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Visitation Training: Student's Manual

Training members to make effective home calls

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Faithful Men

PlymouthBrethren.org · KEE Philippine Missions

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“The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

Course Schedule

Date	Assignment	Memory Verse	Key Question	Way of Life
Week 1	READ: Pastoral and Evangelistic Visitation	Eternal Life: John 10:10b; John 5:24; John 3:16; Romans 5:8	Would you mind sharing with me how you became a Christian?	Pray, write name of an unsaved contact
Week 2	READ: Goals and Attitudes in Visitation PREPARE: First draft of your testimony.	What is Sin? Romans 3:23; Isaiah 53:6	"Have you come to the place where you can say for certain that if you were to die today, you would go to heaven?"	Initiate an opening with an unsaved person
Week 3	READ: Winning the Right to be Heard	Death/Separation: Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:14-15	"If you were to die today and stand before God and He were to say, "Why should I let you into my heaven, what would you say?"	Confess fears to God, keep reaching out
Week 4	READ: Initiating and Transitions	Need to Repent: Acts 3:19; Isaiah 55:7	"May I share with you something that changed my	Share your testimony with someone

Date	Assignment	Memory Verse	Key Question	Way of Life
			life completely?"	
Appendix A	ROLE PLAY: Transitions and Initiating No Lecture Quarterly Exam	Christ's substitutionary death, resurrection. 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18	"In your opinion, what is the greatest change the Lord Jesus wants made in our lives?"	Go through the gospel with one person
Appendix B	No Lecture. Turn in written Personal Testimonies & review	Review Week		Share testimony with an acquaintance
Week 5	READ: Call to Witness	The God-Man: John 1:1, 14; 1 Timothy 2:5	"In your relationship to God, what do you feel is your greatest need?"	Share testimony with a relative
Week 6	READ: The Gospel Offer is Needed	Grace, not works. Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5	"If you had a year to live, what changes would you make in your life?"	
Week 7	READ: The Gospel Offer is Just	Understand gospel: 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 1 John 5:11-12		Bring a contact to church

Date	Assignment	Memory Verse	Key Question	Way of Life
Week 8	READ: The Gospel Offer Must Be Accepted	Receive Christ: John 1:12; Revelation 3:20	"In what way would you like to minister to the Lord and His people?"	Share gospel with one person weekly
Week 9	READ: Dealing With Oppositions	Submit to Lord: Romans 10:9-10; Phil 2:10-11	None	Goal to lead one person to Christ this year
Week 10	READ: Asking Effective Questions	Warning to Rejecters: John 3:36; 2 Thess. 1:8-9	None	Share Gospel with one person weekly
Week 11	READ: Hiding and Evading	Know & review all Gospel verses, outline & key questions	None	Share Gospel
Week 12	READ: Encouraging Others	None	None	Share Gospel with one person weekly
Week 13	READ: Analysis and Direction	None	None	Continue to share gospel
Week 14	READ: Using the Word	None	None	Review efforts to date and determine need for improvement

Commitment and Assignments

Commitment to Visitation Training

We do not ask for volunteers for visitation. Only those approved by the Visitation Training leadership and who meet specific qualifications are approved for visitation. The following considerations bear on approval:

- Sacrificially committed to Christ in daily living.
- Desire to minister to others in His Name.
- Committed unreservedly to the training for the full period, with a view to sharing this training.
- Be recommended. Apply for the training and be approved by the training leadership.
- Willingness to spend weekly 2 hours minimum in preparation for class.

Once approved, we expect the following of both trainers and trainees:

- On time, regular attendance.
- Memory work (verses and key questions).
- Reading assignments.
- Witnessing assignments (sharing Christ as a way-of-life outside of class or visitation calls).
- Respect and attention for those teaching or training. This means listening and participating in class and on the calls. It means directing any criticisms or complaints only to the leaders and not to third parties.

If you are consistently late, irregular in attendance, fail to do memory work or other homework, you will be asked to take the course at a later date. Our training depends on cooperation in this area. If an emergency occurs, which could not have been foreseen and is of supreme importance, then notify the Visitation Secretary of the need to be absent. This should be confirmed to the office before 2:00pm of the visitation day. Arrangement of calls and teams requires this courtesy.

My Commitment

During the coming period of training for visitation I make the following commitment before the Lord and with the believers who are investing their time and effort in sharing their experience with me. By God's help:

1. *I will finish* the training and not drop out unless health or other emergency necessitates (2 Timothy 4:7).
2. I will be there *ahead of time* where possible and *on time* faithfully, so as not to disrupt the training input by the distraction of a late arrival (Ecclesiastes 3:1, Psalm 119:60).
3. I will *conscientiously prepare* my assignments in terms of memory work or reading material, just as any other important class (Proverbs 18:9).
4. I commit myself to *share with others* in their training when I have completed my own training (Romans 15:26-27).

I do this as unto the Lord Jesus and not unto men because He is the motivation for this effort.

Signature

Date

Sign this and keep it in the front of your notebook as a constant reminder. It is between you and the Lord (Psalm 15:4b).

Responsibilities of Trainees

Our Purpose: To train in effective home visitation as a form of Christian ministry, including both evangelistic and pastoral calls. We intend to challenge believers to share the life they have in Christ in a regular way of life.

Prayer Partner: Each person will team with another class member for prayer support, assistance and challenge. There should be a *minimum* contact of once each week.

Evaluation: We will record your attendance, memory work, reading assignments, quiz scores, and visitation reports. We want to keep track of your progress in training. If you cannot complete your assignments or maintain progress, we will confer with you about the possibility of taking the course at a later date.

Role-Playing: We will ask some of you to participate in simulated sessions to demonstrate features of the training.

Testimonies: We want to help you develop your confession of Christ in a form as brief as one minute or as long as ten minutes. You should have opportunity to share it with others.

Book Study: These will stir up your thinking. Our questions are designed to help you apply the truths brought forth.

Way of Life Sharing: Any training limited to being practiced only one night a week would be deficient. Way-of-life reports are designed to stimulate your personal activity throughout the week.

Way of Life Witnessing Assignments

One of the reasons why local churches don't grow is that the believers simply fail to reach the unsaved with whom they are already in contact, and fail to seek new contacts actively. Someone has said, with regard to the life and future of any

church, “evangelize or fossilize”. It has proven to be true time and time again. It will be true in your local church as well. That is why it is so vitally important to not only learn, but consistently practice witnessing as a way of life. Your training in sharing the gospel is designed to help you witness for Christ where you live, work, attend school, or anywhere else. Confessing Christ to others and sharing the good news of how you found eternal life in Him should be a *way of life* seven days a week.

Pray that God will open up opportunities for you to witness and give you “divine appointments”. You must be expectant, and you must work at it. Note the following steps:

PRAY for God to lead you to at least one person with whom you can share your faith. *Write down* a name that occurs to you. List in your notebook the situations in your weekly schedule which might be open for opportunities to witness (have lunch with a co-worker or a fellow student, visit a relative or friend, or even strike up a conversation with a stranger).

“Many of those who heard the Word believed...” Acts 4:4

INITIATE conversational opening with an unsaved person whom you do not know well or at all. Do an act of kindness, show interest, and get to know that person by way of “building a bridge” of understanding, even though you don’t begin by presenting the gospel.

CONFESS your fears to God about witnessing and appropriate His strength to press ahead. Overcome the “fear of man” (Proverbs 29:25).

ESTABLISH your bridge sufficiently with one person so that you can share your testimony because you have earned the right to be heard.

GO COMPLETELY through at least part of the gospel with one person, using either a pocket New Testament or a tract, briefly outlining the gospel for them on a blank sheet of paper. Pray more intensively each day for divine appointments.

SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY with a waitress, clerk, barber, beautician, gas station attendant, or similar person. Establish a minimum quota for yourself of weekly speaking to others about Christ.

SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY and the gospel with a *relative*. If you cannot do it in any other way, use the phone or write a letter. Also express your interest in them in other ways than witnessing.

SHARE THE GOSPEL with someone on a home visit. For example, you could go and visit someone in your neighborhood, or a friend from school or work.

BRING one of your contacts to a home Bible study or to a church meeting. Or bring them to your own home and share with them.

CRY OUT TO GOD to permit you to bring one person to Christ through your witness in the next seven months. Set down on paper any hindrances and determine to root them out.

Way of Life Witnessing Report

Your Name:

Date:

Their Name:

Phone:

Address:

What did you do?

How did they respond?

What follow-up action do you intend to arrange?

Prayer and Visitation

Nothing goes well without prayer. This is true of effective visitation. Paul told the Colossians, “I do not cease to pray for you”, (Colossians 1:9). He told the Thessalonians, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). He begged them to pray for his ministry (1 Thessalonians 5:25, 2 Thessalonians 3:1). He prayed for an uncounted number of believers in many churches. He prayed for the unsaved, even a whole nation (Romans 10:1). The Lord Jesus was always a man of prayer. He still intercedes for us (Hebrews 7:25, Romans 8:34) as does the Spirit.

In calling therefore, pray beforehand and afterwards. We are engaged in a spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:12). We must know and obey the laws of prayer. These include faith, perseverance, the will of God, the Name of Jesus and our own spiritual condition.

Be specific when you pray (names, situations to be changed). As to the unsaved, pray for conviction of sin, relief from demonic oppression, spiritual blindness, bitter or unforgiving attitudes. Don't just pray, “Lord, please save them”. Children never ask for things in generalities, “give me what's good for me”. They are specific and persistent. It should be so with God's children.

“And Jesus answered and said to him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” The blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.” Mark 10:51

Have a prayer partner, during visitation training. Contact each other weekly by telephone or in person. Pray for each other and for those whom you have called or will be calling.

Assignment Completion Form

Name

Date

Were You On Time?

1. Write out memory verses and key questions.
2. Did you read your lesson assignment for the week?
3. Did you share Christ this week and turn in a Way-Of-Life report?
4. Did you contact your prayer partner?
5. Other assignments, if any? (books, etc.).

Please correct the verses with your version, and check the Key Questions before you turn this sheet in.

Hints on Hospital Visitation

- To gain admittance to a hospital, simply say that you are a minister of the Gospel. A minister may visit at any time. Except in emergencies, the afternoon and evening hours are the better. Tests, X-rays, and therapy are usually given in the morning.
- Always read a short portion of Scripture and pray. It often adds a special dimension of comfort and warmth to hold the patient's hand or to "lay hands upon him". Try to avoid a cold and professional manner, and do not have an anxious and troubled appearance.

"...I was sick and you visited Me..." Matthew 25:36

- Make your visit brief. Long visits can be harmful, exhausting and almost unendurable to someone who is ill.

- Do not discuss the patient's physical problems with him, and never make negative remarks as to his appearance.
- If the Lord gives you faith, pray for the patient's healing. Our God is the God of miracles, and we should not limit His power. Above all, help the patient to be aware of the presence of the Great Physician at his bedside.
- Even if the patient is in a coma, do not discuss anything he should not hear. It is known that sometimes people who are in a coma can hear and understand what is being said in the room, even if they cannot communicate.
- Try to be cheery and optimistic.
- Don't sit on the bed or otherwise do anything that might disturb or upset the patient.
- Be ready to perform any service that is consistent with propriety and with hospital rules.
- Never break a confidence between the patient and yourself.

Personal Testimony

By the second week, you should start preparing, *in writing*, your testimony. This will tell how you came to know the Lord Jesus as your Savior.

On the third week, you will *turn it in* for suggestions, to the Coordinator or Director of the Visitation Program. This will be returned to you. Review and revise accordingly. Write on 3x5 cards key thoughts.

Before the fifth week you must be prepared to give an oral testimony in class not exceeding 10 minutes, using only 3x5 cards, not reading. Look your audience (two or three persons) in the eye, giving your testimony as is it were to an unconverted listener. Tell them “how Christ changed my life”.

Your testimony will be evaluated (and returned to you) for clarity, conviction, and conformity to the suggested procedure. Remember not to spend much time on *before*. Be clear on the *how*. Tell the changes that might matter to others in *after*.

Preparing a Personal Testimony

The courtroom is the usual scene for terms like “witness, “testify” and “testimony”. It is in the courtroom of this world that these same terms are used of believers in Christ as they witness, testify or give their confession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Paul charged his young disciple Timothy, “Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of a many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Jesus Christ, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate” (1 Timothy 6:12-13 NASB). Confession of Christ before others is a great privilege which can be used of God to bring others to

Himself. It can also be the occasion of persecution and even death. The words “witness” and “testify” are translations of a Biblical word which relates to our English word “martyr”. It is used in that sense in Scripture (Revelation 2:13) as believers testified to their faith even unto death.

The Lord was clear in His call to His followers to be forthright about their relationship to Him. “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God” (Luke 12:8; cf. Matthew 10:32). The opening of our mouths before others is linked even to salvation itself. “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved” (Romans 10:9 NASB). Our allegiance to the Lord Jesus should be no secret.

Content

A good testimony involves two factors. First, there must be a first-hand authentication of a fact. Ananias told Saul of Tarsus upon his conversion, “Thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard” (Acts 22:15). A good witness deals with what he has seen or knows, not guessed or felt. A good witness for Jesus Christ tells how he met Christ, how his life has been changed and on what authority he makes claim to being a child of God. Second, a witness makes a solemn declaration under oath in response to a question about the truth of a matter. The believer is told, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). The Apostle John in his gospel gave testimony of the things he knew to be true (John 21:24). Paul wrote for the benefit of doubters that he was truly testifying that Christ was risen from the dead. If it were not so, he would have been found a false witness in the sight of God (1 Corinthians 15:15).

The testimony of a child of God often begins with the needs which brought him to Christ, especially the problem of sin. “Many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds” (Acts 19:18). These were evil in the sight of God. The Lord Jesus has brought relief to millions gripped with a sense of guiltiness, emptiness, lack of meaning, lack of peace, fear of death and loneliness. Joy and purpose have replaced them. Yet supremely Jesus came to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), delivering them from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Believers therefore testify to the time in their experience when they heard the gospel of their salvation and believed it (Ephesians 1:13). They received “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7).

Any good testimony is Christ-centered (Acts 5:31-32). It is rightly called “the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:2, 9).

Particular emphasis was given by first century believers to the fact that Christ has risen from the dead (Acts 2:32, 4:33, 13:30-31). Both prophetic fulfillment and the testimony of witnesses were cited by them. It is important to tell how Christ has changed our lives (1 Thessalonians 1:9, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Paul once was a blasphemer and persecutor of Christians (1 Timothy 1:13). He became their foremost champion. A good testimony often brings opportunity to solemnly challenge hearers as to the need of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Remember that spiritual opposition is overcome by believers through “the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11).

General Outline

AS SEEN IN SCRIPTURE. The witness of Paul in Acts 26:1-29 is a scriptural example of a testimony which deals with *Before*, *How* and *After* aspects of receiving Christ.

- *Before Christ was received* (26:4-11). Paul tells of his religious background and resistance to Christ.
- *How Christ was received* (26:12-18). He tells of his meeting with Christ on the Damascus Road and how the Savior reproached him for his sins, yet called him to service of the One he had persecuted.
- *After Christ was received* (26:19-23). He speaks of the changes in his life and how he became a preacher even among countrymen who sought to kill him.

AS REFLECTED IN YOUR TESTIMONY. When giving your own testimony, keep certain things in mind:

- *Before Christ was received* - a short account of your life before becoming a Christian. What elements in your former life caused you to see the need for a change? Which of them are common to the needs of others?
- *How Christ was received* - how, specifically you took the step of becoming a Christian. Be specific so that others will not see this as a vague spiritual change, but rather an encounter with the living God. How, when and where did this take place?
- *After Christ was received* - a very brief account of your life since becoming a Christian. What clear evidences of a transformed life took place? What are the benefits of becoming a believer? What touches the longings in the hearts of others?

Guidelines for Preparing the More Specific Content

The following guidelines should be observed in composing your testimony:

- Keep the Lord Jesus central, telling what He has done.

- Use the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12, Ephesians 6:17). Mention the verses that God used in reaching your conscience. This lends authority and brings conviction (Mark 1:22).
- It should end up sounding conversational, not professional.
- Say “I” and “me”, not “you” (share - don’t preach).

The Sequence of Your Preparation

- Accumulate brief notes on three separate sheets of paper labeled:
 - a. Before
 - b) How
 - c) After
- Write out a long, rough draft using your notes from the three sheets of paper (it will usually take about 10 minutes to read it).
- Cut your draft down to under four minutes to read.
- Outline your three-four minute presentation on a 3x5 card. Learn to give the testimony using only your outline.
- Learn to give your testimony in three minutes without the outline.

Testimonies of Christians - Before and After

Before Salvation

terribly lonely, fearful, proud, selfish, frustrated, angry, searching, unhappy, dissatisfied, empty, haunted by unanswered questions, very shy, apathetic, messed up, insecure, seeking approval, loner, no meaning to anything, useless, desirous of things (cars, fun, drugs), void (missing something), bitter, just a number, life shallow, stubborn, lived for self, rebellious, depressed, aching for attention, hateful, restless, obsessed with death

After Salvation

love toward spouse/family, life is exciting/challenging/
enjoyable, acceptance, new motivations, able to quit bad habits,
has purpose, not afraid to die, sense of direction, aware of God's
presence, re-aligned, desire to help others, secure, victory, no
more fear, new ambitions, love, enjoy other people, obedient, joy,
better person to live/work with, thirsty for the Word, inner
peace, understanding, happiness (eternal), purposeful, lasting
friendships

Personal Testimony

Read notes thoroughly and prepare your testimony according to the “Guidelines” and “Sequence of Preparation”. Your final draft should be recorded under the three major questions below which bring out the *Before, How, and After* of your conversion.

1. What was your life like *before* making Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior?
2. *How* and when did you make Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior? What were the circumstances? What Scriptures did you claim by faith? In a simple, understandable way, make clear to others the way to God. Be sure that Christ, rather than people or the church, is central.
3. In practical terms, how has your life been changed *after* making Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior? A commitment that resulted in a changed life is a mark of reality. There is no point in telling about a “decision” or prayer that had no such effect.

Outline of the Gospel

Offer Made

Eternal and Abundant Life: John 10:10b, John 5:24

Love of God: John 3:16, Romans 5:8

Give Your Personal Testimony

Offer Needed

What Is Sin? Romans 3:23, Isaiah 53:6

Death As Consequence (separation): Romans 6:23, Revelation 20:14-15

Need to Repent: Acts 3:19, Isaiah 55:7

Offer Is Just

Christ's Substitutionary Death and Resurrection: 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18

The God-Man: 1 Timothy 2:5, John 1:1, 14

Grace Not Works (a gift): Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5

Offer Must Be Accepted

Understand Gospel Content: 1 John 5:11-12, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Trust, Receive Christ: Revelation 3:20, John 1:12

Submit to Lord and Savior: Romans 10:9-10, Philippians 2:10-11

Scriptures for Common Needs

Attitudes: The Root of Right and Wrong

Positive: Loving (1 John 4:11-12); Teachable (James 3:17); Thankful (1 Thess. 5:18); Humility (1 Peter 5:5); Forgiving (Eph. 4:32)

Negative: Slander, hatred (Pro. 10:18); Argumentative (Pro. 18:19); Bitter, resentful (Eph. 4:31); Strife, jealousy (Gal. 5:20); Pride, self-sufficient (Pro. 16:18)

Guidance

Desire (Luke 22:42b)

Plans (James 4:15)

Trusting (Pro. 3:5-6)

Counsel of God (Psa. 119:10)

Counsel of others (Pro. 15:22)

Waiting (Psa. 106:13)

Growth:

Priorities (Matt. 6:33)

Lordship (Luke 6:46)

Commitment (Rom. 12:1-2)

Obedience (John 14:21)

Abiding (John 15:4)

Perseverance (Is. 40:31)

Reckoning (Rom. 6:11)

Yielding (Rom. 6:13)

Suffering (1 Peter 2:20)

Unity (1 Cor. 1:10)

Power (Eph. 3:20)

Holiness (1 Peter 1:15)

Discipleship (Lk. 9:23, 14:26, 27, 33)

Quiet time (Mk. 1:35)

Word (Jer. 15:16)

Prayer (1 John 5:14-15): Asking (Matt. 7:7); Interceding (1 Tim. 2:1); Praising (Heb. 13:15); Thanking (1 Thess. 5:18); Confession (Pro. 28:13)

Witness (Acts 1:8); Servant (Matt. 20:26-27) Laborers (Matt. 9:37-38)

Submission (Eph. 5:21, Heb. 13:17)

Grievances

Forgiving (Col. 3:13)

Overlooking (Pro. 19:11)

Correcting (2 Timothy 4:2)

Reconciling (Matt. 5:23-24) Confronting (Matt. 18:15-17)

Family

Husband (Eph. 5:23, 25)

Wife (1 Peter 3:1)

Support (1 Tim. 5:18)

Children (Eph. 6:1-2)

Marriage (Heb. 13:4, 1 Cor. 7:3-5)

Parents (Eph. 6:4, Pro. 22:6)

Divorce (Matt. 5:32, 19:9, 1 Cor. 7:15)

Finances

Giving (Pro. 3:9, 1 Cor. 16:2)

Borrowing (Pro. 22:7, Rom. 13:8)

Church

Baptism (Acts 2:41)

Communion (Acts 20:7)

Fellowship (Heb. 10:25)

Ministry (1 Cor. 4:1)

Activities (Acts 2:42)

Leaders (Phil. 1:1, Acts 20:28)

Gifts (1 Cor. 12:7, 11-12)

Missions (Matt. 28:19-20)

Problems

Success (Joshua 1:8)

Restoration (Psa. 51:2-3)

Help (Isa. 41:10, 13)

Devil (James 4:7)

Flesh (Rom. 13:14)

World (1 John 5:4)

Sorrow (Psa. 30:5b, John 16:22)

Anxiety (1 Peter 5:7, Phil. 4:6-7)

Loneliness (Psa. 27:10, Heb. 13:5)

Bereavement (Psa. 23:4, John 14:1-3)

Burdened (Matt. 11:28, Psa. 55:22)

Difficulties (Rom. 8:28, 2 Cor. 4:17)
Temptation (1 Cor. 10:13, James 1:12)
Encouragement (Deut. 31:6, John 16:33)
Trials (1 Peter 1:6-7, James 1:2-3)
Victorious (1 Sam. 17:47, Romans 8:37)
Strength (Phil. 4:13, 2 Cor. 12:9)
Deliverance (Psa. 34:19, Isa. 43:2)
Comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-4)
Needs (Phil. 4:19)
Chastening (Heb. 12:5-6)
Fear (Psa. 27:1, 2 Tim. 1:7)
Sickness (Psa. 41:3, James 5:14)
Depression (Psa. 40:2-3, 42:5)

Give Attention

Thoughts (2 Cor. 10:5, Phil. 4:8, Matt. 5:28)
Speech (Pro. 15:1, Eph. 4:29)
Works/deeds (Titus 3:8, Eph. 2:10)
Conscience (Acts 24:16, 1 Tim. 3:9)
Body as the Temple (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
Return to the Lord (Luke 12:35-37, Titus 2:13)

Romantic Relationships

Not Anxious (1 Cor. 7:32, 35)
Priorities (Matt. 6:33) Others Directed (Phil. 2:3-4)
Yielded (Rom. 12:2)

Counsel (Pro. 15:22)

Yokes (2 Cor. 6:14)

Lesson 1: Biblical Goals in Visitation

Why have visitation? If people come to church, hear the message and then return home, have we not met our responsibility? If they have an emergency they can just request a visit and we will respond then. That is one way to look at it. It is the way most churches operate. However, in this system, there is very little opportunity to interact with people privately about needs and questions. A typical pastor (shepherd), or even the elders who are shepherds, can scarcely know the condition of their flocks by this system. How can they watch over their souls and give an account to God for them (Hebrews 13:17)? How can the Sunday School teachers and ministry leaders, be they men or women, shepherd their part of the flock without visiting them?

Visitation Is Biblical

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” (James 1:27).

“I was sick and ye *visited Me*” (Matthew 25:36).

“The foolish shepherd...which shall *not visit* those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young men, nor heal that which is broken... woe to the worthless shepherd that leaveth the flock” (Zechariah 11:15-17).

“Thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed My people; ye have scattered My flock and driven them away, and *have not visited them*” (Jeremiah 23:2).

“They were scattered because there was no shepherd...none did search or seek after them...I am against the shepherds and will require the flock at their hand” (Ezekiel 34:5-10).

Visitation shows them that we believe people are valuable, and that we care about them. Routine calling merely to induce people to attend more meetings or to enlist workers is an inadequate spiritual objective. Effectively done it is an unfailing tool in assisting believers. It is a way of bringing souls to Christ. It requires spiritual people, the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Calling should involve the care of persons. It takes time.

General Objectives

PRESENT THE GOSPEL TO THOSE WHO ARE OPEN: Most converts are effectively won to Christ by personal contact, not mass evangelism. Learn to do this thoroughly and to avoid what has been called “spiritual malpractice” in evangelism.

SHOW INTEREST AND CONCERN. Reach out to them. Care should be evident in your manner and tone. We are taking an evening with them on their home grounds to say, “You are important”. We come as friends, neighbors, brothers and sisters. We are not there just to say things like, “We have not seen you in a long time. Where have you been?”

DETERMINE NEEDS REQUIRING HELP. An informal home atmosphere is ideal for people to open up about their feelings. A depth exchange is impossible with mere passing conversation at church meetings. We need to be aware of such things as hurts, offenses, marital strains or frustrated desires. This is an opportunity for spiritual, practical fellowship, not just a handshake at the door. We do not, like the Lord, have omniscience. Therefore we must be in touch with the Spirit, listen and observe carefully. Particularly, we must learn the method of the Lord in asking sensitive, thoughtful questions.

STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS. We may not know this person at all. Thus we need to establish some kind of relationship so that

we can communicate. Draw together with them. The person may be attending the services or even be a member of the local body. In that case we need to know them better, to draw together on a deeper level. When we do this we are seen in a new light and people say, “You are not at all like I thought!”. Building bridges of understanding is a significant accomplishment in calling.

DEFINE NEEDED ACTION. How can we help? There is more than talk required on a call. A physician needs to get acquainted with a patient, but he also needs to make a diagnosis. This requires sensitivity and perception. Is there a need of encouragement? Is there indifference, lack of commitment, a root of bitterness? Is there a clear testimony giving evidence of true conversion? Are there practical needs? Where is this person spiritually?

ASSIST WITH PROBLEMS. Who should be responsible to help? There are many who, in the words of the hymnwriter, are “weak and heavy-laden, cumbered with a load of care”. Many are the areas requiring practical help: marital tension, wayward children, grievances, financial disorder, doctrinal inadequacy, loneliness, and need for practical advice. By being observant, listening carefully, asking good questions, and desiring to be helpful, perhaps we can make a proper recommendation. Make sure that they are open to your recommendation *before* offering advice.

ENCOURAGE RESPONSE. Good discussion is often wasted by failure to invite specific action. Try to bring others to say exactly what needs to be done and to commit themselves to do it. Often it is necessary to challenge them. That is what the Lord did to the rich young ruler as well as with His own disciples. If they are willing to commit themselves to Christ, to spiritual objectives, to right priorities, then we should give them the opportunity to do so by asking.

COMFORT BY PRAYER AND SCRIPTURE. There is a dynamic impact of the Word of God on receptive hearts. There is a powerful effect when we pray with those upon whom we call. We should make use of both. The Holy Spirit is called “the one alongside”. He is there to encourage and we should do likewise. The Lord Jesus “healed the brokenhearted”. We can be used in the same way. Remember, in closing a visit, to ask: “Shall we pray together?” or “May I share something from God’s Word?”

What do we need to learn in a general way in order to do effective visitation? There is much lack in calling because callers do not feel confident that they know what to do. They lack experience and instruction and sense it. By improving your practical skills you can overcome even timidity in dealing with others. Timidity results in a lack of willingness to reach out. The spirit of timidity in the cause of Christ does not come from the Lord; it comes from inexperience and lack of proper training which builds confidence.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7

Seven Things You Need to Learn

Give thoughtful attention to each of these Scriptural principles.

TO BE SPIRITUAL (1 Corinthians 2:15, Galatians 6:1). How could you have real discernment unless the Spirit guided you and gave wisdom? You are not to speak “in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, comparing spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” (1 Corinthians 2:13).

TO BE CONCERNED FOR OTHERS (Philippians 2:4). Unless a person is convinced that you care about him or her, you have no hearing. They sense whether you do or do not. People certainly saw the concern of the Lord Jesus for them. That’s one reason

why “the common people heard Him gladly”. Why should we be concerned? Because each soul is made in the image of God and considered worth dying for by Him.

TO USE COMMON SENSE (Romans 12:3, Titus 2:12). There are too many unpredictable things that can happen for anyone to be instructed in advance about every situation. Common sense is the ability to do the right thing, especially where obvious, without being prompted. You sense what is right, helpful, needed.

TO WORK HARD (Proverbs 14:23, John 5:17). The lack of this is evident in almost all areas of endeavor. The Word condemns a lazy person (sloth, sluggard) and praises hard work. The Lord demonstrated on earth that He was and is a hard worker. Many difficulties can be overcome by this trait.

TO BE TEACHABLE (Proverbs 1:5, 9:9, 12:15). God places much emphasis on teachability as a key to learning godly wisdom. The Word condemns an unwillingness to listen, take heed, respond and apply truth. Such people are likened to mules or jackasses. We must learn with appreciation, from God, from godly teachers, and from experienced guides. We must learn to look for teachability in those in whom we purpose to invest time.

TO BE FAITHFUL (Luke 16:10, 1 Corinthians 4:2). This is an absolute requirement by God. It was a characteristic of Christ, and one of His many names (Revelation 19:11). Confidence in an unfaithful man is like having a “bad tooth or walking on an unsteady foot (out of joint)” (Proverbs 25:19).

TO SHARE WITH OTHERS (Luke 6:38, Matthew 10:8). God has been generous with all of us. People have already invested time in training you, They will be doing that in this course. You must feel responsible to share what you learn with others when your training is completed.

To learn these and many other useful skills, classroom or group training is helpful, especially if Bible-based, not secular in orientation. Principles and goals need to be clearly established in your mind. This is reinforced by study, homework, memory work and examinations to check your understanding. Retention of what you learn must be followed by integration of these things into your calling pattern. Classroom training is not enough.

The best way to learn good visitation principles is by on-the-job training with an experienced person. That is the method used by the Lord Jesus with His disciples. He was a field trainer more than a classroom trainer. He taught by example and practice. He was the perfect Trainer. We are not in His league. Still the more experienced can teach the less experienced something. Both can learn from the input of others if willing to make an effort. An observer-coach who understands sound principles can make very helpful suggestions to a trainee. Even an “old dog can learn new things”, *if the old dog wants to learn.*

Lesson 2: Attitudes in Visitation

Your attitude in visitation is an important factor in determining your effectiveness. It may be the *most* important thing since it underlies your words and manner in dealing with others. Attitude involves your mental position, feelings and way of looking at people. It determines what you do, how you do it and whether or not you are willing to do it. Your attitude ought to be like that of the Lord Jesus in Philippians 2:5, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself. Do not merely look out for your own interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this *attitude* in yourself which was also in Christ Jesus”. His was consistently the model attitude for all believers.

How would the Lord Jesus feel and act if He were making a call? He conveyed clearly an attitude of caring and sympathy.

Some Suggestions

BE INTERESTED. Show them they matter to you. Their names should be known, used, and pronounced correctly. Listen to them, without hurrying to differ. Show them you think they are worth your time and effort.

BE LOW PRESSURE. Results that endure lie with the Spirit, not man. More time may be necessary. Be cautious in evaluations, especially in reporting “decisions for Christ”.

BE TOLERANT. God gives man the right to decide, even if his decision is bad. We should do the same. Some areas are matters of Christian liberty. Do not impose your convictions on others. Try *not* to contradict, insist, or interrupt.

BE COURTEOUS. Good manners forbid us to be rude or obnoxious. Jesus was neither. Exit as pleasantly as you enter.

Learn to give “soft answers” which turn away wrath.

BE COMPASSIONATE. He certainly was. Start where they are and show that you care. Try, in your mind, to stand in their shoes. Jesus wept over a city that rejected Him.

BE CONFRONTING IF NECESSARY. This means to deal with urgent issues. Helping others often requires going to the heart of a matter, *even if it hurts*. Jesus did this with the rich young ruler and the woman at the well. Don’t be overbearing however.

Check Your Attitude

WHY DO THEIR PROBLEMS MATTER TO YOU? That may be what they are wondering. Selfish people generally are not interested in others and don’t want to be involved. People should be important to you because they are important to God. They are made in His image and, in His thinking, worth dying for.

WERE YOU GUILTY OF COERCION? It is easy to pressure people or try to overwhelm them with your arguments. That is not dependence on the Spirit of God. He gives people the right to make their own decisions. You should do the same.

WERE YOU FORTHRIGHT BUT NOT SUPERIOR? We can be bold in the power of the Spirit, not timid. Yet humility is the attitude commended by the Lord even in confronting (Galatians 6:1). Jesus was “meek and lowly”, but not weak. He said, “Learn of Me”.

DID YOU OVER-PROMISE? We are not salesmen trying to close a deal and therefore willing to exaggerate to help the process. We can not promise fulfillment of every human desire to gain an end.

WERE YOU TACTLESS? Even perhaps unintentionally. Consider the feelings and sensitivities of others in your speech and actions.

DID YOU SHOW YOU CARE? That is what people notice, long to see. They don't want to be "a star in your crown". They ask, "Do you *care* about me?"

DID YOU GET TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER? If you didn't arrive at a decision about what might be needed, you are like a physician who can never seem to make a right diagnosis. Like a doctor, you must *tactfully* probe for any underlying problem.

Our attitudes strongly influence the responsive attitudes of others toward us. Their very willingness to listen, to be open to what we have to say, depends upon how they perceive us. Others may be thinking about us as callers:

- Can I respect this person at least in part, because he or she shows respect towards me?
- Would I like this person for a friend?
- Is this person believable and competent in the areas about which he or she is speaking?
- Is this person balanced, fair-minded and reasonable in the presentation of what he or she thinks, rather than an extremist? A good healthy sense of humor?
- Is this one interested in me as a person, not just someone trying to use or manipulate me for his own advantage?
- Can this person like me, even though I may not agree with him or her? Respect my right to have my own ideas, without "cutting me off?"

Without a good attitude in the ministry of visitation, you will likely go about your work reluctantly and without enthusiasm. You will be tempted to feel it is a burden and to find excuses for cancelling the time allotted or dropping out entirely. With a good

attitude, you can go in the power and Spirit of the Lord Jesus and with God's blessings on your labors.

Lesson 3: Winning the Right to Be Heard

We sometimes feel that people owe us an opportunity to listen to what we have to say. Of course, they rarely feel this way. We must earn the right to be heard.

Most people would rather talk than listen. Often they go to places where people socialize in order to have someone with whom to talk. Children when playing together often try to shout louder than others in order to be heard. Wives often complain, “My husband never listens to me”. In conversation people sometimes impatiently wait for others to stop talking so they can express their views. They are not interested in listening. That is why the Lord said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear”. He really did have something important to say to the hearers. Sometimes we do not. Yet He too seemed to observe certain principles which help gain attention.

Our first objective is to establish a bridge of communication. This is called:

Getting on Their Wave Length

MAKE A FAVORABLE FIRST IMPRESSION. These are often lasting. You may not get a second chance. The first minute may decide if they will be open to you.

GET THEM TO TALK, INVITE RESPONSE. You are not there to do all the talking. You are there to encourage them to open up and express their true feelings. Use questions which invite discussion.

PLUG INTO THEIR EXPERIENCE AT THE RIGHT POINT. As you listen, try to find a point of connection between what they are saying and what you would like to bring up about the Lord and

spiritual issues. Use a transition question and then pass the conversational ball back to them.

What to Do Generally

CEASE BEING STRANGERS. Break down barriers which arise when we don't know each other well. Relax the atmosphere. Be informal. Appointments are helpful, but not essential. Review what information may be known before knocking.

MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE. They may not live or think as we would. Accept their right to do this. *Don't be critical*

FIND THE ORDINARY INTERESTING. Learn to make "small talk" in opening the call. Comment favorably when you can. Speak to all, including the children.

CONSIDER THE SPIRITUAL SIDE. Move to these issues when you can. Make a good transition.

RELATE ON COMMON INTERESTS. Find some topic on which you can talk or share, even if unimportant to you.

COME TO THE POINT. Have the courage to get to the main purpose of your call. They expect that.

ASK WHAT THEY THINK. We are not there to browbeat or coerce, but to persuade.

"Come now, let us reason together..." Isaiah 1:18

When Making a Call Consider These Steps:

At The Door

- Knock, stand back without crowding the door.
- Talk casually while waiting. Be at ease and show it.
- Identify yourself (your name, your companion, the chapel).

- Name the person you are seeking. Find out who answered the door. Make sure if you are properly pronouncing the names.
- Be warm, friendly, at ease, informal, confident of reception.

Initial Conversation

- Meet each of those present in the family.
- Show interest in decor, animals, objects, books, as appropriate. Be tactful, sincere, not overdone.
- Speak informally, naturally, setting others at ease.
- Discuss briefly several casual subjects (their interest). Do not pry or bring up unpleasant things.
- Avoid lingering too long in this subject area. Look for an opportunity to open up spiritual matters.
- Move to church or spiritual matters; general attitudes towards sermons, classes, or their concern about God's will for their lives. Move to crucial areas about fellowship with God.

DO's

- Depend on the Spirit of God to prepare the way and give the right words (Luke 12:12).
- Be courageous and bold in going forth for God (Joshua 1:9).
"The fear of man bringeth a snare" (Proverbs 29:25).
- Be tactful in questions and responses. "A soft answer turneth away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1).
- Be neat in dress and personal grooming. Nothing should detract from what we have to say.
- Be expectant that God will work through you to touch and change the life of another person for His glory.

DONTs

- Go out with the attitude that it is a burden and a duty. This communicates to others and hinders the Spirit. “The joy of the Lord is your strength”. Give yourselves *willingly*,
- Carry a large Bible. This has the effect on some of your carrying a gun and is intimidating. A pocket Testament can be carried instead. Most homes have a Bible that can be used.
- Feel that you must give a reference or full quotation whenever you cite Scripture. The Word has power without this.

On the following page is a diagram which indicates the path you should take in a conversation, depending on their response.

Win a Hearing

When you initiate a spiritual discussion, ask yourself;

1.	Interest? Give testimony.	Disinterest? Pray—Do not explain.
2.	Admit they have a need.	Deny Sinnership—give literature.
3.	Understand that Christ died for them.	Can't understand the Gospel—offer teaching.
4.	Want to decide to receive Christ.	Want to wait—allow time.

We are called “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20). The duty of an ambassador is to represent the interests of his or her country. It is also to give a favorable impression on behalf of your people. Finally it is to understand the viewpoint of these people and to convey this accurately to the responsible people at home. As ambassadors, we must be enthusiastic about our Lord, His kingdom and what He has done for us. We need to convey that He is interested in their problems or struggles. He is willing to help them.

When all is said and done, ask yourself, “Did I really *earn* the right to have others to listen to what I had to say on *spiritual*

issues, not personal opinions or peripheral issues?” Would they want to have me come again? Did I discuss critical issues, without either tactlessness or the fear of man? If the answer is “yes” to all three questions, you did very well.

Lesson 4: Initiating, Conversing and Making Transitions

Nothing in this world would ever happen (from a human standpoint) unless someone took the initiative. This means to speak the first word or make the first move rather than wait for someone else to do it. That is one reason why we visit. Initiative is necessary in doing personal evangelism or to reach out to the lonely, the needy, the discouraged. Active initiators are apt to accomplish more than those who merely wait for something to happen.

Take Initiative

BE ALERT FOR OPPORTUNITIES. The Lord was and is the Great Seeker (Luke 19:10, Genesis 3:9). We are called to seek, to “go”, to reach out.

USE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE. Witnessing and pastoring requires dialogue, not monologue. Ask good questions that help others think, rather than give a speech.

FIND THE INTERESTED PERSON. Only “the few” will respond and show interest. Find them by sowing the seed widely and observing carefully who wants to follow the Lord.

WE MUST PERSEVERE when necessary, especially in prayer. Leave off pursuit when it is not indicated as Jesus with the swine-keepers (Luke 8:37).

Making Transitions

One of the most important skills to be mastered in speaking with others about spiritual things is the art of making a good transition. This involves a change in conversational matter, a passage from an ordinary topic to the spiritually sensitive area of

a person's relationship to Christ. Many people find this difficult in spiritual matters although practicing it in other matters fairly easily. This may be due to fear of offending or lack of purpose or direction.

Consider seeking to make effective transitions because they are:

Customary...a normal conversational form used even by small children.

Helpful...avoiding abrupt introduction of subjects by helping the other person shift to a different area

Necessary...getting to key spiritual issues without prolonged generalities.

Three Major Steps

CONNECT WITH THEIR CONVERSATION. Begin at the point where the person is speaking. Listen closely to the conversational flow, looking for connecting opportunity.

MOVE FROM ORDINARY TO SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION.

Consider how to connect this point of conversation to a significant spiritual area with a meaningful statement and/or question. This is like shifting gears in a car. Skill involves making a connection where there is some apparent relationship between the two points.

- Be alert for an opportunity to introduce the transition.
- Relate your transition to the point of their conversation, showing that you are listening. Example: "I have sometimes felt that way myself".
- Use a connective word like: "but" or "however" to show a contrast or relationship of thought. This sets up your following statement and question. Example: "However, I realized that this

did not help to solve anything. Life involves more significant issues”.

MOVE TO A SPIRITUAL QUESTION. In one or more sentences tie the two together in a transition which resembles the changing of gears in a car. The smoother the shift, the less jolt there is in the motion of the car. Now use a question which provokes thought in the area of the spiritual. Example: “If you had only six months to live, what would you be doing with your life? How would you prepare to meet God?”

Some transitions may be simple, direct questions without the connective form shown on the previous page. Paul Little in his teaching on how to share your faith, used these questions:

- “Are you interested in spiritual things?”
- “What do you think a *real* Christian is?”
- “Would you like to know how to become a *real* Christian?”

There are other possibilities in this approach. For example:

- “If someone were to ask you how to be sure of going to heaven, what would you tell them?”
- “If someone were to ask you, ‘Who is Jesus Christ?’, what would you answer?”
- “What is your chief goal in life?”

These illustrate how one can cross the gap between the ordinary and the eternal. The Lord Jesus showed great skill in moving from simple topics to eternal truths in a challenging way. He spoke no idle words. May the Lord help us to use our tongues as He did.

Improve Your Conversational Skills

Most people are poor conversationalists and may not know it. You can improve by working at it and observing sound principles.

These include:

SHOW INTEREST IN OTHERS. Move out of self-absorption. Center conversation in them, not yourself.

GUIDE TACTFULLY TO THE SPIRITUAL AREA. Listen, draw them out. Help them think. Stay off detours leading nowhere.

Some Further Reminders: Avoid gossip. Keep confidences. Don't interrupt. Ask yourself, "Is this edifying or uplifting?"

Lesson 5: Call to Witness

The Lord Jesus has commanded us to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). His first call to the disciples was “Follow Me and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). His closing words of challenge are called, “The Great Commission”. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...teaching them to observe all things, that I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:19-20). Those commands included that of being His witnesses in an unbelieving world. This is not just for the few who have the gift of evangelism. They could never do it all anyway and could not assume responsibility for those in our circle.

We have a divine command and calling to witness which should not be conveniently forgotten. Read Ezekiel 3:18-21 if you need reinforcement on this point.

What Hinders Us?

- Is it that we doubt, “few are bound for heaven” (Matthew 7:14), and most are doomed? Do we believe this is in our heads but not in our hearts? Is it that we don’t care?
- Is it fear, shrinking from possibly offending someone or being ridiculed?
- Is it lack of commitment to Christ or spiritual strength that comes from a close walk with Him? We need the power of the Spirit (Luke 24:49, 1 Corinthians 2:4). Do you seek this daily?
- Is it that no one showed you how and you feel inept? Then, let this course encourage you to learn.

Our Calling to Witness

THE NEED: FEW ARE SAVED. The disciples asked, “Are there just a few who are saved?” (Luke 13:24). Listen to His answer in

another gospel account. “Many will seek to enter and not be able. The gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who will find it” (Matthew 7:14). Look around you and remember His words. Remember also the consequences of *not* being among the few, “Anyone whose name was not found in the Book of Life was thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15). Jesus said, “Fear the One who has authority to cast into hell. I tell you, fear Him” (Luke 12:5).

THE COMMAND: SOW THE SEED. “The sower sows the Word” (Mark 4:14), that is, the gospel message (Ephesians 1:13), “the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). It is the means of people being born again (1 Peter 1:23). It may fall on different soils in human hearts, but it must be sown (Matthew 13:20-23). When we sow little, we reap little. When we sow much, there is more to reap. The problem is not lack of opportunities. It is not that there are few believers. It is because “the *laborers* are few” (Matthew 9:37). We have a command to bring others to Christ out of a dying world.

THE HINDRANCE: FEAR OF MAN. Someone may say, “I don’t witness because it is not my gift”. But witnessing is not to be confined only to those with a special gift. Who will reach *your* circle of contacts? Some say, “I don’t know how”. But what efforts are you making to learn how? There are many people and books to help you. Can’t you speak up about what Christ has done to change *your* life? Some say, “I don’t know any unbelievers. Most of my contacts are Christians”. Then reach out to meet unbelievers in a world swarming with those who have not so much as heard about the opportunity to “have a personal relationship with Christ”. The problem with most people is “the fear of man”. You may fear rejection, scorn, misunderstanding. Are you ashamed of Jesus? (Mark 8:38).

“The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.” Proverbs 29:25

What to Do in Witnessing

GET EXCITED ABOUT JESUS CHRIST! Be enthusiastic about Him before others. Though He is the most controversial man in all history, He is the most fascinating. He is the main issue, not the unsatisfactory churches or the failing Christians.

PRAY FOR DIVINE APPOINTMENTS. God wants to lead us to seeking souls (Acts 8:26-39). Each individual person is important to Him and He will lead workers a great distance to speak to even one (John 4:3-7). Pray to win at least one soul to Christ!

TAKE THE INITIATIVE. Jesus was a seeker. He did not wait for people to come to Him. He visited many homes and communities to find lost souls. Seek to build bridges of understanding with others and to converse freely with them. Be interested in them. Anticipate that God has prepared someone and has a divine appointment for you. Consider strangers, neighbors, and casual contacts. *Be alert* for opportunities to start conversations. The Lord moved among diverse people, making contacts.

LISTEN CAREFULLY, INTERACT. Seek dialogue using the conversational formula previously presented (ask-listen-comment-ask again). Do not preach or give a long speech. Get involved in a profitable “give and take” of ideas. Steer the conversation to serious or spiritual questions. Evaluate their attitude, especially toward God. Find some common ground. Seek to detect spiritual hunger.

SHARE YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY. You must be clear about your own salvation and be able to make the way clear to others. Write it, rehearse it, and then use it. The next lesson will be devoted to helping you do this. Study the chart on “HOW TO

WIN A HEARING". Set a goal to share with at least one unsaved person each week.

USE GOOD QUESTIONS. This was the method of the Lord Jesus. Ask, "Are you interested in spiritual things?". Those using questionnaires in general contact work ask, "We have been talking to people about how Jesus Christ relates to life today. Do you have a few minutes?". Probe their attitudes about what is happening in the world today and where it is heading. A popular subject, due to a number of recent books, is the question of whether there is life after death.

Motivation for Witnessing

LOVE FOR CHRIST. Our greatest motivation should be the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14). We can consider this in two ways. First, because He loved me and this love should constrain me to be obedient to His wishes. Second, it might be my responding love to Him in taking His view of the needs of the multitudes around us. The Lord didn't ask Peter, "Do you love sheep?", fish or people. He asked, "Do you love Me?" (John 21:15-17). If we do, we will obey Him (John 14:15, 21). He said, "Go, and tell them about Me".

CONCERN FOR THE UNSAVED. If you need further motivation, consider this challenge by an unbeliever to a famed British athlete who was trying to witness to him. He said, "If I truly, firmly, consistently believe, as millions say, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, religion would be to me *everything*. I would cast aside earthly enjoyments as gross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as less than vanity. Religion would be my first waking thought and my last image when sleep sank me in unconsciousness. I would labor in her cause alone. I would not labor for the meat that perisheth, not for treasures on earth, but

only for the crown of glory in heavenly regions where treasures and happiness are alike beyond the reach of time and chance. I *would esteem one soul gained for heaven worth a lifetime of suffering...!* I would strive to look only on eternity and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly miserable or everlastingly happy. I would deem all who thought only of this world, merely seeking to increase temporal happiness and laboring to obtain temporal goods -- I would deem all such pure madmen. I would go forth to the world and preach to it, in season and out of season; and my text should be, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" That challenge sent C.T. Studd to Africa to be a missionary. The fact is, as the atheist knew, most Christians don't truly believe this.

ETERNAL FRUIT. There is eternal reward promised for those who win souls (John 4:35-36). Such a one is called wise (Proverbs 11:30). The one who does not warn the wicked of their eternal danger will find that God says, "his blood I will require at your hand" (Ezekiel 3:18, 33:8). We can sow, water, or reap but we are called to be active in the field where, "the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37). Are you a worker, a sower, a soul-winner or just a bystander? Over 90% of all believers are said never to witness on any consistent basis.

Lesson 6: Outlining the Gospel

Careless evangelistic presentations are a danger to souls in two ways. First, it obscures true understanding. Second, it may result in a false profession. There are many aspects to the Gospel. That is why we see the Lord did not always use the same approach to all. There is no single way to present the Gospel, although there are many points of emphasis. It may be His Person; the One to whom sinners are invited to come. It may be His love that reaches out to the multitudes. It may be the sin that defiles and separates man from God. It may be His substitutionary death on the cross. It may be the fear of eternal punishment. Each of these is evident in Scripture.

To assist your understanding of the way of salvation, we have made available what we call the “Gospel Outline”. This is to help you keep in mind all aspects of the Gospel, without attempting to pin anyone down to one rigid presentation method. The full outline is contained in this course. The *four major points* are as follows:

OFFER MADE. Salvation is God’s offer to man to save him from his sins, that’s why Jesus came (Luke 19:10). It is made to “whosoever will”. All are invited to hear this proclamation of “good news” which is the meaning of the word Gospel. It is good news because the sinner is in grave danger of perishing if he doesn’t accept the offer of deliverance. The offer must be accepted to be effective, just as a drowning man must accept an effort to pull him to safety from the waters. This offer has been heard and rejected by millions. It has been accepted only by a few.

OFFER NEEDED. The finest offer in the world means nothing to a person who sees no need for it personally. The one we seek to

find must experience the convicting work of the Holy Spirit and realize the need of forgiveness and deliverance.

OFFER IS JUST. God's forgiveness for man's sin is not as easy as many think. As a God who is both fully *just* and fully *holy*, He requires the due payment or punishment for sin. It is death. If we are to be saved from eternal death, then someone must pay the death penalty for us. That is what the Lord Jesus did on the cross.

OFFER MUST BE ACCEPTED. Millions have heard that "Jesus died for our sins" or that God is willing to forgive sinners for that reason. Jesus is wonderful. Salvation is wonderful. Some may even admit the need in their own lives. However, unless the offer of salvation is accepted in the Person of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, it is not effective. We must accept God's offer on God's terms unconditionally.

We will now break down the first two major headings into explanatory subpoints, each supported by Scripture.

Offer Made

- **ETERNAL AND ABUNDANT LIFE.** "I give unto them *eternal life*", He said (John 10:28). "I came that they might have life and might have it *abundantly* (John 10:10). The offer takes man beyond this life to the life to come. Life is more than existence. It is a partaking of the satisfying life of God. It has peace, joy and many other blessings, far from the sad and troubled experience of many here. It is a life that starts here and now on planet earth, "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12).
- **THE LOVE OF GOD.** "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This is perhaps the best known verse in the New Testament among believers. "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and

sent His Son to be propitiation (satisfying God's justice) for our sins" (1 John 4:10). God offers true love, self-sacrificing love. God loved and God gave. God does not just love nice people. He loves sinners, even the worst, despite their sins which He does not love.

- **PERSONAL TESTIMONY.** It is in this context that you may have opportunity to tell what the love of God has meant in your life; how you came to experience the eternal, abundant life which He promised.

"I was blind, now I see." John 9:25

The second major Gospel outline heading is:

Offer Needed

- **WHAT IS SIN?** (Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:23). Sin is what separates man from fellowship with God. It is often the unseen cause of almost all of man's miseries. Sin is the breaking of God's law, not just the laws of man (1 John 3:4). It is "turning to our own way" (Isaiah 53:6). It applies to every one of us without exception (Romans 3:23). "There is none righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10, 12). It is difficult to see how any thoughtful person could deny having *done* wrong things in this life toward God and man. This includes wrong thoughts and wrong motives as well as deeds. It includes sins of omission, failing to do what we should have done. How can we say before a holy God, "I am a good person", when God says there is none good (Matthew 19:17)? The fact that "no one is perfect" is no excuse. The divine verdict on man as a sinner is "guilty".
- **DEATH AS A CONSEQUENCE OF SIN** (Romans 6:23, Revelation 20:14-15). People generally believe that since all people sin, it cannot be too serious a problem. They also believe that simply praying to God to forgive you is all that is needed.

Unfortunately, neither is true. “The wages of sin is death”; wages are what you earn and death is what sin deserves as punishment. “The soul that sins will die” (Ezekiel 18:4). The most severe consequence is not *physical* death. The *second* death, eternal separation from God in conscious suffering, is the worst result (Revelation 20:14-15). The Lord Jesus said men should fear this (Matthew 10:28). Only death can pay for sin, nothing else. This is either your death or that of a sinless substitute who can die in your place. That’s what the Lord Jesus did.

- **NEED TO REPENT** (Acts 3:19, Isaiah 55:7). This is a step that should not be slighted since Jesus said without it you will perish (Luke 13:3). Repentance means a “change of mind” about sin, your life, God and other spiritual essentials. It is a change of mind that results in a change of action; otherwise it is shallow, incomplete, and insincere. Isaiah 55:7 says, “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord”. The Old Testament exhortation is “turn ye”. You must decide to *turn from* your sins and *turn to* the Lord. This is more than saying, “I’m sorry, please forgive me.” Conversion is a turn around of life. Acts 3:19 says, “Repent therefore and return that your sins may be wiped away”. When people heard Peter preach with such conviction, they asked, “What shall we do?”, that is, to be saved. His first word at that point was “repent”. Repentance, like conviction of conscience because of sin, is not by itself “good news”. It prepares the way for the Gospel.

Let us review the Offer Needed with three series of questions to the one who needs to be saved:

- Do you understand the problem of your sins? Do you feel the conviction about it, a burden for God? Are you ready to cry

out, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner”?

- Do you understand that only death can pay for your sins? That this is the reason Jesus had to die, to pay your debt? That you are separated from God? Do you fear meeting God while still in your sins?
- Do you truly want to be changed, from the inside out, by God? Do you want to be a follower of Jesus instead of a pleaser of self?

Appendix Objections to Repentance for Salvation

OBJECTION: The word means “change of mind”. It is effected when you believe in Christ. Repentance simply means believing, in such verses as Acts 17:30, 20:21, 20:20, Romans 2:4, 2 Timothy 2:25 and 2 Peter 3:9. You therefore may call on men to believe in Christ without mentioning repentance.

ANSWER: “Change of mind” properly cannot be restricted to simply believing in Christ. “To repent is to change one’s attitude toward self, towards sin, toward God, toward Christ,” writes H.I. Ironside in *Except Ye Repent*. “Perhaps it will help us to see that it is one thing to believe God as to my sinfulness and need of a Savior and it is another thing to trust that Savior implicitly for my own salvation.” The use of the word repent in Revelation 2:5, 21, 3:3, Acts 8:22 and 3:26 includes the idea of turning from sin, not just believing something.

OBJECTION: The word repent is omitted in John’s Gospel and mentioned only once in Romans (2:4). It is not mentioned in such salvation verses as John 3:16 and Acts 16:31. Therefore it is not necessary.

ANSWER: It is not acceptable interpretive practice to slice the Word of God into various book portions and then refuse to accept a doctrine if it is not in certain ones. The exhortation to

repent is found in the Gospels, in Acts, in the Epistles and in the book of Revelation. It is found after Pentecost, when the church was formed. Romans mentions repentance as a word only once but it does deal extensively with man's sin and his need for a change of mind. John's Gospel certainly deals with necessity of turning from sin. He brought the woman of Samaria to acknowledge her sin (John 4:17-18) and warned a man he had healed to SIN NO MORE (John 5:14). Those who have not turned from their sins, while professing to believe in Him, are warned that they will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21).

OBJECTION: Repentance is a word for the Jews. The Israelites were called to return to the Lord from their sins as a separate act but this is not applicable to unsaved Gentiles.

ANSWER: Repentance is as much for the Gentiles as it is for the Jews (Acts 11:18). If it were not necessary to prepare the way of the Lord, the ministry of John the Baptist in preaching "repent" has no significance for us (Matthew 3:2, 11, 4:17, Mark 1:15). The disciples were sent to preach to the multitudes that "men should repent" (Mark 6:12). The Lord solemnly warned of its necessity (Luke 13:3,5). The Apostles repeatedly preached it after the church was formed. We have no proper Scriptural warrant to relegate this to Jews alone.

OBJECTION: The sinner is "dead in sins" (Ephesians 2:1). He is incapable of any such response to God as repentance.

ANSWER: Dr. Ironside writes, "To say that because as sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, is dead toward God, therefore he cannot repent, is to misunderstand the nature of that death. It is a judicial, not an actual death. The unsaved man is identified as sinning with Adam by nature and practice and so is viewed by God as dead in trespasses and sins. He is spiritually dead because

sin has separated him from God. But actually he is a living, responsible creature to whom God addresses as a reasoning personality. “Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). Spiritually dead men and women are capable of response to God, either negatively (Luke 13:34) or positively. Otherwise, they could not be judged for their unbelief (John 16:8-9). All human response, of course, requires the enablement of the Holy Spirit.

OBJECTION: Believe is the only condition of salvation in hundreds of verses. Therefore nothing else can be added, such as repentance.

ANSWER: we are saved through the channel of faith, and not by means of human works. This does not rule out the need to understand our sinnership, to desire to turn from our sins and to want to follow Christ.

Those who have opposed repentance as a necessity before salvation have rightly pointed out that the word does not require prolonged anguish of soul or self-torture. The earlier Roman Catholic practice of rendering repentance as “do penance” (acts to pacify God) cannot be justified at all.

Lesson 7: The Gospel Offer Is Just

The message of the Gospel, “good news”, is that God has provided a cure for sins. This remedy satisfies His requirement of the death penalty. It is made possible by the fact that Christ died for our sins, once for all, “that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 2:24). Only death pays for sins - not prayers or good works. The Lord Jesus paid the debt for those who could come to Him, repentant and believing.

This principle of salvation is called *substitutionary atonement*. Jesus died to pay for sins, not just to show He loved us (the moral influence theory). The Passover lamb was sacrificed in death as a protection against the Judgment of God for the Israelites (Exodus 12:13-17). Thereafter millions of animal sacrifices were offered to God as memorials of the coming great sacrifice of Him who is called “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29). It was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). It was He who offered one sacrifice for sins for all times (Hebrews 10:12). By that one offering, He enabled us to be perfect for fellowship with God (Hebrews 10:14). He made peace with God through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). By this we can be declared righteous and justified before God (Romans 5:9-10).

“The wages of sin is death...” Romans 6:23a

Could a righteous judge free a guilty murderer, robber or rapist for no other reason than his pity or love? Of course not! The Judge of all the earth cannot do this with even lesser sinners. It is amazing that so many people know and repeat the phrase, “Jesus died for our sins on the cross”, without knowing either why it is essential or what we must do to claim its benefits. If a person can be accepted by God because of good works or good intentions,

why then did God need to send His Son to die for us on the cross?

“...but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord”
Romans 6:23b

If the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross truly pays the debt of sins, why would some think it necessary to do good works to merit salvation? Scripture says salvation is “not by works of righteousness which we have done” (Titus 3:5). It is by His undeserved favor (grace). Salvation is “the gift of God”; it cannot be earned. A curse is pronounced upon all who attempt to add good works or religious observances to the work of Christ for the purpose of being saved (Galatians 1:6-7, 3:10-11). Good works are the fruit of salvation, that which flows from changed lives. Deeds are not the means of procuring it (Ephesians 2:10, Titus 3:8). We are justified only by faith in the finished work of Christ (Romans 4:5); His sacrificial death provides the only way of salvation.

Why Did Jesus Die?

ONLY DEATH PAYS FOR SIN (Hebrews 9:22). “Without the shedding of blood there is *no forgiveness*”. Mark this well: *no forgiveness whatsoever by God without this!* The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Capital punishment (death) is the only sentence available for sinners, Asking or praying to God to forgive you does not pay the penalty; nor does joining, attending the church or giving to it. This clear Scriptural principle is largely unknown even in countries that have a long history of exposure to the Word of God.

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”
Hebrews 2:14

ONLY A SINLESS MAN CAN DIE FOR ANOTHER (1 Peter 1:19). He was like “a lamb unblemished and spotless”. He *did* no sin, *knew* no sin and *in* Him was no sin. His was the only perfect life ever lived on earth. Why is this important to our salvation? Because only a sinless person can take the place of a sinner to die in his or her place. Only a man, not an angel, can die for another man. He who was “holy, innocent, undefiled and separate from sinners” alone is qualified (Hebrews 7:26).

ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE A SUFFICIENT SACRIFICE (1 John 2:2). Think of the number of sinners who have lived. Think of how many sins each has committed! How can such a vast number ever be encompassed in any sacrifice? Only in One who is the “propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world”. Count them up! He paid for all of them. An infinite God paid an infinite sacrifice for an infinite number of sins. Jesus paid it all!

ONLY GOD CAN PUT AWAY SINS (Isaiah 43:25, Hebrews 1:3). “I am the One who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake”. Religious leaders asked, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Luke 5:21). No one. Jesus Christ has power to forgive sins (Luke 5:24). No other has that right.

The Judge of all the earth must be righteous. He cannot lightly dismiss the due penalty for our misdeeds, our crimes against God. But we ask, “How can He ‘demonstrate His righteousness - that He might be both Just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus?’” (Romans 3:26). It is not an easy task. “It is with difficulty that the righteous be saved” (1 Peter 4:18). God found a way, the only way.

Offer Is Just

CHRIST'S SUBSTITUTIONARY DEATH AND RESURRECTION (1 Peter 2:24, 3:18). The just demands of God for death for the sinner is provided by the gracious and substitutionary death of His Son. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross". He "died for our sins, once for all, the Just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God". The death of Jesus was not just a great moral example. It was a substitutionary sacrifice. You must know more than the words, "Christ died for our sins". You must know deeply the reality that "Christ died for *my* sins"; for *me*. If so, the debt is paid.

"It is finished" John 19:30

THE GOD MAN (1 Timothy 2:5, John 1:1, 14). In personal evangelism, the question is rarely asked, "Who is Jesus?". Yet salvation depends on believing that Jesus Christ is God, the very "I AM" (John 8:24). That is why John's Gospel was written; "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name". The term Son of God was equivalent in the minds of His hearers to be that of God (John 10:33, 36). The Gospel starts with the declaration that "the Word is God" and then says, "the Word became flesh". He is fully God, yet also fully man (1 Timothy 2:5). The Father calls Him God (Hebrews 1:8). So did Thomas (John 20:28). Do you?

GRACE NOT WORKS (Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5). The most common misunderstanding in the minds of most people about salvation is that a good life, or good deeds, contribute in some way to making us acceptable for heaven. The Scriptures flatly deny this. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephesians 2:8-10). Good deeds are

the fruit of salvation, not a meritorious cause. Salvation is by God's undeserved favor (grace) not by human goodness. You cannot be saved because you believe you are a "good person". There are no good persons by God's *standard* (Romans 3:10). That standard is 100% perfection (James 2:10). One unforgiven sin can keep you from heaven where only perfect holiness is acceptable. That is why God must count you to be perfectly righteous through faith (Romans 4:5).

Jesus Rose from the Dead

An essential proof of the Lord's complete victory over sin, death and hell, is His resurrection from the dead. It was the consistent proclamation of the early church. On this basis, men were called to believe upon Him (Acts 2:24, 32, 3:15, 10:40). We must believe this to be saved (Romans 10:9).

Here are five proofs of the resurrection:

- According to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4). He fulfilled a thousand year old prophecy by doing so (Psalm 16:10, Acts 13:35-37).
- According to His own words (Matthew 12:39-40, 16:21, Luke 18:31-33). He specified the exact day of His resurrection (Matthew 27:63). Although His disciples seemed not to have understood, His enemies remembered the prediction.
- In spite of the Romans guard watching over His tomb (Matthew 27:63). Every effort was made by His enemies to prevent a mere pretended resurrection. They sealed His tomb and posted a 24 hour watch. They claimed the body was stolen while they slept. How did they know then what happened? Did every one of them sleep on the watch, knowing it was a death penalty offense?

- By the power of God (Romans 1:1-4, Ephesians 1:20). He convincingly proved that all He said and did was fully accepted by God. He was seen by hundreds of witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:5-8), even to “doubting Thomas” (John 20:20-29).
- Because His resurrection is essential to our justification (Romans 4:25). He completed the action where by sinners can be declared righteous. It publicly validated His claims.

Death could not hold Him. He did what no other man in history did or could do. The message of the risen Christ was the heart of the early church preaching. The believers had a message no others had. They believed and proclaimed “Jesus is alive!”. Do you believe this too?

Lesson 8: The Gospel Offer Must Be Accepted

“What must I do to be saved?”, a jailer asked the Apostle Paul. He answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:30-31). Without doubt this brief answer was amplified later by Paul because a more complete explanation of the Gospel was necessary for understanding the way of salvation.

What does it mean to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Believe is a wide-ranging term used many ways in our language. It can be expressed this way, “I believe it will rain tomorrow”, or “I believe I will do this”. Thus it can be a tentative term, generally indicating a mental agreement or holding an opinion. That is not the way it is used in the Bible. Biblical faith is firm commitment, reliance and conviction. It has substance which attaches itself to specific truths in God’s Word. It is not faith in anything or faith in faith itself. People were saved when they truly believed the Gospel and responded accordingly (Ephesians 1:13, Acts 2:37-41). It was a life changing decision (2 Corinthians 5:17), not passive agreement. Our eternal welfare may depend upon a clear understanding of what we mean by “saving faith”.

Points Involved in Coming to Christ

WE ARE CONVICTED OF SIN (John 16:8-11). We acknowledge our sinnership to God (Luke 15:18, 18:13-14). We sense that it defiles us and grieves God. It separates us from fellowship with One who is infinitely holy.

WE REPENT OF OUR SINS (Acts 3:19, 17:30, 20:21). God summons us to turn away from our sins in order to turn to Him (Isaiah 55:7). The Lord Jesus says we will perish if we don’t repent (Luke 13:3).

THERE IS KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOSPEL (Acts 15:7-9, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The heart of that message is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:1). You believe on Him and on His saving work on the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18). The Gospel is the power of God to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).

WE BELIEVE GOD'S WORD (Mark 4:20, John 5:24, Acts 4:4, Romans 10:17). Belief has a basis; a foundation. Faith comes by hearing and believing God's Word.

WE RECEIVE GOD'S SON BY FAITH (John 1:12, 1 John 5:12-13). We become His follower (John 10:4-5, 27). You come to a Person, a risen, glorified Savior, not to a church, a creed, a denomination. Salvation is a personal relationship with Christ.

WE CONFESS HIM BEFORE OTHERS AS A RESULT (Matthew 10:32, Luke 12:8, Romans 10:9). Being a secret believer, one who hides his diligence to Christ, is dangerous. If one were married why would you want to hide the fact? You must take your stand with Him.

What Is Saving Faith?

Saving faith rests its whole weight upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work. Faith is the instrument, the means, the channel through which the grace of God flows. It is not the source of salvation, nor an act of merit, not a moral excellence which makes one worthy. It is the empty hand that accepts what God freely offers. Like every other good thing, it is a gift of God (John 3:27, Romans 6:23), but this does not deny the moral responsibility of men to respond. Vengeance is upon those who obey not the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

FAITH HAS AN OBJECT (John 6:29). Faith means reliance or confidence. It is in a specific Person, the Lord Jesus. Jesus invited people to "Come unto Me" (Matthew 11:28); "Believe Me" (John

14:11). The question was asked, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” (John 9:35). “There is no other *name* under heaven that has been given among men by which you must be saved” (Acts 4:12). This excludes all other religious leaders, founders or systems.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved...” Acts 16:31

FAITH NECESSITATES CONTENT (Ephesians 1:13). The believers of Ephesus heard the Gospel, believed the Gospel and then were indwelt by the Spirit (saved). That is the sequence of saving faith. What then is the content of the Gospel? This Good News is that Christ *died for our sins* on the cross, was buried and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). That is “the full Gospel” of Scripture. It does not include promises of prosperity, healing on demand, perpetual health, special revelations, signs and wonders or happy days forevermore. It is the means of sins being forgiven and everlasting life through genuine faith in absolute dependence on Jesus Christ.

FAITH HAS A BASIS (Romans 10:17). Upon what authority can we rely for truth as to such an amazing promise as given above? Not human speculation or reasoning. Not comparative religion. Not family, tribal, or racial traditions. There must be an *historical basis*. This is available in the historic impact of the life of Christ. It has a *documented basis*, the Bible, the Word of God. There is a *truthful basis*, provable accounts in Scripture with witnesses. Therefore, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”. “God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:21). People are born again through the imperishable, supernatural, “living and abiding Word of God” (1 Peter 1:23).

FAITH BRINGS ABOUT ACTION (Matthew 9:6, 12:13). The Gospel message requires response, appropriation, action, commitment.

A most dangerous idea is that faith only means “mental assent” or agreement. It is not only untrue to biblical examples but it doesn’t work of transform lives. When Jesus called, men actively responded. “Take up your bed and go home”, He said. “Stretch out your hand”, He commanded. In Hebrews 11, a great section on illustrations of faith, contains a series of responses or faith actions. The Lord’s invitation, “Follow Me” requires action.

The Offer Must Be Accepted

How do you get saved? You must accept God’s offer and yield to Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL CONTENT (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 1 John 5:11-12). “Hear and *understand*”, Jesus often said (Matthew 15:10). You are not able to enter God’s family when you “do not hear, nor understand” (Matthew 13:13). You can’t sincerely believe what you do not know (Gospel content) and do not understand. You must receive the witness (or record) that “God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life”. If you believe He is risen and alive today, having overcome the barrier of your sins, then believe He is your only hope with God.

TRUST AND RECEIVE CHRIST (John 1:12, Revelation 3:20). “As many as *received* Him to them He gave the right to become children of God.” In the prior verse, His own people rejected Him in His claims. They did not believe He was God, Messiah, the only way of salvation. They would not accept His authority, although they may have admired His preaching, the miraculous power of healing, and His inspiring manner. It was to a church that shut Him out that He said, “open the door”. This was never intended to be a prayer in which you just, “ask Jesus into your heart”. You receive and commit yourself to Christ just as two people commit themselves to one another in marriage. In fact, the married state

is an object lesson of salvation (Ephesians 5:23-24, 31-32). It is a personal relationship into which one enters by solemn commitment.

SUBMIT TO JESUS AS SAVIOR AND LORD (Romans 10:9-10, Philippians 2:10-11). Although this part has been challenged by many and ignored by others, it is a crucial part of salvation. There are no rebels in the kingdom of God who refuse His authority (Luke 19:14). You must “confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord”, your Lord, to be saved. You cannot wait until even the doomed and damned are brought to bow the knee to Him. You may not know all that is involved, all the implications, and issues, but you must submit to Jesus as your Lord and Savior and not imagine you can put it off until later while still expecting to be saved. This lack is one of the two most fatal deficiencies in those falsely professing to be followers of Jesus as Lord. The second point of failure is shallow, incomplete, or even a complete lack of repentance. Why would you refuse to submit to Him, yet claim to be a follower of Jesus?

“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” John 15:6

Now, you can answer the question of the Philippian jailer, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). The answer, “Believe on the *Lord* Jesus and you shall be saved”, has been explained by many additional Scriptures, as it ought to be.

Lesson 9: Overcoming Objections

“Always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15). Are you prepared for the defense and confirmation of the Gospel (Philippians 1:7)? Can you, with God’s help, say to others, “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they will be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).

Argument does not win people to Christ, especially when we are harsh and condemning. Reasoning with those who are open, using Scripture can be helpful. Paul often did this (Acts 17:2-3, 18:4-19). The Lord Jesus did that, drawing attention to prophecies concerning Himself (Luke 24:27, 32). We ought to learn how to do the same.

Objections are not a bad thing. They may, if serious, show interest. Without being argumentative, stay calm, and learn how to deal with a sincere question. Don’t fear objections. Be glad that there is enough interest to propose them. This is better than apathy. Say to objectors, “I am glad you brought that up”. Why? Because it gives you an opportunity to answer.

First Ask Yourself

DO I UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION? If you don’t understand, then ask them to rephrase or repeat it. It shows you are listening and taking them seriously. Don’t just guess at their meaning and answer quickly or carelessly. Take your time. Think before speaking. People object for various reasons. Maybe they just want to present their own ideas. Perhaps they object because they have a habit of arguing. Maybe this is a device to cover a deep unwillingness to change and yield themselves to God. It may be

that they have been poisoned by anti-biblical or anti-God influences.

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO ANSWER? We will list below the most common objections. There has been little or nothing new added to the objections people make to the Bible over the centuries. The claim of startling new discoveries in Biblical research that undermine our faith, are mostly myth and verbal overstatement. “Science” has not “disproved the Bible”. Science is a method of study and never has been dedicated to disprove the Bible. There are reasonable, intelligent answers available to all objections. People generally just don’t know the answers. Objectors as a rule have never made a serious study of either the truth of Scriptures or what is called “Christian evidences”.

IS THE OBJECTION TRUE OR LOGICAL? Many false ideas circulate as though they were proven facts. When claims of Biblical contradictions or scientific errors are made against Scripture, ask them for specific examples and the source of their information. People may say, “I don’t believe this or that?” Even if they have the right to disbelieve, is their unbelief based on truth or falsehood? Someone may say, “God is too loving to do that”. On what basis do you *know* that? Do the misdeeds of certain professing Christians or workers really disprove the truthfulness of Jesus or the Biblical revelation?

WILL IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE? If we answer, will it affect their attitude and remove some major obstacle to faith? Most questions are quite superficial and worn out from over use. “Where did Cain get his wife?” or “What about Jonah and the whale?”, are not original and are not a serious obstacle. Some of these questions lead off on to a sidetrack. Are objectors reasonable and open to intelligent persuasion, or just seeking argument for its own sake?

The Two Major Objections

There are only two major objections of any consequence. They are difficult but they do have adequate answers.

WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO NEVER HEARD OF JESUS? This is a genuine problem. Obviously God will not hold you responsible to believe what you don't know. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" You are responsible to live up to the light you have. God says that all men have received the witness of a Creator to whom they must answer (Romans 1:9-20). He says they have the witness of their conscience (Romans 2:14-15). God will help the seeker to know what he needs to know. He can bring a messenger to you, as Philip was sent to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-35). He can bring the seeker to one able explain the truth, as Cornelius was brought to Peter (Acts 10:3-22). Missionaries are sent out for the purpose of being available to seekers.

WHY DO THE INNOCENT SUFFER? Such as children, the helpless, or disaster victims? If there is an all-powerful and loving God, why would He allow this? There is no neat answer to this. God has determined to allow evil to exist and to allow people to choose to do wrong and afflict others. We suffer by reason of evil-doers, including Satan himself. This does not mean that God is the author or agent of evil in each instance. It means He permits it. Certainly God allowed His own Son to suffer at the hands of evil-doers. People were cruel to Him, to the Prophets, the Apostles and godly believers of every age. God didn't do this. Wicked people did it. Permission or latitude to do wrong is not the same thing as causing the wrong. In the lives of believers, it is possible to "suffer for righteousness sake" (1 Peter 2:20, 3:14-17). We can suffer according to the will of God to glorify Him in how we deal with it (1 Peter 4:16 or as Job's experience).

Other Common Objections

IS THE BIBLE REALLY TRUE? Hasn't science disproved the Bible?" Not really, although many people have tried hard to do it. The continuity of this effort and propaganda even today certainly shows they have not fully succeeded. The communist nations tried hard. The secular scoffers try hard. The media tries hard. The educational establishment tries hard. The question is whether you have carefully studied what are called, "the evidences for the truth of the Bible"? In most cases the answer is no. These evidences are quite strong, convincing even some of the greatest philosophers and scientists with advanced degrees in every field. Try studying prophecy in the Old Testament. Jesus appealed to that and it is still there. Study modern works like "Evidence That Demands A Verdict", by McDowell. Your input may be negatively lop-sided. Maybe you are just repeating propaganda, without investigation.

"Now 'If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'" 1 Peter 4:18

"DOESN'T GOD ACCEPT EVERYONE?" "I believe that all religions have some good and that God will accept me as I am." The question is, "Upon what do you base this opinion?" Certainly not upon the words of Jesus (John 14:1-6). Would you dare call Him a liar or deceiver or a lunatic? Do you think there is absolute truth in varied earthly disciplines (mathematics) but not about God? If there is a God of perfect holiness and truth, how can you be sure you are prepared to meet Him?

"DON'T YOU ACCEPT WHAT PAST GENERATIONS HAVE TAUGHT YOU?" This could be true of many people (Hindus, Moslems, even sun worshippers). If someone simply transmitted ideas without investigation it will not help them have a true relationship with God. Every person has a responsibility to seek

what is true, regardless of their upbringing. Why excuse complacency? It is possible that family members may know and have taught someone the truth, yet it has not taken root in their heart. Remember, “God has no grandchildren”. You are responsible for the spiritual decisions that affect your soul’s eternal destiny.

“I HAVE NEVER SEEN ANY MIRACLES SO WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE IN THEM?” By definition, a miracle is an “extraordinary event, manifesting divine intervention”. Even in the Bible miracles were limited to certain periods and individuals. The fact that you personally haven’t seen any means no more than the fact that you never personally walked on the moon. Someone else did however. If you demand that God be like the genie in a magic lamp to jump up and do something special just to convince you, there will be a long wait for your big ego. God calls people to come to Him be faith, not sight, whether you like it or not. As to miracles, most people use the word all the time (sports, products, changes, recoveries); they just doubt *Bible* miracles.

“ISN’T RELIGION A CRUTCH FOR WEAK PEOPLE?” For some people that may be true, but certainly not all believers feel this way. Do you think psychiatrists, psychologists, tranquilizers, support groups, astrologers and even pleasure-seeking are crutches too? Do you object to the idea that people seek and receive professional help at times when they feel a need? Why is spiritual help something to be mocked but other help is encouraged? There is an inconsistency here.

“IS JESUS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD?” For many this is difficult to accept. He certainly said He was (John 14:6). If He is nothing more than one of many ways to God, why did He teach otherwise? Do you have a clear, well considered theory about who Jesus is? Who

else has impacted history like Him? How did He achieve this if it is all false.

“The entirety of Your Word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.” Psalm 119:160

“WHAT ABOUT THE CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE?” Well, show me one or two that bother you. Maybe I can answer the questions or find and answer and get back to you. It is amazing how many difficulties have been resolved over the centuries. Jesus believed in the Old Testament Scriptures and quoted them. Do you think He was stupid or just lying?

“IT’S GREAT FOR YOU, BUT I CAN’T BELIEVE THAT?” *What* is it that you can’t believe? Be specific. Why can’t you believe? Would you like to know what is true that you might intelligently believe? What efforts are you making?

These examples should be enough to get you started as an “objection overcomer”. There are many books available that can provide even more ammunition. Just apply yourself. In the meantime, remember that most objections are not the real problem. Man’s basic problem is his unwillingness to accept God’s authority. People tend to be rebellious, proud, and self-willed. Anyway, that’s what the Bible says. Perhaps some may even object to this.

Lesson 10: Asking Effective Questions

To be effective in interacting with people you must learn to develop the ability to ask good questions. Such questions should be less concerned with gaining information than with helping people think. Random questions often lead to answers that do not advance your mission of being a help.

The Lord Jesus, as God, was a master at asking questions. He had the advantage of omniscience, which we do not. His questions were for the purpose of making others think. His questions taught by pointing out something. They probed the conscience. They provoked decision.

God, the Great Questioner

Notice God's approach from Genesis 3:9-13.

- "Where art thou?"
- "Who told thee thou wast naked?"
- "Hast thou eaten of the tree which I commanded thee not to eat?"
- "What is this that thou hast done?"

The questions of Jesus can be analyzed as to their purpose. He was a wise and perceptive questioner. We must learn to ask questions which reflect the same wise objectives.

Purpose of Jesus' Questions

CLARIFY PURPOSE (John 21:5). Why did Jesus ask the disciples, "Children, have you any fish?", when He knew they had none? In effect, He asks, "Why did you come up here on this fishing excursion, apart from asking if it was God's will, immediately after I had revealed myself in the glory of the resurrection?" That

certainly had a bearing on their catching absolutely no fish after toiling all night. “Why are you doing this?” or “Why are you living this way?”, are good “think it over” questions.

BRING REFLECTION (John 13:12). After washing the disciples’ feet, why did Jesus ask them, “Do you know what I have done to you?” Obviously, they knew of His actions but what was His purpose? Here was a dramatic act of utter humility before all. Not one seemed to have considered doing this for the others. It remained for Him to set the example, yet He was the Lord and Master of all of them. People need to be brought to reflect carefully upon their own actions, or lack, in the light of their calling.

PRICK THE CONSCIENCE (John 7:19-20). Sometimes it is necessary to seek repentance and confession. Jesus asked His accusers, “Why do you seek to kill Me?” They denied this, but it was true. What was the true motive in their sinful hearts? Pilate believed it was envy (Matthew 27:18). It could have been other things. It is important, where possible, to seek conviction of sin or acknowledgement of wrong, by searching inquiries.

TESTING THEIR FAITH (John 6:5). God is a faith-tester. It is our main channel of fellowship with Him. Faced with a great multitude of tired and hungry people, why would Jesus present Philip with this difficult challenge, “Where are we to buy bread that these may eat?” Since they had very little money and there was no large supply of available food nearby, what could Philip say? Would you have said, “With us this is impossible, but with You, nothing is impossible”? We doubt it. Since it was beyond their resources, Andrew starts to inventory their own tiny and inadequate supplies. The Lord then accepted these and used them beyond their wildest expectations.

“Our God is the God of salvation; and to God the Lord belong escapes from death.” Psalm 68:20

IDENTIFY THE SOURCE OF DELIVERANCE (John 8:10). When Jesus emptied His audience of those who wanted to stone the woman caught in adultery, He asked them, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” When she escaped death, she realized who it was that saved her life. Did she give Him the glory? It might have been that she could have attributed it all to good fortune or fate. Here it is unlikely. She needed to know who delivered her.

CHALLENGE THEM (John 6:67). If speakers were faced with having a large company of their audience get up and leave after a message, they would conclude they must have erred. To the contrary, Jesus immediately turns to the Twelve and asks, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” Instead of considering a possible mistake, He challenged the rest and got Peter’s marvelous reply, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”. Never fear to challenge others, on the basis of divine truth, simply to retain public favor.

INVITING THEM TO COME (John 9:35). Although this is often abused, there is a proper time and place to ask someone to express their faith or commit themselves to the Lord. He asked the blind man to whom He gave sight, “Do you believe in the Son of Man (or Son of God)?”.

General Categories of Questions Good Questions

- **OPENING** questions are the type that help the other person talk freely and improves genuine communication. We want to establish that we are not putting the other person on the “witness stand” and “grilling them” like an attorney. Informal

discussion about personal background or attitudes can then move to their desires or objectives.

- **DIRECTIVE** questions are those where you not only select the topical area but seek a reply along the lines of your choosing, not theirs. Often this is to gain additional information. The situation is helped if your question is prefaced by the phrase, “May I ask...?”, “Have you...?” or “Do you...?”.
- **REFLECTIVE** questions are those which restate something that the other person has said and encourages clarification. “In other words, you mean...” is a typical beginning. This is effective at times for helping them see the flaw in their thinking.

Bad Questions

- **TACTLESS** questions are offensive. They overstep the boundaries of our right to ask or need to know. Why do you need to ask this or know this? Is it sensitive, thoughtless, impulsive?
- **POINTLESS** questions are annoying. When you receive the answer, you have no idea of how to utilize the information. If it is irrelevant to your need to know, don’t ask.
- **“YES” OR “NO”** questions are also known as closed questions because they invite a one word response. Such answers are usually the least helpful. Seek those questions which open up discussion and comment that further your purpose.
- **AMBIGUOUS** questions invite a wide range of answers and may get you off track (capable of multiple meanings). “What do you think about getting more involved in the church?” is an example of such a question. Be direct. Get to the point. This will help you to help them.

- **CONTROVERSIAL** questions are annoying and generally have no spiritual purpose. They often begin with, “What do you think of so-and-so?”, and typically deal with religious or political personalities. Unless you are looking for an argument, stay away from these issues.
- **DEROGATORY** questions are sometimes called “put-downs” because they reflect on their intelligence or background. An extreme example would be, “Don’t you think that is a stupid question?”

Helpful Questions

ASK THEIR OPINION. Most people like to express their point of view. Be interested in what they think, rather than expounding your own ideas. This shows you are an interested listener.

Example: “What do you think is the greatest change God (or Jesus) wants in our lives?”

CLARIFY THEIR STAND ON ETERNAL ISSUES. Get them to *think through* where they really stand with God. This may help overcome confusion in their mind or misunderstanding on *our* part.

Example: “In others words, you are asking (or thinking) this? Is that correct?”

KEEP THEM ON TRACK. People go off on conversational detours, sometimes unintentionally. We may courteously have to call them back to the mainline of previous discussion, especially if its important.

Example: “That is interesting. However can we get back to the issue we were talking about before?”

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION. This should be one of our major goals. We want to get others to “open up” and tell us their true

attitudes. The more *we* do the talking, the less opportunity they have. Keep them going if the subject is significant.

Example: “Would you mind telling me more of your opinion on this?”

DETERMINE THEIR STAND. Tactfully seek an honest expression of their true attitudes. This saves the time of both parties and prevents misunderstandings based upon false hopes on our part.

Example: Would you mind sharing what you feel about that?”

PRESENT A CHALLENGE. There is often an opportunity for you to inquire as to the direction they wish to proceed in their relationship with God. Do this in a humble, non-threatening and non-manipulative way.

Example: “If you had only a year to live, what changes would you make in your way of living or use of time and resources?”

SEPARATE CAUSES FROM SYMPTOMS. Complaints and criticisms are usually warning symptoms, not causes. No good physician ignores the search for true causes when making a diagnosis.

“Is this the major issue that hinders you from following the Lord?”

Lesson 11: Hiding and Evading

Probing the spiritual and practical needs of those upon whom we call will not always meet with frank responses. Most people have learned to carefully conceal their true condition. Hiding and evading are familiar actions by people in the Bible (Genesis 3:8, Proverbs 28:13). Believers walking “afar off” from the Lord know how to conceal their condition with pious spiritual talk. They may seek to avoid discovery by God, by others, or even by self. There is pain in admitting unpleasant realities about ourselves. Where issues are clarified and there is a willingness to respond, we may be in a position to help someone. How can you recognize attempts to hide and evade?

Symptoms of Hiding and Evading

SHOW OF UNEASINESS. This may especially be true when you get to vital spiritual questions. Nervous movements, tense facial expressions and hesitance in response might indicate you are drawing near a sensitive area.

LAME EXCUSES. Vacations, visiting relatives, sickness or a busy schedule, may not be the real reason for their absences or laxness. Some excuses are absurd on their face value. It might be best to simply ignore them.

CHANGE OF SUBJECT. An example is when people try to avoid certain areas of discussion and turn to personalities, trivia or conversational detours. This may be a signal, especially if repeated. Don't try to force an issue, but ask yourself, “Why?”. Ask, “Is this something that you just don't want to talk about?”

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?” Matthew 7:3

CRITICIZING OTHERS. This is a classic warning sign, diverting attention from their own lives. Whatever the justification, it is a “red flag”. Why should this issue be brought up now? Is it an empty excuse for a poor attitude? Be careful not to receive slander or gossip. Ask, “Is this something you need to take up directly with them and settle?”

PAST INJUSTICES. This is similar to criticizing others, but goes back into history. This may involve themselves or others. Such complaints as hypocrisy in others, mistreatment, “strictness” of parents or objections to the church. You might say, “I can understand your being hurt by this. I have been offended at times but I saw the need to put it behind me. It had nothing to do with my relationship with Jesus. I needed to forgive and forget.”

AVOIDING COMMITMENT. Lack of specific willingness to change personally, or indefinite postponement of decision, is a bad sign. We are not there to force a decision or accuse people. We might seek an agreement on a short term goal.

QUICK AGREEMENT. This is a surprising danger area since they appear to go along. This may show lack of principle and conviction. Such people have been called “Yes men”. They may want just to get rid of you by being agreeable.

We must face the fact that we cannot help those who do not want to be helped. We may be able to clarify matters and help the person who is open to help if shown the right way.

People may not be aware of the fact that they are hiding, or at least not being transparent about their true feelings. Most of us are less than frank about our true feelings, sometimes even with those who are family members. Viewpoint often determines our actions and responses. We develop various ways of dealing with things other than facing the issues.

- If we are doing what we want, it seems right, *we defend it.*
- If things are not going well, *we blame others.*
- If a subject does not give us a good feeling, *we change it.*
- If we feel mistreated by others, *we bring it up.*
- If something is unpleasant or difficult, *we avoid it.*
- If we have a bad attitude, *we pretend to have a good one.*
- If we have a problem to face, *we want to change the circumstances.*

Suggested Actions

ENCOURAGE HONESTY. There is no value to either of you to pretend. Say, “I would appreciate your being frank with me, as I know you want me to do with you. I respect your opinion. Say what’s on your heart. I will not be offended if you say, ‘I’m not interested’”.

LISTEN WITHOUT REACTING. Do not jump on their words if you truly want to listen to their point of view. Don’t be quick to argue or differ. It’s usually a mistake to say, “I don’t believe it. How can you say that?”

SHOW SENSITIVITY. Pride, embarrassment, fear, and sins make people want to hide. Understand their humanity, their frailty. Never be harsh.

APPEAL TO THEIR INTERESTS. Children, loved ones and our future are areas of concern. What is their *chief* concern? What do they want in life? Ask, “Where do you want to go from here?”

RETHINK THE SITUATION. Try to introduce a different perspective. Change the approach. Say, “I want to help you deal with a problem, if you will let me, even I can’t change your circumstances.”

Actions to Avoid

- Do not directly accuse them of not facing the issues. Even if it is true, it is more apt to provoke resentment than repentance. It puts them on the defensive, closes their ears and heart. We are there to help, not accuse.
- Do not get frustrated or discouraged or even angry in dealing with them. Try to see the most difficult cases as a real challenge to the power of God. Problem people are divine opportunities. You can make things worse if you are not careful. Consider the patience of Jesus in dealing with others?
- Do not accept their explanation as being completely true. People can be very persuasive in relating their grievances, gaining our sympathy, or justifying their actions. You may not have the whole story until you hear the other side.

Our proper goal is to get beyond the surface words and deal with the real issues, if they will permit. Seek to look at them in the light of God's Word. Help them to clarify their thinking, to recognize the issues and be open to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 12: Encouraging Others

Much of our Lord's ministry was in helping and encouraging others. "Be of good cheer", "fear not", were familiar words. He went about doing good. One of the names of the Holy Spirit is Paraclete, meaning helper or "one along side". This tells us much about God. He does not come as "the Great Criticizer", as some are tempted to feel. Rather, He is "the Great Encourager". There is no lack of need for this among God's people or those outside of the household of faith. All of us are subject to discouragement.

Encouragement is a very positive word. In Scriptures such as Romans 15:4-5, it seems to have two meanings:

- To urge forward as, "We encourage (urge) you to attend".
- To support or help as, "She encouraged her to get over her despair and press on with life".

Encouragement takes time, especially with those who have been overlooked. It calls on us to be alert for opportunities. We might set as a personal goal to seek to give some spiritual encouragement to at least one person each day.

Suggestions for Openers

ON MEETING PEOPLE. Have time for people - especially "little people". Show concern for others. Make it your purpose to be on the lookout for opportunity.

LEARN TO SMILE MORE. Seek to maintain a cheerful countenance. Get your mind off your own worries. Consider the impact you can have by having people notice you have a radiant look (Exodus 34:29-30).

GREET WARMLY, PAY ATTENTION. Do not let anyone think you are ignoring them because you are preoccupied with your own

thoughts.

USE THEIR NAMES. You can spend up to \$500.00 for a one day motivational course stressing this. It is a sweet sound to have someone use your name (and pronounce it correctly). Employ it by saying things like, “Well, *Mary*, it’s nice to see you again”.

USE FRIENDLY INQUIRIES. This does not mean nosey, intrusive questions about things that are none of your business. “How are you doing?”, or “How are you?”, are overused examples. Be more creative. Exhibit genuine interest rather than a form, a cliché, or a platitude.

Often a positive word from us can be used of the Lord to help someone move ahead for God in a particular way. Visiting people involves much more than searching out problems and correcting others. We want to help lift the burdens of those bowed down (Isaiah 58:6) and heal the broken-hearted (Isaiah 40:1, Luke 4:18). We are to “bear one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2). The Lord Jesus was not indifferent to these needs as He went about doing good.

“Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it to stoop, but a good word maketh it glad.” Proverbs 12:25

Sit down and think specifically about how you can best accomplish this.

How to Encourage

APPRECIATE MORE. Most of us have a tendency to over use criticism and correction. Thoughtful and kind words which demonstrate that we notice the efforts of others is courteous and unselfish. Even God invites our praise (Psalm 50:23). Look for opportunities to recognize the efforts of others. Look for something to commend or praise. Say it or write it in a note. Give credit for the right things.

COMFORT, ESPECIALLY BY THE WORD. Our Lord is the greatest practitioner of this healing ministry (Isaiah 40:1, 2 Corinthians 1:3). The sorrowing, the discouraged, and the defeated need a word in due season. The Holy Spirit is called “the Comforter”, not “the Criticizer”. Lift the spirits of others. Use a promise from God’s Word.

ASSIST PRACTICALLY. To wish someone “good luck”, pray and then depart without seeking to help them is hypocrisy condemned by God (James 2:16). How can we aid those who honestly need a helping hand? What needs to be done? How can I help? Can I think of someone to help who is better qualified or able? Do something. Don’t just report a need.

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS. It is possible that someone wants to be more involved in Christian ministry and to use their spiritual gift. All of us should be working together in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12). Believers are often troubled by a sense of inadequacy. Point out that God is adequate for any necessity or empowerment. The issue is, “How would you like to serve the Lord?”

CHALLENGE TO GROW. Peter wanted believers to develop beyond the state of infancy or immaturity (1 Peter 2:2). How can we assist them in growing in the Word of God “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13)? The Word of God establishes very high standards for holiness, fruitfulness, character, it condemns mediocrity lukewarmness, laxity.

EXHORT TO GO ON. The idea of this word is to invite or entreat a person to pursue a spiritual course of conduct (Acts 11:23, 15:32). Positive encouragement is better than denunciation. “Stir up the gift that is within you”, Paul told Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6).

KEEP THEM LOOKING UP. We are not helped by looking inward (introspection) or looking at others (making comparisons).

INVOLVE SOCIALLY. The Lord Jesus interacted with many people. He was a social person, not a recluse. Hospitality meant originally “love of strangers”. Believers are urged to show this to others (Romans 12:13, 1 Peter 4:9). Many believers are lonely and neglected, not feeling a part of the fellowship, sometimes “loners”. We are part of a living body, What we don’t use, we may lose, both in gifts and opportunities. Consider how you can help others practically.

Think about how you can put these suggestions into practice, starting now, by doing the following assignment.

- Prepare to report at least one good “Encourager” contact this week. Write on your ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PREPARATION REPORT (briefly) the impact you saw of this action on another person.
- List or check the things you are *not* doing, that you can and should do to encourage others.

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27

Lesson 13: Analysis and Direction

To analyze is to separate something into parts in order to examine more effectively a complex situation such as human behavior. The causes and remedies for improper behavior and thought patterns have given rise to hundreds of theories and suggested approaches based on purely human wisdom. The suggestions of so many approaches, with their continuous revisions, suggests that none have proven lastingly effective. The problem with most of them is that they take little notice of the Creator and Maker of all things in what He has to say.

Any ailing person needs a wise doctor. There is none better than the one called “The Great Physician”. Correct diagnosis must precede helpful recommendations. Good doctors listen well and take a good “patient history” before deciding what needs to be done. Others may need to be consulted. The range of possible ailments is lengthy. There is often a spiritual root to many problems. An informal, but serious discussion, must be used to determine:

What is the problem?

What should be done?

Here are some typical or major problem areas:

Separations and divorces

Sexual offenses

Divisiveness, trouble-making

Gossip, back-biting

Self-centeredness

Lack of discipline

Irresponsibility, job instability

Experiencing sense of rejection

Resent indifference by others

Unruly children

Unforgiving spirit

Role reversal of divine family order

Discouragement

Debt, poor stewardship

Scriptural ignorance

Rejecting proper authority

Defiling, hurtful habits (drugs, alcohol, smoking)

People need spiritual analysis, not psycho-analysis. We need to seek to be one guided by the Spirit and the Word in being a “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). We are not there to pronounce judgment but to discern needs. Obviously we ourselves must be in close fellowship with God. We should not show partiality. We are to be righteous and fair, suspending any conclusions until we have confirmation of what may only be vague suspicion. Here are some considerations:

TAKE NOTE OF OBVIOUS CLUES. What is the nature of the conversation, interaction between family members, reading material displayed, condition (order) of house, and response to the ministry of the church.

Remember, be tactful. You are not to look down on others.

Be Alert for Display of Attitudes

CONCERNING GOD: Is there eagerness or complacency in spiritual things, love for Christ, interest in the Word, priorities?

Remember, probe tactfully. You are not a cross-examiner.

CONCERNING THOSE IN AUTHORITY: Are they open to counsel, independent in spirit or teachable, respectful or critical?

Remember, people can change. Avoid “writing off” someone quickly.

CONCERNING RESPONSIBILITIES: Do they finish what they start (jobs, classes, etc...)? How is leadership at home (participation)? Do they blame others or accept responsibility?

Remember, these things can be taught.

CONCERNING SIN: Is there victory over sin or lack of discipline? Is there conviction or recognition of problems? Are they open/eager for help or apathetic?

Remember, the Lord is the God of recovery.

BE WILLING TO TEST THEIR WILLINGNESS. Do they desire to change? Are they willing to attend a class, be open to further discussion or contact?

Remember, the Lord tested those who professed willingness.

It is good to ask appropriate questions of others. It is also necessary to ask *ourselves* questions about what we observe and what needs to be done.

Questions to Ask

WERE YOU WARMLY RECEIVED? The Lord said, “Whosoever receiveth whom I send, receiveth Me” (John 13:20). If they are evasive, hesitant, cool, uneasy; this may reflect their attitude toward the Lord. If they are open to Him, they will probably be open to you, friendly, hospitable and receptive to a spiritual discussion. If they don’t want to have you there, or talk, then leave graciously.

WHAT ATTITUDES WERE EVIDENT? Was it those of a spiritual seeker, like Nicodemus? (John 3:12). Or those who came with Philip, saying, “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:21)? Or was it argumentative, mocking or apathetic? Sincere questions or challenge may indicate interest if behind their words is a desire to know God.

HOW WAS THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKING? Was there conviction of sin (John 16:8)? Was there a growing perception or understanding of spiritual truth (John 16:13)? Was the Spirit’s ministry, through you and the Word, welcome? Or was He grieved (Ephesians 4:30)? You cannot go beyond His Word and minister without Him.

“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” John 16:8

WHAT SCRIPTURES APPLY? “What does the Scripture say?”, asks Paul (Romans 4:3). That is the determining factor in truth about anyone. That’s how we know right from wrong, good from bad, helpful from unhelpful. You must be filled with the knowledge of the Word, if you are to understand situations and apply the Word rightly.

WHAT ACTION DO YOU RECOMMEND? Much opinion and information is wasted if we do not come to a diagnosis and prescription for action. You may want to help them use the Word to say what is necessary. Or you may just read it and suggest it may apply. Talk without action is usually of little help. The Lord diagnosed covetousness and materialism as more important to the rich young ruler than God. He told him what to do (Matthew 19:21).

Like a good doctor seeking to diagnose an illness, we need to observe symptoms as well as possible underlying causes. We

need to ask perceptive questions in the right areas and probe with “the sword of the Spirit”.

General Causes of Spiritual Problems

LACK OF COMMITMENT TO CHRIST (Romans 6:13, 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:17). Defective consecration is without doubt the chief problem in the lives of professed believers. If Jesus is not effectively allowed to rule our lives or if we are half hearted in our commitment we can not expect Him to provide victory.

WRONG PRIORITIES IN LIFE (Matthew 6:33). God first, others second, *you last* is the divine priority list. Jesus and others and you, spells “JOY” as an acrostic. Decisions, use of time or other resources and goals must be based on this order.

BAD ATTITUDES (Philippians 2:5). We need Christlike attitudes not self centeredness which seeks merely to look out for your own personal interests. If we allow bitterness or an unforgiving spirit to dominate our thinking, we will defile our minds and our actions.

DETERIORATING RELATIONSHIPS (Philippians 4:2,5). Learn to live in harmony with others, even if it is difficult. “If it be possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:18). Strife and contentions destroy peace. The Lord often exhorts us to get along with others. He is a reconciler.

SELF WILL (Matthew 26:39). He said, “I have come to do the will of Him that sent Me” (John 6:38). When we *imagine* that God saved us, gave us life, and then had no interest in whether we served our own desires or His, we are seriously mistaken. A strong-willed child resists obeying parental commands. So does a self-willed person before God.

DISCOURAGEMENT (Psalm 77:1-9). This may be the Devil’s most often used tool. “Be of good courage” is a frequent word from

God to His children. Psalm 77 is a lament of pure despair by a believer “so troubled that he cannot speak”. This is a “deadly” emotional response to difficulties.

LACK OF DISCIPLINE (Galatians 5:23). “A man who has no control over his spirit is like a city broken down and without walls” (Proverbs 25:28). The fruit of the Spirit is self-control. Unstructured, disorganized living is the road to nowhere.

HARMFUL ASSOCIATIONS (Proverbs 1:10). “Do not proceed in the way of evil men”. What kind? Scripture names fools, fornicators, drunkards, scoffers, disorderly, angry and similar types as people to avoid for companionship. We call them “bad news friends”. They are not true friends but acquaintances that can drag you down.

BESETTING SINS NOT DEFEATED (1 John 5:4). The path of a believer is one of overcoming the world. He overcomes evil with good (Romans 12:21). If we initially overcome “the defilements of the world” and then are “entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse than the first” (2 Peter 2:20). The practice of lawlessness, may well indicate that a person is not a true believer (1 John 3:8-9).

We must maintain our grasp of Scripture to properly, spiritually determine what, if anything, we need or ought to do to help someone. This may be either practical assistance or counsel. The best counsel in the world is useless if the other person is not interested in taking heed. Therefore, don’t give unsolicited advice. If they are open and receptive, and ask for your advice, then give it. Be sure you base it upon the Word and examine it together on the required subject. Pray about it and keep praying. Follow up on necessary action where you can.

Lesson 14: Using the Word of God

Accurate knowledge of the Scriptures and effective use of that knowledge is the most important ability we can have in helping others. It is supernatural wisdom. When used under the direction of the Holy Spirit, it has a supernatural impact. Psalm 119 has 176 verses totally devoted to the value of the Word of God. It is presented as the answer to almost every major spiritual problem: wisdom, holiness, guidance and salvation. It is intended to impact the way you live, the way you speak, the way you teach or counsel others.

It is like a hammer in its convicting power (Jeremiah 23:29); like a burning fire in the bones in internal motivation (Jeremiah 20:9); like a soothing ointment to the troubled soul. It is like honey, bread and milk as food for the soul. Therefore how necessary it is for us to use this mighty spiritual aid in effective calling. We must ever keep the Word of God between us and those to whom we speak as a foundation for what we say. If they want to dispute, let it be with God's Word, not us as a matter of personal opinion. Consider these reasons for employing the Word in our conversations.

The Importance of Using God's Word

JESUS USED IT (Matthew 4:3-10). That is sufficient example for us. The Lord regularly used the Word of God in dealing with others. He quoted it to Satan during the Temptation. He refused the Enemy's wrong use of Scripture. He asked in Luke 6:3, "Have you not read?" . He said, "It is written" (Matthew 21:13, 26, 31). "He expounded to them in all the Scripture the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27). There are many indirect references, questions and principles which were based upon God's Word. He

knew and used the Word in dealing with others as a constant practice. So should we.

THE SPIRIT USES IT (Ephesians 6:17). It is not human wisdom but the Word of God that is the mighty sword of the Holy Spirit. Every man is at some point false, but God is always true (Romans 3:4). His Word is truth (John 17:17). It is like silver refined in a furnace and purified seven times (Psalm 12:6). People may refuse its authority but that will not change its power, that of truth from God's living Word. It is by the Word that faith comes (Romans 10:17). The expansion of New Testament Christianity is described this way: "So mighty grew the Word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:20).

HUMAN WORDS CANNOT COMPARE (Isaiah 55:11, 1 Peter 1:23). It is evident that no human statement can equal the Word of God in its inherent power to touch the lives of others. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). "So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth. It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). It is not by the word of man, but by the Word of God that men and women are born again (1 Peter 1:23).

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16

Four Basic Uses of the Word

FOR TEACHING. Healthy believers thrive on what is called sound or wholesome doctrine, much as people are healthier by reason of a good diet. Weak teaching leads to being susceptible to spiritual disease. It leads people to being open to cultic distortions or twisted doctrinal ideas. "You do err greatly", said

the Lord to religious leaders, “because you don’t know the Scriptures”. Strong Christians are “mighty in the Word”, like Apollos or the Bereans who “searched the Scriptures”.

FOR REPROOF. This involves showing people plainly where they are wrong. The Word is the *authoritative* standard for what is right, what is divine, infallible, absolute. When the Lord used the Word, He spoke with authority. The only proper basis of rebuke is an unmistakable violation of God’s Word, it is not just deviating from the customs or traditions of men.

FOR CORRECTION. This is when we use the Word to explain what is right or true. If immorality is a threat, then people are to *flee* from it. If fleshly lusts war against the soul, one should *abstain* from anything providing temptation. If you are a believer that is involved in sin, *stop* it. No believer is a slave to sin’s power any longer (Romans 6). Seek to correct problems by the Word of God.

FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. Discipline for the erring believer is not just punishment, it is training. “Train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6), is more than giving a command or posting a sign. Discipline and follow-up for new believers has the Word of God as its curriculum. It is to be taught, memorized, and imbedded in the minds and lives of believers. There must be example as well as precept. There must be active application and *practice*. A believer who is “rooted and grounded in the Word”, as Timothy from his childhood, will not easily stray.

General Purposes for Using the Word

ENCOURAGE PROPER ATTITUDES. “Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11). An attitude is an outlook or inner feeling with regard to a situation, person or

my own condition. It may result in a characteristic way of response to a situation. This could be resentment, discouragement, fear or indifference. Unless we are able to search out and note this inner feeling, we cannot effectively deal with the situation. Underlying attitudes therefore are as important as words in evaluating people and determining what to do. Attitudes can be as sinful as actions if we consider the words of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 5:22-48). Attitudes can also underlie failure to gain victories in daily living. The following verses represent primary areas of attitude problems:

POSITIVE

Loving (1 John 4:11-12)

Teachable (James 3:17)

Thankful (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Humble (1 Peter 5:5)

Forgiving (Ephesians 4:32)

NEGATIVE

Slander, hate (Proverbs 10:18)

Argumentative (Proverbs 18:19)

Bitter, resentful (Ephesians 4:31)

Strife, jealousy (Galatians 5:20)

Pride, self-sufficiency (Proverbs 16:18)

GUIDE DECISIONS. “Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). This is one of the most quoted verses in Scripture. It proclaims the Psalmist’s dependence on God’s Word for knowing the right way to proceed in life. There are matters of absolute commands to follow. There are matters of circumstantial decisions in which helpful principles apply. It is

good advice to say, “do not lean on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the teaching” (John 7:17). It is important for any counselor to know correct biblical principles and refer to them.

STIMULATE GROWTH. “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). Spiritual growth requires spiritual food from God’s Word, whether it be simple “milk” or advanced “meat”. Solid food helps believers move to maturity (Hebrews 5:13-14). If the immature believer does not grow in the Word, that person is more prone to temptations which lead to moral failure and to defection from active participation in the life of the church (Hebrews 10:25).

ENCOURAGE HOLINESS. “How can a young man keep himself pure? By keeping it according to Thy way” (Psalm 119:9). The Lord’s command is, “Be ye holy for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15). He wants us to be without blame” even if we are not perfect (Colossians 1:22). He wants us to avoid defilement. The believer who feeds on the Word regularly will be the one most likely to have a holy life. In correcting behavior, the Word is the primary spiritual weapon in bringing conviction and change.

CHURCH ORDER. “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). Here is the concise statement of the activities of the early church. The governmental order of elders and deacons, with qualifications, is set forth in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:1-13. The gifts functions within the body, with all members participating are given in 1 Corinthians 12. Christ’s love for the church is stated in Ephesians 5:25 and thus its importance. Do you love the church sacrificially?

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it...Children, obey your parents...Honor your

father and mother that it may be well with you". Ephesians 5:22-25, 6:1-4

FAMILY LIFE PRINCIPLES, "...neither is there male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). There is a divine order within the family which does not contradict equality. The marriage vow is sacred and binding (Hebrews 13:4, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5). Divorce is strictly limited (Matthew 5:32, 19:9, 1 Corinthians 7:15). God must be first in the family without implying any neglect of basic obligations. Husbands should support their wives (1 Timothy 5:8). Children should be obedient to their parents (Ephesians 6:1).

SETTLING GRIEVANCES. "Moreover if your brother sins against you..." (Matthew 18:15-17). God wants to eliminate strife and see differences promptly settled. "If it be possible, as much as it lieth within you, be at peace with all men (Romans 12:18). Forgiveness should be a habit (Colossians 3:13). Overlooking offenses rather than taking offense is commanded (Proverbs 19:11). Spreading grievances is forbidden (Proverbs 17:9). Peace-making is commended by God.

GUIDANCE IN HANDLING RESOURCES. "Honor the Lord with your possessions...the borrower becomes slave to the lender" (Proverbs 3:9, 22:7). God will judge the way believers handle their monetary resources. He advises us to "lay up treasures in heaven", not on earth. He warns against the love of money or "worrying over material needs. We should give God the first fruits of our income (off the top). We are to give regularly, proportionately, systematically (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Believers are warned about going into debt.

UNDERSTANDING DIVINE PRINCIPLES. "Give me understanding that I may observe Thy law and keep it with all my heart", cried the Psalmist (Psalm 119:34). Even the simple can find

understanding through the Word (Psalm 119:130). You must know the Word to find its principles. You must cry out for understanding and wisdom.

The following verses are important in pointing the way to growth.

Priorities (Matthew 6:33)

Lordship (Luke 6:46)

Commitment (Romans 12:1-2)

Obedience (John 14:21)

Abiding (John 15:4)

Perseverance (Isaiah 40:31)

Reckoning (Romans 6:11)

Yielding (Romans 6:13)

Suffering (1 Peter 2:20)

Unity (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Power (Ephesians 3:20)

Holiness (1 Peter 1:15)

Submission (Ephesians 5:21)

Quiet time (Mark 1:35)

Word (Jeremiah 15:16)

Prayer (1 John 5:14-15)

asking (Matthew 7:7)

interceding (1 Timothy 2:1)

praising (Hebrews 13:15)

thanking (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

confessing (Proverbs 28:13)

Witness (Acts 1:8)

Servant (Matthew 10:26-27)

Laborers (Matthew 9:37-38)

Discipleship (Luke 9:23, 14:26-33)

The devil certainly sees the power of God's Word on the human heart. He fears even its residual impact on the careless listener. "The evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in the heart" (Matthew 13:19). Godless regimens try to destroy or ban every copy of the Bible, so that their people cannot read it. Secular forces seek to keep it out of schools. Opposers of the Lord write and teach constantly in attempting to discredit the Scriptures and their authority. No other book has faced such an onslaught in human history. Why?

If it is so influential spiritually upon people, in the eyes of the Lord's enemies, why do we neglect it? We are weak because we do not feed upon it daily. Why, when we visit, counsel, or speak, do we not say more frequently, as our Savior did, "the Scriptures say"?

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To God be the glory.