "Can I ask you a question?"
"Sure."
"Okay."
"Have you ever done anything wrong?"

They looked offended. Immediately one of them said, "No." The other shook his head.

"So you've never said anything wrong or told a lie or disobeyed your parents."

"No," they both said.

"Well," I said, as was explained above, "I want you to know that there will be a time in your life when you do something that's wrong. When that time comes, know that God still loves you and has made a way for you to go to Heaven. And, if you ever start thinking about Heaven and how you can go there, come talk to your pastor or Sunday School teachers."

Then I gave them both a high five and took them back into the church service.

Think about it
“I Live, but Not I...”

“...I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

--Galatians 2:20

At the Core of the Christian Life

Let's say that I wanted to learn to play tennis. So I looked up the rules of the game and I memorized them all. The next day I stepped onto a tennis court for the first time. The balls came at me one by one but as I hit them they soared into the air, over the fence or into the net. Despite my studying, I wasn't ready. Then let's say that I gathered all the books on tennis that I could and I read them all. Now I'm ready. So, again, I step onto the court. The balls come. I swing. What do you think? Am I ready to play? Of course not. So let's say I decide to hire the best tennis coach in the world. He is a former champion and he tells me all of his stories, all of his strategies and all of his techniques. Surely now I'm ready. But again, despite everything I've done and everything I know, I still can't play. Now, hypothetically, let's say that this champion of a coach could enter inside of me. Now I step onto the court but it's really not me. I swing the racket, but it's not me—it's my coach inside of me. And when I make a great shot, I know who really gets the credit because I'm playing, but it's not me playing. My job now is to rest in the ability of my coach. He does the activity and I make myself available to run when he wants to run and swing when he wants to swing. And I quickly find that when I begin to struggle or get frustrated, it's usually because I have taken control again and am trying to do in my own strength what only my coach can do through me.²

Similarly, many believers have missed what is at the core of the Christian life. In all their “doings” and “servings” and “witnessings” and “studyings”, they have lost sight that the Christian life is about “Christ in me, the

***“For me, living is
Christ and dying is
gain.”
Philippians 1:21***

hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). And that “For me to live *is* Christ” (Phil. 1:21), not just *like* Christ. And that all of the outward activities that many would describe *as* the Christian life are not the Christian life at all but the overflow of that life. Now I no longer read my Bible because someone at church told me to; I read it because out of my relationship with Christ, I have a hunger to know God’s Word. I don’t witness because it’s visitation night, but because I have been with God and to hold it in would be a burning in my bones. All of these externals are a natural overflow of my own relationship with God.

***“God wanted to make known to those among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
Colossians 1:27***

Many believers spend their lives trying to squeeze their lives into a Rule Book. Poor souls! They have missed the heart of what it means to know God: The Rule Book, Himself, has come to live in me. He now lives His life through my uniquenesses. I am in covenant with God. Now I can rest, yes *rest*, in a way that I never could before (Matt. 11:28-30) because I live, but not I, but Christ lives in me. I no longer feel an urge to struggle and strive to climb higher on a ladder towards God or to attain a greater status with God. Instead, I can rest in Him and allow all of my activities to flow out of my relationship with Him.

Why has this been included in a book like this? Because understanding who you are in Christ is one of the most freeing and significant concepts that will ever touch your heart. It will even change how you approach sharing your faith.

Write your thoughts here:

Part 2
Making Home Visits

What would you want guests to be like when visiting your house?

Then treat others the way you would want them to treat you.

The jailer...said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the message of the Lord to him along with everyone in his house...Right away he and all his family were baptized. He brought them up into his house, set a meal before them, and rejoiced because he had believed God with his entire household."

--Acts 16:30-34

Chapter 6

A Variety of Visits

Different kinds of visits

There are several different kinds of visits that can be made. We will go into more detail about these later but consider the ones listed below:

- **Evangelistic Visits**—Evangelistic visits are visits to people whom you are uncertain as to whether or not they have given their lives to Christ. The purpose is to share how God can save them. If someone has recently been a guest at your church but you don't know about their salvation, this is the best place to begin.
- **Follow-Up Visits**—These are follow-up visits to people who have recently made a decision to follow Jesus. There are several purposes here:
 - (1) To help connect them to your church. For this reason the team that visits should be people of a similar age or with common interests, etc.
 - (2) To help them understand what baptism is and its importance in following Christ.
 - (3) To see how they have been doing since they accepted Christ. Have they told anyone? What was their response? Do they have any questions? Do they own a Bible that is easy to understand?
 - (4) To make sure that children who have accepted Christ have told their parents about their decision. This is also a great opportunity to engage unsaved parents in a conversation about what it means to be saved.
- **Sunday School Visits**—The purpose of a Sunday School visit is to reach out to someone who is already connected to your church but who has been inactive or inconsistent in their attendance. “We were dropping by to see how you are doing...we’ve been missing you in Sunday School lately...”

- **Ministry Visits**—The purpose of a ministry visit is to reach out to someone who is in need. For example, you might visit someone who has lost a loved one or who has a family member who has been ill. You might drop by when a family is moving to see if they need any help or to take them a meal.
- **Church-Strengthening Visits**—The purpose of this kind of contact is to strengthen and encourage people who are already actively attending your church. For this kind of visit, people normally prefer to know that you are coming in advance because, since they know and care about you, they might be busy but don't want to be rude about it. If you don't set up these visits in advance, you might greatly inconvenience people without even realizing it.
- **Hospital Visits**—Although this isn't a home visit, it is another form of visitation. A visit to a person in the hospital or their family can have a long-lasting impact.

Different visits, similar situations

Although your purpose for the visits may differ, most home visits have a lot of commonalities. The following chapters will walk you through the basics of making a home visit. The key in each kind of visit is for you to genuinely care about the person whom you are visiting. Whether this is an evangelistic visit or a visit to someone who has been missing church lately, they need to see in you Christ's sincere compassion and love. Also, always remember your purpose. Whatever your reason for being there, make the most of every opportunity to reach, teach, share and meet needs in any way possible.

Chapter 7

Preparing for a Home Visit

How to dress

Dress nicely but casually. Most unchurched people you visit will not connect with a suit and tie and this will many times unwittingly communicate to them that this is how they need to dress too to be involved in your church.

Also, dress for the weather. I didn't always follow this suggestion. I used to wear short sleeves and no jacket on the coldest visitation days. My hope was that someone would invite us in because they would see that I was cold. In the 80's this happened quite often. These days most people just comment that you shouldn't be out in "this kind of weather without a jacket," but they don't invite you in. This does, however, give you a feel for how cold the person you are speaking with might be if they come to the door on a cold day but not dressed to be outside.

Who to visit

Everyone likes to be around people like themselves. In making home visits, you can share the Gospel with anyone, no matter what the differences, but you will always connect better with people like you. What do you do? What are your interests? What do you have in common?

But beyond this, you will connect best with people you already know. Who do you know in your everyday life whom you can visit?

Where to visit

You will save a lot of time by mapping out your visits beforehand. Even if you are assigned several visits, taking a few minutes in the car to organize them according to location can save trips back and forth across town. You might also consider making your visit and then going door-to-door to the houses next to it. This way you will make about three times the number of visits in the same amount of time.

You will connect best with people you already know. Who do you know in your everyday life whom you can visit?

What to take

Don't carry a big Bible with you. It can be intimidating. Also, don't carry a lot with you, just what you need for the kind of visit that you are making.

Make sure that you always have:

- **A Bible.** A small New Testament can easily fit in your pocket.
- **Tracts.** Even if you are visiting a believer you never know who else might be in the house or whom you might pass on the sidewalk on your way up to the house.
- **Church information.** This information needs to be convenient to carry and not cluttered with unnecessary information. Also, it is a great outreach to include a free meal coupon as well.

What will happen on your visit is more spiritual than physical and more about what you can't see than what you can.

Pray

When you get in the car, take a moment to pray. What will happen on your visit is more spiritual than physical and more about what you can't see than what you can. Commit your words and ways to the Lord, follow His leadership, and let God move how only He can.

Take a mint

This may sound silly, but have you ever talked up-close with someone who had bad breath. If so, then you know that this can be a big obstacle to some people. Taking a mint is simply a precaution to make sure that everything with your visit goes as smooth as possible.

Now, not to make this a bigger issue than it is, also be wise in what kind of mint you choose—the smaller the better. I once popped a mint on my way to a visit and didn't realize that it hadn't dissolved as quickly as I had anticipated. After ringing the doorbell, I realized that my mouth was so full that I would be fortunate to be able to say hello. I quickly chewed it up which inflamed my sinuses with a quick peppermint rush. A moment later the person I came to visit opened the door to me, a man coughing and sputtering with tears in his eyes. Before I even greeted them, they asked if I was okay. I now prefer Tic-Tacs.

And notice, this says, “take a mint,” not get a piece of gum. Don’t chew gum while visiting. It’s a distraction for many.

Who will talk?

In the car you should always decide who will be the “talker.” This doesn’t mean that everyone stays silent. Everyone can talk, but make sure you know who is going to take the lead. Then everyone else needs to stay on purpose. Even though you might be having a great conversation, great talk is not the point of your being there. Know who is going to greet the person, introduce your team and let them know what church you are from. Also, know who is planning to share the Gospel. Sometimes in the middle of a visit, this will change. If you are going to visit a man but a woman answers the door, as the conversation proceeds, it makes sense for a woman to take the lead. Be open to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and have a plan, but also be flexible.

Learn the information

Who are you visiting? What is the spouse’s name? What are the names of their kids? What grades are they in? Did any of them have a birthday last week? You never know who you will meet, so be ready to meet and talk to them all. Never overlook the children. Sometimes it is for them that the Lord has prepared this time. What else do you know about the family? Is there anything you know that will help your team connect more closely with them? Learn your information before you find yourself on the doorstep and don’t take the information with you. In today’s society people are rightfully concerned about the amount of personal information that is published about them. The last thing you want is for someone to ask, “What is that?” Then as they see it, here come the questions: “Who else sees this?” “This has my address, phone number and children’s names on it?” “What’s to stop a person from using this to put my kids in harm’s way?” “Are these shredded when you’re finished with them?” “How do you dispose of them?” And so forth...you get the idea.

Never overlook the children. Sometimes it is for them that the Lord has prepared this time.

Chapter 8

Arriving at the House

Parking

If possible, park in the street, not the driveway, then walk to the house. If your visit is during the daytime, avoid parking in front of mailboxes.

Approaching it

Approach the house quietly. Don't make a lot of noise. The first sign of you being there should be the doorbell. Be careful not to comment on the upkeep of the lawn or the house. Say nothing negative and avoid walking on the lawn. Some people will even ask you or tell you not to walk on their grass, and it makes for a bad first impression when a team tramples down someone's precious lawn. I once walked across a very nice lawn. I was going door-to-door and just didn't feel like walking back out to the street again. But I chose the wrong lawn to walk across. Before I even reached the porch an older man was yelling at me, who was now standing in the middle of his yard, "To get the (cuss word) off his lawn." And amazingly he didn't want to hear anything I had to say about my Savior. I had already offended him.

Observing it

As you walk towards the house, what does it tell you about the family that lives there? Is there evidence of children—i.e., toys, bikes? Can you see a swing-set in the backyard? Is there evidence of older children—a basketball goal, multiple cars in the driveway, skateboards, etc.? Are there shoes on the porch? What do these tell you about the family? Are there packages or mail on the porch? Could they be out of town? Are there several days of newspapers? This doesn't necessarily mean that they are out of town; perhaps they just enter and exit a different way. Are there any animals around? Is anything displayed that might tell you the family's favorite team, a flag, a sticker about the kind of dog they love, etc. Do you see beer cans or cigarettes anywhere?

Be aware of your surroundings

Beyond observing what the house and property tell you about the people who live there, also be aware of

As you walk towards the house, what does it tell you about the family that lives there?

anything that could be a distraction or anything that could pose a danger. Is there a dog nearby? Are children playing out front? Is there enough room on the porch for everybody on your team? Once I was visiting a house that had a small porch. I had stepped back all the way to the edge, lost my balance and the owner of the house opened the door just in time to see me fall three feet into the bushes behind. Not the best way to begin a visit.

“No Soliciting”

If the sign says, “No Soliciting,” it was probably put there because the people don’t want visitors. True, you are not selling anything, but that really doesn’t matter at most of these houses. So, if you feel led by the Lord, go ahead and knock. If not, then why not jot down the address and when you get back, write a letter that simply says, *“Dear Friend, you don’t know me but I came by your house the other day. My name is (your name) and I’m from (church name), but when I noticed your “No Soliciting” sign, I wanted to make sure that I respected your privacy. And, yet, I didn’t want to pass you by without telling you that Jesus loves you. He changed my life and I’m enclosing some information that tells you about how you can know Him too. If you have any questions, please feel free to give me a call...”* Then enclose a Gospel tract and a small business card that contains your church information and worship times.

“Beware of Dog”

From time to time you’ll encounter a house that has a fenced front yard. When you see one of these, first look for a “Beware of Dog” sign. If you don’t see one, always look for a dog before entering. As a pastor I was going door-to-door and came across a fenced front yard. It did have a “Beware of Dog” sign but I couldn’t see a dog anywhere. So, thinking that this was just a way of keeping people out, I entered. I was cautious, of course, but there was no dog in sight. Little did I know that there was a crawl space beneath the porch. As I stepped on it, the dog and I had an encounter that, to this day, I believe took several years off of both of our lives.

Keeping an open eye and an attitude of prayer

As you are visiting, realize that there might be a bigger picture to where you are going than just the house you are visiting. Be aware of people walking on the sidewalk, taking a break from mowing their lawn next door, or just sitting on their porch. All of these present great opportunities for you to take a few moments to share Jesus with someone else.

As you are visiting, realize that there might be a bigger picture to where you are going than just the house you are visiting.

Chapter 9

On the Porch

Where do I stand?

How will the door open? Whoever is taking the lead needs to stand where they will not be speaking through a screen or glass door. It is also always good to put the lady or ladies of the team up front. They are less threatening, especially if you have more than one man on your team.

Knocking

First ring the doorbell and as you do, listen. It would be a shame to miss a visit because of a broken doorbell. After ringing the doorbell, if you couldn't hear anything, wait a moment and then gently but firmly knock on the door. If there is a glass door, you might want to gently push on it, to make your knock sound more firm and more likely to be heard. However, regardless of your temptation, don't pound on the door but knock loud enough to be heard.

After knocking, take a step back. Be sure that you are not standing uncomfortably close when a person answers the door.

Body Language

After knocking, be conscious of your body language. How are you standing? Avoid crossing your arms. This communicates a wall between you and the person to whom you are speaking. Put a smile on your face, and keep your hands out of your pockets. I have known people who wouldn't answer the door if someone had their hands in their pockets because they didn't know what the person might be hiding.

If you are a man and a woman answers the door, slightly shift your weight backwards. This kind of body language is non-threatening and can help to alleviate fears concerning your intentions.

Also, watch the body language of the person answering the door. What does their body language communicate to you? Determining whether or not the person is willing to engage in a conversation will, in part, determine how you handle the visit. For example, if a

person doesn't open the door all the way, but just sticks their head around it, you know that they don't have any intention of talking long. If their interest shifts, so will their body language. They will open the door wider and step into it instead of peeking around it. In other words, if you know you don't have long, remember your purpose and get to it quickly and at least try to get a tract in the door. Watching their body language will tell you whether they are chatty, bothered, open, and so forth. Also watch for changes in their facial expressions and body language when you mention where you are from and when you mention Jesus. I know a man that physically takes a step back anytime I bring up church. He folds his arms and looks down. His body language completely closes off, but not as much when I talk about Jesus. Although he has never opened up about anything, I'm guessing that he has had a bad experience with church and that his bad feelings are more connected with church than with Christ.

Introductions

A great way to introduce yourself is to immediately state where you are from and then to tell the first name of everyone in your group. For example, "Hello, we're from First Baptist Church. I'm Joel, this is Sarah and this is Katie."

If you are visiting in an area between two towns that both have churches by the same names, be sure to designate which one you are with.

Talking on the porch

Many of your visits will never go beyond the porch. Even if the person you are visiting is willing to talk, some people just don't ask you in and that's okay. Many people accept Christ without you ever entering the living room. But also realize that a visit on the porch will be shorter, so use your time wisely. On the porch most people will expect you to get to the point of your visit quite quickly.

Chapter 10

Entering the House

Entering

When someone invites you into their house, remember the following tips:

- Smile
- Always be polite
- Be friendly
- Never mention anything of any unpleasant nature.
- Greet everyone in the room, including the children.
- Talk about them...not you. Forget yourself. This visit isn't about you. Completely invest yourself in this family and their interests.
- Don't acknowledge an apology for the condition of the house. For example, if someone says, "Sorry about the mess..." Don't answer by saying, "That's okay. I've seen worse." or "You ought to see my place." or "Don't worry about it. It's the middle of the week." All of these answers acknowledge, "Yes, this is a mess..." Instead, if you can, try to shift the conversation to something you see that is nice. But be genuine and sincere. There is no place for deception and manipulative flattery in sharing Christ.
- If you need to use the restroom, wait until you leave and stop somewhere else.
- Never go into a room alone with a child.
- Don't get so caught up in talking about common interests that you neglect your real purpose for being there.
- Don't wait too long to move the conversation to spiritual interests.
- Don't ask about church if this is an evangelistic visit. Who cares about church if this person doesn't know Christ? Begin with what matters—their relationship with the Lord. You also don't want them to ever get the idea that belonging to a church and becoming a Christian are the same.

Positioning yourself for the right situation

If you are invited into the house, as you enter the living room be wise about where you will sit. If this is an evangelistic visit and you are the praying or "silent" partner and are probably not the one who will be sharing the Plan of Salvation, then sit in a single chair. Avoid sitting on the couch. This increases the

likelihood that the person you are visiting and your partner who will be sharing will both be on the couch. This makes the conversation of sharing the Gospel much easier.

Nevertheless, if you are not sitting next to the person with whom you will be sharing, when you begin to show them the Plan of Salvation, move next to them where they can see. If they are sitting in a single chair, say, “This will show you what the Bible says about how God made a way for us to go to Heaven,” and move over to kneel next to them—not so close that it’s uncomfortable, but close enough for them to see well.

Remember, you are not the reason that you are here.

Conversations

As you enter a person’s house you will see a number of conversation starters. You will immediately be able to distinguish interests, hobbies, styles and more. Some visitation programs give you acrostics to remember that deal with where the person works, what the person likes, the person’s family, and such, but instead of remembering key points of interest, just remember: People like to talk about themselves. Engage the person you are visiting by asking them questions about themselves and their family and use the hints about their life that you can see in their house. “I see you have a nice gun collection. Do you like hunting?” “I see that you have a lot of antiques, do you collect them? Which is your favorite?”

Be careful, though. People like to talk about themselves, and so do the people on your team. Resist the urge to go on and on about yourself and experiences that you’ve had. For example, if you see that the person you’re visiting likes fishing, talk to them about *their* fishing experiences, not all the great stories that you might have. Carry on a conversation with them but don’t shift the conversation away from them. Remember, *you* are not the reason that you are here.

Shifting the conversation

There are several ways to shift a conversation to spiritual matters, depending on the purpose of your visit. If this is an evangelistic visit, you can simply ask, “*Can I tell you about the greatest thing that ever happened to me?*” This will lead directly into your salvation story.

Other questions to shift the conversation for an evangelistic visit might be:

- “In your opinion, what do you think it takes for a person to go to Heaven?”
- “Do you ever give much thought to spiritual things?”
- “What do you think Man’s greatest spiritual need is?”

If this is a visit where you don’t know about the salvation of the person with whom you are sharing, do NOT ask anything along the lines of, “So where do you go to church?”

Remember, at this point, you’re not talking about church; you’re talking about salvation. Stay on track with your purpose, which is to discover where this person is in his relationship with God.

Also, direct your question to the person that you feel is the most interested in what you have to say.

Follow your gut

When someone invites you into his house, if something inside you says, “I don’t need to go in this house,” then don’t. Follow your instincts and listen to how God might be nudging you. Then if they offer for you to come in, and you don’t feel safe or you just don’t feel right about it, gently decline. “I’m sorry, but we can’t stay long...” or “I appreciate that, but we were just dropping by real quick to say...” and then continue with the conversation.

Chapter 11

Facing Obstacles

Overcoming obstacles

When you step onto a porch to share Jesus, understand that there is a bigger picture of what is happening than what you can see with your eyes. You are involved in a spiritual war, trying to bring people who have been blinded by Satan from darkness into light. Expect obstacles to come your way. Some of these you can control and work around or even ignore; some you can't.

Some obstacles can be ignored

Once I was sharing Jesus with a teenager. We were both sitting on the couch. I shared the gospel with him and as I asked him if he wanted to trust Jesus as his Lord and Savior, suddenly from nowhere a small dog ran into the room. It jumped across my lap, leaving a wet streak of urine across my legs. The dog didn't urinate anywhere else and it was the only time he entered the room, just as I asked if he wanted to give his life to Christ. I glanced down, didn't say a word about it and just continued on. He said, "Yes", and he prayed to trust Christ. Some obstacles, like this one, can simply be ignored.

Some obstacles can be worked around

If something becomes, or might become, a distraction, try to remove it or work around it. For example, the partners who are not talking can run interference for many family distractions.

- **Children**

If children are in the room, engage them in conversation, in a game, an illusion, in making a balloon animal, or a coloring sheet that you just happen to have with you, etc. In whatever way you can, engage them. If you are talking on the porch, what could you play with them in the front yard. Could you play catch or tag? What other toys might be nearby?

Look for a way to gently remove them from distracting, but also be careful. Never go with a child alone into a room and never give a child something

“Regarding them: the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

2 Corinthians 4:4

without first asking the parent. “Can I make a balloon animal for your son?” “Would it be all right to give your child a Bible coloring page and some crayons?” Then, if you can, move away from the conversation but still where the parent can see you for the activity you have chosen.

Realize also that perhaps sharing with the children is the reason that you are there. If possible, and they are of an appropriate age, look for an opportunity to share your salvation story and the Plan of Salvation with them.

- **Dogs**

If a dog is in the room, pet it, play with it, and distract it. Try to keep it calm. I remember having an hour-long visit with a family once. A dog was in the room the whole time and one of my partners kept it happily content by rubbing its ears and scratching its head while we talked about the Lord. After we came back to the car, I found out that she was allergic to dogs. She sneezed for a while, but not once during our visit with the family. In fact, her allergies didn’t even bother her until we left.

On another occasion my partner and I were walking up to a house and a big dog came around the corner and began barking. My partner quietly said, “Stop in the name of Jesus and do not distract.” The dog immediately stopped barking, stepped behind a tree and whimpered. Then the dog remained there while we talked on the porch. Only as we began to leave, did he start to wander away.

- **Loud TVs**

If you enter a house and the TV is playing loudly, simply say, “If we caught you during your favorite show, we can come back another time.” By drawing attention to the TV in this discreet way, many people will say, “No, this isn’t our favorite show, reach for the remote and turn it off.” And if it is their favorite show, coming back later might be a good idea.

Then, if they don’t turn the volume down and it is distractingly loud, talk quietly. Usually within a few moments they will either turn it down or turn it off.

- **People who answer for others**

On more than one occasion I have been on a visit, sitting in the living room with a mom and her teenager, where the mom answered every question that we asked her daughter. “So what do you think it takes for a person to go to Heaven?” we would ask. “Well I think...” the mom would answer. On one of these occasions, after the mom had answered several questions, my partner spoke up. “Could I have a glass of water?” Now think about it. If a guest is in your house and asks for a glass of water, are you going to say, “Sure, the cups are in the cabinet on the left, second shelf up,” or are you going to take them into the kitchen and get a glass for them?

The mom happily went to the kitchen. My partner followed behind, accepted the water and quickly began a conversation. They could still see us from the kitchen but they were now out of our conversation. For forty-five minutes he distracted her by talking about anything and everything while I had the opportunity to lead the daughter to Christ. We called the mom back into the living room and shared with her what had happened. She was thrilled. She was already a Christian and had wanted the same for her daughter. She never realized, though, that her bubbly involvement was making it hard for us to share with her daughter.

Let the Lord deal with not only the distractions you can overcome or work around but the ones you can't as well.

Some obstacles can't be controlled

Satan has very good timing. You will notice that often phones will ring as you get ready to ask people if they want Jesus in their lives. Friends or relatives will drop by, family members will come home and bring a new presence into the living room—all sorts of distractions can occur over which you have no control. When these things happen, be patient and commit yourself to prayer. Let the Lord deal with not only the distractions you can overcome or work around but the ones you can't as well. He wants people to be saved more than you ever could.

Duties of the “silent” partner

Remember, “silent” partner doesn't imply that this person doesn't speak; only that this person isn't the main talker in sharing the gospel. This partner needs

to keep an attitude of prayer, to be mindful of anything that could distract, and ready to step in and “run interference.” That means being ready to pet a dog, play with a child, ask for a glass of water, and all the while looking for opportunities to share Jesus with other members of the family as well.

Nobody is home

If nobody answers the door, leave a brief note and whatever information is appropriate for the purpose of your visit. For example, if you are making an evangelistic visit or are going door-to-door, what is your main purpose? To share the gospel, so obviously you would want to leave a tract along with some basic church information. If you are making a visit to a student to invite him to camp, you would want to leave information about camp. If you are making a Sunday School visit, you would want to leave information about Sunday School and worship. The information you leave should be appropriate for the purpose of your visit.

Simply roll up the information and slide it in the door handle or carefully slide it into the crack of the door. Always try to avoid opening a glass door and never put information inside a mailbox. If a mailbox on the porch has a clip on the outside, you can clip it there but it is against postal laws to put anything inside a mailbox that was not delivered by the US Postal Service.

Chapter 12

After Leaving

Debriefing the Visit

No visit is a wasted visit. Use each one as a learning opportunity. When you get back to the car, talk about what happened, what you saw, what you could have done differently.

Ask questions such as:

- What did you learn?
- How did this affect you?
- What can we do different if something similar happens?

As the leader of a team, explain why you did or didn't do certain things. Also, explain why you said what you did and why you approached the conversation the way you did.

Write down what happened

Drive around the block so that you're not sitting in front of the person's house, and then write down what happened.

- Record the date
- Write down specific information about your visit. Write down their interests, where they work, the ages of their children, the names of other family members, and whatever else you might discover in your conversation with them. Write in detail what you discovered about them spiritually. Did they share a genuine salvation experience? What did you talk about? Do you have any suggestions for the next team's visit? If they weren't home, did you leave a note or any information?
- Be sure to write down the names of the people on your visitation team in case anyone has questions or needs clarification about your visit.

Turn in your record

Be sure to turn in your record from each visit.

Follow-up postcard

When you are finished visiting for the night, take a few moments to write postcards to the people with whom you visited. See the samples below for more ideas:

Sample #1

Dear [Name],

I just wanted you to know how much we enjoyed our visit with you tonight. I hope you have a great week.

Jesus Lives!

[Your Names]

[Your Church Name]

Sample #2

Dear [Name],

We really enjoyed our conversation with you this evening and we will continue to pray for [prayer request]. Thank you for your time. Please let us know if you ever need anything.

Jesus Lives!

[Your Names]

[Your Church Name]

These samples are just for ideas. Be as personal as you can in your postcards. For example, if they are big University of Arkansas fans and you are too, then feel free to write, "It's always great to meet a fellow Razorback." In other words, be short but not stiff with your words.

Also, be sure to correctly address the card, using the person's name, and put it where it will be mailed quickly.

End with prayer

You began the night with prayer, now end the night with prayer. Pray specifically for the people you met and the people that might not have been home but they are getting home to find the information and tracts that you left. Commit everything that happened to the Lord and leave it with Him. Remember, one may plant, others may water, but God gives the increase.

"So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."

1 Corinthians 3:7

Chapter 13

Follow-Up Visits

Following-up on someone you led to Christ

It's a great joy to visit someone whom you have led to Christ. Try to talk with them within the first 24 hours just to ask, "How was your first day with Jesus?" Don't be afraid of what they might tell you. For example, a person I had led to Christ within one week told me, "I don't think it took."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, I keep doing some of the same wrong things I did before and I can't stand it."

"Really," I said, "so did you enjoy doing these things before you gave your life to Christ?"

"Yes," he said, "but now they drive me crazy."

"Don't you see what has changed? Before you gave your life to Christ you enjoyed doing these things. Now you can't stand them. That's because you're saved and you have the Holy Spirit inside you now. That's the reason that you don't feel the same way about your sins."

This person thought he had evidence that he hadn't been saved. On the contrary, his attitude change toward his sins were evidence of his salvation.

During your follow-up visit:

- Ask about the people they have told about their decision and what the responses were.
- Make sure they have a Bible that is easy to understand.
- Encourage them to start reading in the Gospel of John. This is a great way for a new believer to get to know Jesus.
- Talk about the importance of baptism and what it means for a person to be baptized. (For more information, see page 100.)
- Offer to meet them at church and sit with them. Even go so far as to offer to take them to eat after church.
- Ask if there is a time when you could get together to talk about what it means to follow Jesus. After the first meeting, ask if they would be interested in

meeting regularly. Obviously you should never do this with anyone of the opposite sex, but this is your opportunity to disciple this new believer.

- If you are following-up on a child or a student, ask to talk to the parents. Explain to them their child's decision. Let them know that your church always wants parents to know everything going on with their children. Ask if they have any questions about their child's decision. Then initiate a conversation about the parents' relationship with Christ. A follow-up visit for a child or student is many times an evangelistic visit for the parents.

As exciting as leading someone to the Lord is, this is only the beginning.

Just the beginning

As exciting as leading someone to the Lord is, this is only the beginning. You now have an opportunity to invest your life in them, to teach them what it means to follow Jesus and to help them move from being a baby believer to a reproducer who is actively sharing their faith and teaching others how to follow Christ as well. Walk with this person as far as they will let you in helping them to know and follow Jesus. Sometimes God will raise up another believer to fill this role, in which case, continue to encourage them and to pray for them.

Also, don't be dismayed if at first they don't understand the importance of going to church or being baptized. It may take an unchurched person some time to understand the significance of these. Be patient, pray for them and continue to encourage them. Don't give up on them and don't doubt the genuineness of their decision. Their salvation experience is a matter of the heart and the realness of it can only be discerned by God. I knew a person once that made a decision and was baptized three years later. It took him that long to understand its importance.

Disciples, not decisions

Our goal is disciples, not decisions. In the Great Commission, Jesus told us to go and "make disciples" (Matt. 28:19). When people trust Jesus as the Lord and Savior of their lives, they are born again. As spiritual babies, they need someone to nurture them, to teach them and to help them learn to walk in a daily relationship with God. Too many times we help people make decisions but then leave them to run off to try to reach someone else. And there's nothing "wrong" with

this as long as we don't "give birth" and then leave them on the street without anyone to watch over them. If you don't feel led to disciple the person, then you need to find someone else who can and on your follow-up visit, take them with you to help begin their connection.

Be careful, though, that you don't rob yourself of the rewards that come from not only leading someone to Christ but teaching them to be a disciple and watching as they lead others to Christ and invest themselves in those disciples as well. When I first began in ministry, I used to say that no joy, outside your own salvation, so compared to leading another to Christ. Later I changed my mind and began to say that nothing gave greater joy than to watch someone you led to Christ lead someone else to Christ. Now, after years of ministry, I have changed my mind again. Nothing compares to the joy of watching someone you've disciplined make disciples of their own.

Following-up on someone you don't know

Sometimes, especially after large events where a number of people gave their lives to Christ, you will find yourself visiting someone who was recently saved but whom you have never met. Don't let this make you nervous.

Begin by telling them where you are from, who you are and that you are excited that they recently accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Then ask if they have any questions about what they did. If you're talking with children or students, ask if they have told their parents. "How did your parents respond when you told them?" Finally, ask if you can talk with them more about what it means to know Jesus. Follow the same suggestions for this conversation as you would in following-up on someone you led to Christ. (See page 68.)

Chapter 14

Making Sunday School Visits

The Purpose

The aim of a Sunday School visit is to reach out to someone who is already connected to your church but who has been inactive or inconsistent in their attendance. More specifically, there is a two-fold purpose: (1) To express to them that you miss them and (2) To find out what can be done to help them return.

For all Sunday School members we recommend the *1-2-3 Contact System* which is simply:

- *Contact 1—On the first missed Sunday*, send them a short, hand-written card. Something like, “Just a note to say we missed you this Sunday. Hope you have a great week.”
- *Contact 2—On the second consecutively missed Sunday*, give them a phone call. “I was just checking on you to make sure that everything is okay... We’ve missed you the last two Sundays.”
- *Contact 3—On the third consecutively missed Sunday*, pay them a visit. “We just wanted to drop by to see how you are doing... we’ve been missing you in Sunday School the past few weeks...”

Nobody should ever miss three Sundays in a row without a personal contact. I knew a person who was very active in church. Her family went through some rough times and she missed church for several months. Not once during that time did she ever get a personal contact from the congregation to which she belonged. She later said something along the lines of, “It proved to me that they really didn’t care about me because if they did, would they really have let months go by without even saying a word? I realized that they really didn’t even care if I was there or not.”

People may attend a church for five or six weeks because of a great preacher, a dynamic service, or something else that excites them. But what keeps

Nobody should ever miss three Sundays in a row without a personal contact.

Story

There is a story from long ago, whether true or not, I do not know. But as the story goes, in the old days a man had stopped attending church. After a few weeks, the preacher came for a visit. They greeted one another and the preacher sat down in his living room, next to the fire, which was burning low. They sat quietly for a while. Then the preacher stood up, picked up the poker and stirred the coals. “Sometimes,” he said, “the coals cool off and just need to be stirred a little.” Then he bid the man a good night and left. The following Sunday the man returned to church. As he left he thanked the preacher for the visit and for stirring his coals again.⁴

them coming back is relationship. If a person never forms genuine relationships in their church or class, they will eventually stop attending. During a Sunday School visit, you always want to look for ways to reestablish the relationships. If your class is having a special fellowship or get-together, this is a great opportunity to try to reconnect to absentees.

If a person never forms genuine relationships in their church or class, they will eventually stop attending.

Chapter 15

Making Ministry Visits

The Purpose

The purpose of a ministry visit is to reach out to someone who is in need. This could include a visit to someone who has lost a loved one or has a family member who has been ill. You might drop by when a family is moving to see if they need any help or to take them a meal.

God created us for fellowship and at the heart of true fellowship is the expression of God's kind of love. Let your ministry visits be an extension of the compassion that so often moved Jesus.

The scope of ministry visits is so broad that it is hard to have very many specific suggestions, but consider the following helpful tips:

- During ministry visits, do more listening than talking.
- Sometimes the best thing you can do is to just sit silently with someone who is hurting.
- Avoid trying to fix other people's problems but never hesitate to offer them biblical advice.
- Let God touch your heart. This isn't just another visit. This is someone's life.

The most important key in making ministry visits is to not let them pass you by. Most of them come quickly and unexpectedly and they are never on anyone's schedule. Others last long periods of time, especially as someone is recovering. In these, be patient and careful that you don't grow weary in doing good.

Sometimes the best thing you can do is to just sit silently with someone who is hurting.

Story

I once sat for an hour with a young man who had lost a loved one. I don't think I said more than a few sentences: Basically, "I'm so sorry for your loss. Would it be all right if I just sat with you for a while?" And he only said one word: "Okay." It was one of the most appropriate and best conversations I've ever had during a ministry visit.

Chapter 16 Church-Strengthening Visits

the people's

The Purpose

The purpose of this kind of contact is to strengthen and encourage people who are already actively attending your church. For instance, these visits would include:

- Appreciation visits—a time to drop by an appreciation card or just stop by and say “Thank you” in person.
- Prayer visits—a time to find out what is going on in a person's life and how you can be praying for them.
- Accountability visits—the kind of visits where you confront people about sin or warn them about dangers you see in their lives. I remember visiting a 15-year old girl with her youth minister. She was a leader in their youth group who had begun dating a guy whose intentions were obviously wrong. We visited her to warn her about what her youth minister knew about this young man and to talk with her about the dangers we perceived. These kinds of visits are always a little uncomfortable but if you see a person heading down the wrong road and don't warn them, how have you showed them the love of God? She was offended, of course. She didn't want to hear what we had to say, but she also said she understood that we were just trying to keep her safe.

Confronting people about issues in their lives is not about their response as much as it is about your faithfulness in doing what is right. The prophet Nathan confronted King David and David responded correctly. He repented of his sin (2 Samuel 12:13). But Nathan had no guarantee that he would respond this way. Most people don't respond favorably, especially when you first bring up issues in which they know they are wrong. Throughout the Old Testament the prophets confronted kings and nations, most of the time without success...or was it *with* success. That depends on your definition. The world, judging by

If you see a person heading down the wrong road and don't warn them, how have you showed them the love of God?

responses, would say that these prophets were failures. But God has a different scoreboard. His measure of success is faithfulness. Was Noah successful, even after 120 years of preaching without a single person coming to repentance? Of course he was.

The young lady in the above story didn't listen to our advice, continued dating the young man and a year later was pregnant. She compounded a first mistake by a second and married the young man who continually abused her in a variety of ways. I saw her in a department store three years after our visit at her house. She was now eighteen with a year and half old baby and recently divorced. She said, "I've ruined my life."

Sometimes it takes time and sometimes even a pain experience to change a person's ways. Even if they reject your warning or your attempt to bring them back into a right relationship with God, continue to pray for them. Continue to be faithful and commit them into God's hands.

Make an appointment

Finally, for these kinds of visits, people normally prefer to know that you are coming in advance because, since they know and care about you, they might be busy but don't want to be rude about it. If you don't set up these visits in advance, you might greatly inconvenience people without even realizing it.

God has a different scoreboard. His measure of success is faithfulness.

A Parable

The story goes that a man heard from the Lord and the Lord told him to push a large stone. In faithfulness, day after day, he pushed the stone as hard as he could. From the early morning to the sunset, he pushed and pushed. He gave his all to push. But as the years passed he began to grow frustrated. He had pushed for years but the stone had not moved one inch. In agony he apologized to God, to which the Lord responded: "My faithful son, I told you to push the rock, not to move it." Many times we measure our success by the results while God, many times, measures success by faithfulness.³

Chapter 17

Making Hospital Visits

Before You Go

- Check the hospital to make sure that the person you are planning to visit is still there before you leave.
- Write down the name of person you are visiting and the room number.
- Learn the names of their immediate family. Look up pictures if you can, just in case you pass them in the waiting room.
- Never make hospital visits while you are sick, even if you think you're not contagious. This is for the safety of both you and the person you are visiting.
- Pray for guidance and direction. You never know what might happen while you are at the hospital.

Jesus said, "...I was sick, and you took care of Me...I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me."
Matthew 25:36, 40

Arriving at the Hospital

Hospitals can be confusing, from the parking lot to the hallways. Ask for directions. As soon as you arrive, find a help desk and find out where you need to go.

At the door

- Always knock. If the door is shut, do NOT open it. You have no idea what might be happening in the room and you might be walking into a very embarrassing situation for both you and the person you are visiting.
- If the door is open, knock gently as you enter.
- Don't interrupt a doctor who is talking with the family. If you arrive while the doctor is in the room, quietly wait outside until he is finished.
- Always follow the rules posted in the room, such as wearing gloves or masks.
- A sign that reads no visitors applies to everyone, friends and ministers alike.

In the Room

- Smile.
- Make eye contact
- Introduce yourself if you're not sure the patient or his family knows who you are.
- Do more listening than talking.
- Don't have a "gloom and doom" demeanor, even if the situation is bad.

- Be sensitive to the needs and feelings of the individual or family.
- Listen for the Holy Spirit's guidance.
- Look for ways to encourage the individual or family.
- Keep your visit short—about 5 to 15 minutes unless the patient or family asks you to stay longer.
- Avoid sitting down. Not only does this usually make it hard for the patient to see you, it also helps you to keep the visit short.
- Remember that you are not a doctor. Don't add your medical opinion to the situation.
- Look for ways to help the family but be genuine. If you're really not willing to bring food by for the family, don't offer it. If you don't have someone ready to watch the kids at the home so that grandma can come up to the hospital too, then don't offer it. If you don't really mean, "If you need anything, please let me know." then don't say it.
- Ask for permission to pray for the individual and their family. Ask, "May I pray for you before I go?"
- Keep your hands away from your mouth and eyes to avoid spreading germs and wash your hands before you leave the hospital.

If the person is sleeping

If the person is sleeping or is out of the room for tests, then just pray for him quietly and leave a note. If you don't have a pen and paper, you can usually get some from the nurse's station.

Chapter 18

Talking to Person X

Who is Person X?

In mathematics “X” is commonly used to refer to a specific number that you don’t know. Person X is simply a person that you don’t know. This might be a one-time encounter, sitting next to someone on an airplane. Or it might be an occasional encounter such as the greeter at Wal-Mart whom you see every week or so. Either way, this is someone that you see in passing. You don’t have a relationship with them and don’t even know their names, unless you take the time to find out.

We all pass hundreds of Person Xs every day. You won’t always have time to present the Plan of Salvation to them. Sometimes you just cross paths for a few minutes. Sometimes your journey puts you on the same course a little longer. Either way, you can always plant seeds with Person X and look for and create the opportunities to share the love of Christ with them. This chapter is devoted to tools you can use to reach out to the thousands of Person Xs in your world.

My Jerusalem

We live in an isolated society. Even neighbors sometimes have almost no relationship. We might wave as we pull into the garage, but for the most part the days of chatting over the fence with one another are gone. Yet a whole world of evangelism lies, literally, right in our own backyards. Okay, not exactly *in* our backyard, but on either side of the fence. In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Being a witness began where they were, in Jerusalem, then it progressively spread outward. How many of us go visiting in other neighborhoods but have never even gone next door?

Here are some suggestions for reaching your Jerusalem:

- Invite your neighbors to a cookout. Pray before you eat and look for opportunities to build a relationship with your neighbors and if the

How many of us go visiting in other neighborhoods but have never even gone next door?

Story

A preacher once told me of a woman who had been assigned, during visitation, to go see one of her neighbors. She respectfully declined. When asked the reason, she admitted, “I can’t go tell them about Jesus. They know me too well.”

opportunity arises, share with them your salvation story.

- Take them a holiday treat around Christmas time with a tract or a card that explains why Christmas is so important to you. For example, “...and I hope your family has a Merry Christmas. The reason that Christmas is so important to me is because it represents the greatest thing that ever happened to me. You see...(continue with your salvation testimony).”
- Take them an invitation to your church’s Christmas or Easter special and offer to take them out to eat afterwards.
- Look for ways to help them. If you see they need a ladder, offer them one. If you see they need their lawn mowed, in a kind way, offer to do it for them; etc. Be genuine. This isn’t just a gimmick to get them to listen to you. Truly share with them God’s love in action.
- Have a block party at your house.
- Be sure you live your faith at home as well as at church and everywhere else you go.

Door-to-Door Evangelism

Notice that this says, “Door-to-Door Evangelism,” not “Door-to-Door Visits.” Since you don’t know about the salvation of the Person Xs who will be answering the doors, every door-to-door visit begins as an evangelistic one. Sometimes they turn into ministry visits, but your first aim is to discover whether or not this person is a believer.

Furthermore, all of the same tips and rules apply to door-to-door evangelism as to any other kind of home visit.

Finally, what seems to make many uncomfortable about visiting door-to-door is that they feel that they really don’t have a reason to be on their porch, but they do. It doesn’t matter that this family hasn’t come to church or that you haven’t had any previous contact with them. They still need Jesus, just like everyone else.

So, to help you feel more comfortable, here are a few suggestions that give you a reason to knock on their doors:

It doesn’t matter that this family hasn’t come to church or that you haven’t had any previous contact with them. They still need Jesus, just like everyone else.

Story

When I was in college, I often went door-to-door in our community. When I first began, having not had much training, I would introduce myself and simply ask, “Are you a Christian?” “Yes,” the first person said. “Yes,” came the second. “Yes,” said the third. After about ten of these, I decided that this was either the most Christian street I had ever been on or they weren’t understanding what I meant. So I decided to go a step further. At the next house I introduced myself and asked, “Are you a Christian?” “Absolutely,” the reply came. “So you know for sure that you’re going to Heaven.” “Uh,” he paused, “I have no idea.” You will find that many people consider themselves Christians, but it doesn’t mean that they really know Jesus. Always seek to find out *how* a person came to know Christ. Many will give you the wrong answer. For more information on what to do, see chapter 3.

- Deliver information about an upcoming event at your church. “We’re from First Baptist Church. I’m Joe. This is Jim and Nancy and we wanted to give you an invitation to our church’s Christmas special...Also, while we’re here, can I take a minute to tell you about the greatest thing that ever happened to me?”
- Take a survey to help your church be more effective in helping to meet the needs of your community. “We’re from First Baptist Church. I’m Joe. This is Jim and Nancy and we were wondering if you have a couple of minutes to help us with a quick survey to help our church be more effective in helping our community. “Then, of course, the last question of the survey can be a key question (page 22) to find out where this person is in relationship with Christ.

There is no place for deception or manipulation in sharing Jesus.

When taking surveys like this, however, you need to be very careful about your motive. Are you really gathering information to help your church be better in the community or is this just a gimmick to get to the last question? Are you really being honest about your intentions or are you just trying to create a smoke-screen for sharing the gospel.

Once I was participating in a community-wide survey. A kind man opened the door. He willingly answered all the questions, but when he heard the last question, his face changed. “You don’t really care about all my other answers, do you?” he said. “You’ve just been baiting me and wasting my time because all you really wanted to do was to get to this question.”

There is no place for deception or manipulation in sharing Jesus. If you don’t have an interest in their answers for how your church can be better in the community, then don’t use these just to create an evangelistic opportunity. There are better ways.

- Ask if there is anything for which you can pray. “We’re from First Baptist Church. I’m Joe. This is Jim and Nancy and we wanted to see if there is anything for which we can be praying for you.” Many people will answer, “No thanks” or “Not really” or “Everything’s okay right now.” If they answer as such, then simply say, “Well, before we

go, may I briefly share with you the greatest thing that ever happened to me?" If they agree, share with them your salvation story.

Some people, when asked what you can pray for, will immediately share a need. Others will break down crying and open up to you about the current crisis in their lives. Listen to them, but remember, the first step in helping anyone is to share with them how they can have a personal relationship with Christ. Pray for them but don't neglect to talk with them about salvation. Then after you leave, continue to pray for them. Send them a postcard that says something such as, "Thank you for sharing with us about your sister's surgery. We're praying for you. Let us know if we can help in any way." Then in a couple of weeks, drop back by again and see how things are going.

Even if they were resistant to hear about Christ, your genuine care will build a relationship with them that can be the first step in leading them to the Lord.

Using Tracts

A tract is a small pamphlet that shares the Gospel. It's an easy and fun way to witness, but here's an amazing fact: God will never lead you to give out a tract if you don't already have one with you. I began carrying tracts with me everywhere not long after Jesus changed my life as a teenager. It's primarily seed-planting but from time to time, someone will get saved because of what they read and if you don't put a contact number (such as your church phone) on the back of them, you may never know the impact they had until you get to eternity.

There are various kinds of tracts: Cartoon tracts, tracts that target students, tracts that target adults, tracts that are intended to start people to thinking about eternity, tracts that present the entire Plan of Salvation and more. A great place to preview tracts is through the American Tract Society at ATStracts.org.

Also, always read a tract before you give it out. You want to always make sure that you agree with it.

God will never lead you to give out a tract if you don't already have one with you.

Story

Not long after I began carrying tracts, I was getting ready to mow the lawn and I had a strange urge to put a tract in my pocket. "But," I rationalized to myself, "why would I need a tract mowing the lawn. It'll only get sweaty and be ruined." So I didn't take one. A little later, as I was mowing in the front yard, I turned around to see a man getting out of his car. He needed directions. I helped him and then, out of habit, I reached to get a tract but none was there. He turned, reentered his car and drove away. I had missed my chance. I prayed for him that God would send someone else to share with him but I also learned a valuable lesson. If I have an urge to take or give a tract, don't hesitate. Windows of opportunity open and close in a matter of seconds.

What kind of tracts should I carry?

Carry tracts for what seems appropriate to the people you pass everyday. I usually carry some that target students and some that target adults and sometimes I'll carry a few Spanish tracts. I don't know much Spanish but you don't have to speak the language to hand it to them. Or, if you want, you can always simply say, "Es para Usted. Es gratis," meaning, "This is for you" (Es para Usted) and "It's free" (Es gratis).

Suggestions for using tracts

- Mark your church name and contact information on the back.
- Hand one to the cashier every time you checkout.
- If you come across someone whom you have already given a tract, ask him what he thought about it. If he didn't read it, offer him another one or offer him a different kind.
- Ask God to highlight people to you and when you feel the urge, simply pull one out and say, "I would like to give this to you."
- Put one inside each bill you mail each month. *(Important: You cannot use "Postage Paid" envelopes just to mail a tract. This costs the business who pays the postage money and is considered by the postal service to be an unlawful use of the envelope.)*
- Slip a tract inside offensive books when you see them.
- Leave one with your tip for your waiter or waitress. Notice, this said, "Leave one *with* your tip," not *as* your tip. Of course, if you do this, leave a good tip and make sure that you were a good customer.
- Take one that has a key question on the front such as, "Do you know for sure that you're going to Heaven?" or "If you stood before God right now and He asked why He should let you into Heaven, what would you say?" Then set it up on the mirror of a busily trafficked bathroom. A lot of people will read that one line throughout the day. Probably none will take the tract but it will plant the thought in the minds of many and at the end of the day, someone has to remove it. Maybe they'll read it too. God is so awesome, He could even tear the trash bag open to let the custodian find it.
- Be creative and have fun throwing out gospel seeds wherever you go.

Windows of Opportunity

When you feel led to pass a tract to someone, train yourself to act without hesitating, without questioning and without weighing out all the “what ifs.” Windows of opportunity to hand out tracts open and close as quickly as a toll booth worker saying, “Have a nice day” and handing you your receipt. Once I was going up an escalator and as I looked up, I noticed a man coming down. In my heart the Lord nudged me to give him a tract. As we passed I said, “Here you go,” and passed it across. He took it and was looking at it as I reached the top and turned away. Even a second in the hands of a big God can change someone’s eternity.

*Train yourself to act
without hesitating,
without questioning
and without
weighing out all the
“what ifs.”*

Part 3

Sharing in a Decision Room

A man in the 1970s walked forward during a revival and as he and his wife walked through the counseling area, he saw smiles and tears of joy on so many faces. Not exactly understanding what it was all about, he quietly turned to his wife and said, “I don’t know what they’re smoking, but I want some of it.” That day both he and his wife were introduced to Jesus Christ.⁵

When a person comes forward to speak with someone about their relationship with Jesus or in need of help or prayer, you, as the leader speaking with them, become a first-face for Christ. What an honor!

Chapter 19

Doings in the Decision Room

Now before you skip this chapter as “but that’s not what I do,” be aware that you never know when you might be put in a situation where people at church want to talk to someone about making a decision for Jesus. I believe that everyone who is trained to visit and to share Jesus should also be trained to help people at church when they want to know the Lord as well. This just makes good sense. You never know how God might want to use you the next time you drive to a worship service.

Not long ago I was sharing with a group of preteens. It had been a regular Wednesday evening but right in the middle of my discussion with them, I suddenly had the urge that I needed to give an invitation. I hadn’t planned on doing this. In fact, I had never before given an invitation with our older children on a Wednesday evening. This was a nudge from the Holy Spirit. So I had them bow their heads and simply asked if any of them wanted to talk to someone. Five responded. We weren’t set-up for an invitation. We didn’t have sponsors standing by to talk with them. This was spontaneous. God sometimes interrupts our plans because His plans are bigger. And even though we hadn’t trained for this moment, we had trained people ready to speak with them and several accepted Christ that night.

All this to say: Always be ready. This is the reason that this chapter has been included. It also includes information on dealing with assurance of salvation, a topic that sometimes comes up during home visits as well.

Always be ready.

Story

We were leading a revival in a small town in Oklahoma. A certain older lady, who had attended the church for years, sat on the second row on the left-hand side. She had attended every evening faithfully. On the youth emphasis night a flood of students came forward, more in fact than the total church attendance the previous Sunday. We were in desperate need of people to talk with them. My wife turned to this kind, older lady and asked, “Would you be willing to talk to someone.” “No,” she said sadly. “I wouldn’t know what to do,” and sat down.

Chapter 20

Decision Room Tips

- Prepare your heart and be in an attitude of prayer.
- Rely on the Holy Spirit to guide your conversation.
- Try to sit facing each other and away from distractions.
- Take a mint for fresh breath.
- Smile as you greet them and introduce yourself.
- Ask why they came forward during the invitation. Never assume that you already know.
- Try to talk one-on-one. However, if you are talking to more than one person, first find out from each of them the reason that they came and what they want to talk about. Many times, if they both have the same need (such as salvation), you might be able to address both at the same time. If not, then ask one of them to just listen while you talk with the other person first. Salvation issues always take first priority. “In just a moment I’m going to talk with you about the reason you came because I want to be able to give you my full attention. But first let me talk with (name) about the reason he came.”
- Ask for help if you encounter something you don’t know how to handle.
- Be mindful of the stage of accountability for younger children. See chapter 5 for more information.
- Fill out a decision card for each person with whom you speak. If none are available, always be sure to get their contact information (name, address, phone, email) and be sure to list what decision they have made or why they came forward during the invitation.
- When you are finished, take them to talk to another leader. Any time a person makes a decision at church, always take them to someone else to share about the decision they have made. This gives

the other leader a chance to affirm and encourage them.

Ask why they came forward during the invitation. Never assume that you already know.

- Never go into a room alone with a person of the opposite sex or a child. Stay in view of others as you talk and never speak with anyone behind a closed door, completely out of the view of others. Always avoid any hint of suspicion or appearance of evil.
- Avoid referring to the leaders in the decision room as “counselors.” This term, for many, carries the weight of someone who has been professionally trained and has a counseling degree. Try to refer to your leaders as sponsors, encouragers, or another term that fits your church or event.

Never go into a room alone with a person of the opposite sex or a child.

Chapter 21

Assurance of Salvation

Sometimes during visitation or in a decision room, you will encounter someone who will say that they aren't sure they are going to Heaven, but they will also be able to share with you a specific time when they prayed to ask Jesus into their lives. There are several things that can cause a person to doubt their salvation.

List below if you have experienced a time when you doubted your salvation and what helped you the most.

- **The person wasn't genuine in their decision**

From time to time someone will doubt their salvation because they are aware that their motive in being saved was wrong. Recently a preteen told me, "I know my parents think I'm saved but the only reason I really did it was because my friends did. I know I didn't mean it." Sometimes people make a decision because they knew it would make someone happy or because they felt pressured. Many times, if a person is truly not saved, they will know they aren't saved and why. Other times, you might meet someone who says they don't think they are saved but they just don't know why. We'll deal with this later on in this chapter.

- **Sin**

God didn't save you just to go to Heaven. You were saved and created to have a right relationship with God. When a person is not right with God, when they sin and remain in their sin, it can lead them to "feel" unsaved because their relationship with Christ has been severed. Yes, they are still saved, but they are not in right fellowship with the Lord. 1 John 1:9, which was written to believers, says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- **Unforgiveness**

While preaching a revival in Indiana, a man came forward during the invitation. We talked and he prayed to receive Jesus. The next night, during the invitation, he again came forward. "I'm just not sure I meant it," he said. We talked about how God is true to his Word and how nothing can take a person out of God's hands. The third night, I looked

up and here he came again, walking down the aisle. “I’m just not sure I’m saved,” he said, tears in his eyes. Immediately I asked, “Who in your life have you not forgiven?” He froze and just stared at me for a minute. Then he whispered, “My brother.” We talked about his brother and about what true forgiveness is.

Many people misunderstand forgiveness. Forgiveness is not saying that what the person did to you is okay or that it wasn’t that bad; it’s not sweeping the situation under the rug. Forgiveness acknowledges sin for just what it is—sin. True forgiveness, in essence, says, “What you did was wrong—I know it, you know it and God knows it, but I am not God to sit on His throne and to pronounce judgment against you. Therefore, I give you into the hands of the One who judges righteously for Him to deal with you as He sees fit. I release you into His hands and leave you with Him.”

Furthermore, the forgiveness of deep wounds is many times a process and not just a one-time decision. Sometimes with the mention of a name, a glance at the person, or even a smell, the entire emotion of what happened comes rushing back at you. Forgive again...and again...and again, if you must, and keep forgiving. This doesn’t mean that you didn’t already forgive them; it just means that you need to commit them once again into the Lord’s hands and continue to do so as long as the pain remains or as often as you are reminded of it.

When a person has done something wrong and asks you to forgive them and you do, they sometimes expect that everything will return to the way it was before. Forgiveness doesn’t equal an absence of consequences. Is it okay to forgive someone but also to decide that you don’t want to be around them anymore? Absolutely. The person who hurt you will probably say, “But I thought you forgave me.” “I did, but this isn’t about forgiveness. This is about consequences.” To be clearer, I once knew of a 15-year old girl who molested her 8-year old neighbor whom she was babysitting. Both families were Christian families and both were devastated by what happened. The child’s family forgave the

True forgiveness says, “What you did was wrong—I know it, you know it and God knows it, but I am not God to sit on His throne and to pronounce judgment against you. Therefore, I give you into the hands of the One who judges righteously for Him to deal with you as He sees fit. I release you into His hands and leave you with Him.”

“When reviled, He [Jesus] did not revile in return; when suffering, he did not threaten, but committed Himself to the One who judges justly.”
1 Peter 2:23

work out. I have encountered a number of people who have told me that “nailing down” their salvation experience only caused them greater doubts in the future because they never really worked through the real issues. It was a Band-aid solution, a temporary fix and in some cases it just gave them another experience to look back on and question... “Did I mean it the first time I did it or the first time I nailed it down, or the second time, or the third...” and so forth.

Sometimes God might lead you to pray with them again but be very sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes you need to encourage them with what the Bible says but let them work it out. Especially help them to understand that *being* saved is not about *feeling* saved. Our faith doesn't follow our feelings; our feelings follow our faith. We know what God has told us concerning how to be saved. By faith we accept this and our feelings should never contradict what we know in God's Word is true. Help them understand this and that God doesn't want them left in a state of confusion and doubt. Then let them wrestle with the Lord and let Him move in their hearts to bring His full peace and assurance that they truly do belong to Him. This might not be a quick experience. Sometimes this is a process of the person working out their own salvation before God. But when a person comes out the opposite side of this valley, they will understand God and their own salvation in a new way.

Readings for Assurance

The book of 1 John is a great place for a person who has struggled with, or is struggling with, assurance to read and meditate.

Chapter 22

Assurance of Salvation Verses and Illustrations

Verses and Illustrations

The following verses and illustration can be adapted and shared with people of all ages but are especially good in working with children and students and are written in this manner. Every time a child accepts Christ at our church, the person who led him to the Lord will take him to another leader who will immediately talk with him about what he did, what that means to him and will then walk him through one or more of the following illustrations. Part of the purpose for this is to help him understand that just because he is now saved, this doesn't mean that he won't ever do anything wrong again. From the very beginning we want him to know this as well as what to do when he sins and what that means to his relationship with God.

1. John 10:28-29

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (NAS).

Point

Nothing can take you out of God's hands.

Illustration

Put a piece of paper in one hand and close your fist around it. Tell the student that just like the piece of paper is in your hand, when he asked Jesus into his life, he was placed in Jesus' hand.

Ask the student: Can you pull my hand open and snatch the paper out? Let the student try. Then tell him that he is in Jesus' hand, (*showing the paper in your fist*) and that Jesus is in God's hand. Now place your other hand over the fist and tightly clench them. Tell the student to try to pull your hands open. Will it be harder? Sure it will... "But if someone came in who was stronger than me, they could get it out. But

nobody is stronger than God. God is greater than all and since He is greater than all, no one is able to take you out of His hands.”

2. Romans 8:38-39

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (NAS).

Point

Nothing in all of creation – not even you – can separate you from God. He loves you and will never let go of you.

Illustration

Ask the student to reach out and clasp arms with you. *(Reach beyond his hand and hold onto his arm and instruct him to do the same to you.)*

SAY: When you gave your life to Jesus, you were like this *(referring to your hold on one another.)* Now let’s say you do something wrong and for a moment you let go of God. *(Ask the student to let go of your arm, but you keep holding on.)* Will God ever let go of you? No, God will never let go of you. Once you are a part of His family, you are forever a part of His family.

3. John 3:3 – *Jesus replied, “I assure you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”*

Point

Once you’re born, you can’t be unborn. Once you are a part of a family, nothing you do can remove you from being a part of that family.

Illustration

Let’s say you and I are brothers. One day I’m walking down the hall and out of nowhere, you jump from the woodwork and punch me in the nose. Are we still brothers? Of course. Just because you did something wrong didn’t change our family. The same is true with God. When you trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you became a part of God’s family. Now if you do something wrong, like the brothers, are you still a part of the same family. Of course. But, if we were brothers

and you punched me in the nose, would we be right with each other? No. So what would you need to do for us to get right? Say you're sorry. It's similar with God and us. As a Christian, when you do something wrong, you still ask God to forgive you. You're asking Him to forgive you, NOT to go to Heaven—you're already going there; NOT to be saved—you're already saved; you're already a part of His family, but so you can be in a right relationship with Him. God didn't just save you to go to Heaven; God saved you to walk with you here and now.

Caution

If you ever mention that God is a person's Heavenly Father, especially a child's, be careful to clarify what kind of "Father" He is. If a person has been abused by an earthly father, he may have a severe misconception of what a Heavenly Father might be like and how this new Heavenly Father might treat him.

4. Romans 10:9, 13 – *“That if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved...For who ever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (NAS).*

Point

God said that He would save you if you called on Him and trust Him as the Lord of your life. Have you done this? Yes. Can God lie? No. God promised if you would give your life to Him, He would save you. So if you have given your life to Christ, did He save you? Absolutely.

Chapter 23

Explaining Baptism to a Child

When talking to a child, be very careful to draw a distinct line between salvation and baptism. Keep these two topics very separate.

Below are some illustrations to help you explain baptism on a child's level.

Ring Illustration

SAY: On my finger I have a wedding ring. What does this ring tell you about me? *(That you're married.)* That's right. This ring tells everyone that I'm married, but what if I take it off, am I still married? Absolutely. This ring doesn't marry me; it just tells everyone that I've already been married. In the same way, baptism doesn't save you; it just tells the world that you've already been saved. This ring is a symbol that I'm married and baptism is a symbol that Jesus has saved you.

Baptism as a picture

Explain to children how baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Put your arm straight in the air. "Here's Jesus." Then lay your arm back. "Jesus died for you and was buried." Raise your arm back up. "And three days later He rose from the dead. Baptism is a picture of what Jesus did and of what He has done in your life now." Put your arm straight in the air again. "Let's say that this is you. When you gave your life to Jesus, you died to yourself." Lean your arm back. "...so that Jesus could take your sins away and raise you to a new life." Bring your arm back up again.

***"Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a new way of life."
Romans 6:4***

Part 4
Weekly Thoughts

To inspire a passion for lost souls

This chapter contains twenty devotions that will challenge you to deepen your desire to see lost people come to Christ. As you read this section, spend time examining your heart to see what the Lord desires to do in you and through you.

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.”
--Luke 19:10

Just One More

Read

From a sermon by R. A. Torrey:

I never think of our responsibility for being soul winners without thinking of an incident that occurred many years ago in Evanston, Illinois. There Northwestern University is located. Years ago, before it had attained to the dignity of a university, two strong, husky farmer boys came to the college to study—Ed and Will Spencer. Ed was a famous swimmer. Early one morning word came to the college that north of Evanston, between Evanston and Winnetka, there was a wreck a little way off the shore of Lake Michigan. Ed, with the other students and people of the town, hurried northward along the shore toward the wreck. As he ran along a low bluff, he saw a man clinging to the wreckage trying to make the shore. He threw off his superfluous garments, sprang into the lake and swam out, caught hold of the man and the wreckage and made toward shore. He was struck in the head by wreckage, and the blood from the wound filled his eyes so he could not see, but he succeeded in bringing the man to shore.

Going on a little further, he saw another man clinging to wreckage trying to make the shore. This time he took the precaution to tie a rope around his waist and throw the end to the fellow-students on the shore, and sprang into the lake and swam out, grasped the drowning man, gave the signal, and was pulled ashore. Again and again he sprang into the lake and swam out to rescue some who were drowning, until he had succeeded in bringing a fifth, a

sixth, a seventh, an eighth, a ninth and a tenth safe to shore.

By now he was completely exhausted. His companions had made a fire of logs upon the shore, for the morning was cold and raw. He walked over to the fire, so weak that he could hardly stand and stood trying to get a little warmth into his shivering body.

After standing there a few moments he turned, looked out over the lake again and saw another man trying to make the shore. He cried to his companions, "Boys, I am going in again." "No, no, Ed," they cried, "Your strength is all gone. You cannot save him. You will only be throwing your own life away. It will be suicide." "I will try, anyway," he cried.

Again he sprang into the lake and swam out and grasped a drowning man and was pulled to shore. And again and again and again and again, until he had brought an eleventh, a twelfth, a thirteenth, a fourteenth and a fifteenth safe to shore.

Then his strength seemed entirely gone. He tottered across the beach to the fire and stood beside it so pale and haggard and emaciated that it seemed as if the hand of death was already upon him. After standing by the fire a few moments he turned and looked out over the lake. In the distance he saw a spar drifting toward a point. To drift around meant certain death. Looking again and seeing a man's head above the spar, he cried, "There is a man trying to save his life!" He looked again and saw a woman's head beside the man's. "Boys," he cried, "there is a man trying to save his wife. I'll help him." "No, no!" they cried; "your strength is

all gone. It will be suicide. You cannot help him." "I'll try," he cried.

He sprang again into Lake Michigan and swam out to the spar. Summoning all his fast-dying strength, he put his hands upon it and brought it around the right side of the point to safety.

Then they pulled him in through the breakers; tender hands lifted him from the shore, carried him to his room in the college, and laid him upon his bed apparently unconscious. A fire was built in the grate, and his brother sat in front of the grate to watch developments.

He had been sitting there awhile, looking into the fire and thinking of his brother's bravery, when suddenly he heard a footfall behind him and felt a touch upon his shoulder. Looking up, he saw his brother looking down wistfully into his eyes. "Will," he said, "did I do my best?"

"Why, Ed," Will replied, "you saved seventeen."

He said, "I know it; I know it; but I was afraid I did not do my very best. Will, do you think that I did my very best?"

His brother took him back to bed. During the night he tossed in a semi-delirium. His thought was not about the seventeen whom he had saved, but on the many who went down that day to an early grave. For in spite of his bravery and that of others, many perished that day.

His brother Will, as he sat by the bed, held his hand and tried to calm him. He said, "Ed, you saved seventeen."

"I know it; I know it," he cried, "but, oh, if I could only have saved just one more!"

We all stand beside a stormy sea today—the sea of life. There are wrecks everywhere. Young men, young women, older men, older women are

going down, not to a watery grave but to a hopeless eternity. They are going down all over America. They are going down all over England. They are going down in China and Japan and India. Oh, let us jump in again and again and again and rescue the perishing! And when at last every ounce of strength is gone and we sink utterly exhausted on the shore, let us cry in the earnestness of our desire to save the perishing, "Oh, if I could only have saved just one more!"⁶

Reflect

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:19-20) (NAS)

Respond

If you were to die today, what would you take to Heaven with you? Money can't go, social status can't go, houses and cars can't go, but the people you've led to Christ can. When was the last time you personally, one-on-one, led someone to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Opportunities surround us if only we open our eyes and say, "I am willing."

Write your thoughts here:

If I Believed What You Say...

Read

Charlie Peace was a criminal. Laws of God or man curbed him not. Finally the law caught up with him and he was condemned to death. On the fatal morning in Armley Jail, Leeds, England, he was taken on the death-walk. Before him went the prison chaplain, routinely and sleepily reading some Bible verses. The criminal touched the preacher and asked what he was reading. "The Consolations of Religion," was the reply. Charlie Peace was shocked at the way he professionally read about hell. Could a man be so unmoved under the very shadow of the scaffold as to lead a fellow-human there and yet, dry-eyed, read of a pit that has no bottom into which this fellow must fall? Could this preacher believe the words that there is an eternal fire that never consumes its victims, and yet slide over the phrase without a tremor? Is a man human at all who can say with no tears, "You will be eternally dying and yet never know the relief that death brings"? All this was too much for Charlie Peace. So he preached. Listen to his on-the-eve-of-hell sermon.

"Sir," addressing the preacher, "if I believed what you and the church of God say that you believe, even if England were covered with broken glass from coast to coast, I would walk over it, if need be, on hands and knees and think it worth while living, just to save one soul from an eternal hell like that!"⁸

Reflect

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:11-15) (NAS)

Respond

Write your thoughts here:

Remember

“I still, from my armchair, preach in great revivals. I still vision hundreds walking the aisles to accept Christ. I still feel hot tears for the lost . . . I want no Christmas without a burden for lost souls, a message for sinners, a heart to bring in the lost. May food be tasteless, music a discord, Christmas a farce if I forget the dying millions; if this fire in my bones does not still flame. Not till I die or not till Jesus comes will I ever be eased from this burden, these tears, this toil to save souls.”

*John R. Rice, age 85
(Part of a 1980 Christmas letter
dictated few days before his death) ⁹*

A Call From Below

Read

Taken from a message preached by Jack Hyles:

My father was an alcoholic. He is buried tonight in a drunkard's grave in Italy, Texas. My father heard me preach two sermons, one on Sunday morning and one on Sunday night, New Year's Day, 1949.

New Year's Eve I got burdened for my dad. So I got in my car in Marshall, Texas, and drove 150 miles to Dallas to the Hunt Saloon where my dad was a bartender and a drunk...My dad was sitting at the bar drinking beer. He was a big man, weighing 235 pound, and the strongest man I ever knew.

I said, "Dad, this is Saturday night, New Year's Eve, 1949. I am going to take you back today to Marshall, Texas, to hear me preach tomorrow."

My dad cursed me. "I'm not going to go and hear any preacher preach."

"Dad, you weigh 235 pounds, and I weigh a little over half that. But we are going to have a brawl here in this bar, or you are going to go with me to Marshall, Texas."

He realized that I meant business. I gave him enough coffee to sober him up a bit; then we got in the car and I took him to Marshall, Texas. On New Year's Eve, 1949, my father went on our watch night service with us. We got on buses and rode around town and sang songs and had a wonderful time. We came back to church and prayed the old year out and the new year in.

Sunday was on New Year's Day that year. I stood to preach, and my dad sat on the fourth row from the front. The invitation time came, and he clawed the pew in conviction. I pleaded for him to come, but he would not.

That afternoon we went for a walk out in the pasture. I put my arms around his shoulder and said, "Dad, I want to see you be a Christian more than I want anything in the world. Dad, will you not be saved?"

My dad opened the joybells of Heaven when he said, "Son, I am going to get saved. I am going to go back to Dallas and sell out. I am *going* to move to Marshall. I am going to buy me a little fruit stand or a small grocery store and set up a little business here. I am going to get saved in the spring and let you baptize me."

I said, "Dad, that is wonderful! That is good enough for me."

I wish I could relive that afternoon. I wish I had a chance to try again. I thought he had plenty of time. He was only 62. I clapped my hands. The last word my dad said when he got out of the car on Washington Street in Dallas, Texas, was, "Son, I am going to let you baptize me in the spring."

Every time I baptized that winter, I heard him say, "Son, I am going to let you baptize me in the spring."

On May 3, 1950, about ten o'clock in the morning, my telephone rang. The operator said, "Reverend Jack Hyles?"

"This is Brother Hyles."

"Go ahead, sir."

A man's voice said, "My name is Smith. Reverend Hyles, I worked with your dad. We hung dry wall together. He was up on a sawhorse this morning hanging dry wall on the ceiling, and he just a few minutes ago dropped dead with a heart attack."

I didn't say anything. I just put the phone down.

“Son, I am going to let you baptize me in the spring.”

I got in my car and drove back to Dallas, Texas, to the O’Neil Funeral Home.

My dad was buried in Italy, Texas.

Several months passed. One Sunday night past midnight there came a knock on the door of my study. I went to the door, and my only sister was at the door weeping. “Earlyne, is it Mother?”

“No, Jack. Would you tell me how to be saved?”

“Sure I will.” And I told my only sister how to be saved, and she was saved in my study about one o’clock in the morning.

After she got saved I said, “Earlyne, why tonight? You could have been saved anytime through these years. Why did you choose tonight, and why did you come so late at night to get saved?”

She said, “Jack, you know that I was daddy’s pet.”

“That is right.”

“Daddy did not care much for you, Jack, but he loved me very much.”

“That is right, Sister.”

“Jack, when dad died, I thought I would die too. I couldn’t sleep at night. I lost weight. I cried almost every waking hour. I had a dream shortly after he died. I dreamed that I was taken into a big building, about like this, by a heavenly creature up to the second floor of that building. I was taken to a corner. There I saw a casket. I looked in. The corpse had a look of peace on its face. There was a casket next to that. In that casket was a corpse. That corpse had a look of peace on its face. And the next and the next and the next. The entire wall was lined with caskets, and in each was a corpse. And on each face a look of peace. The same thing across that wall and across this wall.”

She said, “Jack, we got to the last casket, and the heavenly creature said, “You can’t look in that one.”

“I said, ‘I must. I have to look at all of them.’ The creature said, ‘No, you can’t look in that one.’”

She said, “Jack, I saw two hands raise themselves above the casket. They were daddy’s hands. Jack, daddy was saying, ‘Sister! Sister! Sister!’

“I broke away from the creature and went over and looked in daddy’s face. Jack, his face was writhing in pain, and daddy was saying. ‘Sister! Sister! I—I—I—ju—j—bu—bu—I—I—Sister, Sister!’ I said, ‘Daddy, what is it? Tell me!’ He said, ‘Sister, Sister!, I—I—I—eh—B—je—je—be—, Sister, Sister!’”

She said, “Jack, the creature took me then, but I knew what daddy was saying. When I heard you preach tonight on the rich man in Hell who said to go tell my five brothers not to come here, I knew that daddy was telling me not to come to Hell where he was.”

And now for these twenty-four and a half years, the thing that has motivated my life and my ministry has been the fact that somewhere in the torments of the unprepared, my daddy says, “Jack, tell them *all* not to come here. Tell them *all*! Tell them *all*! Tell them *all*!”¹⁰

Reflect

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he

Knock Again

Read

A fellow was giving out tracts. He would knock on a door; and when the people came to the door, he would smile, hand them a tract and say, "I would be very grateful if you would read this," then knock on the next door and the next and the next.

He came to one house; when he knocked, nobody came to the door. He knocked again; nobody came. He knocked a third time; nobody home. So he put the tract in the screen door and walked away.

But something compelled him. It seemed that the Spirit of God said *Don't go off this porch! Go back up there and knock again.* He felt silly, but he walked back and knocked again. Still no answer. As he started to walk away this time, the feeling came stronger. So he went back and knocked again.

This time the door suddenly opened, and there was a man standing there saying, "WHAT DO YOU WANT?!"

He was shaking when he handed the man the tract. "Sir, would you please read this?"

The man snatched it out of his hand and slammed the door.

He walked off the porch unnerved. It took him two or three houses before he got his composure back. Then he finished that block and another block and went home.

His name, address and phone number were on the bottom of each tract.

Late that evening the phone rang. "Sir, are you the man who was giving

out the little papers over in a certain area today?"

"Yes, I was."

"Is it possible for you to come by and talk with me?"

"Sure. Give me the address."

He copied down the address and quickly made his way over there. It was the same house where he had knocked several times!

The fellow said, "Come in. I want to show you something." He took him up in the attic. The man said, "I was getting nervous for sure then!" There in the attic, on the rafters, hung a rope with a noose; and a basket was sitting right under the noose. He didn't know what to think about it.

The fellow said, "This afternoon I heard your first knock. I was standing on that basket with that rope around my neck, planning to end it all. When I heard you knock a second time, I thought, *I'll wait just a moment; and when the man goes away, I'll jump.* You knocked a third time. Then it got quiet. I was ready to jump when I heard you knock again! I figured I had better go see who it was. After you gave me that tract, I sat down and read it in its entirety. I must have read it fifty times this afternoon before calling you. I need what that is talking about." ¹²

Reflect

"The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) (NAS)

The Hitchhiker

Read

On one occasion Dr. Bob Gray got so burdened about winning someone to Christ, he prayed early in the morning that the Lord would give him a soul that day. He had that on his heart as he drove to his early morning radio broadcast. As he got out on the expressway in Jacksonville and headed downtown, he saw a fellow sticking out his thumb. The Spirit of the Lord seemed to say, *There's your man.* So Dr. Gray pulled over and said, "Jump in, fellow. Where are you going?"

"I'm going downtown."

As Dr. Gray started back out on the expressway, he said to him, "I didn't mean, 'Where are you going *today*?' but 'Where are you going when you die?'"

The fellow said, "I haven't thought much about that."

Dr. Gray engaged him in conversation about it. The man listened intently. Then Dr. Gray asked, "Do you mind if I pull off the highway and explain this to you?"

"I'll be glad for you to," he answered.

They did so; and Dr. Gray took out his New Testament, showed him some verses and led right up to the point where he said, "Why don't you bow your head and let's both pray. Then you can receive Christ as your Savior."

The fellow did it. Then as he wiped a little tear out of his eye, he reached into his pocket, pulled out a revolver, laid it on the seat and said, "Sir, as I hitchhiked I had determined that whoever picked me up, I would make him pull off the highway. Then I would kill him and steal his car, dump his body and go on my way to another state. So, if you hadn't talked to me about this, you could have been a dead man by now!" ¹⁷

Reflect

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (Romans 1:16)

Respond

Write your thoughts here:

Remember

Live a life worth sharing; share a life worth living.

The Difference One Moment Can Make

Read

Adapted from a sermon by Hyman J. Appelman:

I had a friend in seminary...One day as he and I drove to our churches in Oklahoma, he told me of his conversion. He told how he was almost driven away from home because of his drunkenness, how he was kicked out of a Christian school in Mississippi, how he became a traveling salesman, how he went from bad to worse.

Then he told me of a night in a hotel room in Vicksburg, Mississippi, recovering from an awful bout of delirium treatments after a terrible period of drunken debauchery. He made up his mind then and there that there was but one more thing for him to do—commit suicide. Starting towards the Vicksburg bridge across the Mississippi, he walked up on the bridge and stood leaning over the railing watching the swelling, dark, muddy waters of the father of rivers.

Reaching into his pocket and taking out his package of cigarettes, he put one in his mouth but couldn't find a match. Perhaps he did not have any or was too hazy to find it.

A man came along. This young fellow of my story stopped him to ask, "Mister, do you have a match?"

"Yes," said the stranger, and gave him a box of matches.

Scratching the match with trembling hands, he tried to light his cigarette. One after another, match after match went out. Finally he succeeded in lighting the cigarette.

The stranger was carefully watching him. After awhile he said to him, "You look kind of sick. Are you?"

"Well, I have been."

"Let's go have a cup of coffee."

Something about the stranger appealed to the man in question. "All right, let's go." In his mind he said to himself, *I can commit suicide anytime.*

After the coffee, the stranger would not let this young fellow go. "Come with me."

"Where?"

"Never mind, just come along. Come on. You can go home after we're through."

They went to church. A revival meeting was going on. The two of them sat in the very back. Somehow, to the befuddled brain of the man in question, there came the story once again of the love of God, of the death of Christ on the cross. Apparently he was impressed, but he made no move.

He went back to his room. He stayed a few more days in Vicksburg to straighten out; then he went home. His people did not seem too glad to receive him.

On Sunday he went to church without saying a word to them. When the preacher gave the invitation, this young fellow walked slowly down the aisle, made a public profession of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then followed the Son of God in baptism. Later the Lord called him to preach, he entered the ministry, became an outstanding religious leader in the United States, leading many people to Christ.

But what if that anonymous stranger on the street had been too busy to notice him? What if he had condemned him for smoking instead of presenting the love of Christ? What if he had not been prepared to give of himself to another? Then this young

How Much Do You Care?

Read

The following story is taken from a sermon preached by the famous evangelist Billy Sunday:

I will never forget one time in a town in Illinois when I was leaving the tent where we were holding meetings. Among those who went out last was a young man to whom I was especially attracted by his keen, bright appearance. I walked down the street with him, and we engaged in conversation. Presently I put to him the inevitable question, "Are you a Christian?"

"No, I am not."

"Father and mother alive?"

"Yes, sir."

"Father a Christian?"

"I don't know; he is a steward in the [local] church."

"Is your mother a Christian?"

"I don't know; she is superintendent of the Sunday School in the same church."

"Have you a brother or a sister?"

"I have a sister."

"Is she a Christian?"

"I don't know; she teaches in the primary department in the Sunday School."

"Do you have family prayer in your home?"

"No, sir."

"Ask the blessing at the table?"

"No, sir."

"Has your father or your mother or your sister ever asked you to be a Christian?"

The tears trickled down his cheeks as he answered, "Mr. Sunday, as long as I can remember, neither my father,

mother nor sister has ever asked me to be a Christian."

Certainly that young man had a right to say, of his own flesh and blood, the mother whose breast he nursed, the father whose name he bore, and the sister he loved, that they didn't care for his soul." ²¹

*We say we care,
But our actions speak louder than
words.
How much do you care that souls are
going to Hell?*

Reflect

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.

*For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,
(Romans 9:1-3) (NKJV)*

The Apostle Paul

Respond

Write your thoughts here:

A Call from Within

Read

From a sermon preached by Jack Hyles in 1974:

I was an introvert when I was a boy. I was still sucking my thumb when I was fourteen. On my 17th birthday I weighed 93 pounds dripping wet and full of bananas. I could not pass public speaking. I was called "Jackie boy." Nobody took me seriously. When God called me to preach, the angels wept and Heaven's flag was flown at half-mast for three days!

One day when I was an older teenager, the chairman of our deacon board, Jesse Cobb, met me after the service on a Sunday morning in the back of the auditorium. Jesse was the best lay soul winner I think I ever met. He said, "Jack, will you do something with me this afternoon?"

"What, Jesse?"

"Will you go soul winning with me this afternoon?"

"Jesse, you know better than that! You know I am a timid introvert. I would not know what to say if I went out soul winning. Jesse, I couldn't do it."

"Jack, I will make you a deal. All you will have to do is to just go with me. I will do the talking. All you will have to do is listen."

Well, since I had a Ph.D. in listening, I said, "Now, let us get this straight. You talk, I listen."

He said, "Well, you may have to say hello."

I said, "I think I can handle that."

So that afternoon for the first time in my life, I went soul winning.

Jesse Cobb and I knocked on the door. A big high school football player, tackle on the Adamson High School football team named Kenneth Florence, came to the door. Kenneth looked down at Jesse and at me. Jesse looked up to Kenneth and said, "Kenneth Florence?"

"Yes, sir."

"My name is Jesse Cobb."

"How do you do, sir?"

"And this is Jack Hyles."

I generated all the extroversion at my disposal and said, "Hello."

"Kenneth, Jack here wants to say a few words to you."

Stuttering, I said, "Kenneth, will you go to church tonight?"

Jesse said Kenneth said, "Yes, I will."

And I said, "You will?"

Kenneth said, "Yes, I will."

I said, "I will come back and get you at seven o'clock tonight."

At seven o'clock that night I went by to get Kenneth Florence. For the first time in my life I knew that God had given me a soul I had to win. I didn't know one single Scripture of the Roman Road. I had never taken a soul-winning course. I had no idea in this world what to do.

The sermon was finished. I put my arm around Kenneth's big, broad shoulders and said, "Kenneth, would...would...wouldn't you like to be saved?"

He said, "Yes, I would."

Remember

When David Livingstone returned from Africa to England for a visit, he recounted some of the hardships which he had endured. Then he added, “The thing that kept me alive, the thing that kept me going, were the words of Jesus, ‘Lo, I am with you always.’”

Yes, in the midst of the fiery trials of life, we are not alone and even though David Livingstone later died on the mission field, he gave his life in service to the Lord. ²⁴

One Verse, One Stanza and a Willing Heart

Read

Paul Bell was our missionary to the Mexicans in Bastrop, Texas. One Saturday afternoon he mingled with the men who came to town at that time. He came in contact with a man in his sixties and found him to be a ready listener to the sweet story of Jesus and His love. Later this man was gloriously converted. He said, "I can't read or write, so I want you to teach me John 3:16. And since my people love to sing, I want you to teach me a gospel song." With painstaking care, Brother Bell taught him John 3:16 and a stanza of the song, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." The man also promised to come to church and be baptized.

Three weeks went by and the man didn't show up. On the fourth Sunday he came and brought with him five other Mexicans. He walked down the aisle with them and said, "We are all here to be baptized." In this brief time, with just a little bit of knowledge, he had led five men to Christ. He lived for two more years. Again and again he would come in and bring someone that he had won to Christ. The total reached about fifty. Then one day somebody came to Brother Bell and said, "An old Mexican woodcutter is dying, and he is calling for you." Brother Bell went out and found the man. "I am so glad to see you," said the woodcutter, "Will you quote my verse for me?" Brother Bell did this and then the man said, "Now will you sing my song for me?" Brother Bell lifted up his voice and sang. He saw the old man's lips moving for a while, then they stopped. At the end of the song, he saw that the soul of the dear old Christian had slipped out to be with his God. But

in two year's time, he had won fifty souls with one verse of Scripture and one stanza of a song.²⁷

Reflect

But 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 1:8)

Respond

Evangelism is one of the purposes God has for you. He created you to shine His life and light to all you meet. How effective do you feel in bringing other people to Christ? In what ways can you grow stronger in this area? What is your vision for seeing people saved?

Write your thoughts here:

Remember

You are witness everyday—either for Christ or against Him.

Life Testimonies

Read

Charles T. Studd was a famous sportsman in England, captain of the Cambridge XI cricket team. A century ago he gave away his vast wealth to needy causes and led the “Cambridge Seven” to China. His slogan was, “If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”

During the first decade of this century, Charles Borden left one of America’s greatest family fortunes to be a missionary in China. He only got as far as Egypt where, still in his twenties, he died of typhoid fever. Before his death he said, “No reserves, no retreats, no regrets!”

A generation ago, Jim Elliot went from Wheaton College to become a missionary to the Aucas in Ecuador. Before he was killed, he wrote, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

“...I [Billy Graham] have chosen Christ not because He takes away my pain but because He gives me strength to cope with that pain and in the long range to realize victory over it. Corrie ten Boom said, ‘The worst can happen but the *best* remains.’”²⁹

Reflect

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21) (NAS)

Respond

Service is one of God’s five purposes for your life and the heart for service begins when a person falls in love with Christ and is willing to say, “Lord, I will do anything you want me to do. Here I am. Send me.” Have you said this lately? Are you absolutely in love with Jesus? For what specific service did God create you? Consider it this way: When you want to drive a nail, you pick up a hammer. When God wants to

(fill in the blank), He calls on you.

Write your thoughts here:

Remember

You’ll never be happier and you’ll never be safer than right in the middle of God’s will—even if it costs your life.

That We May Kiss His Feet

Read

A missionary on the foreign field employed a heathen to help him translate the New Testament into the native language. The missionary would read the verses; then the heathen would translate and write them down. Finally they came to the first Epistle of John. The missionary read, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." The man translated and wrote down the words. The missionary read on, "that we should be called the sons of God." Then the native bowed his head and wept. "What's the matter?" asked the missionary. The man replied, "Teacher, don't make me put it that way. I know our people. That's too good for them. Put it this way, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we may be allowed to kiss His feet!'" ³⁰

Reflect

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.
(John 1:12) (NAS)

Respond

True discipleship is born out of an in-love relationship with a Great God of Love. When people "fall in love" with someone, they want to talk to the person, think about them, talk about them, look at their picture, figure out how they can make them happy, and so forth. When a person falls in love with Jesus Christ, that believer wants to talk to Him (prayer), be with Him (daily devotions), talk about what He's

doing (testimonies), be around others who love Him (church), obey Him and show Him off to the world (witnessing). Then, since true discipleship is an overflow of one's love relationship with the Lord, your desire to grow also becomes a measure of the depth of your love for Him. How much do you desire a deeper walk with Christ? What is the depth of your love for Christ (i.e., Do you want to spend time with Him? Do you want to show Him off to the world? Do you obey Him?) On a scale of 1 to 10, how deeply are you in love with Jesus? Why do you feel this way?

Write your thoughts here:

Remember

"We become what we are committed to."³¹

A Fool for Christ

Read

When Dr. Wayland Hoyt was pastor in Brooklyn, he was engaged in special meetings. Among those who evinced some interest was a gentleman for whom he had often prayed. He noticed his attendance one weeknight and thought he ought to speak to him about his soul, but through fear restrained.

Another night when he had returned to his home late, finding himself too nervous to sleep, he was reading in his study. As he read, something seemed to whisper in his ear, *Go and see that man tonight*. But the preacher mentally replied, *It is after twelve o'clock, and he is asleep with everyone in bed*. He read on. But the impression remained and grew. He argued, *It is snowing, and I am tired!* and finally, *I have been working hard all day, and I don't want to go!* But all excuses to the contrary, the Spirit persisted, and at last he yielded and went.

As he touched the man's doorbell, he thought, "What a fool I am to be ringing a man's bell at one o'clock in the morning. He will think I am insane". But instantly the door opened, and the man stood there fully clothed and said, "Come in; and God bless you. You are the man I have been waiting for all night. My wife and children are all asleep, but I could not sleep; I felt that I must find Jesus tonight."

And the preacher testified, "It was no trouble to show that man the way, for the Spirit who had guided me had also gone before me." ³²

Reflect

*...To obey is better than sacrifice...
(1 Samuel 15:22) (NAS)*

Respond

Would you have found it difficult to be obedient to God in the above story? God created you to worship Him, but one cannot have true worship without full surrender and surrender implies that you are not your own—you belong to another. Hence, there can be no answer to Christ's call other than "Yes, Lord." Is there any area of your life where you are saying no to God? Have you said, "Yes, Lord" to all that He want you to do (everything from teaching to tithing to the small details in your daily life that He wants you to surrender to Him)? Is your life characterized by complete and total obedience to Christ? Why or why not?

Write your thoughts here:

Remember

"Surrender is not only the best way to live; it's the only way to live. Nothing else works." ³³

Rick Warren

To Whom Are You Drawn

Read

John Blanchard stood up from the bench, straightened his Army uniform, and studied the crowd of people making their way through Grand Central Station. He looked for the girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he didn't, the girl with the rose.

His interest in her had begun thirteen months before in a Florida library. Taking a book off the shelf he found himself intrigued, not with the words of the book, but with the notes penciled in the margin. The soft handwriting reflected a thoughtful soul and insightful mind. In the front of the book, he discovered the previous owner's name, Miss Hollis Maynell.

With time and effort he located her address. She lived in New York City. He wrote her a letter introducing himself and inviting her to correspond. The next day he was shipped overseas for service in World War II. During the next year and one month the two grew to know each other through the mail. Each letter was a seed falling on a fertile heart. A romance was budding.

Blanchard requested a photograph, but she refused. She felt that if he really cared, it wouldn't matter what she looked like.

When the day finally came for him to return from Europe, they scheduled their first meeting—7:00 p.m. at the Grand Central Station in New York. "You'll recognize me," she wrote, "by the red rose I'll be wearing on my lapel."

So at 7:00 p.m. he was in the station looking for a girl whose heart he loved, but whose face he'd never seen.

I'll let Mr. Blanchard tell you what happened:

"A young woman was coming toward me, her figure long and slim. Her blonde hair lay back in curls from her delicate ears; her eyes were blue as flowers. Her lips and chin had a gentle firmness, and in her pale green suit she was like springtime come alive. I started toward her, entirely forgetting to notice that she was not wearing a rose. As I moved, a small, provocative smile curved her lips. 'Going my way, sailor?' she murmured.

"Almost uncontrollably I made one step closer to her, and then I saw Hollis Maynell.

"She was standing almost directly behind the girl. A woman well past 40, she had graying hair tucked under a worn hat. She was more than plump, her thick-ankled feet thrust into low-heeled shoes. The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away. I felt as though I was split in two, so keen was my desire to follow her, and yet so deep was my longing for the woman whose spirit had truly companioned me and upheld my own.

"And there she stood. Her pale, plump face was gentle and sensible; her gray eyes had a warm and kindly twinkle. I did not hesitate. My finger gripped the small worn blue leather copy of the book that was to identify me to her. This would not be love, but it would be something precious, something perhaps even better than love, a friendship for which I had been and must ever be grateful.

"I squared my shoulders and saluted and held out the book to the woman, even though while I spoke I felt choked by the bitterness of my

disappointment. ‘I’m Lieutenant John Blanchard, and you must be Miss Maynell. I am so glad you could meet me; may I take you to dinner?’

“The woman’s face broadened into a tolerant smile. ‘I don’t know what this is about, son,’ she answered, ‘but the young lady in the green suit who just went by, she begged me to wear this rose on my coat. And she said if you were to ask me out to dinner, I should go and tell you that she is waiting for you in the big restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of test!’”

It’s not difficult to understand and admire Miss Maynell’s wisdom. The true nature of a heart is seen in its response to the unattractive. “Tell me whom you love,” Houssaye wrote, “and I will tell you who you are.”

In the last sermon recorded by Matthew (Matt. 25:31-46), Jesus told the story about the sheep and the goats and sets a spiritual thermometer through which to gauge a heart by a person’s concern for the undesirable.

Jesus has called us to love the least lovely as well as the lovely and to love those whom no one else will love.

You might say it is a test. A test to measure the depth of our character. The same kind of test Hollis Maynell used with John Blanchard. The rejected of the world wear the roses. Sometimes we, like John Blanchard, have to adjust our expectations. Sometimes we have to re-examine our motives. Had he turned his back on the unattractive, he would have missed the love of his life. If we turn our backs, we will miss even more. ³⁴

Reflect

It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.
(Mark 2:17) (NAS)

Respond

In the story one has to admire how Ms. Maynell put him to the test to see what his heart was really like. We face similar tests every day. For example, who are drawn to in life? People who are like you? People who are attractive? People who will give you a kind word and a loving touch? Or, are you drawn to those who *need* a loving touch, a gentle hug, and a kind word? Consider the people to which Jesus was drawn.

Write your thoughts here:

Remember

“The true nature of the heart is seen in its response to the unattractive. Show me who you love and I’ll tell you who you are.” ³⁵

Where They Love a Fellow

Read

In the late 1800s D. L. Moody began a Sunday school on Illinois Street in Chicago. One child who attended would walk each week from halfway across the city, which was a large city even in those days. He would pass church after church until he reached the Illinois Street Sunday School.

One day a superintendent of one of the Sunday Schools he passed asked him, "Why do you go all the way out there? Why don't you come here? It is right next door to you."

Looking up at the superintendent, the lad said, "I go where they love a fellow." ³⁷

Write your thoughts here:

Reflect

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35) (NAS)

Respond

God created us for fellowship and at the heart of true fellowship is the expression of God's type of love. How can you express God's type of love to the people you visit each week? To the children? To their parents? To others with whom you come in contact on a daily basis?

Remember

"Real fellowship happens when people get honest about who they are and what is happening in their lives." ³⁸

Like Christ

Read

Albert Schweitzer was acclaimed in his day as one of the greatest men on earth. He was a missionary in the heart of Africa. He won more honors than any living man at that time. He won the Nobel prize in 1952. On one occasion, when he came to Chicago, a group of prominent citizens came to welcome him. They gathered around him, gave him the key to the city, and told him that they were greatly honored by his visit. The reporters took notes and the photographers were getting many pictures. Suddenly the great man excused himself. He rushed over to a little woman who was struggling with a heavy suitcase and several packages. He picked these things up and told the woman to follow him. He literally ran interference for her through the crowded station, put her on the train, and wished her a pleasant journey. When he returned to the committee, he said, "I am sorry to keep you gentlemen waiting, I was just having my daily fun." And one of the reporters said, "That is the first time I ever saw a big sermon walking."³⁹

Reflect

He (Jesus) must become greater; I must become less. (John 3:30) (NIV)
John the Baptist

Respond

When people look at you what do they see: More of you or more of Christ?

Write your thoughts here:

Remember

Think about it:

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much are you like Christ?

Endnotes

- ¹Curtis Hutson, ed., *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers), preface.
- ²Smith, Malcolm, *Spiritual Burnout (Tulsa: Harrison House Publishers, 1988)*, p.92-3
- ³Original source unknown.
- ⁴Original source unknown.
- ⁵Original source unknown.
- ⁶R.A. Torrey, "Why Every Christian Should Make Soul Winning His Life's Business,"], Hudson, Curtis, ed. *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 70.
- ⁷Billy Graham, *Approaching Hoofbeats: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), p. 94-95.
- ⁸Leonard Ravenhill. *Why Revival Tarries*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1959), p. 32.
- ⁹Curtis Hutson, ed., *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers), preface.
- ¹⁰Hyles, Jack, "Four Calls for Soul Winning," [1974], Hudson, Curtis, ed. . *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 54-57.
- ¹¹Billy Graham, *Approaching Hoofbeats: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), pp. 94-95.
- ¹²Tom Wallace, "Jesus, the Soul Winner's Example," [1982] Hudson, Curtis, ed. *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 204-5.
- ¹³Billy Graham, *Approaching Hoofbeats: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books), 1983, p. 94-95.
- ¹⁴W. Herschel Ford, *Sermons You Can Preach on John*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958) p. 174.
- ¹⁵Leonard Ravenhill, *Why Revival Tarries*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1990), p. 68.
- ¹⁶W. Herschel Ford, *Sermons You Can Preach on Matthew*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), p. 47.
- ¹⁷Tom Wallace, "Jesus, the Soul Winner's Example," [1982] Hudson, Curtis, ed. *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 201-2.
- ¹⁸Hyman J. Appelman, "Paralyzed People," [July 1946], Hudson, Curtis, ed. *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 128-129.
- ¹⁹Leonard Ravenhill, *Why Revival Tarries*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1990), 68.
- ²⁰Hyman J. Appelman, "Paralyzed People," [July 1946], Hudson, Curtis, ed. *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 128-129.
- ²¹Curtis Hutson, ed. *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers), 1989.
- ²²W. Herschel Ford, *Sermons You Can Preach on John*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958) p. 329.
- ²³Curtis Hutson, ed., *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 44-46.
- ²⁴W. Herschel Ford, *Sermons You Can Preach on John*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958) p. 329.
- ²⁵Sammuel Tippit, *Fire in Your Heart*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), p. 24, 81.
- ²⁶Leonard Ravenhill, *Why Revival Tarries*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1990), p. 161.
- ²⁷W. Herschel Ford, *Sermons You Can Preach on John*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958) p. 429-430.
- ²⁸W. Herschel Ford, *Sermons You Can Preach on John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 338.
- ²⁹Billy Graham, *Approaching Hoofbeats: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983) p. 94-95.
- ³⁰W. Herschel Ford, *Sermons You Can Preach on John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 348.
- ³¹Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, 2002), p 180.
- ³²W. B. Riley, "Six Essentials in Soul Winning," Hudson, Curtis, ed. *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 204-5.
- ³³Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, 2002), p. 83.
- ³⁴Max Lucado, *And the Angels were Silent*, (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah, 1992), p. 139-141, 144.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶A *Children's Leader Devotion*, (Lake Forest, CA: Saddleback Church), Week 31.

³⁷Hyman J. Appelman, "Paralyzed People," [July 1946], Hudson, Curtis, ed. *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*. (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 121.

³⁸Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, 2002), p. 140.

³⁹W. Herschel Ford, *Sermons You Can Preach on John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 273-4.