

Person to Person

Two thousand years ago, Jesus called His disciples from among the rank and file of His day with the simple words, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (See Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17.) These men, who became dedicated followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, turned their world upside down with the message of God’s salvation. Along with their converts, they faced horrible persecution; some were imprisoned, and some were thrown to lions. Many lost their lives for the cause of Christ, but the effects of their faith spread throughout the world. They followed the instruction of Christ to “go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

Today there are millions of Christians throughout the world. Modern technology has given us the means of reaching multitudes with the Gospel. Still, we are told that the percentage of the world’s population who have heard the Gospel decreases every year.

Here in the United States, a large portion of the population claims to be Christian. Our Constitution protects the rights of Christians to preach the Gospel unhindered. Christians in the United States have more wealth and leisure time than ever before in the history of the world. Yet multitudes in this country, including many children of faithful Christians, are turning from Jesus Christ to the gods of Eastern religions, the occult, drugs, alcohol, and immorality of all kinds.

What has happened? For one thing, the Early Church understood that Jesus meant what He said when He told them to go into all the world and to preach the Gospel. Today, with Satan's help, many more excuses are offered as to why the preaching and witnessing of the Gospel is not being expedited. Some of those excuses are:

- "I don't know how to witness." The Early Church did not have training in witnessing, yet they revolutionized the world with the Gospel. Any born-again person can be a witness by sharing what Jesus has done in his or her life, but the anointing of the Holy Spirit is given specifically to empower us to be fully effective witnesses for Christ. Jesus said, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).
- "I'm too busy to witness. My job, my family, and my church activities occupy all my time." If we look, we can find opportunities to witness. We find time for the things we want to do. If we were offered a thousand dollars to go out and witness, the chances are good that we would go, no matter how busy our schedule. It is more important for us to win souls for Christ than it is to earn money. See Matthew 6:19-21.
- "I don't say much, but my life is a witness." Our lives certainly should testify of Jesus Christ to those in our daily contact, but what about all the unsaved people who do not have friends, relatives, or coworkers who live the Christian life before them? The Good Shepherd will leave the ninety-nine sheep and go after the one that has gone astray. In the same manner, we should actively seek and speak to those who are lost, so they might know about Christ. See Luke 15:4-7.
- "I try to witness, but nothing happens." Many people try to tell someone about Jesus but if the person doesn't come to the Lord right then, they stop. Paul the Apostle addressed that problem when he said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6,7). It is not our job to save those we witness to. God will be the one who saves them. It is our job to tell them!

1. Name some people you know, or have heard about, whose lives prove they have a burden for souls. Identify what it is in each of their lives that inspires others, and list some of the attributes that make these people effective witnesses for Christ.

2. An account is told of a young man who grew up in Scotland, and at the age of seventeen, he accompanied his mother into the city of Glasgow for the first time. His mother suddenly became aware that he was not with the rest of the family, and she began to search the area for him. She found him in a small side street, much like an alley, away from the crowds of people. There he sat with his face buried in his hands, sobbing. “Mama, all these people are on their way to Hell! Who will tell them about Jesus?”

This young man, William C. Burns, had a burden for the lost and became one of the greatest evangelists at the turn of the century. Why do we need a burden for souls in order to be an effective witness? How can we get that burden?

3. The missionary C. T. Studd was challenged to an all-out dedication to Christ by an article written by an atheist:

“If I firmly believed, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, then religion would mean to me everything. . . . I would esteem one soul gained for Heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences would never stay my hand, or seal my lips. Earth, its joys and its griefs, would occupy no moment of my thoughts. I would go forth to the world and preach to it in season and out of season, and my text would be, ‘What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul’ (Mark 8:36).”

What actions in a person’s life could cause others to think he does not care about the lost? What actions would show that he does care?

4. D. L. Moody made a vow to the Lord that he would not let a day end without sharing Jesus Christ with someone. One night, as he was getting into bed, the Holy Spirit reminded him that he had not told anyone about the Lord that day. Instead of saying he was sorry and climbing into bed, Mr. Moody got up, put on his clothes, and went out into the night. As he stepped off the front porch of where he was staying, he saw a man leaning against the light post at the corner of the block. He walked up to the man and asked him if he had ever heard of Jesus. The man began to cry, and told Moody that he was just standing there telling God that if He was really real, to let someone come into his life and tell him more about Him. Moody had the privilege of leading that man to the Lord.

If we ask the Lord to help us share Christ with someone every day, He will bring us into contact with people who are anxious to know about Him. Where might some of these contacts take place, and how can we take advantage of them?

5. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, often said that he wished it were possible to send each of his ministers to Hell for one day. He was sure when they returned that there would be no reluctance to tell lost humanity about the Savior! What events in our lives often encourage us to tell others about Jesus?

Thought Provoker: It was a picture of a large pier, and on the pier were tables of every size covered with beautiful linens and set exquisitely. Silver candelabras adorned the center of each table. Violins played as guests were served by tuxedo-clad waiters. Smiling faces showed that the people were enjoying their meal and the fellowship with their friends. On both sides of the pier, though, the water was filled with drowning people. Some seemed to be going

down for the last time. Others were frantically calling out to those on the pier. Under the picture was this caption: “Do you care?”

How can we expect the unbelieving world, or even our own children, to take the Gospel seriously if we do not? When we, as Christians, start crying out to God for the salvation of those around us, and are willing to make any sacrifice to reach them with the Gospel, we will see unbelievers repenting of their sins and calling on Jesus Christ to save them.

Key Texts

Matthew 4:19; 6:19-21; Mark 1:17; 8:36; 16:15; Luke 15:4-7; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 3:6,7

Other Scriptures Used in This Study

Matthew 28:19; 2 Timothy 2:6

Suggested Verse for Memorization

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. – Psalms 126:6