

BIBLICAL EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP



Shepherds Global Classroom exists to equip the body of Christ by providing curriculum for rising Christian leaders around the world. We aim to multiply indigenous training programs by placing a 20-course curriculum tool into the hands of spiritual trainers in every country of the world.

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COURSE OVERVIEW

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a tool to help the church fulfill its mission. The course emphasizes the centrality of the local church, showing that the gospel is the mission of the church, and that the nature of the gospel should shape the church. By explaining the basics of the gospel, this course corrects errors of modern methods that do not lead a sinner to genuine conversion and Christian living. Thus, the student will be equipped to develop his ministry.

Most of the lessons of the course can be taught as complete topics for various kinds of groups. For example, a lesson can be used to teach a method for presenting the gospel.

In this course, students are learning how to make disciples. Shepherds Global Classroom has produced a **discipleship resource** specifically for use with new believers. This discipleship lesson book, *Cultivate Discipleship Lessons*, is available for download from shepherdsglobal.org. Each of the 26 lessons in *Cultivate Discipleship Lessons* includes a teacher guide and student pages.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the implications of the gospel for the nature and design of the church
2. To review the basic doctrines of the gospel
3. To train believers in practical methods of evangelism
4. To understand the responsibility of the church for discipleship
5. To define and describe the task of discipleship
6. To learn practical methods for leading a small group for discipleship
7. To provide a series of lessons to be used in discipleship of new converts

EXPLANATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR CLASS LEADERS

Notes to class leaders are included throughout the course with directions for specific parts of the lessons. *They are italicized.*

Discussion questions and **in-class activities** are indicated by arrow bullet points. For discussion questions, the class leader should ask the question and allow students to answer. It is not necessary that the question be thoroughly answered in the discussion. The lesson material will answer the question. If the same student usually answers first, or if some

students do not speak up, the leader can direct the question to someone: “Isaiah, how would you answer this question?”

Each lesson ends with **assignments**. Assignments should be completed and reported before the next lesson time. If a student does not complete an assignment, he can do it later. However, the leader should encourage students to keep on schedule so that they learn more from the class.

Students will complete **writing assignments** of several kinds. Usually the class leader should collect written assignments at the beginning of the class time. (Two of the assignments (Lesson 6, Assignment 1, and Lesson 14, Assignment 1) do not need to be turned in, only reported.)

Students will also **present the gospel** to many people using the methods learned in class. After each presentation, they will write about their experiences and share in class about how the presentations went. They will prepare an evangelistic sermon for adults and a lesson for children. There are two tests in this course, over Lessons 5 and 10. Students should write the answers from memory without looking at any material or talking to each other. No answer key is provided for the class leader, because all answers are easily found in the lesson text.

Lesson 13 includes directions for distributing gospel tracts. The students will need to know where to get some tracts for distribution. If possible, bring a supply to that class session.

If the student wants to **earn a certificate from Shepherds Global Classroom**, he should attend the class sessions and complete the assignments. A form is provided at the end of the course for recording the assignments completed.

LESSON 1

ACCEPTING THE GREAT COMMISSION

INTRODUCTION

- » A student should read Matthew 28:18-20 for the group.

Some people have believed that this command was only for the apostles.

- » Was this command only for the people who heard it that day? Explain your answer.

William Carey lived from 1761-1834. He was from England. He was a shoemaker who felt a strong desire to spread the gospel. His church was not much interested in foreign mission work. They believed that God had already decided whom he would save, and that he did not depend on human help.

At a conference of pastors, Carey suggested a topic for discussion: he asked if the Great Commission is the task of the church until the end of the world, since the promise that Jesus gave with the Great Commission is that he would be with them until the end of the world. The leader of the conference said, “Sit down, young man. You are an enthusiast [fanatic]. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your help or mine.”

We know that the command is given to the church till the end of the world. Jesus promised to be with those who carry the gospel, even to the end of the age, which shows that the responsibility for the task belongs to the church through all generations. The apostles could not finish the task during their lifetime, but Jesus said that the gospel would be preached in every nation (Matthew 24:14).

So the responsibility of evangelism is inherited by each generation of the church.

- » Look again at the details of Matthew 28:18-20. What is commanded specifically?

Jesus' specific command was that the church go everywhere and make disciples for him.

The command includes evangelism because a person cannot be a disciple until he is converted.

The command means that the church must make evangelism and discipleship its priorities and take zealous action; otherwise, it is not fulfilling the reason it exists.

The phrase “all nations” (every ethnic group) shows that foreign mission work is commanded, since ethnic groups do not have the gospel until it is brought to them. No category of people should be excluded.

The command is not just to preach the gospel. A process of teaching is necessary because we are supposed to teach converts everything Jesus commanded.

The teacher must have complete personal commitment to obey the commands of Christ because he must be a good example, demonstrating to converts how to live a life of obedience to Christ.

The convert must be committed to obey Christ also, because learning the commands of Christ is not enough without obeying as he learns. If he is not obeying what he has learned, he is resisting the work of discipleship. The process of discipleship is not only educational, but character forming.

“I am more than ever convinced that if we were to take the direction of our Master and the assurances he gave to his first disciples more fully as our guide, we should find them to be just as suited to our times as to those in which they were originally given.”

J. Hudson Taylor

“The Call to Service”

EVANGELISM IS A SCRIPTURAL PRIORITY

Besides the Great Commission, there are many statements in the Bible that show that evangelism is God’s priority for the church.

Note to class leader: Students should look up the references below and tell how each shows that evangelism is a scriptural priority. Help them with the comments provided.

Matthew 9:36-38. Jesus wanted his disciples to share his compassion for the lost and pray that God would send workers into the spiritual harvest.

Acts 4:29. When the church first faced persecution, their first concern was not the physical danger, but that the gospel might be hindered. They prayed that in spite of persecution the Word of God would spread.

Acts 11:18. The Jewish church glorified God that salvation was offered to the Gentiles.

Philippians 1:18. Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached even while he suffered imprisonment.

Ephesians 6:19. Paul requested prayer for effective evangelism.

Romans 10:13-15. Paul emphasized the urgent need for messengers of the gospel, because salvation is for those who hear and believe.

- » What are some reasons that a believer should desire to see people converted?

REASONS A BELIEVER SHOULD DESIRE THE CONVERSION OF THE LOST

- He should desire to follow the example of Jesus who left heaven to live and die for the salvation of the lost.
 - He should desire that God be glorified by the conversion of a rebel into a worshipper of God.
 - He should see the spread of the gospel as a victory of Christ and his atonement.
 - He should want to participate in the work that is God's priority.
 - He should have compassion for the lost who are facing eternal judgment for their sins.
- » Is it possible for a person to have the wrong reason for wanting to evangelize? What would be some wrong reasons?

It is not wrong to desire success in ministry and the growth of the local church.

It is important that we not be motivated by pride in success, competition with other churches, or a love for argument.

Some believers are specially called and gifted by God to evangelize (Ephesians 4:11). Leaders must remember that not all believers are skilled to evangelize the same way. However, every believer should be committed to help the church fulfill its mission of evangelism and should be prepared to share the gospel.

REASONS SOME BELIEVERS DON'T EVANGELIZE

- » Why don't all believers evangelize?

Note to class leader: Students should list the reasons they can think of before looking at the following list.

- A lack of general spiritual zeal
 - Not feeling personally responsible for evangelism
 - Not knowing how to open a spiritual conversation
 - Not knowing how to present the gospel
 - Fear of being unable to answer objections
 - Embarrassment at being different from the world
 - Doubt that his efforts will be effective
 - Persecution
- » Are any of these reasons good enough?

GETTING STARTED

- » If a person is not doing anything for the salvation of the lost, what is needed to get him started?

If he has no spiritual zeal, he needs personal spiritual revival.

If a person is spiritually alive, fervent, and realizes his personal responsibility to participate in fulfillment of the Great Commission, the two following factors are most likely what he needs to get him started.

1. **Faith** – He needs to realize what God does to make the gospel powerful.
 2. **Preparation** – He needs to be equipped with training to communicate the gospel.
- » A student should read John 4:28-30, 39 for the group. What qualified the Samaritan woman to bring people to Jesus?

She had no training. She did have an experience of grace and the priority of telling others about Jesus.

If a person has those two things, the experience of grace and the desire to tell others, he has the most important qualifications of an evangelist. Training is good; but if a person lacks those two qualifications, no training can make him a good evangelist.

“This was the way his church was to win—through the dedicated lives of those who knew the Savior so well that his Spirit and method constrained them to tell others.”

Robert Coleman

The Master's Plan

The important issue: What do you need to get you started?

- » What are you doing already to help spread the gospel? Are you satisfied with what you are doing?
- » What would help you to share the gospel more zealously and effectively?

THE CHARACTER OF AN EVANGELIST

Let's talk about the kind of person who can accept the Great Commission.

Even a new convert can share his testimony and tell about the truth that brought him to conversion.

However, a person who can be used by God for long-term effectiveness as an evangelist needs certain characteristics.

1. Converted

The evangelist must be a person who is converted, because

1. He needs a testimony to share.
2. He cannot understand conversion without experiencing it.
3. He must have the change of character that occurs at conversion.

If a person who is unconverted is doing religious work, he does not understand what he is doing and has the wrong motives.

2. Consistent in Christian Living

Although we should never miss a chance to share the gospel, evangelism is most effective when a person hears the gospel from a person he trusts. The people who trust you most should be the people who know you best. The evangelist should demonstrate a life devoted to God with consistent obedience to God.

“We believe that the principal key to persuasive Christian communication is to be found in the communicators themselves and what kind of people they are. It should go without saying that they need to be people of Christian faith, love, and holiness. That is, they must have a personal and growing experience of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, so that the image of Jesus Christ is ever more clearly seen in their character and attitudes.”

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

The Willowbank Report

3. Connected to the Church

The evangelist needs to be a committed member of a church because

1. He needs to be able to invite people into a family of faith.
2. He needs the help of the church to disciple converts.
3. He needs spiritual accountability.
4. He needs the support and encouragement of the church.

He must have the confidence of his spiritual brothers and sisters. He must respect the leadership and work of the church.

If he thinks he can be a believer and do his ministry without the church, he does not understand the church and does not understand the invitation of the gospel.

4. Faithful to Truth

The evangelist must believe that God's Word is the treasure of truth to share. The Bible gives the terms of salvation and relationship with God. We can never change truth to make our message more acceptable (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

Because of the Bible, we know that every person will finally go either to an eternal heaven or eternal hell. The evangelist is motivated by that conviction.

5. Spirit-Filled

The Holy Spirit gives power to the message of the gospel. He convicts of sin, gives spiritual desire, and makes an unbeliever able to respond with faith.

The evangelist is effective only as he is used by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he must humbly depend on God. He must be prayerful. He must ask for guidance from God.

The evangelist must seek for the filling of the Spirit. There is a filling of the Spirit that cleanses the heart and gives power for ministry. Jesus told the apostles to expect this work of the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). The apostles experienced this filling of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:8, Acts 2:4, Acts 15:8-9).

There are also times when God gives a special anointing of the Spirit so that the evangelist can face a specific challenge (Acts 13:9-12).

LESSON 1 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write a few paragraphs describing how you have been personally involved in evangelism and discipleship in the last 12 months. What are your goals for the future? What do you want to gain from this course?
2. What is being done for the spread of the gospel by churches in your area? Observe and ask questions, then write a 2-3 page description.

LESSON 2

THE THEOLOGY OF CONVERSION

INTRODUCTION

Note to class leader: In addition to the scripture passages discussed in this lesson, there are many scripture references provided in parentheses. There may not be enough time for the class to look up and read all of them during the class session. You may select some to be read.

The term *conversion* refers to the change that happens when a person is saved. The goal of evangelism is to lead an unbeliever to the experience of conversion.

- » A student should read 1 Thessalonians 1 for the group. What are details of the change that happened to the Thessalonians when they were converted?

To understand why a person needs to be converted, and to understand what happens when a person is converted, we must understand the condition of the sinner before conversion.

THE HUMAN CONDITION BEFORE CONVERSION

- » How would you describe the condition of a person before he is converted?

Because of the sin of Adam, every person is separated from God when he is born (Romans 5:12). That means that each person is self-centered and goes his own way.

Four Characteristics of Unconverted Sinners

As soon as a person begins to make choices, he begins committing sin. **Every person is guilty of many acts of sin** (Romans 3:23).

Sin is a violation of God's law (1 John 3:4, James 2:10-11). Because God is absolutely just, he does not excuse sin and every person will be judged for what he has done (2 Corinthians 5:10, Revelation 20:12-13). There is no question about any person's guilt or the judgment he deserves. Every sinner is already condemned (John 3:18-19).

The unconverted sinner is the enemy of God (Romans 5:10). A sinner cannot come into relationship with God unless his offenses against God can be removed.

The sinner before conversion is also in a condition that makes him unfit for a relationship with God because **he is corrupt in his desires** (Ephesians 2:3). Because he is a slave to sin, **the sinner is powerless to change his condition** (Romans 5:20, Romans 7:23).

So what is the salvation the unconverted sinner needs? Because the sinner is guilty, salvation means forgiveness. Because he is the enemy of God, salvation means reconciliation. Because he is corrupt, salvation means cleansing. Because he is powerless, salvation means deliverance. These are only a few of the aspects of the salvation that every person needs.

At the moment of conversion, the sinner is forgiven, reconciled to God, cleansed, and delivered from the power of sin. Paul described the previous sinful condition of the Corinthian believers which included many terrible sins. Then he said, “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified...” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

THE NECESSITY OF THE CROSS

No person could pay for his own sin. Sin is against an infinite God, and humanity has nothing of infinite value to pay.

There was nothing that a person could do about his need; therefore, no requirement could be set for humanity that would accomplish salvation (Galatians 3:21). If it had been possible for man to accomplish his own salvation, it would not have been necessary for Jesus to die on the cross (Galatians 2:21).

» If God wanted to forgive, why didn't he simply forgive without the cross?

Because God is holy, he must judge according to truth and justice (Romans 2:5-6).

Imagine if the sacrifice of Christ had not happened. What if God simply forgave sins without the atonement?

If God forgave sin without the atonement, it would seem that:

- Sin is unimportant.
- God is unjust and even unholy.
- In God's eyes there is little difference between a person doing right and a person doing wrong.

If forgiveness were possible without atonement, God could not be worshipped as the just and holy God that he is. Forgiveness without atonement would ultimately dishonor God instead of honoring him.

But, God is loving and wants to forgive. He did not want to leave all humanity in a sinful condition to be eternally lost, even though it was what they deserved.

The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross provided the sacrifice of infinite value that was needed. Jesus qualified **(1) by being sinless** (2 Corinthians 5:21) (perfect and not needing salvation himself), and **(2) by being both God and man**.

The atonement provides what is needed as a basis for forgiveness. Now, God can forgive the person who repents and believes his promise. Nobody who understands the sacrifice on the cross can think that sin is not serious to God.

The atonement makes it possible for God to still be just while counting as righteous the sinner who believes his promise. Romans 3:20-26 gives a logical explanation of how the atonement works.

The Bible tells us that the means of salvation God provided is absolutely the only way. If a person rejects salvation by grace through faith in Christ, he cannot be saved (Mark 16:15-16, Acts 4:12, Hebrews 2:3).

This is why it is important to know the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, received by faith alone. Salvation is by grace alone because there is nothing we can do to earn it or deserve it. It is by faith alone because there is nothing we can do to accomplish it. We can only believe God's promise.

THE FIRST GRACE

» What happens first: man's response to God or God's work within man?

God's grace reaches into the heart of the unbeliever, convicting him of his sins and causing him to desire forgiveness (Titus 2:11, John 1:9, Romans 1:20). The sinner would be powerless to leave his sins without God's help. It is God who gives an unbeliever the ability to respond to the gospel (John 6:44). If a person is not saved, it is not because he had no grace; it's because he would not respond to the grace that God gave him.

Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, and God wants every person to be saved (2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:2, 1 Timothy 4:10). God's grace gives every person the ability to respond, but he does not force anyone. That is why God calls upon the unbeliever to choose to repent and believe (Mark 1:15).

DEFINING REPENTANCE

- » What is repentance?

Repentance means that a sinner sees himself as guilty and deserving punishment and that he is willing to quit his sins.

This verse in Isaiah describes repentance:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:7).

Repentance does not mean that a sinner must correct his life and make himself righteous before God will forgive him. That is impossible, because a person is in bondage to sin and cannot deliver himself; but the sinner must be willing for God to deliver him from his sins.

- » Salvation is received by grace; so why is repentance necessary for salvation?

Faith is the only requirement for forgiveness, but genuine faith in Christ will always cause a person to repent of their sins. Turning to Christ (believing) and turning away from sin (repentance) will happen at the same time, but it is faith that makes turning away from sin possible. This saving faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). If a person is unwilling to repent, he does not want to be saved from sin.

If a person does not repent, he is not admitting the evil of sin. If he doesn't see why he should quit sinning, then he doesn't see that his sin is truly evil. If he doesn't see that his sin is evil, he doesn't really understand why he needs forgiveness.

If a person has not seen himself as truly guilty, without excuse, and deserving punishment, he has not repented. If he admits that he is a sinner but wants a religion that will allow him to continue sinning, he has not repented because he wants to keep doing what made him guilty.

DEFINING SAVING FAITH

- » If a person has saving faith, what does that mean that he believes?

1. He sees that he can do nothing to justify himself.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

He realizes that nothing he can do (works) will make him deserve to be saved, even partially.

2. He believes that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for his forgiveness.

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).

Propitiation means the sacrifice that makes our forgiveness possible.

3. He believes that God forgives him on the condition of faith alone.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

If he thinks there are other conditions, he expects to be saved partly by works instead of completely by grace.

CONVERSION

- » A student should read Acts 26:16-18 for the group. What do these verses say would be Paul's ministry?

Paul's ministry would be to lead people to conversion. Verse 18 describes conversion. It includes turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, receiving forgiveness, and receiving the inheritance of those that are sanctified. It happens by faith in Christ.

The conversion from unbeliever to believer is a great transformation. The Bible calls it a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Old things are finished, and everything is new.

The converted person leaves idols and any religious practice that would be in conflict with complete loyalty to God (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

The change is usually astonishing to others (1 Peter 4:3-4). They don't understand why a person would change so much. The person's closest friends and relatives may persecute him (Matthew 10:34-36).

"The pastor with integrity will not be content with 'decisions' but with believers who continue earnestly in their relationship with Christ; believers who hunger for God's Word, who walk in Christian love, who constantly share by faith in Christ's death and resurrection, and who pray without ceasing."

Timothy Keep

"The Integrity of Biblical Evangelism and Conversion"

The converted person no longer shares the desires and priorities of the world. This contrast is one of the evidences that he is converted (1 John 2:15). The converted person loves other believers and desires fellowship with them (1 John 3:14).

The person's desires change when he is converted. He will still have temptations, but he is able to resist temptation to sin because he is no longer controlled by sinful desires. He has desire for the Word of God because he has experienced the grace of God (1 Peter 2:2-3).

The converted person loves God and wants to please him. He will not consider God's commandments to be hard and unpleasant (1 John 5:2-4).

The converted person maintains a personal relationship with God, expressed especially in prayer (1 Corinthians 1:2).

- » In your own words, tell about the transformation that occurs when a person is converted.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW BIRTH

The Bible says that when a person is born again, all things are made new. The new things include the following:

- A new nature—the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)
- A new Master—Christ through the Holy Spirit (Matthew 23:10, Romans 8:14)
- A new appetite for the Word of God (1 Peter 2:2)
- A new attitude of love (Romans 5:5, 1 John 4:7-8)
- A new relationship with God as son or daughter (John 1:12)
- A new Helper in the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, Romans 8:26-27)
- A new Advocate in Jesus Christ if we fall into sin (1 John 2:1)
- A new and living hope of everlasting life (John 3:15, 1 Peter 1:3)

PERSONAL ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

- » What wrong reasons might make a person think that he is a believer?

A person might think that he is a believer because

- He was baptized.
- He is a church member.
- He believes certain Christian doctrines.
- He follows certain religious customs.
- He follows a standard of right actions.
- He has had spiritual experiences.
- He has made a decision and profession of faith.

According to the Bible, none of these is enough to assure a person that he is a believer.

The Bible tells us that we can know for sure that we are born again. We can have confidence that God has accepted us. We don't have to live in fear, because God's Spirit assures us that we are adopted children of God (Romans 8:15-16).

This assurance is so complete that we do not have to fear the Judgment Day (1 John 4:17). Some people say they hope they will be accepted into heaven, but we can have a better assurance than that. It is not enough to believe that salvation is offered to humanity in general; a person must know that he himself has been forgiven.

» How can a person know for sure that he is justified?

Some people depend on their feelings, but feelings are changeable and can be misleading.

A changed life gives evidence that a person has been converted, but that evidence does not exist at the first moment. Results of salvation have not had time to appear. Therefore, a changed life is not the basis of assurance.

The believer can be sure of his salvation by knowing that he has followed the scriptural way to salvation. If one has truly repented and believed as the Bible directs, he has the right to believe that God forgives him. When one repents and believes, God gives the witness of his Spirit that he has become the child of God.

If a person tries to feel that he is born of God when he has not really repented, he will become confused and might deceive himself.

If a person (1) truly repents, (2) trusts God's promise in scripture, and (3) receives the witness of the Spirit, he will not be deceived. This assurance is based on God's Word, which is absolutely reliable. God always keeps his promises.

10 WORDS FOR ASPECTS OF SALVATION

Reconciliation: This word means that ones who have been enemies have made peace again. In salvation, we make peace with God (2 Corinthians 5:19, Romans 5:1).

Expiation: This word means that a record has been cleared. In salvation, our record of sins is erased (Hebrews 8:12).

Propitiation: This word refers to something that was given to turn away someone's anger. In salvation, Jesus' sacrifice turns away the anger of God that was against us (1 John 2:2).

Deliverance: This word means that someone is rescued from another's power. In salvation, we are taken out from under the power of Satan and sin (Luke 1:74, Romans 6:6, 12-18).

Redemption: This word means that a price was paid so that someone can be free. In salvation, Jesus' death is the price so that we are free from the bondage and penalty of sin (Ephesians 1:7, Titus 2:14).

Justification: This word means that someone is declared righteous, or innocent. In salvation, a guilty sinner is counted righteous because Jesus suffered in his place (2 Corinthians 5:19, Romans 5:1).

Sanctification: This word means someone is made holy. In salvation, a sinner is changed into a holy child of God. Many of the epistles refer to the believers as "holy ones" (Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, Philippians 1:1).

Adoption: This word means someone becomes the legal child of another. In salvation we become the children of God (John 1:12, Romans 8:15).

Regeneration/New Birth: This word means someone starts life again. In salvation the believer begins a new life (Ephesians 2:1, John 7:38-39, Galatians 4:29, John 3:5).

Sealing: This word means something is marked to show who owns it. In salvation, the Holy Spirit in us identifies us as someone that belongs to God (Ephesians 1:13).

ERROR TO AVOID: RELIGION WITHOUT REPENTANCE

There's a type of person who easily thinks that he is saved when he hears that salvation is by grace through faith. He hasn't truly repented because he didn't see that he needed to. He never saw himself as a sinner deserving God's judgment. He thinks that grace means that he can go his own way. Because he accepts the truth of Christianity, he thinks he is a believer though he has had no transformation. He never surrendered his own self will; instead, he accepted God as a part of his life and still lives mostly according to his own will. This is not the beginning of a saving relationship with God, according to the scriptural description.

LESSON 2 ASSIGNMENTS

1. In this lesson we studied 10 words for aspects of salvation. In a few paragraphs, explain which ones have seemed most significant to you in your relationship with God. Are there some that you need to think about more?
2. Based on the forms of Christianity visible in your country, and especially in your own region, what do people think it means to be a Christian? In 2-3 pages, describe several kinds of people and what they would say that a Christian is. Explain what is wrong with their concept of repentance, saving faith, or other doctrine.

LESSON 3

THE URGENCY OF EVANGELISM

INTRODUCTION

- » Can a person be justified without hearing the gospel? Is the work of evangelism necessary?

In scripture we find examples of those reached by God's grace without contact from either Israel or the church. Job was upright and rejected evil before Moses lived and before a page of scripture was written. Balaam was in relationship with God and was known as the seer who got messages from God without going into a trance. Abimelech acted more righteously than Abraham after Abraham thought, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place." Romans 1:21-32 describes heathens who were in a depraved condition; it was not because they never knew of God, but because they rejected what they did know.¹

"The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant" (Psalm 25:14). The covenant is the terms of God's relationship with man, which requires a provision of grace since all have sinned. If a person reverences God fully, God will show him the way to come into relationship with him.

The Bible says there is salvation through no name but Jesus (Acts 4:12). However, the people who were saved in the Old Testament did not know the name of Jesus. They put their faith in God's promise to provide redemption and forgiveness, and he provided it through Jesus. Similarly, people who have not yet heard the name of Jesus might trust God for salvation which he provides through Jesus.

So, what does it mean that salvation cannot come through any other name? It means that there is no alternative means of salvation. A person cannot be saved by some other plan of redemption. It also means that a person who does know about Jesus must not reject him, because to reject him would be to refuse salvation or look for some other means of salvation.

"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world" (John 1:9). The Holy Spirit brings the light of Jesus even to those who have not heard of him.

1 See also Psalm 19 and Romans 10:18.

Many people have received visions or other special revelation that brought them to God before they heard the gospel from a human messenger. For example, in modern times many Muslims are being converted after receiving a message from God.

- » Have you heard of someone that received special communication from God before really understanding the gospel?

So, we see that it is possible for a person to find God and even be saved without hearing the gospel through human messengers. Yet, the Bible describes the gospel as a message that everyone urgently needs to hear.

The book of Romans describes the urgency of the gospel. The Apostle said that the gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). He said that he has an obligation to everyone, to take the gospel to them (Romans 1:14). He establishes the truth that we are justified with God simply by believing his promise to forgive (Romans 3:26, Romans 5:1).

Then comes the sense of urgency. He said, “How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (Romans 10:14). He said, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). God uses the gospel to create saving faith in hearers. The preaching of the gospel is God’s ordinary method of saving the lost.

“In the vast plain to the North, I have sometimes seen in the morning sun the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been — villages whose people are without Christ, without God, and without hope in the world.”

Robert Moffat

If they can be saved without a messenger, why is a messenger so important?

WHY MISSIONARIES ARE NEEDED

Missionary Steve Hight answered the question *Why are missionaries needed?* like this:

The simple answer is that men, when they have seen the light, have rejected it. John 1:9 informs us that Jesus is the true light, who gives light to everyone. Paul declares that creation made God known (Romans 1:19-20) and that, even when men knew God, they did not honor him as God (Romans 1:21). John assesses the situation like this: “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light” (John 3:19). Man’s depraved heart prefers the

darkness. Because of its deceitfulness and desperate wickedness (Jeremiah 17:9), the sinful heart turns from God.

Therefore, missionaries must take the light again! The God of second chances sends his ambassadors with the flaming torch of the gospel to turn them from darkness to light (Acts 26:18).

When Jesus sent the disciples to preach the gospel, he said that if a city would not accept their message, they should shake the dust off of their shoes as they left the city. He said that the dust would be a testimony against them at the judgment. The dust from their shoes was proof that a messenger of the gospel had been to their city. Those who reject the gospel receive worse judgment than those who never heard it. Jesus said they would be judged more severely than the people from Sodom. This tells us that the gospel brings a great advantage to those who hear it (Mark 6:11).

Pastor Eric Himelick answered the question *Why are missionaries needed?* with this explanation:

We send missionaries because the gospel message is best communicated relationally. The gospel truth is not a set of impersonal facts about God or religious belief boxes to be checked; it is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. Missionaries are ambassadors for Christ, his message, and his ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Missionaries are needed because without direct, relational communication of the gospel message, most will be lost. We don't want to believe that people are being lost because of our inaction, but Romans 10:13-15 is clear: "How are they to hear without someone preaching?" The sad truth is, they won't. Sending and supporting missionaries is imperative. Hoping that God will do for us the work that he has called us to do isn't a solution. God has given us the Great Commission; and to whom much is given, much is required. We send missionaries in response to God's grace and in faith that God is at work in his world drawing people to his great heart.

THE PRACTICAL USEFULNESS OF THE GOSPEL

The gospel is the effective means that God has designed for saving the lost. It is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). Let's consider this question again: If a person can be saved without hearing the gospel, why should we send missionaries? Let's consider some similar questions. If a person can be saved without my prayers, why should I pray for him? If a person can be saved without hearing the gospel more than once, why should we tell him again? If a person can be saved without the church, why should we have churches? The obvious answer is, "Yes, he can be saved, but it is much less likely." These are means that God has designed for saving people.

The Word of God is the tool used by the Holy Spirit to bring unbelievers to God. The Bible even says that people are born again by the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23, 25).

Missionaries find almost nobody who was saved before hearing the gospel. The fact that God will save a sincere person without the gospel shows his fairness, but it does not justify our neglect of the ordinary means he has designed. In general, those who do not hear the gospel will be lost. “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

- » A student should read Matthew 9:35-38 for the group.

Jesus had strong compassion for the needs of people. He was busy preaching and healing.

Jesus was most concerned about the spiritual needs of people. He wanted them to repent and know God. In this passage, we read that Jesus looked at the crowds of people and felt strong compassion for their spiritual needs. He saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd. He also compared the ministry to the work of a harvest, and he grieved that there were few workers.

Jesus gave his disciples a prayer request. He told them to pray that God would send workers into the harvest.

- » Why did Jesus tell the disciples to pray this prayer? Surely God wants to do this whether we pray or not, right?

When we pray that God will send workers, we are praying according to the will of God. Because of this, we know that God will answer our prayer.

There is another reason believers should pray this prayer. Jesus wanted his disciples to share his compassion and share in his mission to evangelize. If they prayed this prayer often, they would begin to care strongly about the harvest. They would desire to participate in the work and persuade others to also.

We should desire to care about the same things Jesus cared about. We should pray the prayer he gave to the disciples, so that it can have the same effect for us.

The population of the world has been over seven billion since 2011. More than 153,000 people die each day, but the population of the world still increases 220,000 each day. More than 100 people die every minute. More than 1,000 have died since you started reading this lesson. How many of them heard the gospel before they died?

A MISSIONARY STORY

A team of missionaries went to preach in a prison camp. There were thousands of prisoners, and most of them were murderers and terrorists. The missionaries preached on a platform outdoors. Around the platform, guards with guns were posted to protect them. At the end of the gospel sermon, the preacher asked if any of the prisoners would like to come forward to receive a New Testament. 30 men came forward.

A few weeks later the missionaries visited the camp again. Before the service, the warden told them that all 30 of the men who took New Testaments had been killed by the other prisoners. The missionaries preached the gospel again, and at the end they, again, offered to give a New Testament to anyone who would come forward. 300 men came forward. They knew that 30 men had died for responding to the gospel, but because the gospel was valuable to them, they were willing to risk their lives. They realized the value of the message they had heard.

LESSON 3 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write a few sentences to answer each of these two questions. Is there any opportunity for salvation for a person who never hears the gospel? Why should we send missionaries and evangelists?
2. Read the book of Jonah. Notice the urgency of a messenger of the gospel. What was God's concern in this story? What were Jonah's concerns? Write 1-2 pages of your observations.

LESSON 4

ESSENTIAL POINTS OF THE GOSPEL

NOTE TO CLASS LEADER

For each point, have someone read the scripture referenced, then let someone read the explanation of the point. Let the class briefly discuss each discussion question.

ESSENTIAL POINTS OF THE GOSPEL

The following points are essentials of the gospel. It is possible for a person to be converted without fully understanding them. However, denial of any of these points takes away the foundation of the gospel. A person or organization that denies any of these essentials will tend to develop another gospel, trusting a false means of salvation.

When you share the gospel with someone, certain points will be especially important because of errors that he believes already. For example, if he believes that salvation is only through a certain organization, he will believe that the organization's membership requirements are necessary for salvation. He needs to know that a person individually receives forgiveness and comes into direct relationship with God.

- 1. God created man and woman in his own image so that he could have relationship with them (Genesis 1:27, Acts 17:24-28).**

This truth shows the purpose of our existence and the goal of salvation. This truth is contradicted by religions that do not believe in a God with personality. This truth shows the real problem with the world; people are not in relationship with God.

- » What if a person did not believe that God loves him?

2. The first people sinned and became separated from God (Genesis 3:3-6).

This shows the origin of sin and the real reason for the world's condition. The world is a place of suffering and sorrow because of sin. There is still joy and purpose because of God's design, but the world is not like God planned it to be.

- » What if a person did not believe that sin is the real problem with the world?

3. Each person is born separated from God and disobedient to him (Romans 3:10, 23).

Each person is guilty of willful sin against God. There is not a person who has always done what is right.

- » What if a person thinks he can justify the things he has done?

4. Every sinner who does not find mercy will be judged by God and be condemned to eternal punishment (Hebrews 9:27, Romans 14:12, Revelation 20:12).

This shows the seriousness and urgency of the unbeliever's need for salvation.

- » What if a person does not believe that there is a righteous God who is angry about his sins?

5. A person cannot do anything to pay for the sins he has committed against God (Romans 3:20, Ephesians 2:4-9).

Good works and gifts cannot pay for sin, because sin is against an infinite God and everything already belongs to him.

- » What if a person believes that he must make himself worthy of forgiveness?

6. There must be a basis for forgiveness, because sin is serious and God is just (Romans 3:25-26).

God desires to forgive; but, if he forgave without a basis, sin would seem trivial, and God would seem unjust.

- » Why was the death of Christ necessary?

7. Jesus, the Son of God, lived a sinless life and died as a sacrifice so that our sins can be forgiven (John 3:16, Romans 5:8-9).

Because Jesus is the Son of God, his sacrifice has infinite value and provides a basis for forgiveness of anyone in the world. If he were just a man, his sacrifice would have limited value. The blood of Jesus represents his life given for us. Without his blood there would be no salvation (Hebrews 9:22). If he were not God, he could not completely save us; and we would be looking, without hope, for another way of salvation.

» Why do some religions think that people must be saved by works?

8. Jesus rose physically from the dead, proving his identity as the Son of God and demonstrating his power to give eternal life (John 20:24-28, Revelation 1:18).

Cults that deny the resurrection of Jesus usually also deny his deity and the sufficiency of his sacrifice for salvation. Then, they invent another means of salvation.

» What are the things that we know because Jesus rose from the dead?

9. The sacrifice of Jesus is sufficient for the forgiveness of all sin (1 John 1:9, 1 John 2:2).

If a person denies this truth, he will believe a gospel of works. Many religions believe a message of how a person can partially earn his salvation. This puts people under the control of a religious organization that tells them what to do to be saved.

» Why do some people think that they cannot be saved without their religious organization?

10. God forgives every person who admits he is a sinner, repents of his sin, and believes God's promise to forgive (Mark 1:15, 1 John 1:9).

No human organization has the right to add to the requirements for salvation or to offer a different means of salvation.

» What kind of person has the right to believe that he is forgiven?

11. Repentance means that a person is sorry for his sins and willing to quit his sins (Isaiah 55:7, Ezekiel 18:30, Ezekiel 33:9-16, Matthew 3:8).

Repentance does not mean that a person must make his life perfect before God will accept him; only God can deliver the sinner from the power of his sins. Repentance means that a person is sorry enough for his sins that he is ready to quit his sins. If a person is not willing to quit his sins, he cannot be forgiven. If a person is still living in willful sin, he has not repented.

- » Why is repentance necessary?

12. A repentant, believing sinner receives forgiveness when he prays to God and asks God to forgive him (Romans 10:13, Acts 2:21).

Every person has access to God's mercy because of Jesus. No institution or human agent is necessary for a person to receive God's forgiveness. A person receives it individually and begins a direct relationship with God.

- » How do we know that a person can be converted in a moment of time?

LESSON 4 ASSIGNMENTS

1. In a few paragraphs, describe how one or two of these points were especially important to you at the time of your conversion.
2. Choose a cult or non-Christian religion to research. In 2-3 pages, explain how they deny certain essential points of the gospel. Describe the false gospel they preach and show how it is based on wrong doctrines. Explain how you would give them scriptural evidence for the truth.

LESSON 5

EVANGELICALISM AND THE GOSPEL PRIORITY

INTRODUCTION

- » A student should read Ephesians 1:4-9 for the group. What significant doctrines are taught in this passage?

DESCRIBING EVANGELICALISM

An evangelical church is a church that teaches the scriptural gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. No good works by humanity added to the atonement of Christ can help us to deserve salvation.

Proclaiming the true gospel is the priority of an evangelical church because people who believe the gospel know that it is more important than anything else.

The gospel is the special treasure entrusted to the church by God which it desires to share with the world.

There are some characteristics that are typical of most evangelical churches:

1. **Evangelicals believe in the absolute authority of the Bible.** To deny the authority of the Bible would be to make the gospel questionable.
2. **Evangelicals believe in the historical, foundational doctrines of Christianity.** To deny those doctrines would be to contradict the gospel. For example, cults that deny the deity of Christ also deny that his atoning work is sufficient for salvation and teach, instead, a gospel of works.
3. **Evangelical churches emphasize personal spiritual experience.** This characteristic exists because they believe in individual conversion and conscious faith. Because of this belief, evangelicals emphasize evangelism of unbelievers and spiritual formation of believers.

- » How does your church demonstrate these characteristics? Are there also other characteristics that show that the gospel is the priority?

THE CENTRALITY OF THE GOSPEL

The gospel gives the church its mission. A church that does not make the gospel its priority has forgotten the mission given by God.

We have studied the Great Commission given in Matthew 28:18-20. What is the primary mission of the church?

The gospel creates the church wherever it is preached. The true church throughout history is found where the gospel is preached. The heritage of the church since the time of the apostles is not found in the continuity of institutions, but in the continuity of faithful gospel preaching.

All institutions created by the church should serve the priority of the gospel. For example, a program for training pastors should prepare them to lead the church in fulfilling its mission of evangelism and discipleship.

Institutions tend to take on their own existence and forget the original mission. A renewed emphasis of the gospel always leads to reform of institutions.

The church develops traditions of beliefs, worship forms, Christian living, and church policy; but a renewed emphasis of the gospel leads to the reform of tradition.

“There is a direct connection between the Lordship of Christ and the world mission of the church. This comes out clearly in Matthew’s account of the Great Commission. It is precisely because all authority in heaven and on earth has been given by God the Father to God the Son that the church has the responsibility to make disciples of all nations.”

J. Herbert Kane

“The Work of Evangelism”

EXAMPLES OF LOSING THE GOSPEL PRIORITY

Example 1

As the church works at fulfilling the mission of evangelism, it is necessary to make plans, form teams, develop programs, and find support. The church forms institutions to serve practical purposes. Often, institutions are formed during times of spiritual revival when people are committed and the church is motivated to accomplish its mission.

Institutions are necessary. An institution is simply the long-term organization of people and resources. Without institutions, there would be no church buildings, no foreign missions, no publishing of Bibles or any other literature, no Christian schools or educational programs, and no financial support for ministry. Even the local church is an institution that does not exist unless a group of people commit to it.

If an institution is successful, it may become large, with many people and a large budget. To maintain the institution takes much effort and expense. Sometimes the people who work in the institution begin to feel that building the institution is the primary goal. They think their work is to keep the institution going rather than to fulfill the original mission of the institution.

Though institutions are necessary, they must frequently be evaluated and reformed by the priority of the gospel.

Example 2

Because ministry has the potential of earning money, some people have started ministries as businesses. It is not wrong for a ministry to sell things to help with the expenses of ministry, and it is not wrong for a ministry to look for financial support. However, if a person is motivated more by money than by the gospel priority, his heart is wrong and his work does not please God (1 Peter 5:1-2, 2 Peter 2:3).

Simon was a man who wanted a spiritual gift so he could have status and financial profit, but the apostle told him that his heart was wrong (Acts 8:18-23).

- » What is wrong with the situation of a pastor who tries to sell his church? What is wrong with his understanding of what the church is?

Example 3

Syncretism is the mixture of Christianity with contradictory beliefs and practices from another religion. An example of syncretism from New Testament times is the Samaritan religion. Foreigners who worshipped idols moved into the territory of Israel and mixed

the religion of Israel with their idolatry; Jesus said that they did not know what they worshipped (John 4:22).

Another example of syncretism is from the history of Haiti. When Haiti was a French colony, slaves from Africa were required to convert to Christianity. They mixed their former religions with Roman Catholicism. Many Haitians still practice Voodoo, which is worship of spirits, but use Christian symbols and the names of Christian saints.

Sometimes syncretism happened because Christianity was associated with a nation that dominated another nation. People needed to please the dominant nation, so they accepted its religious customs but kept their original beliefs.

» What examples of mixture between Christianity and other religions have you seen?

Worldly motives can cause syncretism. If people think that accepting the gospel will bring them financial benefit, political influence, or favor from influential people, they may accept the appearance of Christianity without really being converted. Then, they continue to follow their old beliefs and practices but call them by Christian names. It is best when the church can evangelize without offering things that cause people to respond with wrong motives.

Christianity can seem like a foreign religion when the gospel is brought by foreign missionaries. That is why it is important for Christianity to be planted in each culture and take a form that is at home in that culture. It should not continue to look like a foreign religion. However, it is important for missionaries and evangelists to discern what details of a culture cannot fit with Christianity. This discernment is a process that must be assisted by local believers and cannot be finished quickly.

Example 4

Sometimes a religion is considered the established religion of the nation. For example, in some nations, most of the people are Muslim. In other nations, most people consider themselves to be Roman Catholic. Many of the people do not truly follow the moral standard of their religion and only occasionally practice the religious customs; but they say they are followers of that religion.

Many people call themselves Christians because in their social circles all good people are considered Christians. They have not really repented. They follow their own standard of morality.

The gospel is a call to repentance and submission to Christ. Jesus said that a person cannot be his disciple unless he accepts a death of self-centeredness and becomes a true follower (Luke 9:23).

The definition of a Christian cannot be adapted to be popular in a sinful society. The normal morality of a society is always much lower than Christian morality, and a Christian contrasts with the world.

- » How is popular Christianity without repentance often demonstrated in your society?

Example 5

We cannot expect that all believers will agree on all doctrines. There are differences among believers, even though they accept the Bible as their authority for doctrine.

Sometimes churches most emphasize the doctrines that distinguish them from other churches, but those doctrines are not as important as the foundational doctrines of Christianity. A church should not say that other churches are not truly Christian, if those churches teach the essential gospel.

A church should not establish its identity by fighting other churches. It should establish itself first with the gospel, then by building the fellowship of the committed group of members.

- » On what basis should a church accept another church as truly Christian?

Example 6

Even a true doctrine can be emphasized to such an extent that it seems to contradict other truth. By emphasizing grace, a church can seem to minimize the need for obedience to God. By emphasizing the moment of conversion, a church may seem to forget about the process of discipleship. While emphasizing God's faithfulness to the backslider, the church may fail to warn against the danger of apostasy. While honoring spiritual gifts, the church may neglect deep spirituality and Christian character.

Imbalance in doctrine shows up over time and has long-term effects. Any teaching that (1) causes carelessness about sin, (2) takes away the possibility of assurance of salvation, (3) puts extra difficulties in the way of the person who would respond to the gospel, or (4) hides the gospel is a teaching that is doctrinally imbalanced.

HISTORICAL REVIVALS AND REFORMATIONS

At times in the history of the church the gospel seems to have been forgotten by the great institutions. Errors such as institutionalism, syncretism, and doctrinal imbalance seemed more visible than the gospel. Leaders were supposed to be spiritual examples but seemed to demonstrate the wrong motives, wrong character, and interest in worldly things.

God has sometimes sent great revival to the church. Revival with long-term and broad results has three aspects.

1. There is theological reformation, when a neglected spiritual truth is recovered.
2. There is spiritual renewal, with much prayer, fervent worship, and numerous conversions.
3. There are new ministry methods, as the church finds new ways to evangelize and disciple.

The Protestant Reformation (throughout Europe in the 1500s) was a recovery of the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Thousands of people experienced conversion. Scripture was translated into the common languages and made available.

The Anabaptists (throughout Europe in the 1500s and later) were people who were concerned because many followers of the Reformation thought that believing the right doctrines was sufficient for salvation. Many people professed to accept the truth of the gospel but had not experienced conversion. The Anabaptists emphasized personal conversion.

The Pietists (late 1600s in Germany) were people who realized the importance of discipleship. They developed small group ministries and systems for training believers for Christian maturity.

The Methodist Revival (late 1700s in England) started with the ministry of John Wesley. Most of the priests of the Church of England denied that personal assurance of salvation was possible. Wesley preached that each person can know that he has a living faith in Christ and an assurance of salvation from the Holy Spirit.

- » What great truth do you need to emphasize in your society?

CONCLUSION

Many Christian institutions, large and small (including local churches), started with commitment to the priority of the gospel. Over time, many of them get diverted from that priority.

To renew the effectiveness of the church, we do not need strange new doctrines or new revelation. What we need is a recovery of the evangelical principle of the priority of the gospel.

LESSON 5 ASSIGNMENT

You will begin the next class with a test over Lesson 5. Study the test questions carefully in preparation.

LESSON 5 TEST

1. What are three characteristics of evangelical churches?
2. What are six ways that a church may lose the gospel priority?
3. What are four signs that a doctrine is imbalanced?
4. What are three aspects of long-term revival?
5. Write a true statement about each of the following:
 - The Protestant Reformation
 - The Anabaptists
 - The Pietists
 - The Methodist Revival

LESSON 6

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

NOTE TO CLASS LEADER

Give the test provided at the end of the previous lesson. Students should write the answers from memory without looking at any material or talking to each other.

DEPENDENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

When we do our best to receive ministry training and learn methods, there is a danger that we will depend on human abilities for ministry. But, as the Apostle Paul said, “We are not sufficient in ourselves; our sufficiency is from God” (2 Corinthians 3:5).

Paul said that he did not preach with human wisdom or by depending on human persuasion; but that he depended on the demonstration of the Holy Spirit so that the hearers’ faith would not be based on human wisdom, but on God (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Paul was educated, but he did not expect his knowledge and skill to produce spiritual results.

Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul said, “Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). They were convinced by the gospel because of the power of God.

Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Jesus said that nobody could come to him, unless the Father attracted them (John 6:44).

SOME ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- He convicts the unconverted sinner (John 16:8).
- He gives spiritual life to one dead in sin (John 3:5, Ephesians 2:1).
- He identifies the believer (Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 4:30).
- He commissions the believer (Acts 13:2, 4).
- He empowers the commissioned believer (Acts 1:8).
- He teaches the believer (John 14:26, John 16:13; 1 John 2:27).

- He leads the believer (Galatians 5:25).
- He enables believers to put to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13).
- » How does dependence on the Holy Spirit guide our approach to evangelism? What do we do differently because we depend on the Holy Spirit?

THE VALUE OF TRAINING

- » What should we think about training and methods of evangelism?

We are called to communicate God's truth. We should communicate the best we can to be understood.

We should not think that because we depend on the Holy Spirit we should not develop our abilities through training.

Paul said that he tried to persuade people (2 Corinthians 5:11). He told Timothy to study to be able to rightly communicate God's truth (2 Timothy 2:15). One of the qualifications of a bishop is that he have ability to teach (2 Timothy 2:24).

Apollos was highly effective as an evangelist. He is described as eloquent, powerful in the scripture, and fervent in spirit (Acts 18:25-26). His natural abilities, in connection with spiritual gifts, made him a great blessing.

The Apostle Peter tells us to always be prepared to explain the hope of the gospel (1 Peter 3:15).

These scriptures tell us that God will bless and use natural abilities and training if we are devoted to his purposes. He calls us to devote our strength and ability to his work.

THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

In Acts 1:4-5, Jesus told the disciples to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which he called the "promise of the Father." This event would include an endowment of power that would make them worldwide witnesses (Acts 1:8).

"The mighty undertaking which the Master was committing to their hands was beyond the power of man. Therefore he provided for them the infinite resources of the Holy Ghost. He was to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and so, he did accompany them in their ministry with stupendous power and astonishing results."

A.B. Simpson

Missionary Messages

Even though the disciples had been converted, they had an inner need that had to be met before they would be ready for ministry without the physically visible leadership of Jesus. Even three years of training by the greatest Teacher had not fully prepared them, for this inner problem remained. Before they could have a ministry empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit, as God planned, they needed to have a specific need in the heart met by a special work of the Holy Spirit.

The problem had shown itself on various occasions during the three years of training. They were sometimes vindictive in attitude, as when they wanted to call down fire on people who rejected them (Luke 9:54-55). They were sometimes proudly sectarian, as when they forbade a man to minister who was not authorized by them (Mark 9:38). They were selfish and proudly ambitious, as when two asked for high positions and were resented by the others (Mark 10:35-41).

They argued about which of them was the greatest (Mark 9:33-34). The fact that they were ashamed of it when Jesus asked what they had been talking about shows that they were conscious that their motives should have been better.

At their last meal together, Jesus washed the disciples' feet, and told them to have the same attitude of servanthood that he was demonstrating (John 13:14). They did not yet have this kind of humility; they had refused to serve one another that same evening. The problem was not a lack of knowledge, but pride.

Jesus told them that they should have love that would be strong enough for them to give their lives for one another (John 15:12-13). They thought they had this love, but did not; for they fled at the arrest of Jesus, even though they had claimed that they would face death with him (Mark 14:31, 50).

These were the men who would have the responsibility of leading and expanding the church without the physical presence of Christ. Jesus knew that they were not ready for this ministry until their internal need was met, so he told them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4-5). This promise is identified with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was so necessary that they were not to proceed with establishing and advancing the church without it.

He didn't tell them that what they needed was more training, nor a long process of growth. They were to wait in Jerusalem for a spiritual crisis/climax to occur.

They became a united, anointed team of powerful witnesses: following the call of God, depending on the power of God, and working for the glory of God.

The experience of the disciples on the day of Pentecost is described as a filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). Although many things happened at that event, Peter later indicated that the essential work of the Spirit was that he purified their hearts (Acts 15:8-9). This was the need of the disciples. All of the evidences of their inner need pointed to a problem in the heart, inherited depravity, of which they needed to be purified. When this purification occurred by the baptism (or filling) of the Holy Spirit, they no longer considered their own safety or promotion to be the main goal.

The event on the day of Pentecost launched the church into an era of powerful evangelism. The church joyfully and triumphantly advanced in spite of doctrinal disagreements, Judaizers' heresies, internal complaints, hypocrites, demonic resistance, persecution, and hardships.

A believer may have the same need that the disciples had. This need can be met by an infilling of the Holy Spirit.

That is not to say:

1. That a believer does not have the Holy Spirit until he receives this special filling.
2. That none of the works of the Holy Spirit occur in the believer until this filling occurs.
3. That there is no type of filling of the Spirit besides this one that cleanses the heart.
4. That every person who has this filling of the Spirit will have an apostolic ministry.

We should not assume that our experience will be exactly like the experience of the disciples. However, the need of cleansing of the heart and empowerment for ministry is still important for us.

From the example of the disciples we can see:

1. That if a person has this need, he is not fully prepared for ministry or holy living.
2. That God does not want to leave a person in this condition.
3. That the solution is not training or long-term spiritual growth.
4. That it is possible for this need to be met in a moment, after proper seeking.

How can a believer receive this work of the Holy Spirit?

Peter said that it was received by faith (Acts 15:8-9). Jesus prepared the disciples to have faith by giving them a promise and creating expectation.

Therefore, if a person sees his need and sees God's willingness to meet it, he can receive this grace by faith.

LESSON 6 ASSIGNMENT

Each student should examine himself in prayer and answer these questions in writing. This paper does not need to be given to the class leader.

- Do I depend on the Holy Spirit, or do I tend to accomplish only what my abilities allow?
- Do I have some of the characteristics that showed that the disciples needed the filling of the Holy Spirit?
- Are there actions, habits, attitudes, or goals that I have not surrendered to God?
- Am I willing for the Holy Spirit to cleanse me completely, so that I can be used for God's glory?

LESSON 7

PRAYER AND FASTING

INTRODUCTION

What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer.²

- » What error was E. M. Bounds trying to correct with the above statements?

The act of prayer makes a statement of dependence on God. A person who is too busy to pray thinks that his work is more important than the work God would do in response to his prayers.

Because we depend on the Holy Spirit, prayer is important for us. Paul asked people to pray for the spread of the gospel (2 Thessalonians 3:1, Colossians 4:3, Ephesians 6:19).

WHY PRAYER IS IMPORTANT

- » We know that prayer is important for the believer. What are some reasons it is especially important for a person who is an evangelist?

Prayer is important for the evangelist because:

1. **The evangelist must be spiritually alive.** Prayer is the breath of the soul. The evangelist leads others into a relationship with God that he already experiences.
2. **The evangelist cannot sustain the right passion for ministry without spending time with God in prayer.** Without prayer, a person trying to do evangelism will have the wrong motivations (maybe seeking personal success or enjoying argument).

2 E. M. Bounds, *Power through Prayer*, Accessed from https://ccel.org/ccel/bounds/power/power.l_1.html on January 13, 2023

3. **The evangelist must depend on the Holy Spirit to convict the unbeliever and give him the desire to be forgiven.** Evangelism is not a human effort alone. The evangelist relies on the power of the Holy Spirit. Human reasoning alone cannot cause a sinner to admit his guilt and desire to seek God (John 16:8, John 6:24).
4. **The evangelist depends on God to anoint his use of the scripture (Romans 1:16, Isaiah 55:11).**
5. **The evangelist needs God's guidance in his ministry (Acts 11:12).**

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

A Personal Prayer Life

Every believer should be faithful in daily prayer, and the importance is even greater for a person who wants to be effective in evangelism.

He should have a special time each day that he spends alone with God. If possible, he should be in a private place. He may need to get up early so he can pray without distraction before the busyness of the day. If he cannot make his special prayer time early, he should still take a few minutes at the beginning of the day to talk to God.

He should read some scripture every day and meditate on it, praying for God to fulfill the truth of it in his life.

"If your desire for learning exceeds your desire for souls, stop and pray until your desire for souls exceeds your desire for learning."

William Smith

A Prayer List

It is good to list the things we should pray about. Otherwise, we probably are not remembering some of the important things. We should be praying for the worldwide spread of the gospel, especially into countries where followers of Christ are persecuted. We should be praying for the success of the gospel in our own country. We should pray that our own local church will accomplish God's mission for our community. We should pray that God will help us personally to share the gospel effectively.

A list also helps a person pray at times when he has difficulty concentrating.

It is not necessary to use a prayer list every time you pray. Sometimes you feel the need to pray about certain things, and you can remember them without a list.

- » What other things should be on a prayer list?

A List of Names for Prayer

Make a list of 10 people you know personally who need to be saved. These should be people that you are in contact with often. Commit to pray for them every day. Speak to them if God opens an opportunity; if there is no opportunity to speak to them, continue to pray. Many people who have done so have testified that within a year some of the people on their prayer list were saved.

Prayer Partners

It is good for a believer to have a friend to pray with regularly. They should share needs and victories together. They could meet every week, or more often.

A husband and wife may pray together this way; but it is good if the husband also has a man to pray with, and the wife has a woman to pray with as a prayer partner.

- » What experiences do class members already have with prayer partners?

The Prayer Walk

A prayer walk may be done because a ministry feels a responsibility for the people of a neighborhood. A group or individual walks through the area praying for its needs. The prayer may be silent. They may talk to people they meet, but the primary purpose of the walk is prayer. A prayer walk may be done at the beginning of ministry in an area or later.

The Prayer Station

Some churches have set up a temporary prayer station in a public place where many people are passing. They put up a sign that says “Prayer Station,” and offer to pray with people who are passing. They ask, “Do you have a need that you would like for me to pray about?”

“The men upon whose shoulders rested the initial responsibility of Christianizing the world came to Jesus with one supreme request. They did not say, ‘Lord, teach us to preach,’ ‘Lord, teach us to do miracles,’ or ‘Lord, teach us to be wise’ ...but they said, ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’”

Billy Graham

They show concern for needs and do not start arguments. Often they have the opportunity to share the gospel.

- » What would be a good place for a prayer station in your area?

BIBLICAL PRAYERS

The prayers prayed by Jesus and the apostles show us things that we should pray, because we know that they prayed in the will of God. Here are three examples.

The Lord's Prayer: In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus gave a model prayer for his disciples. We should pray these words, but we should also pray in general with these priorities.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians: In Ephesians 3:14-19, Paul prayed for the spiritual establishment of the believers. We should pray the same for ourselves and others.

The Harvest Prayer: In Matthew 9:36-38, Jesus wanted his disciples to share his compassion for the lost and pray that God would send workers into the spiritual harvest.

THE PRACTICE OF FASTING

Fasting is a means of setting our focus on the spiritual and eternal, away from the physical and temporal. It demonstrates that spiritual and eternal things are more important to us than physical and temporal things. This is a means of strengthening our faith.

- » How is fasting different from a person starving himself to manipulate God to do something?

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES OF FASTING

These are examples recorded in scripture of times when someone was so serious about having God's intervention in his life that he fasted. These examples are chosen out of the many references in scripture simply to show that the Bible usually speaks favorably of fasting. In scripture, it is often mentioned as part of the explanation of why God did intervene.

- » A student should read one of the scriptures below about fasting and the class should discuss the situation described in the passage.

SCRIPTURE	RESULT OF FASTING AND PRAYER
2 Chronicles 20	A national fast brought victory in battle.
Ezra 8:21	Ezra fasted and prayed for God's protection through danger.
Esther 4:16	The Jews fasted for God's intervention in the planned massacre.
Jonah 3:5-9	Ninevah fasted for God's mercy.
Judges 20:26	Israel fasted to get God's guidance in a war.
1 Samuel 7:6	Israel fasted for forgiveness and deliverance.
Nehemiah 1:4	Nehemiah fasted for God to enable the rebuilding of the city.
Daniel 9:3	Daniel fasted for a deliverance of Israel from captivity.
Joel 2:12	A fast was called to accompany repentance and avert judgment.
Matthew 4:2	Jesus fasted 40 days in preparation for his earthly ministry.
Luke 2:37	Anna was a prophetess who spent her time fasting and praying.
Acts 10:30	Cornelius was fasting when he received a message from God.
Acts 13:2-3	While fasting, the church was told by God to send missionaries.
Acts 27:21	Paul fasted and prayed in a time of crisis.

JESUS' INSTRUCTIONS

Jesus said that the disciples would fast when he was no longer physically with them (Matthew 9:15, Luke 5:33-35). He instructed them about the proper approach to fasting. He said that fasting was not to be a demonstration for other people to see.

And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Matthew 6:16-18).

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF FASTING

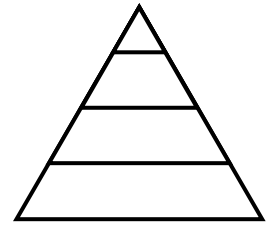
Some believers in the early church fasted a meal each Wednesday and Friday, besides scheduling annual fast days. Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, and D. L. Moody all fasted much. John Wesley and the early Methodists were known for fasting. Every revival of lasting significance has begun with prayer and fasting.

- » What people have you known who saw good results from fasting?

THE WEAKNESS OF THE MODERN CHURCH

Jesus told the disciples that they had failed to help a demon-possessed man because of their unbelief. He then said, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer” (Mark 9:29). He implied that prayer and fasting are the means of achieving faith; and, therefore, the cure for unbelief. He did not mean that the disciples should begin fasting only when a crisis arises; he meant that regular prayer and fasting should be a part of their lives, so that they would have the needed faith to meet crises.

Reasoning from Jesus’ words and from the multitude of scriptural and historical examples of fasting, we could diagram the blessings that are available to us with a picture of a pyramid divided into several levels. The lower levels of blessings may be gained through the faith that we reach by prayer alone. The higher levels of blessings will be gained only by the faith that is reached through prayer and fasting together.



HOW TO FAST PROPERLY

- Combine prayer and fasting so that fasting is not merely an outward act, but a renewal of spirituality and an extension of your faith.
- Fast with a motive of glorifying God and not for pride.
- As you pray and fast, seek for the will of God concerning your request.
- Do not substitute fasting for obedience.
- Do not harm your body.
- » Discuss an activity of prayer and fasting to do together.

FASTING SAFELY

Fasting is not unhealthy if it is done properly. Actually, there are many benefits to health that come with regular fasting.

- Drink water during a fast. Do not fast from water.
- Begin by fasting one day. Gradually increase to longer periods. Have a week of normal diet between fasts of a day or more.

Periods of nausea or headaches are common for those who are not accustomed to fasting. If a person in good health fasts regularly, he will not usually have those symptoms after the first few times. A bad taste in the mouth and bad breath come because the body is ridding itself of toxic waste.

On a long fast, many of the uncomfortable symptoms stop after a few days.

- Break a long fast with juice, then light food.

LESSON 7 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Consider what you will do to develop your own practice of prayer. Choose a time and an amount of time to reserve for prayer daily. Consider scheduling regular fasting.
2. Read two of the passages about fasting. Write a good paragraph about each, explaining the situation and the result of fasting.

LESSON 8

JESUS' METHOD

INTRODUCTION

- » A student should read Matthew 19:16-22 for the group. What surprises you about Jesus' answer to this man? If you heard a friend give that answer to a person who asked how to have eternal life, what would you want to explain to your friend?

THE MISUNDERSTOOD GIFT

Imagine that you are in good health, but a friend comes to you and says that he bought the cure for a certain deadly disease.³ To buy it, he sold his house and everything he had. He bought the cure for you.

- » What would you say to your friend when he gave you that gift?

You would thank him for his generosity, but you would not understand the gift. Why would he give so much to buy for you something you do not need?

Now imagine a different story. You have been to the doctor and found that you have a fatal disease. The cure is very expensive, and you have no way to pay for it. You go home and think about death, realizing that your family will lose you and you will never be able to experience what you hoped from life.

Then a friend comes and tells you that he gave everything he had to buy the cure for you. You appreciate it because you understood your need first. His gift is life for you.

Now think about the response of people of the world when they hear the gospel. The word *gospel* means “good news,” but many people do not understand why it is good news.

Imagine a man named Jason. His friend tells him, “Jesus died on the cross as a sacrifice so that your sins can be forgiven.”

Jason thinks, “I am not a bad person. I am good to my friends and family. Why would such a great sacrifice be needed for my sins? Why is forgiveness so important?” Jason might be

3 Much of the material of this lesson is presented by Ray Comfort in the sermon “Hell’s Best-Kept Secret” and the book by the same title. More material is available at <https://livingwaters.com>.

angry that his friend thinks he is such a bad sinner that he would need the death of Jesus for his forgiveness.

The Bible tells us that people are offended by the cross. People want to find a way to justify themselves. They don't think they need the sacrifice of Jesus, so the cross seems like foolishness to them (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Like the illustration about the cure for a disease, people do not appreciate the cross because they don't understand why they need it.

The biblical way to prepare people for the good news is to show them why they need it. They need to realize that they are sinners who will soon be judged by God.

- » Why should a person be glad to hear the gospel?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JUDGMENT

The fact that unbelievers will be judged and punished is the most important reason for an unbeliever to be glad to hear the gospel.

...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak (Matthew 12:36).

- » Read the description of judgment in Revelation 20:12-15.

The future judgment of unbelievers is the primary reason every unbeliever needs salvation.

God commands everyone to repent, "Because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:30-31).

If a person does not understand that his sin is serious, he lacks the most important reason to desire salvation.

- » What would make a person realize that his sin is serious?

THE USE OF THE LAW

Many people are not interested in the gospel because they do not consider themselves guilty. The Bible says that most people consider themselves to be good (Proverbs 20:6). If you ask someone whether or not he is a good person, he will most likely say "yes" and be ready to

argue for himself. Most people think their sins are not evil, and that they should be excused. To offer those people grace and forgiveness does not make sense.

The person must see himself as a sinner and be convicted by his conscience before he can see himself in need of grace. God has given the law to show sin.

By the term *law* we do not mean specifically the ceremonial requirements of the Old Testament that directed worship in the Temple. We also are not talking about laws that were given for the government of Israel, which do not apply to us the same way. We are talking about God's standard of righteousness. King David wrote in Psalm 119 about how he loved the law of God just as he loved God, because it came from God's own holy character.

The law of God shows us how we should live, and we are guilty for disobeying it. Nobody will be justified by keeping the law (Galatians 2:16, Romans 3:20) because everyone has already sinned. A person is using the law wrongly if he thinks that trying to follow it will earn his salvation.

The law of God directs our life (1 Corinthians 9:21), but it is not the means of our salvation. The law could not bring us to salvation because we do not have the ability to perfectly meet its requirements from birth (Romans 8:3, Galatians 3:21).

The law is not opposed to the gospel in God's plan. The Bible tells us that the law serves the purpose of making an unbeliever realize his need of salvation. The gospel did not destroy the law (Matthew 5:17) or make it irrelevant to us. The law serves as the perfect preparation for the gospel, not just in ancient times but still today as well.

The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Some people think there was a period of law that is over, and now there is a period of grace. The fact is that every person must encounter the law of God and realize that he is condemned before he can understand grace. The Apostle Paul said, "If it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin" (Romans 7:7).

Paul said that the law is given so that sinners are shown to be guilty and without excuse; because, by the law people realize that they are sinners (Romans 3:19-20). Every person is under the law and condemned by it until he is saved.

The gospel is not good news to a person who does not know that his sin is serious. The gospel is good news to a person who knows he is guilty and soon to face the judgment of God.

- » A student should read Luke 18:10-14 for the group. If someone had told the Pharisee that he could be freely forgiven by God's grace, how would he have responded?

A MODERN EVANGELICAL ERROR

Today many evangelicals do not like to emphasize that every person is guilty of sin and deserving of God's judgment.

They do not want to tell people they are bad.

They want to talk about positive things instead of the negative.

They want to offer immediate benefits of salvation, instead of eternal ones, because they are speaking to people who are focused on things of this world.

They imply that the law of God is a bad thing, an enemy to salvation, important only to people who want to be saved by works. The Bible says that the law is good and holy (Romans 7:12-14); the person who wants to please God will try to follow God's directions for life (Psalm 119:1-8).

They imply that God's standard is impossible and unreasonable, and that you are not to blame for your sins.

The problem is that if a person is not really guilty, he cannot really repent. He cannot be sorry for what he did unless he knows that he chose to do wrong. If a person does not really believe himself to be a sinner when he asks for forgiveness, he really is just asking for God's acceptance of his human failings.

The fact is that unbelievers are not condemned for being born with a sinful nature. They are condemned for their willful sins and attitudes of rebellion against God (Jude 15).

Many people believe that God is loving and forgiving, but they do not realize that he is also a righteous judge. They expect that if they ever meet God, he will forgive them even if they never repented. The incomplete gospel they have heard has made them more comfortable in their sins.

Many modern evangelicals emphasize that if a person becomes converted, he will have a happier life. They say that sin does not satisfy, but God does. They say that a person will receive love, peace, and joy. They say God has a wonderful plan for each person's life, and that plan will be fulfilled if a person becomes a follower of God.

“Conversion involves a break with the past so complete that it is spoken of in terms of death. We have been crucified with Christ. Through his cross, we have died to the godless world, its outlook, and its standards.”

Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

The Willowbank Report

These promises can be misunderstood. God gives love and peace, but there will be conflict between believers and people who reject God (Matthew 10:34-36). He gives joy, but there may be persecution at the same time (1 Thessalonians 1:6). He has a wonderful plan for each person, but a believer may experience hard situations and tragedies (2 Corinthians 11:24-27). If a person decides to become a believer because he thinks his life's condition will be better, he may be disappointed. Some people are suffering severely because of their faith in Christ.

As followers of Christ, we understand that life with God is wonderful, even if we suffer hard conditions. We can say that serving God is a wonderful life. However, most unbelievers do not have the right idea of what a wonderful life is. If you ask them to describe a wonderful life, they talk about health, money, freedom, peace, and other good conditions. They would not understand that a persecuted, suffering follower of Christ has a wonderful life. So, if you tell a unbeliever that if he follows Christ he will have a wonderful life, he probably will not understand what you are promising.

There is another problem with a false understanding of the gospel. A person may accept the message without seeing himself as a sinner deserving judgment. Because he does not see the seriousness of sin, he does not truly repent. He is not looking for salvation from sin, but for other benefits. He may think he is saved when really he is not.

He does not even receive the true benefits of salvation for his life, because he is not truly converted. He tries for a short time then gives up in disappointment.

The worst result of the wrong gospel is that the person who was disappointed is less likely to respond to the gospel in the future.

In summary, the problems with the gospel of a better life are

1. It promises what God does not promise.
 2. It is misunderstood by the unbeliever.
 3. The person may not be truly converted.
 4. He will not get the benefits he expects.
 5. He is less likely to accept the gospel in the future.
- » A student should read Acts 14:21-23 for the group. What did the apostles tell new converts to expect?

Jesus warned his disciples that people would hate them because of their faith in Christ. He told them they would not be saved unless they endured until the end. Three of the gospel writers recorded these words (Matthew 10:22, Mark 13:13, Luke 21:17). Most of the original apostles died for Christ.

Millions of believers in Christ have been killed for their faith. This is not just an ancient problem. More than half of Christian martyrs were killed in the 20th century.

If a person is converted because of the promise of salvation without the promise of an easy life, he will not give up because of a hard life. He is willing to endure the trials for the sake of eternal salvation. The trials make salvation seem even more precious to him.

- » Why do followers of Christ endure persecution?

DEMONSTRATING LOVE

- » A student should read 2 Timothy 2:24-26 for the group. What do these verses tell us about the evangelist's manner?

The evangelist should not seem to be fighting with the people he evangelizes. Satan is the enemy, and unbelievers are Satan's prisoners. We should explain truth with gentleness. Our purpose is to help them, not to defeat them in argument. Words used in this passage include gentleness, meekness, and patience.

- » A student should read Titus 3:2-5 for the group. What does this passage say about the behavior of the evangelist?

We should remember that without the grace of God, we would be like the people of the world. God came to us not with judgment, but with kindness and love.

An evangelist must not seem angry at the unbeliever, but at sin and Satan. He should not seem harsh. He should not seem glad to find their errors, but concerned about their salvation.

We have learned in this lesson that we do not show love to unbelievers by promising things that God does not promise. We do not show compassion by acting as though the problems of their life are more important than their eternal destiny.

Jesus fulfilled the prediction that the Messiah would not be a violent person, but gentle, and would not crush the person already wounded by sin (Matthew 12:19-20).

- » What are some ways we can demonstrate the love of God when we evangelize?

BIBLICAL EVANGELISM

The biblical approach to evangelism is to use the law of God to prepare people to receive the gospel. The law convicts unbelievers and shows them that they will be judged unless they find forgiveness.

John the Baptist preached that people should repent to prepare for the coming of the Lord and escape judgment (Matthew 3:1-12).

Jesus preached about judgment and hell many times. He offered grace to those who were sorry for their sins.

- » A student should read Luke 7:36-50 for the group. What kind of person is offered forgiveness?

We do not find in the ministry of Jesus that he offered forgiveness to people who were not sorry for their sins. He warned people of judgment. After a disaster when many people were killed, Jesus told a crowd that they would all perish unless they repented (Luke 13:1-5).

Jesus told the story of the tax collector and the Pharisee who prayed opposite prayers. The tax collector was sorry and received forgiveness. The Pharisee tried to justify himself. It would not have made sense to offer forgiveness to the Pharisee because he did not believe he needed it.

The Apostle Peter preached the promise of eternal life and called upon people to repent and receive forgiveness (Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 5:31).

Stephen, preaching to the Jewish rulers, did not offer grace, but convicted them of resisting God and breaking his law (Acts 7:51-53).

Paul preached that people should repent because God will not excuse sin (Acts 17:30-31).

It is not wrong to talk about joy and blessing that comes with being a follower of Christ; but the primary method of evangelists in the Bible was to preach for conviction of sin and repentance, offering salvation from judgment.

- » A student should read 2 Corinthians 5:11 for the group. What did the Apostle say he used for persuasion?
- » A student should read Acts 24:25 for the group. What did Paul talk about to Felix? How was Felix affected?

AN EXAMPLE OF BIBLICAL EVANGELISM

Andrew was distributing invitations to church when he met Jason.

Jason: I don't need church.

Andrew: The Bible says that every person will stand before God to be judged for his sins. Do you think God will accept you as you are?

Jason: Yes, I think so.

Andrew: Are you a good person?

Jason: Yes, I think I am.

Andrew: Maybe you are good compared to many people. Maybe you are good to your friends and family. But, do you know the standard that God uses? The Bible tells us about how God judges right and wrong. For example, some of his rules are called the Ten Commandments. Do you know the Ten Commandments?

Jason: Some of them.

Andrew: For example, one commandment says, “Do not witness falsely.” Have you ever in your life said something that was not true?

Jason: Of course, everyone has done that sometimes.

Andrew: But lying is breaking God’s command. Another one is to not steal. Have you ever stolen anything?

Jason: Only small things, and I have never made someone suffer by stealing from them.

Andrew: But God does not leave us to decide what we can steal. His command is that we not steal. Another one is that we never take God’s name in vain, saying it without reverence, or using it as a curse word.

[Each of the commandments can be used, but all do not have to be used in one conversation. Below are examples.]

- God tells us not to commit adultery, and Jesus said that to lust for a woman is to commit adultery in your heart.
- God said not to kill, and Jesus said that to hate someone is the same as murder in the heart.
- God tells us to keep His day holy. Have you always kept the Lord’s Day holy each week?
- God tells us not to covet, not to think that things will make us happy instead of God, wishing we had what others have.
- God tells us not to have any other god, not to let anything else be more important to us than him, which means that we don’t let anything keep us from obeying and worshipping God as he deserves.

[After using several commandments to show that the person is guilty, we go to the conclusion.]

Andrew: If God judged you today, you would not pass. You would be guilty by his standard. Would you like to know how to be forgiven so you do not have to fear the judgment of God?

[Then the evangelist can share the gospel and invite the person to pray.]

- » Two students should demonstrate a conversation in which one presents the gospel using the Ten Commandments. The group can discuss their demonstration. Then the students should divide into pairs and practice this presentation.
- » How do you know if a gospel presentation was successful?

Obviously if a person chooses to repent and become a follower of Jesus after our gospel presentation, we know it was successful. But that is not the only measurement of success. God is the one who is responsible to fasten the truth upon the hearer's heart. If you presented the gospel in a way that the hearer understood, you accomplished something important even if you never see the results. If he felt your concern and desire to help him, that is good, also. If he was angry or mocking, that does not mean you failed, especially if he was angry at the truth. God is honored by the message of the gospel; when you communicate it, you are successful at something important.

NOTE TO CLASS LEADER

This is an effective method for presenting the gospel. It is important that the students learn to use it. In your next class session, give them time to tell about their experiences when they tried to share the gospel with this method. Let them encourage and advise each other. It may be worthwhile to spend a session this way and wait until next time to go to the next lesson.

LESSON 8 ASSIGNMENT

Present the gospel to at least three people the way that Andre did in this lesson. Write a paragraph describing each conversation. Be prepared to tell about it in the next class session.

LESSON 9

THE BRIDGE GOSPEL PRESENTATION

INTRODUCTION

Note to class leader: At the beginning of this session, students should report their experiences sharing the gospel with the method they learned in the previous lesson. Remember that students need to encourage one another. Each student that shared the gospel accomplished something important, even if the hearer did not make a positive response.

In preparation for this lesson, be sure to have a chalkboard, whiteboard, or large paper for demonstrating the diagram to the class.

That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

» What reason did the apostle give for sharing the gospel?

We have experienced what it means to encounter God and be converted, beginning a relationship with him. We also have a special relationship with others who are in relationship with God. When we share the gospel, we are inviting others to come into the fellowship that we have with God and others who know him.

A GOSPEL PRESENTATION

This presentation of the gospel is concise and memorable. It uses a drawing that will be remembered by anyone who sees it presented. It can be presented in two minutes, or expanded to include discussion and explanation if the listener is interested.

It is not necessary that you be a skilled artist. The drawing is simple, and its simplicity helps the listener remember it.

We will now go through the stages of the drawing, with the explanatory wording to go with each part to be drawn.

*Note to class leader: Demonstrate the presentation while the students watch. **Try not to add extra explanations into the presentation. It should be short so that the students can learn it easily.** Students should not try to copy the drawing while they see it demonstrated the first time.*

For the second demonstration, the students should draw each stage of the drawing as you draw it on something large enough for the class to see. Try not to add extra explanations into the presentation. After the second demonstration, the class should go on to study the explanations given in the next section, then go back to practice the presentation.

WHAT TO SAY DURING EACH PART OF THE DRAWING

Part 1

“God created each person to be in fellowship with him and live a blessed life. He did not design life to be full of problems and suffering.”

[Write the word “God” and draw a person.]

Part 2

“Man is separated from God because of sin. The first people sinned, and every person since then has committed sin against God.”

[Draw the separation and write the word “sin.”]

Part 3

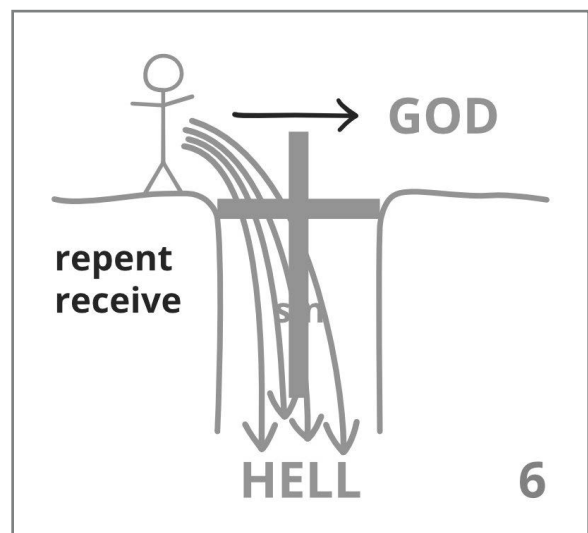
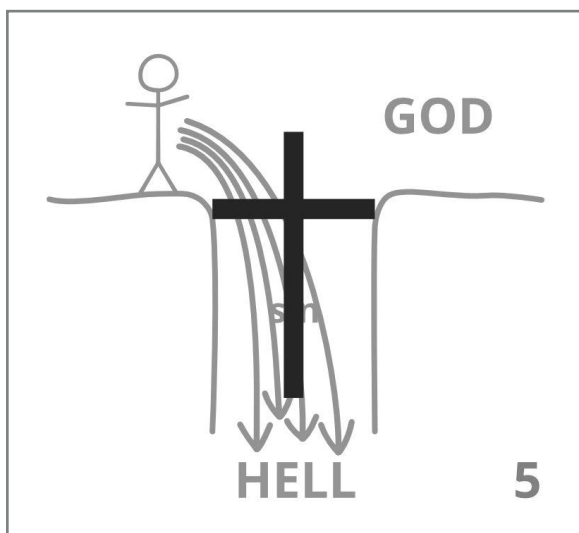
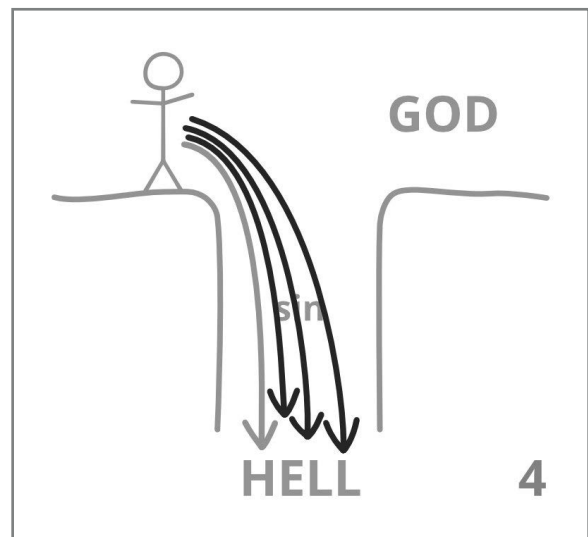
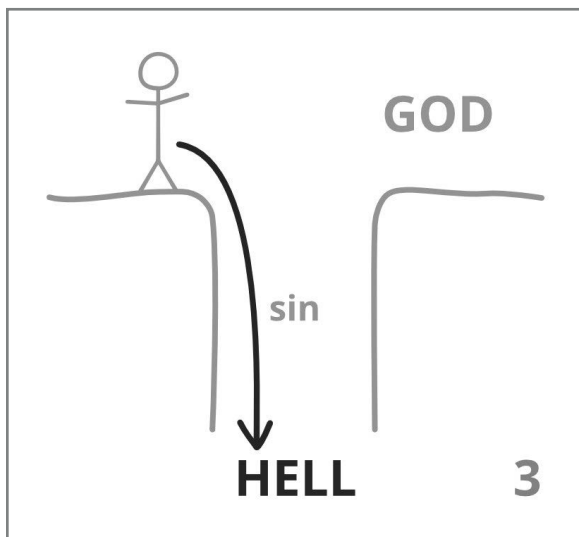
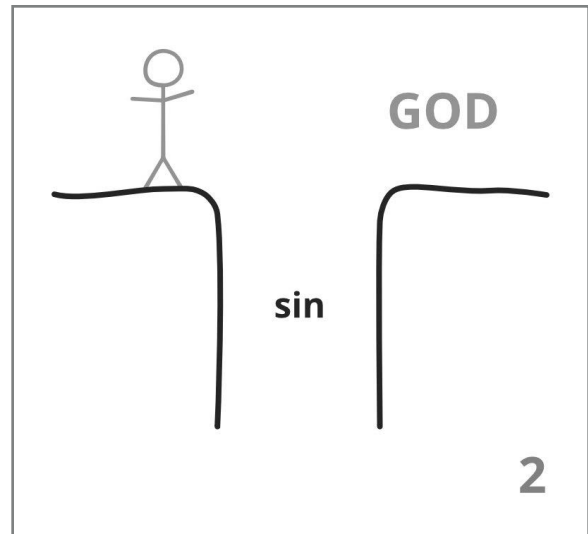
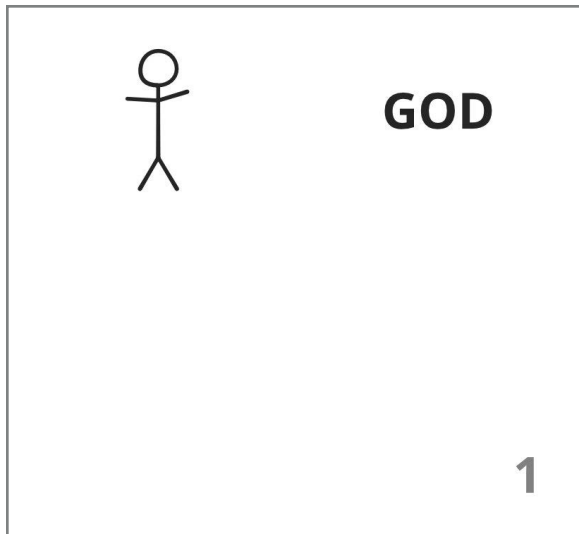
“God is a righteous Judge, and unbelievers will someday be condemned to eternity in hell unless they find mercy and come back into relationship with God.”

[Draw the arrow and write the word “hell”.]

Part 4

“Nothing that we can do brings us back to God or earns mercy—not good works, going to church, religious customs, giving money....”

[Draw arrows with each item in the list.]



Part 5

“Our situation would be hopeless if God had not made a way for us to come back to him. Jesus the Son of God died on a cross as a sacrifice so that we can be forgiven. After three days, he was raised from the dead.”

[Draw the cross.]

Part 6

“But it is not enough just to know this. Each person must individually make the choice to be saved and come back to God. A person must repent, which means to be sorry enough for sin to be willing to quit. A person who repents can receive forgiveness by asking God in prayer.”

[Draw the arrow and write the words “repent” and “receive”.]

Part 7

“Where do you think you are on this diagram? Has there been a special time in your life when you repented of your sins, received God’s forgiveness, and began to live for God; or are you still separated from God by your sin?”

[Wait for an answer. Many people will admit that they are still separated from God.]

“Are you ready to make this step—to repent, receive forgiveness, and begin living for God? I would be glad to pray with you right now.”

[Pray something similar to the following.]

“Lord, I know I am a sinner and deserve eternal punishment. I am sorry for my sins and willing to quit them. I ask you to forgive me, not because I deserve it, but because Jesus died for me. Thank you for salvation. From this time on, I will live for you.”

EXPLANATIONS

Part 1

The beginning of the presentation can be adapted to apply to the listener. Instead of “life full of problems and suffering,” the evangelist can mention something more specific that relates to the experience of the listener.

Part 2

It is important for the listener to realize that he is personally guilty of sin and separated from God. He is not just in a situation that has resulted from the sin of Adam.

Part 3

This shows the most serious aspect of the unbeliever's condition.

Part 4

The purpose of this part is to show the listener that he should not trust in the wrong thing for salvation. This part can be adapted to the needs of the listener. The evangelist should try to name the things that the listener is likely to be trusting in.

Part 5

The simplest way to explain the atonement is to say that "Jesus died on the cross as a sacrifice so that we can be forgiven." The purpose of this part is to help the listener realize that he should depend on the salvation God provided.

Part 6

The evangelist tries to bring the listener to a moment of decision. The listener needs to realize that he must make an individual choice. He needs to know the right definition for repentance, so he knows that repentance is more than regret and more than just saying he is sorry. He needs to know that he should pray to ask God for forgiveness.

Part 7

At this point, the evangelist tries to get the listener to admit his need for salvation. The presentation is designed to help the unsaved person realize that he is unsaved. The question is worded carefully. Many people think they should daily ask for forgiveness while they continue to live in sin. The question asks about a special time when the person is forgiven and a new life begins. He needs to realize that if he has not experienced conversion, he is still separated from God by his sin. Then the evangelist offers to pray with him for salvation.

If the listener does not understand his need or is not ready to repent, the evangelist should not push him to pray. If he prays without truly repenting and experiencing conversion, he may have a false assurance of salvation or may believe that conversion cannot happen for him. Either way, he may be less likely to seek God later.

The drawing can be presented quickly. If you have an opportunity to share the gospel, you can simply ask, “May I take two minutes to show you a drawing that illustrates what the Bible says is the way to know for sure that you are saved?” That lets the person know that you are not going to take a lot of his time. If he gets interested and wants to talk about it, then you can take more time.

Usually, people do get interested in the drawing. Often a person will ask to keep the drawing after the evangelist is finished.

NOTE TO CLASS LEADER

Demonstrate the presentation again several times. Avoid inserting extra comments or explanations into the presentation because the students will learn it more easily if it is short. After several demonstrations, various students could take turns demonstrating the presentation to the group, while the members of the group help them remember the details. Then, students could divide into pairs and practice the presentation with each other.

LESSON 9 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Present the gospel with the bridge diagram to at least three unbelievers. Write a paragraph describing each experience and be prepared to tell about it at the next class session.
2. In preparation for the next lesson, read and meditate on Romans 1-3, Romans 5, and Romans 10.

LESSON 10

THE ROMAN ROAD

NOTE TO CLASS LEADER

Have students report on their gospel presentations using the bridge diagram.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Paul planned to make a trip to Rome. He wanted to preach the gospel there (Romans 1:15), strengthen the believers (Romans 1:11-12), and get the support of the Roman church for a mission trip to Spain (Romans 15:24).

The purpose of the letter to the Romans was to introduce Paul and his theology of salvation to the Roman believers. The letter shows the basis for worldwide missionary work by explaining the theology of salvation.

Paul planned to use the church in Rome as a base for launching a missionary effort into Spain, which was the oldest Roman colony in the west and the center of Roman civilization in that part of the world.

Paul's visit to Rome did not happen the way he planned. He was arrested in Jerusalem. When it seemed to him that he would not get justice, he appealed to Caesar. After a dangerous journey, which included a shipwreck, he arrived in Rome as a prisoner in A.D. 60. Though he was confined, he was free to receive visitors; and, he had a ministry that reached throughout the city (Acts 28:30-31). Paul said that the events in Rome had served to advance the gospel. (Philippians 1:12) There were converts even in Caesar's household. He was released after two years. Whether or not he ever made his trip to Spain is unknown.

There are several questions that would naturally arise in response to Paul's request that they help launch his missionary trip. One might ask, "Why should you be the one to go?" So, Paul began the letter by mentioning his dedication to the work of evangelism (Romans 1:1). He later explained his special calling and success as apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 15:15-20).

Another possible question is, "Why does everyone need to hear the gospel? Maybe this message is not needed everywhere." Paul explained the potential of the gospel for mankind worldwide (Romans 1:14-16, Romans 10:12) and the urgency of missionary work (Romans

10:14-15). He showed that the message applies to every person in the world and that every person desperately needs to hear it.

THE BOOK OF ROMANS FROM THEN TO NOW

The epistle still serves its original purpose of providing a basis for missionary work. However, it does more. As Paul explained why everyone needs to hear the message, he explained what the message is and why people can be saved only this way. He responded to some common objections. This explanation and defense of the message he preached takes up most of the book and provides its structure.

Romans is an explanation of the theology of salvation. Paul's theology of salvation provided an immediate defense against Judaizers; and it serves to correct modern errors about doctrines of salvation also.

William Tyndale, in his prologue to the book of Romans, said that Paul's goal was to briefly lay out the whole teaching of Christ's gospel and to prepare an introduction to the entire Old Testament.⁴

Through history, God has used the epistle to the Romans to restore the most important truths when they had been forgotten.

In 386, Augustine committed to break from his life of sin after reading Romans 13:13-14.

In 1515, Martin Luther realized the meaning of Romans 1:17. He saw that the one who will be spared God's judgment is the one who has saving faith. This gave him the basis for an assurance of salvation which he had long sought. It became the basis of his message that faith alone is the way we can be saved.

In 1738, John Wesley found the assurance of personal salvation that he had sought for years. It happened while he was in a meeting with other young men who gathered regularly to study how to follow scriptural Christianity. While someone was reading Luther's preface to the book of Romans, Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed. He testified, "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation: and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death."⁵

For all three of these men, understanding the message of the book of Romans was a motivation to zealous evangelism. The book still accomplishes its purpose of providing a basis for missions by explaining the theology of salvation.

The whole book of Romans is an explanation of the statements in Romans 1:16-18.

4 William Tyndale, "Prologue to Romans," *English New Testament*, 1534.

5 John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, n.d.), 103.

Everything in verses 1-14 leads up to the statement in verse 15 where Paul said, “I am eager to preach the gospel.” Verses 16-18 explain concisely what the gospel is and why everyone needs it. The gospel is the message that sinners can be justified by faith. The reason everyone needs this message is that they are under the wrath of God.

Another way to state the primary purpose of the book of Romans is that it is the explanation of the gospel, based on the decree of God that whoever believes will be saved and whoever does not believe will be condemned.

The climax of the book of Romans comes in Romans 10:13-15, where Paul explains why it is urgent for messengers to take the gospel. People are saved by believing, but they cannot believe it unless they hear it.

“The general intent of this epistle is to publish the eternal, unchangeable purpose or decree of God, which is, ‘He that believeth shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned.’”

John Wesley

A GOSPEL PRESENTATION FROM ROMANS

The gospel can be explained using verses only from the book of Romans. This presentation of the gospel is sometimes called the “Roman Road.”

The first sentence of explanation for each reference is the most important one to remember.

Romans 3:23

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Every person has sinned by doing things they know are wrong.

This verse shows the real problem that people have. They have not obeyed God; they have deliberately disobeyed God. No person is an exception. No person can be accepted by God on the basis of having always done what is right.

For further emphasis of this point, you can use Romans 3:10 (“None is righteous, no, not one”) and Romans 5:12 (“Death spread to all men because all sinned”).

Romans 6:23

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

Sinners have earned eternal death, but God offers eternal life as a gift through Jesus.

This verse shows why sin is so serious. Because of sin, the penalty of death is passed to every person. It is eternal death, the judgment of God which every sinner deserves.

In contrast to the death we have earned, God offers the gift of life, something we have not earned.

Romans 5:8

“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”

The gift of God was provided by the death of Christ for us.

God was not willing to let us receive the judgment we deserved. Because he loves us, he provided a way for us to receive mercy. Jesus died as the sacrifice so that we can be forgiven. God did not wait for us to do something to deserve salvation—it comes to us while we are still sinners. Salvation is offered not to good people, but to sinners.

Romans 10:9

“If you confess... and believe... you will be saved.”

The only requirement for salvation is for the sinner to admit he is a sinner and believe God’s promise of forgiveness because of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

What about repentance? If a person admits that he has done wrong and wants to be forgiven, he implies that he is willing to quit his sins.

Romans 10:13

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

The offer of salvation is to every person.

Nobody is excluded. No other qualifications exist.

Romans 5:1

“Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.”

Believing God’s promise makes us a friend of God, no longer counted guilty.

To have peace with God means that we are no longer his enemies; we are reconciled. The sin that separated us from God is taken out of the way. To be justified means to be counted as not guilty. To be justified by faith means that believing God’s promise is all that is necessary for our forgiveness.

Romans 8:1

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Because we are connected to Christ, we are no longer condemned for the sins we committed.

Christ lived a sinless life and fulfilled the requirement of justice with his death on the cross. By faith we identify with him and are accepted by God the Father. God treats us as though we have never sinned.

Conclusion

Explain that an unbeliever can be saved by praying to God, confessing that he is a sinner and asking for forgiveness on the basis of Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection.

FOR LEARNING AND PRACTICE

The best way to learn and practice this method is to first mark each verse to be used in Romans by circling or underlining it in your Bible. Then put a number beside each one showing the order of its use. For example: beside the verse to be used first, write the number 1.

Practice presenting the gospel. Read each verse and give the explanation that goes with it. Be sure to include the concepts that are in the first sentence after each verse (above). Then, add whatever explanation is needed, using the other sentences if they are helpful. It is not necessary to use the exact words that are provided in this lesson.

Practice until you can do it without looking at anything except the Bible.

Note to class leader: Two or three students should demonstrate the use of the Roman Road for the group. The group should discuss ways they could improve the presentation. Then, the students should divide into pairs for practice. Each student should do the presentation twice, to different listeners.

LESSON 10 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Using the Roman Road, present the gospel to at least three people. Write a paragraph about each conversation and be prepared to tell about it when you come to the next class session.
2. Be prepared to write from memory (using only your Bible) the scripture references of the Roman Road and at least one sentence of explanation for each at the beginning of the next class session.
3. The next lesson is about evangelistic preaching. In preparation for this lesson, write down an outline or summary of an evangelistic sermon that you have preached, one you have heard, or one you would like to develop. Bring it with you to the next class session.

LESSON 10 TEST

Write the references for the scriptures used in the Romans Road gospel presentation. Below the reference, write at least one sentence of explanation. Do not write out the verses.

1. Romans _____

2. Romans _____

3. Romans _____

4. Romans _____

5. Romans _____

6. Romans _____

7. Romans _____

LESSON 11

EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

INTRODUCTION

- » A student should read 1 Corinthians 1:17-25 for the group. What is God's method for saving the lost?

The Jews were looking for power to deliver their nation. They wanted a message of power with signs of power to prove that it would work.

Gentiles wanted wisdom for understanding life and for success in the world. They wanted a message that would explain how they could get what they wanted.

The cross represented surrender and sacrifice. To the Jews who wanted power, it looked like weakness. To the Gentiles who wanted worldly wisdom, it looked like foolishness. In reality, the power and wisdom of God were demonstrated in the death of Christ. The cross looked like the weakness and foolishness of God, but it was greater than the best efforts of men.

The gospel message goes against the natural, sinful desires of humanity. It calls for repentance and surrender to God. It seems like a foolish message, because people want to hear about how to get what they want.

God has chosen to use the gospel to save people. He has given the task of communication to believers. The word *preaching* does not refer only to a person speaking to a crowd, but to communication of the gospel in various forms. The point of the passage is not that public preaching is God's chosen method. The point is that the gospel is God's method.

- » What does the passage mean when it says that the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who do not believe?

DEFINING EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

The word *preaching* may be used in a broad sense to refer to various forms of communicating the Word of God. However, in this lesson, we will use the word *preaching* in its usual sense: to refer to an individual speaking the Word of God to an assembly of people.

Evangelistic preaching is when the gospel is presented to an assembly of people. It is not just a presentation of any topic or passage of scripture. It is a presentation of the gospel.

The evangelistic preacher usually tries to persuade his listeners to make an immediate response to the message, with the goal that they be converted immediately. The message is designed to call them to that decision.

The information in an evangelistic message is carefully selected. The purpose of the message is not primarily education. The preacher tries to provide the information that the listeners need for the decision to be converted. This information includes explanation of the basic gospel, how the listener should respond, and possible consequences of the decision.

The preaching may occur in a quiet, orderly setting such as a church congregation in a church building or to a crowd of people somewhere else who have gathered for some other purpose. The crowd may be friendly to the message, or they may not.

- » What are various settings where you have seen the gospel preached?

GUIDELINES FOR EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

Because there are differences between preaching in a church and preaching to a different kind of group, we will first give guidelines that apply to evangelistic preaching in a church. In a further section in this lesson, we will give some guidelines that apply to outdoor preaching.

1. Expound a scripture passage.

The Word of God is powerful, so the preacher needs to use it. It is not necessary that the passage be long or that the preacher spend a long time explaining details of it. He should use scripture that supports the gospel message. He should make sure that his most important statements are based on the scripture, so the power of God's Word is used. He should not select part of a verse to use with a meaning that is different from the meaning it has in its context.

2. He should define the terms *repentance* and *faith*.

The listeners may have wrong ideas about what these terms mean. They may think that repentance means making your life right so that God will accept you. They need to know that repentance means being sorry enough for your sin that you are willing to be delivered from it.

Listeners may think that faith means believing in a religion or practicing religious customs. They need to know that saving faith is to completely put your trust in the atonement of Christ for salvation.

3. Emphasize that a person becomes a Christian in a moment of conversion.

Many people have wrong ideas about what it means to be a Christian and how a person becomes a Christian. They may assume that the preacher just wants them to become more religious or be part of his church. They may think he just wants them to start living a stricter life. Emphasize that at conversion a sinner repents, receives forgiveness, and begins a personal relationship with God.

4. Refute the wrong reasons people have for professing to be Christians.

In some societies, most people think they are Christians. They may think they are Christians because they have been in church, do good things, believe certain things, or have had some spiritual experience. Besides emphasizing conversion, describe a life of relationship with God and the obedience that follows repentance.

5. Make sure that unchurched people will understand you.

Don't use terms that only religious people know. Don't refer to religious customs that your listeners don't understand.

- » What are some terms used in your church that people in your neighborhood might not understand?

6. Offer forgiveness, relationship with God, and eternal life.

These are the most important benefits of being born again. Show the seriousness of the sinner's condition by describing the judgment and eternal punishment that will come on unbelievers.

7. Avoid promising benefits that are not promised in the gospel.

If people think that the offer of salvation includes material benefits from God or the church, prosperity, healing of sickness, or some other kind of improvement of life's situation, they may try to accept the benefits without really repenting.

You can explain that when God is in control of a person's life, he will guide, bless, and help with their problems. However, we should not promise that all their problems will be solved if they become followers of Christ. For some people, life may even get harder because of persecution.

8. Do not connect conversion with local church membership.

Church membership should be available as soon as a person is truly converted, but the terms of membership need to be explained after conversion. Do not talk about church membership

requirements while trying to persuade a person to repent of his sins. The evangelist should focus on bringing the listener to encounter God.

- » What are some requirements for membership at your church that are not necessary for salvation?

9. Do not set requirements for conversion that come with maturity.

Call for the listener to repent of the sins he understands. Do not tell him rules about details of life that he will not understand until he has been a believer for some time. The call to repentance and faith is difficult enough. Do not add difficulties that might make a person reject the gospel.

10. Explain what you want them to do.

Don't assume that the listener knows he should pray and ask God for forgiveness. Don't assume that he knows how to come forward and kneel. When you invite the listeners to respond, explain exactly what you want them to do. Consider how to make it as easy as possible for the person who is timid in the church environment.

PRAYING WITH SEEKERS

People may gather to pray for many reasons. Sometimes a pastor invites people to pray about a variety of needs. The guidelines listed here do not necessarily apply to all occasions of praying. These guidelines apply to praying with those who respond the invitation after an evangelistic sermon.

The pastor should make sure some people of the church are trained to help people who are praying for salvation. He should have these people prepared to help when he gives an evangelistic invitation.

Sometimes a person who wants to help pray with people is a hindrance instead of a help. The pastor should watch for problems and be ready to help. If a person is hindering the prayer time with unwise behavior or wrong counsel, the pastor should do whatever is necessary to correct the problem.

We believe that a person can repent, believe, and experience conversion immediately. That belief guides our policies for praying with seekers.

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYING WITH SEEKERS

1. At least one mature believer should help each seeker who is praying.

Do not leave a seeker to pray alone and leave without help. We want the seeker to come to a definite victory.

2. Find out why the seeker is praying.

Do not assume that he is praying for salvation. Even after an evangelistic sermon, people come to pray for a variety of reasons. It is not necessary to interrupt a seeker who is praying; but at some point, the believer who is helping him should ask, “What do you want God to do for you?” The believer can then pray with him about whatever need he has.

3. Encourage the seeker to make full repentance.

Ask, “Are you willing to repent of sin, and let God deliver you from sin?” Encourage him to tell God his repentance. It is not necessary for him to confess his sins to the pastor or any other person, unless there are specific transgressions against those people.

4. Assure the seeker that God will forgive.

Tell him to ask God for forgiveness and to trust God’s promise to forgive. If he seems to struggle with doubt, show him a scriptural promise (1 John 1:9, John 3:16, Romans 5:8).

If the seeker seems unable to pray in his own words, the helper could offer to help him with a prayer that the seeker will repeat. It could be something like this prayer:

“Lord, I know I am a sinner and deserve eternal punishment. I am sorry for my sins and am willing to quit them. I ask you to forgive me—not because I deserve it, but because Jesus died for me. Thank you for salvation. From this time on, I will live for you.”

Usually, if a seeker has difficulty praying to a definite victory, there is a sin that he is reluctant to quit. He cannot have faith for forgiveness until he truly repents.

5. Ask the convert for a testimony.

If the seeker seems to find victory, someone should ask him, “What did God do for you?” Encourage him to make a definite statement. He may testify to the congregation, but he should at least state it to the ones who prayed with him.

6. Give a printed explanation of salvation.

The convert should be given a printed explanation of salvation to take with him. It will help him understand what happened and also help him explain to others.

7. Arrange the first step of discipleship.

The first step of discipleship will usually be a meeting with a pastor or mature believer. Make sure the convert understands what happened to him. After that, he may join a small group or meet with someone regularly.

Someone should also visit his family, make sure they know about the conversion, and invite them to the church. There may be an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

- » What are the customs at your church for praying with seekers? What do you need to do to add the things listed above?

PREACHING OUTSIDE

Preaching outside is for the purpose of reaching people that do not come to church. It is difficult because the listeners are there for some other purpose and may not give attention. There may be noise and disorder. There is not an atmosphere of worship created by a congregation like there would be in a church building.

An obvious requirement for an outdoor preacher is that he must have a voice that is powerful enough for people to hear, or he must use some kind of amplification.

The first challenge for preaching outside is to get attention. People in the area decide quickly whether they want to listen or not. Some will listen for a few minutes. Many will listen to only a sentence or two before deciding whether or not they are interested.

The preacher must use short sentences, and every sentence must make a worthwhile statement. He must remember that each sentence will be the first sentence that some listeners hear. Making a point with each sentence will help catch attention. If he succeeds in getting a group to listen, he may be able to tell illustrations and explain points more thoroughly.

If possible, the preacher should have a group of believers with him. If people who are passing see others listening, they are more likely to stop and listen. If there are musicians who can provide music before the preaching, that usually helps to gather a crowd.

The preacher should invite the listeners to come forward and pray for salvation.

The helpers should distribute printed information to people in the area.

- » What possible settings exist for outdoor preaching in your neighborhood?

NOTE TO CLASS LEADER

Each student should now look at the evangelistic sermon he brought with him. He should consider how it fulfills the 10 guidelines for evangelistic preaching. He should plan how it should be revised.

There may not be time for the class to discuss every student's sermon, but the class should do several of them together to provide students with examples.

The next class session should not cover a lesson. The students should present their evangelistic sermons and then discuss them. It is not necessary for them to preach the sermons completely, but condense them to a presentation of 5-7 minutes each. The next scheduled session after the practice session should use Lesson 12.

LESSON 11 ASSIGNMENT

Develop an evangelistic sermon that follows the guidelines of this lesson. The sermon does not have to be written out completely, but should have the main statements written. Bring it to the next class session for discussion.

LESSON 12

OPENING DOORS

INTRODUCTION

- » Are we supposed to pray for unbelievers? Where in the Bible are we told to pray for unbelievers?

It is not easy to find a verse in the Bible that says directly that we should pray for the conversion of unbelievers. What we do find are many verses that tell us we should pray for the effective spread of the gospel (2 Thessalonians 3:1, Ephesians 6:19, Colossians 4:4, Acts 4:29).

We do know that we should pray for the conversion of unbelievers along with praying for the success of the gospel. We are told to pray for everyone, which would include praying that unbelievers would be converted (1 Timothy 2:1). We are told to try to bring people to repentance (2 Timothy 2:25), and it would be appropriate to pray for God's help in that work.

EVANGELISM IN THE FIRST GENERATION

When the church is at its best, evangelism seems to happen spontaneously and naturally. In the first generation of the church described in the book of Acts, it seems that everyone was joyfully spreading the gospel.

- » A student should read Acts 2:46-47 for the group.

Apparently, the fellowship of the church was so strong and alive that it naturally drew others in. This tells us that if a church is not attracting new people, its fellowship is not as strong as it should be.

- » A student should read Acts 5:42 for the group.

The apostles and others found opportunities for the gospel everywhere and all the time. Some churches have not been doing evangelism, and they are not sure how to start. They don't know how to find opportunities for the gospel.

- » A student should read Acts 8:1-4 for the group.

Because of persecution, many believers left Jerusalem to live in other places. They shared the gospel in all of the places where they went. For them, sharing the gospel was part of the Christian life.

ARGUMENTS ABOUT CHURCHES

You should avoid arguments about other churches in the presence of unbelievers. Try not to criticize other churches when you share the gospel. Unbelievers do not have spiritual discernment to come to the right conclusions in religious arguments. Many people of the world say that conflicts among churches are the reason they do not believe in Christianity.

If someone insists on asking about doctrinal differences, give scriptural answers, but try to get him back to the priority of the gospel. You can say, “Questions like that are important, but the most important thing is to be saved and in relationship with God.” If they tell you about a Christian they have known, maybe a relative or a pastor, try not to say critical things about that person’s doctrine.

If you do have to explain why your church is different from another, you can say, “It is important for a person to repent of sin, be forgiven, and live in obedience to God. Our church emphasizes that priority, so we are different from churches that emphasize something else.”

HARD QUESTIONS

Some believers are afraid to evangelize because they are afraid of hard questions. It is good to keep learning, but the fact is that most believers do not know how to answer all of the hard questions. You do not need to know all the answers.

If someone asks a question that you cannot answer, you can say something like this: “I don’t know the best answer to that question. Someone at our church could help with that. But I do believe the Bible, and I believe that the most important thing is to know God and be saved. I do know how you can be saved.”

If a person says, “I don’t believe the Bible,” or “I don’t believe in God,” there are two different directions you could take that conversation. You could ask him the reasons for his opinion and try to give him some evidence. The other direction is to say, “You probably have thought about this and have tried to come to a logical conclusion. But, even if you don’t believe the Bible, as an intelligent person you want to know the basic message of the Bible. Can I show you what it is?” By doing this you may get to share the gospel without arguing. God can use the message to affect him later.

When you are evangelizing, you may meet someone who just wants to argue. You should avoid wasting a lot of time with him. Even if you say all the right things, he probably will not accept the truth. Try to share the basics of the gospel, then move on and talk to someone else.

DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

- » A student should read Titus 1:9-11 for the group. What does this passage give as reasons that we should defend the gospel?

One of the abilities that a pastor should develop is the ability to defend Christian truth against the philosophies of the world. This is not talking about arguments about the doctrines of different churches, but the resistance of the world against the gospel.

The reason we must defend truth is not only to try to convert the person who argues, but to help the people who are influenced by him. Many people have not yet decided what to believe. They need to hear a defense of Christian truth.

Most believers are not completely equipped to do this kind of argument. Every believer should be learning as much as he can, but some are especially gifted and prepared for that work.

During argument, it is important to show your purpose. You are not trying to win a competition. You are not fighting the person as a personal enemy. You need to show that truth is important to you because you care about people. If he does not believe the gospel, his soul will be lost. That is why you want to change his mind. You could say something like, “I want you to know God and be saved, and I’m afraid that you believe something that will not bring you to God.”

DEVELOPING THE SKILL OF MAKING OPPORTUNITIES

We do have some records in the Bible of times when an evangelist found a special opportunity to share the gospel.

- » A student should read Acts 8:26-39 for the group. Another student could be asked to summarize the story for the group. How was the Spirit of God active in this event? How did Philip recognize an opportunity for the gospel?

Another example of an evangelist recognizing an opportunity for the gospel is Jesus himself.

- » A student should read John 4:7-14 for the group. Another student could be asked to summarize the story.

This conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman included the topics of ethnic conflict, religious controversy, and the routine duties of life. Jesus did not spend much time on those topics, but guided the conversation to the topic of the woman’s spiritual need.

When you have learned how to give a gospel presentation, you will look for opportunities to share it with people. Occasionally, someone may ask to hear the gospel, but opportunities are usually not that obvious.

Some believers feel that it is difficult to share the gospel because they think people are not interested in hearing it. They think it is difficult to start a conversation about religion.

The gospel deals with many concerns that people have. Therefore, it is not difficult to introduce the gospel into a conversation.

In this lesson, we will next talk about the reasons people have for being interested in the gospel.

THE VARIETY OF MOTIVES

People have various motives for responding to the offer of salvation. Sometimes there are wrong motives, but there are many right motives.

- » What was your reason for accepting the gospel? Let several students describe their own reasons for conversion.

Here are various motives that cause people to desire salvation.

- To go to heaven, not to hell (or fear of judgment)
- To have fulfillment and purpose in life
- To have security, peace of mind, freedom from fear
- To have forgiveness, freedom from guilt (clear conscience)
- To be spiritually clean and whole
- To have fellowship with God (to know God)
- To have fellowship with followers of Christ
- To have satisfaction of spiritual desires (real happiness)
- To have deliverance from sin
- To know truth

These are direct benefits of reconciliation to God. They are not worldly concerns that conflict with eternal values. A person lacks these things if he is separated from God.

- » Look at this list and consider which ones are important to you. Which ones attracted you before you were converted? Which ones became important to you after conversion?

An unbeliever may show in his conversation that he feels a need for one of these benefits of salvation. The evangelist can adapt his approach to sharing the gospel to address that

need. Say, “The reason people don’t have _____ is that they are separated from God. The Bible tells us how to come back into relationship with God.”

It is important to make sure that we are not promising earthly happiness to any person who will become a Christian. A person who decides to follow Christ for that reason probably is not really repenting of sin and, therefore, will not get the benefits of salvation. Another reason we should not promise earthly happiness is that the Bible does not promise good situations for the believer; instead, it predicts persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).

The most important reason for a person to become a follower of Christ is that he realizes his guilt and the coming judgment. The other things in the list above can be used to help a person realize that he is separated from God.

RECOGNIZING OPPORTUNITIES IN CONVERSATION

- » What openings have you used to get an opportunity to share the gospel?
- » Has it seemed difficult for any of you to get an opportunity to share the gospel? What do you think is the reason?

Sometimes an opportunity comes easily. In those cases, you can simply start explaining the gospel. If you want to show them scripture verses, you can ask, “May I take a few minutes to show you what the Bible says about how to become a Christian?” If you want to show the bridge drawing, you can ask, “May I take two minutes to show you a drawing that illustrates what the Bible says is the way to know for sure that you are saved?”

Openings appear in conversations on a variety of topics. Any of the conversational openings described here can be used for the presentation of the bridge drawing or a gospel presentation from scripture like the Roman Road.

- » How many have heard people complain about the hard conditions of their lives?

Sometimes people complain about hard conditions in their life. Ask, “Why is life so hard?” After they respond, say “Can I show you a drawing that illustrates why life is so hard?” Begin by saying that God intended for us to live in relationship with him and did not intend for life to be as it is. The world has been damaged by sin. Go on to present the drawing.

To use a presentation directly from scripture, like the Roman Road, you can say, “The Bible explains that life is hard because everyone has sinned. Sin brought a curse on the world.” Continue through the Roman Road.

If a person seems to be religious, you can ask him what his most important belief is. Or you could ask him, “What do you believe is the way a person can know that he will go to

heaven?” After hearing his answer, ask “May I take two minutes to show you a drawing that illustrates what the Bible says about how a person can go to heaven?”

- » Have you heard people talk about the bad condition of the world or national problems? How would you use that as an opportunity to share the gospel?

If a person is talking about national problems, world hunger or poverty, or the danger of war, ask, “Can I show you some scripture that explains why the world is like it is?”

Show that the world’s condition is because unbelievers are separated from God. Do not imply that salvation instantly ends all problems, but show that individual salvation is the beginning of God’s solution. Someday there will be a new heaven and earth and those problems will not exist for those who are now reconciled to God.

USING OPENING QUESTIONS

Questions can be used to start a conversation, and then the conversation will open an opportunity for the gospel.

The easiest question is to simply ask “Are you a Christian?” Most people are not offended at the question. If the person says, “No,” you can ask, “Can I tell you what the Bible says about how a person becomes a Christian?”

If the person says, “Yes, I am a Christian,” you can say, “That’s wonderful. How did you become a Christian?” If the answer is wrong or the person seems confused, you can offer to explain what the Bible says about how a person becomes a Christian.

The questions in the section above can be used as other opening questions during conversation. Below are some more questions.

“What do you think is the purpose of life?” Let the person give his opinion. Agree with whatever is good about his statements. Then say, “The most important part of our purpose is to know God. He designed us to live in relationship with him. Can I show you what the Bible says about how to come into relationship with God?”

“What do you think is the key to happiness?” Whatever they suggest, you can say, “Many people who have that don’t seem to be happy for very long. The Bible tells us that joy comes from God (Psalm 16:11). Can I show you a drawing that illustrates how a person can come into relationship with God?”

“Do you believe in life after death? What do you think it is like?” Then, “The Bible says that each person will go either to heaven or hell. Can I show you what the Bible says about how to get to heaven?”

“What do you think is the basic message of the Bible?” This gives you the opportunity to show the drawing from Lesson 9.

- » Has anyone already used an approach similar to one of these? How did it work?

Not every class member will feel comfortable with every method described in this lesson. It is possible that a method might not be appropriate in every culture.

The purpose of the lesson is to help the student find a way to develop his own approach.

NOTE TO CLASS LEADER

The next lesson includes directions for distributing gospel tracts. The students will need to know where to get some tracts for distribution. If possible, bring a supply to the next class session.

LESSON 12 ASSIGNMENT

As you continue to share the gospel this week, try some of these opening questions or develop your own. Observe how they work and write a paragraph of description. Be prepared to tell about your experience in the next class session.

LESSON 13

ADAPTING EVANGELISM METHODS

INTRODUCTION

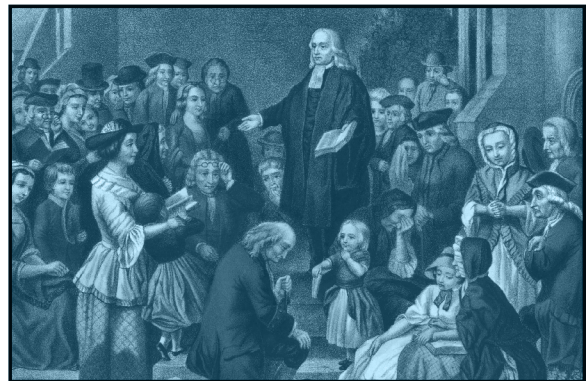
- » How do you think that the task of evangelism is different now from New Testament times?
- » How do you think that evangelism in your country is different from the time when the first missionaries came?

EVANGELISM IN HISTORY: THE EXAMPLES OF JOHN WYCLIFFE AND JOHN WESLEY

John Wycliffe was a pastor in England. He lived 1324-1384. At that time, the Bible was not available in the language of the people. People had to depend on what the Roman Catholic Church taught them. Most people did not know the gospel. Even many Catholic priests did not know the Bible well. Priests traveled the country doing religious rituals and asking for money. Most churches were controlled by priests who did not preach the gospel. Wycliffe and his helpers translated the Bible into English. Printing by machine was not available then, so they copied scripture by hand. They traveled in pairs and taught the Bible to groups everywhere. People called them “poor priests” because they did not ask for money.

Methods of evangelism must be adapted to the conditions of a society. Wycliffe and his helpers accomplished the basic part of evangelism; they took the message of the Bible directly to the people.

John Wesley lived in England 1703-1791.⁶ At that time, the Anglican Church had become the church of wealthy people. They were ritualistic and did not teach a clear gospel. Most



6 Image: “John Wesley preaching on his father's grave”, by Currier & Ives, retrieved from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002707689/>, “no known restrictions.”

of the poor people of the nation were not welcome in the churches and did not know the gospel. Wesley was an Anglican priest, but he wanted to get the gospel to the people. One morning, he went to a field where many coal miners were passing through on their way to work. He preached, and many stopped to listen. After that, he preached outside almost every day for the rest of his life. Thousands of people were converted by his ministry.

- » What missionary is remembered for being one of the first to bring the gospel to your area?

THE NEED TO ADAPT METHODS

In 2003, a man was traveling in London with his family and stopped at a park to rest. He noticed a woman standing on a hill in the park. She had a Bible and was speaking. He went closer and could hear her talking about something religious. He noticed that she had a friend standing nearby, so he asked the friend what was happening. The friend said, “We are part of a group that continues the tradition of outside preaching like Wesley did. Occasionally, we go to a public place to preach.” However, the man observed that the woman was standing in a place where few people were passing, not many could hear her, and her style was not effective for getting the attention of people outside. She was trying to continue the tradition, but had lost everything that originally made the method effective.

Methods must be adapted to the circumstances. Sometimes people assume that there is only one way to do evangelism, and they continue a method that is no longer effective. Sometimes people think that a method that was effective in one place will be effective everywhere else, but that is not true.

In many places the church has evangelized by going from house to house and knocking on the doors of people they have not met yet. That method has resulted in many conversions, but it would not be effective in every place.

Some churches have bought buses and offered to bring people to church. On Sunday morning, they drive the bus throughout a neighborhood gathering people. Many people have been converted through the bus ministry, but that method would not work in every place.

Many churches have evangelized by preaching the gospel to a crowd that comes to the church building on Sunday. They invite people to come forward to kneel at the altar and pray for forgiveness for their sins. Thousands of people have been converted by this method, but most unbelievers do not come to church. Many people will not hear the gospel unless someone shares it with them individually in conversation.

The Apostle Paul was a model of adapting evangelistic methods. He could speak in the Jewish synagogues because he was a qualified Jewish rabbi, and he explained to them that Jesus is

the Messiah. He also spoke in places where people gathered to present philosophical ideas. Sometimes he spoke in marketplaces. Often, he spoke to groups in homes.

SOME MODERN METHODS

People have used many different ways to start a conversation about the gospel. Some churches have used survey questions. They go throughout the community and ask questions like these: “What do you think the church should be doing in the community? What is the most important belief of Christianity? How would you explain what a Christian is? How does a person become a Christian?” After listening patiently to a person’s opinion, a Christian might ask, “Can I tell you what we believe the Bible says that a Christian is?”

Sometimes evangelists in a public place get attention by painting a picture or diagram that illustrates the gospel. Others make drawings with chalk. Some evangelists put colorful pictures on a board as they tell a story.⁷

Some churches offer a seminar on a practical subject that is needed by people in their community. The subject may be marriage, child raising, business principles, health, or training for some kind of work. The church is doing something good when it serves the needs of the community. The church has the responsibility of showing how biblical truth applies to daily life. The seminar may not present the gospel directly, but it teaches biblical truth and develops the relationship between the church and the neighborhood.

Some churches have set up a temporary prayer station in a public place where many people are passing. They put up a sign that says “Prayer Station” and offer to pray with people who are passing. They ask, “Do you have a need that you would like for me to pray about?” They show concern for needs and do not start arguments. Often, they have the opportunity to share the gospel.⁸

The most basic essential element of an evangelism method is that the gospel be presented clearly to people who need to hear it. Because God gives power to his Word and the Holy Spirit convicts those who hear, an evangelism method is more likely to be effective if it communicates the gospel clearly and directly.

The challenge for the church in every place and every time is to find a way to get the attention of people and communicate the gospel throughout society.

- » What are some ways that churches in your city get the attention of people? Do those methods communicate the gospel?

7 For examples of this method, see the Open Air Campaigners websites: <https://www.oacgb.org.uk> and <https://oacusa.org>.

8 For pictures and information, see the following website: <https://prayerstations.org>

EVANGELIZING FRIENDS

The most effective form of evangelism is when a person directly explains the gospel to a person who knows and trusts him.

A follower of Christ should be most effective when witnessing to friends and acquaintances because they have seen the example of his life. If his example is good, they are more likely to respect his testimony. It is important for a believer to show his faith so that people always know that he is a Christian. He should not be embarrassed for people to see him read a Bible or pray. People who know him should not be surprised when they learn that he is a believer.

A follower of Christ can be respected for his example at school or work even by people who do not like Christianity. Even people who persecute him will respect his example if he is consistent in his actions and attitudes. Some people will come to him for prayer and counsel.

PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS

Some people think that they must know a person for a while before witnessing to him. They try to become a friend before talking to someone about God. It is true that a person is more likely to listen to a friend. However, it is possible to show sincere concern and interest in a person immediately. If we do not learn how to share the gospel with people we meet, we will miss many opportunities to be effective. A previous lesson about “Opening Doors” gives methods of starting conversations for the gospel.

One man said, “Any time I am alone with someone for a few minutes, I use it as a meeting arranged by God.” He meant that he believes that God gives him encounters to use for the gospel.

THE GOSPEL IN PRINT

You can do something to spread the gospel that the Apostle Paul could not do.

We have a method of spreading the gospel that was not available to the church for many centuries: information can be printed on paper by machines.

- » What do you think would be different about ministry before printing was available?

Try to imagine ministry in the times before printing. Every copy of a book required days of work by an educated person because it had to be written by hand. You may think that books are expensive now, but imagine paying for a book the same price you would pay to hire a skilled professional for 10 days of work.

Almost nobody had their own copy of scripture. Even the pastor might not have the whole Bible. Imagine if you did not have the possibility of reading the Bible at home.

Training of pastors was done mostly by speaking, and they had to try to remember what they heard. There was no way to send printed training to other places. Without printing, nothing could be written and distributed in a large quantity.

» What are some ways that printing helps for the spread of the gospel?

Tracts are small printed articles, usually presenting the gospel. Believers can give them to people that they encounter. They can also be given out in large numbers in a public place. They can be left in places where people will read them.

If a person has not done much evangelism of strangers, giving tracts is a good way to start.

A tract should be colorful and have an interesting title. When distributing tracts to people on the street or some other public place, smile and greet them. You could say, “Hello, did you get one of these yet?” That makes them curious to see what it is.

It may seem that most people are not interested in the tracts that you give them. Many people may throw them away without reading them. However, there are good results, also. People have been converted because of the message of a tract. Usually you will not know the results of the tracts that you have given.

MEETING PRACTICAL NEEDS

Sometimes people are concerned about some practical need of life. They are without enough food or adequate shelter or medical care. They feel that those needs are more urgent than their spiritual need. The church can respond to practical needs as a way to share the gospel. The potential problem is that the church’s attention will become focused on earthly needs rather than spiritual needs, just like the focus of unsaved people.

The church should respond to practical needs but should maintain certain practices that emphasize the spiritual priority.

1. They should explain that they are sharing the love of God when they meet needs.

“Missionaries in India, Uganda, and other places have been accused of ‘buying’ converts by giving them money, famine relief, educational advantages, and medical services, or by according them other kinds of preferential treatment.”

J. Herbert Kane

“The Work of Evangelism”

2. They should work together as a family of faith, rather than becoming an organization distinct from the church.
3. They should invite people to commit to the fellowship of the church where people care for one another.
4. They should share the gospel, teaching that eternal life and blessings come from knowing God.

Many ministries offer programs that respond to material needs. They serve the needs of the community as far as their resources allow. Their goal is to create opportunities to share the gospel. They think that helping people in practical ways will make friends and get attention for the gospel. The formula is Program, then Relationship, then Gospel.

There are many ways for programs of help to go wrong. Help may not create any relationship except the giver/recipient relationship. Sometimes the gospel seems separate from the things being given, and people can get the help without being interested in the gospel. Even the people working in the program become busy at providing the help and do not share the gospel.

The formula should be turned around. The church should emphasize the gospel as its first contact with everyone.

When a church presents the gospel to the world, they must be faithful to include a description of a new life in the church. Salvation is not just a personal, individual decision that leaves a person alone in a strange, new life. Unbelievers will not usually accept the gospel unless they are attracted to the community of faith that presents the gospel.

In the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, we see that the gospel is the good news of the kingdom of God. It is the message that the sinner can be forgiven and come into relationship with God. He is delivered from the power of sin and made into a new creature. He enters the family of faith where his spiritual brothers and sisters encourage him and help him with his needs.

The church should see its primary mission to be communicating the gospel. The church should work at that constantly. Everyone should know that working for the salvation of souls is what the church is about. Then, the church attracts the right people. It attracts people who are interested in the gospel. These people come into relationship with the church, so the ministry of the gospel creates a relationship.

Then, the church helps people that are in relationship with the church. Maybe not all of those people are believers yet, but they are in relationship and are attracted by the gospel ministry of the church.

So, the reversed formula is Gospel, then Relationship, then Help (not a program). The church should not be just an organization offering programs for help. Instead, the church is a group of people that help the people who are in relationship with them. If they start programs, people will come for the programs without the relationship.

LESSON 13 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Observe the methods for evangelism that are being used by churches in your area. Do the methods succeed at getting the attention of people outside the church? Do they communicate the gospel clearly? Write 2-3 pages on your observations.
2. Distribute at least 100 tracts. Write a few sentences describing your experience.

LESSON 14

MINISTRY TO CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

- » A student should read Matthew 18:2-6, 10-14 for the group. What are the warnings we see in these verses? How would you describe the importance that God sees in children?

Sometimes people say that children are important because they are the next generation, the future of the church, and the future leaders. All that is true; but first of all, children are important because they are people. Sometimes adults seem to forget that children are people with eternal souls and unknown potential.

“A traveler stopped in a small village. He saw an old man sitting beside the street and said, ‘I have never heard of this village before. Were any great men ever born here?’ The old man said, ‘No, only babies.’”

GOD’S COMMAND FOR MINISTRY TO CHILDREN

God gave the people of ancient Israel a covenant. He promised to bless and care for them. He gave them requirements to obey.

God wanted the covenant to be for all generations. He told them, “These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

Raising children to follow God’s will was important for the covenant, because many of God’s blessings were conditional and depended on his people’s continued obedience. If the next generation chose to not be loyal and obedient to God, then they would lose the benefits of a relationship with him. That meant that careful teaching of the children was necessary.

- » What do you think the Israelites could do to make sure that their children would make the decision to follow God?

God gave them some directions for training their children.

You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 11:19-20).

What point was God making? They were to teach diligently, constantly, and consistently, not just occasionally. They were to have reminders of God's law posted in visible places. They were to see scripture everywhere. They were never to forget or ignore God's commands.

Consistent teaching meant that they would not have decorations or entertainments or behaviors contrary to God's law.

So, these verses emphasize that parents are responsible to teach their children God's values constantly and consistently and to guard them from teachings and examples that would do the opposite.

- » This commandment was given to parents. What applications should we make to the ministry of the church?

First, we know that the training of children is first the responsibility of parents. The church should teach parents how to teach their children. We should never assume that children should get spiritual instruction only from the church because parents cannot do it.

Secondly, the church should minister to children in the context of their family as much as possible. Help children by helping their parents. When doing evangelism, the church should try to attract families to the church.

Some children from non-Christian homes come to the church and begin to follow Christ. When that happens, the church should try to minister to the family. If the parents do not respond, the church must be a spiritual family for the children. The members of the church should be like older relatives who show spiritual care.

EVALUATING A CHURCH'S MINISTRY TO CHILDREN

- » How can you evaluate the success of children's ministry in a particular church?

Your ministry to children is not necessarily successful even if...

- Your teachers have great abilities.
- The number of children and teachers is increasing.
- Children are learning biblical information.
- The teachers use high-quality material.
- Children enjoy the ministry.

Those characteristics should exist if a ministry to children is successful. If a ministry lacks them, there will be problems. However, it is possible for a ministry to have some, or all, of those characteristics but still be failing.

Your ministry to children is successful if...

- The children are converted and have assurance of salvation.
- The children are gradually maturing spiritually.
- As the children get older, they follow Christian principles.

Your ministry has not succeeded with a child who...

- Is not a follower of Christ.
- Chooses worldly role models.
- Follows impure entertainment and relationships as he gets older.
- Rejects God's will for his life and follows personal ambitions.

Shaping a life to match God's truth is the work of discipleship. It is to develop a person into a mature follower of Jesus. The moment of conversion does not automatically integrate God's truth throughout a person's thought patterns, attitudes, assumptions, and lifestyle. That integration of truth takes time. That is the real task of discipleship.

THE FIRST NECESSITY FOR MINISTRY TO CHILDREN

» What do you think is the first thing you need for ministry to children?

A ministry for children quickly forms a group of participants that includes the children and the adults who are involved. That group has natural leaders, people who influence the others by their personalities, even if they are not in official positions. Among the adults and among the children there are natural leaders.

The first necessity for the ministry is a Christian environment with a positive spiritual atmosphere. There you can nurture Christians who are immature mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.

That means that the adults must be people who are spiritual examples. You cannot use people for children's ministry who are not serious believers. You cannot include children who strongly influence the others to reject your message.

Your ministry to children is already failing if...

- Adults who are helping the ministry are there because of a special ability or other reason, but are not good spiritual examples.
- Children without interest in spiritual things dominate the conversation and social interaction of the group.
- All spiritual activities are led only by adults with no significant participation by children.
- Only a few children want to cooperate and show spiritual interest, and they are not socially accepted by most of the others.

Look at the group of children and ask yourself these questions. If a new boy started coming to our ministry, which children in the group would he most likely follow? If a new girl were enrolled, whom would she tend to follow? Would those influences be good or bad?

The first necessity of the ministry is a positive Christian environment. Children's ministry must be started with this first necessity in place. If the ministry already has lost that, it must somehow make a new start, or it will not achieve the right purpose.

THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNICATING LIFE

The knowledge of God comes through relationships.

When God spoke to Jacob, he identified himself. He did not say, "I am the God of the universe," or, "I am the God who created the world;" though either of those statements would have been true. He said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac." (Genesis 28:13) God reveals himself through people.

Abraham became a man of faith and others believed in God because of him. His servant Eliezer prayed to the God of his master Abraham (Genesis 24:12).

There should be people who come to know God better because he is your God.

Sometimes we assume that discipleship is merely telling people what they need to know and what they should do. It isn't. First, you have to show them a life that they want to follow. If they want to live like you do, then they will listen to your directions about how to do it.

Discipleship is communication of life. A lifestyle, with its motives and core values, is being transferred from a discipler to a disciple.

The principle of life transference states that discipleship occurs when a teacher implants his lifestyle, with its motives and core values, into a student.

First-century Jewish rabbis understood that discipleship was life transference. When a young man wanted to be the disciple of a rabbi, he would ask the rabbi to accept him. If accepted, he would begin to share the life of the rabbi. He would be with him most of the time, not just learning his doctrine but learning his approach to life.

Jesus varied from the custom of that time by choosing men who had not asked to be his disciples. But, he followed the custom of discipling by sharing life together for the purpose of life transference.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, some of his disciples were arrested and taken before the same court that had convicted him. The Sanhedrin probably thought that their problems were over since Jesus had been eliminated. They assumed that a few threats would be enough to intimidate and silence Jesus' followers. As they examined the disciples, they could see that they were not highly educated men, certainly less educated than any member of the court. But, the scripture says that the Sanhedrin observed of them that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). Jesus had stamped his life upon them.

What did they see of Jesus in those disciples? Was it his mannerisms or style of speaking? Maybe; but there was more. They saw a courage that came from a sense of divine calling. They saw a steady commitment to truth at any cost. They saw a respect for authority but a rejection of compromise and hypocrisy. Surely the hearts of those corrupt politicians and religious hypocrites must have been shaken as they realized that their problems were just beginning. Jesus had multiplied and perpetuated his influence through discipleship.

Dr. Paul Brand was observing some of his young medical students as they practiced examining and diagnosing patients in a hospital in India. As he watched one of them deal gently with a patient, he was amazed at a certain expression that came onto the intern's face. The expression perfectly matched the face of Dr. Pilcher, the surgeon who had trained Dr. Brand in England. Dr. Brand explained to the interns that he had reacted with such surprise because he knew that Dr. Pilcher had never been to India, and he didn't understand how the intern could so imitate him. Finally, one of the interns said, "We don't know any Dr. Pilcher, but Dr. Brand, that was your expression he was wearing."⁹

It is what you teach when you are not trying to teach that will have the most effect. You teach the most when you are not trying to teach anything. As someone has said, "You teach a little by what you say, more by what you do, and most by what you are."

Beware of the power of your example. You are always teaching. You disciple mostly by your lifestyle.

You show a disciple how to respond to his problems by the way you respond to your problems.

9 Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *In His Image*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 18-19

Kindness, courtesy, and patience are important for helping children. Some people are more able to be kind, courteous, and patient with children than others.

You show that you value a person if you give him full attention. Don't act hurried when you talk to him. Consider what your body language is saying if you are turning away, walking to your next task, working on something while he is talking, or switching your attention to someone else.

Practice good listening habits. Signs of good listening are eye contact, a concentrated expression, ignoring distractions, and responding to the speaker's humor or other emotions.

If you really have to hurry and cannot stop to listen, you can explain. That will not offend them if you usually give them the attention they need. But if in general you feel too busy to take time for them, thinking you need to get something done, you need to stop and consider what your real work is.

- » What children are part of your life? What are some ways you can show them that they are important? Do you have some habits that you should change?

Our availability to God is more important than our abilities. God needs our availability more than our abilities. God will give the abilities needed to fulfill his calling.

Young people tend to be unsteady in many things. From one day to the next they may switch from seeming spiritual to seeming rebellious, from generous to selfish, or from mature to childish. That is not because they are being hypocritical. They are still in development, and their personality is not consistent.

Young people are unsteady, but they need you to be steady in your expectation. If on their bad days you tell them they will never be worth anything, you lower their expectation of themselves. They don't yet know what they are going to be, and your evaluation influences what they become.

Talk much about God's special plan for their life. Tell them God has given each of them special abilities. Talk about the satisfaction of finding God's will.

"When a person no longer has sympathy for the young, his usefulness on the earth is about over."

George MacDonald

A young person with leadership potential may have many ideas but not do well at discarding the bad ones. An aspect of maturity is the ability to distinguish between good ideas and bad ones. Help him learn wisdom, but don't discourage him from having ideas.

Above all, remember that God has the ultimate plan for every person, and he is working to bring it about. Pray for discernment so that you can work with God's plan of development for the student. Pray for miracles of grace and providence in the student's life that will turn him in the right direction.

IMPROVING TEACHING METHODS

- » What are some characteristics of a good teaching style? When you see someone teach, how do you know he is a good teacher?

The teacher has control of the teaching style. There are several aspects of style that the teacher should carefully plan.

1. Rate of Instruction

People are like vases with narrow necks. If you pour too quickly, some does not go in. If you teach information too quickly, they will not learn it. As a person learns new information, he must connect it to what he already knows. He must also think about how this information applies to his life. Therefore, there are limits to the speed that a person can learn information.

It is better to make one point in an unforgettable way than to cover many points that they will forget. It is better for them to learn how to really apply one major concept than to hear masses of information in which they see no significance.

2. Group Discussion

Most people need some discussion with others while they learn. They need to be able to ask questions and to repeat a concept in their own words. If a teacher's style of teaching does not allow interaction from the listeners, they will not learn as much.

You can introduce a theme with a question, like "Why is it important to...?" or "What is the most important thing you know about...?" Don't spend a lot of time on the introductory discussion, but use it to get them interested.

After presenting some information, you can ask a question that makes them explain the concept their own way. For example, "What was the mistake the person in the story made...?" or "Why is it important for us to...?" Ask questions that must be answered with explanation, instead of questions that are answered with a yes or no. The questions need to be easy enough that most of them get good answers from the children. They will lose interest if their answers are usually wrong.

- Do not pressure a student to share something personal. Instead, try to create an atmosphere in which he will feel free to share personally.
- Don't allow certain ones to do all of the talking. You can direct a question to a silent member: "What do you think, Charles?" You should encourage participation by others: "What do the rest of you think?"
- Don't allow people in the class to have their own discussions while ignoring the group.
- Don't allow anyone to interrupt even a child who is speaking.
- Try to affirm every comment in some way before criticizing it. If it needs correction, try to correct by expanding it.

3. Relevance

Always ask yourself the question, "Why does this material matter?" If you don't know, they won't either. What difference should it make in them? Are there specific applications they should make to their lives? If you can't think of any, they probably won't either.

If they see that the topic is relevant to them, they will listen better. In order to control the class, concentrate more on making it interesting than on maintaining discipline.

4. Significance

Show the results of the truth you are teaching. What happens when people know it and follow it? What happens when people reject this truth?

Inspire them with great themes. Avoid spending too much time on the smaller issues. Tell them stories about others who have lived by the truth you are sharing. They won't remember your outlines, but they will remember your stories.

Provide heroes for them. They are looking for people to admire and imitate. Tell about heroes of faith—not just those who saw great miracles, but those who accomplished great things by God's power. Help them see that the church's mission to spread the gospel and make disciples is the greatest challenge and most fulfilling work in the world.

5. Visuals

If possible, use colorful pictures when telling stories. When teaching concepts, write main words and statements on a board. They will remember them better if they see and hear.

6. Action

People learn by doing. Children can learn by making something or acting out a story. The teacher can even direct them in acting out a Bible story as she tells it. This takes time, so

you may not be able to have action for the whole story every time, but you should look for ways to put in some action every time.

- » Some members could talk about recent lessons or sermons they have presented and describe how they should have used these aspects of style better. Some could describe what they are already doing to apply these aspects.

A GOSPEL METHOD FOR CHILDREN: THE WORDLESS BOOK

Each page of the wordless book is a different color and represents part of the gospel.

Below is a summary of the message that goes with each page. When you use the Wordless Book, you should add more explanation and let the child interact and ask questions.¹⁰

Note: some people put the gold page first, then black, and continue through the others in the same order listed here.

Black: Black reminds us of sin, the bad things we have done. The Bible says that everyone has sinned. Because of sin, we are in trouble with God. (At this point, you should ask the child to admit that he is a sinner.)

Red: The good news is that Jesus, the Son of God, died for us so we can be forgiven. Red represents the blood of Jesus. Jesus died, but he rose from the dead and is preparing heaven for us.

White: When God forgives us he makes us clean in our heart. He takes away all the sins we have done. You can pray and ask God to forgive you. God is ready to forgive you if you are sorry for your sins.

Gold: Gold represents heaven, the place that God is preparing for us. When our life here is finished, we will live with God in heaven where there is never sadness, pain, or evil.

Green: When you are forgiven, you are a child of God. You will grow in your relationship with him. Green represents growing. You will learn more about God and learn how he wants you to live. You should read your Bible, pray every day, and listen to others who know how to live close to God.

¹⁰ For other information about what to say when you use the Wordless Book, visit these websites:

<http://berean.org/bibleteacher/wb.html>

<http://www.abcjesuslovesme.com/ideas1/bible/bible-themes/1150-wordless-book>.

For information about how to make a Wordless Book or similar things, see this link:

<http://www.teenmissions.org/resources/wordless-book-bracelet/>.

LESSON 14 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Look again at the material in this lesson under the title “The Principle of Communicating Life.” Consider your interaction with children, not just in teaching, but anytime you encounter them. What do you need to change? Have a conversation with someone who knows you well. Show him (or her) the material and explain your evaluation of yourself. Ask for their honest opinion. You need to report that you did this assignment, but you can choose whether or not to give details of your evaluation.
2. Prepare a lesson or sermon for children. Design it carefully to use the six aspects of style. Be prepared to explain how you designed it.
3. Find a way to buy or make a wordless book. Learn the presentation and present it to at least three people. Write a paragraph describing each experience.

LESSON 15

THE DESIGN OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Joel likes to talk about the early years of his church. “We started meeting in a park, inviting everyone we saw. When it got cold, we met on an old bus. We didn’t have any bathrooms. Later, we met in a gymnasium for a while, then rented space in an old church building.”

Joel’s church was growing through those years. The people who committed to that church were not attracted by the building. They were attracted by the group of people.

In this lesson, when we talk about how to design the church, we are not talking about a building. Many great churches have stories about how they started in difficult circumstances.

Some churches say they cannot attract people because their building is not good enough. The truth is that they lack something else that is more important than a building.

THE MEANING OF CHURCH INVITATION

Believers everywhere invite people to visit their churches. They hope that visitors will like the church and want to continue coming. They hope visitors will respond to the gospel.

- » When you invite someone to church, what does that invitation mean? What are you offering?

We are not asking them to participate in religious exercises, as if that would meet a need or fulfill a duty. We don’t believe that practicing religious rituals is effective for a person without faith.

We don’t expect that they understand worship of God while they are unconverted.

We hope that they will like the friendliness of the people and want to be with them again.

We hope they will respond to the gospel.

Some churches try to make their program attractive to people with no spiritual interest. They hope that if people enjoy the program, they will continue to attend. The problem is that if the entertainment succeeds, it attracts a group of people without the right interests. The congregation becomes a mixed group that includes many people who are not interested in worship but enjoy the entertainment. The worship leaders and musicians become performers. Eventually, worship leaders are developed who are not interested in worship. The worship has become corrupted.

- » Consider this question again. When you invite someone to church, what are you offering? What should you be offering?

Think about the great change that happens when a person is converted. He leaves his former religion, which may also separate him from family and friends. He repents of sin, which may mean leaving most of the things that he thought he could enjoy. He surrenders control of his life to God.

Because of the great change that happens at conversion, a person does not usually accept conversion without thinking about the community he will leave and the one he will enter. If a person is attracted by the witness of an individual believer he wants to see the community of faith that the believer represents. He wants to see how the faith is really lived out. He assumes that the message he is hearing has already created a community of faith that he will enter if he is converted. It's as if he is asking, "Where is the group of people who believe this message and live by it? What would it be like for me to be in that group?"

Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom and spoke often about the kingdom of heaven. He told people that the kingdom of God had come to them (Luke 10:9). People who entered God's kingdom accepted the rulership of God, lived by his laws, and shared life together. Their loyalty to God made them a community of faith.

Because people need to see the community of faith created by the gospel, evangelism cannot be done only by individuals persuading individuals. That means that the local church is necessary. The local church must be attractive as a community of faith.

- » What would a person want to see before committing to a community of faith?

The church has a nature designed by God and a mission given by God. Every local church should be the best it can be by God's standard. We should not turn

"Jesus had built into his disciples the structure of a church that would challenge and triumph over all the powers of death and Hell. It had started small like a grain of mustard seed, but it would grow in size and strength..."

Robert Coleman

The Master's Plan

the church into something different to attract people. We should not try to present the church as something different from what it is.

If a church fulfills the purpose God gave it, it will attract the right people and build a committed group.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ATTRACTIVE LOCAL CHURCH

- 1. The members show that their relationship with God is real and satisfying.** An unbeliever does not have a relationship with God. When he sees what life with God looks like, he will feel a need. Members show this by testifying to the joy of knowing God and by living a committed life. If a member is still living in sin when he is not at church, he shows that he is not satisfied with God.
- 2. The church presents doctrines both as truth and as terms for the relationship with God.** We teach doctrine because it is true, but not only because it is true. Doctrine is something we need to know because we want to live with God. Just like marriage is a relationship with promises, our relationship with God has promises of commitment. Doctrine explains how we live in the relationship.
- 3. The church demonstrates the joy of worshipping God.** The joy of worship is not the same as the enjoyment of entertainment. People who do not worship the true God do not feel the joy that comes from worshipping him. We are designed for worship; therefore, an unbeliever who sees joyful worship will feel his need.
- 4. Church members show purpose for life with the perspective of eternity.** Followers of Christ do not have to wonder if their life is significant. They have comfort and courage in the hard times of life. Unbelievers struggle to find a satisfying purpose for life, and they do not know how to face death and eternity.
- 5. The church shows the priority of relationships, instead of selfish goals.** The church does not evangelize or care for its congregation for the purpose of building its organization. People of the world neglect relationships or use relationships for selfish goals.
- 6. The message of the church satisfies deep spiritual needs.** The unsaved person has a spiritual hunger that cannot be satisfied by anything the world offers. The preaching and teaching and counseling of the church should match the real needs of people.
- 7. The church is a family of faith that loves and cares for its members.** Other kinds of groups may help some needs of their members, but only followers of Christ can have true Christian fellowship.

- » What are some specific ways a church can show these characteristics? What are some things a church should start doing to better show the right priorities?

PREPARING THE CHURCH FOR EVANGELISM

The church should make sure that its programs and organization help fulfill its mission of evangelism and discipleship. Everything the church does should be consistent with that priority.

Welcoming Visitors

The church should be prepared to welcome visitors and help them feel comfortable. Some people are not familiar with church customs. When they visit a church, they do not know what to expect. They don't know what will be expected from them. Within the first few minutes of their arrival in a church, they will either be glad they came or wish they had not come. The church should arrange for people to be prepared to welcome visitors.

The church should never exclude people because of poverty. The dress expected of people in church should not exclude the poor.

The church should be prepared to minister to children who come without parents. People should be appointed and trained to respond to children who come to church.

The visitor should be invited to attend a small group meeting or home meeting where he can learn and ask questions.

Reaching Outside

The first responsibility of the church is to take care of the committed members of the congregation. However, the church must always be reaching out to the people in the neighborhood. The church must have activities that make sure people outside the church are seeing the work of the church and hearing the gospel. Some of these activities may happen spontaneously. Leaders will need to organize other activities also. Members with abilities should be invited and trained for these activities.

The church should find ways to respond to needs in the neighborhood. The priority should always be to show the love of God and demonstrate biblical principles.

Small Group Ministry

When a person gets saved he should not be invited only to a worship service. He needs to be invited into a system of immediate discipleship. This may begin with personal visits with a pastor. He may be invited into a small group that meets weekly.

A healthy church usually has some kind of small groups where spiritual life is sustained. These groups may be house churches, Sunday school classes, or other kinds of groups. Spiritual accountability and life change usually happen in small groups. The leaders of the church should make sure that small groups exist that are accomplishing these purposes. If the existing structures in the church are not enabling spiritual life, changes are needed.

Visible Membership

People who want to commit to the church need to know specifically what commitment means. Some churches claim to have no membership structure, but every church has some way of knowing who its people are. Everyone needs to know who the people are who form the church.

Everyone should know what commitments are necessary for membership. The requirements and a description of the process for becoming a member should be printed.

A convert who is ready to commit to the church should be able to help the church immediately. That does not mean that he should be given a position or leadership responsibilities. It is important for him to know that he is part of the church.

Quick Response to New Converts

Discipleship starts at conversion. A new convert has several urgent needs. To continue the relationship with God that he has just begun, he needs to know how to pray and read the Bible. He also needs a new community of friends because he will lose many of his old friends. He needs guidance in many lifestyle issues.

The church must begin discipleship of a new convert immediately. *Immediately* does not mean the following Sunday. It means when he lifts his head from praying to be saved. Someone must take responsibility for daily contact with the convert for at least the first week. He should meet several other believers in the local church. He should have opportunities to discuss the changes that are happening to him and to ask questions.

The convert should be invited to join a small group where he can ask questions and get encouragement. If possible, he should be introduced to several others in the group during the days before the first meeting that he attends. Several members could give him a phone call ahead of time to make his acquaintance and welcome him to the group. This begins building his feeling of being in a community.

A new convert should join the group at its next meeting. The lessons should be covered in rotation so that a member can be added at any time. This way the new convert gains a support group immediately. Members graduate from the course individually when they finish all the lessons.

Care of Needs

The church must care about the financial needs of people of the congregation. Most needs should be met by people helping each other without administration by the church leaders. If most of the members do not feel responsibility to help others, they have not formed a mature church yet.

The church should have deacons that make sure needs are noticed. The church in the book of Acts appointed the first deacons for this purpose.

Care of needs is necessary for the mission of evangelism. People must be able to see that the church is a family of faith where members care about each other.

LESSON 15 ASSIGNMENT

Imagine a church that does all the things described in this lesson. Write about an imaginary person who visits the church, is converted, and becomes a committed member of the church. Describe how it all happens.

LESSON 16

REAL DISCIPLES

FOLLOWING JESUS

» What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

Some people think that a Christian is any good person. Others think that being a Christian means to believe certain things. For many of these people, beliefs do not make much difference in their lives.

Others are closer to the truth. They know that there must be a time of conversion, when a person becomes a Christian. They believe that this happened when a person at some moment believed that he was forgiven. Many believe that a truly converted person has the guarantee of heaven no matter what he does after his conversion.

It is true that conversion must be genuine. It is true that forgiveness is given by grace in response to faith. It is true that a Christian lives in obedience to God. But that is not all it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

We can see what happens when a moment of faith is made the only criterion for being a Christian—it leads to antinomianism, the teaching that God's commands are not binding on a Christian. Instead of being free grace, it becomes an imaginary grace that pretends to justify sin.

Churches that advertise imaginary grace have members who attend church but live in open sin. Their pastors and other leaders live better than the congregation but may also have sinful habits. They say it is not necessary to live in complete obedience to God because we are saved by grace. They have lost the commission Jesus gave to the church, which is to bring people to obedience to the commands of Christ. The special task of the church is to turn unbelievers into holy worshippers of God, and the church has no better reason to exist.

Even churches that maintain the necessity of obeying God have certain people that are in another error. They have conformed their life to the requirements that they believe are right, but they do not have a Christlike spirit. They are harsh and unforgiving. They cannot give a humble and gracious apology. They are quick to judge others. They have confidence in only a few people. They never seem to doubt their own rightness. They have an answer for every issue, and no respect for those who disagree with them. They do not have any

zeal for winning the lost, but great zeal for defending their opinions. They are satisfied with themselves, and do not plan to change.

Do these people really know Jesus and want to be like him?

To be a Christian means to be a disciple of Jesus.

What does it mean to be a disciple? To obey Christ? Surely it means at least that much. In the Great Commission, when Jesus told the apostles to go everywhere making disciples, he instructed them to teach these new disciples to obey all that he had commanded them (Matthew 28:19-20). Obeying Jesus' commands is not all that is meant by being a disciple.

The disciples of the Jewish rabbis shared life with them, learning not just their teaching, but their lifestyle. They learned their attitudes and priorities.

When Jesus called disciples, saying "Come and follow me,"¹¹ that was what he meant. He still calls disciples through the gospel.

How does one become a disciple?

First, you must believe in him – unless you believe in him you have no reason to follow him.

You have to change the direction you are going. Nobody starts out as a follower of Jesus – we start out going our own way. You have to decide to follow Jesus instead of your own way. That means you see there is something wrong with your own way. The following starts with repentance – you cannot follow him without being sorry for your sins. If you are not sorry enough to quit your sins, you are still going your own way.

You experience his forgiveness and begin a relationship with him. You begin to know him more and want to be like him.

- » A student should read Matthew 16:21-25 for the group.

"Jesus Christ insists on dislodging from the center of our world whatever idol previously reigned there, and occupying the throne himself. This is the radical change of allegiance which constitutes conversion, or at least its beginning. Then once Christ has taken his rightful place, everything else starts shifting."

Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

The Willowbank Report

11 Matthew 4:19, Matthew 9:9, Matthew 16:24, Matthew 19:21, John 1:43

In this conversation with his disciples, Jesus described his coming death. Peter was shocked by Jesus' words. Peter did not see suffering and death as appropriate for Jesus at all. He began to argue with Jesus, trying to encourage him to reject the thought of death.

Jesus rebuked Peter and said that he did not understand the things of God. Jesus said that to be his disciple one must deny self, take up the cross, and follow him. This meant to accept death to self. The rebuke was against the natural human tendencies of self-fulfillment, self-exaltation, and self-defense—things that resist true discipleship.

» Why is the human self naturally resistant to discipleship?

The disciples did not see suffering and death as appropriate for themselves. They didn't yet fully understand what it meant to follow him. It costs you nothing to be forgiven, but it will cost you everything to follow Christ. Following him results in continued heart searching, humbling, and changing.

» Explain the statement, "It will cost you everything to follow Christ."

To take up the cross is to embrace a kind of death for the sake of eternal life with God. It is death to self, death to your own sovereignty. It is not just outward submission, but it goes all the way through the heart. It is a humility which Jesus described as the requirement for entering his kingdom.

Like those first disciples, many today do not understand what it means to be a disciple. Churches offer grace to those who have not repented. That does not start converts on the right road or prepare them for what is to come. It is so different from real Christian living that it is not the same road.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor who was executed under Adolph Hitler. He wrote these lines in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye that causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him... such grace is costly because it calls us to follow.

Following him is to become like him. It is to die to self because he completely surrendered self. It is not just to quit doing certain wrong things, but to quit them because Jesus would. We try to do what Jesus would do in his purity, compassion, kindness, and forgiveness.

We don't just do what is right while our heart opposes it. We want our hearts to be like his. He did not hate anyone. There were people who chose to be his enemies, but he was nobody's enemy. Even on the cross he forgave.

His real followers are not spiteful. They do good to those who mistreat them. They bless and never curse. They do not limit their forgiveness. They have given up their personal rights and serve instead.

There is no place to quit living out this self-surrender. The one who tries to keep his soul will lose it—the one who gives it will save it (Mark 8:35).

- » How can we call people to salvation in a way that will prepare them for discipleship?

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

There is a process of spiritual formation¹² that brings a believer to spiritual maturity.

A believer should continue to mature throughout his life, but there is a level of maturity he can reach that can be called spiritual adulthood. The Apostle Paul said that believers could reach a level so that they would not be children any longer (Ephesians 4:14).

Spiritual formation is partly accomplished by learning. That is why the Apostle Paul said that a characteristic of immaturity was that they were not ready for advanced doctrine (1 Corinthians 3:1-2. See also Hebrews 5:12-14.). He said that a characteristic of maturity is for believers to be established in doctrine. Because learning is part of spiritual formation, teaching is part of the work of discipleship.

Spiritual formation is not accomplished only by learning.

The apostle said that spiritual maturity is to be in Christian unity, to have knowledge of the Son of God, and to become like Christ (Ephesians 4:13). This maturity is more than knowledge and does not come from knowledge alone.

- » A student should read 2 Peter 1:2-11 for the group.

This passage is about spiritual development. Notice the key points of this passage.

Verse 3: God has provided everything necessary for us to be godly and has called us to Christian virtue.

Verse 4: God has given the promise of transforming grace that delivers us from sin and gives us the holy nature of God.

Verses 5-7: We should not stop with saving faith, but advance to develop Christian qualities.

¹² "Spiritual formation is the gracious process of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ for the sake of others." Definition adapted from M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), 12.

Verse 8: These qualities will make us have spiritual fruit.

Verse 9: The person who does not develop these qualities is not continuing from his deliverance from sin, and does not see where he is going.

Verses 10-11: Do not rest in assurance of salvation without working to develop Christian qualities. They will establish you in salvation and bring you with great victory into the eternal kingdom of God.

Chapter 2 of 2 Peter talks about people who have rejected spiritual development. They want just the name of Christianity. Because they refuse to advance spiritually, they justify sin. They develop false doctrines to support their behavior. Their false doctrine causes new converts to fall back under the power of sin and become worse off than if they had never experienced saving grace at all (2 Peter 2:18-22).

The epistle ends with a warning. We must avoid being led back into sin by false doctrine and, instead, focus on growing in grace (2 Peter 3:17-18).

Jesus said in the Great Commission that the work of discipleship is to bring people into obedience to him. Obviously, the person who is learning must obey the truth that he learns; otherwise, he is not advancing. The purpose of the knowledge is to show him how to please God and to guide the development of his character. If a person continues to learn but does not continue to obey, he is not a disciple. There are many people in churches who have much religious knowledge, but do not demonstrate the life of a mature believer.

» A student should read Philippians 1:9-11 for the group.

The Philippian church was a wonderful group of believers, and Paul's letter to them has an atmosphere of joy.

In these verses, Paul described spiritual growth for the Philippians. The description is significant because it connects knowledge, discernment, love, and behavior.

Paul prayed that their love would increase and that the love would be demonstrated in their discernment of right, so they could choose the attitudes and behaviors that were best. This life would be blameless before God when Jesus returned. Their lives would be full of spiritual fruit that would glorify God.

» Based on what we have studied, what is a disciple of Jesus?

A disciple of Jesus is a believer who is living in obedience to the truth he has learned, earnestly desiring to better understand the will of God, and depending on God's power to develop Christian character and behavior.

- » Now that we understand spiritual formation, how would you describe a person who discipled others?

He teaches the truth of the Bible. He is an example of obedience to Jesus. He encourages others to learn, to obey, and to allow God's work within them.

THE POTENTIAL OF GRACE

In a previous section we studied 2 Peter 1:2-11. In that passage, we learn that God has promised grace that delivers us from the power of sinful desires and gives us a holy nature. That knowledge guides our spiritual growth.

Some people believe it is impossible for a person to live without disobeying God. They believe it is impossible for a person to have a holy heart. These ideas affect their understanding of discipleship.

Discipleship means to be learning and obeying the commands of Christ. If we do not believe that complete obedience is possible, we find some other way to evaluate a spiritual condition.

John Wesley believed that nobody could fulfill God's commands without enabling grace, but he believed that enabling grace is offered to every person. Wesley believed that every sinner has the ability, not by nature but by enabling grace, to respond to the offer of the gospel. He also believed that every follower of Christ is provided grace to live in complete obedience to God.

From Wesleyan theology comes a hermeneutical principle that could be called the "Promise Principle." Wesleyans believe that whatever God commands, he will enable his people to fulfill. This means that every command of scripture can be viewed as a promise of grace.

THE PROMISE PRINCIPLE

The following paragraphs are Wesley's explanation of this principle.¹³

One common objection is that there is no promise of it [Christian perfection] in the Word of God. But there is a very clear promise that we will all love the Lord our God with all our hearts. We read, "The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 30:6). Equally clear is the word of our Lord, **which is no less a promise, though in the form of a command:** "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"

13 Adapted from John Wesley, "Christian Perfection," from *A Timeless Faith: John Wesley for the 21st Century*. Edited by Stephen Gibson. (Nappanee: Evangel, 2006).

(Matthew 22:37). No words can be stronger than these; no promise can be more definite. Similarly, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39), is as definite a promise as it is a command.

And that unlimited promise which rules through the entire gospel age, “I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts,” (Hebrews 8:10) **turns all the commands into promises**; including this one, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). **This command is equivalent to a promise, and gives us reason to expect that he will work in us what he requires of us.**

The command of God given by St. Peter, “But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,” (1 Peter 1:15) **implies a promise that we will be holy**, if we are not unwilling. Nothing can be lacking on God’s part. As he has called us to holiness, he is undoubtedly willing, as well as able, to work this holiness in us. **For he cannot mock his helpless creatures, calling us to receive what he never intends to give.** That he does call us to holiness is undeniable; therefore, he will give it if we are not disobedient to the heavenly calling.

“But has he promised to save us from sin while we are in the body?” Undoubtedly he has. For **a promise is implied in every commandment of God**, including, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37).

We should have an expectation of God’s grace based on our view of God’s character. We expect that whatever God commands he will enable, since his commands are sincere and can be fulfilled no other way.

We can take all of scripture seriously. We should never distort the plain meaning of biblical statements. The Promise Principle is honoring to God, for it expects that God has the power and the willingness to work in the believer the holiness to which God calls him. The warnings, promises, and prayers of scripture should not be ignored. Good theology is best proved by the way it uses scripture.

IS LIVING A HOLY LIFE POSSIBLE?

Why can the Almighty not sanctify the soul while it is in the body? Can he not sanctify you while you are in this house, as well as outside in the open air? Can the walls of brick or stone prevent him? Neither can these walls of flesh and blood prevent him for one moment from sanctifying you entirely. He can just as easily save you from all sin in the body as out of the body. “But has he promised to save us from sin while we are in the body?” Undoubtedly he has. For a promise is implied in every commandment of God, including, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart

and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). For this and every other commandment is given, not to the dead, but to the living. It is expressed in the words recited above, that we should walk “in holiness before him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:73-75).¹⁴

Many people profess to be Christians for many years but never get victory over temptation. They grow in knowledge and in ministry skills but not in the most important thing.

The Bible clearly teaches that God’s standard for the believer is that he have victory over sin and a holy heart (Titus 2:11-12, Acts 15:9, 1 John 3:2-10, 1 John 5:1-4). If a believer realizes that he is not what God wants him to be, he should immediately and seriously seek for the transforming and empowering work of God’s Spirit.

The person in the ministry of discipleship must keep the priorities clear. Victory over sin is the first priority. If a person is falling into sin, the discipler must lead him to repentance and victory before anything else can be accomplished.

“If his bountifulness equals his justice, his promises of grace must be understood to mean as much as the requirements of his justice. If he delights in giving as much as in receiving, his promises must mean as much as the language of his requirements.”

Charles Finney

Systematic Theology

14 Adapted from John Wesley, “Christian Perfection,” from *A Timeless Faith: John Wesley for the 21st Century*. Edited by Stephen Gibson. (Nappanee: Evangel, 2006).

LESSON 16 ASSIGNMENT

Write a few paragraphs about each of the following questions:

- What should a person expect if he wants to be a disciple of Jesus?
- How would you explain the central truth that Peter stated about spiritual growth?
- What is the “Promise Principle”?

The total length should be approximately two pages.

LESSON 17

TOWARD SPIRITUAL MATURITY

THE TEACHING MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

At conversion a transformation occurs. The convert has new desires and new priorities—the change is so great that the Bible describes him as a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

But, some things take time. The convert does not immediately see how to apply Christian principles to all parts of his life. He has to learn the principles, then see ways to apply them.

There is also a process of personal spiritual maturation. The new convert is an infant in Christ.

- » A student should read 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 for the group. According to these verses, what is typical of a new convert?
- » A student should read Hebrews 5:13-14 for the group. What is the milk the verses talk about? What is the solid food? What is a characteristic of spiritual maturity?

Early in this course, we looked at the Great Commission that Jesus gave to the church. Let's look at it again.

- » A student should read Matthew 28:18-20 for the group. In this passage, what responsibility did Jesus give beyond evangelism?

Before giving the Great Commission, Jesus stated that he has all authority in heaven and earth. Then he gave the church the responsibility to bring people into obedience to his authority.

Jesus told the disciples not only to preach the gospel, but to teach all the things he had commanded. Evangelism is only the first part of the task. Teaching converts to obey all of Jesus' commands is the process of discipleship. To fail in discipleship is as serious as to fail in evangelism.

The teaching ministry of the church is to bring converts to spiritual maturity.

In Ephesians we are told that God calls people to special roles of ministry for the purpose of building up believers so that they are no longer children (Ephesians 4:11-14). A result of their reaching spiritual adulthood is doctrinal stability.

A pastor is especially responsible for discipleship. Paul told Timothy, “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.” (1 Timothy 4:13) He was not referring primarily to Timothy’s personal study; he was talking about ministry. Timothy’s ministry was to focus on reading and explaining scripture, giving spiritual direction, and teaching Christian doctrine. One of the qualifications of a pastor is that he be able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2).

Because learning is part of spiritual formation, teaching is part of the work of discipleship. Teachers are important in the church, and the church must always be working to develop teachers.

“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2) This instruction was given by Paul to Timothy, as from an experienced evangelist and pastor to a younger minister. Paul was not confident that the faith would be passed down by preaching only. Individuals would need to be trained with special effort and be prepared to train others. If such training would not be accomplished by preaching to the congregation, these faithful men would have to be trained individually or in small groups.

There is a lot of teaching to do. What pastor has time to do it all, especially since not everyone is ready for the same instruction at the same time? But Ephesians 4:11 doesn’t say, “He gave a pastor” (only one person and only one role). Instead, there are various roles and several people to fill them. God calls teachers, gives them teaching ability, and equips them through the church for a teaching ministry.

“The initial objective of Jesus’ plan was to enlist men who could bear witness to his life and carry on his work after he returned to the Father.”

Robert Coleman

The Master’s Plan

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

True discipleship is more than teaching information; it includes the shaping of values, priorities, attitudes, and lifestyle. This process can happen only in a Christian community with spiritual accountability.

We see throughout scripture that God intended that people live in community, beginning with God’s statement that Adam should not be alone (Genesis 2:18).

Some advantages of community are described in Ecclesiastes 4:9-10:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!

God told Moses that his plan for Israel was that they be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). The heritage was to be passed down through families, described in what is called the “Great Commandment.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

The Holy Spirit inspired the New Testament writers to use those terms in the New Testament to refer to the church (1 Peter 2:9).

God always intended for the people who are in relationship with him to also be in relationship with each other. Our relationship with God forms us into a community of faith. Just as our relationship with God calls for commitment, our relationship with the people of God calls for commitment. It is wrong for a person to think he can be in right relationship with God but choose not to be in relationship with God’s people.

Paul used the metaphor of the body to describe the relationship among members of the church (1 Corinthians 12). No member can function properly if it tries to be independent of the body. Members must cooperate and care for one another, or there will be no body. If one member is harmed, all suffer. A member’s actions affect the whole body. Paul spoke of this when he dealt with the situation of the man in an immoral relationship, although he used the metaphor of bread instead. He said, “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (1 Corinthians 5:6) We must see ourselves as vital parts of a Christian community.

Many New Testament commands cannot be obeyed without a sense of community. To fulfill the commands of God, Christians must live in commitment to one another. This means that Christian community leads to spiritual accountability.

We find many places in the Bible where Christian community is connected to spiritual accountability.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you (Hebrews 13:17).

This verse tells believers to submit to those in positions of spiritual authority. The command also gives a great responsibility to spiritual leaders. Their responsibility is not just to lead by authority, but to watch for the souls under their care. To do that, they must be well enough acquainted with their people to give individual spiritual direction, and they must have a relationship with their people that makes such direction possible.

Christian community and spiritual accountability are described also in this passage:

- » A student should read Hebrews 10:24-26 for the group. What is commanded in this passage?

We are commanded here to be aware of other believers' needs and to encourage them to do what is right.

- » Describe the relationship that would be necessary among believers for them to fulfill this responsibility.

Our encouragement is not effective if we do not have the right relationship with others. We have to know them well and show love and concern. Otherwise, they are offended by personal advice.

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-13).

We are called to hold one another accountable. The exhorting here must go beyond scheduled meetings of the entire church body, for we are commanded to exhort daily. This requires fellowship on an individual or small group basis. Fellowship of this kind would not merely be eating together or visiting, but would have a spiritual purpose. To accomplish this purpose, we must purposefully plan conversations and small group meetings with that priority.

The way that we can benefit one another is illustrated in Proverbs 27:17:

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

One person need not be superior to another before benefiting him with spiritual direction and encouragement. In fact, spiritual direction given humbly is more likely to be accepted.

Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:16).

Confession of personal faults will not ordinarily happen in large groups; therefore, this command is not easily carried out in church services. The context shows the reason for the command: that those who have erred may be restored.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

Often a Christian feels that nobody cares what he is going through. Fellow Christians would care if they could really understand what he is suffering, but they usually do not know him

well enough to understand. How can we bear another's burdens if we don't really know what they are?

In the early days after the birth of the church, a close relationship among believers was normal.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts (Acts 2:46).

John Wesley said that there is no such thing as individual Christianity.

» What do you think Wesley meant by his statement?

Spiritual accountability occurs in a healthy Christian community.

To have spiritual accountability is to establish a relationship with a person or group to whom we report our spiritual condition, our success or failure in spiritual disciplines, and our commitments for development.

Without spiritual accountability we will not fulfill all of the commands of scripture, and we will neglect a means that God has designed for giving us grace.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

What does it mean to be spiritually mature? How would you describe a mature believer?

Because maturity takes time, it tends to come with age (Titus 2:1-5). Obviously, some people get older without maturing spiritually like they should, and there are young people that demonstrate unusual maturity.

Most characteristics of maturity are not completely achieved at a certain point, but are gradually increased. At times they may increase suddenly because of a spiritual experience or an experience in life. Even though a person should continue to develop all of his life, there is a level he can reach that can be called spiritual maturity.

Characteristics of spiritual maturity are described in several scripture passages.

» Various students should read these passages for the group: Ephesians 4:11-14, Hebrews 5:12-6:1, 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, and 1 John 2:12-14.

Below is a list of characteristics that are signs of spiritual maturity. It is not a complete list, and some points in the list are not completely distinguishable from other points.

A mature believer may not demonstrate all of these characteristics completely, but is growing. He may not realize some of his faults, but will respond to the continuous work of the Holy Spirit in his heart.

TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

1. Christlikeness in motives, attitudes, and actions

Christlikeness comes from the passion to know Christ in his nature, by spiritually experiencing his death and resurrection (Philippians 3:10). It may include sharing his suffering in persecution. A person who loves Christ like this will be transformed to be like him.

To be like Christ is to be motivated by love and not by selfishness or pride. A follower of Christ wants to be like Christ and is sad any time he realizes he was not like Christ in something he said or did.

2. Close relationship with God

A person should grow closer in his relationship to God. Signs of a good relationship with God are enjoyment of God's presence, love for God's Word, and time spent in prayer.

3. Demonstration of the fruits of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit produces fruit in the life of the believer, which includes love, joy, patience, and self-control. A believer becomes more consistently kind and gentle as he lets the Holy Spirit work in his temperament.

4. Victory over outward and inner sin

The believer learns how to depend on God for victory over temptation. He yields to God's cleansing so he can have a holy heart. He develops habits and disciplines that help him live consistently in victory.

If he yields to a temptation, he confesses it to God and prays for forgiveness and strength. He should share his failures with close Christian friends who pray for him (James 5:16).

5. Spiritual disciplines established

Spiritual disciplines are ways to practice making our relationship with God the first priority. A person who does not consistently pray, read the Bible, and attend church is not a mature believer.

6. Developed Christian character

A follower of Christ learns to pattern his life on principles of honesty, reliability, and faithful work.

7. Consistent Christian living

A believer learns to apply Christian principles to life. A mature Christian should want to look like a Christian all the time in his behavior and attitudes. As he realizes that something he says or does is not consistent with love in his heart, he depends on God's strength to make changes.

8. Healthy relationships

A mature believer develops deep friendships with other believers. He maintains relationships by showing honesty, patience, and forgiveness. He is humble and admits mistakes. Because he may misunderstand a situation, he may not be as patient as he should, admit a mistake quickly, or have the right opinion about another person.

9. A personal ministry

A believer should identify his spiritual gifts. He should find his place in the church to be a blessing to others. A believer can minister in the church by helping to evangelize and disciple others in the Christian life.

10. Endurance of hard conditions

A believer should learn to trust God when bad things happen. He should depend on God when he is in difficult situations. A mature believer does not lose faith when he does not understand why something is happening.

CONCLUSION

The characteristics of spiritual maturity do not depend on natural talent.

They are not the same as ministry skills.

They do not necessarily accompany leadership ability. It is good if a leader is spiritually mature, but sometimes a person becomes a leader because of his abilities, while he is still not spiritually mature. Sometimes a person is spiritually mature, but does not have leadership ability.

Certain personality types seem naturally more patient and kind. Natural traits of personality are not the same as spiritual maturity. God works in our personalities and helps bring

balance to our tendencies. If we analyze a particular person, we cannot distinguish exactly between his natural personality and the characteristics of spiritual development.

Health problems may also affect a person's discernment and reactions. We should not be quick to judge others.

LESSON 17 ASSIGNMENTS

1. Examine yourself by the 10 characteristics of spiritual maturity. Prayerfully consider which ones you lack the most. Plan how to purposely develop in those, through prayer, study, counsel from others, and dependence on God's help.
2. How can a church purposely fulfill its responsibility for teaching and spiritual accountability? Write two pages describing a plan of action for a church.

LESSON 18

A SMALL GROUP MANUAL

NOTE TO CLASS LEADER

This lesson is not set up as a class session like the others. You can teach through it, and there are many topics for discussion. It may be necessary to meet more than once for this lesson.

The class should take time to especially discuss their future actions. They should be planning together how they can help their local churches with the tasks of evangelism and discipleship.

THE VALUE OF SMALL GROUPS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Small group ministry takes many forms around the world. There are many types of small groups, designed for different purposes. Small groups may meet for study, spiritual accountability, ministry, prayer, or special projects.

Some churches are divided into groups that meet in homes. The groups function like small churches. The churches of the New Testament apparently functioned like this.

Growing, effective churches usually have some kind of small group system.

In this section, we will talk about the effectiveness of small groups for discipleship.

THE WESLEYAN MODEL

John Wesley (Great Britain, 18th century) was not the first to organize small groups, but he developed a system that was highly effective.

Wesley developed a system of discipleship with various sizes of groups called societies, classes, and bands.¹⁵ Wesley's methods were not a complete system at the beginning, but were developed gradually to meet needs. Many of Wesley's converts asked for encouragement, advice, and prayer. Because there were so many, he arranged for them to meet every Thursday.

15 See "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," in *The Works of John Wesley, Volume VIII* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 249-258.

In each place that Wesley and his preachers took the gospel, they organized converts into groups that met regularly. Because the congregations were large, many could not tell about personal spiritual needs and were not getting the attention they needed. Smaller groups were formed called classes, where leaders served as pastors to encourage and guide the members. Any member who continued in open sin and did not change was removed from membership and not allowed to come to the meeting.

Groups smaller than classes were formed so members could share their spiritual struggles and provide each other with spiritual accountability. These small groups were called bands. In these meetings the leader would describe his own spiritual condition, then ask others searching questions concerning their condition, sins, and temptations. In these groups, the members were all of the same gender.

Wesley's success caused the famous George Whitefield to make this statement: "My Brother Wesley acted wisely—the souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class, and thus preserved the fruit of his labor. This I neglected, and my people are as a rope of sand." Wesley's methods were continued by the American Methodist church in the early years, but both his discipleship principles and his doctrines have been neglected by modern Methodism.

UNDERSTANDING THE ESSENTIAL CHURCH

The earliest church building that has been found was built at approximately A.D. 250. For the first two centuries, the church saw itself as people, not as a building or organization. The church is composed of the groups of believers that worship together, evangelize, and obey the Bible.

Small groups of people are the basic building blocks of every effective church structure. A small group discipleship program is not a new institution that will someday become obsolete. It is not a new method that may work in some places and not in others. Instead, small groups are the basic building blocks of the church. Ministry in small groups can be done in various ways to meet the challenges that any local church faces.

A church will not accomplish its purpose unless its people are regularly edified and trained in a setting more personal than the whole congregation or most Sunday schools.

A Caution

Small groups are only as spiritual as the people involved. If they are not committed disciples with the priority of pleasing God, living faithfully, and accomplishing the mission of the church, there are many ways for the group to go wrong.

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

To have spiritual accountability is to establish a relationship with a person or group to whom you report your spiritual condition, your success or failure in spiritual disciplines, and your commitments for development. They tell you when they think you are doing wrong. You tell them your commitments, and they ask you later if you are keeping your commitments.

The biblical basis for spiritual accountability in a healthy Christian community is more thoroughly explained in a previous section. Without spiritual accountability, we will not fulfill all of the commands of scripture; and we will neglect a means that God has designed for giving us grace.

Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:16).

A person will not confess private faults except in a relationship that makes it easy. If he is not confessing to someone who is praying for his faults, he is neglecting the means God has designed for meeting those needs.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

Unless we know someone very well, we do not know what his most serious burdens are. We cannot fulfill this scriptural command without being in a relationship that makes it possible.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24).

We are to examine one another closely with a motive of love in order to see what encouragement and reproofs are necessary. Encouragements will be shallow, and reproofs will be resisted unless we have a special relationship with the other person.

The following questions can help a person determine whether or not spiritual accountability is established in his life.

What relationships do I have which allow:

- Someone to help me bear my most serious burdens?
- Me to confess my faults to someone?
- Me to help someone bear his burdens?
- Someone to respond to my present spiritual condition?

Are there times:

- When there is nobody I can lean on?
- When I am glad that nobody knows my condition?
- I would be embarrassed to report my prayer time or Bible study time?

Most churches do not fulfill their responsibility of spiritual accountability unless they arrange a system for doing so. For many, that is a system of small groups.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A SMALL GROUP LEADER

Jesus demonstrated the priority of discipleship. From the beginning of his ministry he chose a few men who would receive the responsibility of guiding the church. He did not spend all of his time preaching to the thousands who followed him; instead, he was often taking time to train the twelve apostles. He extended his ministry through those that he trained.

A person who does discipleship should have the following characteristics. He may not excel in every quality, but should try to improve in them all. If he lacks any one of them, he will be much less effective.

1. Spiritually mature

He should have the qualities of spiritual maturity described in a previous section. If he is not spiritually mature, he will not set a good example and will not have the experience he needs.

2. Available

If his schedule is already too full and not well managed, he is not available for small group ministry. He must make it a priority.

3. Reliable

He must be a person who fulfills his commitments. He must be able to keep appointments. He must be able to remember to hold others accountable for their commitments.

4. Confident

He must believe that he is able to learn how to lead a group. If he has the ability but does not believe it, he first needs some guided experiences that will build his confidence.

“Though he did what he could to help the multitudes, he had to devote himself primarily to a few men, rather than to the masses, in order that the masses could at last be saved. This was the genius of his strategy.”

Robert Coleman

The Master's Plan

5. Able to resolve conflict

He needs to be able to keep the right attitude when people disagree and cause problems. He needs to be able to help resolve conflicts between others.

6. Able to teach

Do people understand his explanations? A leader must be one who does not confuse people.

7. Hungry for God's Word

He must have an enjoyment of God's Word, so he can invite others to enjoy it also. He must make the Bible important in his relationship with God.

8. Dependent on God

He must realize that spiritual results can happen only by the work of the Holy Spirit. He must be ready to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. He must depend on anointing from God. He must not be confident that his explanations will succeed because of his ability alone.

9. Ready to serve

He must be a person who feels that he is doing something valuable when he serves others. He should not be a person who wants to be served. He should not be looking for a ministry for the purpose of displaying his talents. He must be responsive to needs and ready to volunteer.

10. Under spiritual authority

He should be spiritually accountable to someone. He should follow the direction of spiritual leaders.

11. Faithful to the church

The group leader should be a committed member of a local church. The ministry of discipleship should cause people to appreciate the church and become more committed to it.

12. Zealous to succeed

If he has zeal to succeed, he will not quickly give up. He will adapt to circumstances. He will look for information to help him be more effective. He will take initiative when there are problems or opportunities. He will have energy and enthusiasm.

13. Doctrinally accurate

He should have a good foundation of biblical, evangelical doctrine.

14. Trained for ministry

It is not necessary for ministry training to occur in an academic institution. Training starts with observation, as a believer sees how ministry is done. Training increases with participation, as he is given responsibilities under direction. Reading and study of good material is very important.

DEVELOPING A DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM

The best way for discipleship to happen is by a local church that understands the responsibility and priority of discipleship, working in unity.

Therefore, these directions are addressed to the leaders and committed members of a church.

If a church realizes that they need to do better at discipleship, they should first study the scriptures and points in this course about discipleship. Leaders can present the material. All the committed members of the church should be involved if possible, so they can share the vision.

A second part of development is to observe what the church is already doing. Most churches have some groups already operating, even if they have not purposely started a small group program. For example, there may be a group of musicians in the church that meets frequently. There may be a choir that practices. There may be a board of deacons. There may be Sunday school classes, and the Sunday school teachers may also form a group. The youth of the church may meet occasionally. Committees may exist to take care of various responsibilities. A group may form informally of people who work together on a project. There may be families of the church that occasionally get together for fellowship. There may be home Bible studies and prayer meetings.

These groups may not have formed for the purposes of discipleship or spiritual accountability, but they may help serve those purposes. Any church that has spiritual life already has some groups operating to support that life. When a church decides to improve its program for discipleship, it should examine the existing groups and discover what is happening, then think about how the purposes can be achieved better.

New groups may be needed. Maybe different kinds of groups are needed. There may be groups that give practical training for ministry. There may be groups that primarily study the Bible and pray. There may be small groups for serious spiritual accountability.

The purpose of the group determines who should be there and how the group should function. For example, a group for serious spiritual accountability should have fewer than 10 people. If the group is too large, confidentiality is reduced, sharing becomes shallow, greater control is necessary, less participation is possible, and attendance tends to be worse. The depth of the personal sharing will be limited if both men and women are present.

The purpose of the group determines whether or not it should be open to new members. If the purpose is spiritual accountability, it should not be adding new members after the group has met several times. Most people will not share about their spiritual condition until they feel secure with the others in the group. If the purpose of the group is to cover a series of lessons, it is not practical to be adding people throughout the series of meetings.

There may be a group for new converts.¹⁶ It is important that a new convert not wait for several weeks to join a group. Therefore, this group needs a revolving series of lessons so that new people can join at any time. The leaders must realize that some new converts will drop out. The fact that some people leave the group does not mean the group is not doing well. Even though some will drop out, a new convert group should be open to new people.

If a group is for ministry training or deeper spiritual development, the group members must be people who desire to grow spiritually and are willing to commit to the goals of the group. If some of the members are not committed, the group will not do as well at achieving its purpose.

Most members must be recruited by personal invitation. Do not wait for people to ask to join.

Not everyone in the church will get involved in a small group program. If you are a leader in the church, do not drive people away by criticizing them for not being in a small group. Promote the group ministry by describing its benefits.

At the first meeting, make sure everyone understands the importance of the group. Share scripture and information that shows the importance of discipleship.

To help attendance, the group can be scheduled to meet for a certain number of weeks. Explain that the group is covering a specific series of lessons and tell them when the series will be finished. That way, each member knows exactly what he is committing to. Emphasize the need for perfect attendance. At the end of that time, the group can start again with those who want to continue.

16 Shepherds Global Classroom offers a 26 lesson book for discipling new believers. This free resource, *Cultivate Discipleship Lessons*, is available for download at shepherdsglobal.org.

SCENARIO FOR CONSIDERATION

Andrew has been a believer for several years. He is a church member and helps in his church. He is concerned that his church does not have a plan for discipleship. He thinks the church should start small groups, but the leaders are not interested.

» What should Andrew do?

Andrew should talk to the church leaders and ask their approval to lead a small group. He should not criticize the ministry of the church, but instead describe the benefits that would come from the group. If the group does well, the church will begin to understand the benefits of that kind of ministry.

LEADING AN EFFECTIVE GROUP

At the beginning of a group, there is excitement and expectation. Many members do not know exactly what to expect, but they hope to get help from the group.

The following directions will help the group to be effective and fulfill its purpose. There are important principles for the functioning of small groups. If the leader helps the group to follow these principles, he will reduce frustration and discouragement.

The first meeting may be different from the others because the group is learning how the meetings will be done. However, the first meeting will set the style for future meetings. If a person does not talk in the first meeting, he will expect to be silent in the future. If someone dominates the discussion, the group will expect future meetings to be dominated by the same person. If the meeting is disorderly, they will expect the same in the future. If the meeting is like a class with little participation, they will expect the same pattern.

Some members may drop out after a few meetings because the group is not what they expected. It is important to lead the meeting properly so that the members who were expecting the right things will not be disappointed.

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVENESS

- 1. Schedule the group to meet weekly, if possible. Some may need help arranging child-care.**
- 2. The format of meetings should be (1) study time, then (2) sharing of personal needs for prayer, then (3) prayer.**

If the group's primary purpose is study, the study time may be long and the other parts short; but the three parts should still be included. If the purpose of the group is spiritual

accountability, the study time may be short, but they should have some material that they are studying.

If a group has personal sharing and discussion but no lesson material to study, it will tend to become chaotic. It will be dominated by some members' personalities. Lesson material makes them all respond to truth beyond what is in their own minds.

3. Start and end the meetings on time.

If you start and end late, those who value their own time will start coming later or skip some of the meetings.

4. Set the date when the group will end.

Members need to know how long their commitment is for. Normally, new members should not be allowed join the group after several meetings, unless the group is rotating lessons for new converts. If the group is studying a lesson series, the number of lessons may set the number of weeks they will meet. If they are meeting for spiritual accountability, they could set a period of six months. At the end, they can organize again. At that time some members may leave, and the group can consider whether or not to allow new members to join.

5. When studying, emphasize a life-changing purpose rather than knowledge for its own sake.

A member will feel that the group is worthwhile if he is able to draw personal, specific applications from the study.

6. Follow up on commitments.

If someone has shared a problem then agreed that he should take a certain course of action, ask at the next meeting if he has done what he said he would do.

7. The leader should be available to meet with a member individually to give spiritual guidance.

Other members may also get together at other times for encouragement.

8. Select a good meeting place.

It should be an informal meeting place with a home atmosphere. Seating should be as circular as possible, so that each member can see every other member's face. This will encourage participation. Meet in a place where there will not be interruptions or distractions.

9. Practice good listening habits.

Signs of good listening are eye contact, a concentrated expression, ignoring distractions, and responsiveness to the speaker's humor or other emotions.

10. Make sure no member is always silent.

Direct a question to a member who does not speak much ("What do you think about this, Caleb?").

11. Do not pressure a member to share something personal.

Instead, try to create an atmosphere where he will feel free to speak. Build a member's confidence by giving him eye contact and commending something he says.

12. Try to ask questions that they can answer to build their confidence.

If someone gives a wrong answer, try to affirm something good about the answer before critiquing it.

13. Try to affirm every comment in some way before criticizing it.**14. If someone has a tendency to talk too much and answer all the questions, find a way to limit him.**

One way is to direct questions to specific members. Or you can ask, "What do the rest of you think?" In a discussion, you could say, "Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken about this yet."

If a member still talks too much, the leader could talk to him outside of the meeting. He could say something like this: "Caleb, you are a quick thinker and able to respond quickly in discussions, but I'm concerned that some of the others will not participate if we answer everything quickly. Can you help me get everyone involved?"

15. Don't let two or three members have their own discussion while ignoring the group.

If someone wants to keep arguing for a long time about something, tell him that the discussion will have to be finished later outside of the meeting.

16. Don't allow anyone to interrupt others.

Raise your hand, assertively stop the interrupter, and allow the first speaker to finish. Otherwise, a discussion will always be dominated by the less mannered members. People who are less assertive will feel frustrated that they cannot finish their sentences.

17. Listen to complaints.

Any complaint may show a problem that can be corrected. Don't ignore signs of dissatisfaction. If someone is dissatisfied with the group meeting, he may not understand the purpose, or he may have a valid complaint.

18. If a member persistently acts hostile, disruptive, argumentative, or bored, he may not accept the goals of the group.

The group may not be what he expected. Talk to him privately to help him see the group's purpose.

19. The leader does not have to know the answer to every problem.

His role is not to have the answer to everything but to lead the group to bear burdens in prayer.

20. Be flexible and patient with interruptions of the schedule.

Remember that the events in our lives are part of God's development of us. A problem is an opportunity.

21. If a member often takes the whole meeting to share his needs, offer to counsel him at another time.

Otherwise, the other members will feel that the meeting is being stolen from them. Do not let the group lose its purpose, unless the members agree together that the purpose should be changed.

22. Don't allow the discussions to become subversive.

Don't let the group become a forum for criticizing the local church and other leaders.

23. Remember that the effectiveness of the group depends on the power of God working through it.

The group is only a scriptural structure that God uses.

LESSON 19

PRAYING FOR DISCIPLES

PRAYING PAUL'S PRAYERS FOR BELIEVERS

Paul's prayers for new believers tell what needs to happen to a new Christian. These prayers guide us in praying for young believers because we should pray the same things for them that Paul prayed. These prayers also guide our ministries because we should cooperate with what God is doing for them.

Let's look at Paul's prayers for three different groups.

The Thessalonians

- » A student should read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 for the group.

The first letter to the Thessalonians gives a call to holiness. Every believer is called to live in victory and purity, and God promises that it is possible by faith. We should pray and teach with the goal of bringing every believer to victory and purity.

The Philippians

- » A student should read Philippians 1:9-11 for the group.

These verses tell about an ongoing process in the believer's life. His love should be continually increasing. As that happens, his ability to discern what is best should increase. As he discerns, he adapts his life to focus on what is best. This must be happening in order for him to be pure (sincere) and without offense.

The people that Paul wrote to in these verses had been believers for some time already. Yet, Paul was praying that they would keep increasing in their love for God and, by that love, be able to understand God's will for them better.

Here are some questions that a young believer should consider:

- What is an example of a change that I made in my life when God showed me that an attitude, habit, or action was not the best?
- Is there anything in my life that I have doubts about?

- Am I willing to let God show me in prayer any changes I should make?

The Colossians

- » A student should read Colossians 1:9-12 for the group.

Paul prayed that they would receive knowledge of God's will, in wisdom and spiritual understanding. A new convert does not yet understand all about the will of God for his lifestyle. He will gradually see that certain habits, words, and attitudes in his life should change. Since he loves God, he will more and more conform his life to God's will. The discipler should be praying and carefully teaching young believers to recognize God's will.

The apostle Paul said that they would, as a result of better understanding God's will, walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. They would become more appropriate representatives of God. Their lives would better match their profession of being transformed by grace. What the discipler must remember is that until this process has gone on for a while, some inconsistencies will show in the life of the young Christian.

A part of walking worthy includes "bearing fruit in every good work." We should not be surprised when a young Christian is not yet fruitful in every good work. He may not yet be as responsible and conscious of duty as he should be.

The verses also tell us that we can be strengthened by God's glorious might so that we can endure and have patience with joy. A person who can keep Christian joy as he serves and endures has gained some spiritual maturity.

Conclusions about Paul's Prayers

The prayers of Paul for young believers tell us much about the work of discipleship. We should have the right goals for believers' development. We should be able to recognize progress. We should not be surprised to see inconsistencies, misunderstandings, and irresponsibility in a young believer. We should not expect that all Christian qualities will appear suddenly.

We should notice that Paul was not most concerned about their ministry training or development of ministry skills. He was most concerned about the development of their faith and Christian character. We should not be satisfied with people who can do ministry jobs but lack Christian character.

The teacher is important because of his example and because of the value of information. Learning is emphasized in two of the above prayers. Knowledge is involved in the spiritual process. The teacher has a great impact through his use of truth.

We should pray Paul's prayers for the young Christians that we influence. We should cooperate with the Holy Spirit to help these processes occur in their lives.

The following prayer is based on Paul's prayers for new believers.

A PRAYER FOR A YOUNG CHRISTIAN

Heavenly Father,

I pray for _____ that you would sanctify him completely. I pray that he would be holy in his actions, attitudes, and motives.

Help his love for you to keep growing, so that he understands better and better what your perfect will for him is. Help him to discern what is best and always to choose it, so that his life will bear fruit for your glory.

Help him to live daily as a Christian should, pleasing you in everything and learning more about your ways. Help him to draw strength from you, so that he can live in victory and endure trials with joy. May he always be thankful for the grace you give.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Books

Coleman, Robert. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Ada: Revell, 2010.

Coleman, Robert. *The Master Plan of Discipleship*. Ada: Revell, 1997.

Eims, Leroy. *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.

Friedeman, Matthew. *The Master Plan of Teaching*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991.

Gorman, Julie. *Community That is Christian: A Handbook on Small Groups*. (2nd edition). Ada: Baker Books, 2002.

Neighbor, Ralph. *Where Do We Go from Here?* Touch Publications, 1991. (Available on Kindle, 2011.)

Snyder, Howard. *The Radical Wesley: Patterns for Church Renewal*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980.

Snyder, Howard. *The Problem of Wineskins*. Franklin: Seedbed Publishers, 2017.

Wilkinson, Bruce. *The Seven Laws of the Learner*. New York: Multnomah, 1992.

Online Resources

Evangelism training, gospel tracts, and other information is available from Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron at <https://www.livingwaters.com>.

For information about outdoor evangelism using painted diagrams, see the websites of Open Air Campaigners at <https://www.oacgb.org.uk/> and <https://oacusa.org>.

Cultivate Discipleship Lessons, from Shepherds Global Classroom—26 lessons for discipling new believers. Available for download from <https://www.shepherdsglobal.org/courses>.

Excellent material for discipling new converts is available from Nathan Brown at <https://comeafterme.com/>.

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