

A STAGGERING COMMISSION

***A STUDY TO MOTIVATE AND EQUIP THE BELIEVER
FOR THE MINISTRY OF EVANGELISM***

MARTIN PURYEAR

A STAGGERING COMMISSION

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THE SAME LORD IS LORD OF ALL, ABOUNDING IN RICHES FOR ALL WHO CALL ON HIM; FOR "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." HOW THEN WILL THEY CALL ON HIM IN WHOM THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED? HOW WILL THEY BELIEVE IN HIM WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD? AND HOW WILL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER? HOW WILL THEY PREACH UNLESS THEY ARE SENT? JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

– ROMANS 10:12-15

A STAGGERING COMMISSION

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THE SOBERING REALITIES FACING THE CHURCH

The World's Population

On November 15, 2022, the world's population reached eight billion souls. ¹

The World's "Unreached"

Based on the World Christian Database, the *Atlas of Global Christianity* defines an "evangelized person" as "an individual who has had adequate opportunity or opportunities to hear the Gospel and respond to it, whether he responds positively or negatively."

- 1) According to its own research (as recorded on the chart, the *Status of Global Christianity, 2023, in the Context of 1900-2050*), the World Christian Database reports that there are 2.25 billion people (2,250,856,000) classified as "unevangelized," that is, "they have never had an adequate opportunity to hear the Gospel and respond."

<https://www.gordonconwell.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2023/01/Status-of-Global-Christianity-2023.pdf>

The following three organizations give a much higher estimate:

- 2) According to *East-West Ministries, International* (eastwest.org/), "Of the approximately 8 billion people on planet Earth, about 3.2 billion are considered 'unreached' or 'least reached.' More than 7,000 *people groups* are classified as 'unreached.' That's more than 40% of the total population."

<https://blog.eastwest.org/what-is-an-unreached-people-group#:~:text=Of%20the%20approximately%208%20billion,40%25%20of%20the%20total%20population>

- 3) Shortly before the November 2022 date, *Global Frontier Missions* (globalfrontiermissions.org/) reported, "It is estimated that of the 7.83 billion people alive in the world today, 3.37 billion of them live in unreached people groups with little or no access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. According to 'Joshua Project,' there are approximately 17,428 unique people groups in the world with 7,400+ of them considered unreached (over 42% of the world's population!). The vast majority

(85%) of these least reached groups exist in the 10/40 window and less than 10% of missionary work is done among these people.”²

<https://globalfrontiermissions.org/gfm-101-missions-course/the-unreached-peoples-and-their-role-in-the-great-commission/>

4) The statistics given by *Project 42* (project42partners.org/) agree: “3.23 billion total unreached / 41.7% of unreached people on earth.”

<https://www.project42partners.org/stats-1>

The average of the last three estimates above comes to approximately *3,270,000,000*. *Three billion, two hundred and seventy million eternal souls* have never been given an opportunity to hear the Gospel and meaningfully respond to it.

When it comes to the *urgency* of global evangelism, we should keep these figures in mind.

The World’s Birth Rate

The second statistic that we, the Church, should keep in front of us is this. Worldwide, there were approximately 133,990,000 *births* during 2022.³ This averages to roughly

367,096 births every day
15,296 births every hour
255 births every minute
4.3 births every second

When it comes to *how* we approach evangelism, our strategy should keep this rate of world population growth in mind.

The World’s Death Rate

The third statistic we should keep in front of us is this. Worldwide, approximately 67,100,000 people died during 2022.³ This averages to roughly

183,836 deaths every day
7,660 deaths every hour
128 deaths every minute
2.1 deaths every second

Again, when it comes to *how* we approach evangelism, our strategy should keep this worldwide rate of death in mind.

The World's Eternal Destinies

The fourth fact facing the Church is this:

The New Earth is a real place ... and so is the Lake of Fire.

Conclusion

To be sure, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is confronted with a staggering situation. At the time of this writing,

- at least as many as 2.25 billion eternal souls (2,250,856,000) have never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. With the world's population now at eight billion, that means that over 28 % are "unreached," worldwide.
- over four (4.3) births occur every second, worldwide.
- over two (2.1) souls enter eternity every second, worldwide.
- the New Earth and the Lake of Fire are real places.

These are the realities facing those who have been entrusted with this command:

*GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL THE NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THAT I COMMANDED YOU; AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE.
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)*

So, how is the Church to address such a daunting task? Most surely, we cannot be faithful to this stewardship without the power and wisdom of God almighty.

1 United Nations / Department of Economic and Social Affairs (un.org). World Economic Forum (weForum.org). Worldometers World Population Clock (worldometers.info). Pew Research Center (pewresearch.org / short reads / 2022/07/21)

2 Most of the world's population live in what is known as the "10/40 Window." This "Window" (located between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude) is a rectangular area encompassing North Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

While it constitutes only one-third of earth's total land area, nearly two-thirds of the world's population (4.83 billion souls) reside in the 10/40 Window. This area of the world is home to some of the largest unreached people groups in the world, including the majority of the world's Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. (Sixty-two percent [62%] of its population live in an "unreached people group.")

(http://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/10_40_window)

When it comes to *where* we should position most of our *missionaries and mission dollars*, *responsible stewardship* tells us to focus on the 10/40 Window.

3 Our World in Data (ourworldindata.org)

TWO PARTICIPANTS

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GROUNDWORK IN SALVATION

Two Responses to the Gospel

John and Jane Doe are your neighbors. You have lived next door to each other for 20 years. John is a fine husband, a fine father, and a fine neighbor. He fills his spare time taking care of his lawn and playing golf. He and Jane seem to have a good marriage. And they both are kept extremely busy taking their teenage children to all the different school and sports activities, as well as going camping together as a family during the summer months.

But when you try to engage either of them in a spiritual conversation, they show very little interest. They give you no reason to believe that they have a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

This was not a snap evaluation on your part:

Over the years the John Doe family has come over to your home to celebrate the Christmas season. They have even attended several Easter services at your church with you and your family.

When Jane was in the hospital for tests and John needed to be with her, you helped them out by keeping their children, getting their mail, and cutting their grass. They have observed the love of Christ in your family for many years.

On more than one occasion, you have shared with John and Jane the reason that Christ died on the Cross. Furthermore, you have kept the Doe family on the prayer list of your Thursday night Bible study group for the last eight years.

John and Jane have observed your lives and they have heard your words. Yet, neither of them has shown any interest in spiritual matters. You begin to wonder, "Have they seen something in my life that was not Christ-like?" "Have they heard me say something that was not Christ-like?" Well, if your life is like mine, they probably have. Twenty years is a long time; and you still have the capacity to sin. So now you begin to wonder if your words and your life have kept them from trusting Christ.

Most certainly, there is still hope for John and Jane. As long as the body has breath and God is merciful, there is hope. But this family you took on as your "target for evangelism" has, so far, not responded to your witness.

Driving home from work one day, you were texting on your mobile phone. While keying in the letters, the driver in front of you noticed that the green light had turned red; but you didn't. He stopped; but you didn't. And so, you plowed into the back of his car.

As the two of you stand by the side of the road waiting for the wreckers to arrive to tow your cars away, he glares at you with a look that says, "I did not need this wreck. My *life* was already a wreck before you came along." He asks for your auto insurance card; and as you open your wallet to hand it to him, a Gospel tract falls out. *He* picks it up, reads the front cover, and realizes what it is. *He* then says to *you*, "May I have this?" And, of course, you say, "Most certainly."

Later that evening, the driver you hit is sitting in his den, carefully reading the Gospel tract that fell out of your wallet. He knows that his life has been heading in the wrong direction for years; and he feels miserably empty. But, according to this little booklet, Christ died for his sins so that he could be made right with God. And so that very night, this man cried out to God for mercy and asked to be forgiven of his sins.

Your neighbors, the John Does, have known you for 20 years. They know what you are like. They have seen Christ Jesus in your marriage, in your parenting, and in your church's witness. They have felt your loving care for them in His Name. They know that Jesus Christ is real to you and that He is the central focus of your life. But to this day, the John Does remain in their sins.

The man you rear-ended was introduced to you less than 24 hours ago. He knows very little about you except that you go to church somewhere and that you do not watch where you are going while driving. And yet, less than eight hours later, his dead soul was made alive through faith in Jesus Christ. His eternal destiny changed from being the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light.

You have done almost everything right with the John Does. For 20 years! And yet, John and Jane are still children of wrath. On the other hand, you have done almost everything wrong with the guy stopped at the traffic light. You did him no favors by wrecking his car. And the only reason you gave him a Gospel tract is because *he asked you* if he could have it. Yet, this man, a few hours later, is now a trophy of God's grace.

I'm wondering. Does it not seem to you that this should be the other way around?

Two Kinds of Sinners

According to the Bible we are all sinners ... every single one of us (Romans 3:23). But the Bible also tells us that there are two *kinds* of sinners: those who humbly believe they need God's mercy and those who believe they don't.

TWO MEN WENT UP INTO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY, ONE A PHARISEE AND THE OTHER A TAX COLLECTOR. THE PHARISEE STOOD AND WAS PRAYING THIS TO HIMSELF: "GOD, I THANK YOU THAT I AM NOT LIKE OTHER PEOPLE: SWINDLERS, UNJUST, ADULTERERS, OR EVEN LIKE THIS TAX COLLECTOR. I FAST TWICE A WEEK; I PAY TITHES OF ALL THAT I GET."

BUT THE TAX COLLECTOR, STANDING SOME DISTANCE AWAY, WAS EVEN UNWILLING TO LIFT UP HIS EYES TO HEAVEN, BUT WAS BEATING HIS BREAST, SAYING, "GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME, THE SINNER!" I TELL YOU, THIS MAN WENT TO HIS HOUSE JUSTIFIED RATHER THAN THE OTHER; FOR EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE HUMBLLED, BUT HE WHO HUMBLLES HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED. (LUKE 18:10-14)

The one who sees no need for God's mercy has a low view of God's holiness and a high view of his own goodness. As a result, he has little – or no – regard for the seriousness of his sins and, for that matter, may even be proud of them. Either way, he is not all that concerned about their eternal consequences. If his attitude were honestly voiced, it would be something to the effect, "Yes, I do disobey God from time to time; but don't we all? Overall, I'm still a decent person." Ignoring the death sentence that he is under (Romans 6:23a), he turns a blind eye to the approaching wrath of God. John and Jane Doe represent this kind of sinner.

On the other hand, the one who is acutely aware of his need for God's mercy is convinced that God is holy ... that he has violated that holiness with his sins ... and that what lies before him is eternal death. This is not someone who casually admits, "I am a sinner." (Most people are willing to do that.) To the contrary, the gravity of his crimes against the Holy One has begun to sink in. There is a growing uneasiness that God's righteous anger burns against him. As a result, his soul is burdened by an inescapable sense of misery and distress. To borrow from Luke 18, this is one who is "beating his breast." The man with the wrecked car represents this kind of sinner.

Dear friends, it is *impossible* for an individual to be saved who has a casual attitude toward his sins and their consequences. If he senses no urgency to be rescued from eternal death, he will sense no need to depend upon the sin-Bearer to do so.

What, then, does it take for an apathetic sinner to realize the seriousness of violating the moral law of God?

The Gift of Conviction

Just as you did with your neighbors, John and Jane Doe, believers are expected to present the Gospel to unbelievers. Yet, *until the Spirit of God convinces them of their deadly condition*, they will have *no sense of urgency* to be rescued from the penalty of their sins, whether we believers "do all the right things" or not.

The godliest of Christians can be nice to unbelievers.
 He can be a loving example of Christ to them (*lifestyle evangelism*).
 He can make church life attractive to them (*seeker-friendly services*).
 He can make the Christian faith logical to them (*apologetics*).
 He can meet their physical needs for food and medical care (*humanitarian aid*).
 And he can fight with them for civil, educational, and economic equality
 (*social justice*).

The Church can do all this ... and do it well ... without ever mentioning the unbeliever's sin and the penalty of eternal death he is facing. But *until the Church warns him of this reality and until the Spirit of God takes that truth and awakens him to his horrific state*, he will see no need for "the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world."

Let's take this a step further. Let's move it over *into* the church itself.

One who is **not** *distressed over his sins* can go to church.
 He can enjoy going to church.
 He can join the church.
 He can be baptized.
 He can partake of communion.
 He can become active in the church.
 He can invite others to come to church with him.
 He can become a member of a small Bible study group.
 He can serve on church committees.
 He can sing in the choir.
 He can become a Sunday School teacher or small group leader.
 He can serve as a deacon or an elder.
 He can go to a seminary.
 He can serve as the pastor of a church.
 And he can serve as a missionary on a foreign field.

A person can be just as religious as he wants to be ... yet still be lost. It is not until the Holy Spirit *awakens him to the reality of his sins' consequences* will he understand the significance of Christ's death. Then (and only then) will he flee to the Savior to be rescued from eternal death. Then (and only then) will he trust in Jesus' merciful, magnanimous Payment for sin to be applied to his own life.

This ministry of the Holy Spirit is known as *the conviction of sin*; and though it is painful, it is a priceless gift, motivating one who is hell-bound to repent of his sins.

The Gift of Repentance

THE LORD IS NOT SLOW ABOUT HIS PROMISE, AS SOME COUNT SLOWNESS, BUT IS PATIENT TOWARD YOU, NOT WISHING FOR ANY TO PERISH BUT FOR ALL TO COME TO REPENTANCE. (2ND PETER 3:9)

As with conviction of sin, repentance is a crucial step in the salvation of a sinner. It carries the idea of *change*: to change one's *attitude* about something ... and then to change one's *action*.

A Change in Attitude

Before God's work of conviction takes place, the consequences of sin are largely ignored. But once the Holy Spirit convicts the lost of his sins, he realizes that – all this time – he has been under the death sentence of an offended God (Ephesians 2:3). It is at this point that he *repents* of his sins. That is, he *changes his mind* about them. He is no longer indifferent toward them. He now knows they make him worthy of eternal death.

The very sins toward which he was once apathetic (or even proud of), he now abhors but is helpless to do anything about. So, he does the only thing he can do. He turns to God for salvation.

Salvation

If he has heard the Gospel (which is *our* responsibility, Romans 10:13-14), the significance of Christ's Death begins to come into focus.

“The Father's execution of His Son was the Payment for *my* crimes!”
 “Jesus Christ was punished in *my* place!”
 “He died as *my* Substitute ... so *I* would not have to!”

And as he awakens to the glory of the Cross, the one who knows he deserves to die will grab hold of Christ's Sacrifice by faith. And let there be no mistake about it. You will not have to “twist his arm” to get him to do so.

In response to his faith in Christ, the divine Judge forgives **all** his lawless crimes ... fully and forever. He is released from “death row” by God's gracious pardon.

A Change in Action

It is at this point, *as a new believer*, that he seeks to *change his actions*. Now under the sway of a living faith, he *gladly* strives to turn 180° away from the sins in his life of which *he is aware* (the very sins that once held him in the tyranny of bondage). He is not – and never will be – aware of *all* the sins in his life. Nor will he be able to *fully stop* committing all the sins of which he *is* aware. But the struggle with sin has begun (Romans 7); and by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, he will never again be satisfied with the status quo of his spiritual life.

As with conviction, repentance is not man generated. It is a work of the Spirit of God, leading those who are spiritually dead to spiritual life.

*"THEREFORE, IF GOD GAVE TO (THE GENTILES) THE SAME GIFT (OF THE HOLY SPIRIT) AS HE GAVE TO US (JEWISH CHRISTIANS) ALSO AFTER BELIEVING IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO WAS I (PETER) THAT I COULD STAND IN GOD'S WAY?" WHEN (THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS) HEARD THIS, THEY QUIETED DOWN AND GLORIFIED GOD, SAYING, "WELL THEN, **GOD HAS GRANTED** TO THE GENTILES ALSO **THE REPENTANCE THAT LEADS TO LIFE.**" (ACTS 11:17-18, PARENTHESES ADDED)*

*FOR THE SORROW THAT IS ACCORDING TO **THE WILL OF GOD** PRODUCES A **REPENTANCE** WITHOUT REGRET, **LEADING TO SALVATION**, BUT THE SORROW OF THE WORLD PRODUCES DEATH. (2ND CORINTHIANS 7:10)*

Because conviction leads to repentance and repentance "leads to life," both play critical roles in the process of salvation. That is why John the Baptist preached repentance:

NOW IN THOSE DAYS JOHN THE BAPTIST CAME, PREACHING IN THE WILDERNESS OF JUDEA, SAYING, "REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND." (MATTHEW 3:1-2)

It is why Jesus preached repentance:

FROM THAT TIME JESUS BEGAN TO PREACH AND SAY, "REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND." (MATTHEW 4:17)

It is also why Peter (and, presumably, all the other apostles) preached repentance:

THEREFORE, REPENT AND RETURN, SO THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED AWAY, IN ORDER THAT TIMES OF REFRESHING MAY COME FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD. (ACTS 3:19)

We have seen the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation: His works of conviction and repentance. Now, let us not miss this. It is not our responsibility to change the heart of an individual. Borrowing terms from *"The Parable of the Soils"* (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23), we are not expected to turn hardened soil ... or shallow, rocky soil ... or thorn-infested soil ... into good, fertile soil. That is not our calling. We have neither the wisdom nor the ability to do that. Only God has the power to change a heart. That is *His* role, not ours.

But God *has* given His Church a part to play in the salvation of the lost, that of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is to this sobering responsibility and magnificent privilege that we shall now turn our attention.

THE BELIEVER'S STEWARDSHIP OF EVANGELISM

The Responsibility and Privilege of Evangelism ^{4 5}

God has given the Church a staggering responsibility. He has placed in our hands His plan of salvation and sent us forth to explain that plan to those who are separated from God and in desperate need of the life He offers. It is, indeed, a sobering assignment:

WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED. HOW THEN WILL THEY CALL ON HIM IN WHOM THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED? HOW WILL THEY BELIEVE IN HIM WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD? AND HOW WILL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER? (ROMANS 10:13-14)

Yet, this is much more than a sobering responsibility. It is also a commission of honor, for within this stewardship is the privilege to *participate with God in His plan*

to make those who are “sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2) “to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father” (Revelation 1:6);

to transfer those who live in “the domain of darkness ... to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13);

to call those who are “dead in (their) trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1) “into His own kingdom and glory” (1st Thessalonians 2:12);

to prepare those who are “by nature children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3) “for glory” (Romans 9:23).

We should pause here to take note of something. Our heavenly Father did not have to do that. He did not have to make us a part of this extraordinary work. He could have chosen to declare this Good News *Himself*, whether in Person or through dreams or through visions. (After all, He has used these means to reveal His will in times past.) He also might have chosen *angels* to deliver this message. He has used them in times past as well to declare His messages to mankind (and, interestingly, will use an angel in the future to proclaim the Gospel to the world (Revelation 14:6-7)! But during this present age, we, the Church, are the stewards of God’s Word, including the Gospel message.

With that said, let us be even further motivated. There is *great reward* for those who are faithful to this privileged stewardship of evangelism (as there is with *all* acts of service in Christ’s Name).

NOW HE WHO PLANTS AND HE WHO WATERS ARE ONE; BUT EACH WILL RECEIVE HIS OWN REWARD ACCORDING TO HIS OWN LABOR. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:8)

It has been rightly taught, “The faithfulness of the believer’s witness will determine (his) eternal capacity to reflect God’s glory.”

THOSE WHO HAVE INSIGHT WILL SHINE BRIGHTLY LIKE THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE EXPANSE OF HEAVEN, AND THOSE WHO LEAD THE MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, LIKE THE STARS FOREVER AND EVER. (DANIEL 12:3)

“To ‘shine’ in glory is a privilege of all the saved. Any who influence others for righteousness shine like stars in varying capacities of light as their reward.” (The MacArthur Study Bible, footnote: Daniel 12:3, page 1742)

Therefore, the Great Commission is a stewardship with *great responsibilities*. But there is also *great privilege* in this calling, for it allows us to participate with God in the fulfillment of His will. And if that were not enough, those who are faithful to this command will be given *great reward*, sharing in the glory of Christ throughout eternity.

With that in mind, let us now consider the different types of evangelism at our disposal.

The Types of Evangelism

There are three types of evangelism:

- 1) Proclamation
- 2) Relational
- 3) Confrontational

Proclamation involves preaching the Gospel to a crowd, large or small. This kind of evangelism can take place from the pulpit of a local church, on a street corner, at an evangelistic crusade (e.g., Billy Graham), etc. This is typically the most *broad-reaching* – but *impersonal* – of the three types of evangelism.

Relational involves explaining the Gospel to an individual you know: a family member, a friend, a neighbor, a co-worker, a fellow student, etc. This is typically the most *personal* – but *time-consuming* – of the three types of evangelism. (It takes time to establish a *new* relationship.)

Confrontational involves explaining the Gospel to an individual you do *not* know: someone seated next to you on an airplane or in a park, going door-to-door, etc. This is typically *more time-effective* than *relational* evangelism and *more personal* than the *proclamation* approach.

Most certainly, there are occasions for *all three* to be used appropriately.

Although most of us are not called to preach the Gospel to crowds of people, there is a definite need for the “proclamation” method of evangelism.

Concerning the other two methods, the one that has been emphasized in our churches over the last two generations is the “relational” type of evangelism. If a relationship does not already exist, we have been encouraged to “build a bridge.” Because the unbeliever is more likely to listen to someone he knows (or so we have been told), we have been encouraged to establish new relationships to earn “a platform of credibility.”

Most certainly, we *should* seek to reach those individuals we know personally: in our families, in our neighborhood, from work, from school, etc. Perhaps these should even be considered our *first* concern. Our sovereign Lord has strategically positioned each of us within our own “circle of influence” for His Name’s sake.

But should relational evangelism be our *primary* approach? To explain the Gospel to an individual with whom we *already* have a relationship is one thing. But it takes time to build *new* relationships; and if that is the primary approach the Church uses, we will never be able to keep up with world population growth (4.3 births per second).

Furthermore, there are over two (2.1) deaths occurring every second worldwide. Fellow stewards of the Great Commission, we do not have the luxury of making relational evangelism our primary approach to reaching the world for Christ.

In addition to presenting the Gospel to those we already know (relational evangelism), we also need to learn how to explain the Gospel ... tactfully ... according to our unique personalities ... to people we do not know and may never see again (confrontational evangelism).

4 **God’s promise:** Every believer, now indwelt by the Holy Spirit, can effectively explain the Gospel of Jesus Christ (John 15:26 and Acts 1:8). [These two promises were given to those who became believers *before* the Day of Pentecost. *Since* the Day of Pentecost, the believer receives the Spirit of God *at the time of salvation*, enabling him to testify of Jesus Christ with divine power.]

5 **God’s promise:** The believer who strives to submit to (obey) the will of the Father (just as Christ did) will become an effective witness to others (Mark 1:17).

ONE STRATEGY

Before we continue, it would be good to remind ourselves of the magnitude of the situation facing the Church. At the time of this writing,

- at least as many as 2,250,856,000 (2.25 billion) eternal souls have never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. With the world's population now at eight billion, that means that over 28 % are "unreached," worldwide.
- over four (4.3) births occur every second, worldwide.
- over two (2.1) souls enter eternity every second, worldwide.
- the New Earth and the Lake of Fire are real places.

These are the realities facing those who have been entrusted with this staggering commission:

*GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL THE NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THAT I COMMANDED YOU; AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE.
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)*

Brothers and sisters, if this generation of the Church Age is going to faithfully fulfill its stewardship of the Great Commission, there are some things we need to do:

- We must learn how to present the Gospel to those we know and to those we do not know.
- And we must do so in a way that does not call upon us to take on a personality that we, as unique individuals, do not have.

These are the things we need to do. But before we consider the strategy a local church *should* use to evangelize our communities, let us consider the strategy we should *not* use.

WHAT THE CHURCH'S EVANGELISM STRATEGY SHOULD NOT BE

Inviting an Unbeliever to *Church*

(The following presentation is not meant to be used to turn away an unbeliever – coming in off the street – from entering the church building. He is, instead, to be warmly welcomed and given the best of seats from which to hear the Gospel. Nor is this discussion meant to discourage parents and grandparents from seeking help from the local church in “bringing up [their unsaved children and grandchildren] in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” [Ephesians 6:4].)

When it comes to the *strategy* of evangelism, a certain practice exists within our churches; and it goes something like this:

“Somehow, we’ve got to get all those people out there to come here to where we are so that our pastor can present the Gospel to them. And we will do whatever it takes to do so. If they want a basketball court, we’ll build them a basketball court. If they want a musical extravaganza, we’ll present a musical extravaganza. If they want a dog and pony show, we’ll bring in a three-ring circus. Our church will offer the public whatever it takes to get all those people out there to come here to where we are so that the professionals can tell them how to get saved. After all, they’ve been trained for this kind of thing; we haven’t.”

To many, when it comes to evangelism, the role of the church member is to get the lost to “come to church.” To do so, time, money, energy, and abilities are *lavishly* spent in their attempt to make church life appealing to the unbeliever.⁶ If the pew can attract the unsaved to their campus, they will have done what they were expected to do. The *pulpit* will take it from there.

The Consequences

(# 1) This strategy has caused confusion regarding the role of the church member in the Great Commission

With this approach, the believer is not to “go into all the world (to) *preach* the Gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Rather, he is to “go into all the world (to) *invite* all creation to come hear his preacher.” His role in evangelism is to invite someone to *church* rather

⁶ What it takes to *get them there* is what it will take to *keep them coming back*, which explains how many of our churches (in the west) became entertainment centers.

than to invite someone to *Christ*. Consequently, instead of being a saltshaker, the local church has become a salt *block*.

Such is the tradition of man. But it is not the will of God. According to Ephesians 4, it is the *pew* – *not* the *pulpit* – that is primarily responsible for explaining to the lost the Marvelous News of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

(# 1) The Solution

In Ephesians 4:11-12 we read that the Lord Jesus places within each local church certain individuals ... with certain gifts ... to fulfill a certain stewardship. The ministry to which they are called is to *equip all the other believers in the church to serve Christ*.

AND HE GAVE SOME AS APOSTLES, AND SOME AS PROPHETS, AND SOME AS EVANGELISTS, AND SOME AS PASTORS AND TEACHERS, FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE, TO THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST (EPHESIANS 4:11-12)

What is of special interest to us is that some of these gifted individuals are evangelists. Their responsibility is to *equip the saints* for a particular “work of service,” that is, to *share the Gospel*. Church leadership should surface those who are gifted as such and exhort them to train its membership in *the one message of the Cross* and in *the various methods* they can use. Therefore,

- 1) we in the *pew* need to *learn what that one Message is*;
- 2) we in the *pew* need to *learn which unique method* comes most naturally to us;
- 3) and then, we in the *pew* need to **do evangelism**

... out there

... where the lost are.

(# 2) This strategy has compromised the maturity level of the local church

The ministry of the pastor-teacher is, in part, to explain God’s Word *to God’s Flock* so that they might be faithful stewards of the Truth: strong in faith, diligent in obedience, reverent in worship, and impassioned in service. But if the purpose of the Sunday service is evangelistic, the preacher’s “target audience” necessarily shifts to the *unbeliever* ... which means the bulk of his sermons will be used to explain the Gospel to the lost rather than the meat of God’s Word to the saved. Whether they realize it or not, the redeemed who hear an evangelistic sermon Sunday after Sunday after Sunday are malnourished, starving for the entire counsel of God.

This is no small problem. If the depth of Biblical instruction remains elementary for the sake of the lost, the spiritual maturity level of those who are already saved will remain stunted, both in character and discernment.

This, in turn, dilutes the church's effectiveness in living out God's Truth before a world blindly following the lies of Satan ...

... which, in turn, is a detriment to the reputation of God.

This immaturity in the pew explains why many in the Church do not have the ability (or the desire) to distinguish moral error from moral truth. (It explains why the church looks a lot like the world.) Biblical instruction has been dumbed down for the sake of those who are spiritually dead ... at the expense of those who are spiritually alive.

Blame for a church's immaturity can, to *some* degree, be laid squarely at the foot of the pulpit, behind which stands a man whose definition of a "successful ministry" often carries the idea of "a lot of people, a lot of programs, a lot of money, and a big building" instead of "faithfulness to preach the *entire* counsel of God."

(# 2) The Solution

Have you ever wondered why Billy Graham was not the pastor of a church? It was because he knew that was not his calling. He was not called to preach the deeper truths of God's Word to the saved. He was called to preach the Gospel to the lost. To do so, he did not pursue a pastorate. Instead, he started *The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association*. When he preached, he did not expect the lost to come to a church building. He went "out there" to where they were.

The makeup of a congregation on Sunday morning was never intended to be like the crowds at a Billy Graham crusade. The Bible portrays the Church as *an assembly of the redeemed* whose purpose for meeting is to be sanctified by hearing the *whole* Truth versus the elementary things about Christ over and over and over and over.

EVERYONE WHO PARTAKES ONLY OF MILK IS NOT ACCUSTOMED TO THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR HE IS AN INFANT. BUT SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE, WHO BECAUSE OF PRACTICE HAVE THEIR SENSES TRAINED TO DISCERN GOOD AND EVIL. THEREFORE, LEAVING THE ELEMENTARY TEACHING ABOUT THE CHRIST, LET US PRESS ON TO MATURITY, NOT LAYING AGAIN A FOUNDATION OF REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS AND OF FAITH TOWARD GOD ... AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD AND ETERNAL JUDGMENT. (HEBREWS 5:13-14; 6:1-2)

If a man believes he is called to preach the Gospel to the lost, may he be blessed ten thousand-fold. (Would that God raise up thousands upon thousands of Billy Grahams!) But if that is what he believes to be his calling (proclamation evangelism), then he

should hand over the pulpit to one who is called to explain God's Word to those who are already saved and, instead, focus *his* attention on those who are in desperate need of that salvation

... out there

... where the lost are.

(# 3) This strategy restricts the offer of salvation only to those who are willing to "come to church"

Have you ever seen this license plate?

"C H _ _ C H. What's missing?"

In his book *"Where Do We Go from Here"* (Neighbour, Ralph, © 1990, TOUCH Publications, Houston, TX), the author makes the following observation:

"Where did we come up with the idea that *unconverted* people are burning with desire to dress up on Sunday morning instead of sleeping in, bursting with desire to come to a church facility with an insatiable thirst for Bible study?"

Not everyone is willing to "go to church." Indeed, there is a *huge* population of unbelievers out there who have no intention of setting foot on a church campus. How are *they* supposed to hear the Good News of salvation?

(# 3) The Solution

We must *take the Gospel to them as we go into all our world*: across the neighbor's fence ... over a cup of coffee at the coffee shop ... while chatting around the patio's fire pit ... during a lunch break at school ... while carpooling to work ... while talking with family or friends at a reunion ... while sitting next to an individual on a plane ... etc.

Since much of the world will not come to us, then we should go to them. We must learn how to offer God's pardon

... out there

... where the lost are.

Otherwise, many "out there" will never hear a clear presentation of the Gospel.

(# 4) This strategy creates a false assurance of salvation among lost church members

It is a dangerous thing to equate “getting right with God” with “going to church.” That should never be the impression a believer gives an unbeliever. Nor should it ever be what the *pulpit* communicates to the *pew*. And yet, that can – and does – happen when church members are encouraged to invite the lost to *church* rather than to **Christ**.

Beloved, church attendance does not make one acceptable to God. Now, you may already know that; but there are a lot of people out there, living under the death sentence of God, who don't. The last thing we need to do is to leave them with the wrong impression that attending a church service is even *part* of the solution to that problem. It is not. Yet, that *is* the step we are encouraging them to take. No wonder there are so many sitting in our pews Sunday after Sunday with lives void of spiritual fruit. And what's worse, many of them do not know that anything is wrong.

Dear friends, Jesus Christ did not die to turn an “unchurched” person into a “churched” person. He died to turn a condemned person into a pardoned person ... to give a spiritually dead person spiritual life. A ruined sinner is not saved by associating with a group of *redeemed sinners*. He is saved by placing his faith in the *Redeemer*.

(# 4) The Solution

I realize that what I am about to write is going to fly in the face of a traditional approach many of you have followed, perhaps, your entire life. Nevertheless,

*WHEN DOING EVANGELISM, WE SHOULD NOT **MENTION** THE WORD “CHURCH”*

We should stop depending on someone else to do our job (which is what we have been doing). Instead of inviting the lost to church so they can hear the Gospel from our pastor, *we ourselves* need to learn how to share the Gospel ... and then *we ourselves* need to do so

... out there

... where the lost are.

If the unbeliever is convicted of his sins, cries out to God for mercy, and trusts in Christ's death on the Cross as the Payment for those sins, **THEN** we should invite him to come to church with us ... *as a believer*.

An Observation

Dear friends, something very special resides in the hearts of those who are truly born of the Holy Spirit. There is a God-implanted craving to know the Father and His will through a study of His Word. There is a pleasant desire to worship the Son of God Who rescued them from the horror of sin's penalty and the tyranny of sin's authority and power ... the One Who crowned their souls with the assurance of eternal glory.

This passion to fellowship with the Savior draws the one who is born of God to fellowship with others who share this kindred spirit. They, too, know what it means to be delivered from bondage and death. *No dog and pony shows are needed to coax them to these refreshing, these strengthening, these holy meetings.* That is because the longing they have for this fellowship is not created by the world's "bells and whistles." This supernatural passion to know and worship God is generated by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Nothing short of a miracle has taken place in the soul of each reborn Christ-follower, one that only God can perform.

These gatherings of the redeemed have existed since the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost. It is from the Book of Acts that we are given a snapshot of what the early churches did when they assembled on the first day of the week (Acts 20:6-7).

THEY WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES' TEACHING AND TO FELLOWSHIP, TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD AND TO PRAYER. (ACTS 2:42)

Let us take note. These are not activities for the unregenerate. Sunday's meeting is a time reserved for the redeemed, not for those *we want* to be redeemed.⁷ The Church is to be strengthened and refreshed on the first day of the week *so that She might be an effective witness to the lost during the normal course of the rest of Her week*

... out there

... where the lost are.

⁷

Evangelism *did* take place when the early church met on the first day of the week. According to 1st Corinthians 14:23-25, unbelievers were present *and welcome* in the believers' assemblies. But they were apparently "coming in off the street." Their presence was not the result of an *evangelistic strategy*.

A Ladies' Tea
(A Traditional Approach to Evangelism)

There were some women in a church's Bible study who became concerned about the eternal welfare of their family and friends. So, they approached the pastor of their church with the idea of a Ladies' Evangelistic Tea. Their plan was for each of the 20 women in their study group to invite two lost friends / relatives to the event. During the refreshments, a speaker would weave the Gospel into her testimony. It would be a one-day opportunity for 40 people to hear how they might be given eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. And so, the preparations began:

A room at the church building, large enough to seat 60 ladies, was reserved. (This took 10 minutes.)

The tea was scheduled on the church calendar for the 3rd Saturday of the following month (10 minutes).

Six tables and 60 chairs were in the basement and reserved (5 minutes).

Six women were asked to serve as table hosts (10 minutes x 6).

The invitations were designed (30 minutes).

Arrangements were made for 40 invitations to be printed (60 minutes). This cost \$ 35.

Teenage girls were asked to serve the tables (10 minutes x 6).

A dynamic speaker was secured (45 minutes). Cost of honorarium: \$ 150.

Directions to the church were emailed to the speaker (10 minutes).

Refreshments to be delivered and served by a nice pastry shop downtown were ordered (45 minutes). Cost for 60 ladies: \$ 550.

Flower arrangements for the tables were ordered (45 minutes). Cost: \$ 90.

China and silverware were requested from some of the ladies (10 minutes x 6).

The invitations were picked up from the printer and mailed (60 minutes). Cost of stamps: \$ 27

The day of the Evangelistic Tea arrived. Set up began four hours before the event:

Each volunteer packed the china and silverware in boxes and loaded them in their cars (45 minutes x 6).

The flower arrangements were picked up (30 minutes).

Some of the husbands, recruited by their wives, brought up the tables and chairs from the basement and set them up in the room (35 minutes).

The table hostesses arranged the tablecloths, flower arrangements, china, silverware, and napkins at each table (30 minutes x 6).

The Ladies' Evangelistic Tea takes place (2 hours)

Following the Evangelistic Tea

The china and silverware were washed in the church building's kitchen, packed in boxes, and loaded back in the cars (2 hours).

The tables and chairs were moved back down into the basement's storage (35 minutes).

The room was vacuumed (40 minutes).

The tablecloths were washed, dried, and ironed (1 hour, 30 minutes).

According to the table hostesses, three women trusted Christ as their Savior that morning: Barb's next-door neighbor, Liz's co-worker, and Katie's niece. The event was considered a success; so, plans were made to make this

AN ANNUAL EVENT

Total cost of the Ladies' Tea: **\$ 852**

Total hours invested from start to finish: **~ 23 hours, 40 minutes**

Total number of believers who presented God's salvation to the lost: **1**

Total number who heard the Gospel from this investment in money and hours: **40**

The cost in money, time, and energy to *repeat* this outreach: **same as above**

Some of the ladies' husbands decided to do something similar each year on Super Bowl Sunday (the game to be viewed on the wide screen TV in the church's Fellowship Hall, a Christian testimony to be given by a former NFL player, and a meal of buffalo wings, fries, and coleslaw to be served). Both groups requested that these events be written into the church's annual budget, which they were.

WHAT THE CHURCH'S EVANGELISM STRATEGY *SHOULD* BE

Inviting an Unbeliever to *Christ*

A Ladies' Training (The Biblical Approach to Evangelism)

There were some women in a church's Bible study who became concerned about the eternal welfare of their family and friends. So, they approached one of their church leaders – one who had the gifts and passion for evangelism – with a request: Would he be willing to meet with their group (of 20 ladies) for some basic ideas on how **they** might explain the Gospel to their lost neighbors, family members, and friends. (This took 30 minutes.)

After agreeing to meet with them,

the church's evangelist selected a tract that offered a brief, clear, and thorough presentation of the Gospel to a general audience. Cost for 100 tracts: \$ 25.

A date was then set to meet with the women in the church's sanctuary (30 minutes).

They met on a Saturday morning (2 hours).

Once they had been seated, the evangelist handed out five Gospel tracts to each of the 20 participants.

To familiarize them with its contents, he first read through the tract, making comments along the way.

Then, he took some time to explain

- *how they should prepare themselves – ahead of time – for the opportunities the Lord gives them – on any given day – to share the Gospel with someone,*
- *how they can initiate a conversation about the Gospel with someone they know (relational evangelism) and with someone they do not know (confrontational evangelism),*
- *what probing questions to use to determine one's religious beliefs,*
- *what they could say if they have only one minute to say it,*

- *how they can literally place the Gospel in a person's hands,*
- *and how to follow up this appeal once the unbeliever has had time to read the Gospel tract, whether it be with someone they know or someone they do not know.*

These concerned sisters in Christ left the sanctuary, each one agreeing to pray and look for opportunities to use this approach over the next two weeks. Afterwards, during their Bible study, they would discuss what happened.

Over the course of those two weeks, three women trusted Christ as their Savior: Barb's next-door neighbor, Liz's co-worker, and Katie's niece. This approach was considered a success; so, plans were made to continue looking for other opportunities to share the Gospel with ones they met ...

ALL YEAR LONG

Furthermore, five of their husbands also decided to use this approach with their contacts.

The leader of their Bible study group *scheduled into her lesson plans* time to discuss their evangelistic opportunities. Every two or three weeks, she would ask,

- "Did anyone have an opportunity to share the Gospel recently?"
- "How did it go?"
- "What are you glad you did?"
- "What would you do differently next time?"

And throughout the year, many other friends, relatives, and neighbors heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, during that year, seven others trusted Christ as their Savior.

Total cost of the ladies' materials and training: **\$ 25**

Total hours invested for the training: **~ 3 hours**

Total number of believers who presented God's salvation to the lost: **20**

Total number who hear the Gospel from this investment in money and hours:
countless, over the lifetimes of these 20 women

The cost in money, time, and energy to *repeat* this outreach: **same as above**

AN EVALUATION

What advantages does the *Biblical* approach (pages 28-29) have over the traditional approach (pages 26-27)?

TWO SITUATIONS

HOW TO BE PREPARED FOR AN EVANGELISTIC OPPORTUNITY

- 1) Select an evangelism tract that explains the Gospel briefly, clearly, and thoroughly to a general audience.
- 2) Write your first name, your church's name, and your church's telephone number somewhere on the back of each of these tracts.
- 3) Inform your pastor as to what you are doing, giving him time to prepare his office staff for the calls that may come in from those interested in discussing the Gospel.
- 4) Always carry with you at least one tract.
- 5) Pray for *opportunities*, for the Lord's *guidance*, and for the Lord's *loving composure*.

WHEN THERE IS NO TIME OR OPPORTUNITY FOR AN EVANGELISTIC CONVERSATION

During everyday life, you will likely have contact with several who need to know Christ as their Savior. But because of the situation, an evangelistic conversation may not be possible.

- Their time may be limited.
- Responsibilities demanding their attention may be a distraction.
- The presence of other people may not allow for the privacy needed.
- Maintaining a proper work ethic may be a factor.
- Their company's policy may even forbid them from engaging in this kind of discussion.

The Church must be sensitive to all these situations as we reach out to others with the Good News of God's grace. Therefore, we need to have at our disposal two or three sentences we can use with those individuals whose circumstances do not allow for a lengthy discussion. The following words are presented as *only one way – of countless other ways* – the believer can present the Gospel to those whose circumstances do not allow for a discussion.

- 1) "I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ; and I have the privilege of telling others about Him."
- 2) "I want you to know that He changed my life."
- 3) (*Show him* the Gospel tract you have **prepared** to give away.)
- 4) "I would like to give this to you **if** you will read it."

You should create your own presentation based on your own personality. But it needs to be brief.

WHEN THERE IS TIME AND OPPORTUNITY FOR AN EVANGELISTIC CONVERSATION

There are certain believers who seem to have a wonderful, God-given ability to steer just about *any* conversation into a presentation of the Gospel. But for most of us, this does not come easily. We simply “lack the knack” of converting a secular discussion into a spiritual one.

Asking questions can help. That is because most people do not mind (and some really enjoy) giving their opinions about things, including religion. Questions are a natural way to draw the individual into a discussion about spiritual issues.

Furthermore, an individual is more likely to participate in a “religious conversation” if we begin with *his* belief system, not ours. To ask someone, “What exactly do *you* believe?” communicates *interest in* and *respect for him*. (Even though we may reject his belief system, we should still acknowledge his dignity as one created in the image of God.)

Moreover, if we enter the conversation as a *listener* instead of a lecturer, we are less likely to come across as “superior-than-thou,” an offensive attitude that often accompanies the most well-intentioned evangelist.

*“This is what I believe; and you should believe this, too.
That’s because what you believe is probably wrong; but what I believe is right.
So, be quiet and listen to what I have to say.”*

Of course, no one would say that; but it is possible to come across in this way. When we take time to listen carefully to what the other person has to say, he is more likely to listen carefully to what *we* have to say.

And finally, to ask a few questions that we have prepared ahead of time allows us to control the direction of the conversation. It is less likely to wander aimlessly.

How to Initiate an Evangelistic Conversation *with Someone You Know*

“(Name), I have known you for (length of time); but there is something we have never discussed. Would you mind if I ask you a few questions about your religious views?” ^{8 9 10}

How to Initiate an Evangelistic Conversation *with Someone You Do Not Know*

“I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ; and I enjoy listening to others’ religious beliefs. Would you mind if I ask you a few questions about yours?” ^{8 9 10}

Assuming You Are Given Permission to Ask Him Questions

1) “Do You Believe in God?” – “No”

For the next several minutes, just *listen* to anything else he wants to add to that. If he says something that you do not understand, ask him to explain what he means. Then ask him

- 2) “What do you believe will happen to you on the day of your death?”
- 3) “I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ; and I have the privilege of telling others about Him. I want you to know that He changed my life.”
- 4) (*Show him the Gospel tract you have prepared to give away.*)
- 5) “I would like to give this to you *if* you will read it. It explains what the Bible says about this issue. You can read it at your convenience. ¹¹

1) “Do You Believe in God?” – “Yes”

For the next several minutes, just *listen* to anything else he wants to add to that. If he says something that you do not understand, ask him to explain what he means. Then ask him

- 2) “Do you believe in ‘heaven’ (or ‘Paradise’ or ‘the world to come’)?”
- 3) “What do you believe you must *do* to be *able to go* to this place after you die? How do you get there?” ¹²
- 4) “Up to this point in your life, have you done all that you said a person must do?”
- 5) “What do you believe will happen to you on the day of your death if you do *not* keep all the requirements you mentioned?” ¹³
- 6) (*Show him the Gospel tract you have prepared to give away.*)
- 7) “I would like to give this tract to you *if* you will read it. It explains how the Bible answers these questions. ¹⁴ You can read it at your convenience. ¹¹ And if you have any comments or questions,

... we can get back together to discuss them.” (someone you *know*) ¹⁵

... you can call my church at this number (on the back of the tract). Someone there would be happy to talk with you about your comments and questions.” (someone you *do not know*)

8 To be sure, it is helpful to have some understanding as to what the major world religions believe about salvation. At the same time, though, it is not necessary for one to be thoroughly acquainted with the theology of each religion before he can witness to their disciples. Most who follow a certain belief system (including Christianity) do not have a detailed, systematic knowledge of that religion’s theology. In fact, many will combine the doctrine their leaders teach with their own personal views. (For example, a person raised in a Mormon home may have also added bits and pieces of New Age humanism to his “bag of beliefs.”)

That is why we do not ask the person, “What exactly does (*his religion*) teach about God?” Rather, we should ask, “What exactly do *you* believe about God?” He may not be able to tell you in detail what he is supposed to believe; but he *will* be able to tell you – with sincerity – what *he* believes. And that is what we are after ... *his personal belief system*.

So, if your ministry involves addressing crowds of people who hold to various world views, you will, of course, need to spend significant time acquainting yourself with the doctrines of these different religions.

But if your evangelistic efforts are usually one-on-one, then for every *one* hour you invest learning about Islam or Mormonism, it is advisable to spend *one hundred* hours studying the Word of God. Instead of saturating our minds with Satan’s lies, we need to give our minds over to God’s Truth. This is a wiser way to prepare ourselves to *discern* and *address* the many deceptions that permeate our world.

9 You have not started the conversation by telling him what you believe. Rather, you asked for his permission to talk about **his** beliefs. Instead of expecting him to listen to you, you have shown a willingness to listen to him. You have shown him respect.

10 Since people generally enjoy giving their opinions about things, he will likely enjoy telling you what he believes. The conversation will not be “strained.”

11 There is no pressure put on him to make a response in your presence. His response to trust or to reject Christ will be sincere because, when he makes this decision, he will likely be by himself. (This prevents him from responding in the way he thinks you want him to.)

12 With the first three questions, (1) – (3), we are trying to gain insight into what the individual believes. Is he an atheist? Is he a Muslim? Is he a Jehovah’s Witness? Just what is he? In a short period of time, we can become oriented to his world view so that we might know better how to address him.

- 13 The full force of these questions comes when we ask him to compare what he believes a person must *do* to go to heaven with what *he is actually doing*. Does his life “measure up,” not to *our* standard but to *his own standard*?

“In order to go to heaven, I believe I must obey the Ten Commandments.”

“Do you obey the Ten Commandments?” (Question 4)

“No, not all the time.”

“Since you have not done what you said you must do to go to heaven, what will happen to you on the day of your death?” (Question 5)

The main purpose of these two questions is to help the one with whom we are speaking trace his own belief system to its logical conclusion.

- 14 Once he is shown that his own *works-based righteousness* is impossible to attain, he is more likely to listen to our message of a *faith-based* righteousness, (step 7). **IF the Spirit of God is at work in his heart**, the resulting sense of despair will make our message of *God’s grace* something he wants to grab hold of.

- 15 The next time you see him, if he does not bring it up, you have a natural way of getting back into the conversation. (“Did you have a chance to read the tract; and if so, what did you think?”) At that time, you can discern if the Spirit of God wants you to probe further or let the seed of the Gospel “take root.”

ONE MESSAGE

WHAT THE GOSPEL DOES ... AND DOES NOT ... PROMISE

BUT HE WAS PIERCED THROUGH FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HE WAS CRUSHED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; THE CHASTENING FOR OUR WELL-BEING FELL UPON HIM, AND BY HIS SCOURGING WE ARE HEALED. ALL OF US LIKE SHEEP HAVE GONE ASTRAY, EACH OF US HAS TURNED TO HIS OWN WAY; BUT THE LORD HAS CAUSED THE INIQUITY OF US ALL TO FALL ON HIM ... THE RIGHTEOUS ONE, MY SERVANT, WILL JUSTIFY THE MANY, AS HE WILL BEAR THEIR INIQUITIES. (ISAIAH 53:5-6, 11)

... AND HE HIMSELF BORE OUR SINS IN HIS BODY ON THE CROSS. (1ST PETER 2:24)

The Restoration of a Ruptured Relationship

Yes, it is true. Christ *can* heal – and has healed – torn relationships between family members and friends. He has also been known to split relationships wide apart. Indeed, *Jesus presented Himself* as the most divisive Person who has ever lived.

DO NOT THINK THAT I (JESUS) CAME TO BRING PEACE ON THE EARTH; I DID NOT COME TO BRING PEACE, BUT A SWORD. FOR I CAME TO SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; AND A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. (MATTHEW 10:34-36)

The Cross of Christ does *not* guarantee the healing of a ruptured relationship. Maybe it will. Maybe it won't. (There are two wills involved, not just one.) What the Gospel *does* guarantee is the believer's *deliverance from sin's tyranny: its eternal penalty, its authority, its power, and – eventually – its presence.* This is to be the appeal of the evangelist.

The Restoration of a Broken Marriage

Yes, the power of the Cross *can* heal – and has healed – many broken marriages. But for one to believe on Christ so that his failing marriage will be restored should *not* be the message of the evangelist. The Bible tells us what to do when an unbelieving husband or wife *leaves* his / her believing spouse (which means that it could – and did – happen).

BUT TO THE REST I SAY, NOT THE LORD, THAT IF ANY BROTHER HAS A WIFE WHO IS AN UNBELIEVER, AND SHE CONSENTS TO LIVE WITH HIM, HE MUST NOT DIVORCE HER. AND A WOMAN WHO HAS AN UNBELIEVING HUSBAND, AND HE CONSENTS TO LIVE WITH HER, SHE MUST NOT SEND HER HUSBAND AWAY ... YET IF THE UNBELIEVING ONE LEAVES, LET HIM LEAVE; THE BROTHER OR THE SISTER IS NOT UNDER BONDAGE IN SUCH CASES, BUT GOD HAS CALLED US TO PEACE. (1ST CORINTHIANS 7:12-13, 15)

The Cross of Christ does *not* guarantee the restoration of a broken marriage. In fact, it may even be the *cause of* the division. What the Gospel *does* guarantee is the believer's *deliverance from sin's tyranny: its eternal penalty, its authority, its power, and – eventually – its presence. This* is to be the appeal of the evangelist.

The Healing of a Serious Physical Illness

Yes, it is certainly true: Jesus Christ *can* heal – and has healed – many serious physical illnesses. It is also true that many prayer warriors – men and women of great faith – have died of cancer. For one to believe on Christ so that his body is restored to health should *not* be the message of the evangelist.

The Cross of Christ does not guarantee the healing of a serious physical illness. What the Gospel *does* guarantee is the believer's *deliverance from sin's tyranny: its eternal penalty, its authority, its power, and – eventually – its presence. This* is to be the appeal of the evangelist.

Conclusion

“Have you ever wondered why Jesus doesn't just heal everyone? It's because it was never Jesus' intention to be sought by people as the *means* to an end but, rather, to be sought by people *as* the End. His gifts are not the treasure. *He* is the Treasure. Those who come to the Savior to get something other than the Savior as their ultimate desire have not truly come to the Savior at all.”¹⁶

But when *God's pardon* is presented to someone who is *convinced of God's justice*, that will be all it takes. If he understands the eternal danger he is in, his deliverance from that plight will be foremost on his mind. ***Whether his circumstances change or not***, he will grab for that Good News ... that Marvelous News ... that over-the-top Fantastic News ... as though he were grabbing for a life preserver in a sinking ship.

And he will cling to it.

And he will not let it go.

¹⁶ Brown, Tom, “Jesus Cleanses the Temple” (Matthew 21:12-17), sermon at Covenant Grace Church, Greensboro, North Carolina, March 10, 2024.

“Years I spent in vanity and pride, caring not my Lord was crucified, knowing not it was for me He died on Calvary.”

“By God’s Word – at last – my sin I learned; then I trembled at the Law I’d spurned, till my guilty soul imploring turned to Calvary.”

“O, the love that drew salvation’s plan! O, the grace that brought it down to man!
O, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary.”

“Mercy, there, was great and grace was free.
Pardon, there, was multiplied to me.
There my burdened soul found liberty
at Calvary.”

(*At Calvary*, lyrics by William R. Newell)

Perhaps you are not sure about your own relationship with God. If you would like to have the assurance that you will go to heaven when you die, the following presentation is for you. But *before* you read it, we would like to encourage you to ask God (through prayer) to help you understand it.

RESCUED BY GRACE

Beloved friend, you have been given a special promise. And it comes from God Himself, the One Who cannot lie.

*FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD,
THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON,
THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM
SHALL NOT PERISH,
BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.
(JOHN 3:16)*

We would do well to carefully consider – and cherish – each line of this promise of deliverance from eternal death to eternal life.

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

According to the Bible, God loves the entire world: every race, every nation, every people-group, every tribe ... every person. But notice the *kind* of world He loves:

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US ... WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS ... WHILE WE WERE (HIS) ENEMIES. (ROMANS 5:8, 10)

The world that God loves is not a world of His friends. Rather, it is a world of His enemies: those who are indifferent toward Him ... those who hold Him in utter contempt ... who rebel against Him ... who are hostile toward Him ... who shake their fist at Him ... who curse His Name. *This is the kind of world God loves.*

Let us also consider this. The kind of world God loves reveals the *kind of love* He has. God does not seek to destroy sinners. Rather, He seeks to turn them from their sin. His love is patient ... one that is not easily provoked ... one that endures much. It is a love that does not seek to get even but, instead, is eager to forgive and to restore. *This is the kind of love God has.*

How did He demonstrate such wondrous love?

HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON

According to the Bible, you and I have a serious problem. We are all *moral failures*. We have all broken the righteous laws of a holy God.

FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD. (ROMANS 3:23)

The sins we have committed against God are not minor offenses. In His sight they are *capital crimes* deserving *capital punishment*. We deserve eternal death, and God has every intention of executing that sentence. His justice demands it. Of all the problems we will ever face, this one is the most dangerous:

... THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH. (ROMANS 6:23)

But because of His great love for the world, God sent His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die *for us*, the condemned. He placed our crimes on His innocent Son and, in doing so, Jesus became guilty *for us*. The sinless One Who did not deserve the death penalty died *for all of us* who did.

... AND HE HIMSELF BORE OUR SINS IN HIS BODY ON THE CROSS. (1ST PETER 2:24)

Jesus Christ was born to be **your** *Substitute in death*.

He was sent by God to be executed in your place.

He died so you would not have to.

*GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US,
IN THAT WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US. (ROMANS 5:8)*

To whom will God give so great a salvation?

WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM

God offers His salvation to everyone. No exceptions. His mercy toward you is higher than the heavens; and His grace is greater than *all* your sins combined ... past, present, and future. *All* of them. Not one of your sins is too great to exclude you from His promise:

WHOEVER *WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED. (ROMANS 10:13)*

You are invited to receive this salvation *by trusting in His Son's Death to serve as payment for your crimes against God*. He wants you to be restored to Him.

"COME TO ME, ALL WHO ARE WEARY AND HEAVY-LADEN ... AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS." (MATTHEW 11:28-29)

The one who depends on Christ's Death to serve as the payment for his sins ...

SHALL NOT PERISH

Why will you not perish? Because **all your sins** will be washed away. Every single one of them. And **all your guilt** will be fully pardoned. In the sight of God, you will be completely cleansed, and you will be forever forgiven.

TO HIM WHO LOVES US AND RELEASED US FROM OUR SINS BY HIS BLOOD ... TO HIM BE THE GLORY AND THE DOMINION FOREVER AND EVER. (REVELATION 1:5-6)

This is God's promise to you:

If you *depend upon* Christ's Death ...
to serve as the punishment for your sins,
you will be *fully and forever* pardoned ...
from God's sentence of eternal death.

*THEREFORE, THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION (THERE IS NO PUNISHMENT)
FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS. (ROMANS 8:1, PARENTHESIS ADDED)*

No good deed is good enough for you to earn this deliverance.

No sin is too great to exclude you from it.

And there is still more good news found in this verse!

HE SHALL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

Three days after Jesus was punished for our sins, God raised Him from the dead. Likewise, those who trust in Him for salvation have been given that same assurance. They, too, will one day be raised from the dead. And they will never die again.

"I (JESUS) AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME ... WILL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, AND I MYSELF WILL RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY." (JOHN 11:25, 6:40, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

No religious leader who decomposed in his grave can give someone else eternal life. (How can a person who is still in the grave raise someone else from the dead?) The only One Who *can* give others life after death is the One Who walked out of His tomb.

And that is what the Lord Jesus Christ is offering **you!** Everlasting life! This, too, is the glorious promise of God.

WHAT ABOUT YOU? HAVE YOU SETTLED THIS ISSUE WITH GOD?

Dear friend, I must warn you. You are in a dangerous situation. Your sins are an offense to a holy God. In His sight they are capital crimes; and capital crimes deserve the death penalty.

... *THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH. (ROMANS 6:23)*

Are you able to hear this? You are under the death sentence of God. Someone must be executed for your sins. The justice of God demands it. You can either pay this debt of death yourself, or you can accept Christ's death to serve as your own. But one of you is going to make this payment.

**The only way you can escape this penalty of eternal death
is to depend upon the execution of Jesus Christ
to serve as the punishment for your sins against God.**

This is what it means to "believe in Him."

Jesus Christ is your *only hope*. He has told us:

"I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH ME." (JOHN 14:6)

THERE IS SALVATION IN NO ONE ELSE; FOR THERE IS NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN AMONG MEN BY WHICH WE MUST BE SAVED. (ACTS 4:12)

Have you done this?

Have you trusted God to pardon you from His sentence of eternal death and to give you eternal life through the Death and Resurrection of His Son?

APPENDIX A: GOSPEL PRESENTATIONS OFFERED BY STEWARD OF TRUTH PUBLICATIONS

This website (www.stewardoftruth.com) offers three different Gospel presentations, each designed to be used with a different type of audience.

- 1) *Rescued by Grace* (a general presentation for those whose level of knowledge or understanding of the Gospel is unknown)
- 2) *A Breathtaking Weekend* (for those attending an Easter or funeral service)
- 3) *More than a God of Grace* (for those who have repeatedly rejected the Gospel)

Found on our **Home Page** under the tab **Evangelism**, each presentation can be downloaded and printed for *FREE*.

Furthermore, from these printed pages, you may make as many photocopies as you wish for *FREE*.

TO ORDER PRINTED TRACTS

Our Gospel presentation, ***Rescued by Grace***, is also available as a **printed tract**.

Offered through the printing company, *Moments with the Book*, this tract is available in quantities of 100, 250, 500, 1000, 2500, 5000, and 10000.

The price per tract is determined by the quantity ordered.

Its format is a folded tract, having a total of 8 pages.

Its dimensions are 3½ inches x 5½ inches.

The version of the Bible used is the New American Standard Version (NASV). *Moments with the Book* does, however, make this offer:

“Do you want to print this tract in a different version than the one listed? Contact us and let us know what you’re looking for – we may be able to create the alternate version for you *at no charge*.”

To order *Rescued by Grace* in the form of printed tracts, go to:

www.mwtb.org/rescued-by-grace-tract

APPENDIX B: PRINCIPLES OF EVANGELISM

The following insights have been gathered over the years from both personal experience and from others' experiences and are intended to provide some guidelines to observe as we share the Gospel with others.

I. Motivation

1) A Genuine Concern for the Person's Eternal Destiny

We should not come across as God's "Law enforcement." Let us, instead, be to those with whom we speak as ones who portray a *sincere concern* regarding their eternal wellbeing.

2) Consider This to be a Team Effort between the One Who "Sows," the One Who "Waters," and the One Who "Reaps"

"Sowing," "watering," and "reaping" usually do not take place at the same time. There are often several believers involved throughout the process, most of whom are not present when the harvest takes place. Evangelism is a team effort.

JESUS SAID TO THEM, "MY FOOD IS TO DO THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME AND TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK. DO YOU NOT SAY, 'THERE ARE YET FOUR MONTHS, AND THEN COMES THE HARVEST'? BEHOLD, I SAY TO YOU, LIFT UP YOUR EYES AND LOOK ON THE FIELDS, THAT THEY ARE WHITE FOR HARVEST. ALREADY HE WHO REAPS IS RECEIVING WAGES AND IS GATHERING FRUIT FOR LIFE ETERNAL; SO THAT HE WHO SOWS AND HE WHO REAPS MAY REJOICE TOGETHER. FOR IN THIS CASE THE SAYING IS TRUE, 'ONE SOWS AND ANOTHER REAPS.' I SENT YOU TO REAP THAT FOR WHICH YOU HAVE NOT LABORED; OTHERS HAVE LABORED AND YOU HAVE ENTERED INTO THEIR LABOR."
(JOHN 4:34-38)

Regarding eternal rewards, the one who presents the Gospel ("sows") receives the same reward as the one who leads one to salvation ("reaps"). One does *not* have to see the harvest ("win someone to Christ") to receive "wages" and "gather fruit for life eternal."

II. Lifestyle

3) The Role Our Lifestyles Play in Evangelism

It is important that we are sensitive to how our conduct affects the spread of the Gospel. We do not want to shut doors unnecessarily.

(THOSE WHO ARE TURNING TO GOD FROM AMONG THE GENTILES SHOULD) ABSTAIN FROM THINGS CONTAMINATED BY IDOLS AND FROM FORNICATION AND FROM WHAT IS STRANGLED AND FROM BLOOD. FOR MOSES FROM ANCIENT GENERATIONS HAS IN EVERY CITY THOSE WHO PREACH HIM, SINCE HE IS READ IN THE SYNAGOGUES EVERY SABBATH. (ACTS 15:19-21, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

These Jews would be offended by the above practices of Gentile converts, creating an *unnecessary barrier* for the Gospel.

III. Preparation

4) Respect Local Laws and Customs

There are issues worth going to jail for (especially the Gospel) ... but not *unnecessarily*. Any law or custom (especially within a different culture) that – if obeyed – allows the Christian to obey the Scriptures and allows the Gospel to be freely declared should not be recklessly ignored or arrogantly resisted. It should be heeded to avoid offense.

5) The Role of Prayer in Evangelism

Salvation is of God, from start to finish. We are completely dependent on Him for everything we need to be faithful in evangelism.

We need to pray for God's *guidance*. We need to trust Him to lead us to those whose hearts *He* has prepared to receive the Truth of the Gospel, to direct us to those in whose hearts *He* is at work.

BUT AS MANY AS RECEIVED HIM, TO THEM HE GAVE THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD, EVEN TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIS NAME, WHO WERE BORN, NOT OF BLOOD NOR OF THE WILL OF THE FLESH NOR OF THE WILL OF MAN, BUT OF GOD. (JOHN 1:12-13)

We also need to pray for *boldness*. The Gospel is not a popular message. There will be times when our courage will fail us, if attempting to declare the Gospel in our own strength.

AND PRAY ON MY BEHALF, THAT UTTERANCE MAY BE GIVEN TO ME IN THE OPENING OF MY MOUTH, TO MAKE KNOWN WITH BOLDNESS THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL. (EPHESIANS 6:19)

6) Be Prepared

If you know that you are about to face an evangelistic opportunity (e.g., a coffee appointment with a friend), be prepared to explain the Gospel fully, clearly, and precisely. You may want to read through a tract with him or her; or you might want to

use a small Bible. A Bible will show the unbeliever that your source of Truth – your authority – comes from God’s Word and is not merely your opinion.

IV. Expectations

7) The Responses to the Gospel We Can Expect

HEAR THEN THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER. WHEN ANYONE HEARS THE WORD OF THE KINGDOM AND DOES NOT UNDERSTAND IT, THE EVIL ONE COMES AND SNATCHES AWAY WHAT HAS BEEN SOWN IN HIS HEART. THIS IS THE ONE ON WHOM SEED WAS SOWN BESIDE THE ROAD. THE ONE ON WHOM SEED WAS SOWN ON THE ROCKY PLACES, THIS IS THE MAN WHO HEARS THE WORD AND IMMEDIATELY RECEIVES IT WITH JOY; YET HE HAS NO FIRM ROOT IN HIMSELF, BUT IS ONLY TEMPORARY, AND WHEN AFFLICTION OR PERSECUTION ARISES BECAUSE OF THE WORD, IMMEDIATELY HE FALLS AWAY. AND THE ONE ON WHOM SEED WAS SOWN AMONG THE THORNS, THIS IS THE MAN WHO HEARS THE WORD, AND THE WORRY OF THE WORLD AND THE DECEITFULNESS OF WEALTH CHOKES THE WORD, AND IT BECOMES UNFRUITFUL. AND THE ONE ON WHOM SEED WAS SOWN ON THE GOOD SOIL, THIS IS THE MAN WHO HEARS THE WORD AND UNDERSTANDS IT, WHO INDEED BEARS FRUIT AND BRINGS FORTH, SOME A HUNDREDFOLD, SOME SIXTY, AND SOME THIRTY. (MATTHEW 13:18-23)

We need to be clear about what we are called to do. We are called to “sow seed.” That is, we are to declare the Gospel. We are *not* called to see conversions. The responses we witness are determined by the kinds of hearts (“the soils”) upon which God’s Word falls.

Our job is not to declare the Gospel only to those *we* think are ready to receive it (“good soil”). We do not have that level of insight; only God knows.

Nor is our job to turn “rocky places” into “good soil.” We do not have that level of power.

Our job is to *throw* seed and *trust* the Spirit of God to take that seed and apply it to those hearts He has prepared to believe it, whether we witness their conversion or not.

8) The Treatment We Can Expect from the Worldly-Minded

The Lord Jesus was rejected and opposed. The disciples and John the Baptist – those associated with Jesus – were also opposed and persecuted.

“IS NOT THIS THE CARPENTER, THE SON OF MARY, AND BROTHER OF JAMES AND JOSES AND JUDAS AND SIMON? ARE NOT HIS SISTERS HERE WITH US?” AND THEY TOOK OFFENSE AT HIM.

"ANY PLACE THAT DOES NOT RECEIVE YOU OR LISTEN TO YOU, AS YOU GO OUT FROM THERE, SHAKE THE DUST OFF THE SOLES OF YOUR FEET FOR A TESTIMONY AGAINST THEM."

HERODIAS HAD A GRUDGE AGAINST (JOHN THE BAPTIST) AND WANTED TO PUT HIM TO DEATH AND COULD NOT DO SO. (MARK 6:3, 11, 19)

This world hates Jesus Christ. And it hates those who align themselves with Him. No matter how diplomatic and winsome we are, we should expect to be rejected, opposed, and persecuted. (Nevertheless, we should still be diplomatic and winsome.)

Yet, why would we want those who reject Christ to accept us ... who hate Christ, to love us ... who hold Christ in contempt to respect us? We should be so closely identified with our Savior that we receive from the world the same treatment Christ would have received from them.

V. Presentation

9) The Use of the Title "the Lord Jesus Christ"

If the Name of Jesus is not mentioned, then we have not shared the Gospel. Jews, Muslims, Mormons, New Agers ... all freely use the word "God." Whenever *theologically accurate*, we should use His full title, "the Lord Jesus Christ" rather than "God."

10) Be Willing to Say, "I Don't Know"

We should not be reluctant to admit that we do not know something. Saying "I do not know the answer to your question" builds credibility. It causes the hearer to look upon you as a person of integrity. If you can have another meeting with him (relational evangelism), the gap between these two meetings gives you time to rethink / clarify those ideas you wished you had said (or wished you had said differently) during the first meeting.

11) Be Clear About What Your Responsibility Is ... and What It Is Not

Some of our evangelistic efforts will fall on responsive, fruit-bearing hearts. On the other hand, much – if not most – of our evangelistic efforts will fall on unresponsive, shallow, distracted hearts. Jesus Himself experienced this; and we, too, should be prepared for this possibility. Yet, no matter what kind of response we witness, let us remember:

Evangelism is the *declaration* of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is the *definition* of evangelism. “Winning people to Christ” is the *goal* of evangelism; it is not the *definition*. We are responsible to

faithfully sow the seed of the Gospel.

In other words, when we “faithfully sow the seed of the Gospel,” we are doing evangelism, whether we witness conversions or not. Distinguishing between evangelism’s definition and its goal will prevent us from carrying a weight we were never meant to carry. (The results of evangelism are in God’s hands, not ours.) This, in turn, will prevent us from trying to pry out of the hearer a favorable response to the Gospel.

12) Don’t Force a Decision

There are two sides to the coin of evangelism. One is the responsibility of man to hear and believe. The other is the sovereign work of God upon an individual’s heart. Concerning this work of God, it is impossible for one to come to Christ for salvation without being drawn unto that salvation by God’s power.

NO ONE CAN COME TO ME UNLESS THE FATHER WHO SENT ME DRAWS HIM. (JOHN 6:44)

We should be careful not to force the process of salvation. To exhort the hearer to decide ... yes. But to coax him, to pressure him, to push him into doing so ... no. Our work is to “sow the seed of the Gospel.” We do not want to make a nuisance of ourselves. If we do, the hearer may say “Yes to Jesus” just so we will go away and leave him alone.

VI. Discernment

13) Discernment Concerning What and When to Speak

The Lord Jesus Christ was very careful with what level of instruction He gave to an audience. He would “size them up” (spiritually) before deciding what and how to present Truth to them. He did not want to give them more than He knew they could receive.

AND THE DISCIPLES CAME AND SAID TO HIM, "WHY DO YOU SPEAK TO THEM IN PARABLES?" JESUS ANSWERED THEM, "TO YOU IT HAS BEEN GRANTED TO KNOW THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, BUT TO THEM IT HAS NOT BEEN GRANTED. FOR WHOEVER HAS, TO HIM MORE SHALL BE GIVEN, AND HE WILL HAVE AN ABUNDANCE; BUT WHOEVER DOES NOT HAVE, EVEN WHAT HE HAS SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM. THEREFORE, I SPEAK TO THEM IN PARABLES; BECAUSE WHILE SEEING THEY DO NOT SEE, AND WHILE HEARING THEY DO NOT HEAR, NOR DO THEY UNDERSTAND.

IN THEIR CASE THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH IS BEING FULFILLED, WHICH SAYS, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.' "
(Matthew 13:10-15)

That is,

"FOR WHOEVER HAS (A LIVING FAITH THAT MOVES HIM TO OBEY THE TRUTH HE KNOWS), TO HIM MORE (TRUTH) SHALL BE GIVEN (BECAUSE HE HAS PROVEN HIMSELF TO BE A FAITHFUL STEWARD OF THE TRUTH ALREADY ENTRUSTED IN HIS CARE), AND HE WILL HAVE AN ABUNDANCE (OF UNDERSTANDING)."

"BUT WHOEVER DOES NOT HAVE (A LIVING FAITH THAT MOVES HIM TO OBEY THE TRUTH HE KNOWS), EVEN WHAT (UNDERSTANDING AND MOTIVATION) HE HAS SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM" (that is, he will become "dull of hearing," see Hebrews 5.)

Jesus used parables to teach Truth to the discerning while, at the same time, hiding that Truth from those unwilling to listen.

DO NOT GIVE WHAT IS HOLY TO DOGS, AND DO NOT THROW YOUR PEARLS BEFORE SWINE, OR THEY WILL TRAMPLE THEM UNDER THEIR FEET, AND TURN AND TEAR YOU TO PIECES. (MATTHEW 7:6)

Therefore, if you know the person in front of you has scoffed at the Truth repeatedly, it would be wise to not give him any more Truth.

14) Avoid Rabbit Trails

We should avoid being taken down "rabbit trails" (issues that do not focus one's attention on his dangerous situation and the Solution to that problem). We need to stay on track.

"That is an excellent question / comment. I would like us to set it aside for now. We can come back to that a little later."

15) Be Aware of Your Surroundings

We must trust the Lord for protection and guidance. But we also have the responsibility to use wisdom and common sense. This does not mean we will never have to take risks and go into a potentially dangerous area; but we should at least count the cost before doing so.

16) Discern Whether the Hearer Is Self-Righteous or Contrite

Some with whom we will talk are convinced that they have been good enough to be admitted into Paradise. Others are weighed down with the burden of guilt, convinced that there is no way they will ever “make it in.” We need to be sensitive to which of these two attitudes we are talking.

If we are addressing someone that is self-righteous, he needs to understand that his good works are not the means of salvation. Verses such as Galatians 2:21 should be our emphasis.

I DO NOT NULLIFY THE GRACE OF GOD, FOR IF RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES THROUGH THE LAW, THEN CHRIST DIED NEEDLESSLY. (GALATIANS 2:21)

If we are addressing a person bearing a heavy load of guilt, keenly aware of the death sentence he is under, he needs to understand that no volume of sin is too great for the blood of Christ to cleanse. No matter what he has done, he can be made whole through the redeeming work of Christ. Verses such as Romans 5:20 should be our emphasis.

THE LAW CAME IN SO THAT THE TRANSGRESSION WOULD INCREASE; BUT WHERE SIN INCREASED, GRACE ABOUNDED ALL THE MORE. (ROMANS 5:20)

17) Discern Whether the Hearer Is Unable to Believe or Unwilling To Do So

Evangelism is not necessarily a “one shot” opportunity. People often require some questions to be answered before trusting in Christ for salvation. So, for a person to ask a *sincere* question regarding the Christian faith is one thing.

On the other hand, for a person to keep bringing up objections with an *argumentative* spirit is something else. There are a lot of people out there who have no intention of trusting in Christ for salvation. All they want to do is argue and, in the process, waste the evangelist’s time.

We need to discern whether the person we are addressing is *unable* to believe without further clarifications or *unwilling* to believe no matter how clear our presentation is. If we sense that we are speaking with someone who only wants to antagonize, we should follow the Lord’s advice. We should “dust off our sandals” and move on.

That does not mean that he is beyond salvation. It means that, by that point in our conversation with him, he probably has been exposed to enough of the Gospel for God to convict him of his sins and draw him to the Savior ... when he is by himself.

VII. Attitude

18) Treat Everyone with Respect

Those with whom we speak are human beings created in the image of God. We should view them as such. We should show them that we respect their right to express their thoughts. In fact, we should invite them to do so. After all, we cannot know their world view (what they believe) until we hear them state their viewpoint.

Then, *be flexible* to where the conversation might go. Pray for the composure of Christ.

APPENDIX C: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE SOBERING REALITIES FACING THE CHURCH

- The World's Population (6)**
- The World's "Unreached" (6-7)**
- The World's Birth Rate (7)**
- The World's Death Rate (7-8)**
- The World's Eternal Destinies (8)**
- Conclusion (8)**

- ? Would some of you be willing to describe what effect these numbers had on you?

- ? Why do you think these statistics were used to introduce this course?

Keep in mind that the Church has been well-established for centuries. Her numbers are in the millions. We live in a world that has high-speed transportation and high-speed communication. Literature production abounds.

- ? Why do you think that there are still over two billion people in the world today that have never heard a clear presentation of the Gospel? Where are the breakdowns?

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GROUNDWORK IN SALVATION

Two Responses to the Gospel (10-11)

- ? Have any of you had a "John or Jane Doe" in your life? That no matter what you did or how long you tried, that person showed no interest whatsoever in Christ?

- ? If so, did you gain any insights from that experience? Or are you still left with a lot of unanswered questions?

Two Kinds of Sinners (11-12)

According to this section, a person will respond to his sins in one of two ways: he will either be bothered about their *consequences* ... or he will not. Both attitudes can be seen in the story Jesus told of the Pharisee and the tax collector. At the end of that story, Jesus concluded that only one of the two “went to his house justified”: the one who cried out to God for mercy. The other did not.

This section then concluded, “It is *impossible* for an individual to be saved who has a casual attitude toward his sins and their consequences.”

? Just to be clear on this point, why is that?

The Gift of Conviction (12-13)

Two points are made in this section:

First, when it comes to a *believer's* evangelistic efforts, he can try to “do everything right” in word and deed over a long period of time. Yet even then, it is possible for the person he wants to “lead to Christ” to remain unsaved.

Second, a person can be a church member in good standing (he can go through all the motions of the Christian life) and still be unsaved.

In both cases, something is missing that prevents the unbeliever from turning – in true faith – to Christ Jesus for salvation.

? What is missing?

The Gift of Repentance (13-15)

It was stated that repentance “carries the idea of *change*.”

? How do you know whether someone has changed his *mind* concerning the consequences of his sins from indifference to concern? How can you tell this change has taken place in someone's *mind*?

THE BELIEVER'S STEWARDSHIP OF EVANGELISM

The Responsibility and Privilege of Evangelism (16-17)

This section presented three factors that should motivate us to do evangelism. It portrays the Great Commission as (1) a *responsibility*, as (2) a *privilege*, and as (3) a stewardship that promises a *reward*. Yet, sharing the Gospel is something many believers shy away from.

- ? With so much to gain if we are faithful to this calling ... and so much to lose if we are not, why do many believers have such a hard time presenting the Good News of Jesus Christ to others?

The Types of Evangelism (17-18)

Three types of evangelism were listed in this section: proclamation, relational, and confrontational.

- ? Would someone briefly describe in your own words what is meant by each type?

It was stated in your reading, "(S)hould relational evangelism be our *primary* approach? To explain the Gospel to an individual with whom we *already* have a relationship is one thing. But it takes time to build *new* relationships; and if that is the primary approach the Church uses, we will never be able to keep up with world population growth (4.3 births per second)."

- ? Do you believe this line of reasoning is correct? If so, why? If not, why not?

WHAT THE CHURCH'S EVANGELISM STRATEGY SHOULD NOT BE

Inviting an Unbeliever to *Church* (20)

The Consequences

- (# 1) This strategy has caused confusion regarding the role of the church member in the Great Commission / The Solution (20-21)**

Concerning a local church's evangelism strategy, the church member's role in evangelism *should be* to invite someone to *Christ* rather than to invite someone to *church*.

? ***Realistically***, would anything change in your church's evangelism efforts if it were concluded, "We should do both"?

? If so, what would change?

? If you believe that nothing would change, would you be satisfied with that?

(# 2) This strategy has compromised the maturity level of the local church / The Solution (21-22)

This section emphasizes the importance of cultivating maturity within a local body of believers. It is true that new converts, even though they have not had time to mature in their faith, are often *more zealous* in their witness than saints who have been in the faith for a longer time. Nevertheless, mature believers are often *more effective* in their witness for Christ.

? Why is that? Why are mature believers more effective in their witness for Christ?

(# 3) This strategy restricts the offer of salvation only to those who are willing to "come to church with us" / The Solution (23)

The idea of presenting the Gospel to a family member or friend or total stranger often causes us to become tense.

? Why is that?

(# 4) This strategy creates a false assurance of salvation among lost church members / The Solution (23-24)

? Why is it easier to invite someone to church rather than to Jesus Christ?

AN EVALUATION (30)

? What advantages does the *Biblical* approach have over the traditional approach?

Not even the *Biblical* strategy for evangelism will work unless the hearts of the redeemed are *concerned* for the lost.

? How can that concern be cultivated in the hearts of the Church?

HOW TO BE PREPARED FOR AN EVANGELISTIC OPPORTUNITY (31)

? Does anyone have anything to add to or take away from these five steps?

WHEN THERE IS NO TIME OR OPPORTUNITY FOR AN EVANGELISTIC CONVERSATION (32)

? During your daily, weekly, or monthly routine, with whom could you use a one-minute presentation like the one given?

? Let's all put on our creative hats for a few minutes. In what ways could you give out tracts to those with whom you have limited or no personal contact? (For example, if you pay your bills by postal mail, you could place a tract in the envelope along with your payment.) We need to seize the opportunities for evangelism, many of which we may never have considered opportunities.

- ? If we are not careful with this approach, what mistakes could we make as we pass out tracts?

WHEN THERE IS TIME AND OPPORTUNITY FOR AN EVANGELISTIC CONVERSATION (33)

- ? What are some problems that you might encounter in your use of questions?
- ? Does anyone come to mind to whom you could present the Gospel using this series of questions?

**How to *Initiate* an Evangelistic Conversation with Someone You *Know* (33)
How to *Initiate* an Evangelistic Conversation with Someone You *Do Not Know* (33)**

- ? What did you think of these two probing questions?

“Do You Believe in God?” – “No” (34)

- ? What did you think of this presentation? Would you change anything about it?

- ? Can you think of any other foundational questions that would be helpful to have prepared ahead of time for this approach to evangelism?

“Do You Believe in God?” – “Yes” (34-35)

- ? What did you think of this presentation? Would you change anything about it?

- ? Can you think of any other foundational questions that would be helpful to have prepared ahead of time for this approach to evangelism?

WHAT THE GOSPEL DOES ... AND DOES *NOT* ... PROMISE

The Restoration of a Ruptured Relationship (37)

The Restoration of a Broken Marriage (37-38)

The Healing of a Serious Physical Illness (38)

Conclusion (38-39)

It is true: the temporal damage caused by sin can be and, many times, has been healed. But at other times it has not. This is not the salvation that is *promised*. The deliverance promised is that *from sin’s tyranny: its eternal penalty, its authority, its power, and – eventually – its presence*.

- ? What is the danger in making the temporal damage caused by sin the issue?

RESCUED BY GRACE

For God So Loved the World (40)

He Gave His Only Son (40-41)

Whoever Believes in Him (41)

Shall Not Perish (42)

He Shall Have Eternal Life (42)

What About You? Have You Settled this Issue with God? (43)

- ? Was there anything from these six sections that you would like to talk about, anything that may have been especially *interesting* or *helpful* or *new* to you?

I would like to invite anyone who would like to talk with me privately about this question to contact me at any time. If you have not already done so, it is the most important decision you will ever make in your life.

APPENDIX B: PRINCIPLES OF EVANGELISM (45-52)

This final section is a mixture of *practices* to follow and *attitudes* to cultivate as you present the Gospel to others.

- ? Was there anything from any of these principles that you would like to talk about, anything that may have been especially *interesting* or *helpful* or *new* to you?