

WITNESSING

OR

PERSONAL

EVANGELISM

Chapter 1

God's Wonderful Desires

1 Peter 3:15 is God's command to all believers, not just leaders and evangelists: ***"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."*** In Philemon 6, Paul said: ***"that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus."*** Philemon was not a church leader.

One of the reasons why we have received the Holy Spirit is to empower us to personally share the Gospel or witness to non-Christian relatives, friends and acquaintances. Acts 1:8 says: ***"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."***

In Proverbs 11:30, God says: ***"...and he who wins souls is wise."*** Jude 25 says we should snatch people from the fire. Even if only one person is saved through our witnessing, it is worth all the time and effort we devoted to it.

In Matthew 22:1-12 and Luke 14:16-23, Jesus taught that He commanded His servants to go out and invite people to His heavenly banquet. *All* believers are Christ's servants (see Romans 6:22 and 1 Peter 3:16). Luke 14:23 records: ***"Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.'"***

In Matthew 18:14, Jesus said the following about little children: ***"Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."*** In 1 Timothy 2:3-4, Paul said: ***"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."***

The Great Commission

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus Christ commanded: ***"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, 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."***

One false view claims that the above Great Commission relates only to the eleven Apostles and not to all believers. This theory is seen to be false when we examine Matthew 28:18-20 in context. Note in verse 19, Jesus commanded that disciples be made in *all* nations. The eleven Apostles did not make disciples in every nation on Earth, for example every remote island nation in the Pacific or in the Americas. It was later Christians who fulfilled or are fulfilling this aspect of Jesus' instruction in verse 19. Even at present, some nations have not had disciples made in them.

Also, note in verse 20, Jesus told the disciples He would be with them always until the end of the age. The end of the age refers to Jesus' Second Coming (see Matthew 13:39-42, 13:47-50 and 24:3). But note the eleven Apostles died long before Jesus' Second Coming. So Christ was referring to being with His Church – the collective group of His disciples, as

represented by those living at the time, that would hear or read the Great Commission – until the end of the age. Christ’s comments did not just apply to the eleven Apostles.

Therefore, in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus was giving instructions to the eleven Apostles as *representatives* of all later disciples living up until the time of the Second Coming. Matthew 28:18-20 is similar to the Ten Commandments in the sense they were both originally given to a limited group but applied to multitudes living in the following centuries. The Ten Commandments were given to Israelites in Moses’ time (see Exodus 19:3-8) but applied to later generations of Israelites also.

Hindering the spread of the Gospel and revival

I have heard people wrongly use the wonderful Biblical teaching on God’s sovereignty or supreme rule. They say He will bring revival no matter how we respond to Him. Or they argue He will convert people regardless of whether we share the Gospel with others. But such attitudes are contrary to Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9:12: “*...but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.*” Here Paul revealed believers can do things which hinder the spread of the Gospel among other people.

The Welsh revival of 1904-5

One popular false idea these days suggests that the key to having large numbers of new converts in the Church is to concentrate *only* on great praise and worship, prayer and manifestations of the Holy Spirit in miracles, signs and wonders – all wonderful things. This view claims the Welsh Revival of 1904-5 was proof of this.

But note three other primary emphases of the Welsh Revival were *confessing known sins, turning from known sins* and *personal evangelism* by believers outside of church meetings. Evan Roberts and the other Welsh revivalists constantly prophetically called on believers to confess their known sins and to turn from everything in their lives which was even the slightest bit doubtful in relation to being in agreement with the written Word of God.¹

Also Roberts spoke often about the necessity of personal evangelism by believers. At Bala in Wales in July 1905, he preached:

“What need is there here tonight, friends? The need of prayer. Yes, it is prayer that raises our heads. It is possible to go to destruction singing. Let us pray for saving the people. Show the Saviour to the people, there is plenty of room for all in His kingdom, and plenty of welcome. Is there anyone ready to come in? Here is a splendid place to accept the Saviour. Pray for the Holy Spirit. Everyone ought to pray for His coming. Pray for bending the people. Offer Jesus to them. There is not half enough working here...Is there anyone in the audience working now? That must be done before we shall have all the listeners in. We want to have everyone in...There are people here despising the Son of God. How can we be so quiet then? Certainly, there is something not right. Can it be that there is someone here again not having prayed? We must all be workers and sincere in prayer. It will not do for us to go to heaven by ourselves. We must be on fire, friends, for saving others. We cannot be so without being workers. To be

¹ Brynmor P. Jones, “Voices from the Welsh Revival – 1904-1905”, Evangelical Press of Wales, Bryntirion, Mid Glamorgan, 1995, page 33

workers will draw Heaven down, and will draw others to Heaven. Oh! that we were filled with the spirit of the Great Teacher – the great love! Without readiness to work the spirit of prayer will not come.”²

A form of subtle pride

I have heard Christians say, “I witness by my lifestyle, character and actions. I believe this is better than witnessing by sharing the Gospel in words.” Such an attitude is a subtle form of pride because they are really boasting about how holy and Christlike they are. They are inferring that it must be obvious to all others how godly they are.

James 1:18 shows people are born again by the Word of God. They are not saved just by observing our godly behaviour. Romans 10:13-14 shows unless someone shares the Gospel with unbelievers, they cannot believe and be saved: **“For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher.”**

On occasion, an unbeliever can observe the godly lifestyle of a believer and as a result ask the believer about his faith without the believer previously sharing the Gospel to him. But if we are honest, such examples are rare.

The evangelistic principles of the early Church, the Brazilian A.O.G. and others

Acts 8:4 reveals the evangelistic practices of the early Church: **“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”** Here we see *all* believers preached the Word of God to the unsaved. The early Church did not just have select evangelism teams. This is even though the latter are not bad in themselves. In the early Church in the times of the Apostles, all believers knew how to do personal evangelism. Partly as a result of this, between 5-12% of all the people in the Roman Empire were Christians in about 250 A.D. through God’s grace and the Holy Spirit’s power.³

The same type of approach is used today by the Assemblies of God in Brazil. The Brazilian A.O.G. has grown from about 250,000 people in 1957 to about 20 million members and regular attenders in about 1990-1993.⁴ They had about 85,000 churches and about .% of the whole Brazilian population. Members of the Brazilian A.O.G. are all taught to be personal evangelists. They evangelise strangers. But most of their evangelism is to their relatives, friends and personal contacts at work, school and elsewhere. Refer to Chapter “Revival in Brazil” for more details about the revival in Brazil – one of the greatest ever seen on Earth.

There are many other rapidly growing large Christian groups in Columbia, Thailand, Africa and elsewhere who train all their people how to preach the Gospel in personal ministry. The house churches in China have grown to about 100 million members. They train all their members to preach the Gospel in their personal relationship with friends, relatives and social contacts.

² Ibid, pages 200-201.

³ Earle Cairns, “Christianity through the centuries”, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1967, page 102.

⁴ Patrick Johnstone, “Operation World”, 5th edition, O.M. Publishing, 1993, page 128.

A mixture of Biblical commands and general practical principles

The following sections give Biblical and practical advice about how all believers can become preachers of the Gospel in personal ministry. Some of my comments also relate to preaching the Gospel in group meetings.

Some of my practical advice are not commands of the Lord, but are still needed to be considered. Such practical advice is not contrary to the written Word, but is not clearly commanded in Scripture. For example, later I recommend sometimes inviting unbelievers to play sport with you. The Bible does not command this. But it is not contrary to the Bible.

Also some of my comments are *general principles* and *not absolute rules with no exceptions*. For example, it is generally best to talk to unsaved individuals alone. But there are exceptions to this.

Note in addition, the following sections do not encourage all believers to spend all their time preaching the Gospel in personal ministry. I believe they must fulfil their other God-given responsibilities in relation to their families, secular jobs, having rest, having physical exercise, attending Bible studies and so on as well.

Study Questions

1. What do 1 Peter 3:15, Philemon 6, Proverbs 11:30 and Jude 25 teach us?
2. To whom did Jesus Christ give the Great Commission?
3. What is wrong with relying solely on our lifestyle and character when witnessing to unbelievers?
4. What does Acts 8:4 show us?

Chapter 2

Based On Real Love And Unselfishness

Evangelism emphasising techniques and outward image

Some approaches to evangelism concentrate so much on techniques that they lose their true Biblical basis – God’s awesome love for unsaved people. For example, one evangelistic approach is based on thinking up three acts of kindness to do towards each unsaved person we wish to evangelise and choosing three different events at which you can spend time with the person before you witness to them on three occasions.

Such a regimental approach easily degenerates into doing the above 3 acts 3 times without having a deeply felt God-given love and spiritual burden for the unsaved persons we wish to evangelise.

We must always remember witnessing is a *ministry* and *not a regimented programme*. It is one of the ministries of every Christian and not just of some spiritual elite. I was once at a church leaders’ meeting where the discussion centred on how to make a local church more friendly towards newcomers. Many good outward expressions or tokens of friendliness were suggested, but the most important thing – having a genuine love and unselfish concern for the welfare of others – was belatedly only added as an afterthought. It was not emphasised as the main key from which all things flow.

This is one of the main problems in many modern Western churches. Because of an over-emphasis on marketing and sales techniques, much ministry is focussing on *outward image* and *appealing personality* with little concern for genuine unselfish heart attitudes and godly character. In other words, the focus is more on having a church which has an outward image of friendliness and unselfishness when the reality is the church members are mainly only concerned with their own selfish needs, wants and goals. Such attitudes are a terrible hindrance to truly effective evangelism and the good follow up of new converts.

Say I rarely speak to my neighbours or only ever talk to them when I want them to do something for me, for example, loan me a saw or help me move some furniture. Then over a few days, I do three acts of kindness towards them. Then I share the Gospel with them. It will be likely that they will interpret my behaviour as selfishness and not as love. They will probably say, “He is being kind to me so he can trick me into doing what he wants.”

If instead, my neighbour was used to me over months taking deep interest in him as a person, he would more likely regard my later evangelistic witness as being just another expression of my concern for him as a person. Unsaved people look at believer’s words and actions over the *whole time* they know him and *not just* at the brief times of *isolated preplanned acts of kindness*.

The tragic effects of hypocritical self-centred types of Christianity

Some Christians are very lazy at work, always asking unbelievers to do some of their work. They never show a genuine interest in their fellow workmates unless they want something from the latter. Their unsaved workmates may even show unselfishness by doing some of these Christians' work. But these unsaved people regard such Christians as hypocrites when these self-centred believers begin to share about God's love and Jesus Christ.

For example, I know a Pentecostal lady who used to frequently witness to one of my unsaved relatives. But this married woman began to communicate with an unknown American man on the Internet. This fellow came to Australia and had an adulterous affair with her. She left her husband. This example left a very bad impression on my relative.

I once observed a Pentecostal borrow money from an unbeliever and then continually delay paying it back. This was even though the churchgoer was financially better off than the unbeliever. The same churchgoer wanted to put in a false insurance claim and often would ask for petrol money from the local government school his children attended. His wife had a vicious punch-up with her sister in the school grounds and abused my sister who worked at this school. She called my sister "a selfish b.tch" for not being willing continually to run messages for her. When my non-churchgoing sister was telling me this "testimony" about events at the school, I was ashamed to tell her this guy and his wife are regular churchgoing Pentecostals.

Because of a lack of emphasis on repentance from known sin in many Western churches at present, the above sad type of "testimony" is quite common. It is one major cause of the failure of much outreach to the unsaved in Western countries.

I can understand how unbelievers are repulsed by the personal evangelistic efforts by Christians who do not really love and care for them. For example, years ago a churchgoer began to talk to me and be very friendly. Prior to this time, she had never shown any interest in me as a person. After talking for a while, she asked me if I was interested in investing in some type of pyramid selling supposedly for my benefit. I knew if I accepted her offer, she would be the main one to financially benefit. From that time onwards, I tended to regard her with suspicion. So you can imagine how unbelievers regard Christians who evangelise in similar ways.

Speaking the truth in real love

Personal evangelism involves speaking the truth of the Gospel in a very loving outward manner based on a sincere God-inspired love for the person. Ephesians 4:15 speaks of speaking the truth in love as we grow in Jesus Christ: "***but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ.***" Romans 5:5 shows God's love is present in us through His Holy Spirit's Presence: "***...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.***" In prayer, we must draw continually off His unlimited love.

It is very difficult to tell a person, that he will be judged with eternal punishment if he does not turn from his cherished sins and does not begin to have a trusting faith in Jesus Christ, unless we have a deep God-inspired unselfish love towards the person. Also, if we tell him God loves Him deeply but we treat him selfishly and without compassion and kindness, our actions will send him *the unconscious message* that what we are saying is *not real*.

Our four motives for witnessing should be He loves us, He loves all unbelievers, we love Him and we wish to see His Kingdom established on Earth.

Love unbelievers like Jesus did

Do not make contacts with unbelievers solely to try to convert them. Make new contacts also because *you wish to love them just as Jesus does*.

Remember Jesus befriended Judas Iscariot even though He knew Judas would betray Him to a cruel death. Note even when Judas was in the act of handing Jesus over to the representative of the Jewish authorities, Jesus called him, **“Friend”**. If you make contacts with unbelievers only to preach to them, they will regard you like those people who only take an interest in you when they are trying to sell something to you. How do you feel when people treat you like this?

Continue to have love towards unbelievers even if they reject the Gospel. If you are unfriendly or cold towards them after they reject the Gospel, you are *contradicting the Gospel message* that Jesus loves them and has died for them. We must not just love those who turn to Christ.

Show Jesus’ love to those who have hurt and rejected you

Romans 12:17-21 shows we should do good even to those unbelievers who have rejected and treated us badly: **“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. ‘Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”**

If we pay back evil with good, this can reveal God’s true character through you to the unsaved person. In Roman times, Christians mostly repaid the evil done to them by pagans with kindness and love. This was one of the church’s best evangelistic tools.

A practical example of this occurred during the Roman persecution of Gallus in 252 A.D. in Carthage in North Africa. Despite having suffered badly, the Christians repaid the evil of unbelievers with love and kindness. For when a plague spread through Carthage, the heathens threw their dead and sick out on the streets and ran away in fear. They blamed the Christians for bringing this tragedy on them. It is recorded that the Christian leader named *“Cyprian assembled his congregation and exhorted them to love their enemies; whereupon all went to work; the rich with their money, the poor with their hands, and rested not, till the dead were buried, the sick cared for, and the city saved from desolation.”*⁵

Treat the unsaved with the kindness and tenderness of Jesus Christ

When talking to the unsaved, treat them with great kindness, tenderness and compassion. In 2 Timothy 2:23-26, Paul told Timothy: **“But avoid foolish and ignorant**

⁵ Philip Schaff, “The History of the Christian Church”, Vol 2, W.M.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1910, page 376.

disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

The unsaved person must see God’s love, kindness and tenderness being expressed through us. 1 Peter 3:15 relates to these things also: **“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 Corinthians 13:1-3 shows what we do must be based on love. We need to copy Jesus’ example. He ministered to others with great compassion (see Matthew 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 20:34, Mark 1:41, 6:34, 8:2 and Luke 7:13).

Learn when to stop the time of witnessing about Jesus Christ. If you keep talking when the unsaved person sincerely wishes to stop, he may be afraid to talk to you about Christ ever again. Remember Jesus was often *bold* and *direct* when sharing with the spiritually lost, but *He did not force Himself upon them*.

If the person responds with any abuse or harsh criticism of you, do not do the same. 1 Peter 3:8-9 commands us: **“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”** Speak with love, compassion and tenderness. Proverbs 15:1 says: **“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”**

Some non-Christians delight in trying to get Christians angry and abusive. So be careful to guard your own heart as Proverbs 4:23 says.

Show deep respect for unbelievers

Be *very respectful* of non-Christians as persons created by God. Aim by your words and manner to show them how deeply He loves them and is interested in them. If you are rude, abrupt or harshly argumentative with them, it is a very poor witness for God. A rude abrupt manner creates a very unfavourable impression of both yourself and Christianity.

Brian, a Christian friend of mine does much personal witnessing. When on holidays in the United States, he had a Christian supposedly “witness” to him once. The person did not firstly get to know my friend or even introduce himself, but immediately gave Brian a lecture about how he should accept Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. He rudely insisted on controlling the conversation from start to finish so much that Brian did not have a chance to say he was already saved. My friend was very offended by such “witnessing”.

Imagine how an unbeliever would have felt in this situation. Brian said the guy exhibited no real love or interest in him as a person, but just seemed to want to relieve his conscience about having to witness to someone.

You must understand how *enormously valuable* or *precious* each unbeliever is to God. This is even though they are totally unworthy according to His perfect justice to go to heaven.⁶

⁶ Read Chapter

“Worth and Unworthiness” for more details.

Every unbeliever – no matter how wicked or depraved at present – is *special* to God. He or she is so precious, Jesus was willing to die in place of him or her.

Be a good listener

When personally witnessing, be a good listener also. Do not shout louder every time the person tries to say something, so you can control all the conversation. Proverbs 18:13 says: ***“He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.”*** To be a good listener, you must show a *deep interest* in the *welfare* of the person speaking to you. Jesus did this with the Samaritan woman (see John 4:5-18). An unbeliever will usually realise you are genuinely interested in him if you are willing to listen to him. So do not continually butt in every time he is speaking. Remember *you are not trying to prove how well you can argue*. You are aiming *to love him into the Kingdom of God*.

If he, however, talks so much he will not give you a chance to speak, you need to butt in. Also, being a good listener does not mean you should be a compromiser who agrees with unbiblical things the person may say.

One good way to show deep interest in an unbeliever is to ask him, “How have you been recently?” and then to ask follow-up related questions about his emotional well-being, health, job and so on.

There is a difference between just hearing what another says and deeply listening to them. True listening involves aiming to find out exactly what the other person thinks and how he feels. The more you understand how the person feels and thinks, the easier it will be for you to minister to him. Also, if you are a loving, sympathetic listener, the person is more likely to see a glimpse of how much Jesus loves him.

Our lives confirming our words

To be an effective personal witness of the Gospel, we must aim by God’s strength to live very godly lives. 1 Peter 2:12 commands: ***“having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”***

Your personal evangelism in words must be backed up by a life which shows the radical transformation Jesus Christ brings to the lives of those who receive Him as Lord and Saviour. No believer will be permanently sinlessly perfect everyday of their lives. Believers do have sin and fall into it (see 1 John 1:8 and James 3:2). But unless our lives express much victory over sin, our preaching of the Gospel will be regarded as hypocrisy by those unbelievers who know us.

This does not mean we have to grow in Christ, for example for 10 years, before we can witness. In Luke 8:39, Jesus sent a man out to begin witnessing *immediately*, even though he had been possessed by many demons for a long time before Jesus delivered him.

We need to not only be kind, respectful, loving and unselfish towards people when sharing about Jesus Christ with them. We need to aim to be this way towards them *all the time*. Otherwise they will regard us as hypocrites who are only Christ-like towards them when witnessing about Jesus Christ in words.

If we do treat any unbeliever selfishly, rudely or in any way contrary to Jesus Christ's attitudes, we should humbly *say sorry* to them. This in itself is a good witness even if the unbeliever at first rejects such an approach.

Study Questions

1. "Evangelism without God's love becomes a regimented programme". Discuss this statement.
2. What effects do hypocrisy and selfishness in our lives have on the unsaved to whom we are trying to witness?
3. What should be our motives for witnessing to others?
4. How did Jesus Christ treat Judas Iscariot?
5. How should we treat unbelievers if they reject the Gospel of Christ?
6. In what ways is our obedience to Romans 12:17-21 a strong witness to the unsaved?
7. What does 2 Timothy 2:23-26 teach us about ministering to the unsaved?
8. How should we respond if unbelievers abuse or harshly criticise us when or after we have shared the Gospel with them?
9. Why should we also be a good listener when witnessing the Gospel?
10. In what practical ways can our lives confirm the Words of the Gospel which we share with unbelievers?

Chapter 3

Other Things Which “Preach” Also

There are a number of things which speak as loudly to unbelievers as our words. For example, if *our daily lives* express the fact we are *totally satisfied with Jesus Christ*, this will greatly increase the effectiveness of our personal evangelism in words. Also, if *our character* shows the *emptiness* and *unsatisfying nature* of *ungodly worldly ways of living*, this will magnify the truth to unbelievers that a personal relationship to Jesus Christ is what they need. When referring to godly believers at Corinth, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:2: **“You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men.”**

The more churchgoers show a delight in worldly ways of thinking or acting, the more they are *undermining* the evangelistic message they are speaking to unsaved friends, relatives and contacts. This is why churches who grow in numbers by preaching a self centred worldly false “gospel” and having their members live accordingly are actually opposing the real Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the history of the church, many different groups have tried to win unbelievers by becoming ungodly and worldly like them. In the short run, many such attempts have increased outward “decisions” for Jesus. But in the long run, all such attempts have resulted in a decline in real converts. For example, in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, many previously good Protestant churches in Western countries tried to win unbelievers by saying Adam and Eve were not real historical figures and by not mentioning the supernatural elements in the Bible when preaching to unbelievers. Examples of such supernatural elements were miracles, fulfilled prophecies, Jesus’ virgin birth and the resurrection.

These compromisers did these things because most Westerners had turned to evolution and the philosophies of rationalism, empiricism and foolish similar views. Rationalism taught we cannot believe anything is true that cannot be rationally explained to the human mind. Empiricism taught humans cannot say something is true unless it can be experienced by the five human physical senses. By compromising with these and other pagan philosophies and committing other sins, these above-mentioned Protestant Churches have greatly declined in numbers up until the present time.

The great evangelist Charles Finney said, *“If Christians attempt to accommodate (the Christian) religion to the worldliness of men, they render the salvation of the world impossible.”* An example of this has occurred in recent decades when some Evangelicals, Charismatic and Pentecostals have changed by no longer preaching the fully Biblical view of conversion. These compromisers have taught you do not need to turn from your known sins at conversion to Jesus Christ. This has resulted in many people thinking they are saved when they are not.

Also if we do not express a deep love and compassion towards unbelievers in our eyes, voice, general attitudes and actions, but instead live mainly for our own entertainments and pleasures, we are giving the unsaved person an *unspoken message* which is *contrary* to the one we have shared with them in words. We are inferring there is no real eternal punishment awaiting them if they do not repent and turn to God or that even if there is, we care little about if they end up being tormented forever in this way.

Study Questions

1. If our lives reveal we are totally satisfied with Jesus Christ and that ungodly worldly ways of living are empty and unsatisfying, what effect does this have on our evangelism?
2. What does 2 Corinthians 3:2 reveal?
3. By compromising with worldly philosophies to try to win unbelievers to Christ, what results?

Chapter 4

Satan's Major Weapons

Satan longs to see every unbeliever in hell eternally. To achieve this goal he uses a number of weapons to discourage believers from sharing the Gospel with the unsaved. These are fear, the failure syndrome and the angry critical responses of some unbelievers.

Fear

The main weapon Satan uses to discourage us as believers from doing personal witnessing is *fear*. He has his demons bombard our minds with:

- fear of failure in relation to whether the person will respond favourably to our witnessing
- fear of feeling embarrassed
- fear of rejection
- fear of being criticised
- fear of being labelled a religious fanatic or a religious nut and
- fear of having no friends at school or work.

If we are ruled by such fear, we are not really filled with God's perfect love for others nor are we feeding off how much He loves us.

We all have to battle such fears as listed above. But the more we allow ourselves to be filled by God's wonderful love, the easier we will resist such fears. Satan and his demons hate seeing believers witness sensibly to others. So they will continually pressure you not to do it.

It is true witnessing will result in rejection and criticism by some people. But some will be open to the Lord. Others will be open to discussion about Jesus Christ. Without rejecting you, the latter will not want to be converted at least at the present time.

Being caught in the failure syndrome

Satan also discourages believers from witnessing through the failure syndrome. The failure syndrome relates to when believers wrongly feel that God regards them as a failure whenever the person they witness to remains unconverted. If you have obeyed God through lovingly sharing the Gospel and praying for others, this is sufficient. Even great evangelists like Smith Wigglesworth had many unbelievers say, "No" to his invitations for them to receive Christ as Lord and Saviour after he had personally witnessed to them.⁷

It is a sad but true fact that generally less people accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ than those who reject it. Jesus spoke of this fact in Matthew 7:13-14: "***Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in***

⁷ S. Frodsham, "Smith Wigglesworth, Apostle of Faith", Elim, London, 1949, page 14.

by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Jesus was the *perfect evangelist*. But the majority of His listeners did not believe in Him. Only a large minority accepted the Gospel. Also some like Paul who at first rejected Him later received Him.

There are times for both sowing the Word and reaping. We must be obedient and faithful in times of all sowing the Word and no reaping. Others may later reap converts to the Lord on the basis of your earlier sowing. In John 4:37-38, Jesus said: ***“For in this the saying is true: One sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.”*** Also, do not stop witnessing just because you say the wrong thing sometimes. *Learn* from your previous mistakes.

Do not be put off by angry critical responses

Satan also uses the angry and critical responses of some unbelievers to witnessing to discourage believers from further witnessing. But do not allow the angry or critical responses of some unbelievers lead you to give up witnessing. Instead follow Paul’s example! He was constantly kicked out of Jewish synagogues after he shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them, but he still went back to the synagogue at the next town (see Acts 18:4-7 and 19:8).

Sometimes those who are the most angry or hostile at first will later respond better to Jesus Christ than those who show no response at all.

Study Questions

1. What type of fears does Satan and his demons use to discourage believers from witnessing about Jesus Christ to the unsaved?
2. What fears do you battle with which hinder you from witnessing at times?
3. What is the failure syndrome about witnessing? Why is it wrong to be caught in this syndrome?

Chapter 5

Establishing Good Relationships With The Unsaved

Many Christians and churches are waiting for unbelievers to come miraculously through their church doors without any prior ministry by believers. But rarely does God work this way. Jesus Christ told us to go to unbelievers and not wait until they seek us out. Matthew 22:8-10 records Jesus' Words: "*Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding'. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.*"

Jesus Christ sometimes ministered to unbelievers by *establishing common natural interests* with people. For example, John 4:7-8 records Christ began His relationship with the Samaritan woman by discussing with her about water, after she had drawn water from Jacob's well. We need to follow Jesus' example.

A common problem

After being born-again believers for many years, many have no non-Christians with whom they have a good relationship and little contact with non-Christian relatives. As a result, they have little opportunity to minister to unbelievers.

To begin to solve this problem, these believers need to start devoting some time for establishing relationships with:

- their neighbours
- close and distant relatives and
- other non-Christians.

Proverbs 18:24 teaches: "*A man who has friends must himself be friendly...*" God does not expect you to spend 24 hours a day on seven days a week ministering to those who are not a part of your close family. You also need time with your spouse and children if you are married. Otherwise you may end up with a dreadful marriage and rejected undisciplined children. This would counter the effectiveness of your witnessing to others and is wrong anyway.

Also you need time for your job, sleep, prayer, Bible reading, church meetings and so on. So you cannot spend all your time everyday doing personal witnessing. But make sure you set aside time regularly to pray for and be with non-Christians in order to evangelise them. As well, believers need to have very close friends among other believers. This is because Proverbs 12:26 warns us that sinful friends can lead believers astray. We must find a God-guided balance in the above matters.

Using social gatherings and sport as evangelistic opportunities

In Luke 5:27-32, we see that after Matthew the tax collector became a disciple of Jesus Christ, he held a great feast in his own house for Christ: *“After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ And he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. But their scribes and the Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”* Matthew invited many tax collectors and others to this social gathering. Christ was able to meet all these people in order to relate and minister to them.

There are many different types of natural activities that you can invite the unsaved to in order to establish good relationships with them and to share Jesus Christ with them. Examples of this are:

- barbecues at a park, beach or private home
- pizza nights
- watching a soccer, cricket or other sport match
- having social sports day at a park or beach
- birthdays

Ask the Lord to reveal by His Spirit if He wishes you to use any of the above. Ask God if He wants you to join a squash club or a tennis club or a soccer team or playgroup for babies (if you have a baby) or some similar non-sinful activity group.

If God puts it on your heart to join such a group, consider asking one or more other Christians to join with you. It is often easier to witness when you go in pairs or larger numbers. Remember Jesus sent His disciples out in *pairs* to minister (see Luke 10:1 and Acts 13:1-2). Sometimes they went out in *larger groups* (see Acts 15:22, 16:6 and 18:5).

1 Timothy 4:8 says that physical training is of some value in God’s eyes: *“For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”*

Do not make an idol of any sport, but use it for physical exercise, glorifying God and as a means of meeting unbelievers. Years ago, some Christian friends and I joined a secular soccer team one year and another in the following year. We were able to witness to non-Christian players during this time.

If you are young and/or fit enough, it may be good to invite a non-Christian to come together with you to play a sport they enjoy. For example, invite them to play touch football, soccer, cricket, squash, tennis or some other sport in a non-competitive social form. Try to have other sensible Christians come to play also. I have seen much effective witnessing being done through this. Also, it is good physical exercise.

If the person does not like sport, ask the Lord what other types of things to which you can invite them.

Sharing the Gospel can occur almost anywhere. Jesus ministered at weddings, funerals, people’s houses, public places, Jewish synagogues, the Temple, on boats, on mountains and so

on (see Matthew 5:1-7:29, 15:29-31, Mark 2:13-17, 5:21-24, 6:56, Luke 4:16-37, 5:1-11, 7:36-50, 19:1-9, John 2:1-22, 7:14-15 and 11:1-44). The Apostles ministered in private houses, rented halls, public squares, synagogues, the Temple, the courts of political leaders, on roads, near rivers and other places (see Acts 3:1-4:22, 5:12, 8:4, 8:26-40, 9:32-43, 10:1-48, 13:4-14:18, 16:11-34, 17:1-19:20, 20:7-12 and 24:10-26:32). The only types of places which Jesus and the Apostles did not minister in are brothels and pagan temples.

If you have not had close relationships with unbelievers for many years, do not think that if you invite them to your social gatherings that you have to allow them to bring pornographic movies or drugs or pornographically-worded music. In a loving gentle way, you will have to tell them not to bring these things if they say this is what they intend to do.

Luke 19:5-10 records another example of Jesus visiting unsaved people in their houses and having meals with them in order to minister to them. John 2:1-11 reveals Jesus used non-sinful public gatherings like weddings in order to minister to others. Jesus *did not compromise with sin* even in the smallest way at such times. But He showed *enormous love* and *interest* in all people – no matter how sinful they were.

Social events at your local church

We can also establish relationships with the unsaved through inviting them to social events held at our local church. But one trap to avoid is continually inviting the unsaved to church social events while never sharing with them the Gospel and their need of receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour through faith and accompanying repentance. The result of such an error will be the church continually year after year having to entertain a group of unbelievers. Such a church will end up as a social club.

All churches must face the fact that preaching the Gospel and about faith and repentance will result in some unsaved visitors not returning to future church social events. When Christ and the Apostles preached the Gospel, some listeners went away and never returned.

Become hospitable

In Romans 12:13, Paul commands all believers to be hospitable to others: “*distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*” In Greek, the word “*hospitality*” in this verse is “*philoxenia*” which means “*love of strangers*”⁸ or “*to receive and show hospitality to a stranger, that is, someone who is not regarded as a member of the extended family or a close friend*”⁹ or “*kindness to strangers*”.¹⁰ Hebrews 13:2 uses a form of “*philoxenia*” when it commands us: “*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.*”

Hospitality is an important element in both ministering to other believers and in much personal evangelism. You should at different times invite unsaved people from your workplace and unsaved neighbours to visit where you live. When they come, show a deep interest in their

⁸ Vine, page 312.

⁹ Louw and Nida, page 455.

¹⁰ Perschbacher, page 429.

lives. Do not boast about yourself (see Proverbs 27:2). Do not talk about just those things which interest you. Do not spend your time gossiping about others to your guest. He will probably think you are self-righteous and will gossip about him after he has left.

Also do not gossip about your guest to others, especially if he has opened to you the secrets of his heart. Proverbs 11:13 warns: ***“A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.”***

In 1 Timothy 3:2, Paul teaches that all church leaders must be hospitable. 1 Peter 4:9 commands that *all* believers must learn to be hospitable: ***“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.”*** Remember being hospitable refers to showing love or kindness to those who are not a close friend or a part of your extended family. One reason many churches are so ineffective in evangelism and discipleship is most or all of their members disobey 1 Peter 4:9.

Be generous with your guest in relation to food and drink. Do not be like the stingy man spoken of in Proverbs 23:6-7: ***“Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies; for as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you.”*** Make the person feel comfortable and relaxed. Remember you are aiming to reflect how Jesus would treat the person if He were here. Jesus was even willing to wash other people’s smelly dirty feet (see John 13:1-17). By being truly hospitable, you will find the unsaved will see Jesus Christ in you and will be more open to discussing the Gospel.

Galatians 6:10 commands us to do good to all people including unbelievers: ***“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”***

We should so sincerely love unbelievers that we want to do acts of kindness and unselfishness towards them. When they are sick or in any time of need, offer to help them. If you grow fruit and vegetables, give them some. Ask the Lord what other things He would desire you to do for them.

I believe it is better to not give money to unsaved people unless you personally know them and really know they are in need. We need to be generous, but as wise as serpents also. In Matthew 10:16, Jesus commanded us: ***“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”***

In parts of South America, Pentecostal ladies find wonderful opportunities to share the Gospel by each morning cooking food which they then take to non-Christian families who have not got enough to feed their children. Many of these believers have barely enough food themselves. So the unbelievers truly understand the cost involved for these believers to do this.

If you invite an unbeliever for a meal, it can be useful to ask the person at the beginning of the meal whether you can pray as you normally do. This is often a means by which the person will then or later ask you about your faith.

Invite a non-Christian and a Christian friend together

It is sometimes a good idea to invite a non-Christian over to your house at roughly the same time you have invited a sensible believer. In this way, you give the unsaved person an opportunity to establish a good relationship with another Christian and to see that Christians are not evil or unfriendly people. Also, your Christian friend may have an opportunity of later sharing about Jesus Christ with the person.

You need to make sure the type of Christian you invite is a good (though obviously imperfect) witness for Jesus Christ and has a loving, kind approach to unbelievers.

It may be better not to invite the unbeliever and your Christian friend together on the first visit of the unbeliever to your home. Otherwise the non-Christian may feel like he is intruding. It is also probably better if they do not arrive at the same time. It may be better if your Christian friend leaves before the non-Christian does, so you can spend time together at the end.

Later invite to a Christian meeting

After a period of time of establishing a good relationship with the unbelieving person, ask them about coming to say a house meeting or a youth meeting or some other church meeting. If the person says “No”, do not be hurt. Instead emphasise if he changes his mind later, he is very welcome.

Study Questions

1. What does Jesus teach us in Matthew 22:8-10?
2. What is a major reason that many born-again Christians have little opportunity to minister to unbelievers?
3. “In Luke 5:27-32, Jesus set a great example for us in relation to using natural activities as appropriate means for evangelism.” Discuss this statement.
4. What are some examples of natural activities that you believe you can use effectively to minister to the unsaved?
5. Should we compromise with sin in order to evangelise “better”?
6. What is the result if Christians only continually put on social events for the unsaved but never share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them?
7. What is hospitality?

Chapter 6

Barna's Research About Evangelism

The American Church statistician George Barna has discovered many things about American churches through his research. For example, the below statistics, which were compiled in 1995, list the various means by which a sample of 1007 American believers converted to Christ:

- Through a conversation with a family member - 24%
- Was raised by family to be a Christian - 14%
- Responded to a sermon at a church - 14%
- Through a conversation with a friend - 10%
- Was healed of a physical problem - 6%
- Attended an evangelistic event - 5%
- Through a relationship with a minister - 5%
- Death of a family member or friend - 4%
- A Sunday School class or Bible study class - 4%
- Experience at a youth camp or youth event - 4%
- Watched an evangelistic T.V. programme - 3%
- Birth of a child - 2%¹¹

The above statistics suggest many important things. Two of these are:

- Most converts in America came through relationships with family and friends
- One of the least effective means of evangelism was watching American television evangelists. Only 3% of converts came through this means. Funerals for family members and for friends had a higher success rate (4%). American television evangelists drain multiplied millions of dollars out of the Church each year through their continual emphasis on fund-raising. But the results per dollar in terms of conversions is very poor when compared with other far cheaper means of evangelism.

I believe one of the most helpful things that many American television evangelists could do to benefit the church is to close down their television ministries. There are exceptions to this. The massive amount of money given to these television ministries would be better spent on helping good missionaries and American local churches who are effective in evangelism and discipleship.

Another American study done in 1987 concluded that at least 75% of the several thousands of American believers they questioned had been converted through their relationships with *friends or relatives*.¹²

¹¹ George Barna, "The index of leading spiritual indicators", Word Publishing, Dallas, 1996, pages 73 and 75.

Barna also discovered:

- Most Americans who receive Christ as their Saviour do so at a young age. In total, *six* out of *ten* people say they made their decision to receive Christ before age *eighteen*. Only 8 percent of the American population received Christ as Lord and Saviour after they turned 50 years of age.¹³
- “The typical Protestant church in America spends less than 2 percent of its annual revenues on community evangelism. Among the leading evangelistic churches, however, we found that it was more common to spend 10 percent to 20 percent of the annual budget for that purpose”.¹⁴

Statistics about American churchgoers who witness regularly

When studying those American churchgoers who regularly share their Christian faith with the unsaved, Barna found:

- One third believe that if people are generally good or do enough good works during their lives, they will earn a place in heaven. In other words, one-third preach a false legalistic “gospel”.
- Four in every ten evangelizers believe it does not matter what religion a person follows. In other words, 40% have a liberal attitude to pagan religions.
- One-quarter believe the Bible contains errors in what it teaches.
- One-fourth say that Jesus made mistakes.¹⁵

Barna also said about these evangelisers, “*In particular, we found that many evangelisers are happy to talk about the good news without providing its context i.e. we serve a holy God who cannot tolerate sin and will cast His wrath upon those who commit sin without remorse and **repentance**... We live in a nation where our **desire to feel good** has overwhelmed our awareness of the consequence of our actions.*”¹⁶

Study Questions

1. What did Barna find were the most effective means of evangelism?
2. What problems did Barna identify in his research about many of those churchgoers who share their Christian faith regularly with the unsaved?

¹² Andrew Jackson, “A Heart for Others”, YWAM Publishing, Seattle, 1992, page 65

¹³ Barna, “The index of leading spiritual indicators”, page 73.

¹⁴ George Barna, “Evangelism that works, Regal Books, Ventura, 1995, page 97.

¹⁵ Ibid, page 142.

¹⁶ Ibid, pages 142-143.

Chapter 7

Adapt But Do Not Compromise

When establishing good relationships with unsaved people, we should adopt Paul's principle of adapting ourselves to various types of unbelievers. For example, in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, we see Paul adapted himself to the varying groups to whom he ministered: *"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you."*

Many people wrongly interpret Paul's words here to mean he amended or watered down the Gospel or compromised about various sins in order to convert certain types of people. Such an attitude is contrary to Paul's words in Galatians 1:9: *"As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."*

Adapting ourselves to various unsaved groups can involve finding non-sinful natural things to discuss with them. For example, we can talk about sport while getting to know those unbelievers who like sport or about history, gardens, car, bikes, computers and so on with those interested in these. But in adapting ourselves to others, we need to make sure we do not participate in their sins. In 1 Timothy 5:22, God commands: *"Do not...share in other people's sins, keep yourself pure."*

For example, it is sinful if a Christian tries to minister to unbelievers by watching films full of sexually immoral scenes (see Ephesians 5:3-7) or gamble. Gambling is a form of envy and greed. Greed is idolatry according to Ephesians 5:3 and Colossians 3:5. Also it is evil if we agree with their approval of abortion or laugh at their dirty jokes (see Ephesians 5:3) or do similar things. We need to *set a standard* for unbelievers to follow instead of us living lives like them and becoming compromising Christian "playboys".

If the non-Christian swears or wishes to go outside to smoke or say something sinful, do not harshly abuse him for this. But do not in any way suggest you agree with such things. You need God's wisdom to *tread a fine line* between these *two extremes*. (At a later time, however, when you are sharing the Gospel, you need to add a loving gentle mention that true conversion involves turning in our hearts from such things as swearing, sinful language and so on.)

Jesus commanded us to *"Go"* to people living under the rule of this sinful world system (see Mark 16:15), but not to let this world rule us in even the smallest way (see Romans 12:2, James 1:27, 4:4 and 1 John 2:15-17).

Also adapting to unbelievers does not involve becoming a people-pleaser or changing the Gospel to suit people's sinful desires.

It is fine using contemporary relevant methods of preaching the Gospel. But some sin by changing the Gospel while attempting to be contemporary. Galatians 2:11-14 records that

Paul strongly rebuked Peter for falling into this trap of changing the Gospel to be relevant to Jewish culture.

Being a good witness for Christ involves preaching *His Gospel* and not our watered-down version of it. 2 Timothy 4:2-3 warned of leaders who would teach what their listeners' selfish desires wanted instead of God's truth.

Adapting to the unsaved does not mean becoming someone who exhibits only an insipid sickening humanistic type of love which compromises with various sins and unbiblical errors. True Holy Spirit-inspired love involves preaching *repentance* and *God's future judgement* as being *closely linked to the Gospel* (see Acts 2:38-39, 3:19-20, 10:37-43, 11:18, 17:30-31, 20:20-21, 24:25 and 26:16-20).

An example of Paul's godly evangelistic ministry can be seen when he was at Athens. Paul quoted from a Greek poet in order to make the presentation of the Gospel *relevant* to his listeners (see Acts 17:28). But note Paul did not water down the Gospel. In Acts 17:29, he challenged the idolatry of the Athenians which had been a part of their culture for centuries. In Acts 17:30-31, he told them God had commanded them to have a changed heart attitude to their sins and to Him and warned them of the coming Final Judgement: ***"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."***

An example of compromising while trying to be relevant

While it is good to have *relevant methods* of preaching the Gospel, we must be careful not to *compromise* with any form of ungodliness or sin. Even the most sincere believers and God-called leaders can be drawn into the deceitfulness of compromise without fully knowing what has happened.

King Jeroboam I is a classic example of a God-ordained leader compromising with sin. Jeroboam was supernaturally chosen by God to lead the 10 Northern Tribes of Israel (see 1 Kings 11:30-39). God led the prophet Ahijah to give Jeroboam the Word of the Lord about this matter.

But Jeroboam did not fully trust God or obey His written Word. 1 Kings 12:26-31 records: ***"And Jeroboam said in his heart, 'Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah.' Therefore the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!' And he set one up in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan. He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi."***

In the following I am writing satirically in order to teach some important truths. In order to make sure he did not lose any people to the "church" down the road at Jerusalem, Jeroboam asked advice from others (verse 28). In other words, Jeroboam held the first "church growth conference". The main speakers at the conference gave inspirational motivating messages, telling how they had observed the biggest most prosperous churches can be built by making the

teaching of the Word of God more relevant and contemporary. They said a sure winner was setting up two new outreaches at Bethel and Dan which would each have a golden calf. They said, "The people will flock to these new centres. They will be attracted by these calves made of gold. The gold will symbolise the future prosperity the Lord will bless them with. Of course your primary worship must still be to the Lord but you need the calves to attract the people to the Lord. Also, you should begin some new types of relevant religious festivals to attract people." Jeroboam was inspired by what he had heard about these "new ways of glorifying and worshipping God". So he set up two new "contemporary churches" at Bethel and Dan.

Read 1 Kings 13:1-5 to see what God's attitude was to Jeroboam two new contemporary worship centres: "*And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, 'O altar, altar! Thus says the Lord: "Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you."*" And he gave a sign the same day, saying, '*This is the sign which the Lord has spoken: Surely the altar shall be split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out.*' So it came to pass when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched his hand from the altar, saying, 'Arrest him!' Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself. The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord."

Verse 6 says Jeroboam then asked the man of God to pray that his hand be healed. Jeroboam still had strong faith in the healing ministry. But like many others after him, he had compromised by disobeying the Word of the Lord. He ruined his walk with the Lord and that of thousands of others. He had been supernaturally called and anointed for leadership of God's people.

Compromising through having the aim of being relevant is a great temptation. Satan paints it in many attractive bright colours. But like in Jeroboam's case, it leads to sin, backsliding and people becoming lukewarm in their hearts towards God. Remember what Jesus warned in Revelation 3:15-16 about lukewarm churchgoers: "*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.*"

Moral standards for members and visitors must be different

Churches should welcome *all* unbelievers no matter what they look like, how they are dressed or what they have done in the past. Occultists, adulterers, homosexuals, child molesters, murderers, criminals, drunks, drug takers, gang members and anyone else who has not been converted should be warmly received by churchgoers with love, kindness and respect for them. Christians should reflect God's love towards these people. Jesus longed to die for them even though He knew how wicked they would be. Because of their high moral standards, many churches do not welcome unsaved people unless they are conservative types who have good manners and morals to some degree. This is *very wrong*. Jesus did not operate by this principle. Such churches cannot evangelise effectively.

This does not mean churches should allow visitors to take drugs, get drunk and so on in the church meeting-place. But we need to make sure we avoid the error of thinking holiness means avoiding all contact with people we regard as very sinful.

Other churches go to the opposite extreme. In their desire to evangelise and make unbelievers welcome at their meetings, they lower the moral standards of their own converted members. They foolishly allow some of their members to live in de-facto sexual relationships, to go frequently to disco nightclubs which specialise in “pick ups” for sex and heavy drinking, to gamble regularly, to be able to belong to the cultic Freemasons and so on without such matters being lovingly taught about and enforced by church discipline. Such churches end up like the *compromising Israelites* in *Elijah’s time* who mixed the holy religion of God with the pagan practices of Baal worship.

The Biblical pattern is for the Church to maintain very high standards for truly converted people, but to not expect unbelievers to adopt such standards until they have turned to God in faith and repentance.

This is one of the great weaknesses of the easy-believism and gradual-conversion philosophies which foolishly claim that people can be truly converted without turning from sin in general and from their specific known sins. What results is the pastors cannot tell any difference between the unsaved attenders and the supposed “convert” who has put his hand up for Jesus and for His blessings but still loves his known sins and refuses to let them go.

There are many large churches in the United States who have this problem. No one can tell the difference between the unsaved attenders and many of the supposedly “converted” members. They think, talk and act similarly. Such churches are very sadly like large-scale factories *processing many unconverted “converts”* for the lake of fire. It is amazing that many Pentecostals and Charismatics in the West are falling into this trap of the gradual conversion philosophy, even though it ruined many older Protestant denominations who have tried it in the past. Note I am not here referring to the gradual process involved in many unbelievers coming to the point of conversion. Instead I am mentioning the idea that I can now merely put my hand up for Jesus as Saviour and be assured of salvation as a result and then if I want to in future I can begin to turn in my heart from my sins and allow Jesus to be Lord of my life.

Study Questions

1. What does Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 teach us about adapting ourselves to unbelievers when ministering to them?
2. Does adapting ourselves to unbelievers mean changing the Gospel or leaving out parts of the Gospel when ministering to them?
3. Does adapting ourselves to the unsaved mean we should compromise about various sins in order to try to make it “easier” for them to be saved?
4. If we truly love the unsaved, will we warn them of God’s future judgement and their need to repent of and turn from their known sins through faith in Christ?
5. What do the historical events recorded in 1 Kings 12:26-13:6 teach us?
6. Should local churches lower the moral standards which the Bible teaches born-again believers must have, in order to make unbelievers feel more welcome?
7. Should local churches tell unbelievers who are homosexuals, murderers, child molesters and so on that they are not welcome at their church meetings?

8. What does it mean when it is said that some churches are like factories producing many unconverted “converts”?

Chapter 8

The Crucial Importance Of Prayer

If you become so busy with natural activities and even church events that you have no time to pray much about the many varied aspects of ministering to unbelievers, you will usually be ineffective in ministering to them. This is unless God chooses to work sovereignly through you. Churches in Brazil and parts of Africa who are possibly the most effective evangelisers on Earth today give much time to group and personal prayer about the various aspects of witnessing to the unsaved. Below are the main things we should pray about in relation to evangelism:

- Begin to pray for your unsaved relatives, friends and acquaintances.
- *Pray for open doors.* Ask God to open doors of opportunity for you to share the Gospel with others. Colossians 4:2-4 is an example of this: ***“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”***
- *Pray to be able to share clearly.* Observe in Colossians 4:2-4, Paul also asked for prayer so he could share the Gospel with the unsaved in a way that it is manifested to them *clearly*. We need to pray this about our own personal witnessing also, because without the Holy Spirit’s help no unbeliever can ever clearly understand the Gospel and be converted.
- *Pray God will enable you to love hard sinful people.* It is important you ask God to impart to you His love for sinful unbelievers. Note Mark 10:21 records that Jesus looked with love at the young man with whom He was sharing God’s Word.
- *Pray for the right words and power to defeat fear.* Pray also for yourself and for other believers whom you know personally witness to others, that God will give you and them the *right words* to say and His power to *overcome the fear* which prevents such sharing of the Gospel. Paul’s words in Ephesians 6:19-20 relate to this: ***“and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*** In James 1:5-8, God promises to give us wisdom on the basis of us trusting Him to do this: ***“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. Let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”*** Praying in Biblical ways results in a deepening of our relationship to God. As a result, He can use us as His instruments more effectively.
- *Pray for boldness and concentrate on sharing the Word.* Acts 4:29-31 records the latter part of the prayer of the early believers and the results: ***“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled***

together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” They prayed for *boldness* to speak the Word despite the persecution of the Jewish religious leaders. Note they prayed not just for healings, miracles and wonders alone. Sadly, many modern Western Christians only pray for healings and miracles and expect to see unbelievers saved without personal bold witnessing.

Associated with them being refilled with the Holy Spirit was the fact they then spoke the Word of God boldly to the unsaved. They *did not merely entertain* the unsaved with *great singing and music or plays* nor *just share their religious experiences or testimonies*. Singing, music and testimonies are okay to use, but they can never replace the Word of God. 1 Peter 1:23-25 emphasises it is the Word which God uses to save people: **“having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.”**

Verses such as Matthew 13:18-23, John 5:24, 8:31-32, 12:47-48, 17:6, Acts 13:26 and Romans 10:8-17 also show the importance of the Word of God to being saved by Him. The Word of God is *not a side-issue*.

This does not mean we have to always read passages from the Bible when witnessing. Sometimes it is more suitable for us to talk in agreement with Biblical teachings when sharing with unbelievers without specifically quoting verse numbers and the exact words of the verses themselves. For example, we can talk about God as Creator, His goodness, eternal punishment, the effects of Jesus’ death and the need of faith and repentance without quoting the exact wording of relevant verses and their numbers.

- *Intercede in tongues for unsaved individuals.* Ask God to help you to intercede in tongues for unsaved individuals. Romans 8:26-27 reveals we do not know how to pray but the Holy Spirit will intercede through us for believers according to God’s will: **“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”** Also pray in tongues in order to charge yourself spiritually before witnessing. In 1 Corinthians 14:4, Paul says: **“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...”**

Pray and think about evangelism often

Charles Finney gave us some good practical advice about evangelism when he said: *“Make it an object of constant study, and of daily reflection and prayer, to learn how to deal with sinners so as to promote their conversion. It is the great business on earth of every Christian, to save souls. People often complain that they do not know how to take hold of this matter. Why, the reason is plain enough; they have never studied it. They have never taken the proper pains to qualify themselves for the work.”*¹⁷

Because evangelistic opportunities are *pre-planned* by God and often happen without us knowing when they are going to occur, we must be continually preparing ourselves for such occasions.

¹⁷ Charles Finney, “Revival Lectures”, Fleming H. Revell, Old Tappan, New Jersey, page 192.

Trust the Holy Spirit to work

One of the most crucial keys of witnessing is for us to depend greatly on the Holy Spirit to work on non-Christians and to give us wisdom about how to minister to them. Acts 1:8 says one reason we have been given the Holy Spirit is to empower us to witness about Jesus Christ. This witnessing involves sharing the Gospel and living a godly life. The work of God the Holy Spirit in ministering to non-Christians is seen in verses such as John 16:8-11, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 and 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

Unbelievers are spiritually dead in relation to God as Ephesians 2:1-3 shows. Unless God the Holy Spirit moves on them in His unmerited grace, they will never be able to understand His truth. 1 Corinthians 2:14 states: ***“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”***

In Matthew 4:19, Jesus spoke of following Him and becoming a fisher of men. After His resurrection, Jesus by His Spirit continues to train those who follow Him to be fishers of men. We need to remind ourselves constantly that unless God the Holy Spirit works behind the scenes, our witnessing will have no good effect. Even while talking to unbelievers, pray little prayers in your mind asking God to minister to them.

Trust the Holy Spirit for guidance

Trust God the Holy Spirit to guide you in your witnessing to unsaved individuals. A good example of someone witnessing through the guidance of the Holy Spirit can be seen in Acts 8:26-38 when Philip shared the Gospel with the Ethiopian. Two steps in God’s guidance are recorded in Acts 8:26-29: ***“Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, ‘Arise and go toward the south along the road from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot.’”***

We need to have the Holy Spirit’s guidance also in today’s world. God has many *sovereign divine appointments* for us if we are open to His guidance. But note also God can sometimes lead us to an opportunity to share the Gospel without a specific leading of the Holy Spirit.

(Refer to my books “How To Recognize God’s Voice” and “Dreams and Visions” for details about how the Holy Spirit guides us.)

Study Questions

1. What are the main things we should pray about in relation to evangelism and personal witnessing?
2. It is fine to use singing, music and testimonies in ministering to the unsaved. But why is it even more important to share with them the Word of God?
3. What are some of the crucial things the Holy Spirit does in relation to our witnessing to the unsaved?

Chapter 9

One Key Neglected Element

Use God's truth to encourage the unsaved person to see their true state

When doing personal evangelism in the power of the Holy Spirit, one of the keys is to help the unsaved person see God does not regard him as being good enough to go to heaven. In other words, God says the unsaved person is a sinner and unrighteous. The words "sinner" and "unrighteous" are usually unfamiliar to unbelievers, so it is better to use other *simpler* more familiar words and expressions to explain these concepts.

It is possible for God to sovereignly reveal to an unbeliever that he is a sinner without anyone telling them this through preaching or personal conversation. But this is a rare occurrence.

Some unsaved people believe in various teachings of the Bible. For example, some believe in the existence of the God of the Bible, heaven, a place of eternal punishment and the Final Judgement Day. But unless they know that just one sin is enough to condemn them forever to the Lake of Fire, they may be deluded by Satan into thinking they are good or moral enough to go to heaven.

When talking to such people, they usually self-righteously tell you all the kind and unselfish things they do and how others are worse than them. Such people need to be told the meaning of verses such as James 2:10: ***"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all"*** and Galatians 3:10: ***"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'"***

It may be helpful for you to ask the person things such as, "Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever once stolen anything, even something small? Have you ever not honoured either your father or your mother? Have you ever used God's Name or Jesus Christ's Name in anger or like a swear word? Have you ever at any time been envious or jealous about your neighbour's house, car, money or possessions? Have you even once been envious of the wife or husband of someone else – maybe a Hollywood star or a popular singer and so on? Have you at any time made an idol of any person or thing – regarding them as more important to you than God?" If the person answers, "Yes" to one or more of these questions, you then need to tell them that Romans 1:29-32 and 6:23 say that people who sin in such ways deserve immediate physical death and eternal separation from God or spiritual death. Romans 6:23 says: ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

In addition, it may be useful to share with the unsaved Jesus' Words in Matthew 5:21-22 and 27-30: ***"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgement. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire...You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already***

committed adultery with her in his heart. And if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."

When being so personal with a believer about specific sins, make sure you do not give the impression you are rejecting him. In John 4:16-19, we see Jesus did not reject the Samaritan woman when discussing her personal sins.

Lovingly and gently talk about specific sins

Despite the workings of conscience, most sinners try to convince themselves they are innocent and good people. Proverbs 16:2 refers to this: *"All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits."* Proverbs 21:2 states: *"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts."*

In order to destroy unbelievers' delusions about themselves through the Spirit's convicting power, we should lovingly and gently mention numerous examples of specific sins. This is one aspect of preaching the Word of God. It is mostly useless just talking about sin as some general concept.

While mentioning specific sins, we should gently include some which we know the person has probably committed in their lives. The person's conscience and the Holy Spirit will support us in this. Jesus Christ used the same principle while witnessing. Here are some examples:

1. When talking with the woman at the well, Jesus gently confronted her with her many divorces and present defacto relationship. John 4:17-18 records: *"The woman answered and said, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You have well said, 'I have no husband', for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."* Note John 4:19-20 shows she then tried to side-track Jesus off her sins by referring to a religious dispute between Samaritans and Jews: *"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."* You will often find that when unbelievers are being convicted of their specific sins, they will try to side-track the conversation onto various religious controversies.
2. When speaking with the rich young ruler, Jesus confronted him with his materialistic love of money and possessions, as Mark 10:21-22 shows: *"Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.' But he was sad at this word, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions."* Jesus spoke the above confronting words in love. Jesus did not try to compromise with the young man in order to obtain a follower. Christ watched the fellow go away unrepentantly.
3. When ministering to Simon the Pharisee, Christ indirectly told him he was a sinner (see Luke 7:36-37). Also note in verses 44 to 46, Jesus corrected him about not doing certain things which to us may seem minor: *"Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but*

she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.”

4. While speaking to the woman caught in adultery, Jesus did not condemn her but He clearly showed He regarded her sexual immorality as sin. He called her adultery “*sin*” and ordered her not to do it again. John 8:11 records His words to her: “...*And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’*” Jesus did not want to condemn her eternally. He desired to save her. But He told her she was a sinner who needed to repent.

The great evangelist Charles Finney said, “*Some people are very careful to avoid mentioning the particular sins of which they know the individual to be guilty, for fear of hurting his feelings. This is wrong. If you know his history, bring up his particular sins; kindly but plainly; not to give offence, but to awaken conscience, and give full force to the truth.*”¹⁸

Gilbert Tennant was a preacher used greatly of God in leading the unconverted to Jesus Christ in the Great Awakening or New England Revival of the 1700’s. Winkey Pratney said that Tennant: “*seemed to have no regard to please the eyes of his hearers with agreeable gestures, nor their ears with delivery, nor their fancy with language; but to aim directly at their hearts and consciences, to lay open their ruinous delusions, show them their numerous secret, hypocritical shifts in religion and drive them out of every deceitful refuge wherein they had made themselves easy with the form of godliness without power...His preaching was frequently both terrible and searching.*”¹⁹

When talking to the unsaved, it can be sometimes useful to share about the Fall of Adam and Eve and its effect upon the human nature of all their descendants. This will explain why the human race is not as God originally created it.

It may not be necessary when sharing with the unsaved to explain how Adam’s guilt has been imputed or accounted to all his descendants. This complex teaching can usually be explained better after conversion. It often becomes a side issue used by unbelievers to take the focus off their own actual sins and their present need of conversion to God through Jesus Christ.

Aim at the person’s conscience

When witnessing, it is important to aim at a person’s conscience. Unless you can arouse the person’s conscience, you will usually end up with merely an intellectual discussion of God. The conscience is aroused by:

- (a) talking about *right* and *wrong* as God defines these in His written Word. You do not necessarily need to open the Bible and read it to the person, unless he is willing to have you do this. You can paraphrase the main thrust of what the Bible teaches on various key issues. Note Romans 2:14-15 shows conscience operates in the realm of right and wrong as God defines these: “*for when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.*” 2 Corinthians

¹⁸ Ibid, page 180.

¹⁹ Winkey Pratney, “Revival”, Whitaker, Springdale, 1983, page 283.

4:2 and 1 Peter 3:15-16 also reveal the relationship between conscience and absolute right and wrong.

Romans 3:21, 7:7, 7:13 and 1 Timothy 1:8 show that the Ten Commandments and other moral laws of the Mosaic Covenant were given to show unbelievers that they are condemned sinners in His eyes. Galatians 3:24 demonstrates that the Mosaic Law is meant to be used to lead unbelievers to Jesus Christ: ***“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”***

The New Testament commands us to love God, unselfishly love others, not steal, not be involved with sexual immorality, not get drunk, not be greedy (see Matthew 22:37-40, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Ephesians 4:28, 5:3-5 and 5:18) can be used to arouse the Person’s conscience also. Refer to Chapter “The convicting moral law” for more details.

- (b) speaking of the Final Judgement of all humans by Jesus Christ. Romans 2:15 demonstrates that when it is operating properly, conscience will accuse or condemn a person who disobeys any of God’s commands. By referring to Jesus’ Final Judgement, the person’s conscience may become active in confirming your words about his spiritually lost state.

Note when Paul was witnessing to the Roman governor Felix and Felix’s wife, Paul included a mention of the future judgement. Acts 24:24-25 records: ***“And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgement to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’”***

Peter did the same when witnessing to Cornelius and his household, as Acts 10:42 demonstrates: ***“And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.”***

In Romans 9:1, Paul spoke of the Holy Spirit ministering to him through his conscience. You need to pray continually beforehand, in your thoughts during, and after witnessing to a person, that the Holy Spirit will minister to them through their conscience.

Be very careful, however, not to have an evil attitude to God’s Final Judgement. For example, if you show the person you would enjoy seeing them suffer eternal punishment, you are not motivated by God and His love but by the flesh. The Apostles James and John once had desired God to kill some Samaritans because these people had rejected them. The Apostle’s attitude in this case was evil and was rebuked by Jesus Christ (see Luke 9:51-55). We must warn others of the Final Judgement because we love them and want them to avoid eternal suffering.

Following John Wesley’s instructions, the Methodist evangelists in the 1700’s and 1800’s were marvellously effective in leading unbelievers to Jesus Christ. Winkey Pratney quotes Bishop Moule as saying: *“It was a precept of Wesley’s to his evangelists in unfolding their message to speak first in general of the love of God to man; then with all possible energy so as to search the conscience to its depths, to preach the law of holiness; and then, and not till then, to uplift the glories of the gospel of pardon and of life. Intentionally or not, his directions follow the lines of the epistle to the Romans.”*²⁰

Charles Finney was one of the most successful evangelists in history. He wrote: *“Just so Christians should let the sinner see their compassion and tenderness, but they should take the God’s part,*

²⁰ Ibid, page 281.

*fully and decidedly. They should lay open to the sinner the worst of his case, expose his guilt and danger, and then lead him right up to the cross, and insist on instant submission.”*²¹

One of the worst faults of much modern evangelistic preaching is that it does not appeal to the unbelievers' consciences. Such preaching does not stress enough that it is *right* to turn to God through Christ and it is *wrong* to remain in a state of rebellion and unbelief towards Him. Much modern preaching now concentrates mainly on appealing to the *selfishness* of believers as the reason why they should turn to God. Such preaching may result in many outward decisions. But it results in far less genuine converts and many backsliders because it encourages unbelievers to try to turn to Christ in a way which permits them to keep selfishness as their real lord and master.

Study Questions

1. Why is it necessary to share the basic meanings of verses like Romans 1:29-32, 6:23, Galatians 3:10 and James 2:10 with the unsaved?
2. Why should we lovingly and gently mention to unbelievers some of the specific sins they may have committed?
3. Give examples of Jesus Christ, the perfect evangelist talking to the unsaved about their specific sins.
4. How can we arouse an unsaved person's conscience?
5. What is one of the worst faults of much modern evangelistic preaching?

²¹ Finney, page 406.

Chapter 10

Beware Of Humanistic Perversions Of The Gospel

Throughout church history, some of the most effective attacks on the preaching of the true Gospel and evangelism have come from within the Church. One of the most subtle yet successful assaults on evangelism from the 1970's onwards has been the spread of the *humanistic perversions* of the Gospel which have been taught by some very influential American Christian authors. One of these authors insisted: *"Since we believe that the deepest need of every person is to experience and enjoy a healthy self-respect, a distinctive theology of evangelism evolves from a theology of self-esteem. Then it follows: The unconverted, the unchurched, the non-Christian is to be viewed as a non-trusting person – fearful and suspicious – instead of as an 'evil' or 'depraved' or 'shameful' soul...Our natural ability to trust God's love or to trust Christ's offer of salvation and forgiveness stems from our deep lack of self-worth... 'Unsaved souls' – insecure, non-trusting persons – will need a great deal of positive affirmation before they will be able to 'listen' and 'hear' and begin to comprehend the truth of saving grace. No wonder Jesus Christ employed a strategy of evangelism where he never called a person a 'sinner'. They were sinners, of course, but he never told them they were. The proclamation of the truth of their sin would only have driven the nail of unworthiness deeper until promises of forgiveness would lack the power to loosen and extract the spike of sin, self-condemnation and guilt."*

The above humanistic do-gooder type of comments have been tragically accepted by many Evangelicals and Charismatics in Western countries who follow the teachings of the above author. The deepest need of every person is *not self-respect*, but is *to know God intimately* through Jesus Christ, *to receive His love* and associated with this *to be saved by Him* from the power of sin, Satan and eternal punishment.

Also non-Christians are non-trusting in God, but they are also basically evil and depraved in the human nature. The natural inability of humans to trust Christ's offer of salvation and forgiveness stems from not our deep lack of self-worth. Instead it results from the fact that our sinful rebellious unfaithful hearts love evil desires and darkness, prefer to be dependent on and ruled by self instead of God and are inherently self-trusting. In John 3:19, Jesus says: ***"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*** Hebrews 3:12-13 reveals that it is sin which hardens our hearts against God.

Contrary to the above author, John 7:7 shows Jesus told unbelievers that their actions were evil: ***"The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil."*** Jesus here said unsaved people hated Him because He *told them they were evil*. Jesus loved people enough to tell them the truth, even though many hated Him in response.

Humanistic faith and legalistic twisted grace

The same American author said: *"What is lack of faith?' It is really a profoundly deep sense of unworthiness. It is lack of trust, a projection of a deep inner insecurity. So the unsaved person will be*

incapable of belief in 'salvation by grace.' The unsaved person cannot perceive himself as worthy of 'divine grace' and hence rejects it."

The above quote contains numerous unbiblical ideas. First, a lack of faith or trust in self is needed to have saving faith in God. Secondly, there is no such thing as being worthy or deserving of God's grace. By definition, God's grace cannot be deserved in the slightest way (see Romans 4:4, 11:6 and 11:35). By suggesting God's grace can be deserved, the previously quoted American author is preaching a legalistic twisted type of grace.

A false understanding of the Pharisees and Jesus' ministry to them

The same American author also wrote that Jesus Christ "*never called any person 'a sinner'. Rather he reserved his righteous rebuke for those who used their religious authority to generate guilt and caused people to lose their ability to taste and enjoy their right to dignity (Matt 23).*"

In the above, the author has indirectly judged and condemned as hypocritical Pharisees some of the greatest church leaders in history – revivalists such as Luther, Calvin, George Whitefield, Jonathon Edwards, John Wesley, Peter Cartwright, Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, Charles Spurgeon, R.A. Torrey and so on. In preaching, these past leaders told unbelievers they were sinners who would be eternally punished if they did not begin to have dependent faith in Jesus Christ and turn from their known sins. These great revivalists also told unbelievers what sins they must repent of as a part of their conversion and post-conversion walk with God.

We must stress to unbelievers how much God loves them. But they can only really see how much He loves them and how merciful and gracious He is as expressed in what Jesus Christ has done, if they come to see through Holy Spirit-inspired convicting preaching how sinful and wicked they are without Him. The limitless depths of His grace through Christ is not revealed by humanistically telling unbelievers how wonderful they are or by pretending they are not sinful and evil.

Let us examine the claim by the above humanistic author that Jesus "never called any person a 'sinner'." In Matthew 7:11, Luke 11:13 and 11:29, Jesus called His listeners "*evil*". In Mark 10:18, Jesus told a young man that no one is good except God. Luke 6:42 and 12:56 record Jesus calling the multitudes "*hypocrites*". In Matthew 9:13, Mark 2:17 and Luke 5:31, Jesus referred to Matthew the tax collector and Matthew's friends as "*sinners*". Luke 15:1-7 record Jesus calling people sinners in their presence. So the American author obviously knows more about worldly humanism than his Bible.

In the previous quote, the author has suggested Jesus in Matthew 23 rebuked the religious leaders – the scribes and Pharisees – for generating guilt and preventing others from feeling dignified about themselves. The truth, however, was the Pharisees preached about the sins of others from a standpoint of hypocritical self-trust, self-dependence and self-righteousness, not from the Biblical perspective of undeserved grace towards sinners and total humility. In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus spoke of the Pharisees: "*Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'' I tell you, this man*

went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Pharisees felt dignified about themselves and had little understanding of humility and God’s grace. Jesus called the Pharisees “*hypocrites*” (see Matthew 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27 and 29), “*whitewashed tombs*” (Matthew 23:27), “*blind guides*” (Matthew 23:16), “*blind fools*” (Matthew 23:17), “*sons of hell*” (Matthew 23:15) and said in Matthew 23:33: “*Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?*” Matthew 23:28 records Jesus said to the Pharisees: “*Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*”

Jesus was attacking the self-centred false religiosity of the Pharisees. He was not discouraging born-again preachers from making unbelievers feel guilty about their sins and aware of their future eternal punishment. In fact, Jesus was brilliantly trying to shock the self-trusting Pharisees into realising how sinful and wicked they were, how they were under a sentence of eternal condemnation and needed Him as their Lord and Saviour.

John the Baptist, Stephen and Peter compared to false prophets

John the Baptist preached in ways which confronted others with their sins (see Matthew 14:4 and Luke 3:7-14). He was beheaded because of this (see Matthew 14:1-12). He was no self-righteous unloving hypocrite but was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth (see Luke 1:15). Jesus said John was more righteous than any other person in Old Testament times (see Matthew 11:11). According to the wrong words of those previously quoted humanistic American author, John the Baptist was like the Pharisees and Jesus would have rebuked John for the way he preached.

In Jeremiah 23:21-22, God said: “*I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings.*”

Here God stresses one major sign of a ministry truly inspired by Him is it will emphasise the importance of people turning from their specific evil ways and doings. Obviously, such ministry makes listeners feel guilty as a needed preparation for them turning from their known sins and the receiving of His gracious forgiveness.

In Lamentations 2:14, God says it is a sign of a false prophet to not expose iniquity or sin: “*Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not uncovered your iniquity, to bring back your captives, but have envisioned for you false prophecies and delusions.*”

Stephen was a man full of faith, the Holy Spirit and His miracle-working power (see Acts 6:5 and 8). But note Acts 7:51-54 records his strong convicting preaching about the sins of his listeners made them feel very guilty. Similarly, Acts 2:22-38 reveals how Peter’s strong preaching to the Jews about their murder of Jesus Christ made them feel very guilty also. Stephen and Peter had not been led astray by humanistic religiosity and do-goodism.²²

²² Refer to Chapter “Rebuking and correcting” for more details on the Biblical teaching on correcting and rebuking sin.

Study Questions

1. What was unbiblical about the words of the author quoted in the first section of this chapter?
2. Is it Biblical to say we can be worthy of God's grace?
3. What were the real sins of the Pharisees?
4. What was different about how John the Baptist, Stephen and Peter ministered to how false prophets minister?

Chapter 11

Explain The Gospel, Conversion, Faith And Repentance

In witnessing and evangelising, we must very clearly and simply explain the Gospel and what conversion, faith and associated repentance means. For a person to be properly converted to Jesus Christ, they need to understand the basic elements of the Gospel, how they need to respond to God's grace through faith and accompanying repentance.

Also we need to correct the false notions of repentance and faith of the unbelievers to whom we minister. If these are not corrected, mostly false conversions will result. This is one of the worst faults about much public evangelism and private witnessing in Western countries at present. It is little wonder so many "decisions" for Christ are not really conversions and why so many backslide soon after.

Refer to my chapters on "The Gospel", "Conversion", "Faith" and "Repentance" for detailed teaching on what these are.

Occult involvement

One of the reasons why repentance from known sin must be emphasised in witnessing is that the majority of non-Christians in Western countries today have had some involvement in demon-inspired occult practices such as fortune-telling, spiritualist mediums, ouija boards, tarot cards and similar things. In Deuteronomy 18:10-12, God says that such things are an abomination to Him: *"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you."*

A person cannot be converted to Christ and continue to approve of such wicked things.

Study Question

1. What may happen, if we do not correct false notions of repentance and faith in Christ which unbelievers, to whom we are ministering, have?

Chapter 12

Emphasise God's Undeserved Love, Grace And Mercy

If you share with the unsaved person only about God's Final Judgement and his sin, he may become convicted but he will not be saved. This is because the person must also be told about:

- God's love for him.
- God's undeserved grace and mercy

The unsaved person must come to know how deeply God loves and values him despite his sin and guilt. You should explain that God sees him as being so precious God would have sent Jesus Christ to die for him even if he was the only individual on Earth.

If the person says he does not believe God loves him, tell him that Jesus Christ was God and His willingness to die for him proves His love. Romans 5:8 says: ***“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*** John 3:16 states: ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”***

Possibly explain the terrible tortures and shame Jesus Christ went through prior to His death (see Luke 18:31-33) and the dreadful sufferings He endured while on the Cross. Despite being totally innocent, Christ was willing to suffer these things only because of love for people. Possibly ask the person would he be willing to do such a thing for someone he loves but who does not love him.

Sharing about the Cross of Jesus Christ in this practical way is a key which God often uses in breaking down the hardest unbelieving heart. It is something which often brings me to tears.

The Holy Spirit uses the Ten Commandments and/or God's New Testament commandments about how we should live to convict the person of their sin, resulting guilt and of the future judgement (see John 16:8). But knowledge of God's undeserved love and mercy expressed in Jesus death and His present offer of salvation is the thing which breaks open unbelievers' hard hearts. When they see that *despite* their *terrible treatment of God*, He paid them back with undeserved love and mercy, their hearts will more likely be willing to respond to Him.

Study Question

1. What aspects of God's love, grace and mercy are needed to be shared with the unsaved?

Chapter 13

Handling Excuses, Difficulties And Tangents

Barriers to remove

One key in personal witnessing is by the power of the Holy Spirit to break down the barriers that prevent an unsaved person from being willing to discuss Jesus Christ, the Gospel and associated matters with you.

For example, many unbelievers have had bad past experiences with a Christians-in-name-only or even born-again Christians. The unbeliever may have been robbed, lied to or selfishly used by the churchgoer. The churchgoer may have committed adultery with the person's spouse. The unbeliever may have had hypocritical Christian parents. The unsaved person may have only known churchgoers who focussed purely on God's Final Judgement and spoke little of God's love and grace.

Or the unbeliever may have known liberal Christians who speak only about God's love and grace but live like the Devil. In one Australian town, for instance, a young so-called "Christian" used to witness to everyone he could find but was well known for not being able to control his sexual desires for many of the young girls in town. He used to come for prayer month after month about this wrongly claiming he could not with God's help turn from these sins.

Also, remember Satan uses the media to convince non-Christians that pastors and preachers are all money-grabbing manipulators. Sadly some American televangelists have brought thousands of godly ministers into disrepute about money matters.

Usually before you can minister effectively to such unsaved persons, they need to see you *practice what you preach*. Your love and concern for them and your practicing of true Christianity will help to break down many barriers.

Note also many believers have never known a practising non-hypocritical born-again Christian. They will have probably heard criticisms of Christians on television, radio, at school and among their friends. Usually, for you to minister well to such unsaved people, they need to observe you expressing Jesus' love, kindness and sympathy, and living a godly, moral, though obviously imperfect life such as commanded in the Bible over the time they know you after your conversion.

Lovingly hunting out excuses, difficulties and smoke screens

Charles Finney gives advice below to ministers about how to evangelise – advice he put into practice with enormous effect. This advice can apply to ascension gifted ministers or others doing witnessing:

*“Every sinner has some hiding place; some entrenchment, where he lingers. He is in possession of some darling LIE, with which he is quieting himself. Let the minister find it out and get it away, either in the pulpit or in private, or the man will go to hell in his sins...”*²³ He also said, *“Be careful to find the point the Spirit of God is pressing a sinner, and press the same point in all your remarks. If you divert his attention from that, you will be in great danger of destroying his convictions. Take pains to learn the state of his mind, what he is thinking of, how he feels, and what he feels most deeply upon, and then press that chief point thoroughly.”*²⁴

When witnessing to the unsaved, you will find they will bring up excuses and genuine difficulties to them becoming Christians. An *excuse* is some error or part-error that many use to justify them not turning from their sins to Jesus Christ. A *genuine difficulty* is some error or part-error which Satan uses to deceive them from being converted. Those with genuine difficulties are those who will quickly turn to the Lord if the difficulty is removed. In some cases, those with mere excuses will convert if the Holy Spirit empowers you to demolish their excuses. In other cases, they still will not convert even if you destroy their excuses. They will quickly find a new excuse to justify their rebellion against Jesus Christ.

As 2 Timothy 2:23-26 shows, you *should not quarrel or argue with non-Christians*. Instead you should *gently and respectfully ask questions* until you find out exactly what excuses or genuine difficulties are barriers to their conversion. For example some may say they cannot become Christians because they do not believe in eternal punishment. This may be a genuine difficulty in some cases, for example, those who have had non-Christian loved ones previously die. For others, it may be a mere excuse used to justify their own self-righteous rejection of God.

With a loving servant’s heart, you should keep probing unbelievers’ minds and hearts until you find out whether you have gotten to their deepest level of excuses and/or genuine difficulties. What they say at first about why they have not become Christians is sometimes a *smoke screen* covering the real excuses and/or genuine difficulties that lay underneath their initial comments. For instance, a person may say he has not become a Christian because he feels Biblical morals are wrong or there is no such thing as absolute right or wrong. But when you gently dig deeper with questions, you find he loves the sin of sex outside marriage. His other earlier comments are a smokescreen to defend his underlying sin.

Another unbeliever may say she cannot become a Christian because she believes Christianity supports the maltreatment of women. But when you lovingly probe her with other questions, you find that she became pregnant outside of marriage, had the baby aborted and self-righteously refuses to admit her guilt before God.

Every unbeliever is different. They all have *different* excuses and/or *varying* genuine difficulties. So we must treat each individual differently to some extent. You must continually pray *asking the Lord to bring the person’s excuses and genuine difficulties to the surface*. God may reveal these on one day or over many weeks or months. Once you have discovered a person’s genuine difficulty, you must *trust the Lord to help you remove it*. You may not remove the difficulty at the first discussion. The Lord may enable you to do this through later discussions.

²³ Ibid, page 224.

²⁴ Ibid, page 192.

If the unbeliever is merely hiding behind various excuses, you must trust the Lord to help you lovingly to *expose* the real reason why he is not willing to receive Jesus Christ as His Lord and Saviour.

Do not allow the sinner to use the sins of Christians as an excuse

If the sinner begins to defend himself by attacking the sins of various Christians in the past or present, do not allow him to deceive himself in this way. You should tell him firstly that God will judge everyone as individuals and that their sin will not be a valid excuse for him on the Final Judgement Day.

Also, tell him that Jesus said in Matthew 7:2 that partly by the standards we judge the sins of others so shall God judge us: ***“For with what judgement you judge, you shall be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”*** In addition maybe share with him the Words of Romans 2:1: ***“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things”*** and Jesus’ Words in Matthew 12:36-37: ***“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgement. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”***

The excuse of other religions

Often unsaved people try to divert the conversation away from their need of receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour by saying, “What about other non-Christian religions? Do not all religions lead to God? Christianity is not the only correct religion.”

In a loving gentle way, you need to share with the person these things:

- The Bible says Jesus Christ is God (see John 1:1, 8:58, 14:7-11, 20:28, Romans 9:5, Philippians 2:9-11, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:1-2, 1:6, 1:8, 2 Peter 1:1, Revelation 1:8 and 22:13). Either He was or He was not.
- God’s written Word insists that His death was the only means humans could be reconciled to God (see Romans 5:9-10, Ephesians 2:14-18 and Colossians 1:20-22). Either He was right or wrong.
- Jesus made the absolute claim He was the only way to God and all other leaders of other religions were false. In John 14:6, Christ said: ***“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”*** John 10:7-9 records similar claims: ***“Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.’”*** The Apostle Peter confirmed such absolute claims in Acts 4:12: ***“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”***

Therefore, you must lovingly tell unsaved people that they *must make a choice* either to receive Jesus Christ as Lord or to take the enormous risk of rejecting Him, but *not to hide*

behind the pretense that all religions are the same. You may even wish to quote Revelation 3:15-16 which while in context is directed towards churchgoers, can be applied to those who say they believe in Jesus and other religions together: ***“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.”***

Avoid unfruitful tangents

Try to limit as much as possible being diverted into discussions about the differences between different church denominations and about minor points of doctrine. Often the Devil will lead the unconverted into these side-issues in order to defuse their feelings of conviction about their sins and the Final Judgement and to try to take the Word of God out of their hearts. Luke 8:12 says: ***“Those by the wayside are the ones that hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.”***

Note when Jesus Christ was ministering to the Samaritan woman, He did not allow her to become side-tracked on religious matters which distracted her attention from the main question of whether she would become His disciple (see John 4:20-26).

Be very patient though

Be very patient if the unsaved person has a genuine difficulty in their understanding which is not just an attempt to have the conversation be bogged down on a side issue. Be willing to discuss such genuine difficulties. If, for example, they cannot accept the idea of undeserved grace, gently discuss this more fully.

Do not take the sinner’s side against God

Sometimes while witnessing, Christians mistakenly and often unknowingly begin to take the sinner’s side against God. For example, the sinner may say he is too controlled by his sin to repent of it. Do not agree with him. He needs to be told that if he sincerely wishes to turn to God and repent of his sin, God will give him the power to do this.

It is right to respond *sympathetically* to an unsaved person’s wrong beliefs, “I understand how you could think that way...” But then add to your comments a gentle correction of their false belief.

Study Questions

1. What are some of the barriers in an unsaved person’s mind we may have to remove by the power of the Holy Spirit?
2. What are the differences between the excuses and genuine difficulties which the unsaved have in relation to turning to Jesus Christ?
3. Generally how should we handle the excuses and genuine difficulties which unbelievers share when we are ministering to them?
4. If an unsaved person uses the sins of other Christians as an excuse to not turn to Jesus Christ, how should we handle this?

5. How should we deal with the excuse that because there are many religions, Christianity cannot be the only true way to God?
6. Why should we try to avoid unfruitful tangents and side-issues when witnessing?
7. How can we fall into the trap of taking the sinners side against God?

Chapter 14

More Practical Advice

Aim to talk alone

Aim to talk to unsaved individuals *alone*. This is unless they are willing to be a part of a Bible study group. Most unbelievers will not open their hearts to a deep discussion about God in the presence of others. Their own *pride* and *fear of rejection* mostly will manifest at such times. Also, you will find that other unbelievers will often band together behind the person you are witnessing to, in attacking what you are saying. The person you are sharing with may laugh off your comments to prove to other unbelievers he is not becoming interested in Jesus Christ.

Similarly when you witness to a family of unsaved people, usually it is better to do it *one by one*. Unbelievers will mostly react very differently when you talk to them alone than when they are psychologically pressured by other unsaved relatives or friends. This is not an absolute rule, but a general truth in many cases.

Wait until the person is not absorbed by urgent matters

If possible, try to talk with the person when his mind is not absorbed by some other activity he regards as urgent. For example, if he has to leave to go to work in 5 minutes time, it is unlikely he will concentrate on what you say. If your female cousin is studying for an exam occurring tomorrow, she is likely to be offended if you wish to have a lengthy conversation about the Gospel of Jesus Christ at that time. Look for a time when she is less pressured.

Salvation is far more important than work or an exam or anything else, but the unsaved do not think so. This is why it is usually best to look for an occasion when the person is more open for discussion.

You need to consider prayerfully when it would be the best time to talk to the person. To some degree, this also applies to public evangelistic ministry. For example, John Wesley found one of the best times to preach publicly to poor workers in the 1700's was at 5 am in the morning. This was because they were going to work at that time. The workers worked such long hours – about twelve hours a day six days a week with only Sunday as a day of rest – that except for Sunday and early in the morning it was difficult for evangelists to come into contact with them.

Not when he is drunk

Mostly you will find it of little use sharing the Gospel with a person who is drunk. Drunk individuals are fond of talking about religion but rarely are they in a state to be convicted of their sins and need of a Saviour.

Mostly wait until he is in a good mood

It is mostly best to share the Gospel with a person when he is in a good mood. A person who is already angry, will mostly become more angry and want to fight in words or with his fists if you share the Gospel with him at that time.

Unbelievers really dislike what God represents. If they are already angry about something else, a discussion about God is likely to achieve little except provoke more anger.

Avoid religious jargon which is unknown to the person

When witnessing to a non-Christian, try to avoid using religious jargon wherever possible. I refer here to words such as repentance, justification, atonement, propitiation, redemption, righteousness and holiness. Use other *simpler* words or phrases that can explain these Biblical concepts. If unbelievers do not know the words you use, they will usually fail to grasp the meaning of what you are saying. At the time of the early Church, those who Greek understood the meanings of the Greek equivalents of the above English jargon words. But many English-speakers today are unfamiliar with the meanings of these words in English. They need to hear other more commonly spoken English words used to explain these Biblical concepts.

Seek the earliest opportunity

Having taken into account other things mentioned here, seek the earliest opportunity possible to share the Gospel with unsaved relatives or others. Do not leave it too long. The person may die and will face a sentence of eternal condemnation. Colossians 4:5-6 says we must make the most of every opportunity with outsiders – the unsaved: ***“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”*** Notice these verses also say our words should be loving expressions of God’s undeserved grace.

Be humble

Previously, I said we should pray for boldness in witnessing. But boldness does not refer to thinking and behaving in ways which suggest we are superior to the unbelievers to whom we witness.

The only difference between believers and unbelievers is believers have Jesus Christ and His salvation. Without Him, we are no better than them. So we should relate to unbelievers with humility when witnessing to them. 1 Peter 3:15 says: ***“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.”***

If you have done anything wrong towards the unbeliever in the past, ask his forgiveness and if possible undo the wrong you have done.

Do not be like Zophar!

Sadly, many Christians are like Zophar, one of Job's comforters. As Job said in Job 21:34, Zophar's ministry to him was so full of error that it did not help him: "***How then can you comfort me with empty words, since falsehood remains in your answers.***"

By sharing serious errors with unbelievers when witnessing or preaching in public, we can do more harm than good. Here are some examples:

- When discussing with an unbeliever his past life, you agree with him that it was his parents, teachers, other people and Satan who were responsible for all his sins. While it is true others may have sinned terribly against him and led him towards various sin, God holds him responsible for his decisions to sin. Adam blamed Eve and God for his sin (see Genesis 3:12). Eve blamed Satan for her sin (see Genesis 3:13). But God held Adam, Eve and Satan *all responsible* (see Genesis 3:14-19). If out of a false worldly sympathy you try to make a sinner feel less blame before God, you are resisting the Holy Spirit.
- You tell a sinner he will be converted in future in God's time. God's time is *now*. The Gospel command to convert and repent relates to *now*, not later. The mention of repenting in Mark 1:15, Acts 17:30 and 26:20 in relation to the Gospel are in the present tense in Greek.
- You encourage the sinner to pray that the Holy Spirit will repent through them. The Holy Spirit gives people the power to repent but it is *they and not He* who uses His help to repent.
- You instruct the sinner to *try* to repent of their sins and to turn to Him in faith. This is nonsense. God is willing to empower all unbelievers to repent of their sins and have faith. So if they have not done this, they show they have not really wanted to repent and have faith in Him. Talk of "trying to repent" is the words of religious hypocrites.

Sharing your testimony

In witnessing, it can be useful to share some of your own testimony as Paul did in Acts 22:1-21 when speaking to the Jews in Jerusalem. Testimonies of how Jesus Christ has changed your life can have a powerful impact when anointed by God the Holy Spirit.

When sharing parts of your testimony with an unbeliever, try to pick those aspects which are relevant to him. Also talk about *specific* changes in your life. Do not just say, "I have changed." Do not *exaggerate* or tell lies. The Holy Spirit will not support such words.

But you need to be careful to not rely on your testimony alone all the time. Otherwise you can end up falling into the trap of focussing so much on yourself and your own experiences, the person loses sight of the real Gospel challenge – receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Paul referred to this in 2 Corinthians 4:5: "***For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord...***"

Questions for the unsaved

On numerous occasions when ministering to various Jews, Jesus focussed their attention by asking them various questions. See, for example, Matthew 12:3-5, 12:11-12, 12:48, 16:15, 22:20, 22:43-45, John 10:34-36 and 21:15-17.

When witnessing, we can also use various questions to improve our communication. For example, in order to focus an unsaved person's mind on God and Jesus Christ, you can ask questions like:

- “Do you believe there is a spiritual world?”
- “Do you believe there is a God?”
- “What do you think about Jesus Christ?”

By asking such questions, you will also learn what the person thinks.

When talking to non-churchgoing Christians-in-name only, maybe ask something else:

- “Do you wish to know personally the God to whom you have prayed over the years?”
- “If you died tonight, do you know with absolute certainty you would be going to heaven?”

Ask the person if you can pray for them at the end

It is important to ask the person if you can pray for them at the end of discussing the Gospel. This may open their hearts more the Holy Spirit's work.

There are a number of possibilities:

- You may have to do all the praying.
- If the person is willing, ask them to pray something like, “Lord God' I sincerely ask You to reveal Yourself to me from this day forward. I thank You for this in Jesus' Name!” Some may be pleased to pray. Others may not want this.

If your unsaved relatives or friends do not want prayer for themselves about salvation but tell you that they or their loved ones are sick or having problems in their marriages, with their children, at work, in their studies or in other areas, offer to pray for them about these matters. Sometimes, God can use this to open unbelievers hearts to Him.

Praying at the point of conversion

When the unsaved person is ready to be converted, get her to pray words similar to the following:

“Lord Jesus, thank You for dying on the Cross to pay the price I owed to God's justice because of my sins. I now sincerely open my heart to You and receive You as my Lord and Saviour. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life even though I do not deserve it. I give the rule of my life to You. Thanks for helping me by Your power to become the type of person You want me to be.”

The key thing is not repeating the above words like a trained parrot but instead praying the above with *sincerity* and *trusting faith*. Assure the person that if she prays in faith and sincerity, Jesus Christ will do exactly as she asked.

After the person has prayed the above or similar words, ask her to pray whatever is on her heart in her own words.

Follow up all converts

When an unbeliever surrenders his heart to the Lord Jesus, do not abandon him. Recontact the person within 24 hours. Make sure you start taking him to church meetings while he is flowing in the Lord. If you truly are the person's friend, you must continue to see the person regularly, probably now more regularly than before. Lovingly and gently share with him about important Biblical teachings on temptation, confession, repentance, trusting God, justification, the Holy Spirit living within him, God's grace, witnessing and so on. Tell him not to think Jesus Christ will quickly leave him if he falls into a known sin. Share verses such as Hebrews 13:5 and 1 John 1:9.

Satan will try to lead him to backslide right from the start. So you need to help this new child of God.

Introduce the person to other Christians. Seek another sensible Christian to help you care for the new convert. Aim to spend time praying with the person and have him join a suitable small group in the local church. Make sure the person buys or is given a Bible. Encourage him to begin reading a New Testament Book such as the Gospel of John or Luke.

Disciples, not just decisions

Remember true New Testament evangelism aims at disciples, not just momentary decisions.

Witnessing to casual contacts

I believe strongly in the personal relationship-style evangelism or friendship evangelism written about here. But note the New Testament also teaches that believers can also evangelise through *casual contacts* with people that they have never met before. The evangelist's Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch is an example (see Acts 8:26-39).

Learn from other witnesses

One way of growing continually in your ministry of personal evangelism is to ask others, who are effective witnesses, for Biblical advice and practical suggestions. Those who travelled with the Apostles Paul and Barnabus learnt much about effective public and personal evangelism by observing the lives of these fellows and talking with them.

Be careful not to take all advice as a "Thus Saith the Lord". Test it by the Scriptures to see if it involves specific Biblical principles. If it involves practical methods that are not specifically mentioned in the Bible, make sure these are not contrary to general Biblical

commands and teachings. For example, if a person suggests you watch movies laden with sexually immoral scenes with unbelievers in order supposedly to minister to them, ignore such foolish advice.

Study Questions

1. Why it is often better to talk to unbelievers alone about turning to Jesus Christ?
2. Explain why it is generally wiser to share with the unsaved about Christ when they are not absorbed by what they regard as urgent matters and when they are in a good mood.
3. Why is it better to try to avoid religious jargon when sharing with the unsaved?
4. What does it mean to be humble when witnessing?
5. What does Job 21:34 say was wrong with Zophar's ministry to Job? What are some examples of serious errors we can share with the unsaved?
6. What practical advice should we follow when sharing our testimony with the unsaved?
7. What types of questions can we use to focus the minds of the unsaved while witnessing to them?
8. What are some of the principles in following up new converts?

Chapter 15

Atheists, Agnostics And Pagans

Witnessing to atheists and agnostics

Atheists believe that God does not exist. When witnessing to atheists it can be helpful:

- to show them gently how they do not truly live according to the underlying assumption of atheistic philosophy. This is the assumption that unless we can see, hear, taste, touch or smell something, we cannot believe it exists.

For example, they believe in the existence of radio waves even though they can only observe the results of radio waves in radios and televisions. The same applies to the sounds that a dog whistle makes and to gravity. Similarly, we cannot see, taste, touch or smell God at present, but the *results* of His existence are everywhere in nature, on human conscience and evident in the fulfilled Biblical prophecies and the spiritual experiences of multiplied millions of Christians. (These results in themselves do not provide 100% intellectual proof of His existence, but they destroy the creditability of the simple-minded atheistic philosophy which places such unreasonable faith in the limited observations of the human physical senses.)

Also, ask them, “Do you believe there is life on other planets?” If they say, “Yes”, say gently how they are contradicting themselves by believing in beings they have never personally seen, heard or touched while not believing in God because they cannot see, hear or touch Him.

- to ask them lovingly, “If God is not real, how can you explain away Jesus Christ Who said He was God manifested in human nature?” They will mostly try to give naturalistic interpretations of Jesus Christ's life. Listen respectfully and patiently to their words.

But do not allow such excuses to prevent you from then telling them that Jesus Christ constantly stated that even though every human deserves punishment for not loving God and other people perfectly, He loves them so much He was willing to suffer the death penalty set by God's perfect justice due because of their selfish treatment of God and other people. (Your question about Jesus Christ opens up the opportunity for you to share the Gospel about Him.)

If they foolishly say they do not believe Jesus Christ existed, emphasise that non-Christian ancient writers said He did exist. The Roman writers Tacitus (60-120 A.D.) in his “Annales” (XV.44), Suetonius (75-160 A.D.) in his “Vita Claudii” (XXV.4) and Pliny (62-113 A.D.) in his Epp.X (ad Trajan – XCVI), the Greek writer Lucian (120-180 A.D.) in his “The Passing of Peregrinus 1, 11 and 13 and the Jewish writer Flavius Josephus (37-100 A.D.) in his “Antiquities” (Book 20, Chapter 9:1) all refer to the human existence of Jesus Christ. For example, Tacitus wrote: “*Christ...was executed at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius.*” Lucian described Christ as the one “*who was crucified in Palestine.*”

- to emphasise what awesome intellectual faith is required to believe the universe just accidentally began out of nothing. Stress that it requires less intellectual faith to believe an infinite eternal God created it. Do not be diverted, however, into a “ten year” discussion of evolution. Demons can use this to try to keep the unsaved person’s mind so bogged down that they never consider the Gospel.
- think beforehand of other things that would encourage an atheist to begin to doubt his dogmatic stance.

Agnostics believe that we *cannot be certain* whether God exists or not. They base their arguments mostly on the philosophy of *scepticism*. But scepticism itself is an *illogical* philosophy in that it teaches, “We cannot be certain about anything”. Scepticism really foolishly teaches, “I am certain that we *cannot be certain* about anything.”

Agnostic philosophy if logically applied to the natural world would make us say foolishly that we cannot be certain the earth or anything on it exists. This is because if we apply the same sceptical philosophical arguments to the reality of the natural world that agnostics apply to God’s existence, we could not say for certain the natural world existed either. This is because human physical senses do not give perfect perceptions of truth.

For example, if you look down a train line, your eyes wrongly suggest the lines meet. Put a stick in water and your eyes will falsely tell you the stick is bent. Human noses cannot smell certain things that some animals can smell. The human ear cannot hear sounds dogs can hear. Colour blind people see some colours differently to others. Who is seeing the right colour? Is the majority always right? To one person’s tastebuds a food may taste bitter. To another, it may taste sweet. Which tastebuds are giving the correct information?

Therefore, if human physical senses are so imperfect, we can use the same sceptical arguments that agnostics use about God to conclude we cannot be sure the natural world exists. But what agnostic would be foolish enough to walk in front of a moving bus on the basis that they cannot perfectly prove the bus exists. Here we see the *hypocritical* nature of agnosticism. It uses sceptical philosophy only in matters that suits itself.

Even if atheists and agnostics refuse to accept your words about the God of the Bible being real, do not allow this to prevent you from lovingly and gently sharing the Gospel with them. The Holy Spirit will use your words to convict the person regardless of their atheistic or agnostic stance. Intellectual discussions alone about the existence of God will never convert anyone. University philosophy classes debate arguments about God’s existence often, but few people have been saved by such debates. God has ordained that He would convert people through other humans sharing the Gospel with them.

In 1 Corinthians 1:17-25, Paul emphasised: ***“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’ Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are***

called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

In Romans 1:14-16, Paul said the Gospel is suitable to save both “wise” and “unwise” unbelievers: ***“I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”***

There have been cases in which God has sovereignly led individuals to Jesus Christ without them previously hearing some human share the Gospel. But mostly in such cases, like when God sent His angel to Cornelius, the people were then instructed to talk to a specific Christian who would later share the Gospel with them.

In Mark 16:15-16, Jesus commanded: ***“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’”*** Note in Mark 16:20 God worked behind the scenes confirming His Word as the disciples preached it. God the Holy Spirit will be doing the same as you share the Word in personal evangelism. As John 16:8-10 and 1 Thessalonians 1:5 show, He will be working in the unseen realm convicting the unsaved of their sinful nature and acts, their need of a right standing before God and nature through Christ, and the future Final Judgement.

This does not mean all or the majority of the people you share with will be converted. Jesus foreknew only a minority of the world’s population would choose to be saved. In Matthew 7:13-14, He said: ***“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*** Matthew 22:14 records Jesus said God calls many people to Himself, but only some of these are finally saved: ***“For many are called, but few are chosen.”***

Another helpful thing in witnessing to atheists and agnostics is to say something like, “If you are truly open to the truth and are not using intellectual debate to hide yourself from possible truth, you should be willing to sincerely ask God for a few weeks each day starting now, ‘God if You and Jesus Christ exist and what is claimed about You is true, I ask You now to reveal Yourself to me.’ If you are not willing to do this, this proves conclusively you are really seeking to know the truth.”

Do not allow atheists, agnostics or anyone else bog you down in a discussion of philosophy and logic. These are mostly fruitless tangents which the Devil uses to blind the person to their need of God and Jesus Christ. Keep referring back to Jesus Christ, His love for the person, the Final Judgement, Christ's death, what His death has achieved and the need for a response of receiving Him as Lord and Saviour through faith and accompanying repentance.

If, however, you see the unsaved person has a genuine difficulty or question they need to have answered but you cannot answer at the time, say, “I do not have an answer to your question today, but I will get back to you with the answer at a later time.” Then research the matter and give your answer next time.

Witnessing to believers in pagan religions

Usually before witnessing to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and members of other pagan religions, it is helpful to learn some things about their religion in order to be able to share the

Gospel effectively. You do not need to be like a university professor teaching comparative religion. But it is very useful to understand key features of these other religions.

For example, it is helpful to know that the Hindu religion teaches there are 330 million gods, that nature is a part of God and human spirits are God or gods. Also Buddha was born about 621 B.C., Lao-Tse (the founder of Taoism) in the 500's B.C. and Confucius in about 551 B.C. But Abraham, the man of God was born long before in about 1900 B.C. The first author of the Books of the Bible lived around the 1500's B.C., – *many centuries before* the times of Buddha, Confucius and Lao-Tse.

Be careful, however, not to become bogged down in focussing purely on the faults of other religions. It is only Jesus Christ and the Gospel which saves people, not words about the faults of other religions.

You need to say pagan religions are wrong and to state Jesus insisted He was the only Way to God (see John 14:6). You may also need to give a few examples of major errors of the pagan religion(s). But more importantly, you will need gently to return the conversation to:

- Who is Jesus Christ?
- Is He God manifested in human nature?
- Where is He now?
- All humans will be future judged by Him.
- He loves all of us – no matter how wicked. He was willing to pay the death penalty we all deserved.
- He wants to form a deep personal relationship with us all and to save us from eternal punishment.
- He requires us to turn in our hearts from our known sins and begin to have trusting faith in Him in order to commence this relationship and to avoid such future punishment.

Ministering to those who do not believe in God, Christ and the Bible

If an unsaved person insists, “I do not believe in God, Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Bible”, gently say something like, “Have you ever *sincerely* asked God is He real and given Him *plenty of time* to answer. If He is real, don't you think He will reveal Himself if you sincerely ask?” and/or “Have you ever read the Bible? Don't you think it is *intellectually dishonest* to judge something you have not properly read. This is especially when the Bible makes *exceptionally higher claims* for itself than any other book you have been willing to read.” Then encourage the person to ask God sincerely each day for a fortnight if He is real and if Jesus Christ really is Whom He claimed to be and to read say the Gospel of Matthew. Also possibly say respectfully to the person, “A scientist would *not be honest* in his search for truth if he already made up his mind before doing the experiments, would he?”

If the unsaved person says, “The Bible is full of errors and contradictions”, you may reply something like: “Have you actually thoroughly read the Bible or are you just believing *without thorough proof* the second-hand opinions of those who attack it? How can you be sure that those who attack it are not doing this only because they are angry as a result of the fact the Bible attacks the evil they are doing in their own hearts and behaviour. So to try to justify themselves to their own conscience, they attack the Bible.” If he replies that he has read it, gently ask, “How long ago did you read it? Also how much of it did you read?” or similar

questions in order to encourage him to honestly evaluate how well he has actually studied it. The aim is to lead him into being willing to read the Bible more thoroughly.

If he ends up being willing to read the Bible, make sure you urge them:

- to ask God each time he reads it to speak to him through its Words and
- to begin with one or more of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These focus on God, Jesus and the Gospel and are easier to understand than most other New Testament Books. If he begins in the Old Testament, he may become bogged down in the Mosaic Law, genealogies or some other area.

Study Questions

1. When ministering to atheists, what are some helpful things you can do to undermine their belief in their false philosophy?
2. Explain the hypocritical nature of agnosticism and the philosophy of scepticism on which agnosticism is based.
3. It is important to discuss any genuine difficulty that an atheist or agnostic has about turning to God and Jesus Christ. But explain why it is also crucial that you share the Gospel with them and that the Holy Spirit ministers to them.
4. What are some of the things we may do in ministering to the members of pagan religions?
5. How can we minister to those who do not believe in God, Christ and the Bible?

Chapter 16

Uninterested, Interested And Convicted Sinners

We can put unsaved people in three main categories:

1. uninterested sinners – those who have no interest in converting to Jesus Christ at present.
2. interested sinners – those who have become interested in Jesus Christ for various reasons but do not feel convicted of their sins and sinful nature. The Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus was probably an interested sinner. Acts 13:7 reveals he sought to hear the Word of God through Paul and Barnabus.
3. convicted sinners – those who are interested in Jesus Christ and are aware of the conviction of the Holy Spirit about their sinful nature, sins, resulting sentence of eternal condemnation and their need of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, but have not been converted as yet.

While each of the above three groups are different, they all have various excuses and/or genuine difficulties about turning to God. Loving personal evangelism involves doing what the perfect evangelist Jesus Christ did. He uncovered people's excuses and reasons for not turning to Him. As stated before, He ministered to the rich young ruler about his attitudes to money and possessions (see Mark 10:17-23), to the Samaritan woman about her relationships with men (see John 4:1-26), to the woman caught in adultery (see John 8:1-11) and to Simon the Pharisee about his self-righteousness (see Luke 7:36-47).

Dealing with interested sinners

Two serious mistakes which many believers make in evangelising interested sinners are:

- they assume the latter are convicted of their sinful nature and sins and of their need of a divine Saviour, when they are not.
- they assume the latter know what the two key elements in conversion – repentance and trusting faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – really mean.

Many preachers in public evangelism and believers in personal witnessing try to rush interested sinners into making some sort of decision for Jesus Christ without the latter coming under conviction and knowing what true conversion involves. This is one reason so much modern evangelism in Western countries has multitudes of decisions but only a small percentage of real conversions and multitudes of drop outs.

The Ten Commandments, Matthew 5:21-22, 5:27-30, Luke 10:25-28 and similar verses are especially suitable to be used under the anointing of the Holy Spirit to show interested

sinner's sins and sinful state. Verses like Romans 1:29-32 and 6:23 are suited to reveal to them they are under a deserved sentence of eternal punishment by God the Supreme Ruler and Judge. Read my Chapter "Repentance", Chapter "Faith" and my other chapters on repentance, conversion and faith for relevant verses about the necessity of repentance and faith for salvation. You do not need to quote these verses word for word to the unsaved. You can paraphrase the verses to them.

Christians are very cruel when they do not reveal to a person their sin, their state of eternal condemnation, their need of a Saviour and what repentance and faith mean. Some interested sinners will be convicted and converted very quickly. Others will take longer and yet others will never be convicted.

Dealing with convicted sinners

Convicted sinners know their sinful state, their guilt before God, the eternal punishment awaiting them and Jesus Christ being their perfect remedy. But if a sinner remains for a long time in a convicted state without being converted, mostly it is because:

- they have been deceived into thinking their sins are too bad or too many for God to forgive them.
- they do not know what repentance and trusting surrendered faith in Jesus Christ mean.
- they are wrongly waiting for some special feelings or mystical state which someone has wrongly told them they must experience to be converted.
- they are refusing inwardly to surrender the lordship of their lives to Jesus Christ. They are willing to receive Jesus only on their terms and not on His.
- they are rebelling inwardly against turning in their hearts from a specific sin. They may pretend to themselves it is only a minor matter, but the Holy Spirit does not. The Spirit of the Lord continues to deal with them about it. Demons are encouraging the person to cling to it, in order to hang on to the person's life. It may be a hatred or resentment of someone or sexual immorality or people-pleasing or something else.
- they have a particular idol which they love more than God. Satan uses this idol to lead the person to refuse to surrender their life in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. The idol could be the approval of certain unbelievers. It could be something good in itself such as a business, money, a sport, a hobby or something else (see Luke 14:16-24).

When talking to sinners who are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, make sure you do not agree with them about any of the above six wrong attitudes. Otherwise Satan can use you as an unwitting instrument so he can remove the Word of God from their hearts (see Luke 8:12). For example, often convicted sinners will look for some Christian(s) who will tell them the opposite of what the Holy Spirit and their consciences are telling them. They have some particular sin or idol they do not want to turn from but they also want to be saved. So they constantly ask various Christians "Can I be converted to Jesus Christ and still do or keep such and such a thing in my life?"

If the person is troubled about it and it obviously is an idol or a thing contrary to the Bible, you can be sure the Holy Spirit is dealing with the person about this. So if you tell the

person they can be converted and not repent in their hearts of this *known* sin or *known* idol, you will be grieving and resisting the Holy Spirit and thereby sinning yourself.

Be careful, however, not to tell the person she has to repent of something which is not revealed in the Bible as a sin but is merely a man-made law. For example, if she thinks she has to turn from eating meat or desiring to be married in order to be saved, tell her this is a false doctrine of devils (see 1 Timothy 4:1-5). As stated in Chapter "Conversion", unbelievers do not need to turn from all their unknown sins in order to be converted to Jesus Christ. But they do need to turn in their hearts from their *known* sins to experience true conversion.

The Holy Spirit usually reveals to the convicted sinner their specific sins during the varying-in-length conviction period prior to conversion. Other presently hidden sins will be revealed by the Holy Spirit later after conversion as a part of the person growing in sanctification.

Remember as shown in Chapter "Faith", the word for "faith" in the original Greek New Testament has elements of surrendering or committing yourself to Jesus' rule. Obviously, such a surrender will be imperfect in that after conversion the Holy Spirit will reveal specific areas the person did not know needed to be surrendered. But such surrender at conversion must be genuine for the person to have saving faith.

Numerous often sincere but misguided preachers and ordinary believers lead convicted sinners who have not repented of their specific known sins and who have not surrendered themselves to Jesus Christ as Lord to make decisions for Him which are not true conversions. The poor convicted sinners are told they are saved when they are not. Usually after a while, the conviction of the Holy Spirit leaves them and they stop going to church and/or having any interest in Jesus Christ. They end up in a more hardened, worse spiritual state than previously.

I also believe there are probably many others who were initially led into false conversions and who later were truly converted while being followed up and taught by a local church.

Sinners can be converted without knowing the technical definition of the word "conversion". But true conversion requires a turning in their hearts from all their old *known* evil ways.

Avoid all religious pretense and hypocrisy

When praying for interested and convicted sinners who are not ready to turn from their known sins and to surrender their lives to Jesus' rule, do not while praying together with them:

- call them "humble souls". They are not humble until they have turned in their hearts from their known sins to having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- call them "poor sinners" as though they were not to blame for their sinful lives.
- refer to them as "seeking God". Matthew 7:7 says those who are truly seeking will find. So if they are not yet converted they are not really fully seeking God. They are considering God, but not really totally seeking Him. Do not participate in any religious pretense or hypocrisy. To do so is like a doctor telling a person who will die if he does not receive a new physical heart that because the person is merely considering having the operation, he is completely seeking to avoid death.

Do not pray in any way which suggests God does not hold them accountable for their sins and that He does not command they *immediately* surrender their hearts and lives to Him in faith and turn in their hearts from their known sins. To do otherwise, is to resist the Holy Spirit and wickedly to give the person a false hope of salvation.

Jesus Christ had enormous problems with people clinging to false ideas about conversion, repentance, faith and love for God. The same applies now. So do not add to the errors clouding the minds of unbelievers by telling them what are really *religious lies*.

Study Questions

1. What are the differences among uninterested, interested and convicted sinners?
2. What are two of the main mistakes we can make when ministering to interested sinners?
3. How can Christians be very cruel to the unsaved when ministering to them?
4. What are some of the reasons sinners can remain in a convicted state without being converted to Jesus Christ?
5. How can we be an unwitting instrument in Satan's hand so he can remove the Word of God out of the hearts of the unsaved?
6. When praying for and with interested and convicted sinners, what types of religious pretense and hypocrisy must we avoid?