

*"How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger
who announces peace,
who brings Good News,
who announces salvation ..."*

Isaiah 52:7 NRSV

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me
because He has anointed Me
to bring Good News to the poor.
He has sent Me
to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."*

Luke 4:18-19 NRSV

Sharing God's Good News

A SERIES OF BIBLE STUDIES ON
SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS

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**God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son
so that whoever believes in Him will not perish
but inherit eternal life (John 3:16)**

SO ...

Jesus said to His disciples, "All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

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Sharing God's Good News

1 INTRODUCTION: "PREACH THE GOSPEL"

Many Christians are deeply concerned at the way the world, and society in general, is heading. Whether in the realm of warfare and increasing armament, moral decay, industrial and economic problems, social and racial problems, increasing liberalism, humanism, communism/dictatorship, or whatever, there is much to cause the thinking Christian to be deeply concerned. More than that – how should we face these problems? What *is* the answer?

The ultimate answer to all our problems is, in a word, SALVATION. People need to repent of all their wickedness and evil, receive God forgiveness, and experience the life-transforming power of Jesus Christ. This, alone, will help meet the world's needs.

God says that "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt" and that "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander; and these are what defile a person" (Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19-20). Therefore what we need, basically, is a changed heart and changed attitudes – which will never come about by petitions, education, law enforcement, protests, etc., although these may help and are, to a certain extent, needed. Only Christ, and a new life through Him, can answer the problems we are facing today.

The reason why God raised up *Pray for the Nation* (Intercessors for New Zealand) was to encourage Christians to intercede for revival and evangelism (sharing the Gospel – the good news that, through Jesus, we can be reconciled with God and inherit eternal life). More than anything else, this is what our sin-sick, divided world needs today:

Revival – a supernatural outpouring of God's Spirit, bringing people to true repentance and salvation.

Evangelism – the Christian Church (you and me!) getting out with the Gospel, the Good News, and declaring to the world: "Here is the answer. This is what you are looking for. This is what we need."

Most Christians seldom, if ever, really witness for Christ and lead people to Christ. One of the greatest tragedies of the Church is that most of us are *silent* when we should be shouting out, as it were, "Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Like the four starving lepers who found food and began to gorge themselves while a whole city was dying of starvation, we need to cry out, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of Good News. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now, therefore, come let us go and tell..." (2 Kings 6:24-7:20). Like Ezekiel, we need to heed the warning God gave: "If I say to the wicked, 'O wicked people, you shall surely die', and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, that wicked person shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their way, they will die in their iniquity but you will have saved your life." (Ezekiel 33:8-9). Jesus said, "We must work the works of Him Who sent Me while it is day, for the night comes when no one can work" (John 9:4).

Why do not more Christians witness – share their faith? And why do Christians not witness more? Probably the single main answer is because of *fear*.

Fear

1. Fear of what people may think. What will the person think of me if they find out I am a Christian? What will they think if I try to witness to them? Actually, most non-Christians have quite a healthy respect for a sincere Christian who shows genuine love and concern for them. They may not agree with everything that is said; they may not immediately get saved, but *rarely* is there antagonism or ridicule if the Gospel is shared simply and sincerely, in the Spirit and love of God. Besides, it is far worse *not* to share the life-giving Gospel of Christ than to suffer a little embarrassment or humiliation for Christ's sake (Matthew 5:11-12; 10:32-33).

2. Fear of questions they cannot answer. Somehow we have the idea that if we are going to witness then we must be able to answer any and every question and challenge that may be put to us. But, believe it or not, none of us know all the answers! And it is not a sin to say to someone, "I don't know the answer to that question, but I'll try and find out for you," and then go and see if some other Christian can answer the question for you. Besides, it is not intellectual answers to intellectual questions that saves people – it is the Spirit of Christ touching their lives as a result of the sincere testimony of a believer.

3. Satanic fear. Some fears are quite irrational and quite unexplainable except to say that it is demonic fear produced by the enemy who *never* wants us to witness for Christ. Praise God He "has not given us a spirit of fear, but a Spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). Therefore, rebuke any spirit of fear in Jesus' name, and receive from Him the Spirit of power, love, and a sound (whole) mind. Most fears are imaginary! It has been said that "Fear hears a knock at the door. Faith opens the door – and finds no-one there!" Most fears later prove to be groundless, but they are very effective ways the devil uses to keep us from witnessing, and keeping people out of the Kingdom of God.

The other major thing that keeps Christians from witnessing is *ignorance*.

Ignorance

1. Ignorance of how to witness. How do I start to witness? How do I lead someone to Christ? What do I do then?

2. Ignorance of what to say. What do I say when I am witnessing? What, basically, is the Gospel message that I am trying to present? What must a person do to be saved? How can they be sure of their salvation? After they become a Christian, what next?

3. Ignorance through lack of experience. By witnessing we learn a lot about witnessing! Experience is a great teacher. Besides, you will learn a lot about your faith by sharing it with others. In fact, you will probably learn more by sharing with others, than simply sitting in church listening to someone else talk! But you do not have to be another Paul or Billy Graham in order to witness; just "one beggar (saved by the grace of God) telling another beggar where to find Bread!" Moreover, never forget that we witness by our *lives* as much as we do by our lips, but both are necessary. A Godly life without words may simply draw attention to our goodness without pointing people to the Saviour; a verbal witness, no matter how convincing and forceful, without a consistent life backing it up, is simply hypocrisy. But a Godly life, together with a gracious verbal witness, has great power.

In the following studies we will share some of the great ways we can share the Gospel, with the fervent prayer that these studies will help you to understand the Christian Faith better, and be more effective and more zealous to "preach the Gospel" in the power of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS

1. Most Christians do not witness very often, and seldom lead people to Christ. What are some of the reasons why you are not a more effective witness?
2. Should *every* Christian be a witness or evangelist? Why or why not?
3. What are some of the reasons why Christians are afraid to witness, and how can these fears be overcome?
4. Is it realistic to say that all the world's problems could be solved by people coming to know Christ as Lord and Saviour? Is it worth trying to "save the world"?
5. What *major* differences would we see in our country if God's Spirit was poured out on the Church in revival, and tens of thousands of people came to Christ?
6. What effect did past revivals (e.g., in the days of Charles Finney, John Wesley, the Welsh revival, and others) have on their nations? Will God do this again? In our country?

2 "WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

If we are to successfully communicate the Gospel to other people then we ourselves need to know clearly and concisely what the Gospel is really all about. In this study we will look at the subject of what *is* the Gospel: "What must I do to be saved?" Many years ago this most important question was asked by a Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30; see also Luke 3:10; Acts 2:37). Today, it is still one of life's most important questions!

What do we need to be saved from?

When God first created Man, He created him perfect, but gave him the choice as to whether he would obey God and live forever, or disobey God and sin. God said that if Man disobeyed, he would die (Genesis 2:15-17). There are two types of death:

1. When our physical bodies die and are separated from life and all other living things.
and
2. When we die spiritually and are separated or cut off from God.

As a result of sin, we die both physically and spiritually. But God is a loving God: He made us so that we could be friends with Him, and so that He could be our loving Heavenly Father.

Now here is the problem: God is perfect and holy, and so cannot be friends with anyone or anything that is sinful; but God loves us and does not want His friendship with us to be broken. What did God do?

God had a wonderful answer to this problem. The penalty (punishment) for sin (disobeying God) is death, and we have all sinned so we all deserve to die. But suppose some perfect Man was to die in our place? (He would have to be perfect or else he could only die for his own sin, not ours). Suppose He paid the penalty for us – then we could be forgiven (pardoned). And this is just what Jesus Christ, God's perfect Son, did. He lived a perfect life here on earth, and died on the Cross in our place. That is how much God loves us – that is the price He paid! (Romans 5:8).

What do we need to be saved from? We need to be saved from the penalty for our sin – eternal death and separation from God, which is so terrible; it is called Hell. God created us to live with Him in Heaven. Jesus died for us so that we could be saved from Hell.

See Genesis chapters 1-3, and Romans chapters 1-8, for a much fuller description of Creation, Man's sin, Jesus' death, and our forgiveness and salvation.

What must I do to be saved?

Since we have all sinned, we all deserve to be punished – to die and be sent to Hell. But because God loves us so much, we can be saved from this terrible death. How? The Bible tells us that there are several things we must do in order to be saved:

1. Repent and be baptised (Matthew 3:1-12; Acts 2:37-38). To repent means to turn from our old sinful way of life, to a new life in Christ. It means being sorry enough to stop doing what is wrong. (See also Matthew 4:17; Acts 3:19; 2 Corinthians 7:10).

True repentance is shown by a new way of life, and restitution for past wrongs wherever possible (See Exodus 22:1-15; Ezekiel 33:14-16; Luke 19:1-10; Matthew 5:21-26; 18:15-17; James 5:16). Water baptism is an outward and public sign, both to Christians and to the world, that we have been washed from our sin by the Blood of Christ; that we have died to sin, our old nature has been buried with Christ, and we have been raised to newness of life in Christ (Romans 6:1-11). Baptism is thus an outward, physical sign of the inward working of God's Spirit in our lives. (See also Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:36-37).

2. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30-31). Repentance is not enough: there is still past sin to be forgiven and the future to face. We need to believe in the Lord Jesus – that He is God's Son, Who died to pay the penalty for our sin. (Three days later God the Father showed that Jesus' death had been accepted by raising Him up again from the dead!) See also John 3:16,36; Hebrews 11:6

3. Confess our sins (1 John 1:7-9). Not only must we believe in the Lord Jesus, but we must also confess our sins to God and ask His forgiveness. Baptism symbolizes this washing away of our old sinful life and being raised to a new life in Christ (Romans 6:1-4).

4. Receive Christ (John 1:11-13). When we have confessed our sins and have been forgiven, God washes away our sins and we are then ready to receive Jesus Christ into our lives. See also Revelation 3:20.

5. Confess Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9-10) To confess Jesus is Lord is to put Him in charge and in full control of every area of our lives, and to tell other people too that He is our Lord (Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:13). It is interesting to note that in the New Testament the word "Lord" occurs about 730 times, while "Saviour" only occurs 24 times (and 8 of those times it is "Lord and Saviour"). Christ has saved us from sin (past); He rules in our lives in order to keep us from sin (present and future!)

6. Be born again (John 3:3-8) When we repent and believe in this way, God's Spirit comes into our lives and we are "born again" - we become new people (2 Cor. 5:17). We now have a new life, new desires, and so on. It is like a caterpillar going into a cocoon and coming out as a beautiful butterfly - completely changed - a new life!

7. Endure to the end (Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:7,10). Once we begin this new life in Christ we need to persevere – throughout the whole of our lives we should seek to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:29-30).

The Bible maintains a beautiful balance between *warning* Christians who are in danger of backsliding into worldliness and sin (e.g., see Luke 9:62; Hebrews 6:4-8; Revelation 2:5; 3:3) and *encouraging* Christians who sincerely seek to follow the Lord but who may have doubts and fears about their salvation and have become fainthearted (e.g., see Hebrews 12:1-14; Revelation 2:10; 3:5).

QUESTIONS

1. What does *everyone* need to be saved from?
2. How did God overcome the problem of loving everyone and wanting to be their Father and Friend, but because of sin everyone deserved to die and be separated from Him?
3. What does "repent" mean?
4. What does it mean to make Jesus "Lord" of your life?
5. In what ways is becoming a Christian like being born all over again?
6. In Revelation we read of warnings to "repent" in 2:5, 16, 21, 22; 3:3, 19. We also read of promises to the faithful in 2:7, 10, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21. What would you say to:
 - (a) a person who had once received Christ as Lord and Saviour but is now worldly, carnal and careless towards sin and the Lord?
 - (b) a true Christian who has fears that they might not eventually be saved, and yet who sincerely loves the Lord?

3 THE BASIS OF OUR SALVATION

It is one thing to be saved; it is another thing to be absolutely sure of our salvation and the basis on which our salvation rests. In the last study we looked at "What must I do to be saved?" and in this study we shall look at the basis of our salvation and hence how we can have ASSURANCE of SALVATION.

It is most important that every true Christian *knows* that they are saved, is a child of God, and has eternal life. Those people who are involved with other religions and cults do not have this assurance of salvation because other religions and cults are based on good works and a striving after God, rather than on the finished work of Christ which He accomplished on the cross as God reached down to save us.

The basis of our salvation

The Bible says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sins (Hebrews 9:22). In Old Testament times animals were sacrificed and their blood was spilled to cover over the people's sins; this looked forward to the time when Jesus, the Lamb of God, would die and shed His Blood so that our sins would be completely forgiven and washed away (John 1:29; Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:1-10).

Our salvation is based on the Blood of Jesus Christ, shed for our sins on the Cross almost 2,000 years ago. It is a finished, completed work; all we have to do is to BELIEVE and RECEIVE by faith the salvation Jesus offers us.

God took the initiative; we must respond (Romans 5:8; John 1:12-13; Revelation 3:20). Ephesians 2:8-10 says: *"By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"*. So we are saved by God's GRACE which we receive through FAITH (*not works*), but GOOD WORKS follow as a result of the working of God's Spirit in our lives after we become Christians. If we could be saved by our good works then the death of Christ was meaningless. In fact, compared to what God asks of us, all our good works are like filthy rags! (Isaiah 64:6).

The Bible gives us a number of illustrations of what God does with our sins when we truly repent and confess our sin to Him. Read Psalm 103:10-12; Isaiah 1:18; 38:17; Jeremiah 31:34; Micah 7:19; and 1 John 1:7, 9.

We are saved because Jesus *has died* and *has paid* (past tense) for our sins, and we have accepted His forgiveness and received the gift of eternal life.

"It is finished!" Jesus cried from the Cross (John 19:30).

As the hymn says, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way..." So our salvation, our security, our assurance of salvation is based on what Christ has done for us, not on what we must do for Him. Christ's death on the Cross (His substitution as our Sin-bearer) plus our acceptance of His death on our behalf, leads to our reconciliation and atonement with God. Hallelujah!

Seven foundations of our salvation

There are seven very important foundational truths on which our salvation is based:
[You might to look at these, one by one, over a week!]

1. *The Cross of Christ* (1 Corinthians 1:17-18; Galatians 6:14; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 1:19-20; 2:13-15)
2. *The Blood of the Lamb* (Romans 5:8-9; Ephesians 1:7-8; Hebrews 10:1-22; Revelation 1:5; 12:11)
3. *The Name of the Lord* (Proverbs 18:10; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:13; Philippians 2:5-10)
4. *The Word of God* (Matthew 4:4; Romans 10:14-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; 1 Peter 1:23)
5. *The Confession of the Faith* (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:8-10; Hebrews 10:23; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:22-23; 4:2-3, 15)
6. *The Armour of God* (Psalm 91; Romans 13:11-14; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6; Ephesians 6:10-18)
7. *The Power of the Spirit* (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:1-17; Ephesians 1:13-14)

While a lot of references have been given above, it is well worthwhile looking them up, studying each of the seven topics in turn, and also reading other relevant Scriptures which can be found by looking up the following words in a concordance: CROSS, BLOOD, LAMB, NAME, WORD, CONFESSION, FAITH, ARMOUR, POWER, SPIRIT.

Assurance of salvation

How can I be sure I am saved?

1. *The promises in God's Word* (John 20:30-31; 1 John 5:11-13) If we have fulfilled the conditions (see previous chapter: "What must I do to be saved?") then God *promises* us salvation – and God never lies or breaks His promise. We are children of God, forgiven, washed from sin, born again by God's Spirit, we have eternal life, and after our bodies die we shall be in glory (Heaven) with the Lord forever.
2. *The witness of God's Spirit* (Romans 8:15-17) When we are "born of the Spirit" (John 3:5) the Holy Spirit tells us that we are His children – we just *know* in our hearts that it is true!
3. *The freedom from condemnation* (Romans 8:1-4) Until we are forgiven and cleansed from sin we have a sense of guilt and condemnation on our conscience, at least until our consciences become seared by constant sin (1 Timothy 4:1-2). But when Jesus comes into our lives and forgives our sin, a deep sense of being clean, a sense of peace and forgiveness fills our heart.

4. *The fruit of a changed life* (2 Corinthians 5:17; Matthew 7:15-21) Good fruit will follow a true conversion (Matthew 5:16). Our lives will more and more become like that of Jesus Christ, Whose footsteps we try to follow (1 Peter 2:21).

The promises in God's Word are OBJECTIVE proof of our salvation; the witness of the Spirit and freedom from condemnation are SUBJECTIVE proof; the fruit of a changed life is EXPERIENTIAL proof that God has done a saving work in our life.

Doubts

Doubts as to our salvation may come for three reasons:

1. *Satan*: The devil will do all he can to cause you to doubt – do not listen to him (he is a liar and the father of lies, John 8:44). He often uses intellectual reasoning or arguments to cause doubt, but go back to what Christ has done, to what God has promised, to what His Spirit says to your heart, and resist all doubts from the devil! (James 4:7).
2. *Feelings*: Feelings are not always reliable – unfortunately they often depend on our health, tiredness, worries, what people have just said or done to us, circumstances, the weather, and so on! This is why God has given us His unchanging Word, the Bible, to assure us of our salvation. Hold on to God's Word! We are saved by FAITH in what Jesus has already done, not by our feelings.
3. *Works*: While our aim as Christians is *not to sin*, there will be times when we fail because we try to overcome temptation in our own strength (or do not even try to resist it!) Our lives will not be sinless, but if we *do* sin then there is always forgiveness when we repent, confess our sin to God and ask His forgiveness (1 John 1:7-2:2).

We *should* produce good works that glorify God, but do not get into condemnation if you sometimes fail. Call on God for His help and strength to overcome temptation in the future (Matthew 26:41).

As we seek to witness to people and lead them to Christ, there will be many times when we clearly need to understand and be able to share just how we know we are saved, how to handle doubts, and just what is the basis by which we are saved.

QUESTIONS

1. All other religions and the cults differ from true Christianity in several very important ways. What are some of them?
2. Many people, including nominal Christians, people in other religions and the cults, humanists, etc., believe they will be saved if they do enough good works. What would be your answer to them?
3. Discuss the statement: "Before Christ there were the LAW and WORKS; now we have GRACE and FAITH": (Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-10). In what ways are the cults and other religions (including Judaism) still under law and works? Why are faith and works both so important in the Christian's life?
4. What does God do with our sin when we repent, and confess it?
5. What is "the witness of the Spirit"?
6. How would you counsel a person who began to doubt their salvation?

4 WAYS OF WITNESSING

When Jesus commanded His followers to "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), He did not say *how* to witness.

One question which every person who is keen to witness has surely asked, is "What is the most effective way to witness?" The reason Jesus did not say how to witness, is tied up in the answer to this question. In actual fact there is no "best" way to witness – except to be led by God's Spirit and witness as He leads!

There are many ways of sharing our faith – each has its place; each has its 'advantages' and 'disadvantages'. God is a God of infinite variety (look, for instance, at His creation!), and people are won to Christ in a many different ways. So God uses all sorts of ways to bring people to Himself. What we need, more than anything else is a sensitivity to His Spirit, because the right words, said by the right person, in the right way, at the right time, can bring a person to Christ even though years of other witness by dozens of other people may seem to have failed.

Primarily, we all witness by *both* our lives and our words. Words, not backed up by a consistent life, are hypocrisy; but a good life not backed up by words which point to our Saviour, may simply bring glory to us, not Him (cf. Matthew 5:16). So, first, we must check out HOW WE LIVE and WHAT WE SAY. Witnessing *should be* (but often is not) the spontaneous overflow of a Spirit-filled life. This fact is beautifully illustrated by the lives and witness of the early Christians, as recorded in the Book of Acts.

Ways of witnessing

There are two major ways of sharing the Gospel:

1. Personal evangelism: This is where the Gospel is shared essentially on a one-to-one basis. It may involve:

(a) *a direct approach*, where a Christian shares about the Lord and the Gospel from door-to-door, in the street, in a cafe, with a person they have never met before (and may not see again), and so on.

...or...

(b) *an indirect approach*, where the Christian witnesses to friends, family, relatives, neighbours, workmates, etc.; that is, to people they know and will probably see again.

2. Public evangelism: Where the person preaching the Gospel (maybe an evangelist or preacher) does not speak personally to the people but to a larger gathering or crowd of people, e.g., open air meetings, rallies, through radio and television, video, online, and other media. This may be called an evangelistic outreach.

Advantages and disadvantages

There are advantages and disadvantages in each of these methods. We need to know the advantages (strengths) of each method and use them; and we need to be aware of the disadvantages (weaknesses) and seek to overcome them.

1. (a) The advantages of a direct approach in personal evangelism is that we never run out of people to witness to, and theoretically everyone can hear the Gospel in this way. It is not dependent on being able to persuade someone to go to a Christian meeting. Also, it is *sometimes* easier to witness to a complete stranger, and many people will talk more freely to people they have never met before than to someone they know well.

The disadvantages are that follow-up may be difficult or impossible (you may never meet the person again); the person cannot see your life backing up what you say; sometimes there are barriers when talking to strangers; and some people will not give you the time to share the Gospel message – they do not like "being pestered with religion".

(b) The advantages of an indirect approach to friends and people you know and see reasonably often are that they can see your life – you can *show* Christ to them! – and as there is more frequent contact you can take more time over sharing the Gospel. Also, follow-up is easier and more thorough, and, perhaps most important of all, you can deal with individual problems and questions, over a period of time if necessary. However, sometimes people know us 'too well' ("a prophet is not without honour, except in his own country and in his own house", Matthew 13:57), and there may be fear or shyness when talking to friends. Also, we are limited by the number of friends and the contacts we have.

2. Advantages of 'mass' evangelism are that we can reach large numbers of people at once, there is less embarrassment, and people have come of their own free will so they should be basically interested in listening.

The disadvantages are that individual needs, problems and questions cannot be dealt with; it is impersonal, some people feel that they are being "preached at"; and finally, only a small percentage of non-Christians will go to Christian meetings.

"One sows, another reaps"

Having seen some of the advantages and disadvantages in the various ways of sharing the Gospel it is obvious that no one method is "best", but that all work together for good. God uses all sorts of people – evangelists, individual Christians, street preachers, new Christians, and so on – to lead people to Christ. Some people even get converted as a result of what non-Christians say and do! We must see ourselves as part of a divine plan for people's salvation in which one sows and another reaps (see John 4:35-37; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9) – this will take a lot of the "sweat" out of evangelism.

Also, while we may long for, pray for, and seek to witness towards, the salvation of members of our own family (and all that is good and right), nevertheless frequently it is someone else, right outside our family circle, who eventually leads them to Christ.

We have a whole world to reach with the Gospel – eight billion people! The population of the world is *increasing* rapidly. We *must* use modern methods of 'mass' evangelism – radio, television, films, crusades, tract evangelism, social media, online, and so on. And this needs to be backed up by the personal, consistent witness of *every* Christian.

Evangelism in the early Church

It is well worthwhile reading the whole Book of Acts to see the ways in which the early

Church evangelised. Here, the Christians were simply filled with the Holy Spirit and went out 'gossiping the Gospel'! They had no techniques or methods, as such, no amplifiers, no tracts, no gimmicks – but they, in the power of the Holy Spirit and under His anointing, turned the world upside down.

The importance of the Holy Spirit in evangelism, of whatever kind, cannot be over-emphasised. Jesus said to His disciples, "Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on High... You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses... to the end of the earth" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

It is easy to work out, in the flesh, ways of evangelising, and these will not be without fruit, for God knows the desires of our heart and longing for people's salvation, and He has also promised to honour the preaching of His Word; but how much better it is to wait until we are endued with power from on High and then move out under His leading and anointing!

Witnesses and evangelists

One of the ministries God has given to the Church is that of evangelists (Ephesians 4:11) whose special ministry is that of preaching the Gospel and calling people to Christ. At the same time, *every* Christian is to be a witness day by day, by word and action, to the life-transforming power of Christ. We should be available at any moment, as God leads, to share the Good News with those who don't know the Lord. How often we miss God-given opportunities because we are not sensitive to the Lord! But without coming under condemnation for our failures, let us all rise up and heed the call to preach the Gospel in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:1-5) so that by all means some will be saved (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

"Lord, help me to witness to You by word and deed – TODAY!"

QUESTIONS

1. The following passages from Acts show some of the ways the early Christians witnessed. What lessons can we learn from each? 2:1-42; 2:43-47; 3:1-4:4; 5:42; 8:4-13; 8:26-40; 9:10-22; 10:1-48; 13:1-12; 16:16-34; 17:16-34.
2. Look at the *disadvantages* of each of the "Ways of witnessing" and say how these can be minimised or overcome.
3. Home-based evangelism by Christian families, and Prayer and Bible Study group evangelism, are important ways of leading friends and neighbours to Christ. Discuss how these can be effectively done, and some of the advantages of these methods.
4. It is easy, when we have witnessed to someone and they have not responded, to feel we have failed, and get discouraged. What does the parable of the Sower and the Seed (Mark 4:1-20) have to say to us in this regard?
5. Discuss the statement: "Witnessing should be the spontaneous overflow of a Spirit-filled life".
6. What does it mean to "preach the Word, be urgent in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2)?

5 PERSONAL EVANGELISM

The following are some thoughts on sharing the Gospel, based on John 4:3-42.

Daily witness (v.3) So often we miss God-given opportunities to witness because we are not prepared. "Jesus left Judea and departed to Galilee." Jesus was not on an "evangelistic crusade"; He did not have organised times of evangelism interspersed with long periods without witness. Evangelism needs to become part of our normal, everyday life. We ought always be ready to witness, at any time (2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Peter 3:15), remembering also that we witness by our daily *lives* as well as by our *words*!

Sensitive to the Spirit (v. 4) "He had to pass through Samaria." In one sense Jesus did not have to pass through Samaria – He could have crossed the Jordan and travelled to Galilee through Perea. But He was "constrained by the Spirit" to pass through Samaria even though the Jews usually avoided it. (Matthew 4:1 "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit"). Jesus did not walk by chance, but in the Spirit.

Led by the Spirit (v. 5-7a) Jesus was led by the Spirit to Jacob's well, near the city of Sychar, and about the same time God led a woman to the same well. (John 6:44). How wonderful it is when God draws a Christian and a non-Christian together for the purpose of leading the unbeliever to Christ! This is why it is so important to be prepared. We need to pray for opportunities to witness, expect them, look for them and then use them when they arise!

Taking the initiative (v. 7b) "Jesus said to her..." There were three reasons why Jesus should 'not' have spoken to her:

- (a) He was a man and she was a stranger and a woman (v. 9, 27c)
- (b) He was a Jew and she was a Samaritan (v. 9)
- (c) He was the holy Son of God and she was an immoral woman (v. 17-18)

But Jesus took the initiative in order to help her find salvation. We may be able to think of a number of reasons why we should not speak to someone – *except* they need Jesus!

Humility (v. 7c) "Give me a drink." Jesus asked a favour of her. Rather than "Give her the Gospel" and force His message on her, He simply asked a favour, and so made her more receptive to what He had to say (cf. Zacchaeus, in Luke 19:5).

Treating her as a person (v. 7c) Jesus saw the woman as one for whom He was to die. He treated her as a person, not as an inanimate "soul". He was not out to "get souls" or to "get her saved", but to draw her to Himself in true love, and to the Father. We need to be careful that we do not treat new Christians as statistics, or people as objects that need to "get saved". See Matthew 9:35-38 and 2 Corinthians 5:14. Some of our evangelical methods and concepts are very impersonal and unloving; we can become mechanical, rather than being constrained by divine love to share the Gospel.

Opening on an everyday topic (v. 7c) Jesus opened up the conversation on an ordinary, everyday subject, and then led on to spiritual things. News items and everyday topics of conversation can often provide good opportunities for Christians to witness.

Availability (v. 8) "His disciples had gone away... to buy food." Jesus' disciples were not available to help a woman in need. Effective witnessing demands our time and our availability; it can be costly!

Our life is a witness (v. 9) "How is it that you, a Jew...?" Jesus' life and manner aroused an interest in the woman. Something in Him and His request spoke to her. (Matthew 5:16). Do our lives and conversations arouse an interest in other people?

Intrigue (v. 10) "If you knew the gift of God..." Rather than lecture her on her relationship to God, Jesus first used intrigue to arouse her interest and curiosity further. He deliberately said something she would not understand so that she would question Him further (cf. John 3:3-5). In this way Jesus opened up dialogue, rather than bombard her with facts. He also turned the conversation from the natural to the spiritual – "a drink ... living water."

Response (v. 11-12) "Where do you get that living water?" The woman's response showed her interest in what Jesus was saying.

The message (v. 13-14) "Living water... welling up to eternal life". In Jesus' dealings with people, He had no set pattern or message: to each person He gave the message in a way in which they would hear, understand and respond. To this thirsty woman He offered "living water" – fulness of life, and cleansing, in Christ. This was a positive message of all that God desired to do for her (John 10:10b).

Wanting to receive (v. 15) "Sir, give me this water..." The woman had now come to the point of wanting to receive the living water and eternal life. She wanted "to be saved". Note that the request came from her; Jesus did not ask her if she wanted the water.

The sin problem (v. 16) "Go, call your husband..." The woman's desire was right, but the question of sin had not been dealt with. We do not just receive Christ and eternal life; we must also repent and turn from sin. Repentance is both turning *to* Christ and turning *from* sin. Jesus is to become *Lord* as well as *Saviour*.

Honestly facing the problem (v. 17-18) "You are right..." Jesus did not beat around the bush. He probed right to the base of sin in her life. He did this gently, but firmly. He neither condemned her, nor condoned her sin (cf. John 8:11).

Evading the issue (v.19-20) "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain". The woman tried to evade the conviction of sin which she felt, by introducing an irrelevant, controversial issue. It had nothing to do with the topic of conversation, but at least it avoided the sin question! Most "intellectual objections" to the Gospel are primarily due to a desire to evade the fact of sin in a person's life – they stem from rebellion and an unwillingness to face up to, and turn from, sin, rather than a genuine intellectual problem. It is not that a person *cannot* believe with his mind, but that he *will not* believe with his will, in almost every case.

Dealing with objections (v.21-24) "The hour is coming..." Jesus did not ignore the question, but neither did He waste too much time on it. He simply dealt with it briefly. If an objection is an obvious side-track to evade the issue, it is probably best to say so and get back onto the question of sin. If it is a reasonably honest objection, then we can deal with it briefly and get back to the subject, as Jesus did. If it is important, it may need to be dealt with fully, then and there, or maybe left until later. For example, Evolution! What you believe concerning evolution has little bearing on your salvation, unless you do not believe in God, in which case it is a question of the existence of God, rather than evolution.

We need to understand other people's views and beliefs, and we need to listen to what

other people are saying, and yet not waste unnecessary time allowing ourselves to become involved in unprofitable discussions that side-track us from the all-important issue of our relationship to God.

Pointing them to Jesus (v. 25-26) "I am He". There is no salvation apart from Christ, the Messiah. A person is not saved by accepting our theology, or by being beaten in an intellectual argument about Christianity. Neither can they be forced into salvation – our persuasiveness will not save them (John 1:12-13). Jesus was gentle, yet firm. He led, rather than pushed; and yet He did not compromise. "Follow Me!" He commanded (Matthew 4:19), and left the decision as to whether or not to obey, to the person concerned.

Confessing Jesus is Lord (v. 27-30) "Come and see". Our salvation should be followed by public testimony, witnessing and confession that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9-10; Matthew 10:32-33).

A missed opportunity (v. 31-38) "See how the fields are already white for harvest". The disciples missed their opportunity – they thought that there were four months to go before the harvest (their "evangelistic crusade!") and did not see that here was one ready to be reaped.

Personal experience (v. 39-42) "It is no longer because of your words that we believe..." Our faith does not rest on another person's testimony or experience – it *must* be because of our own experience of a personal relationship with Christ. It is "Not of blood (human relationship), nor the will of the flesh (human desire or intellectual persuasion), nor the will of man (human pressure), but of God (divine relationship)" (John 1:13).

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to witness "in season" and "out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2)?
2. What is the difference between not condemning the sinner and condoning sin?
3. "Repentance for sin deals with the past; the Lordship of Christ deals with the present and future". Discuss.
4. What did Jesus mean by what He said in John 4:35 and 9:4?
5. What lessons in personal evangelism can be learnt from the way Jesus dealt with the following people: Levi (Luke 5:27-28); the disciples (Mark 1:16-20); Nicodemus (John 3:1-21); Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10); the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11); the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22); the scribes and pharisees (Matthew 23:1-39)?
6. In what ways can personal evangelism in a neighbourhood be effectively done through Christian homes?

6 PUBLIC EVANGELISM

Jesus and the early Christians not only witnessed, preached and taught personally (person-to-person) but were also involved in 'mass' evangelism (e.g., Sermon on the Mount, preaching to the 5000 and the 4000, on the Day of Pentecost, in Athens, Ephesus, and so on).

While all evangelism must ultimately come down to the personal level, many people will only be reached *initially* through mass evangelism. One sows, another waters, another reaps (John 4:35-38; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9).

In today's world of over eight billion people, the vast majority of whom are not

Christians, there is a very real need for mass evangelism, as well as personal evangelism. Of course it is not an either/or situation. Some people are better at personal evangelism, and some are better at mass evangelism; some people will respond to a personal witness, others to a message preached to a larger group. Jesus and the early Church used both methods effectively, and so can we.

Some ways of mass evangelism

1. *Large gatherings of people.* These have, and are, reaching millions of people with the Gospel. In some cases these outreaches have very effectively incorporated the healing ministry as well as preaching the Gospel. Mark 16:15-20 says that God "confirmed His Word with signs following", including healing. Especially in poorer countries, where there is often much greater faith and spiritual awareness, coupled with much more sickness, healing/evangelistic meetings have touched many thousands of lives. Often people are first drawn to hear the Gospel as a result of hearing about or seeing God miraculously heal. (See, for example, Acts 3:1-4:4). In more materialistic Western countries, while there are some large outreaches of this nature, personal witnessing to people in need is probably more effective and more common at this time.

2. *Films* The use of films has also been effective in introducing people to the Gospel in a "more attractive" way. Some people would not go to hear someone preach, but will see a Gospel video or program. Again, in Third World countries the film/video ministry is very effective in attracting people to hear the Gospel.

3. *Literature* Literature evangelism has been very effective because it does not rely on people having to come to a meeting. Literature can be distributed to people wherever they are – in their homes, on the streets, in cities, parks, or wherever. Moreover, people can read and re-read literature at their leisure, without any pressure from other people.

4. *Radio* The use of Gospel broadcasts, especially into closed, communist or other difficult countries, has been especially useful and effective. In the privacy of their own homes millions of people can hear the Gospel over their radios. The use of dictation-speed Bible readings has meant that people can copy down the Bible in their homes, in countries where it is otherwise very difficult to get Bibles.

5. *Television* Now the Christian life can be shown pictorially as well as being heard. With T.V. spreading all over the world, Christians should be leading the way with high-quality Christian programs that will meet people at their point of need and bring them to Christ.

Advantages and disadvantages of 'mass' evangelism

The major disadvantage of mass evangelism, by itself, is the lack of personal contact. Personal problems and questions are not easily dealt with. Also, it may be very difficult to effectively follow-up and encourage a person who comes to Christ as a result of mass evangelism. However, large numbers of people can be reached by mass evangelism without them feeling "pressurized" by over-zealous evangelists!

Obviously, mass evangelism needs to be followed by careful and thorough follow-up. People need to be encouraged to make contact with the people doing the evangelism. They need to be encouraged to go to a local church and find personal help and encouragement through the church leaders and other Christians. In this way, the seed sown through mass evangelism can be nurtured to maturity through personal contacts in a local church. We must always remember that the church is primarily people. In this electronic age we must make sure that we do not end up with an "electronic

church" – people only listening to radio broadcasts and church services on television, instead of fellowshiping with other Christians in a personal way. Of course, radio, television, digital media, etc., are a tremendous blessing to those who *cannot* get out and fellowship with other Christians, but these are ways that most Christians must be careful not to misuse!

Whatever way we use to share the Gospel, the seed needs to be sown with 'tears' and prayers, and then it will be reaped with joy! (Psalm 126:5-6)

QUESTIONS

Read each of the following passages in Acts:

2:1-47 3:1-4:4 5:1-16 8:4-25 17:16-34 19:1-20

For each passage,

1. What was it that drew the people to hear the Gospel?
2. What were the basic elements in the message given?
3. To what extent was Scripture used in the preaching?
4. How effective was the evangelism?

7 FOLLOW-UP

After leading people to Christ, the next most important thing to do is to adequately follow-up the sowing of the seed, to make sure it grows towards maturity (cf. The Sower and the Seed, Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23).

Sometimes it may be difficult to follow-up a new Christian by visiting, because they may not live nearby. However, we can still phone, email, text, or write. Even more importantly, try to put them in contact with some reliable Christian who lives near them, and also put them in contact with a good church which will care for them and follow them up personally. This is *most* important, because so many new Christians do not really go on in God because there is no-one who takes the time to encourage, love, teach and help them.

Even though a person may have come to Christ, there may still be many areas of need that have to be dealt with. The following areas are common points of need, both in the unconverted and in new Christians. They may be dealt with either before a person becomes a Christian, or, if not, after coming to Christ.

Common needs in people's lives

1. The need for someone or something to worship and follow.
2. The need for an aim or purpose in life.
3. The need for love (to love and be loved).
4. The need for acceptance and freedom from loneliness.
5. The need for security and freedom from fear.
6. The need for forgiveness and freedom from guilt.
7. Financial and material needs.
8. The need for physical and spiritual healing, including deliverance (e.g., from sins, drugs, the occult, bondages, etc.)
9. The need for good, healthy relationships.
10. The need for inner peace and rest.

Obviously, different people will have different needs, but we must be aware of these common needs and show people how each of them can be met by Christ and through His people, the Church. But note that while it is true that Jesus can meet all these needs, Jesus is far more than a "need-meeter"! He is King of kings and Lord of lords; our Lord and Saviour.

The balanced Christian life

When following up a new Christian there are 7 main areas we should mention in order for them to develop a healthy, balanced, mature Christian life. (These 7 areas are dealt with in more detail in the booklet "Now I'm a Christian – What Next?" (see 'More books by the same author' on the last two pages)

1. Church fellowship

It is *most* important that new Christians are encouraged to regularly attend a good, live, evangelical church (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:23-25). If they do this, then the leaders and members of the church will encourage them in the other areas too.

2. Bible reading

It is also important to regularly read the Bible and hear God speaking through it (2 Timothy 3:16-17). A simple translation of the Bible will probably be best at first.

3. Prayer

Prayer is 'talking with God' – both speaking and listening. New Christians need to learn to confess their sins; give thanks, praise and worship to God; and to intercede, both for their own needs and those of others (Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18; 1 Timothy 2:1).

4. Obedience

We will never get very far with God if we do not obey what He tells us to do (John 14:15,21; Luke 11:28; James 1:22; 1 John 2:1).

Some specific areas of obedience are:

- (a) Being baptised in water (Acts 2:38)
- (b) Taking part in the Lord's Supper (Communion) – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.
- (c) Resisting temptation (James 4:7)
- (d) Making Jesus Lord of every area of one's life (Romans 10:9-10)
- (e) Producing good works that glorify God (Matthew 5:16; Galatians 5:22-23)
- (f) Giving generously of one's time, abilities, and possessions (Acts 20:35)

5. Being filled with the Holy Spirit

Every Christian ought to be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Ephesians 5:18). The subjects of the Spirit-filled life and gifts of the Holy Spirit are dealt with in the booklet "Are You Enjoying the Spirit-filled Life?" (see 'More books by the same author' on the last two pages)

6. Witness

Once a person has been born again, they can start to witness. They may not know much about the Bible, but they can share their own testimony – what they were like before they became a Christian, how they became a Christian, and the difference Christ has made since (2 Corinthians 5:17). Also see Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8.

7. Endurance

The Christian life is not always easy. After Jesus was baptised in water and the Holy Spirit, He spent 40 days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil (Matthew 3:13-4:11). The Bible says that "All who will live Godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). But we must persevere. Jesus said, "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24:13). In times of difficulty and trial, we can always call on the Lord and His people for help and encouragement.

QUESTIONS

1. If we are not able to personally follow-up a new Christian, what should we do?
2. Why is it so important that a new Christian gets quickly established in a good, live church fellowship?
3. From the parable of the Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13):
 - (a) Why did some seed not produce fruit?
 - (b) What should be done to ensure that all the seed produces fruit?
 - (c) How can we get 100-fold instead of 30-fold?
4. How can we help someone we led to Christ, when they are finding the going tough?
5. Why do many people, after having asked Christ into their lives, later fall away?
6. Why is obedience so essential for Christian growth? (See John 14:21).

8 EVANGELISM AND INTERCESSION

It is very easy, in evangelism, to organise and witness as though everything depended on us – upon what we say and do, and on our ability to persuade people to receive Christ. We sometimes forget the no-one is converted except as a result of the Holy Spirit working in their lives, drawing them to Jesus Christ (John 1:11-13; 3:3-8; 6:44).

There is a real danger of organising and witnessing "in the flesh", instead of spending time before God in prayer, seeking His leading and guiding, His anointing, and praying for the convicting, converting power of the Holy Spirit. In more-organised evangelism, for example, we need to seek the Lord as to *how* we should witness, *when*, *where* and *to whom*, etc.

Moreover, spiritual warfare for people's souls will only be won through intercession; Satan will not easily allow people to come to Christ and into His Kingdom (cf. Luke 16:16; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Prayers in the New Testament relating to evangelism

For what did the early Christians pray, and how should we pray, with regard to sharing the Gospel?

In the New Testament we see that we should:

1. Pray that the Lord will send out labourers (Matthew 9:35-38; Luke 10:2).
2. Pray for boldness, and signs and wonders to confirm the Word (Acts 4:29-31; Ephesians 6:18-20; Mark 16:15-20).
3. Pray that people will be saved and reconciled to God (Romans 10:1; 2 Corinthians 5:20).
4. Pray for open doors, open hearts, and clarity in presenting the Gospel (Colossians 4:2-4).
5. Pray for wisdom (James 1:5-8).
6. Pray for follow-up: most of Paul's prayers with regard to evangelism were for

those he had brought to the Lord (e.g., Ephesians 1:16).

The necessity of prayer

Prayer is necessary, both for ourselves and those to whom we will be witnessing, both before, during, and after sharing the Gospel.

Prayer before witnessing

1. For ourselves: For more-organised evangelism, seek God for His will concerning how, when, where and to whom you will be sharing the Gospel. Do not rely on our "good ideas" – find out what are "God's ideas"! Also, we need to prepare ourselves and make sure there is no hindrance in our lives. We must be clean vessels, or channels through which the Good News can flow (Psalm 139:23-24; Proverbs 28:13). More than that, having been cleansed, pray that God will fill you with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). *Witnessing should be the spontaneous overflow of the Spirit-filled life* (e.g. Acts 4:8-13).

2. For those we will be witnessing to: The best way to get a God-given burden and love for people is to pray for them.

Pray for the love of Christ which will constrain you to witness (2 Corinthians 5:14). Ask the Lord to show you people as He sees them.

Pray that God will prepare their hearts, create a hunger for spiritual truth and reality, and illumine their hearts and minds to the Gospel.

Pray that God will order their circumstances, convict them of sin, and bring them to salvation (John 16:8-10).

Pray for people *by name*, as the Lord leads you.

There will also be a need to engage in spiritual warfare through intercession on their behalf. The god of this world has blinded people's minds and hardened their hearts (2 Corinthians 4:3-4); he especially uses fear (e.g., the fear of the unknown) to hinder people's salvation. But God has given us the power and authority to bind the powers of darkness and set the person free (Luke 9:1-2; 10:19; Matthew 18:18; Hebrews 2:14-15).

Pray in the NAME of the Lord Jesus Christ, cleansed and covered (protected) by the BLOOD of the Lamb. Witness in the POWER of the Holy Spirit, using the SWORD of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Prayer during witnessing

If possible, while someone is sharing the Gospel, others should be praying for them.

Pray for boldness, wisdom, faith, love and authority.

Pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit on their life and words.

Pray against fear and doubts.

Pray that the person being witnessed to will be given spiritual insight and understanding.

Pray that every Satanic stronghold, argument, proud obstacle and thought will be taken captive to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).

Pray against the powers of darkness. Deliverance may be necessary if the person is bound by demonic powers through involvement in drugs, the occult, false religions, etc., or sin. Again, bind the powers of darkness in Jesus' Name, to set the person free (Luke 4:18).

Prayer after sharing the Gospel

Give thanks to God that another person has been born into His Kingdom. Continue to pray for the new Christian's growth and discipleship. Pray for their follow-up:

Pray that the new Christian will: pray and read their Bible, seek the fellowship of other Christians, be obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, be faithful in their witness for Christ, and also become a witness; that they will become strong in the Lord, and be strong to resist the enemy in the time of temptation.

Pray that they will be constantly filled with the Spirit.

Pray as the person becomes established in the faith.

We may often have to stand in the gap against the powers of darkness on people's behalf, as often the most vicious attacks of Satan come shortly after conversion.

Even if a person does not come to Christ at the time we witness to them, don't be discouraged. You may be one link in the chain that leads to their conversion. "One person plants, another waters, but God gives the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:5-9). Pray that God will continue to speak to them through His Word, and that they *will* come to Christ. Pray that other Christians will witness to them too, and that God will not let them rest until they come to the Lord. Water the seed of the Word with fervent prayer. (See Isaiah 55:6-11).

Finally, entrust them into the hands and safe keeping of God the Father (John 10:29). Colossians 1:9-12 is a beautiful prayer to pray for those who have recently come to Christ.

Some suggestions for prayer

1. "Pray that the Lord of the Harvest will send forth labourers into the vineyard" (Matthew 9:37-38).
2. Pray for all evangelists, churches, and evangelistic organisations, that many people will be brought to the Lord. Pray for all evangelistic meetings and outreaches: in the streets, homes, cafes, parks, on beaches, at camps, rallies and other places.
3. Pray for Bible Schools and all who are training people in evangelism.
4. Pray that *all* born-again Christians will share their faith in Christ, both by their words and their lives.
5. Pray that God's people will constantly be filled with the Holy Spirit and that the overflow of lives filled with the Spirit will result in many coming to Christ.
6. Pray for a missionary vision – that Christians will be sent forth overseas in evangelism, including communist and other "closed" countries, as well as in our own land.
7. Pray that new Christians will be soundly established in the Christian faith, and be brought into true discipleship and maturity in Christ.
8. Pray that the Gospel will be powerfully preached in our churches so that many nominal Christians will be confronted with the truths of God's Word, and the Gospel, and will be truly born again.

QUESTIONS

1. Hardness, the 'birds of the air', shallowness, and 'weeds' can all hinder the seed sown from bringing forth a good, fruitful harvest (see Matthew 13:1-23). How should we pray so that this does *not* occur?
2. How can we discern if a person needs prayer for deliverance before they will respond to the Gospel and be saved?
3. Why is "spiritual warfare" through intercession important before witnessing?
4. Is it necessary to be filled with the Holy Spirit before witnessing? Why or why not? (See Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).
5. How can a person get a real, God-given burden and love for the lost?
6. How should we pray if a person rejects our message of salvation?

9 WITNESSING TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Almost all Christians have friends and relatives who are either not Christians or who are backslidden Christians.

In some ways, the way we witness to close friends and relations is different from that of witnessing to people we do not know so well and with whom we have much less contact. For example, if a person is close to us and we see them reasonably frequently, then constant contact and witness, as the Lord leads, over a long period of time, can lead to their salvation. In one sense there is less "urgency" in witnessing to them. We should not be pushy or over-anxious, but wait God's time.

Also, because we know them well, and they know us well, they can see the witness of our lives (!) and we can also see their areas of need and, perhaps, some of the things that hinder their salvation.

We must always remember that we witness *both* by our WORDS and our LIVES (Matthew 5:16; 1 John 3:18). It may well be that *we* are, in some way, hindering their salvation. We need to ask the Lord "Is there *anything* in my life which hinders them coming to Christ?" Are we resentful, proud, bitter, or unforgiving towards them? Have we done anything wrong which we need to confess to them and ask their forgiveness? If so, we need to deal with this quickly. Give the person *no excuse* for rejecting the Gospel. Demonstrate a *loving, balanced* Spirit-filled life.

We also need to be sensitive as to when we speak and when not to (Ecclesiastes 3:7b). In our desire to see them saved we must not fall into the trap of feeling that we have to "witness" to them every time we see them. Remember that God loves them even more than we do! Pray for a word of wisdom, and *when* God gives it, speak! Remember too, that it will not necessarily be you who leads them to Christ. "One sows, another reaps..." (1 Corinthians 3:6-9). Sometimes it is easier for someone who is not so close to them, to lead them to the Lord. As long as we pray, and witness as the Lord leads, then it does not matter who leads them to Christ, as long as they are saved – then we can all rejoice together.

Praying for people who are not Christians

1. Pray against all hindrances to their hearing, understanding and being saved (Romans 10:13-17; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; 10:3-6).
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict them of sin, righteousness, and judgement, and draw them to Christ (John 16:8-11; 6:44). Remember that it is not our job to condemn people for their sins; let the Holy Spirit convict them of sin and of their need for repentance and forgiveness.
3. Pray against fear, e.g., the fear of being rejected by their non-Christian friends, fear of the unknown, "What will people think?" etc.
4. God may ask us not only to pray for them, but also to fast and pray for a time. There may be times of real battle when fasting is especially beneficial.
5. Pray much, but do not pray yourself into unbelief. If you begin to doubt or get discouraged, either stop praying for a while, or get someone else to pray with you and encourage you. If God lifts the burden of prayer then stop praying, at least until God leads you back into prayer for them.
6. Avoid vain repetition. Try to keep up-to-date with their needs and situations, and pray accordingly.

Be encouraged!

"For the unbelieving husband is consecrated (sanctified, made holy, set apart for God) through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy" (1 Corinthians 7:14).

The presence of a Christian in the family has a sanctifying effect on the whole family. This does not mean that they will automatically be saved, but the presence of God and the witness of His Spirit is in that home. In a sense the home is "covered" by the Blood of the Lamb (cf. Exodus 12:13) but people also need to become believers. The presence of a Godly, witnessing Christian can set that family apart for God, and keep it from the dominion of Satan.

God does not normally reveal if a person will ultimately be saved. But if He does, do not sit back and simply wait for it to happen – pray them through; believe God's promise; keep witnessing! Let God use you towards their salvation. Even if God does assure you of their salvation, we may still have battles to pray through on their behalf, but we can rest in faith, and thank and praise God that the victory is certain.

Often God allows people to come to the end of themselves (e.g., through sickness, bereavement, accident, financial or family problems, etc.) in order to bring them to Himself. While it may be painful for us to watch, don't be discouraged; pray for them! Commit them into the hands of a loving God (Psalm 37:5). Note the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).

God will not violate a person's free will, but as we intercede He will use all means possible to bring them to Himself. "Be patient, therefore, brethren... Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and the late rain. You also be patient; establish your hearts..." (James 5:7-8).

In a Christian family it is often good, whenever possible, to include the non-Christian in things like family devotions (prayer and Bible reading), and some church activities (including social contact with other Christians) if they will. By constantly coming under the sound of the Gospel and in Christian contact, the Lord can lay a good foundation for their later conversion.

Sometimes it may take *years* before a person comes to Christ, but do not give up hope. Pray for them as and when the Lord leads, and do not feel condemned if the Lord leads you to stop praying for them for a while. The person will not be saved by the "works" of praying – they will be saved by God's grace in answer to prayers of faith.

Finally, the enemy especially attacks those in Christian leadership, their wives and children, so especially pray for them – not just those in obvious need, but *all* leaders, whether they appear to need it or not, that they and their families may not fall into the snare of the enemy.

QUESTIONS

1. Read the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) and state what lessons can be learned about how to deal with backslidden or unconverted children.
2. In what ways can a Christian have a Godly influence on their unconverted husband or wife?

3. How can a Christian young person witness best to their unconverted parents?
4. In what ways do some Christian husbands or wives hinder their spouse's salvation?
5. (a) What are some of the hardest aspects about witnessing to relatives and close friends? (b) How can we overcome these difficulties?
6. What should we do if we are really discouraged because we see no response after praying and witnessing to someone for a long time?

10 EVANGELISM AND REVIVAL

Before we consider the subject of Evangelism and Revival, let us be clear on what is meant in this study by the terms "evangelism" and "revival".

Basically, *evangelism* is the proclamation of the Good News (the Gospel, Evangel) of salvation through Jesus Christ, to those who are not Christians, with the fervent prayer and expectancy of their positive response and subsequent salvation. We evangelise, and the lost are saved as God draws them into a life-giving relationship with Himself.

Revival, on the other hand, is basically a Sovereign move of God's Spirit, bringing new life back into the Church and to individuals whose spiritual lives were lukewarm, backslidden, discouraged or otherwise ineffective. God pours out His Spirit, and Christians and the Church are revived - restored back to life in the Spirit.

We may contrast evangelism and revival in these ways –

Evangelism is what we do, in God's power; revival is what God does Sovereignly.

God commands *us* to evangelise; *He* brings revival.

Evangelism is the awakening of unbelievers; revival is the awakening of the Church.

We must always be involved in evangelism; revival often comes when the spiritual "climate" is right – e.g., in times of moral, spiritual, and economic collapse.

What should we do then?

1. We should *always* witness, being "urgent in season and out of season" to share the Gospel and seeking to save the lost (2 Timothy 4:1-5)
2. We should earnestly pray for revival. "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy" (Habakkuk 3:2). "Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Psalm 85:6).

"Now for a brief moment, favour has been shown by the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold within His Holy Place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. For we are in bondage, yet our God has not forsaken us but has extended His steadfast love to grant us some reviving, to set up the House of our God, to repair its ruins and to give us protection" (Ezra 9:8-9).

Why should we pray for revival?

1. Because in a Sovereign move of God, He is especially glorified. In "ordinary" evangelism God is glorified as people are born again into His Kingdom. However, when God moves in Sovereign and supernatural power it is "obviously God" and He is glorified for His deeds. The miraculous (what God does not normally do) becomes more common.
2. Because true revival of the Church will always lead to fervent, effective evangelism. Evangelism under the anointing and inspiration of the Holy Spirit may lead to a revival

which eventually may affect a city or nation as a whole. When the Church is revived, it will overflow into the world around us, bringing about an awareness of God and leading more people to Christ. A truly revived Church *will* affect the nation.

3. Because revival will shake the Church out of its apathy and lukewarmness – we can only be either "hot" or "cold" when there is revival! (See Revelation 3:15-19; Acts 5:11-16). Revival will bring new life, fervour and boldness to Christians; backslidden Christians will be restored, nominal Christians will be saved. This will naturally spill over into the neighbourhood in which the Christians live, bringing others to the Lord.

4. Because revival will touch many people who would not otherwise be touched by the Gospel. Many non-Christians will not go to church meetings (for one reason or another!) and are skeptical about the existence of God and the claims of Christians. Much "normal", more-organised evangelism bears little visible fruit, at least immediately. But during revivals, many people find Christ. During the Great Awakening of 1857-58 about two million people were converted in Britain and America.

The Church was born in Revival: the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) radically changed the lives of the 120 people, who in turn reached 3000 with the Gospel that day (2:41). It was followed by miraculous signs and wonders (2:43); God added to their number "day by day, those who were being saved" (2:47). Later, 5000 were saved (4:4); more signs and wonders (5:12) led to "more than ever believers were added to the Lord – *multitudes* both of men and women" (5:14), until eventually they were accused of turning the world upside down (17:6). Oh, that the Church today might turn the world upside down! When revival comes, it will!

Revival amongst the disciples led to evangelism; evangelism led to further revivals. And it all began with the outpouring of God's Spirit in answer to 120 people spending 10 days in prayer (Acts 1).

Will there be another revival?

Yes! Acts 2:16-21 indicates that in the last days God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh. This was initially fulfilled as the "former rain" fell on the early Church (Acts 2 onwards), but James 5:7-8 indicates that there will also be a "latter rain" outpouring of the Holy Spirit just prior to the harvest, before the Second Coming of Christ. There is a great harvest to be reaped; there is a Bride to be perfected, a Body to be united, and a Building to be completed. The glory of the latter House (the Temple of the Holy Spirit – the corporate Church) will exceed that of the former (Haggai 2:9). There will be a perfect, pure Bride ready for the coming Bridegroom (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Conclusion

The Church should always be evangelising – being a bright light in a dark world. Christians' lives should be a constant witness to the power and grace of God. Individually, as families, as churches, and as the Church, we should be calling people to "repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand". We should declare the righteous wrath and justice of God as far as sin is concerned, and His love and grace as far as the sinner is concerned. Revivals ("showers of blessing") may have been relatively few and far between in the past. But we must never lose our vision of a real Heaven-sent outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church. We should pray fervently for revival, believe God for it, and share the Gospel "in the meantime".

Let us not give up hope, nor sit back and do nothing, while we wait for it! "Though the vision tarry, wait for it, for it will surely come to pass" (Habakkuk 2:3). God will revive those who are of a contrite and humble spirit (Isaiah 57:15). If we will return to the Lord

and press on to know Him and His ways, then He will revive us and send us showers of blessing (Hosea 6:1-3). Hallelujah!

QUESTIONS

1. "There is a ministry of an evangelist in the Church, but not of a revivalist". Do you agree? Discuss.
2. What was the "secret" of the revival in the early New Testament Church?
3. What are some of the characteristic features of revival?
4. Is the present-day "charismatic movement" a revival? Why or why not?
5. To what extent is the right "spiritual climate" necessary before revival will occur?
6. What can we do to prepare for revival? Can we hasten its coming? How?

[On the subject of Revival, see the book "**Revive Us Again!**", mentioned on the last page, for further details]

11 EVANGELISM AND THE CHURCH

Most Christians have a real sense of inadequacy in sharing the Gospel and leading people to Christ. While some individual Christians do witness, and people are led to Christ through their testimony, the great majority of Christians need to be taught the principles of evangelism and need to be encouraged by their local church to reach out to non-Christians with the Gospel.

Thus, part of the ministry of the local church is to (a) teach people how to witness; (b) encourage people to witness; (c) pray for, and support in practical ways, those involved in evangelism.

Several ways in which church-based evangelism can be effective:

1. Home-based evangelism

In New Testament times the home was very much the centre of the church and evangelism (see Acts 2:46-47; 5:42; 20:20; Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2). In the absence of "church buildings" the home was a centre for teaching, sharing, fellowship, and witness. Today God is restoring the use of the home to these same purposes. Home groups, home fellowships, prayer and Bible study groups are again being raised up, and in this informal, friendly atmosphere people are finding Christ as their Lord, Saviour and Friend. Christians need to be encouraged to use their homes and hospitality to share their lives, and the Gospel, with neighbours and friends. In an increasingly lonely and needy world, people may come to a home with their problems and find Christ there, whereas they may never go to a "church service" in a "church building".

2. Christian communities

In some areas Christians feel led to be knit together into an even closer Christian community where they can share their lives with others and lead people to Christ. The early church was also communal in their outlook (see Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-5:16). No doubt this close Christian living and sharing will increase as the days go by and there is increasing conflict and persecution in the world.

3. The local church

The local church as a centre of evangelism and ministry, is very important. The church is not a building to be used for two one-hour services each week but can be used as a

centre for fellowship, teaching, healing, ministry, counsel, and evangelism. Our "once a week" attendance at church and the "rest of the week is mine" attitude must go! We are Christians – followers of Christ and ministers of Christ – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week! A number of churches are now beginning to see themselves as a centre from which they can minister the Gospel in all its entirety – spiritual, mental, physical, social, etc., – wholeness in Christ.

4. The church citywide

There is an urgent need for denominational barriers to be broken down and for all true Christians to demonstrate their unity in Christ. All those who sincerely love and put their faith in Jesus Christ, and who are sincerely seeking to follow Him, should come together from time to time for combined citywide evangelistic outreaches and witness. The days for larger outreaches which cover the greater city areas are not over; nor is the need for them! Christians need to unite together and enlarge their vision. Our cities and towns are full of unconverted people, many of whom are lonely and needy. "Open your eyes, for the fields are ripe and ready for harvest!" (See John 4:34-38; 9:4). Let us lay aside our differences, see the power that lies behind a united witness (Psalm 133), and reach out to the lost!

5. Christian organisations

God has raised up Christian organisations to assist the local churches in outreach. These should be encouraged and used to the full. Three particular ways in which every local church can help Christian organisations are:

- (a) By praying for them and their needs.
- (b) By financial and other support; practical help.
- (c) By encouraging their church members to become actively involved in such organisations.

Christian organisations are *not* a threat to the churches – they are *part of* the Church, and often in the forefront of the battle! Far from competing with the churches, they are often the life-blood of the Church, and should, of course, encourage new Christians to fellowship in local churches. It is often because of the 'deadness' in some churches that some Christian organisations have had to function almost like a local church themselves. But this is not necessarily wrong – there is only one Church, one Body, one Flock, although there are many folds (see John 10:16 "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, ... There will be one flock, one Shepherd", Jesus said.) There are many folds because there are many sheep, but all true Christians belong to the same Shepherd and the same Flock.

6. Missions

As well as a vision for non-Christians in our own city or town, and country, we need to have concern for the whole world. "God so loved the (whole) world that He gave His only Son..." (John 3:16). What has been said in the above section on Christian organisations also applies to missionary outreach to other parts of the world.

What part does evangelism play in the Church?

1. It is essential for obedience (Mark 16:15).
2. It is essential for growth (Acts 2:47).
3. It is essential for maturity. An active life of witnessing and ministry will ensure that we pray, study the Bible, learn obedience and have fellowship – thus we will grow! It helps to set us free from pride, selfishness, materialism and worldliness. See 1 Corinthians 9:16; 2 Corinthians 5:14. Witnessing, especially in pairs or in a group (cf. Luke 10:1-2,17), also helps us to overcome fear.
4. It will keep the church alive. Evangelism helps to prevent stagnation, getting into a rut, spiritual boredom, introversion, and other besetting problems that afflict churches

which do not have a vision beyond their own four walls.

5. It will unify the Body in a common vision and goal (see Proverbs 29:18).

Evangelism is one of the four main functions of the Church:

- (a) Evangelism – reaching the lost in our community.
- (b) Teaching – instruction in the Faith and Christian living.
- (c) Fellowship and worship – ministering to one another and to the Lord.
- (d) Missions – a worldwide vision for extending the Kingdom of God.

QUESTIONS

1. Many local churches have little or no evangelistic *outreach* as such into their neighbourhood. Why? What can be done about this?
2. Sometimes there is very little co-ordination between local churches and the Christian organisations working in their area. What can be done about this?
3. Fear, pride and apathy stop many Christians from witnessing. How can these be overcome?
4. What advantages are there in pairs (or small groups) of Christians reaching out and witnessing together?
5. Why are Christian homes so important for witness and fellowship?
6. Each church "doing its own thing" is a real hindrance to citywide witness and outreach. What can be done to draw churches together for combined outreach in a city?

12. THE SPIRITUAL PREPARATION OF THE EVANGELIST

Witnessing *should be* the spontaneous overflow of a Spirit-filled life. Jesus, and the early Christians, did not go round merely quoting verses of Scripture – they lived and demonstrated the power of God; and the joy of a Spirit-filled life was so evident that multitudes were saved.

Jesus said, "I send the promise of My Father upon you, but wait... until you are endued with power from on High" (Luke 24:49). "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

Jesus did not begin His public ministry until He was first baptized with the Spirit (Matthew 3:11-17; Luke 3:21-22). He told His disciples to wait until they had first been filled with the Spirit, and then they led 3000 people to Christ on the first day! (Acts 2).

People are looking, and longing, for LIFE, not just words, theory, theology or religion!. Jesus said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. The water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14). "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink", Jesus said. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'. Now this He said about the Spirit, which those who believed in Him were to receive" (John 7:37-39).

As witnesses, we need to be filled with the fulness of life in Christ and of His Holy Spirit, if we are really to impart life in all its fulness to others (John 10:10b).

What was so unique about Peter and John's witness? (Acts 4:13). People recognised that they had been with Jesus! The life of Christ shone out from them because they were filled with the same Spirit that Jesus was! Moreover, God uses the miraculous gifts of the

Spirit as one of the means of drawing people to Himself (Mark 16:15-20). God *confirms* the truth of the word spoken, by signs and wonders. And He still does today! (Hebrews 2:3-4).

Spiritual warfare

Evangelism involves spiritual warfare – a fact that is most important to realize. Satan does not easily surrender his own people to the Kingdom of God! Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking people to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He hates people defecting from his kingdom and will do all he can to oppose Christians who witness, and to prevent people from being saved. This is why fervent intercession is so important!

Spiritual authority

But God has given us spiritual authority for spiritual warfare! See Luke 9:1-2; 10:17-19. Let us use our God-given authority over the powers of darkness as we pray and witness!

Deliverance

Sometimes, in order for people to be saved or to grow in their Christian faith, deliverance is necessary. The god of the world (Satan) has blinded people's eyes, darkened their understanding, and bound their wills lest they see, believe and are saved! But Jesus came to set the captives free, to open blinded eyes, and to set at liberty those who are bound (Luke 4:18-19). So we may need to exercise the ministry of deliverance in order for some people to be set free from whatever binds them – physically, mentally or spiritually – and be saved (made whole).

Bondages especially occur when people have been involved in the occult, false religions, or persistent sin. But "whoever the Son sets free, is free indeed!" (John 8:36).

The gifts of the Spirit in witnessing

Jesus endued His disciples with the power of the Holy Spirit in order that they might be effective in their witness (Acts 1:8). 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 lists nine gifts or manifestations of the Holy Spirit which may be exercised by a believers as they witness. Let us look at each one briefly, and a New Testament example of the gift being used as a means towards leading people to Christ:

1. **Word of wisdom:** Divinely given wisdom in a situation where mere human wisdom is inadequate (e.g., Acts 6:8-15).
2. **Word of knowledge:** Divinely revealed truth that is not known naturally (e.g., Acts 5:1-11).
3. **Gift of faith:** Supernatural faith to believe God in a situation that would otherwise cause us to doubt or fear (e.g., Acts 27:1-44).
4. **Gifts of healing:** Supernatural physical healing of sicknesses (e.g., Acts 3:1-4:4).
5. **Working of miracles:** Miraculous occurrences that have no physical or other explanation. God "over-rules" His natural laws (e.g., Acts 5:12-16).
6. **Gift of prophecy:** God reveals the future – foretelling or fore-warning what is to happen (e.g., Acts 21:10-15).
7. **Discernment of spirits:** Knowing when a person is demon-possessed or in bondage, leading to their deliverance (e.g., Acts 16:16-34; 19:11-20).
8. **Gifts of tongues and interpretation:** Speaking in an unknown human or angelic language, and the interpretation of it into the known language, in order to reveal what

God is saying or doing (e.g., Acts 2:1-42; see also 1 Corinthians 14).

Being led by the Spirit

Witnessing should not be artificial, forced, or mechanical. We should seek to be led by the Holy Spirit, and witness as He leads us. We should endeavour to walk and witness in the Spirit, both by our words and our lives. See Galatians 5:16,25; Matthew 5:16.

Faith, not fear

Fear of witnessing is one of the most powerful weapons the enemy uses to stop Christians from witnessing effectively. We must renounce and resist the spirit of fear, and then in its place, receive from God the Spirit of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

Praise and thank God in faith

Having sown the seed of the Gospel prayerfully, and committed the person to the Lord in prayer, we should praise and thank God in faith for their salvation. Often, one person sows and another reaps (John 4:34-38; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9) but it is God Who brings the fruit, so to Him belongs all the glory and praise.

Remember that it was as a result of Paul and Silas praying and worshipping God – even though they had been beaten, were in stocks and in prison – that a Philippian jailer and his whole family were saved! (Acts 16:19-34).

You and your household

In the Old Testament, at the Passover a lamb was sacrificed for a whole household (Exodus 12:1-14, especially v.13). While people can only be saved by putting their own personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, we need to be encouraged to pray for, witness to, and believe God for the salvation of *every* member of our family. God has put us in our families as a light – a witness. See 1 Corinthians 7:12-16.

May the Blood of the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world, be effective in bringing not only ourselves, but our whole household, into the Kingdom of God!

QUESTIONS

1. Preparing for evangelism involves preparing the evangelist. What are some of the most important ways in which we need to be prepared?
2. We often talk a lot about power and authority, but where are they to be seen?
3. *Must* we be Spirit-filled before witnessing?
4. Why are the gifts of the Spirit important to evangelism?
5. What proof do we have that the gifts of the Spirit are still available to Christians today?
6. How can Christians effectively witness to members of their own family?

13 SHARING OUR TESTIMONY

Our testimony, well shared, can be a powerful influence towards leading people to Christ. We need to remember two things:

- (a) Our testimony supports and illustrates the truth of God's Word – God is real, alive, and relevant to TODAY!
- (b) Our life must back up our testimony – words, by themselves, may be sheer hypocrisy unless people can see the constant reality of Christ in our daily life. We witness *both* by words and actions.

The following points will help you to share your testimony in a meaningful, honest way:

1. Basic parts of a testimony

- (a) *What we were like before we became a Christian.* Make sure, however, that you do not glorify sin or the devil. It is *not* necessary to go into great detail over past sins (which Jesus has forgiven anyway!)
- (b) *How we became a Christian.* Explain as simply and clearly as possible exactly *how* you came to Christ.
- (c) *How things have changed since we became a Christian.* What is it like being a Christian? Why should a person become a Christian? In really practical terms, what does Christ mean to you? Share needs and problems He has met, and how He has met them.

Paul twice shared his testimony at length (Acts 22:3-21; 26:4-23). Note how he covered the above three points.

2. Every conversion is different

God is a God of infinite variety, and every conversion is different. So we need to explain to people not to try and copy us as such. God will meet them in His way and their way. So laying down principles is generally better than specific details.

3. Make sure our testimony is Christ-centred

Do not glorify yourself, or the devil, or evil. Give God all the glory.

4. Use a few verses to illustrate our testimony

A testimony is not a sermon, but use your testimony to illustrate the truth of Scripture and its relevance today. More than that, the Bible is written for *everyone*; our testimony is ours alone! Nevertheless our testimony should answer the question, "Why should I become a Christian?"

5. Don't exaggerate

An "exciting" conversion story does not glorify God if it is not true! Be honest – it is *not* always easy to be a Christian. We need to remember that people need to be able to identify with our life and conversion, and an exaggerated testimony will sound too good to be true (which it is!)

6. Pop the question!

"Would you like to receive Christ *now*?" If the person says "No" then ask them "What is stopping you from committing your life to Christ now?"

7. Keep our testimony up-to-date

We should not only be able to share what Christ has done for us years ago when we were saved; we should also be able to share recent, up-to-date things He is still doing in our lives! We need to keep our testimony "fresh"!

VERSES TO MEMORIZE AND USE WHEN WITNESSING

The Bible is full of good verses (!) but we would especially recommend that you underline the following verses in your Bible, memorize them, and use them as the Holy Spirit leads you when you witness:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| John 1:12-13 | "To all who receive Him ..." |
| John 3:16 | "God so loved the world ..." |
| Acts 2:38 | "Repent and be baptized ..." |
| Romans 3:23 | "All have sinned ..." |
| Romans 5:8 | "God shows His love towards us ..." |
| Romans 6:23 | "The wages of sin is death ..." |
| Romans 10:9-10 | "If you confess with your lips ..." |
| 2 Corinthians 5:17 | "If anyone is in Christ ..." |
| Hebrews 11:6 | "Without faith it is impossible to please God ..." |
| Revelation 3:20 | "Behold I stand at the door and knock ..." |

Be wise! *"People who win souls are wise ... and those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars for ever and ever!"* (Proverbs 11:30; Daniel 12:3)

QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the weaknesses in testimonies you have heard?
2. What are three Scriptures which you could illustrate from your testimony?
3. In what ways do some testimonies glorify sin and the devil?
4. How does your testimony answer the questions:
 - (a) Why should I become a Christian?
 - (b) What does Christ mean to you now?
5. What does 1 Peter 3:15-16 say about sharing our testimony?
6. What promise does God make to those who bring people into the Kingdom of God?

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