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WAYS
TO SAVE
YOUR
NEIGHBOR



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WIN ONE FOR THE SAVIOR

By John Orr

There is no doubt Jesus wants us all to be soul winners. The bible says “He who wins souls is wise” (Proverbs). But, did you also know it is a mark of true discipleship (John 15:8).

This is my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

In fact, we’re in big trouble if we don’t (John 15:1, 2).

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

And...

“If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. “John 15:6“

Some think this is a passive command. Some teach if you are a good example you can bear fruit. But, Jesus plainly speaks to us as he did to the apostles (John 15:16)

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit –fruit that will last. Then, the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

We have to go if we are to bear fruit. We can't sit inside the four walls of the auditorium and preach to ourselves. No one can do it for you. We are all commanded to GO (Matthew 28: 19, 20).

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Now consider carefully the importance of this command. Jesus said:

“If you love me, keep my commands. (John 14:15)

To so many in the church today, this seems unfair. Why would Jesus ask me to go out and talk to people about salvation, when:

- a. I'm not talented in speaking to people
- b. No one will listen
- c. I may make enemies of them
- d. People don't want to be bothered with the gospel
- e. I've tried it before and it just doesn't work...it's too difficult

In the following articles, you will see that evangelism CAN be accomplished on some level, if you are willing to try every day for the rest of your life. Evangelism is more than a Bible study.

It is a lifestyle. When Jesus said “go” in Matthew 28:19, he literally meant “as you are going”. These articles of evangelism are designed to encourage you to make disciples, as you are going toward the eternal Promised Land. God bless you in HIS work.

2

Where do I begin?

Many who try to win souls usually fail because they try to win arguments...Winning a soul to Christ is not all about how much you know, but how much you care. People need to see Jesus in you, before Jesus can lead them through you. How did Jesus win souls? He first began with compassion.

Mark 6:34:

“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.”

The NKJV says that he was **MOVED** with compassion. When you are bitter and resentful, does your heart ache over the misfortunes of others? When you see children who are at home on Sunday morning instead of in bible class (learning about Jesus), does it motivate you to offer a ride to church?

Think about it!

When you see a dog or a cat that is malnourished and abused, do you want to care for the animal? How much more, then, should we care for

those whose spirit is dead in sin, whose heart is broken, and whose soul is headed toward eternal destruction. According to Jesus (Matt. 7:13, 14) only few will be saved. Does that move you to compassion? By the time you finish reading this, almost 400 people in this world have died. But, close to 1000 were born. What will motivate you to win at least one soul to the savior this year? It begins with compassion. The same emotion that moved others to lead you to Christ. And remember, the soul you save may just be your own.

My brother, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this; whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.”(James 5:19-20)

3

LESSONS IN FISHING

Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 4:19:

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said “and I will make you fishers of men.”

Why did Jesus use this analogy for soul winning? For one thing, a commercial fisherman knew that catching fish wasn't easy. The disciples he called in this passage cast their nets in the sea while two were in the water and two were in the boat. The net had to be extended to where the fish were. Sometimes they would cast it all day and catch little. But sometimes, it really paid off. Also, you had to be very careful not to scare the fish away. The net had to be closed in carefully and gently. The same is true with rods and reels. One does not jerk the line up with one nibble. He waits until the fish is hooked.

There are many great parallels.

One is, do not give up on the first try. Or as the popular adage goes: “If at first you do not succeed try, try again.” Also, when you talk with people about religious subjects, do not answer

them without a Bible. The power is not in you or your persuasive abilities. The power is in the word. The Holy Spirit “convicts men of sin” (John 16:8). And, don’t make the mistake of going straight to baptism, or instrumental music. Try to set up a study, or at least put the thought in their head. You may ask

them to Church services, but what they need is the gospel. Just as commercial fishermen, such as Peter, James and John were, so are we in the sea of this world. Be patient. Take time. Pray. And work toward leading them to a Bible Study which in turn may lead them to Jesus... Until then, they just nibble. But keep on throwing out the bait: worship, fellowship, compassion and listening. God is using you for a great catch.

Just keep throwing out your net!

4

IT'S NOT ABOUT ME

The story is told of a couple and their 9 year old son coming home from Church services. As they were driving along, the little boy's parents were whining about the morning worship.

"The preacher preached too long!"

"The building was too cold!"

"The family behind us was too noisy!"

"Only 7 people spoke to us today!"

"Brother Jones led the same prayer he has prayed for the last 20 years!"

"The song leader never sings the songs we like!"

And so on. The boy was listening to this when he piped up and said,

"Oh, I don't know", he quipped.

"I thought it was a pretty good show for a dollar."

Why do “Christians” complain, whine, moan and groan. Because with most folks, it’s all about me. Have you ever stopped to see how many times you use “I” or “me” in a conversation? Psalms 115:1 states:

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness”

6

When we come together for worship, it should never be about what I want or what “I think” or what “I feel”. It’s not about us, it’s all about Jesus. That’s why Paul says in Galatians 2:20:

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

If every decision you made was centered on Jesus, would your life be different? Would you have different goals, desires, and outcomes? Would your worship be richer? Would your singing be louder? Would your desire be for the spiritual rather than what pleases the 5 senses? And on top of that, how many souls will be lost because of griping, and complaining? When others see and hear that repeatedly, do you really think they want to go to church with you? Do they want to study the Bible with a negative, self-centered person like that?

Jesus tells us only a few will make it to heaven. Because only a few will learn the true meaning of being a Christian and a successful soul winner. Because sadly, only a few realize:

“It’s all about Jesus”

5

REMEMBER WHEN?

Memories are a very special gift from God. They leave us with rich experiences in which to share and re-live with others. But what do you remember about your salvation experience? How were you saved? When were you saved? Who taught you? Who baptized you? How did you feel before, during and after God joined you to Jesus Christ? How good was it to have a new life? How secure did it feel to be covered by His blood? And finally, how much did you want to tell everyone what you did, and what Jesus has done for you! Would you have done anything Jesus asked you to do? Did you feel welcomed and loved by everyone in the Church? Were you willing to volunteer for anything?

We need to keep that experience fresh in our minds. Satan wants to take it away from you. He wants you to grow stale and dissatisfied. The devil will try anything to get your to be distracted, and disillusioned, so that you will take your eyes off Jesus. The Church in Ephesus was told to do the same:

Revelation 1:4, 5:

“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place.

They were so engaged with fighting false teachers and being involved with busy work, they forgot Jesus.

Think back to your conversion. Take time this week to write down everything you remember about it. Then read it to someone you love. Your story may inspire others to consider their own lives. Paul told his “conversion” story 3 or 4 times in the scriptures.

He never forgot it because of God’s mercy and grace. He once referred to himself as the “chief of sinners.” People need to hear the good news of Jesus. But they also need to hear your story, as well. Paul spoke of how his conversion changed his life. It motivated him to work harder than anyone else. In I Corinthians 15:8-10, he said:

“And last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”

Do you remember when YOU came to Jesus? What if you never heard the gospel? How fortunate you are? Let the excitement and memory of that experience motivate you always.

6

What is your story?

DO YOU GO TO CHURCH?

How often have you asked others where they go to church? Most will give the name of a church they usually stay away from. Statistics show that on any given Sunday, only 15 percent of the population of most towns are in “church”. So, our question should not be:

“Where do you go to church?”

Instead, we ought to ask:

“Where do you go every Sunday? “

You will be amazed how people will react. It usually catches them off guard. Then, ask them to tell you their story. Get to know them better by finding out the history of their religious experiences. If they are devout in their beliefs, then wait for an opportunity for God to open a door. But if they do not attend every Sunday, then carefully continue the conversation. Allow them to really be honest as to why they don’t attend church

every Sunday. There is a reason. It is important for you to listen, especially to key words or phrases.

“My feelings were hurt.”

“I don’t get anything out of it.”

“All they want is my money.”

After you hear what they have to say, then ask them to come to church with you this Sunday. Statistics show that 25 % of those you ask will eventually come with you if you are patient, persistent, and persuasive. In fact, one out of every 4 people will come worship with you at least once. From there, you encourage and pray, **and keep asking!** If they begin attending, and would like a Bible study, make sure you accommodate them immediately. If you feel uncomfortable setting up a study, contact someone who will.

The story is told of a woman who asked her friend to go to church with her over the course of many years. One day she asked the Lord,

“Am I wasting my time?”

She loved her friend. So she decided she would try once more. When she arrived at her friend’s house she said,

“I was thinking today that over the course of the last few years I have asked you to come to church with me 49 times.”

Her friend, stunned at first, said:

“Ask me once more and I’ll go.”

She did and tearfully embraced her friend. Sunday came and her friend was there for worship services, just as she had promised.

The next Sunday, she came back. Eventually she was taught and was baptized into Christ. But if her friend had given up, as we

often do, then the 49 invitations would have been wasted. Most of us give up when we ask what church they attend. Remember, ask them **what church do you attend every Sunday?** Then keep on gently asking and praying.

Consider the admonition of the apostle Paul in Galatians 6:9: “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”

The point? Don’t give up. Just keep asking: “where do you go to church, every Sunday?”

7

BASKETS, BAGS, AND SACKS

This section may sound odd to most people, and it is. It is odd in the fact that it is seldom done. But oh, what a difference it can make! What if you were at work, and you were having a bad day. Then, one of your fellow employees brings you a basket full of goodies (candy, pencils, a notebook, and an encouraging book). It is wrapped in clear cellophane and has a nice ribbon on it. Attached is a note with encouragement and a scripture to give you hope and comfort. What would you think? Would it change the way you look at that person. Then, if they later invited you to go somewhere with them, would you be inclined to go? Sure you would. Why? You would feel indebted to them.

Now, what if you were the one giving baskets to people, whether you knew them well or not. Then later, you invited

them to church or friend's day, do you think they might come, eventually?

You see, everyone loves to receive gifts. Period. And whether it is in a basket, a bag, or a sack; it doesn't matter if it is given from your heart. That gift will be long remembered by those who receive it. And some day, it may help to lead them to Christ. No, it's not about bribing them. And you shouldn't even invite them or ask anything of them when you give them your gift. But leave with them something that took time and effort on your part. Then, when the opportunity is right, ask them to come with you to worship God together.

In Acts chapter nine, we read of a woman who made a difference in the lives of others by the gifts she gave.

36 At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. 37 But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. 38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. **And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.** 40 But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

Do you see the impact made from a giving heart? Whether you make something or give something in a basket, bag, sack or box, it impacts others. It was something that required careful thought, time and money. When they see the effort, it makes a greater impact than just encouraging them. And don't forget to add scripture to your note when giving your basket, bag, or sack. Don't give tracts or hound them about church, just give them something from your heart that requires your time and effort. Keep a basket full of goodies on hand. Pray that God will use it to his glory. Some fill up a bag with groceries in it and keep it in their car. Then, when you see someone in need, you can give it to them in the name of the Lord, with a card from the church. Others may have a small sack with candy or toys for children. You use your imagination. Try it and see what God can do when you make an effort to bless the lives of others. There is only one rule.

“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” (Luke 6:35-36)

Whether it's an enemy, a stranger, or a friend. **Do not expect anything in return.** Let God take it from there. Your job is to follow up with kindness, prayer, and God's word. So choose your weapons against Satan: a basket, a bag, or a sack?

8

How to get your visitors to come back

Someone once said,

“you never get a second chance at a first impression.”

When people visit the congregation for the first time, it is a new experience for them. Everything that is seen and heard by your visitors will stay with them after they leave. Most of us have experienced attending a church where we felt uncomfortable or unwelcome. We work so hard to get visitors to come. What a shame it is when our members run them off. So how can we get our visitors to come back? What do we need to do differently?

1. Address the problem before the church. Many are naturally passive as they come to worship. They (the passive members) are more concerned about how everything affects them. That has to change! You may even have to

visit with some of your members personally concerning this subject.

Consider Leviticus 19:34:

The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

There is your answer. Love them as yourself, treat them as if they had been members at that congregation all their life, and remember how it feels to be a stranger visiting another congregation.

2. Discuss and preach on Hospitality. This word means “lover of strangers.” Hebrews 13:2 teaches:

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”

This is a sobering passage of scripture. What if we viewed every visitor as an “angel among us”? Would that change anything? If you fear the Lord, it will.

3. Your visitors need to leave with a loving, lasting impression. Show them where to go for classes. Sit with them if possible. Introduce the people around them. And if possible invite them to have lunch or dinner with you. Years ago, my family and I were traveling to a town in North Texas for my father’s funeral. We stopped in the little town of Throckmorton for services. It was a small congregation, and we were strangers passing through. But after service, nearly every member invited us to their homes for lunch. WOW! We were overwhelmed. Although we couldn’t accept their initiation due to time restraints, we have never forgotten their hospitality. The year was

1973. I was so impressed, that I have mentioned their name wherever we go. I don't remember who was preaching, what was said, or how the worship services were conducted. I don't remember the inside or outside of the building. It was the love of Jesus I remembered. And that is how we need to decorate our churches. Not only will visitors come back, but they will remember your love for years to come, and they will tell everyone they know about you.

4. Utilize everyone as a greeter.

It's wonderful to have someone at the door when you walk in a building and greet you with something in their hands. I've attended services, where you had to hunt for someone to give you information. You can never have enough greeters: before services, between class and worship, after services, and on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights. In fact, ask everyone in the congregation to be on the rotation. It's great practice for "seat greeters" in talking to those they sit close to in the assembly. **Do not let a visitor walk in the door without being warmly greeted.** In fact, some churches have greeters in their parking lots. WOW!

5. Freshen up your building

There is not a bigger turn off to visitors than to walk into a Musty smelling building. What does your building smell like? Moth balls? Mold? Stale carpet? How does it appear to the outsider? Is the tract rack full or empty? Do you have outdated pictures and furniture in your foyer? Are the seats and the curtains dirty, broken or outdated. Are the boards and literature in your foyer current? The big question is, would you live in the church building? Think

about that for a moment. Although the church building does not have the same significance as the Old Testament Temple, similar questions need to be asked.

“3 Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple[a] to lie in ruins?” 5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: “Consider your ways!

6 “You have sown much, and bring in little;
You eat, but do not have enough;
You drink, but you are not filled with drink;
You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;
And he who earns wages,
Earns wages to put into a bag with holes.”

7 Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Consider your ways! 8 Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the Lord. 9 “You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?” says the Lord of hosts. “Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.” (Haggai 1:3-9)

Now you may say we place too much importance on the building. But it does belong to the church and the church belongs to God and it is used as a place of worship to God.

So shouldn't it be the best you can offer. It doesn't have to be a new building, but a fresh coat of paint here and there; a waxed floor or professionally cleaned carpet can make all the difference. How do your bathrooms smell? Are they comfortable to use? Are the stalls enclosed for privacy? These may be little things to most people, but to a visitor, it tells them something very important about you. And that is, do you really want visitors? And you a good caretaker of that which God has blessed you with. There is a group of brethren that started worship under a tree in 2000. They moved to a small rented space, but out grew it quickly. When God gave them a building, it was an old run down church in a sinkhole with termite infested walls. Today, that congregation continues to make improvements on that old building. It really looks nice. They haven't gone into debt over the remodeling, but everyone has chipped in to make the building very inviting. Conversely, another congregation meets in a building that smells horrible. The mold is suffocating. The paint is old. The tract rack, unkept. The bathrooms are filthy and need repair. The fellowship building is a mess. And the sad thing is, they can't figure out why visitors seldom come back.

We live in the most affluent nation on earth. So consider the words of Jesus in Luke 16:11:

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?

If churches in third world countries had even the worst of our buildings in America, do you think they would take care of it better than some of us do? Although the church building isn't nearly as important as Jesus Christ or teaching his word or love and faith, it is still important to

the visitor. And they will judge you by how it looks and smells.

4. Adequate childcare

This is becoming more and more of an issue today. Visitors that come in with small children cannot worship if they have to handle restless children the entire worship. If nothing is provided, than they probably won't be back. It doesn't matter how you raised your children, our world is different today. If you want visitors, you cannot ignore this problem. A well prepared nursery and an attendant is important to have, even if no one in the church has young children. You must be prepared for young families when they come. If you have several children over nursery age, you may want to consider having a Bible class during the lesson. It is important the children are involved in the worship until then. But it is also important the parents hear the gospel. And in an age of growing wickedness, parents and their children who visit will need time to learn discipline. This is a big problem. Even large churches tend to ignore this and run off many visitors because of their unwillingness to deal with this issue. Let your ladies of the congregation have a big voice in this. They are more prepared to handle this than are the men of the congregation.

5. Be a good host

We advertise with signs, with cards and with personal invitation that visitors are our "honored guest". Well, if they are our guest, we need to be good hosts. A host offers their guest something they can use. Most guests are seeking love and truth. Everything about the worship needs to be about spirit and truth. We are not putting on a show, but we are worshipping before the throne of God.

There needs to be passion in our singing, prayers, lessons, giving and especially in the Lord's Supper. All guests need to be treated as if they were the president of the United States visiting in our midst. Often we treat the nice young families this way. And perhaps someone who is well dressed. But what about the poor, the guy with tattoos, the person with tattered clothes? Consider these words in James chapter two:

2 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. 2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, 3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? 7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? 8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; 9 but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors."

We need to back up our invitations with warmth and love toward all. We can't afford to be selective about who God sends to us. We need to be good hosts and they'll be guests that will WANT to return and they will tell everyone they

know what a friendly and loving church you are. FOR THIS TO HAPPEN, EVERY SINGLE MEMBER MUST BE A GOOD HOST!

6. Collect necessary information:

Make sure you get all the information you can on visitors. You may have visitor's cards in the pew, but they may not fill it out. That is why it is so important to get to know the visitors among you. They may feel uncomfortable giving you their information, because they don't know you. If you will do more than say "Hello", then you can get to know them and gain their trust. Ask where they are from? Where did you grow up? Where do you work in town? Do you know _____? As you are talking to them, fill out a card for them.

7. Do not embarrass your visitors by making them stand. Some are embarrassed to wear name tags. It is better the members wear name tags and learn the visitor's name. You can remember a person's name if you use it three times in a conversation. Let's say the person's name is Tom. You could say:

"Tom, where are you from?"

"Tom, did your family come with you today. "

"Tom, what do you do for a living? "

The sweetest sound to a person's ear is the mention of their own name.

8. Don't let your first time visitors leave without a gift. Have something made up in a small sack with information about the church. Some churches give out small cakes or bread. Let them know how important they are to you. If you want to grow, if you want to please the Lord, then take the extra time and effort it takes to get them to come back. There

are some churches that have a meal after every Sunday morning worship. The visitor may not attend the first time, but they probably will the second and the third and so on. Jesus used an old proverb to reinforce his teaching. In Galatians 6: 7:

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

Whatever effort, time, or kindness you invest in your visitors will reap great rewards **when they come back!**

9

Why don't more people come to this church?

Have you ever asked yourself that question? You need to. And it should be followed with prayer and soul searching. There are several possibilities.

1. **Some don't attend because they don't feel like they belong.** They may not have friends their age, or they feel alone. 1 Corinthians 12:25-26 emphatically states:

“that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

2. **Some have never connected with the word of God.** They don't have a real interest because they have never been taught to study. They don't feel the need to be in the word every day. So they grow weary of the same routine. Psalm 119 explains how exciting and life giving God's word is:

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word!¹⁰ With my whole heart I have sought You;

Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!¹¹ Your word I have hidden in my heart,

That I might not sin against You!¹² Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statutes!¹³ With my lips I have declared All the judgments of Your mouth!¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches!¹⁵ I will meditate on Your precepts,

And contemplate Your ways!¹⁶ I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

If they see us that excited about God's word, then they will want the same.

3. **Some do not feel in touch with the leadership.** Their investment into the Lord's church is minimal. Their ideas and suggestions are often ignored. There must be a continual communication publically and privately from the leadership. Everything needs to be transparent. Leaders need to be loving and humble. It is a positive when leaders admit shortcomings and ask for prayers. Honesty IS the best policy. It is the only way to defeat the "us" versus "them" conflict that is in nearly every church. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:1-4:

"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."

4. **Some are not growing from the sermons and classes being taught.** When instruction comes across as negative and repetitive, it kills the spirit. When God condemned Israel for their disloyalty, he followed with blessings and promises that came with true repentance. Sermons have more power if they are preached from the text (expository) rather than from the mind of the preacher (topical). It is always more powerful if God does the exhortation through men rather than men shaming people into doing God's will. Consider what Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is

given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” There must be a healthy balance of the presentation of scripture.

5. **Some have been affected negatively in the past.** They have conflict with one or more of the current members that has never been resolved. Reconciliation takes work and much humility and love. The Lord tells us:

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal 6:1-2)

6. **Some have developed tunnel vision.** They have taken their eyes off **Jesus** and are more focused on the way they feel. They have lost their “first love”. Some are burned out. Some have given up. Some are seeking more pleasure from the worship services. It is because they are self-absorbed.

They are like Demas.... because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica." (2Timothy 4:10a)

To which Jude admonishes us:

“20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with

fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”

7. Some grow weary of the gossip and infighting within the church. James warns us in James 4:4-6:

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? 6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Only when we humble ourselves, can we stop the squabbling, hurt feelings and infighting. That’s where we all need to begin.

8. Some haven’t connected with enough people in the church. Fellowship has to go beyond “Hi” and “Bye” in the foyer. They need to love and be loved. Ephesians 4:15-16 says:

but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working

by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Enough said!

9. **Some haven't been given or accepted responsibility.** Everyone has a need to feel they are important to the body. There is plenty of work to do. Too often, church activity is restrictive or not encouraged, because the leadership struggles to think outside the box. The fear of losing control, and being blamed for something going wrong can be paralyzing. It is important to create an environment that encourages creative thinking in an ever-changing world. The problems in our world around us can also be used as opportunities to reach out to the lost. For instance, the church can offer parenting classes, drug and alcohol addiction group meetings, and tutoring classes for at-risk students. There are any number of opportunities for people to get involved besides waiting on the table or building maintenance. Part of leadership is creating opportunities for men, women and children to serve. And if someone is not involve, spend time with them. Show them how important they are to the body. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:18:

“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.”

Therefore, it is the responsibility of everyone in the church to discover through faith where God intends for them to serve. Once a person has accepted responsibility, they become more interested in the success of the church. They become **invested**.

10. **Some have hardened hearts.** Whether they were once members or have never darkened the door of the church,

something is wrong. Satan has used every trick in the book to harden them from being an active member of the Lord's church. Even some of our "faithful" church attenders don't appreciate what it means to be a member of the Lord's church. Listen to Peter's instruction in 2 Peter 1:5-9:

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins."

If we will be in harmony with God, and show the love of Christ, **then more people will want to come to this church...**

10

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO SOMEONE YOU DON'T KNOW?

Most of us do not have a problem talking. Especially if it is someone we know. The more we know them, the more likely we are to talk. The ability to communicate is a great gift from God. Some don't know how to use it, while others can talk for 30 minutes to a person who dialed the wrong number. A parrot can talk, but it cannot carry on a conversation. Sometimes, we are like a parrot when visitors attend our worship. We are trained to say "Hi", "how are you", and "glad you are here". But beyond that, we are stumped. The way to carry on a conversation is to find common interests. The following is an acronym you can use to remember what to talk about. Remember the word "HOPES". What does that stand for?

HOME—Questions such as:

"Where are you from?" Where were you born? Where do you live? Do you enjoy living in your house? Such questions can open up a number of opportunities for you to connect. For instance, if they say they were born in Dallas, you have either lived close to there, have a friend who lives in Dallas, or talk about the times you've been there. If there is no association, you can say "

"I've never been there, tell me what it is like to live in Dallas?" When you start them talking about what is important to them, you have the beginning of a good conversation."

OCCUPATION—Questions such as:

What do you do for a living? Where do you work? What did you do before you started this job?

If retired or disabled, ask:

“What did you do before that?” “What do you enjoy doing?”

Again, find things in common and keep them talking about what they want to talk about.

PREFERENCES—everyone has an opinion. So ask questions that will illicit one. Questions such as:

“How do you like the weather?” “What do you think of our church?” “What is your favorite food?” “What is your favorite time of the year?”

These are questions to which everyone has an opinion. Be careful not to get too personal or talk about politics, unless they bring up the subject.

ENTERTAINMENT—questions such as:

“What is your favorite sports team?” “What do you do for entertainment?” “Where do you go on vacations?” “Have you ever been to Disneyworld or on a cruise? And so on. Let them tell you what THEY like to do or dream of doing.”

SPIRITUAL—this subject is obviously the most important one. Try to start with things in common. NEVER BRING UP BAPTISM FIRST?

Ask them questions such as:

“How did you come to find us?” “Are you familiar with the church of Christ?” Do you know anyone that is a member here? How do you know them?”

As the conversation continues, you can slowly interject some thoughts such as

“What are you looking for in a church? “Do you enjoy studying the Bible?” Do you enjoy singing? Isn’t Jesus wonderful?

When they began asking doctrinal questions, say”

“Would you like to get together soon and see what the Bible says?”

Offer them options on a time and date. Set it up then, if they are interested. Do not say,

“Well, if you want to study sometime, just let me know”.

CONCLUSION:

The “HOPES” acronym are tools for you to use in extending a conversation. This is the true secret of fellowship. When they entrust you with personal information and spiritual discussion, you have engaged in fellowship. Make sure you keep private things private. If possible, end with prayer before they leave. Continue to practice this, and you’ll be on your way to being a successful soul winner.

11

MAKING DISCIPLES

One of the reasons folks shy away from evangelism, is they are not introduced to the big picture. Often, when sermons are preached concerning soul winning, it comes across as a “save souls or else” presentation. It’s like telling someone they need a good education to get a good job. Well, that certainly helps, but that is only one piece of the puzzle. What type of education? What kind of job will motivate them to go to school and stay with it? Which school should they attend? How do they afford it? And consider this: nearly half of college-educated workers said their first job was outside their field. That is after they spent or borrowed \$100,000 to go to school. Why? There is a big difference between being a student and a disciple. A student is incubated in a classroom. He needs experience. But, most employers want someone with experience. And therein lies the problem. But a disciple has a mentor that works with the student before during and after the classroom. A personal interest is invested in the student. The student develops a passion for the job and desires to learn as much as possible. Then, on the job training accompanies the classroom and after graduation, the “disciple” is locked in to his job because of the personal time and training by his mentor.

The same applies to evangelism. It is a process and not a onetime experience. Consider these steps in making a disciple. Jesus gave us a twofold charge:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” “Amen.” (Matthew 28:19-29)

1. To become a disciple, they must be baptized. What are some helpful suggestions to accomplish this?

a. Build a trust. Become friends with the person you study with. That is why soul winning is often called “personal evangelism.”

b. Plant seeds of scripture that can work on the heart. Even if a person is not ready to study with you, plant seeds of scripture with them. Either have it printed on a card or give a “word picture”. Sometimes, just handing them a scripture can be good as well, after a religious discussion. But just give them one scripture at a time.

c. Invite them in different ways and for different church events, such as friend’s day, or lunch after church or whatever.

d. Ask questions that create interest in spiritual things, such as “what do you think heaven is like? Or what do you think hell is like? Or did you know the wise men were not at Jesus’ birth. Asking non-threatening questions that spark interest is always good. Listen to their answer. And continually move them toward a time where you can open the Bible together and study. Never give your opinion. And stay away from doctrinal subjects until then.

e. Choose a time. When they decide to have a Bible study with you, allow them to choose the place and the time. For instance, would night or day be better for you? Would Tuesday night or Thursday night be better? Let them

make the decision, but give them options. Never say, “Well, let’s study sometime”. That will probably never happen.

f. Plan a study. Have some kind of Bible study method or outline to use. Chasing rabbits all over the Bible seldom works. **Do not talk about Baptism until you have laid the groundwork.**

g. Prayer and patience. Pray before, during and after a study. Remember it is God that works on the heart and Jesus draws souls to himself if he is lifted up above doctrine and opinion.

h. Make sure you write down exactly how they were saved (if they claim they were) before you start your study. Then when you do get to Baptism, you can compare what they said with the Bible. It may take them some time to realize the difference, but be patient with them. This is a life changing experience. As they are deciding, assure them it is better to “**know that you know**” for sure you are right with God—nothing doubting. Tell them, there is a place where they can be baptized right now. Clothing is available, and once we get there, they can be right with God in just a matter of minutes. If they are not ready for Baptism, continue to study with them. Use a new Christian study. Eventually, they will respond. Some may take months or years, but most will respond if you get this far with them.

2. “Teaching them to observe all things”. This is the second part of making disciple. You cannot baptize them and forget them. They need you even more after they have accepted the gospel.

a. Follow up with at least 6 months of personal Bible study

b. Sign them up for a Bible class

c. Get them in a group study

d. Sit with them in services

e. Get them involved in what you do, or in some other area of church work.

f. Nurture them toward maturity. Hebrews 5:12-14 says:

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Don't stop working with them until they have matured.

g. Introduce them to everyone

h. Help them make at least 6 friends

i. Expect ups and downs the first 3 or 4 years. Most new Christians will experience setbacks in their spiritual journey. Be patient. It is through those setbacks, that God can build a stronger disciple.

j. Get them to study and pray every day

k. Turn Interest into Habit into Addiction

l. Train them to teach and train others

- m. Build leadership tendencies in them by challenging them to take on certain responsibilities for the Lords.
- n. Never stop, never give up, and never show anger in being a mentor to someone. Making disciples is a lifelong occupation.

12

GET ON TRACT

One of the most successful ways of teaching through the years has been the giving of Bible tracts to answer questions others may have. Whether it's an introduction to the church or answers to doctrinal questions, tracts can be a great tool. They have been used as early as the thirteenth century in some form or another. Some tracts have pictures in them, others have an attractive cover. But the message is the most important part of the tract. Now the question is "how do I use them".

1. Have a well maintained tract rack at the church. This is very important to visitors and members. Make sure you have a good variety. Use current tracts that are attractive on the outside and helpful on the inside. Purchase a larger display if necessary.
2. Leave on sitting areas of shopping malls.
3. Pass out door to door.

4. Pass out at camp grounds and trailer parks.
5. Put in pockets of used clothing given away.
6. Pass out at parades, festivals, and special events.
7. Leave in laundromats.
8. Leave in motel rooms (in the drawers, telephone book, etc.)
9. Include in bills paid by mail
10. Put in magazines in waiting rooms.
11. Put up tract racks in stores, beauty parlor, anywhere public.
12. Put in correspondence to prisoners, etc.
13. Leave in restrooms at restaurants, etc.
14. Leave with (generous) tip in restaurants.
15. Offer positive comforting tracts to hospital and nursing homes
16. Leave on seats on bus, cab, airplane, etc.
17. Leave in a locker or on a bench in work out areas
18. Pass out on busy street corners.
19. Place near vending machines.
20. Leave in break room at work
21. Put in airport lounges, bus terminals, etc.
22. Give to students at Vacation Bible School and Bible class.
23. Keep tracts on hand for those with whom you have religious discussions.

24. Use tract for a follow-up to Bible study. Only give them one or two at a time.

25. Make sure and leave the address and phone number of the Church if they have more questions.

When you leave a tract somewhere, ask the owner for permission. Obey all local ordinances. (Some areas or stores, including the US Post Office, have prohibited the distribution of literature). This also includes littering, etc. DO NOT put tracts on windshield in any parking lots. Most owners do not want it, and you can cause damage to the windshield wipers or the car itself. Most importantly, ask God to use this “seed” you have planted, pray that someone will read it, and then pray for the Lord of harvest to bless it.

13

MAJICAL MONDAYS

Every church needs a way of follow up for visitors and prospects. Monday nights are usually a good night to visit or make phone calls. By using every other Monday, people will not burn out as quickly. If you prefer, have a meal. You can charge a small amount to pay for the food. Co-ordinate different cooking crews for each “Magical Monday”. Also, have cleanup crews and child care if needed. Announce it every Sunday. Have someone to keep a folder on all visitors. Have a signup sheet available for those who take a name. Then follow up next Sunday to check on their results. If someone goes out to make a visit and

they are not home, leave an “oops” sheet on the door. Have those who call or make a visit to put as much information as possible on their sheets. Transfer some of that information onto the next visitation sheet. “Magical Mondays” is also a good time for writing cards for visitors, birthdays, anniversaries, “we’ve missed you” and so on. Make sure your message is brief and encouraging. You can also send cards to shut–inns, newlyweds, college students who are away, those in the military, those who are ill, bereavement, those needing encouragement and so on. For those not attending, there are many light hearted postcards at the Christian bookstores. If you are serving a meal, this is a good time to invite friends and neighbors to eat with you. You will need a pre-count on Sundays for preparation on Mondays. Always prepare extra for unexpected guests. If there is an overage of food, then take the leftovers to a family going through loss, illness, or financial problems.

14

DON'T WAIT

The story is told of four members of a local church: Mr. Somebody, Mrs. Anybody, Miss Everybody, and Mr. Nobody. Whenever a visitor would walk through the door of the church building, Somebody should have spoken to him, Anybody could have taken them around to meet the other members. While Everybody was busy talking to their own friends and family. So guess who made the visitor feel welcome? You guessed it, NOBODY!

One day, a couple was baptized into Christ. They had two children and were anxious to be a part of the body of Christ. Somebody should have sat with them on their first Sunday. Anybody could have invited them for lunch. Everybody was too busy getting to the restaurant in time. So guess who made the new family feel loved? That's right, NOBODY.

Do you see a pattern here? Brothers and sisters, we must change our ways so that outsiders will say, "truly, God is among them".

So, don't wait for Somebody to say something. You must take the initiative, whether you are young, old, married, single, outgoing, and bashful—step up and be that person God wants you to be. Anybody can do that. Everybody is able to repent and quit being selfish. Somebody needs to be an example for the rest of us. But God help us if NOBODY is the one that does what is right. The apostle Peter admonishes us in 1 Peter 4:8. 9:

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling."

We have work to do. Important Work! Life changing work! Souls are hanging in the balance. What will you do next Sunday?

15

WHAT KIND OF CHURCH MEMBERS ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

The story is told of a poor woman who moved into “the maid’s quarters” in a well to do neighborhood. She decided to go to the church nearby for services that next Sunday. As she came in, no one spoke to her and she felt out of place. But she enjoyed the sermon and wanted to go there to worship since it

was within walking distance from where she worked. After visiting several Sundays, she spoke to the preacher about “joining” the church. She was told to pray about it and come back in a couple of weeks and visit again. Although hurt, she decided to do what the preacher said. Two weeks later she showed up ready to “join”. The preacher suggested she go home, pray about it and come back in two more weeks. He wanted her to consider if she really wanted to be a part of that church. So, she took his advice and came back at the appointed time. Then, the preacher told her, that it would be in her best interest to find another church that was more suited for someone like herself. As she left the building with tears in her eyes, she heard a voice asking,

“What’s wrong my child”.

She said,

“I’ve tried for week to be a part of that church and they won’t let me.

By the way, who are you?”

“I am Jesus”,

He said.

“Lord”

She replied.

Why won’t they let me in to that church. I love you and want to worship you every Sunday. But what can I do?

Jesus said,

“I know, my child, I’ve been trying to get into that church for years, and they won’t let me in either!”

Now, you might think this story is farfetched, but sadly, it’s not. Jesus told a similar church these things:

“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:15-20)

The church in Laodicea was self-sufficient. They had shut Jesus out. Souls were being affected. Corinth had the same problem.

1 Corinthians 11:19 tells us”

“For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.”

The wealthy in Corinth ignored the poor brethren and turned the Lord’s Supper into a party.

If you decide to evangelize your community, what kind of members are you looking for? What kind of person seeking Jesus will you accept?

You see, God doesn’t send many clean cut young families with good jobs and no problems. Most people that seek Jesus are like the publicans and sinners in Jesus day. What will you do when someone shows up needing Jesus and you are forced to meet their needs? What if you really have to work with them to keep them faithful and growing in the Lord? What if they come from

gangs, broken homes and broken lives? What will you do? What if they are struggling with mental problems? We sometimes forget the invitation of Jesus:

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

When you start inviting people to come to worship with you, people will come. Are you ready for the kind of people God will send to you?

What kind of church members are you looking for?

16

5 Reasons All Church of Christ Members Should be Involved in Outreach

1. It is a direct command of Jesus (Matthew 28: 19, 20:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey

everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

2. It is a salvation issue - Matthew 10: 32, 33:

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my father in heaven.”

3. It is the reason Jesus came to earth - Luke 19:10:

“for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

4. It is evidence of being a disciple of Christ (John 15:8)

“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

5. It proves you’re on Jesus’ side - Matthew 12: 30

“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.”

We may all have employment of some kind, but reaching out to save souls is our main occupation. If you struggle with this, begin with prayer. Ask the Lord to lead you to some soul today. Begin by inviting to worship services with you. Tell them the reason you go every Sunday. Keep it a part of your daily conversation. If you are unafraid of telling someone a funny story or a sad story, then why not tell them the story of Jesus. Start there, and continue to pray that God will use you to save souls. As our Lord once told his disciples:

“Then He said to them, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Luke 10:2)

17

AMEN

If there is any word unique to the Jews and Christians, it is certainly AMEN. The word amen in Greek means “so be it.” But amen in Hebrew (O.T.) means “I believe it.” The question is, what does it mean to us today? In Deuteronomy 27, all the people said amen twelve times after each warning (curse) was given. In I Corinthians 14:16, the church used this word when they understood the message and approved it. When Jesus would say something with great emphasis, he used the phrase:

“Amen, Amen, I tell you,”

In Revelation 3:14, Jesus is referred to as “the Amen”. In fact the word is used twice as much in the New Testament as in the

Old. So, why aren't we using it more today? There are some very good reasons for its use.

For one thing, it affirms what has been said or sung. When we sing a song and truly focus on the words, we should complement such with a chorus of "amens". Likewise, when a prayer is offered, the absence of the "amen" causes the brother who prays to wonder if the congregation is praying with him.

And if a preacher preaches the word of God and makes a particular statement of emphasis, the "amen" tends to encourage and motivate the speaker and thus motivates the church. Someone once said,

"saying amen to a preacher is like saying 'sick em' to a dog."

Another preacher referred to the lack of the "amen" in the congregation, and said:

"don't put me in a freezer and make me sweat"

It takes effort, and careful attention to what is said in order to say Amen.

Amen is similar to singing. It is responsive. It is encouraging. It causes the audience to listen carefully for those points of emphasis in a sermon. It encourages those who say prayer and lead singing. Without it a church seems dead to all who visit. It takes effort, timing, and love to say the "amen". Consider the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:15-17:

"So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. 16 Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an enquirer, say 'Amen' to

your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? 17 You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified.”

Paul was teaching the church in Corinth the importance of doing all things in worship with understanding, and consideration of one another. Of course, speaking in tongues is no longer needed today. It served its purpose for a short period of time in the early Church. But the Amen” is needed. It should be done with the “spirit and with the understanding”. And it will make a difference to those who visit with us, and to those who lead us in worship. Today, some substitute clapping instead of saying “Amen.” Anyone can give human applause. But it takes special effort to say the “Amen”, and it is much more appropriate to a spiritual minded church.

Consider the words of this poem:

There is a word only hearts can say

More than tongue or pen

When you’re cleansed the savior’s way

That word is Amen!

I have been saved from the fires of Hell

Freed from a life of sin

Now I’ve a wonderful story to tell

Jesus Christ! Amen!

More than the word merely spoken

**More than the sounds of men
I will live so hearts may shout
Jesus Christ, Amen!**

Brothers, let your amen be heard!

18

HOW TO IMPROVE OUR WORSHIP TO GOD

Many today feel we can improve our attendance if we improve our worship service. And that's often true. But many go about it by human standards and not by God's instructions. For instance, some put more emphasis on the building. Others on the order of Service. Then others try to bring in things that will "entertain" the consumer oriented visitor. But what does God want? After all, we are here to worship him.

In Isaiah chapter one, God blisters the heartless, faithless worshippers of Israel:

“12 When you come to appear before me,
who has asked this of you,
this trampling of my courts?

13 Stop bringing meaningless offerings!
Your incense is detestable to me.

New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations –
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.

14 Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals
I hate with all my being.

They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.

15 When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I hide my eyes from you;
even when you offer many prayers,
I am not listening.

Your hands are full of blood!”

When worship becomes a burden to us, it escalates into an abomination before the throne of God. If we are just going through the motions, then no one will want to be a part of that. It is difficult to evangelize when you bring someone to a lifeless assembly. What can be done? Consider Paul’s admonition from Hebrews chapter 10:

“19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

1. Prepare yourself to worship - Get a good night's sleep before you come to worship. You want to be early to bible class, refreshed and ready to give all to worship God. Pray before you enter the assembly. Sing songs on your way to worship. Be prepared to worship God with all your heart and with all your soul. Remember, you are entering the “Holy place” when you assemble with the saints”. Hebrew 10: 19-20says:

Therefore, brothers, since we have a confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body.

Worshipping God is not a duty, it is a privilege! Jesus opened that “new and living way” to stand in the presence of almighty God. How dare we come dragging into the assembly with expectations of getting out of there as soon as possible?

2. Strive to be at every meeting and assembly of the church. Do not be like those who come when they feel like it. Hebrews 10:24--25 indicates your presence is a tremendous encouragement to the church family. Your absence is a real discouragement to others who need you.

3. Study and pray all week so you will be “drawn” to the assembly and take it seriously - (10:22). Let the assembly of the saints be the high- light of your week.

4. Be dependable - don't be just a bump on a log. Hebrews 10: 23 says:

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”

5. When you come to worship God, consider how you can “stimulate” others to love and good works, (Hebrew 10:24) Sing loudly; pray earnestly; listen attentively; give generously, amen enthusiastically, partake of the Lord's supper seriously; worship spiritually; and love others fervently.

6. Then, after services (as well as before) make everyone feel at home—especially your visitors.

When the outsider attends this kind of worship service, they will walk away thinking, “surely, God is among them.” AND, they'll be back!

19

5 Things You Can Do to Set up a Bible Study

1. Build a friendship with your contact. They must learn to trust you before they will study with you. This may take a long time. Don't immediately ask for a study, but work toward religious conversations.

2. Find a way to meet a need - Galatians 6:10 states:

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Don't know what to do? Ask! See if there is anything you can do for them. Especially, pray for them, and with them—then and there if possible. As you see an opportunity, take advantage of it. Perhaps their lawn mower is not working or they need a ride somewhere, or they are anxious about something. Well, you get the idea. The word of God is the seed you plant in them and these “opportunities” are the watering and nurturing process.

Ask them what they think of the Bible. Use questions to continue the discussion. Listen carefully and remember what they say. Write important statements down. Ask them about their religious experiences in the past. What did they start with, what are they now? Do they like where they are. Is there something that has bothered them about their church? You can also ask questions that will stir up interest, such as:

“How many wise men were at Jesus’ birth?” (Answer—none—Matthew 2:1-2)

Who cut Samson’s hair? (Judges 16:18-19—it wasn’t Delilah)

“How many times was Jesus Baptized?” (Answer—twice—Luke 12:50)

If this peaks their interest, ask:

“There are a lot of exciting things I would like to show you in the Bible—are you interested?”

4. At the right time, when they seem open to more discussion, then ask if they have ever sat down, one on one and studied the bible with a friend. If so, ask them how that went.

5. Then ask if they would study the Bible with you. If no, then find out why (gently). If yes, ask “when would be a good time to study; Tuesday night or Thursday night? If nether, then find out the best time and make an appointment. NEVER say “just let

me know if you want to study sometime.” BE SPECIFIC! And pray, pray, pray.

20

Advertising the Church in the community.

Recently, a large church in town advertised on the back of a brochure. The emphasis of the church featured fun, theatrical plays, musical entertainment, exciting youth programs, and other things that would appeal to a consumer-minded “Christian”. Nothing however was mentioned concerning Jesus Christ, his word, truth, holiness, or even love. Why? Because that is not what most people want. Worldly things and fleshly

lusts are much more enticing than becoming a “living sacrifice.” What if we advertised the church to the community in this way? II Corinthians 4:5, 8-10:

For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you.

Wow! People would be beating down our doors, wouldn't they? Or would they? Don't we need the challenge of the “high calling” of Christ Jesus? Do we really want to compete with the consumer driven churches who have restaurants in their church buildings? Or do we want to preach Jesus? The way of the cross is not pretty. Most will reject it. Following Jesus is not flashy, glitzy, or attractive. He was and still is “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:3).

And yet, millions have died for him. The question is, will we live for him? Will we challenge each other to love like him, to sacrifice like him, and to suffer humiliation like Him?

When visitors walk in, they need to see and hear such dedication in song, prayer, meditation, and biblical teaching and preaching that they are driven to their knees instead of the bowling allies. They need to see such love and dedication that they are driven to tears and not to the movies. The best advertisement for the

church of Christ is JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified. You might be surprised as to how many people are looking for just that! Are you?

21

“I don’t have the time”

Time is a very precious gift.

When it comes to wealth, talent, education, strength, health, success; time is the key investment.

We are all gifted differently. But we all have the same number of hours in a day; days in a week, and so on. What you do with your time can affect other opportunities in your life. But you can also misuse your time and suffer tremendously. The Bible says in Ephesians 5: 15-17:



“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise making the most of your time because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

The word “redeem” means to buy back. For instance, if you hocked something valuable at a pawn shop, you would have to pay much more to “buy it back” or else lose it. The same is true with time. You cannot pay cash for more minutes, but you can “buy back” a bleak future and wasted opportunities... How? By understanding and doing the Lord’s will. We spend our time as we chose. But if God’s will come first, then everything in life will be richer, more joyful, and more meaningful. How? Your priorities will change. Your desires will change. Your time will be spent wisely. By investing more time in the Lord and His church, your time will increase in different ways.

You can work all your life and save up thousands, even millions. But if you are too busy for God, then you will not enjoy what you’ve spent (read Luke 12:16-21). So when someone asks you to do something for the Lord, think long and hard before you say “I don’t have the time.” If you’re too busy for God, then you are **too busy!** Jesus said

“I have come to give life, and life more abundantly.” (John 10:10).

Someday, you will die and everything you worked for will be gone. Redeem the time you’ve thrown away by giving it to the Lord, and everything you work for and accumulate will have life added to it. And that life can be used to bring others to Christ who “don’t have the time for Him!”

22



“I’ve got my own religion”

Have you ever said that to someone? At least, you've heard it from others. It is a very popular statement. It is used by many when confronted with truth. But please be careful. It is often followed with:

“There are two things I don't discuss: politics and religion. “

This is a very dangerous life decision. It may sound like a good way to end an uncomfortable conversation, but it will end in tragedy and heartache. **Ignorance is not bliss!**

Consider the wisdom of Solomon in Proverbs 14: 12-14:

“There is a way which seems right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways; and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.”

Still sound like a good thing to say? The point is, you don't need your own religion. You need JESUS.

Many will say anything to keep you from probing into their lives. But don't be afraid to ask them about “their” religion. They will probably say at one time they attended some church and or went to worship when they were a child. What happened? Jesus is still waiting for an answer. He says this

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29)

A yoke can refer to an oxen being “yoked” or hitched to the plow. It was often joined with another ox in order to grind wheat or plow a field. Jesus invites us to be yoked or joined to him in life. To do that you have to follow Jesus' teaching very carefully or you will break the “yoke”. The word yoke was also used for a school. When someone was chosen as a disciple, they

joined or yoked themselves to their teacher. They would go everywhere with them. A good student does not learn from his friends, he learns from the master! So, ask them if they have ever gone to school with Jesus?

Teach them to say goodbye to “your own religion” and open their heart to Jesus.

23

It's not about you!

Religion is all about me...That's right. That's why we have so many. That's why our religion is not fully satisfying. When I was a child, we attended church services every time the doors were open. Everything in life revolved around the Lord's church. But today, people are attending church services less and less. Why?

1. Lack of instant gratification. They want a feeling they can carry away immediately. That's not the way it works. But we live in a microwave society. Most do not have the patience to grow into a lifestyle.
2. Many do not fear the Lord. Many think this is only a healthy respect. But the word fear in the New Testament comes from the word “phobia”. Isaiah 8:14 says: *The LORD*

Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread.

3. Poor communication from the leadership as to the direction of the church. Many in the pews do not feel a part of what is going on.
4. Children involved in sports during worship services and Bible classes.
5. Cultural tendency to not take Jesus Christ and the word of God seriously. Very few, even in the church, study their Bible every day.
6. We have too many idols. According to an article in the daily mail,

“We now spend almost half our waking hours either online, on the phone, or watching television according to a survey.

The average adult is awake for 15 hours and 45 minutes every day and 45 per cent of that time is spent using a proliferation of technology.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1304266/We-spend-7-hours-day-using-technology-computers-TV-lives.html#ixzz3qX6d5r1Q>

7. We are the richest country in the world. Making money is more important than saving souls. When people are comfortable in their lives, there is little need for God.
8. Even though we can communicate with people around the world, we seldom talk to our neighbors. Building close ties are more difficult in our neighborhoods and especially in

the church. As a result we attend worship with a bush of strangers week after week.

9. We forget Who is the head. We tend to bring democracy into the church.

As a result, churches split and divide over the most ridiculous things, such as the color of the carpet, or hurt feelings, or “I didn’t get my way”.

10. We love to travel, camp out, and go on “mini” vacations. We may only be at our local church 2 times a month. It is impossible to be a part of something you rarely attend.

Consider these reasons carefully. What’s missing? Here it is.....
Ephesians 1: 13, 14 -

”In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise; who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of “God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

We become so consumed with “our” possessions, we forget to Whom they belong. When we obeyed the “gospel of our salvation” we were “baptized into the name (or possession of) the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Then the apostle Paul adds this in 1 Corinthians 6:19:

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body[e] and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

So, we need to continually remember that Jesus owns our time, our possessions, our family, and our will. So when we have the

tendency to make excuses as to why we didn't ask our friends and co-workers to worship with us, or why we neglected to be at services to encourage the brethren, or why we don't support the work of the Lord more, Just remember: **"It's not about me!"**

24

The Happiest Place on Earth

Disneyland, etc, has always advertised itself as the "Happiest place on earth." The parades, the rides, the storybook characters, the magic castle - all have a great appeal to children ages 1 - 99. But why would it be the happiest place on earth? Perhaps, if but for a few days, we can escape our problems and our cares. I'm sure you have a happy place. Be it Disneyland, the beach or the mountains; it is the one place you think about when life gets tough, or when you want to "get away from it all!"

But, what if you could go and visit heaven for a week? Can you imagine that? What is it, and can we see the brochure? Well, the Bible explains Heaven and Hell with sensations. For

instance, Hell has the sensation of being burned, falling, suffocation, and being eaten with worms forever. Hell is also a place for Satan, demons, death, suffering, depression and people who didn't love Jesus with all their heart, mind, soul and strength.

But heaven - well that's a different sensation. How about eternal comfort, complete love, glory, beauty, life, kindness, peace, absence of conflict, uninterrupted rest, and "inexpressible joy" without end! How about that for a variation! If you could go, wouldn't you say THAT would be the happiest place on earth?

Now, let's go back to "right now". What about the church—the assembling of the saints". The church. What if that became the happiest place in town!

25

Words That Need To Heard

Have you thought about how many words we hear every day? The average person hears tens of thousands of words each day. Not all are good. Some are harmful. But there are some words we need to hear. The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 4:29:

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Corrupted speech is worldly, disappointing, hurtful, and often depressing. That’s why we all need to hear words of encouragement; those that “build up” instead of “tear down.” We really need that every day. But where does it start. There is only one letter of difference between better and bitter, and that’s “l”. When we quit thinking only of ourselves and contemplate ways of encouraging others, then we become encouraged as well. The world desperately needs for us to be these people. We need to make the world a “better” place by encouraging the broken hearts, by speaking what is good, and by imparting grace to the hearers. Now what if everyone in the church worked on this every day, especially when we meet together. It would change the entire dynamic of the church. People would look forward to coming and engaging in “beautiful” conversation and genuine love for one another. Can you find words to build up and encourage others? Can you complement them, pray for them, listen to them, speak to them, smile at them, and share your heart with them? You get the picture. These are the words you and I need to hear, and these are the kind of words that need to come from our lips. Notice the results that can happen:

“Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. 20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. 22 Then news of these things

came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. 23 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. **And a great many people were added to the Lord.”**(Acts 11:19-24)

Have you ever wondered why we don't have more people coming to Christ? Perhaps they are not hearing the words they NEED to hear from you and me. Let's turn this around. Every day, be a Barnabus. Encourage people in and out of the church. Be **that** person the broken and the lonely and the searcher need. And God will bless your efforts with the same results:

“And a great many people will be added to the Lord.”

26

I'll Never Change

Have you ever known a person who will not change? Why of course you do! You might even see that person in the mirror now and then. Now, there are some things we should never change; things that have to do with respect, love, holiness, honesty; the good things. However, we are creatures of habit. We like to go to the same restaurant. We like to shop in the same stores, wear the same types of clothing, eat the same

foods, etc. The same is true in the church. We like to sit in the same place, sing the same songs, fellowship the same people, and so on. It even bothers us if the order of services out of order. Some things do not need to change. Some things do not have to. But bad habits do. One dangerous habit that some develop is found in Hebrews 10:24–25:

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds; not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”

When you get in the habit of missing “church”, you have developed a habit that can cause you (and others) to lose the most precious thing on earth. Verse 26 states:

“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”

It is the blood of Christ through His sacrifice that compels you to take of His supper every Sunday. But also, your brothers and sisters need you, also. It’s depressing when brothers and sisters won’t come back for Sunday or Wednesday evening services. We need each other and we all need the Lord. Some say, “I don’t have to come.” Others say, “It doesn’t matter.” Still others say, “That’s the way I am and I’ll never change!” Folks, if we want to change the world, we first must change our own habits. It begins by making it a habit to attend all services. Make a true change today that will truly change the outcome of your eternity! And more importantly, showing up and participating says to your brother, your sister, and your Lord, “I love you more than anything else!”

27

Something's Missing

Have you ever felt incomplete? You have an income, a home, a car, a family, but something is missing. Then you see the doctor, a counselor, or a friend. The pieces come out but the puzzle isn't solved. You go to church, you pray, you study, you believe in God! But something is missing. What is it? That same something that was missing in the church at Ephesus. They worked hard; they were sound in doctrine, they did all the things right. But, Jesus said in Revelation 2:4 -

“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”

First Love! What is it?

Literally, the phrase means “Love at the First.” Do you remember when you first came to Christ? As you came up out of the waters of Baptism? Was there something wonderful about that moment? Even afterward, you felt it as well...like everything fit. All the pieces of the puzzle came together. You see, Jesus is what was missing from your life, and now he became your Lord and you were his little child. Everything was wonderful! So, what’s missing now? Could it be Jesus? Is he really first? Do you love him when you think about it or do you love him with all your heart, your mind, your soul, and your strength? When Jesus takes his rightful place on the throne of your heart, then everything will change for you, for your family, and for the church. As Jesus told the Ephesian church –“Remember, Repent, and Restore (do the deeds at the first).”

So, what are some of those deeds you did at the first? Did you want to tell everyone you knew about your Baptism? Were you on fire for the Lord? Did you want to convert the world? What has happened since then? Step back for a moment to those happy days, and recommit yourself to your first love. Until then, it will always seem like “something’s missing.”

28

Reserved Seating

Have you been to a special event where your name was on the table? It indicated the seat at that table was reserved for you and you alone. It makes you feel “kind of” special, doesn’t it? Remember when you went to lunch and your friends saved you a seat? That felt good, also. And what about church services? Do you have a favorite pew to sit in while someone in your family saves you a seat? Feels like home doesn’t it? But what about the first time you visited this congregation? Or perhaps you visited another church where you didn’t feel so comfortable? Remember the feeling in school when there was no seat saved for you, and you had to sit somewhere else, eating alone. It

hurts, doesn't it? So what's the point? We need to pay more attention to our visitors, new members, and restored brethren. They need someone to save them a seat, also. Now we may do that with someone we know or even a "sharp" looking family. But what about a single parent? Or a college student? Or a poorly dressed person? James tell us James 2:1-9:

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place." and you say sit down by my footstool" Have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren; did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. "

We need "reserved seating" in our assemblies, at our luncheons, and at our special gatherings. And **that**, is saving a seat for the visitor, the lonely, and the needy among us. Next Sunday, who are saving a seat for?

29

10 Reasons Why Most Members of the Church of Christ Do Not Evangelize

1. Most folks believe they are not qualified. They don't have that ability.
2. Many do not believe it is their job.
3. In the past, Evangelism was done through big events such as gospel meetings (revivals) and campaigns for Christ.
4. Most people are scared to death to knock a door or invite their neighbor. Either that or they are embarrassed and are afraid of confrontation.
5. We have gotten the idea that "defending the faith" is more important than "spreading the gospel"
6. Many do not study and prepare themselves to save souls.

7. Most don't know where to start, and feel guilty every time it is mentioned.

8. Many do not believe evangelizing others is a "salvation issue"
Matthew 7: 19-20:

9. Evangelism takes up too much time. Besides, past evangelism efforts have failed.

10. We don't want to have a bad reputation in the community.

Sound familiar?

Listen to this from John 12: 42, 43:

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

Many of you reading this are tired of hearing this. You may even feel guilty, ashamed or even angry. What we need to do is

STOP IT!

Members of the Lord's church that love the Lord Jesus with all their heart need to quit worrying and fretting over saving souls. Consider these 10 solutions to soul winning verses the 10 excuses.

1. Remember when you first obeyed the gospel. You wanted to tell everyone about the Lord and his church. Recapture that boldness and first love. Jesus said in revelation 3:

4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works..."

2. Study God's word every day. Go through the entire Bible in 2 years. Take the time to read what it says and ask questions. You won't be able to contain yourself when you are sharing God's word with others. Jeremiah told the Lord::

But if I say, "I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot." (Jeremiah 20:9)

3. When a friend or a family member brings up the subject of religion, don't be afraid to join in—AFTER you have listened for a while. Lead them by asking questions. You do not have to know all the answers. If they ask you about something you can't answer, say:

"That's a good question, we'll talk about it the next time we meet." That gives you time to research the subject.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15)

4. Write down all the doctrinal subjects of which you are unsure. Then begin to do research on your own. Ask questions of others in the church. Ask the Lord to help you be confident in your answers.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing (handling accurately) the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

5. Remember who the enemy is. It is not the person you are talking to. It is the being that controls the misguided. Ask

the Lord continually to give you wisdom to defeat the enemy.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12)

6. Study denominational doctrines and learn what you will be dealing with. A good place to start is <http://www.netbiblestudy.net/denominations> or christianresources.i8.com on the web. Also Rose book of Bible charts 1 and 2 can help. However, their historical and numerical information on the churches of Christ are incorrect, as they are not members of the church.
7. Memorize scriptures that relate to evangelism. For subject matter or long verses, memorize the book and chapter where it is found. For instance, the explanation of the gospel is found in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 at the beginning of the chapter. The first gospel sermon is in Acts chapter 2, and so on.
8. Try to avoid talking about the same topic over and over again such as Baptism or instrumental music. If the discussion gets too heated, go to another subject and bring it up next time after you have studied more about it. It is always better to use an organized study, so that if a subject is brought up that does not relate to the study, you can say:
“that’s a good question, let’s write that down and discuss it when we get to that part of our study.”
9. Remember, your main focus is salvation. You can argue about speaking in tongues or instrumental music till the

Lord comes back and you may not get anywhere with them. But your objective is salvation. That is the most important issue—what does it take to be “in Christ”?

10. Always pray before you enter the study, before you start the study and after the study. Remember, the closer you get to God, the closer you will get to each other. Trust will build, and the Lord will guide you in your study.

30

10 Commandments of a Bible Study

1. Thou shalt not argue - look first for the things you can agree on, then let the bible do the rest.

2. Thou shalt not choose an inappropriate time if your prospect seems agitated or not focused, wait till there is genuine interest.

3. Thou shalt not be obnoxious - Arrogance and the feeling of I'm right and you're wrong will win you enemies, always be humble.

4. Thou shalt not be out of control, angry or excited - The word "meekness" means power under control and the meek will always win out. "If you lose control, you've lost a soul."

5. Thou shalt not use inflammatory language - Do not begin with the "You're going to hell if you're not baptized" attitude, be patient and kind.

6. Thou shalt not study with someone without a bible, otherwise it will come across as your opinion. Don't quote scripture or read it yourself! Hand him or her the bible and let them read it.

7. Thou shalt not leave discussion without prayer or asking them what you can pray for.

8. Thou shalt avoid using "I" or "me" in your discussion. Example: I think, I feel, I believe. Let God's word be your mouth piece.

9. Thou shalt not study with someone without asking God for help. Remember it is the Holy Spirit that "convicts men of sin" through the word of God.

10. Thou shalt not do all the talking. Don't be preachy, or use big words. Use questions when possible. A good listener is the best teacher.

Obviously, this is not scripture, but it is good advice for Bible study.

Jesus sums it up by saying:

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

31

10 Keys to a successful Bible Study

1. Build a friendship - take an interest in them as a human being, ask about family, job, etc. Ask them over for a meal or take them to get a cup of coffee.

2. Be an example- everything you do to save a soul can be ruined by a filthy joke, unkind word, etc.

3. Sow seeds - use every opportunity to use scripture; especially words of Jesus to answer questions.

4. Listen to them - ask them about where they were born, how long they have lived in in their town. Ask about their personal interests' hobbies and their spiritual life.

5. Prepare for a harvest. It takes Christians working together to save souls. Jesus said in John 4: 34-38;

“Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. 35 Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! 36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors. “Jesus can use all of us if we are willing and love him enough.”

There are many more involved in the saving of a soul than just you. Be patient. Do your part in God’s plan for that person. Work together, pray together and you’ll have a harvest together as **the Lord gives the increase.**

6. Look for opportunities to meet their needs. Ask them what they have that you can pray for them. If they are ill, take them something; if they lost a love one, be there for them. If they or their loved one is in the Hospital, go see them. Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

37 “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40 And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”

Always remember the old saying:

“I don’t care how much you know until I know how much you care.”

8. Remember, you are leading a discussion. You are not telling them what to do. It has to come from the Lord’s word and not from your opinion. Be a river bank and not a river dam. Allow them to discover truth as you lead them toward a decision built upon a solid foundation of biblical truth. Avoid saying, “you’re wrong”.

9. Be respectful. Their beliefs are very important to them. Start with things you can agree on. Then Let the Bible take over as the only guide. Always complement the good they say. If their answer is wrong, then read the scripture and stop at the correct answer. For instance, when discussing Romans 10:17, consider the following conversation.

“Bob, how do we receive faith?”

“Well, I receive faith when I see a miracle”, says Bob.

“But how does the Bible say we receive and grow in faith?”

Bob replies: “I don’t know what you mean?”

“Well, let’s look carefully at that passage again.”

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

“So Bob, how does God what you to build your faith? On what you hear or what you see?”

Be patient with those you study with. Open their eyes to God’s teaching, and God will give you success.

10. Trust in the Lord - it is the Lord who gives you opportunities, courage, and the help of the spirit. Ephesians 3: 20, 21 says:

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

32

Biblical Instructions on Outreach

1. Inviting others to Jesus - John 1: 45, 46

“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”⁴⁶ And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “**Come and see.**”

2. Seed Sowing - Galatians 6: 7, 8

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; **for whatever a man sows,** that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

3. Let it become your passion - John 4: 34- 36

Jesus said to them, “**My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me,** and to finish His work. 35 Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! 36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

4. Evangelism begins in the home - Deuteronomy 6: 4-6:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 **You shall teach them diligently** to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

5. Outreach begins when we start confessing, praying and turning from sins James 5:16-20.

“**Confess** your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent **prayer** of a righteous man avails

much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. 19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who **turns** a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

6. Learn to Listen, not argue. (James 1:19-20)

“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man **be swift to hear**, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

7. Evangelize through the children (Luke 18:15-17)

15 Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them to Him and said, “**Let the little children come to Me**, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 17 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”

8. Keep asking! Don't stop. Luke 18:1 – 5

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor

regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, **lest by her continual coming she weary me.**”

9. Determine to become the hardest worker for Christ. (I Corinthians 15:9-10)

“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; **but I labored more abundantly than they all**, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

10. Start now! (James 4:13-17)

“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will[g] go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.17 **Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.**”

33

DOOR DIALOGUE

Sometimes, it's hard to know what to say when you are making a visit. Here are some examples that may help.

Hello: I'm _____ and this is _____. We're here from the _____ church of Christ.

I see that you:

--are a member

--were once a member of the church of Christ

--Visited the church of Christ recently

--visited us in the past

--Are related to one of our members

-----and I are here because we care about you and your family.

{Began a conversation: Ask Questions about them

Try to make a connection.

Do you have any questions or concerns about the church?

Is there any need you have, that we can pray for?

(If yes, then pray with them or tell them we will pray for you)

Talk about their conversion, try to set up a study, and invite them to worship with you Sunday)

PHONE DIALOGUE

Hello: I'm from the _____

I see that you:

- are a member of _____
- were once a member _____
- are a member of the church of Christ
- Visited the church of Christ recently
 - visited the church in the past
- Are related to one of our members

----- I'm calling because we care about you and your family.

{Began a conversation: Ask Questions about them

Try to make a connection, then invite them to church on Sunday
Do you have any questions or concerns about your life or the _____ church of Christ?

Is there any need you have, that we can pray for?

(If yes, then pray with them or tell them we will get together and pray for you)

Do not talk too long unless THEY want to talk. Try to get them to tell you as much about themselves as possible. You are not only trying to get them to come to church but you are also trying to build a friendship. Be pleasant. Do not be rude or sound judgmental. Have a tone of humility in your voice—read Galatians 6:1-2 before you make the call and pray before each phone call.

NOTES _____

34

Are You a Knott?

When lumber is cut and sold, no one likes to see a knot. Why? Because a knot breaks down the strength of the board. I'm sure you have heard the phrase "worthless as a knot on a log". This phrase refers to people who have activity all around them but do not react in a useful or helpful way. In other words, "they just sit there." Many church members think very little expected of them. Just show up, listen up, and pay up. As a result, sermons on evangelism add guilt and more guilt to the "knots", and eventually they become hardened. They look like they might useful, but in the end, they make the branches weaker. Worst of all, people become what they are taught to do. If your parents are knots, you are likely to become one also. If they are active, involved, and always looking to save souls - then you will be inspired to do the same.

Knots in a tree are formed through imperfections. We become knots through sin, weakness, and fear. The cure? Jesus told the church in Sardis in Revelation 3:1 - 5;

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'these things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that

you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.[a] 3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. 4 You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”

In this passage, Jesus calls for repentance, change, and “strengthening that which remains”. Without this transformation, we may have a name of being alive, but we may just be as dead as a knot on a log. Instead, let’s walk with Jesus in white garments given to those who confess his name. While Jesus, in turn will confess us before the Father. Let’s decide to make that change. Stick your neck out. Take a risk. Don’t be ashamed of Jesus and go to work; lest you become a knot.

35

As You Therefore Have Opportunity...”

Sometimes, you may think everyone around you is so hardened, they will never listen; and never respond to your invitation. But, everyone has moments of weakness; of doubt; and of despair. If you look around you, it's easy to spot. If you know someone in the hospital, visit them (but don't stay too long and never talk about death). Perhaps someone has lost their job or they are having a hard time or they have lost a loved one. Bring a gift or write a card. You'll never know how much it will be appreciated. If they are having a rough day or they haven't been feeling well; pray for them. If they need someone to mow their lawn or something needs to be moved; help them. It is these seeds of kindness at the right moment that will open up spiritual opportunities later. Paul says in Galatians 6:2;

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Then having said that, he concludes with verse 10;

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Our brethren always take first place. The community needs to hear, see, and feel the love each member has for one another. But, when that love is shared with all, then they see:

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35)

It’s difficult to plant anything on hard dirt, without water. But, when planted at opportune times, great things can grow with the proper seed, fertilizer, water, etc. So can souls. Just keep looking for the right opportunity to do good; and the opportunity to reach them will come. Most importantly, don’t waste an opportunity that God gives you. James tells us in James 2:14-17:

“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

Dead churches are full of dead people with dead faith. A church will come alive when we start taking advantages of opportunities to help others. You may not be able to provide everything they need, but you can give them something. If a man has a water bill of one hundred dollars, you can at least give him five or ten dollars. Or you can refer him to a place that may give him more. Perhaps he needs someone to listen. If he needs a job, start calling others to find out where someone is hiring. There are thousands of ways we assist with an opportunity. And it is that personal involvement that will open the door to sharing the gospel or restoring a soul. So, what will you do when the next opportunity comes along?

36

Looking for a Handout

Sometimes, you are in a situation where a tract is not enough. You need to get the attention of the lost. Although you want to be patient and kind, time is running out. There has to be an urgency. This is where handouts can be effective; such as business cards, evangelistic books (such as the muscle and a shovel and I died last night) may say what you can't. You can also get attention by putting up signs around town. Such as:

FREE BIBLE STUDY

BY MAIL OR IN YOUR HOME

**CALL _____ FOR MORE INFORMATION
THIS COULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT CALL
YOU MAKE IN ALL ETERNITY**

Or you may want to make copies of something like this and leave all over the town and everywhere you go.

Danger!

You may be in immediate risk of losing your soul for an eternity!

In Noah's day, some scholars estimate a population of 1 billion or more. And yet only 9 were saved. Jesus said something similar in Matthew 7:12, 14:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

Why only a few? Luke explains in Luke 13:23-27:

Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, 24 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' 26 then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' 27 But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' "

You see, only a few take God and His word seriously. Do you know what the Bible says concerning salvation? Holiness? Faith? Love? Discipline? Persecution? Find out... Be one of the FEW.

Call us for a personal home bible study.

Don't wait until it's too late!

Either way, we all need to get the gospel message to those around us. Yes, there are many looking for a monetary handout. But what they need is a spiritual handout from you!

37

WHY DO YOU PEOPLE NOT BELIEVE IN MUSIC

How many times have you been asked that question? What was your answer?

I graduated from a small town in west Texas. I was asked this question often. In fact, one day, the teacher asked me this question in class. Can you imagine that happening today? It might. I really didn't know what to say. And every time I tried to answer, I was interrupted by him or a class member. He delighted in making a fool out of me and the Lord's Church.

Most people want a simple straightforward answer to their question. But like any prejudiced question, it requires study from God's word, and an open heart to Jesus Christ. This question is like any other concerning what we teach and believe. It cannot be answered without God's word. And so when someone asked this question or any other, answer something like this:

"You know, that's a good question. It's too important to exchange opinions. When can we get together and see what God has to say from his word. "Would Tuesday or Thursday night be better for you?"

If they persist in in trying to get an answer, continue to ask questions, such as:

"Do you really think we don't believe in music?"

"Do you know what the word "acapella" means?" Do you know how special that is?

"What would it sound like if your entire church was required to sing together without instruments or a choir?"

“Do you think the church in Paul’s day used instruments in their worship to God?”

“Could it be that your church is missing out on something very beautiful and spiritual?

“What if God wants you to be the instrument in worship to him?” Could you do it? “

Do not try to answer these questions now. Use them to spur on more interest. If they press you, say:

“If I gave you an answer without the Bible, it would be my opinion. You deserve better. Let the Lord be our guide. So when can we study this together?”

Always remember, the person asking the questions is the one in control of the conversation. Don’t be upset. Be under the Lord’s control. Then:

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15...New International Version)

When you do get together for study, be prepared. Be under God’s control. Be kind, be prayerful, be patient and “speak the truth in love”.

You will probably not change their mind on the first try. So use this as a seed planting session so that God can work on their heart. Then get together again and have a Bible study that centers on their salvation. That is usually the biggest problem they have.

Always leave the door open for more discussion. And invite them to come with you and see for themselves how beautiful and powerful acapella worship can be.

38

REACH OUT AND SAVE SOMEONE

In the 1980's, an advertisement by A T & T encouraged America to "reach out and touch someone". It was an advertisement to use their phone service in order to communicate more with those we know and love.

Long before that advertisement, Jesus told his followers to reach out and SAVE someone by saying:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19).

He wants us all to go and bear fruit (John 15:16), and he wants us to take on his mission "to seek (out) and save the lost (Luke 19:10). So where do we find people that will listen and accept our invitations. Below is a list of contacts for you to begin.

- a. Start a weekly visitation program to visit prospects, weak or fallen away members, and visitors to services.
- b. Visit with hospital patients. Be brief and always pray with them.
- c. Make contact with friends and relatives of members.
- d. Follow up with visitors to special occasions such as Friend's Day, Gospel meetings, seminars, fall festivals, etc.
- e. Start a neighborhood bible study.
- f. Put out brochures advertise bible correspondence courses on signs around town.

g. Invite people to bible class at church on Sunday morning or Wednesday nights

h. Invite youth and parents to youth events, youth rallies, or special events for youth.

i. Make a list of 10 people you want to see obey the gospel. Begin praying for them every day.

j. Take food to neighbors who have lost loved ones, having financial or marital problems or involved in some disaster

k. Always carry around a business card with the church's name and information with you. Make a commitment to hand out at least 5 per week.

l. Invite outside youth to camp. Volunteer as a counselor.

m. Begin making a list of acquaintances' birthday, send an e-card or post card to them on their birthday. Offer to celebrate their birthday at a local restaurant after services (the one closest to their birthday).

n. Conduct a faith opinion poll in a public place. Tell those passing by you are conducting a poll. Ask questions such as Do you go to church every Sunday? Do you believe it is equally important for children to have a spiritual education as well as a public education? Do you think people today are more spiritual or less spiritual? Does lack of church attendance have anything to do with the divorce rate in America today? There are many questions you could ask. You will be surprised at the answers. Use them as an invitation to worship services or a bible study.

Do you have more ideas? Share them with the Elders and the rest of the congregation. It's going to take everyone working together to make this work. God wants us all to "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

So make an effort every day to **reach out and save someone**. And consider the words of Daniel 12:3:

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

39

Singing - A Powerful Tool for Evangelism

One of the great distinctions and privileges of the Lord's church is singing. For nearly two thousand years the Church of Christ has sung what is known as "acapella". That word simply means - "in the manner of the church" or of the chapel. The idea reverts back to the type of music used in the church for hundreds of years. The bible says in Ephesians 5: 19;

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."

Our "speaking" to one another indicates everyone must make distinct word sounds loud enough for others to be encouraged. Then words become decorated by singing. And, singing becomes glorious when accompanied by the "heart strings." As Paul says in Colossians 3:16;

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."

The beauty of this wondrous event fills us with the Holy Spirit as everyone participates for the praise and glory of our God. (See Ephesians 5:18). It is a privilege to sing in God's chorus. And every one worshipping in the assembly of the saints is in God's chorus. That is why he uses the words "one another". God wants to hear the voice he gave you - and he wants others to hear it, also. To not sing or at least speak the words while meditating on them is to go against the "spirit and the truth" of the Lord (John 4:24). We have been given something very special and the world needs to hear it, and experience it.

Someone once said,

“show me a church that loves to sing, and I’ll show you a church that reaches out to the lost.”

Why? Because we have something unique and beautiful. And we want to share that with all the world.

It is exciting to be a part of a great singing congregation that praises the Lord with all their heart and soul. Most importantly, it glorifies God, which in turn glorifies his church. For as he says in Hebrews 2: 11-12:

For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying: “I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”

Take every opportunity to sing together. Work on your singing with enthusiasm. Get excited about singing praises to God and outsiders will be amazed and want to hear more about Jesus!

40

The Friendliest Church in Town

Often, folks that visit this congregation will comment on the friendly environment. Many are impressed. Some, however slip through the cracks and no one speaks to them at all. Although the church may be a friendly church; what if it was known as the **“friendliest church in town.”** We would have to step it up a notch or two. In order for that to happen. Every visitor (no matter how many times they attend) should have several people speak to them. Then, after another visit, they should have several members try to get to know them, personally. Invitations to lunch or dinner should be on all our minds. Visits, cards and calls should follow. If they just moved into town, several families should bring by food as they get settled. At worship services, members should ask the visitor(s) to sit with them so they won't feel alone. After services, members should offer to “show” them the facilities, and explain our mission and purpose. Young people who visit should be asked by our own youth to sit with them, and introduce them to others. If an opportunity for assistance presents itself (such as food or moving in or locating a job or finding services in town) we should do as much as we can. The longer you visit with them about things that interest them, the more they will be interested in you as a congregation. The more information they share with you, the more they will trust you. This is what the Lord had in mind by the word “fellowship”.

So, is this just a good thing to do or is this something Jesus wants you to do? Well, let's go one step further - what if you will be judged by this? Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 25: 34-40;

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’”

37 “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40 And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

Notice he said “as you have done to the least of these... the least likeable, the least wealthy, the least friendly, the least righteous... Wow! You see, friendship goes beyond saying hello. The friendliest church in town is meeting needs and bearing burdens... to the least of our visitors, friends, and seekers of the Lord. Grow in these things and you will be known as **the friendliest church in town!**

41

Weeds in the Worship

Most folks coming to worship God are very serious. They have good intentions. They love the Lord. Their goal is to glorify him. But Satan has his spies among us. Sadly, those people do not even realize they are on the wrong side. They may sit next to you every Sunday. You may see them often and speak to them. But they are doing much harm to the Lord's church. Jesus talks about them in Matthew 13:24-30:

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ 28 He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ 29 But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”””

The weeds used in this parable are known as “Darnel”. They look just like the wheat plant. The only way you can tell the difference is when they grow to maturity. The wheat bears the stalk. The darnel does not. It is a weed. It keeps the wheat from producing more fruit. Sometimes it chokes out the wheat. The same is true with the weeds in the church. They are the complainers, the whiners, the “bored”, the lazy, the self-infatuated, the divisive, and the nitpickers. Paul addressed this problem in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3:

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?”

What a terrible mess. So many churches run into the same problems as the church in Corinth faced. Ask yourself:

“Am I a weed or am I wheat? Do I complain and whine continually. Do I gripe about what others are doing? Or am I determined to do the Lord’s will with gratitude and joy in my heart?”

Watch out for weeds. But be careful all the more that you don’t become one. Instead, be the one who sings out, builds up, gives more and loves unconditionally. Be the one you see on Sunday and Wednesday nights and the workdays. Be that brother or that sister who is a Barnabus and not a Diotrefes. Allow God to work through you as his humble servant. Be the good seed, NOT A WEED!

42

HELPING THE UNFAITHFUL TO COME HOME

“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.” (Titus 3:10-11)

There is nothing more divisive than those who forsake the assembling of ourselves together. There may be dozens; or in some churches hundreds that fit in the category of seldom attending to not at all. Some have forsaken the Lord for years. And yet they are still in our directories. It’s time to lovingly seek out these people in order to see who is for Jesus or who is against him. Here is one plan.

1. First admonition—Go to their house. Many today will talk to you at the door only. Be kind and listen. What they tell you will be surface excuses. There may be other reasons for their falling away. Encourage them to come back. Tell them how much we need them. Have a prayer with them before you leave or at least say,
“I’ll pray for you and your family. Is there anything special we can pray for? “Then leave them a copy of the book “I died last night”.” with something like this inside the book:

WE WANT YOU BACK!

Life takes us down many paths, with ups and downs, good times and bad. But at some point, we all have to take a hard look at our relationship with God. Not only does it affect us but everyone we love in this life. This church family is working harder to reach out to all who love the Lord, but need a fresh start. If you are currently attending somewhere else, please let us know.

But if we can help you come home to the Lord, let us know what we can do to help. If we have failed you, we give our sincerest apologies and want to make things right. We serve a God who is “not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

In a loving way, we want to leave this book with you entitled, “I died last night”. The whole purpose of the book is to relate the secret of being with God forever—and knowing that you know where you would be if you died right now. Our message is loving but urgent. If we can talk with you further, study the Bible with you or pray with you, please call us and we’ll come—

Sincerely,

2. Second admonition—a month later, visit them again and ask them if they read the book. Continue to ask questions and listen for other reasons that is keeping them from attending. Hopefully they will come back. But if not, offer to have a Bible study with them. If they don’t have time, and they are still interested, then give them a copy of “When the shovel breaks”, by Michael Shank. Again have a prayer with them before you leave.

3. If you have not heard anything from them after 2 months, then make a third visit and ask them if they still want to be considered a member. If so, either make another visit or hand their names over to the Elders for removal from Directory (unless the Elders want to personally visit them).

Each time lovingly explain the importance of your visit. The second or third time, explain the consequences which we do not want to do, and ask if they would like to visit with one of our Elders.

Why must we do this?

God told Ezekiel in Ezekiel 3: 17-21:

17 “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: 18 When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 19 Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

20 “Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. 21 Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.”

Brethren, we must act quickly, and we need all the church to be involved in this most important work before we can truly reach out to the community!

43

What Are You Afraid Of?

The story is told of a woman who was pulled over by a patrolman. The man noticed she was licensed to carry a hand gun. He then asked her if she had one with her. She said “yes,

there is an 8mm pistol in the car pocket. He said, do you have any more weapons. She replied, yea, I have a 45 pistol under my seat and a shotgun in my trunk. The patrolman was stunned. He finally said, just tell me all the guns you have left. She said, “I just have one more, a Saturday night special in my purse.” The patrolman looked at her funny and asked, “ma’am, what are you afraid of?” and she said - NOTHING!

We may feel confident with holding weapons in our hand, or living inside a home with security alarms. But, why are we so afraid of speaking to others about Christ? Why are we ashamed to ask someone to worship? When the power of God is inside us. Notice the words of Paul in Philippians 1: 20, 21;

“I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Perhaps we are afraid of the wrong things. We are ashamed to ask because of the fear of rejection or ridicule. But Paul refocuses our fear in II Corinthians 5:11

Since, then we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

And Jesus adds in Matthew 10:32, 33;

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”

I don't want to live and die with an angry and disappointed God. Do You? If you don't come to work, you'll be fired. If you don't gain new customers, you will be laid off. If you don't love and

appreciate your job, it will show. Perhaps the greatest reason to save souls is in

II Corinthians 5: 14, 15;

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

The point? We talk about the things we love. Period.

Think of that when you come in contact with your next soul.

44

What If This Was Your Last Week On Earth?

If you only had one week to live, what would you do?

Take a vacation?

Get your funeral plans laid out?

Pout and moan and wonder why God is doing this?

Or, make a heartfelt plea to everyone you know to seek the Lord and be saved.

Many are in no shape to do anything. But if your answer is the latter then the real question is: Why wait?

What if this really was your last week???

There is a song that came out several years ago that encouraged us all to “Live like we’re dying.” In fact, we began dying when we were born (Roman 5: 12-14). That’s why Paul encourages us in Hebrew 3: 12- 14:

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

Don’t wait until it’s too late. Share the gospel with someone this week. Or ask them “where do you go to church, every Sunday?” Because it may be their last day...or yours.

45

Who's Your Top 10?

When I was baptized into Christ, the preacher challenged me to bring at least 10 people to Christ. I took it very seriously and brought two of my friends to the Lord that year. By the way, I was only 9 years old. With that challenge in my heart the Lord has used me to bring many to himself. How many have you had a part in bringing to Christ? Try this: Write down 10 names of people you know that need the gospel. God is the one who gives the increase. It is up to you to start by praying, inviting, and sharing the word of God.

Who are your top ten?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Keep this list with you at all times. Don't give up, even if it takes YEARS! You'll be amazed at what God can do with your top 10...

46

You People Think the Church of Christ are the Only Ones Going to Heaven....

Has anyone ever told you that? How did you respond? If you tried to make up some excuse or go into a long discourse, you will sound arrogant, condescending, and confusing. The real question is: How would Jesus answer that question? In Matthew 16, Jesus said:

“I will build My church!!

What does that mean? It means that the church belongs to him. He didn't build Peter's church; he didn't build the Roman church; he didn't build John the Baptists' church, he didn't build Martin Luther's church, and he certainly didn't build the Church of Christ's church. He built His church. And the cost was His blood. He is the sole authority and head of His church. And the cost was His blood. He is the sole authority and head of His body; His church (Ephesians 1:22, 23) No man can take His place. And only He can choose who will be in His church. You

can't join His church. You can't make a human decision to be in His church. You have to be added by God to His church (Acts 2:47 & John 1:13). When Paul said in Romans 16:16;

“The churches of Christ” sends you greetings”

He referred to only one church - His church. That church existed in the first century and it still exists today. It has for almost 2000 years and it will continue forever. The question? Is the church you attend the church that belongs to Jesus?

Even if you put the name church of Christ on your marquee, does that make you a Christian? Similarly, would a denomination allow someone to put a sign in their front yard saying “this is not a church of Christ?” Our goal should be to eliminate all names, creed, doctrine, corporate heads, and just be the one body Jesus prayed for in John 17: 19-21:

19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

20 “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Are you a member of HIS ONE, TRUE church? Only if we are sanctified or set apart from all others by obeying the WHOLE truth can we wear the name church of Christ.

So the next time someone asks you if you think that the church of Christ is the only ones going to heaven, ask them:

How would Jesus answer that question?

Let's see what the Bible has to say...

47

Youth Evangelism Explosion

Evangelizing through our youth is one of the fastest ways to grow a church. Youth are not as intimidated as are older Christians. It is natural for them to invite their friends to camp, youth activities and worship services. If their friends become Christians, the parents of those teens become good prospects. In fact, youth camp can be one of the best local mission efforts of the church. Often in the second or third year of a “friend” camper, conversion will take place. Within one to two years after that, one or more of the parents will come to the Lord.

Another important tool of youth evangelism is phone calls or “text messaging.” Every youth that comes, should receive visits, phone calls and sometimes a thank you note or text. Visitors should to be put on a “call list.” Each time any activity happens all youth should be contacted, every time. The contact is best made by one of your own youth. Even if they do not come for a year or two, as long as they are receptive - keep calling. However, if they indicate they are happy with their own church or “they do not want to be on the call list”; remove their name. Make sure all calls and texts are cordial, appreciative and non -

threatening. You never know who may come if you keep trying. Most importantly, our youth and their parents need to take in all visitors, strangers, etc. into the youth family. This needs to be the church where “no one sits alone.” If a young person visits, the others in the youth group needs to invite them to sit with them. If we can get our youth to be evangelistic, kind, and gracious - God can do amazing things through them.

If you don't have a church supported “youth minister”, become a youth leader. It is extremely rewarding and profitable for the Lord's kingdom. Don't try to do it alone. Invite others to be involved in working with youth. Have devotionals after Sunday night services in the parents' home. I've seen non-Christian parents with tears in their eyes after hearing the youth sing. Many parents are led to Christ through the singing and enthusiasm of the youth. Get them involved in youth projects such as helping the elderly or the poor. Take them to orphan homes. Let their fun activities revolve around Bible study and doing good. Listen to them. Try to make leaders of the youth. Grow your youth group and Jesus will grow the church.

48

...As you have opportunity

It is very important for a church to get out into the community. Too often, the church is known as a cult that keeps to itself. Since we often don't reach out or participate with denominations, we are often considered a cult. One web site stated:

“The Church of Christ [COC] Religion is straight out of the pits of Hell. They teach that water baptism is absolutely essential to go to heaven.”(www.jesus-is_savior.com/False%20Religions/Church%20of%20Christ/ch...)

Others have stated we don't believe in the Old Testament. Many believe we were established around 1905 in America. They have no idea that our history dates back to the beginning.

But how can they know if we don't get out into the community.

There are many opportunities in which a local church can participate in the community. Activities such as county fairs, special (non-religious) events, food pantries, or be a P.I.E. partner (partners in education) with a local school etc.

You can use the church building to host blood drives, free medical testing (blood pressure, blood sugar), back packs for low income children before school starts, fall festival, spring festival, etc. Advertise it in the local paper, so that the community will see the love of Christ in you. Jesus always loved people; had compassion on people; and even ate food with people as he was teaching them the good news of the kingdom of God. Your mission has to be more than to keep the doors open. As the old saying goes:

“I don’t care how much you know until I know how much you care.”

Start with one or two community activities and repeat them every year, so the church will build a good reputation among the town.

1 Peter 2:12 says: “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

Most of all, don’t worry about instant results. You are sowing seeds of kindness in your community. And as the apostle Paul stated in Galatians 6:9-10:

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, **as we have opportunity**, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Brethren, the church building is not a holy place. The body of Christ is holy. If a business only used their building only 3 times a week, they would go broke. Think about it. Let’s take advantage of the opportunities the Lord gives us, and people will be more open to listen to what we have to say.

49

Three d's of evangelism

(From Jerry Tallman)

1. Develop the dialogue

Start talking about Jesus. Who is he to them? Is Jesus someone they think about every day? Do they understand why God sent Jesus to earth? Was Jesus a real person? Why did Jesus have to die in the manner in which he did? Have you seen the movie, the "Passion of the Christ"? These are just some of the questions you can use to get them to open up about Jesus...

2. Discover their story

Listen, ask questions, and keep on listening. Use questions like, "tell me about your religious background."

"Have you been saved?" "How did that happen?"

"Are their questions about the Bible that trouble you?"

3. Discern the next step

Where do I go from here?

How close are they to the truth?

Began with things in common.

Get them to tell you their story.

If saved, how were they saved?

Ask them, can I share with you my story?

Set up a study, by saying, “let me tell you the rest of the story.”

50

DO NOT BE AFRAID

Satan uses many weapons against us. He does not want us to take souls away from his control. One of his best weapons is fear. He tells us we don't know enough, or we are not good enough. He convinces us it is someone else's job. We are often like a young shy boy trying to ask a girl to go out with him. He will ask a friend if he should. He will dream about what he would say. He sees her at school every day. She smiles at him, but he turns away. Then he convinces himself she will say no. So he never asks.

We can be like that boy when it comes to asking our friends and neighbors to come to church or have a Bible study with us. That is why Jesus said this:

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore[c] and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”, even to the end of the age.”(Matthew 28:18-29)

We know the command, but we often forget the last part
“and lo, I am with you always.”

What would you do and say to others **if Jesus was literally beside you in the flesh?** Who would you ask to study the Bible? Who would you invite to church? Why, you would say, “This is Jesus Christ, and I want to invite you to listen to his word this Sunday He is amazing!” He can change your life!”

If you lack courage, remember, Jesus is always with you, and he does most of the work. You just have to get the conversation started. You have to plant the seed of the word. You have to water it by continuing to lead them to Jesus. He will give the increase! And then, He’ll let you be in on the harvest.

Just remember, the most often used phrase in the Bible is—“Do not be afraid”. It is used—get this—365 times. That’s a different assurance every single day of the year. If we don’t have assurance from that—if we convince ourselves we can’t and won’t, just remember the warning Jesus gave us:

But the **cowardly**, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8)

Don't let Satan talk you out of the most joyful experience in the world—bringing someone to Christ. Keep trying, don't give up, and remember Jesus will be with you always, so you don't have to be alone...and afraid!

