
Stepping out in Faith: Putting Mathew 4:19 in Action!

Come, follow me, "Jesus said," and I will make you fishers of men. (NIV) Matthew 4:19

Stepping into faith in Christ and then be willing to step out with the faith for Him.

Theme: Understanding faith and applying evangelism

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Section 1: Understanding and Applying Faith

Principle Scriptures: Mark 9:23; Luke 17:5-6; Romans 1:16-32; 3:22; 5:1-11; 10:14-17; 12:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:7; 13:5; Galatians 3:1-14; Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 2:6-12; Hebrews 2:4; 11: 1-6; 12:2; James 1:2-4; 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:7-9; 2 Peter 1:2-9; 16; 1 John 5:4

We are called to learn and develop faith because faith is essential and of the utmost importance for every aspect of the Christian life. Without faith, we can do nothing! Although this study is aimed at pastors and church leaders, any Christian desiring to grow deeper in the faith will find it impacting and convicting because it is from the precepts of Scripture. As Christians, especially those who are responsible for the education and care of others, we are called to build our spiritual formation from the solid foundation of the Bible (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6).

This essay is designed so that you might understand the basics of faith as determined from the precepts of the Bible. By understanding faith and what Christ has done for you, you will be able to hear His call and put into action real, effective Christian growth and action, by faith, for His glory and Kingdom! In pastoral ministry, there will be times of stress, uncertainty, and failure. We will be tired, tried, tested and go through setbacks, difficulties, and suffering. We need to understand faith in a real, heartfelt way so we can keep our eyes fixed upon our Lord. Faith will become even stronger and better through the afflictions we face. Faith must not be just an idea or a plan; it must be a reality. It must be working in you before you can be effectively used by our Lord.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "but the righteous man shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

What is Faith?

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

Christ is what we hope for; Christ is what is to be seen! Faith is the promise of God that gives us the hope and confidence so we can receive, act on, obey, and trust God's promises, because God is sovereign and trustworthy. We can trust God for the future because we can see what He has done in the past—from creation, to testimonies, to His infallible Word. Faith reassures us of God's love and grace and gives us direction and motivation for the Christian life. Faith looks to and is fueled by hope, it gives us optimism, builds our confidence, helps us be bold, to remain faithful, and persevere in the faith—all for the glory of the risen Lord and the building of His Kingdom!

Faith in and of itself will not save you or empower you; it is the object of the faith that does this. The Object of that faith is Jesus Christ as our Lord. Faith

means that we are committed to Christ; it is our faith that puts us in Christ and keeps us remaining in Him (Rom. 1:17). Thus, we, as Christians, must live by faith (1 Cor. 1:22-30)! Faith is putting into practice our trust, assurance, hope, and conviction. Faith is not a force we obtain or manipulate or control. We cannot think that just because we believe in something, it must be true. If this were so, we could go to the supermarket and believe we are a cucumber, which would not make us a cucumber.

Christianity is not based on fairy tales or superstitions but on fact and reality. Faith is not subjective, based on feelings or personal ideas; rather, it is substantive, based on fact and reality! Faith is based on knowledge given by God. Our faith is based on historical evidence, logical reasoning, the confidence in who God is, and valid testimonies. We have a wide body of knowledge. Our Bible is a collection of 66 books written over a 2000 year period of time by dozens of authors all inspired by the Holy Spirit. Just consider the millions of personal testimonies and thousands of volumes of works by gifted authors and teachers. The Bible is reality and truth; the Bible tells us about faith. Faith is simple but not simplistic; it is not just simple belief, because even the demons believe (James 2:19). Faith is not blind trust, because we know the One who is leading! Faith is still trusting what is not seen and believing our God (Rom. 1:16-32; 5:1-11; 10:14-17; Gal. 3:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; James 2:14-26)! It combines belief with trust; we are to believe in Christ—not just about Him. Faith provides the "substance" and "essence" of our relationship with our Lord, it looks to our future, and it is our hope. Faith is a two way street; we receive it from God, and respond it back as trust. It would be like a lake which has a source and an outlet. If we only have an outlet we would dry up. If we just have a source we become like the Dead Sea, lifeless and void.

Faith is the Instrument and not the Cause; Christ is the Cause.

Because we have confidence in God and in His plan and purpose for our lives, we can then act on faith. Faith is based on the faithfulness of our Lord, and not of our goodness, just as animal sacrifice in the O.T. was a means of forgiveness and surrendered attitude because of a loss of something precious, but not the cause of the Jew's salvation (Gal 2:15-16; 3:24; Heb. 9:11-15; 10:1-4). The reformers called this "meritorious ground for our justification," explaining that faith is the soil that the seed of justification is planted into. Christ was that soil, too. As we give our lives to Christ in faith, He, in turn, gives us His righteousness. Faith will generate real, impacting Christianity so we can become a committed disciple and build His Church. If you want to understand faith, you must be willing to understand our Lord. Your faith is as only as good as the object into which you place it. If it is in money or power, it will be weak and lifeless. If it is in false teachings or personal ideas, it will be dead. Faith must be in our living God by way of His working in you!

The Theological Meaning of Saving Faith (Acts 13:38-39; Rom.1:17; 3:31-5:21; 2 Cor. 5:13-21; Gal. 2:15- 5:1; Phil. 3:4-14; 1 John 1:9)

In Protestant, Reformed, and Evangelical Theology, faith comes to a person by what is called “Justification by Faith Alone.” This was the rallying cry of the Reformation. This was the main point that caused Luther and Calvin to challenge the Catholic Church and its teachings. This is also the cornerstone of protestant theology that Christ, through His work, gave us a “pardon.” This pardon is from the penalty of death because of sin, and there is nothing we could ever do to earn this pardon. It is purely by His acceptance of us that we are saved (Eph. 2:8-9). There is nothing that we can add to it, such as good works or clean living. Justification means that, much like a blanket, God's righteousness is covering us from His wrath and punishment! It is like getting a speeding ticket, going to court, and having the judge declare you innocent, even though you were speeding. To God, you are clean, covered by “Atonement,” which is Christ’s righteous covering over our sinful being; this is what Christ has done for you. This creates our reconciliation to God; as we were in perfect relationship to Him before the Fall, we now are, again, in harmony.

God has a righteous basis for our justification, through the sacrifice of His Son for our sins. Grace was not cheap for God. Christ paid a great debt by pleasing God's wrath, both in metaphysical pain and the human pain of the crucifixion (Lev. 16; Psalm 103:12). Our independence is a slap in His face, and He can do nothing in us until it is removed (John 3:5)! Let us pray to be cleansed by the atoning death of our Savior, who bore our punishment and lived out the Law on our behalf.

Some Jews take issue with this, saying it is unbiblical—that God cannot overrule His own Law, sighting Duet. 25:1 and Prov. 17:15. However, they do not realize that Jesus Himself is the righteous One and He lived a perfect life in our place, as a designated hitter in baseball.

The Catholic Church taught that justification was a process, achieved through the Sacraments and church, and that faith, as well as works, contributed to it. The Reformers said this act was done at once at our acceptance of His gift of Grace. The Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation was even “selling indulgences,” granting people a spot in Heaven for money, regardless of faith or even the Church. They did this to pay for the cathedrals they were building—and you thought bingo was bad! Although Catholic apologists say this was never an “official act” of the church, nevertheless, history clearly states this was a wide problem.

Fate & Philosophy vs. Faith & Doctrine (Romans 11:10-10; 11:11-36; 1 John 4:7-21)!

Fate is looking at what must be, what has been decreed by whoever is in charge, whether it is your boss or God's sovereignty. But, doctrine is what God has revealed for us to understand, not because it must be, but because this is what is best for us and on our behalf! Furthermore, since it is the best, then it obviously should and must be the best for us. Philosophy tells us that faith is blind; however, doctrine has eyes of love. Philosophy only looks to itself; doctrine looks to God. Philosophy has no compassion or liberty or impacting application to create freedom, faith, or to glorify God. Fate is without care, love, or understanding. Doctrine shows us our faith; it is the care and the love and the kindness that abounds because He first loved us! Faith and predestination are also the voluntary choices of the sanctified Christian, because God is working and foreordained it. This is not contradiction, as it transcends normal thinking.

Providence in Scripture means that God is in total control, and thus, we can trust our Lord completely, whatever unfolds before us. Providence fuels our faith; it does not obstruct it! The ultimate love of God is that He laid down His life for His enemies!

Faith Produces Hope (Luke 12:15-21; John 16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Cor. 4:8-13; 2 Cor. 4:7-18; 5:6-8; Rom. 15:13; Phil. 1:21-24; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Heb. 6:18-19)

Hope is eternal love. It is our forward outlook to be in Christ forever. This produces joy and strengthens our faith which Hebrews 11:1 tells us is "*the substance of things hoped for.*" Hope is our future with Christ in glory, in Heaven. The opposite of hope is despair and hopelessness. This is the rotten trait that keeps people oppressed, and stagnates, rendering them unable to grow and succeed in life and in faith. It only sees the problems and circumstances and not the Light of Christ. When we keep our focus on our circumstances, we will see little or no hope. We can only attain hope by being in Christ, and having our eyes focused upon Him. Christ is to be our anchor, our hope.

Hope calls us to patience and confidence for service in all aspects of life, from the great times to the bad. It keeps us fixed on Christ in times of adversity, so that we can endure suffering, and continue in His call (Rom. 5:1-5; 8:18, 25). Hope must be our focus—to us, and to others. It must never be phony or oppressed (1 John 3:3; 4:18)! Hope is the effect of faith, which grows our spiritual maturity and character through our obedience and trust in our Lord (Heb. 6:18.) If you have no hope, then you have no vision, no purpose, no trust, and no faith in the One who loves you. Hope allows you to live with the perspective of eternity, so you are not bogged down in your dire circumstances.

Faith Produces Faithfulness (Psalm 119: 89-90; Matt. 17:19; 25:21; Rom. 1:17; 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 5:22-23; Heb. 11:1; 1 Thess. 5:24)

Faithfulness is the “gluing” fruit that will preserve our faith and the other characters of the Spirit, and identify God's will so we can be dependable and trusting to God and others. It is the one fruit that we give to God, whereas the others, such as love or humility, are a result of the Spirit working in us! Faithfulness is authenticity, the power and motivation for Christian living. Because God is trustworthy with us, we can be faith-worthy in Him!

When we are not exercising our faith, we will be consumed with doubt and distrust—the opposite of God's call and plan for us. We will lose our trust and hope that God is in control! When we do this, we will lose or miss out on seeing God come through with His promises.

Faithfulness is very difficult to have or hold on to, especially when applying it to our church, work, and relationships. We tend to lose our patience with God thinking He is just a blessing machine; and, when we do not get what we want, we leave Him because of our uncertainty. Yet, Faithfulness is the fruit that we give to God so He can change us—inside and out! It is the ability to take what Christ has done in us and, with loyalty and trust, be a blessing to others. Faithfulness goes against modern psychology and the thinking of society, as it requires us to move beyond ourselves. Psychology tells us to be egocentric, putting the “me” first, and rearranging the world to suit our needs, which creates self-destruction and broken relationships. We have to keep the goal of faithfulness in our minds always, as it will allow God to work deeper, and us to respond to His call! God has bigger things at stake that He wants you for, much more than the petty complaints we voice or the things we ask of Him!

Remember, God does not want our complaints; thus, He will not give us an answer for them. Rather, He wants our obedience so He can use us more and in better ways!

Faith Produces Optimism (Proverbs 4:23; Luke 21:18; John 16:33; Romans 8:25; 28; 15:13; Colossians 3:1-4)

Optimism combines hope and faithfulness into synergy (the combination supercharges and become more than just the sum of its parts) to be positive for Christ. It is a heartfelt confidence that everything will come out for the best, as Paul proclaimed, no matter what happens. It will help us to think the best of and be positive with people and in all situations, even if we are proven wrong.

When we are not exercising optimism, we will be pessimistic, give off cynicism to our family and friends, and operate all of our relations with distrust, doubt, and sarcasm. These are the opposites of God's call to faith! These bad characteristics will help us see and dwell on the fact that the glass is half-empty, not that it is half-full! We will only recognize the negative, and look for the worst in people and situations. There are times when we need to be careful and cautious, but constant negativity will get us nowhere.

Faith is the foundation and rock on which we stand. Hope is the confidence and expectation that God's promises will be fulfilled. Optimism combines the two so our faith turns into conviction and enthusiasm, and our hope and faith turn into certainty! So, when we are filled with His Spirit and are true to the Word, we can put His call into action with passion. We will be motivated to seek training to hone our knowledge and prepare us for our call to better glorify our Lord. We will be filled with passion so we can stand longer in service for our Lord, even in times of stress and persecution. We will be motivated to seek justice and be fair. Real Optimism will help us sink our roots in the awareness and knowledge of who we are in Christ, and the power of His grace. Optimism is not just a wish, an academic thought, positive or hopeful thinking, nor is it just the confidence that everything will turn out all right. Rather, it is real and tangible.

With Optimism, we will be able to keep our faith on track and see what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. Then, we will be able to overcome any setbacks, disappointments, or suffering we may face, as the goal of being His child will outweigh all else. We will have no fear for what happens to our body when our soul is secured (Phil. 3:20-21a). Eternity is our goal, and our life here is a training ground to learn—a mere rehearsal of what is to come. When we are positive and optimistic, we will keep our interest on what is true, and seek His promises. Because Optimism puts faith into action, we will be able to be more confident that God's promises are real, true, and will come to us. That way, we can have a good attitude, be filled with zeal, and *keep our heart with all diligence* (Proverbs 4:23) even when times are harsh (Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Peter 3:15).

Faith Produces Confidence (Proverbs 3:25-27; 14:26-27; Job. 13:15; Philippians 4:13; Heb 4: 14-16)

Confidence enables us to rely on the Lord for all things in our life. It keeps our faith focused and rooted on the object, which is Christ as Lord, and knows the obstacles of our feelings, circumstances, or issues. We can push forward in the direction that we are called because He is governing and He is sovereign. As we look to Him with trust, and not to others or ourselves, we have the God of the universe in us. Nothing is greater than that! We can live our lives in holiness and Christian character, and react to all the situations we encounter with the focus on who we are in Christ, as He is our confidence. Confidence also makes us realize we are not responsible for the results—only for the faith and obedience.

When we are not exercising confidence, our faith weakens and may fail. We will be overwhelmed with doubt, uncertainty, and disbelief. We will soon distrust people, our capabilities, and God's call. This is the opposite of God's call for faith! This will cause us to seek our limited thinking, placing confidence in feeble, temporary abilities, and things that do not last and have little importance. Self-confidence will elevate us as godlike, becoming our principle authority and reason for life instead of Christ! Confidence will skew into pride. Pride is not a

synonym; rather, it is a heinous mutation. We will lack confidence to serve the Lord, and engage in fear because our faith is limited to the situation, and not in Christ (Matt. 8:26). Our real confidence is in who we are in Him. This is our motivation in all of our life's pursuits—from relationships to decisions, how we are treated, how we respond to others, and how we exercise our faith.

A Christian is to balance confidence and esteem by the temperance of the other characters. Pride and arrogance are the very worst things a Christian can exhibit in the sight of God! Our confidence is to be sure and righteous—without pride. Pride elevates the “me,” whereas, Christian confidence elevates Christ and allows Him to empower us! Bad things become bad when we lack the confidence in Christ to endure and learn from them. Things get worse when we lack the faith and mental composure to deal with a crisis. It is our holding on to His holy love and grace that builds our strength and confidence, and gives us perseverance and more faith. Our Lord gives us the ability and strength to reach beyond our grasp!

Faith Produces Boldness (Genesis 6; 1 Kings 18; Proverbs 28:1; Isaiah 7:9; Daniel 3,6; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; 7:16; Ephesians 6:13-14; Hebrews 13:6)

Being bold means our willingness to take our faith, venture out with it, and do the right thing at the right time, regardless of the barriers or fears we may encounter (1 John 7:17-19). This enables us to speak the truth, and perform a task without fear of the consequences or results because it is the right and Biblical thing to do. It is realizing that God is in control. He is there within us, beside us, and He will take care of us. Therefore, we do not need to fear what others can do; rather, we are to concentrate on our character and call, and do it with passion and conviction.

When we are not exercising boldness, we will become Christian cowards. This means we will be held back from what God has called us to do, miss His opportunities and our growth. We will be engulfed by fear, cynicism, negativity, discouragement, and pessimism. These negative traits create a negative attitude that is infectious to others. It causes people not to take the chance to go forward with what God is calling them to. The exercise of faith and the pursuit of relationships require risk and the willingness to be hurt, as people will hurt and betray us; only Christ remains true. This fear seriously hampers our faith. Thus, the person and/or church remains ensnared in fear, allowing obstacles to stop them so that the work our Lord has for them remains undone. Remember, God heals us and helps us move on; there is no reason to be held back by our fears.

Boldness comes from the confidence we have in Christ—who He is, and what He can do. This attitude directly affects how we respond to any given situation. When we have confidence in our Lord, we can venture beyond our limits, abilities, and comfort zones to engage in the simple things of life—from talking to a stranger in a kind, encouraging way, or sharing the Gospel with a

friend, to the big stretches, such as, church planting, teaching with truth and conviction, or going overseas to a strange and foreign land as a missionary. *I can do all things*, Paul said, not because he was this great and powerful man, but because he knew His God, and what He could do! We will not fear what others can do to us, just as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego demonstrated. They knew God *could* save them. They just did not know *if* He would save them. But, whatever God did, they trusted Him for it, even if the furnace took their lives away. So, they could walk into that furnace with confidence, whatever the results might be (Daniel 3:8-30). God chose to do a miracle. And, even if He had not, how we respond is more important than any miracle we may receive.

Our boldness does not stand alone. If it did, then it would be pride—the most heinous sin we could commit! Boldness has to be tempered by the other characters and fruits from our Lord, so it is synergistic and powerful because of whom He is, not for what we can accomplish! If meekness (strength under control), and gentleness are not accompanying our boldness, we will have “bully-ness” and not boldness. You will have a force of personality—not the Spirit of the Lord (1 Peter 4:7-5:8). *Boldness* works together with *cautiousness*; they balance each other out by helping us exhibit wisdom and passion for a better and godly approach to life.

Faith Produces Perseverance (Psalm 37:24; Romans 8:30-39; 1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Colossians 2:7; Hebrews 2:1; 12:1-3; James 1:4; 25; 1 Peter 4:16; 5:8-9)

The dictionary definition of perseverance is, “To persist in an idea, purpose, or task despite obstacles” (Webster). In the Christian context, perseverance is to continue in a state of grace to the end for our eternal reward. It is literally fixing our eyes upon Jesus—period! In diversity, the call for the Christian is to keep on track, knowing He will take care of us because we belong to Christ. Whatever we face and go through, our Lord is there and we are in His arms. And, when we realize this fact, we can persevere through anything because our Lord, King, and Creator of the universe is there, carrying us through.

It is essential for the pastor and capable leader to be focused on the goal ahead and be able to carry the task and self through the tough times. Too many leaders get frustrated when things do not go as “they” planned or in their perceived way, and they either give up or neglect their responsibility. Their eyes leave Jesus and just focus inward on themselves.

Too many pastors feel they have to answer all of the “whys” in life, like the “whys” of suffering. It is not so much how we answer the question on the reason for suffering, but how we live out our lives and walk with Christ. Too many people are stuck in the questions of it and never learn to trust and rely on our Lord, or learn to deal with it as a learning experience so to be better prepared as a servant of the Lord. Suffering is a natural aspect of the human experience, as we

inherited a sinful nature that corrupted all of God's creation, including us. Suffering does not diminish our faith; in fact, it will strengthen it. When we accept Christ, we take on His righteousness as a covering; but the sinful nature is still there, and we must confront and fight against it all of our Christian life. As we battle on, we grow, and each instance becomes easier to handle as we grow in righteousness and sanctification. This is our spiritual growth, and the faithful and cheerful Christian is the one who perseveres, regardless of the circumstance.

Since suffering is a natural aspect of life, we need to realize this and guard ourselves from it, whether it is physical, mental, emotional, financial, or spiritual. The Bible tells us many times to expect it and to be persistent when faced with adversity. Faith is the key to make this happen; it is faith that allows the work of our Lord in us. Christ will give us the comfort and strength to press on; our reward is yet to come and our adventure in this life is very short compared to the eternity to come. So, we need to make the best of it as life deals us the curves; we are not to be overcome with frustration, but overcome with joy through the life we have in Christ. When things do not go our way, we need to make sure we are going His way!

Section II: Developing an Evangelism Program

Understanding and developing the best means to reach people for the Faith

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers; Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him (Matthew 4:18-20, NIV).

Jesus calls us to Himself, and then calls us to reach others for Him! This is very evident in this passage. An uncommonly incredible, insightful, strange, mysterious person approached a small group of young fishermen working in their family fishing business and challenged them to make a life-changing decision. They were in wonder at this Man's teaching, and the miracle of the fish that was performed for them as recorded by Luke. They knew all about fishing. Their substance and living depended on fishing. They provided a much needed and vital food to their region—fish—which they caught with nets suspended from the back of their boats. The floats and weights that spread out the nets, to catch as many as possible as they rowed in the Sea of Galilee, was done much the same as fishing boats operate today. Then the fish were dried, cured with salt, or pickled to preserve them, and then sold. They were perhaps in a business that provided them with a much higher standard of living than many other people around them. So, why would they desire to leave that good and stable life and venture into the unknown?

Are we willing to *Follow Me*? If not, how will we become *Fishers of Men*?

Jesus gives us a call to step into Him with faith. "Come, follow me" was extended to the disciples, and their response was evident as they left their boats and followed. A call was also given to them to then step out with their faith. "I will make you fishers of men" to others—without irresistible pressure, yet with passion and conviction. That call was unprecedented in their culture and understanding. Normally, a student would seek out a teacher, a Rabbi. A Rabbi would never seek students, as it was a pride issue. Jesus broke the pride and arrogance barrier to model that we are to seek disciples, and not just wait for them to come to us. This call also tells us that before we can teach others to fish, we have to know the fish and know how to fish. In so doing, we can challenge one another to leave our comfort zone and enter the realm of His faith, worship, service, and outreach.

Jesus went throughout the region of Galilee, and into the synagogues, proclaiming that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand (Matt. 4:17; 4:23). However, public preaching was not His main goal or reason for doing so! Above any other activity, Jesus' main goal for His interrelations with humanity was

"discipling" (Matt. 9:9)! Jesus publicly taught the need for repentance. He further taught and challenged His disciples, both personally and systematically, that Christianity does not end at repentance and conversion; it begins there! His primary goal was to mold disciples, so Jesus went directly and personally to call those whom He wanted to work for Him. He took those who lived "normal" lives. He did not go to the universities or synagogues, but literally to the "man on the street." Afterward, He sent them out (Matthew 10:1-15). Then, Jesus ended His time on earth with an imperative command for them to make more disciples (Matt. 28:19-20), which is also our call!

Jesus said, "Follow Me." (Matt. 4:19; 9:9) Jesus did not mean that they should just physically follow Him on the road, aimlessly. They were set apart, challenged to know and grow in the faith, and taught their call and mission. Just as they had worked at catching fish, now they would be catching men (Luke 6:39-40)! The word "disciple" literally means someone who pledges to be a "learner." Moreover, it is someone who follows another's teaching, and adheres to it. It is a commitment and a process. It involves commitment, time to undertake the learning, and, as a Christian, a yearning to imitate Jesus! *Follow me*, as a call to discipleship, is also reciprocal; that is, when one learns, he or she makes the commitment to train someone else. That is what Jesus meant by, "I will make you fishers of men." It is not just catching them and then either throwing them back or storing them (fish were processed and sold for the betterment and use of the community); rather, we are called to care for and cultivate the fish, which are the people. It is training them and placing them so they, too, can catch, train, and place others—and so on! Discipleship is the primary earthly application of the Church as a whole, and the Christian as an individual. It is our duty, it is our priority, and the one thing Christ directly and imperatively commanded us to do (Matt. 28:19-20). In so doing, we will become like Him in character and share His outlook and concerns (Luke 6:39-40).

A lot of Christians have the false presumption that in discipleship we make people like ourselves, or, have them conform to our specific church or denomination or specific system of belief. But, that is not what discipleship and *follow me* is about. It is helping facilitate the spiritual growth of others. It is being empowered by the Spirit to hook people up to Christ. We are never to make disciples in our image, alike in whom we are, how we think, feel, and act, but like Christ! Christian means to be "Christ like," not "self like" or "Bob like" or "Joan like." We are to become His disciples by our faith, by His Work in us! We are then to be disciplined by someone! This is not just learning about the faith as a new Christian; it is a life long commitment to grow in Him—through His Word, through our personal devotions, through fellowship, through worship—and by learning all we can and applying what we have learned. This helps form us as the people of God. We are to disciple others so they can, in turn, disciple others. Thus, Christianity is by faith, it is communal, it is continual, and it is shared. It is a community endeavor! A lot of Christians just will not do this. Perhaps, they are too individualistic, self-absorbed in their own lives without a thought of God or

others. Perhaps, they think, *once I made that prayer and I am “set free.” I do not need to do anything else.* And, yes, they are if it is real and in Christ. But, what good it is to be a “pew-sitter” and do nothing with what Christ gave and called us to (James 2:14-24)?

The twelve disciples spent three years of their lives following, learning, listening, observing, practicing, and experiencing life directly with Jesus. Then, they carried that learning and experience to the world (Matt. 10:1-15; the Book of Acts). It all comes down to a decision. Will we make our faith real and impacting, relinquishing our pride, allow ourselves to learn and grow, and in turn teach others, or will we plant our rears in the pew, so that our only impact is our butt-print in that pew? Let us make sure our impact comes from a life transformed and carried on to the people around us!

What we need to learn for today

Evangelism and discipleship are not easy because this goes against our pride and will. It cuts into our time and plans; it brings us out of our comfort zone into the scary areas of life. It even has a cost. Following Christ will cost us and will require effort and consistency (Matt. 8:18-22; 10:38; Luke 9:57-58; 14:27). The original disciples left their families and good jobs (Matt. 10:37; 19:27; Luke 9:59-62; 14: 25-26; 33)! If you are thinking, *well, they were just fishermen. I have a “real” job, I have a family, or, I am important.* Consider this; Jesus did not call bums who had nothing better to do! These people, contrary to popular belief, had good jobs and were educated. I have no idea how the theme that the disciples were uneducated men in dead-end jobs came about. In fact, fishing was one of the best and most lucrative jobs you could have in that time and culture. The disciples had the equivalent of a college education, as they attended school and were able to read and write well. They did not have the further formal education that the Scribes and Pharisees had which was equivalent to a Ph.D. today. That is the reason the Pharisees looked down at them—because they did not have “their” education and title, and they were not under the care of another Rabbi—not because they were uneducated (Mark 6:2-3; 11:27-28; John 7:14).

We may not be called to the radical commitment they were. Jesus will never call you to literally leave your family, and, in most cases, He would rather you stay where you are. What Jesus wants is for us to follow Him in our will and mindsets so we grow in the faith and then become contagious with the faith to others. And, we can do this best in the relationships and connections we already have, even before we set out to make new ones. He may then call you to venture out, but He will also give you the ability and desire to do so!

Jesus expects us to know what we are getting into, and embrace it with vigor and faith. The point is that nothing can come before Him (Matt. 3:8; 6:33; Luke 14:15-24; John 8:31; 14-15)! We must embrace our call and responsibility to be discipled and make disciples! If we are truly willing to learn and apply what

Christ taught, if we really respond with gratitude for that which He has given us, we would truly be His disciples! The Church will be on fire by the Spirit and really impacting the world! Heeding our call to bring the message of Christ's love and reconciliation takes the determination to follow though—to follow Him. Does this sound too far-reaching, too scary? Consider this, what we gain will far outweigh any suffering or loss on our part (Mark 10:28-30; 1 Cor. 15:58)! If, and when we hear God's call depends on our ears, our will, and our attitude (Matt. 22:14). God does not force us or plead with us; He merely presents us with the option (Isa. 6:8)! We must say, as Isaiah said, *Here I am, send me!* We must allow our spiritual eyes to be opened and our will to be relinquished to His for real discipleship to take place. Then, our churches will grow in prayer, worship, and maturity, and revival may even take place!

Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. Are you doing that? Most Christians just stand at the shore of life watching the fish. We make little effort to catch them for our Lord. It is amazing at all the excuses I have heard, and have even given myself over the years, for not following Him and why it is not necessary to become fishers of men. We can theologize and rationalize for not doing what He has called us to do (Mark 8:36; Luke 18:29-30). But, I believe it is our fear that takes us over, and not the love we have in Christ (1 John 4:16-21). Yes, it is scary; the waters can be deep, and they can be rough, and we will get wet. But, we have the incredible comfort that Jesus gives us not only the call, but also the ability and resources by which to follow Him (Isa. 55:10-11). He gives us the rod and the reel; He even provides the bait of His Holy Spirit. All we are called to do is cast out the line with our faith, with our love, with our character, with our determination, and with our trust and eyes upon our Lord.

Let us, as the Church triumphant, adhere to His call and follow. Apply your faith! Because, if we just sit around and come up with excuses, we will drift too far away—too far from the fish. We will not be catching anything and the fishing expedition of life will be just a meaningless and wasted trip. Let us allow the power of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes, and break our will, so we can be receptive to our Lord and Savior, and so we can do as He called! It all comes to the decision of whether we will make our faith real and impacting, relinquishing our pride to allow us to learn, grow, tell, and teach others, or else we will plant our rears in the pew, thus making our butt print in that pew our only impact! Let us make sure our impact comes from a life transformed and carried on to the people around us! Let us follow Him and be His fishers of men!

The Nature of Humanity

Before we can venture into the subject of Evangelism, of making fishers of men, we have to understand the sinful nature and the arrogance of the *fish* in question—our human nature. We will flap our fins and tails as fast as we can to the very last moment to try to flee from God's presence and control, saying we can do better on our own. We will ignore His bait and His truth. We will stay in

our stinky stingy waters and not venture into His *living water* (John 4:10-12). Most people, throughout history, would rather take their own chances than surrender themselves to the will of the Lord (Luke 12:16-21; John 3:5; 30; Heb. 10:31). They do not want to be convicted or challenged that their presumptions, pride, or thinking is wrong. There are no words or deeds that can sway a prideful heart; yet we are called to do so (Rom. 3:3; 23; 5:12-19; 6:23; Gal. 3:13; Eph 2:1-3).

Most Christians fear evangelizing and witnessing because of the possibility of rejection, or how friends and peers will perceive them. Therefore, we must realize the role of evangelism, of saving people, is God's—and God's alone. He chooses to use us for His glory, but it is His Spirit that convicts and converts. We are the tools, the rods and reels He uses. Who and what we are and do in Him far outweighs how others see us. Our responsibility is to obey and let Him use us. We are not responsible for whether or not people accept the message; we are only responsible to proclaim it as effectively and as passionately as we can. This takes the “personal responsibility” and “fear of rejection” load off of us. We need not fear rejection because we are not being rejected; God is the One who is rejected. He is the One to whom people do not want to conform; we are merely His servants!

Obeying God's Call

Our lives would be a lot easier, as Christians, if we did not teach these truths; and, this is a big reason why most Christians just sit in their pews and do nothing. This is why many churches no longer teach Truth, but, rather, false doctrine or liberal ideas. It is easier to sit and believe than to walk, and obey what we believe. And, it is much easier to believe what we want, and only look up at Jesus on occasion but never get up to follow. And, if we never follow, we can never make fishermen of others or ourselves!

But, God calls us out of the darkness and into the light. He tells us that, as Christians, we need to know our neighbor and their objections, but not let that detour us from His plan. We cannot just take our beliefs and keep them in a secret huddle. A football team that wants to win does not hold a huddle so the quarterback can get some sleep, so he can say and do nothing; no, the huddle is to unleash the plan of action that the coach has called them to do. Our Christian faith is based on the cross of Christ, but it does not stop there, as the start of a football game does not stop at the toss of the coin. We are called to do and obey with the gifts and abilities that our Lord has given us (Matt. 5:16).

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

God calls us to respond, and this passage calls us to respond! It must be an action; we are encouraged to respond with passion, boldness, compassion, clarity, truth, and tact. The Roman Empire persecuted the Christians because their faith went against their beliefs, even though their philosophy had an “almost anything goes” attitude (just as American culture does today), but, these same “anything goes” people are very intolerant to Truth! Because, with Christ, “anything” does *not* go, and without Christ, we do not “go.” We will run into people who are offended, but we need to take heed and comfort from the Lord through His Word. Christ says we are sinful, and He is the only way; people say, “No, I am my own way.” So, by obeying, we may cause conflict and strife and even experience rejection and persecution. Accept it as a challenge and as the call that it is (Matt. 5:11-12, 44; Luke 21:12-19; John 15:20-25; Phil. 1:12-18).

Peter says we can do it. “Do this with gentleness and respect.” This is our call. Being ready is a big part of the Christian life, and the defense is to know what you believe and why; thus, our passion will be to lovingly give a response, even out of hostile reactions and the threat of persecution.

“No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62) This may seem like a strange passage for us *city folks*, but what this means is we are to put forth the effort. Putting our *hand to the plow* means we are to take up the necessary means and the determination to accomplish the task He gives. A field does not plow itself, and without plowing, the field will not be ready or usable and thus no harvest will come about. It comes down to removing our “me first” mentally and replacing it with a “Christ first” determination; then the fish and the harvest will come. For the farmer to farm, he must have a symbiotic relationship with God. The farmer cannot make it rain, nor can he create the soil or the seeds. The farmer is given the seeds, the soil, and the ability from God, but it is up to the farmer to prepare the field, plant the crops, and then care for them until the harvest is ready. It is the same with evangelism. He gives us the ability and reason, and He saves; it is His work, but He uses us in the process to deliver His message.

The Desire not to Follow

What I want to do is challenge you to see some of the root causes that people turn you off when you evangelize. By knowing these common objections (we will look at more of them next month), you will understand why people respond the way they do, so you will not take things so personally. That way, you will not be turned off from doing evangelism yourself. This will give you greater confidence; you will know how people respond, and then be better listeners and evangelists. We first need to ask, what are my objections? What stopped me before? What can still stop me? What did I fear giving up or fear to go?

Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead (Matthew 8:21-22)."

This passage reveals some seemingly strange happenings and words coming from Jesus. Large crowds often followed Jesus, attracted by His teachings (Matt. 7:28-8:1) and His miracles (Matt. 8:16-18). Then, He saw a large crowd coming toward Him so He ditched them. Then, individual people came up to Him and He turned them away, too. He even turned away a Jewish leader. Jesus gave the impression that He was pushing people away who had come to Him, which would have been in direct opposition to His character and mission. So, what is going on here?

This passage stresses the radical demands of Jesus' call. His call is above all else for us as Christians. What God's will is all about, and of what we are to be doing in our personal lives and in our churches is practice our faith so we will grow in Him. This is discipleship! Nothing else is more important. Period. At the same time that He gives us this call, a great cost is placed before us that we need to accept. It is a cost that He paid on the cross, a cost of our will. It is a sacrifice of all that we may think is important in life, except that with eternity in mind, it is not. But, most people do not realize that the things they are chasing in life are really meaningless and worthless in an eternal perspective.

We need to understand that none of these people were really turned away by our Lord. Rather, they, themselves turned away of their own will because they just wanted a show. Those who said they wanted to follow Him refused to pay the cost. Remember, our Lord knows what is in our hearts and what is motivating us. Jesus desires for us to grow in Him, not to merely seek a show (John 2:25; 1 Pet. 2:11). The scribe said, *I will follow you*. He was perhaps requesting an apprenticeship, to go under Him and learn. Most people followed in their family's business or trade. There were many schools for basic education to learn how to read, write, and learn the law, but there were few organized schools or universities for professional learning. People who did not want to follow their family's trade would seek out a good teacher and plead for them to take them in and mentor them. In the process, they would become a servant to the mentor, or do whatever it took to get their attention and their admiration, as well as learning from them. Then, one day they would take over, or franchise what they had learned somewhere else. This could be any professional trade, from a carpenter to a philosopher. Jesus had both roles! Here, several people came to Jesus seeking His mentoring. Jesus saw their real intentions. Perhaps, these men had ulterior motives, or were not honest in their approach. Maybe, they just wanted to go with Him to see more of His miracles. Maybe, they were seeking to cash in on Jesus' fame, or make a name for themselves, while uninterested in godly pursuits or real discipleship and learning.

Me First!

It was common for Greek teachers and philosophers to make hard demands on their potential students to test their resolve, commitment, and intentions. These hard demands were meant to discourage people who had bad intentions and ulterior motives from taking up their valuable time and resources. The best teachers would only take in a few of the worthiest students, just as most universities do today, with screening processes. Jesus' own profession as a carpenter was considered a very good profession. Many sought to get into it because it was far more lucrative and respected than the other occupations in an agrarian community where farming and trade were the norms. Jesus must have had a lot of people seeking Him as a carpenter too, prior to His public ministry.

The point of this passage is that selfish intentions will block us from knowing Him and growing in Him. We must be aware of selfish intentions both in us and in others. Being "me first" is common, and a part of our sinful nature that Jesus asks us to purge. We have to be honest and introspective as to why we want to serve Him, why we want to grow and be discipled. Because, if it is for egotistical and selfish gain, it will not be real or loving. Pride, spiritual blindness, and vacillation will become our mentors, and we will not have His will and glory in our sights. Jesus will be bearing with us in our unbelief and failures, but He will not be helping us grow (Luke 9:37-62)! The same goes to people coming to the Lord; the selfishness will be one of the biggest barriers.

Jesus calls His disciples, all who follow Him, to a higher standard of commitment beyond poverty and social status into real sacrificial servitude and discipleship lifestyle (Matt. 6:31-33; 10:34-37; 12:46-50; Luke 10:38-42; Acts 14:21-22; 2 Tim. 3: 10-12; 1 Pet. 2:9-10). This is scary, and many will not want to do this, or else will only make a shallow effort (Matt. 13:18-23). Just look at the *scribe* who desired to come to our Lord, wanting to become a disciple. He said he was willing to follow Jesus anywhere, a seemingly commendable offer. But, did he know what it meant? It seems he just wanted to see more of the show. His job was to record the Law and keep records for the nation, a very important leadership position in Jesus' time. Perhaps his intention was to spy or to gather false information; whatever it was, Jesus saw through it. We may not have the insight, and we cannot judge the motives of people. And, even if they do respond, we never know for sure how sincere they are until we see the fruit of their lives (Gal. 5:22-23). That is why when we are called to follow; we must keep our eyes on Christ and not on our situations or how people respond.

To literally follow Jesus at that time—that is, travel and learn and minister with Him—would have meant leaving everything, including your home, as the rest of His disciples did (Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 10:28-29). This was not permanently leaving, as the Gospels record them going back to their homes on occasion, but venturing beyond their normal way of life (Matt. 8:14). This scribe was, perhaps, a person focused on his home and material positions. Jesus was, in fact, telling this scribe that he needed to count the cost before becoming a

disciple (Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-33). We do not have to become homeless to follow Jesus, but we still must love Him more than anything else. That way He is the Lord and Ruler of our life. We must consider the cost before we commit. Otherwise, we will not remain, and will become a bigger hindrance than if we never bothered following at all. A lot of people do consider the cost, and they refuse to pay it. You have to pay it before asking others to do so!

Another man comes and desires to follow, but wants to return home first, to *bury my father*. This may seem sincere, too, as this was one of the most enduring and basic of responsibilities of a son to his family. The father was probably not dead yet (or he would not have been there, or asked the question). Rather, the son's duties were to take care of him and then take over the household, business, and any family matters. One normally did not go into a mentoring position until his family was taken care of first. After death, the body was entered in a ground burial. A year later, it was dug up and put into a family crypt or box, much like the one recently discovered that may have belonged to James, the brother of Jesus. This process can take one to two years. So, this man was seeking something he had no intention of following through with until a much later time. Jesus calls us now, not later! This man can be described as the "reluctant disciple," one who needed to be reminded of what it means to make a real commitment.

Then Jesus responds, *let the dead bury their own dead*. Jesus is telling us the importance of discipleship, and of our growth in Him. He is saying to let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead, as they are both dead. The time we have on earth and of obeying His call is short, so it demands our full attention and commitment. Jesus was not telling the man to disrespect his parents; rather, he is telling him to consider what is important, and to have the right priorities in life. We are to make disciples to revive the spiritually dead, not wait around for someone to die and be buried—especially in our spiritual life, and that of others. Remember that *follow Me*. Jesus is asking us to place Him above all—including occupation, family, personal desires, and aspirations. All we desire and all our work must have Christ as the focus and purpose. A true disciple will not have a pecking order where Jesus is not number one on the list. There is a cost to following Jesus. Most people did not want to pay that cost, whether first hand with Christ himself, or today in the Church.

We are not told if the man followed Jesus into the boat, or if the storm (verses 23-27) or his inclinations distracted him from this ever so important sojourn. To really follow Christ, we will surrender all to Him (John 3:5, 30; Rom. 12:1-3; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 3:10-14). But, what we give up is nothing compared to what we gain! Remember, Christ surrendered Himself so you can have eternal salvation. Should there not be a small piece of gratitude within you to say, "Hey, I will go wherever you call me?" If we respond to *follow Me* with a "but," we will never truly follow. We will never grow in the depths of His precepts or be able to serve Him fully. We will remain in our status quo, saved perhaps, but uninvolved,

sitting in a pew, with no impact or reason for being a Christian. If you have reservations, think them through. Do they have more to offer you? Do they have a greater purpose or impact? Will they follow you into eternity? Life is short; make the most of it and just go and follow Him! Be real and be committed! Do not let doubt, the pleasures of this world, or your sin distract you from life's greatest opportunity and adventure...His call to *make fishers of men!* Embrace His call with unmovable trust and be assured that His plan is the best plan!

You may have made the decision to *follow me*, but what have you done with becoming *fishers of men*? Have you counted the cost? Are you willing to pay the price? Do you know that both are required to follow Jesus?

Section III: Why most People Stay away from Christ

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. 2 Timothy 3:1-4

Have you ever wondered why people do not have the willingness to come to faith in Christ? Why will they not listen to a passionate plea from a loving and caring friend or family member who wants to see them saved? Why would they choose not to see their need for such a fantastic gift from God? Why, after all your efforts and hard adoring work, it seems to have been pointless and have gone unheard? After all, we have the God of the universe—full of love and compassion, Who created not only us, but all things—reaching out to us!

Consider this; He is God. We are a seemingly inconsequential, created entity that has been rebellious and ungrateful toward Him ever since the beginning. He does not need to bother with us; He does not need to reach out to us! We do not deserve such efforts. We do not deserve His love, because, after He made us, we, in turn, broke our covenant with Him, venturing into sin and total separation and alienation from God. We deserve total punishment and eternal damnation for such a betrayal!

Now, consider this; we willfully forsake Him. However, God chose to send His Son to take His wrath in our place. He saved us! Christ not only lived a perfect life on our behalf, He suffered and died in our place! Then, because of His work on the cross, His Grace was bestowed upon us, a most precious free gift that we could never earn or purchase on our own!

Therefore, we are fallen human beings with no hope, no future, and no place in eternity where we would desire to be. We are condemned to eternal damnation, and we deserve it! Yet, by Christ's grace, a most marvelous gift is extended to us, the gift of eternal life. This is the gift that covers our sin by His work, so we no longer need to fear punishment and the consequence of sin. Because of His work, we now have a life that has hope, love, and a purpose to it. Yet, most people will not realize their sin or accept His most gracious bequest, damning themselves for eternity!

Because of our fall and alienation from God, most people will cry, *foul*, saying, *hey, this is not fair!* But, have you considered that it was not fair for God to take our place in punishment? It was not fair for Him to offer grace to us when we did not earn or deserve it in any fathomable way! But, He gives us His love freely anyway! Unfair? Yes, it is unfair—unfair for God!

Now, back to your friends and family members who will refuse to see your faith as real and relevant and who may think you are some kind of fool, or misguided from reason. They may hear these above words about God's grace, and the Holy Spirit may be knocking at their door, but they just flat out refuse to go God's Way! After such passionate efforts with friends, family, and others around you, you may feel frustrated and may want to give up. But, let me encourage you; most of the time, people are not rejecting you—they are rejecting God. They refuse to see their sin, and there is nothing you can do, other than continue with your prayers to God on their behalf and remain consistent with your character.

Why is that? Why would people not want to be in Christ? Why would they not respond to our outreach programs? The basic reason is that most people will place their trust in anything that is not God, such as their money, their career, and the high standard of living we enjoy in the United States. Overseas, trust is placed in clans, tribes, idols, religion, and various beliefs systems. People do not see the peril that is right in front of them. Just click on the evening news and you will be inundated by the moral erosion of our culture, and the flight from godly values (Rom.1-2; Eph. 2:1-3). The reason is that people are in sin, and they prefer that sin to God's love. It blinds, courts, and misleads! They do not want to be convicted away from their beliefs!

People like to see themselves as gods; their will is as a protected castle, and they will not bow to the siege of anything that comes against it—even that of Christ. Christ has a plan of love that feeds, not a siege that starves (A siege is when an army surrounds a castle before they storm it. It may take days and even months to starve the people into submission if the army cannot get past their defenses such as the rampart, walls, or mote). Yet, too many ignore the call, and refuse to give up their will. The walk of the Christian faith flies in the face of our individualistic culture that says we can *do it our way*, and we can *have it our way*. This mindset is not uniquely American; it is that original, sinful nature we all have (Matt. 10:32-33; 1 John 2:15-17).

We do not have to be perfect or even fundamentally good. All we need to do is be who we are. Just watch the biographies of famous people on cable TV, and how they lived their lives. They chased drugs, pleasures, and wealth, only to find despair, and, sometimes, even death. They thought they had everything, only to find they had nothing in their lives. It all comes down to the fact that people do not like to be convicted! They do not like nor want to be challenged; they want to do as they deem fit (Duet. 12:8; Jud. 17:6)!

We have to realize that we got ourselves into this situation through sin. At the same time, we must realize that we are unable to get ourselves out of it! Humanity is powerless to know God without God's intervention (1 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil.1:6; 1 Thess. 1:3-6; 5:23-24; 2 Tim. 1-12; 4:18; 2 Pet. 1:10). We are at the mercy of God, and God responds to us with mercy and forgiveness. We got

ourselves into trouble; He is willing to get us out of it. The problem is that most people will not respond. They will not reach out a hand to take His, even when they are drowning!

This classic sermon illustration explains this well.

During a flood, a man named Biff sought to find a way to save himself as water slowly came into his home, leaving him no way out. Biff frantically sought an escape, but he had waited too long and now it was too late. When Biff originally purchased his home, he was told by the realtor and city officials that he was in a floodplain, and they discouraged him from buying the home. But, Biff was insistent that this was the home for him. They continued to warn Biff, but the realtor and city officials acquiesced that he could still live there if he chose. They warned Biff of his coming peril; then, they gave him the instructions on what to do if it rained, and how to be saved when the flood came. They told Biff that if it rained more than one day, he needed to evacuate to the city shelter, or his home could be inundated by the water and be destroyed. They further warned him that the city might not be able to send help if he waited too long. He agreed to this. Then they gave Biff a special cell phone to call on if he could not get out, cautioning him that he needed to call before the road was flooded or they would not be able to get to him at all.

Now, it had been raining for three days straight. The realtor came by on the second day to see if he could help, but Biff got mad at the realtor, telling him that the rain would stop, so to leave him alone! The realtor left. On the morning of the third day, the road was about to be washed out when the city sent an evacuation team to rescue the man. Biff again got mad and sent them away, declaring that it would soon stop raining. They told him that he had one hour, and if he changed his mind, he could use the special cell phone. However, he got mad and smashed the cell phone. Biff was determined and did not want to leave his home and miss his favorite TV show. He did not want to be rescued from something he did not believe would happen! By this time, the waters had completely engulfed Biff's home, and he was on the roof. All of his neighbors had already been evacuated, but he did not want to go because he was sure the rain would stop. The rain did not stop, and Biff was stuck. By now, Biff was angry at the realtor for selling him the home. He was angry at the city for allowing the rain to wash out the road, but, he remained confident that he had made the right decision—as he drowns.

The rain represents the stresses and trials of life, and the flood, our final judgment. At one time, we had our chance, but we forsook God. Now, we must reap the consequences of our decision. Biff represents all of us as we refuse to see our situation, blame others, and remain in our sin! We do this even though we have so much information about our Lord; we still refuse to respond to Him! We do this when, even though the Spirit is there, we do not let Him in! We are confident, and assured by our culture and our will that everything is OK, as the

rains of life come and sweep us away. The root issue is our pride and our refusal to see our plight. That is why God intervened on our behalf—because we could not (Romans 1)!

No one wants to admit his or her depravity or helplessness, so we come up with all kinds of ideas and ways that we do not need Christ (Isa. 59:2; Rom. 1:18-19; 3:9; 19; 5:12-17; 21; Gen 3; Acts 17:26; 1 Cor. 15:22). The idea that we do not need Christ is not a new, twenty-first century phenomena, but was stated by Christ Himself as he told the story; *A certain ruler asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Why do you call me good? Jesus answered. No one is good—except God alone* (Luke 18:18-19). The ruler, who was some kind of leader, was flattering Jesus, and assumed his good deeds would bring him eternal life. Jesus quickly responded that goodness is found in God alone, and that his flattery was insincere. Even if we are sincere, we will be sincerely wrong. The leader failed to do what was required, and his good deeds amounted to nothing.

The rich man refused to see his sin or to repent. He was only able to see his needs and desires. These desires became the barrier to knowing and growing in Christ. We are never to think too highly of ourselves, lest pride would enter in to ruin us. Pride removes God from our equation of life and relationships. It removes honesty and sincerity. It literally destroys our relationships and takes away our joy! The irony is that pride is used to seek fulfillment of the self and joy, but, it only results in sheer despair (Phil. 2:1-4). Jesus, in the Luke passage, tells us never to allow money to stand in our way of Him. When we do, it blocks us off from the true treasures and blessings He has for us! Money represents anything that takes the place of our Lord! If you fear you will lose out in happiness or lose out in what seems important, the fact is—you won't! Wealth in itself is not wrong, but it can be a very powerful, false god that subjugates us; Christ frees us and blesses us! Allow Jesus Christ to free you from the self-destruction of your pride!

So, why do we call ourselves good? Why do we go through life with a mentality like a Frank Sinatra song, "I'll do it my way?" Did you know all the members of the "Rat Pack" (the nickname for America's greatest and most popular entertainers of the years between 1950 and 1970, such as Dean Martin, Peter Lawford, Joey Bishop, and Frank Sinatra) all died meaningless, lonely, and alcoholic lives? *Doing it my way* did not work for them, and, yet, they had the wealth and power to make it work if it *could* have worked. The same pattern follows most celebrities and industrialists who seek fulfillment in money, fame, and power. Yet, when their fame is over, when the money runs out, and as they grow older, their entourage is gone, their fame has fled, they list a string of ex-spouses, and their lives are without merit or meaning, virtually all of them end up unhappy and destitute in both relationships and joy (Rev. 3:5)!

When we think we are a god to ourselves, we have a much exaggerated view of ourselves. Even if you are a model citizen, and live your life to help

others, you will not even be close to godhood. Jesus knew the leader lived for his possessions, and would miss the Kingdom of God because of his own efforts. It is the righteousness of Christ alone that gives us the hope of salvation; our only effort is the acceptance and trust of what was done on our behalf. Of course, if you are perfect and born perfect, then you do not need to worry; however, no one has ever been perfect except for Christ. Too many people *do* think they are perfect, and boy, will they be surprised in the end! We all need help because we are not perfect. Fortunately for us, Christ was perfect on our behalf; He was our substitution; He is perfect; all we need to do is respond in gratitude and be our best for His glory.

The bottom line is that most people do not want to be bothered by religious things or be convicted; yet, the purpose of our existence is to be reconciled to Him. We have to be convicted in order to receive His grace. The Spirit is the One who convicts; it is our will that keeps Him from that mission! The biggest problem is in recognizing that we are indeed in need, and that we must surrender ourselves to God's providence (John 3:5, 30; Gal. 2:20-21; 1 Pet 5). If we dare to despise God and His offer, then we are damned—not a pleasant future—but it will be by our own design and desire, and our blame alone. If we choose ourselves over God, then we will lose everything!

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Psalm 90:1-2

This Psalm, along with many other Scriptures, tells us that God has always existed, always directed His creation, and has always provided a plan for us. God is eternal, and we are not. He has always been and will always be. There is one God, and we are not Him! This is paramount for us to understand in order to begin our walk with Christ.

If an evangelist simply stated that Christ was a great moral teacher, he would get no reprisal. If you were to witness to your neighbor boldly that Christ was a great philosopher, he or she would invite you to tea. If a billboard stated that Christ was a great example, the non-Christian would not complain. Christ is all of those, and, yet, He is not. Our Lord is a great Example, Teacher, and Philosopher, but not *just* a great moral philosopher, teacher, and example. He does not stop there. He is also eternal and Lord over all (John 8:24; 56-58). The world, at large, is greatly offended by the implication that Christ is God, thus, saying He is anything *but* God is okay. Because, if Christ is God, then our self-directed destiny would be in error, and our will would need to be controlled by Him, and we just do not want to be *lorded over*. This is why people are so passionate to get prayer out of the schools, and God's name out of the Pledge of Allegiance and off our money! Because, they do not want God in their lives or to be reminded it is in God we trust! American money is a great evangelistic

illustration; stamped on it is the saying "In God we Trust" which is next to "Liberty!" Without God, there is no liberty!

Of course if the evangelist does only proclaim the "niceties" without substance, without conviction and without truth, the person who receives the message does not hear about the real living and loving Lord! They do not hear about their sin and their real need for a Savior!

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. John 3:18-21

Not believing in God is not the source for judgment or being condemned, but, rather, from not believing who Christ is or what He has done. The demons believe; they just do not trust or surrender to Him. It is the rebellion that our human nature constitutes against God that gives us over to damnation. Jesus, as the perfect One, comes to us, the condemned, with an offer of hope and salvation. We see that hope, but put it off saying, *I do not need it, or, I can do it alone*. Jesus goes on to say that our evil nature is the cause of our condemnation, and He is the source of our hope. When we love ourselves and our deeds more than we love our Lord, then we are in trouble. This is not of God's doing, but a result of our own will and choices (Eccl. 11:9; Rom. 3:3; 1 Cor. 1:18, 23; 6:2).

Common Objections

We have already examined the two prime, root reasons why people will not come to faith In Christ. Of all the objections we hear when we seek to share our faith, these two root reasons sum up most of all of the objections you will encounter. These objections blind people to Christ so they do not see the reality and veracity of their sin. By this blindness people will replace Christ with anything and everything they can to fill that void of emptiness they feel. Unless people who are blind turn away from the comfort of the objections they will not feel or see a realization of their need for Christ. They will then refuse to be convicted of that sin. Under these two reasons of no one wants to admit his or her depravity or be convicted of sin, come the countless objections that people give, and many different categories they can go into. But, from my experience in youth, pastoral, and evangelism work, over 90% of these objections fall into seven main categories. These reasons were not just drawn out of a hat. These were carefully researched over a period of twenty years, during which time I put into practice the directive of *making fishers of men*.

The Mindsets of Modernism and Post-modernism

Before we can get to the objections, we need to understand the mindsets that infiltrate the thinking of most people. There are three predominate mindsets, rooted in history, that define individuals as well as generations. They are *Post-modernism*, *Modernism*, and *Pre-modernism*.

The *Postmodernism* theory rejects a sovereign God and absolute truth. It firmly teaches independence and individualism, with a prominent philosophy of rebelliousness as a societal collective. Big words, but basically it puts the emphasis on personal experience and diversity so no one in the group is offended, without the parameters of distinctions or truth to define them. It is a bankrupt philosophy because it merges subjects and objects; the self and others are indistinctive. There are no real definitions in life and reality, so God cannot be defined, and truth is nonexistent and irrelevant. Examples of postmodern thinking include the subjects of homosexuality, sexual freedom, and other “formerly” taboo practices as being “rights” and “virtue” over and against the Christian principles that condemn them. Monogamy, marriage, and virtue in general are considered unfair and irrelevant to personal freedom and expression.

So, Postmodernism, sometimes called “Postmodernity” is a theory based on illogical reason and absurdity. However, its comfort, and the reason it has gained such popularity since the early 80s, is the personal freedom to define truth as each person sees fit and to believe what one wants as long as it is not considered real truth—because there is no truth.

In contrast, *Modernism* is the period of enlightenment that advocates that only logic, reason, and natural science give us truth. It also rejects traditions—especially the Catholic Church and authority. This view has fueled most philosophical and educational thinking since its popular acceptance. The reason people find comfort in this view is because one becomes a part of something bigger than oneself. Consider the *WWII* generation and all their incredible accomplishments; this modernistic thinking was at their forefront. Most historians date this period from the French Revolution in 1789 to the fall of Communism in 1989. This view believes in real truth as tested by science and reason. Science and reason also form the foundation of apologetics, which is the intelligent defense of the Bible and God. A logical presentation along with a listening ear to those who are of this philosophy is the key to winning them to Christ. *Postmodernism* is harder to combat because of the rejection of substantiated Truth and replacing it with subjective truth. Thus demonstrated truth is replaced with what feels good, whereas a carefully crafted argument will have more impact with people holding the *Modernism* worldview. *Postmodernists* deny truth, so no matter how good the argument may be; a “true” *Postmodernist* will not listen.

The key to getting past their *Postmodernity* is to listen to them, being very careful not to come across as judgmental or use “churchy” language. Build a

relationship and let them see the difference in your life while people pray for them. I never seen a *Postmodernist* won over by an argument, but I have seen countless people won over by kindness and consistency which is absent in a *Postmodernity* mindset (Matt. 10:20; Mark 13:11; 1 Cor. 2:4-5, 10-14; 1 Tim. 4:1-6)!

The final mindset, the precursor to both *Postmodernism* and *Modernism*, is *Premodernism* which was the prominent mindset from the Middle Ages through the Reformation. If you are thinking *hey, this is meaningless today*, I invite you to just watch the news. You will find this view evident—from terrorists to zealous religious types, cult groups, separatists, and those who force their view on others, regardless of real truth or reason. This mindset accepts a total absolute truth—but only their concept of it. They tend to be so devoted to their view that they are closed off to any truth that does not fit their view or what they have grown up with. *Premodernism* is also dominated by traditions and rituals. You will see this mindset predominately in religious-fundamental and zealous-political groups, as well as multi-generational Christians who feel their faith rests in their church and parents, and thus do not take personal involvement into account. The meaning of *Premodernism* is being “oppressed” by authority, such as being oppressed by the Catholic Church. (This is the historic view; I am not “bashing” our Catholic friends!)

For this view, we need to appeal to their sense of tradition. Explain how Christianity is rooted in ageless traditions and well as reason. *Historicity* is important to them, whereas the *Postmodernism* mindset rejects it. Your focus for evangelism needs to be that God has a place and plans for them that are far better than what they may have ever experienced or dreamed of. Now, you can start to see why knowing these mindsets are important because each one requires a different approach. However, the key is communicating God’s compassion, grace, and love, and demonstrating it, consistently, in your life.

Section IV: The Seven Main Objections

First: Trustworthiness (Galatians 1: 4-10)

People tend to object to the reliability of the Bible, and even of God. This attack and objection is rooted in the nature of the *will*, as most objections are. People do not want to acknowledge a prime source to which they need to submit. So, they grasp at anything with which to make a blanket to protect them from the truth, and to give them comfort for their reasons. People will attack the faith to give themselves protection for their beliefs. If a seemingly logical reason can be ascertained, then they will use it. They may say the Bible is a myth and full of contradictions, but they probably have never read it, and are only repeating what they have heard from others who also have not read or researched the Scriptures.

Before I was a Christian, I would say almost anything, and argue with anyone, to try to prove the errors and contradictions of the Bible that I got from reading anti-Christian books. However, I rarely went to the prime source. The more I looked at the prime source, the Bible, the more I was convicted of the real Truth! As I came to understand what it means to be a Christian, I learned, over the years, that the reality of God is found in our experience of Him, and being obedient to His will. I know that God exists because I know Him personally. This is a proof from personal testimony and personal reason. But, many use science as a reason to disprove the Bible's reliability. For this, we can see the trustworthiness of Christ just by the reliability of history that proves the historical aspects of the Bible. Even science—the reason why people object to the Bible—can be expounded through apologetics to prove the Bible.

Even though we have the answers to any objection through gifted Bible Apologists, credibility will be at stake for you in witnessing. People may not want to acknowledge a God to whom they must be accountable, so they will say there is no God as a protection from the responsibility and accountability they do not want to take on. Now, we know the truth, and science and history back us up, but most people, even Christians, know little about apologetics. So, do a little research; there are a lot of Christian books, websites, and resources that are of great help. You do not need to know all the answers, but you should know where to find the answers, which we will reference in our appendix.

Second: Pluralism (2 Timothy 3:6-9)

This is also called *Postmodernism*. We live in a “politically correct” culture in the West, where offending someone's belief is a cardinal sin—unless Christianity is the target.

Most people in America today want to believe that all religions are the same, and all roads lead to God. People will respond in a way such as, *why does it matter what I believe?* They say it is arrogant and narrow minded to believe that Christianity is the only way. This objection usually is expressed in the most passionate, negative responses because people want to believe what they want, and do not want to be dictated to or directed to Truth. The arrogance is in us and our determined will to go our own way; the ultimate pride and condescension is not Christianity, but rather our refusal to surrender our arrogance. Christianity is the true and only way that God provides for us out of His love and grace.

It is our human nature to strive to be on top. Two kids will argue over who gets the bigger piece of cake; so it is with adults who argue their right to themselves. We are always involved in tasks to prove our value and worth. We often hear, *what happens to the person who never heard the Gospel, like those tribal people in Africa?* The fact is that most people cannot fathom that God is in control and sovereign, because it interferes with their comfort level. If they can rationalize that God is not sovereign, and that there are people not in His control, then they are “off the hook.”

The key to providing evidence for the truth of Christianity is not rooted in the skill of the argument; rather, it is in the love of the person presenting the argument! Your life, and how you live it, is the greatest persuasive power you can have on someone (Eph 4:2; 5:9; Col 3:12-15)!

Third: Need (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

People do not want to admit to a need for something that is outside them, or see the need and urgency of their plight. So, you may hear responses such as, *it is okay for you but I do not need it, or, Christianity is just a crutch for weak people.* People get so entwined in their own lives that they never look up; all they see is their busyness, their accomplishments, or *karma*. They may see religion, in general, as a pacifier to the masses, as Communism was. They may believe that people should be in control of their own destinies, and that we are gods unto ourselves.

People get themselves into all kinds of addictions trying to find a substitute for God. They fear loneliness, a deep yearning for companionship that other people cannot provide, so they get involved in perverted activities as a substitute, only to have that yearning still unfulfilled.

People see religion as a barrier to science and rational thought, when, in fact, the opposite is true. Christianity is based on solid, rational, logical, and consistent reason. The will to reject the truth is like when the people on the Titanic refused to believe they were in danger as their ship sank, then panicked in the last minutes! They may also see religion, in general, as a reaction to a fear complex or that religion is an unenlightened way to view the universe. Yet,

science has never given an answer to the basic beginnings and reasons of existence. God is our reason, our meaning, and our purpose in life—not being unto ourselves.

Fourth: Suffering (1 Peter 4:12-18)

As human beings, we are corporal in nature. That means we have a physical body with nerves and fragility. Suffering is a very negative aspect to our nature. After all, who likes to suffer? So, when people take a look around the world, and even in their own lives, and see suffering, the question arises, *why would a loving God allow suffering and evil into the world?* In other words, when they see suffering, they assume that if there is a God, then He does not care. And, since He does not care, then it does not matter how one lives or what one does.

What the non-Christian may not understand is that suffering is a result of our evil, sinful nature and arrogance against God. Suffering is not from God; it is from us. God is the One who offers an undeserved plan of redemption to bring us out of it. When we accuse God of allowing evil, it is like accusing a bank teller of robbery because they handled the money, while the real robber gets away. Suffering is the result of our choosing to disobey God, not a result of God. He does not have a malicious nature.

The modern person considers suffering as negative, because it does not line up with happiness, peace, and joy. Some Christians have furthered the problem by teaching that suffering is a sign that you are out of God's will and have unredeemed sin. However, this is not Biblical. Yes, sin is the main factor, but, more often than not, the consequences of the sins of others become cumulative and compacting, and affect us. It is a difficult journey, but take heart; our sufferings are very temporary in the scheme of our eternal existence (Matthew 5:10; James 1:2; 1 Peter 4:13; Hebrews 10:24; 2 Corinthians 1:24; 12:9; Philippians 1:19-25; 2:17).

We only see a small, small fragment of life and meaning. God sees the whole picture. Our time here is a mere vapor to what is ahead. We do not see the big picture, but only the here and now. He sees us with eternity in mind, so He can help us to be formed and matured for His purpose. His plan is best. Although it can be a hard and long road for some, it is worth it more than we can possibly imagine! Take this to heart; He is there—guiding, loving, empowering, and even carrying us through it! Check out John 16; 33; Romans 8:18 and 1 Peter 4:19!

My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. (Psalm 119:50)

For further help please see our articles on: *God Really Does Have a Purpose Behind Your Problems!* and, *Growing through Difficult Times of Waiting and Confusion* .

Some further comforting verses to share in evangelism are Psalm 31:9; Psalm 119:50; Isaiah 41:10; Romans 8:18; 28-29; 35-37; James 1:2-3; 12; John 9; 14:1; Colossians 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7; 1 Peter 4:12-19; Hebrews 10:34; Revelation 21:4.

Fifth: Death (Matthew 10:28-31)

The non-Christian may not want to admit to a death in their past, or their own impending demise, so an objection to Christ comes out of it. They may deny death altogether—the afterlife part, that is. Since there is no afterlife, there is no God, and since there is no God, there are no moral absolutes. Thus, people are in charge and in control of their environment, and, again, have no need for accountability or responsibility. So, the individual can rationalize his or her own fate and values and do what he or she wants without fear of reprisal from a holy God. The other possibility is a denial of death stemming from an earlier loss, or the inability to recognize our immortal nature. Out of this view often comes the reckless endangerment of the self by thrill seekers who take on unrealistic, unsafe challenges.

The great news for the people with this objection is there is no death in Christianity; we are made for eternity and God has a place for us! Share the eternal comfort and position we have in Christ. John 1:1-14 tells us that Jesus is God who came to us both as a human being and as fully God. He experienced life and death. He has risen from the dead, (John 2:19-21; 19:33-37; 20:1-10), He has prepared a place for us, and has covered our sin so we can have eternal life (John 14:1-4; Eph. 2:1). This life is merely a temporary venture until we are called home (Luke 16:22-23, 2 Cor. 5:8, Phil. 1:21-23, Rev. 14:11)!

Sixth: Spiritual Warfare (2 Corinthians 4:4-6)

We need to know that we have an *enemy* who will do whatever it takes to destroy our relationship with the Lord. He works best by blinding us to the truth and/or getting us to focus on things that take us away from God. Sometimes, these can be “good” things, such as being so busy with our children and their activities that we never go to church. Our enemy will also prevent others from gaining access to God, access lost out of our pride being inflected on others. Our enemy is the Devil. We have an enemy who uses our own ideas and conflicts against us, and tricks our will and desire away from God. Satan’s strategy is that he joins the church and does not fight against it. Satan is at his best, his strongest, and most powerful in the church, because, as Christians, we let him. He causes more distraction by using Christians against each other than any occult practice could ever do. To use a Biblical illustration, Satan spends more

time watering and fertilizing the tares/weeds (evil agendas and personal desires) than he does in cutting down the wheat (devotion to God).

Satan is the angel of light who fell from grace by his pride (verses Christ is Light the real Light) (Isa. 14:12; Eze. 29:12-19; Luke 10:18; 1Tim. 3:6); God has not taken his glory away; he is not a goat-headed monster with a pointy tail and a trident (the pitchfork). Thus, he deceives us with a little of the truth, and a lot of misdirected imitation of the Christian life. Satan accomplishes his task by manipulating us to focus on our desires and to be in conflict with one another. Satan spends little time in what we see in the movies—that is, an outright attack on us. We need not blame all of our problems on the devil, as so many Christians do. They do this to take the responsibility away from themselves, focusing all the blame on Satan. But, we do need to take precautions and actions to avoid Satan's influence on us and our neighbors.

Breaking Satan's influence (see our articles on Satan in the *Discipleship* channel) means breaking his strongholds of influence. Identify where he is operating, commit as many people to pray there as possible, and continue that prayer. His influence and stronghold will be torn down. (A stronghold is an area where Satan is at work in a concentrated effort. This could be a Hindu shrine in India or a pornographer in the US—or even a dead church.)

The key here is prayer and more prayer, a subject which we will be tackling later!

Seventh: Fear (Job 15:20-25)

Stemming from most of these objections is the underlying fear of the unknown and unexplainable. Most people, Christians included, do not have an accurate view of theology. They base their beliefs on irrational, preconceived ideas that they pick up from a smorgasbord of places. With non-Christians this is even more prominent!

Remember the two root causes for these objections? People do not like being convicted. Now, add to that the fear of being convicted! Even Christians! I had a friend several years ago who refused to ever go and hear a missionary speak. He was a leader in the church and a growing Christian. One day I asked him, *why?* His response was very honest and to the point; he said he did not want to be convicted, and have to leave for a foreign destination to be a missionary. This, for some reason, really scared him; maybe it had something to do with his parents being missionaries and the problems they dealt with that he did not want to face. I explained to him that God would not call him to anything he was not gifted to do, or had the desire to do, so to quit worrying. I guess he got over it, because he spent a summer in Russia a few years ago.

This grip of fear keeps Christians from growing because they do not want to be convicted. And, this fear is especially rooted in non-Christians! In addition, it is a very powerful motivator to the non-Christian who does not want to give up his or her perceived lifestyle out of fear that the Christian life is boring. They may feel like my friend who was afraid to go overseas. They may think they have to be some kind of monk, or they may have some perverted view of a Christian they got from TV or from misdirected Christians.

The non-Christian may fear God's vengeance, thinking his or her sins and deeds are not forgivable and, therefore, they would be rejected. It is a basic misunderstanding of the Gospel message; and, since they do not understand it, they reject it. I believe the biggest barrier is the surrender of the will. People just do not want to give themselves up; they think being a Christian is a sign of weakness and they do not want to be known for that (John 3:5; 30; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 3:10-14).

First Peter 3:15 is as clear for us today as it was for Paul; too many people rely on themselves to get through life while giving God the *raspberry*. We, as Christians, need to wake up and see the peril that the world is in—that our own friends, family, and neighbors are in. We are in a ship that is sinking from under our feet, yet we live our lives as if nothing were happening, just "partying on, dudes."

The key to evangelizing people that have fear as their concern—whether they fear God's wrath or the trivialities of life—is sharing the love and forgiveness of our Lord. The life of Paul (Acts 9) is an excellent place to start. They need to be reassured that, yes, God is a God of wrath, but He is also a God of forgiveness! He not only forgave us, He took our punishment in our place. Therefore, we have no need to fear Him—or anything else for that matter (Prov. 1:7; Matt. 10:28; 14:27; 1 Heb. 2:14-18)!

We need to communicate to others the need for Christ, and then realize the objections we may face. People do not see the need, and Christians are too busy in their lifeboats—ignoring the cries, afraid of being swamped. Our call is to be constant and do as we teach, do as we say, and act as we teach others about our Lord. There is no reason ever to make things up, bend the truth, or water down the gospel message to make it more palatable! Integrity, consistency, love, care, respect, and listening without being judgmental are utmost, important, and effective evangelistic tools for the apprehensive Christian sharing the love of God to someone for the first time (1 Thess. 2: 10-12)! Why? Because, hypocrisy gives people a false impression of God! Insincerity gives people a false impression of who we are called to be; it nullifies our witness and character! Because, God is righteous and just; God exercises grace. The willingness to model Christ's character is far more vital for us today than the willingness to preach it. God wants us to be authentic—not pretentious (2 Cor. 8:9; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 3:13-22)!

Section V: Understand the Importance of Prayer for Evangelism!

Matthew 9:35-38; John 14:12-14; Colossians 4:2-6;

Prayer is pivotal and essential. Nothing of value can accrue in you or though you without prayer! The above Scriptures testify to us that we need to be praying for workers, for ourselves, for opportunities, and for those who do not know Him!

Prayer is our key to God's door. It is our foundation to the exercising of and growth in the faith, and essential in our witnessing. It is the work of Christ through the work of the Spirit that saves. Prayer lines us up to His will and grows us in maturity and understanding. It is the power behind, in the mist of, and in front of the faith (Ezek. 36:24-32; John 3:5; 30; 20:21-23). To be effective in your growth in Christ, you have to be a person who prays—and prays regularly. To witness, you must be praying for that person's soul and conversion. Pray as specifically as you can, and as often as you can. It may take a few minutes; it may take many years. Whatever the cost and time, prayer is the foundation to any work of evangelism. Without effective prayer, you cannot be effective in your evangelism—period! Do not even try it without prayer! Sharing your faith without praying for the person is like training a pig to fly; all you will do is waste your time and annoy the pig! All you will accomplish in trying to do evangelism without prayer is stay away from God, waste your time, and annoy the person!

- Know this important point: No amount of corporate prayer will make up for a lack of personal prayer! That is, you can and should pray as a group, but because you pray as a group does not mean you can cut back on your personal prayer time! Your personal prayer time is the key to your growth in Christ.
- There is no better use of your personal and ministry time than prayer!
- There is a phrase that says, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Sometimes, the people we are close to have hurt us; perhaps we just do not trust them, perhaps we fear their response, or perhaps we just do not care. We have to have a heart for someone before we can be an effective witness. Continue in your character development and spiritual growth, be consistent, and allow your changed life to show without words—even when others do not respond well to you! Start to pray for them! Then, when you have a heart for them, start to be in prayer; pray more, and then use your words to witness. Do not witness to people you have contempt for, as your attitude will show; all you will do is give the Lord a bad reputation and make it harder for the next person.

- It is essential that all those on staff and leadership of your church be people of continual prayer! If they are not persons of prayer, then they should not be in leadership (Col. 4:2-6; 1 Tim. 2:8)!
- When I went through the training at the *Billy Graham School of Evangelism* and “Crusade Training,” the point was made that over 90% of the people who come to a Crusade, and 95+% of those who go onto the field and pray to accept Jesus, have been regularly prayed for by others—for a significant period of time!

More Ideas and Strategies for Reaching Out

R.A.K.E. Random Acts of Kindness Service Project

Encourage your church to adopt a community service project such as, sponsoring a youth center, developing job training, distributing food, cleaning people’s homes, cleaning up neighborhoods—the needs are endless. Start by selecting and targeting the greatest need you can fulfill. Do not bite off or promise what you cannot deliver! One great idea my youth group did a few years ago was to help elderly persons and underprivileged people by doing simple gardening and light maintenance in their homes. This was very well received. We also did free babysitting once a week to give parents a much needed night out. What are the various needs you and your church can fulfill (Rom 2:4)? A service with no strings attached? This can be an all-church endeavor, and a platform for evangelism.

Sometimes people are traveling, just checking out what others are up to, or are looking for a new church home, so we need to be sensitive, be aware, be concerned, be friendly, and be Christ like. The friendly atmosphere and being a good host is your primary strategy to reach out. We cannot effectively reach out unless we are reaching within and receiving Him!

Matthew 10 Project

Here is a fantastic idea I picked up from Tony Compolo. It is very simple, effective and Biblical. Go to your neighbors door to door without literature, without inviting them to programs, or without anything to sell. Tell them what church you are from and your name. Then say, “How can we pray for you?” And that’s it for the door to door thing! From my personal experience doing this in inner-city areas, people are very open and will share most of the time. Yes it is scary and doors do get slammed, but when you are not selling, people are more prone to listen!

Then go back to the church and spend a significant amount of time in prayer for them. You may go through the neighborhoods first and pray in power

and conviction, thus kicking Satan and his entourage out of there, seeking God's help and interdiction, and preparing yourselves for the endeavor.

Then you may put up a bulletin board on the needs of the community and see if things like children needing clothes to people needing jobs can be filled. Do not use people's names and addresses. Have some kind of number system and keep them anonymous unless they say otherwise. When you fulfill a prayer request, you are being the feet of Christ and a beacon to that neighborhood. I personally experienced great joy by seeing the excited faces of people when we knocked on their door, prayed for them, and then came back with a tricycle for their child or a job opportunity. This is a wonderful ministry!

Surveys

Going door to door in your neighborhood and seeking information on how you, as a church, can serve them better is a great way to get to know your neighbors and their needs. Keep it simple and short so not to tie your neighbors up and be very friendly! There are always people who do not want to talk and there are those who do. The biggest barrier to this is the misgivings and fears of your congregation. The people of the church must relinquish their fears and embrace the call of Scripture to seek out people and then make Christ known to them.

Small Group Outreach

There are numerous good programs out there that are designed to target and bring Christ into your neighborhood. "Alpha" is a small group introductory Bible study imported from England by Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena. This program has had great success in this area. It is a video series that trains and equips ordinary Christians to do extraordinary outreach. There is also a program from Campus Crusade for Christ called "The Lighthouse" which is a neighborhood prayer and evangelism tool.

With your surveys and these evangelism tools, you can invite people to your church programs. Start off with baby step programs such as the Matthew 10 idea, then maybe get a big screen TV and invite people to watch Monday Night Football or movies. Or have concerts or dinner parties. The possibilities are as endless as the ideas. The key is to model Christ's character and show the hospitality we are called to do.

Personal Lifestyle Evangelism

There is perhaps no better way to introduce the Lordship of Christ to others than modeling His character to others. When we are distinctive and interesting, living a life above reproach with love and care to others is a beacon of hope to the lost, even if they will not admit it publicly. When you earn their

attention and respect, which takes an investment of time, then you can invite friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc. to your house for dinner or something personal. Then you can invite them to a church program. Getting to know people is essential, as we are called to be salt and light. And salt and light are penetrating and not elusive. So let us meet the call and snub the elusiveness, break out of our fears and resentment and follow our Lord!

The church leadership must be supporting and encouraging to outreach. Providing training events and follow-ups for its members. Programs such as Thursday night once a month is "Invite Night", where members are trained and encouraged to invite the people in their lives who do not know the Lord or have fallen away to their homes for fellowship and friendship. People are more likely to go to a home than to a church. Once they know you then they are inclined to participate in the programs of the church, no matter how good they may be.

Another Great idea: This just in from our Friends in Pakistan: Show the new movie, "The Passion of the Christ" with the volume turned down and read the appropriate excerpts from our Article: "**The Crucifixion of Jesus!**" The Passion of Jesus Crucifixion From A Medical Point of View. This has been a very powerful combination that shows what Jesus did for us while explaining why and what happened.

http://www.christianity.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID34418|CHID144523|CIID1541414,00.html

Section VI: How to Understand and Apply Faith Study

Below is a 24-week study on understanding and applying faith. This was originally designed to train pastors and church leaders; however, any Christian who truly desires to follow Christ will greatly benefit from it. It can be used for Bible studies, small groups, sermons, and youth ministry as well as for personal edification and growth.

Lesson 1: Faith is Tactical and Practical

Psalm 15 and Philippians 4:4-9

As pastors and church leaders, we must come to the point that we allow the search and conviction of the Holy Spirit upon our lives to the very core of our souls (2 Cor. 13:5)! Once this happens, the result will be more faith and more use to Christ. The result for your church will be more focus upon His precepts and increased prayer, which will bring an outpouring of the Spirit and renewal! This will impact your neighborhood and the world in which you live. It all starts with your determination to encompass the faith He has given you and obey! What is stopping you?

Psalm 15 is a crucial image of how we are to approach God. It tells us that He is indeed working in us; we are learning and receiving His Truth and are willing, able, and called to impart it to others. These are the traits of faith that will produce results. Faith will help, along with the Holy Spirit, to build maturity and character. If you are wondering if you have faith, or enough faith, the results will be:

- Walking with integrity and honesty, genuine and just to God and to others!
- Worshiping, rejoicing, and praising Christ as Lord!
- Teaching God's Truth with power, conviction, and clarity!
- Restraining the tongue that reflects the soul!
- Working and living for righteousness and truth!
- Modeling Christ's love to others!
- Always humble, generous, gentle and kind!
- Not over-worrying, and trusting in the Lord!
- Committed to the importance and practice of prayer!
- Speaking from the heart with love!
- No gossiping, slandering or lying—or even listening to it!
- Not doing evil or reproaching others!
- Despising of ungodliness!
- Honoring people who fear and respect the Lord!
- Not being influenced by power or position—of self or of others!

- Not being corrupt!
- Not extorting, manipulating, or using people for false gains!
- Not taking bribes or fighting against the innocent!
- Allowing the Holy Spirit to direct one's life!
- Swearing to one's own oath and keeping promises!

Those who do these things will never be shaken!!! These are the instruments to determine character and how one has taken in and used faith. These gauges do not lie. If these precepts are weak, not functioning properly, or not at all, then there is something definitely wrong and you need to get on your knees and into His Word! Without a real, working faith, you will not be able to be used by God to build His Church! Real faith will cause the above principles to work from you to those around you! A real, called church leader follows these principles, from the heart and a desire to please God, resulting from the work of the Spirit within him or her. A pretender or false teacher in the pulpit will not exhibit these characteristics!

Questions:

1. Discuss the "Introduction," and how faith has impacted you.
2. How can your growth in faith impact your church?
3. How well can you relate to these principles from Psalm 15? Are they realistic, practical for today, for you? Why, or why not?
4. Look at each of these "Principals" and answer the question, *how have you applied these to yourself, your family, your friends, your church, and people in general?*
5. How can you improve your spiritual walk so you can be the person who models Psalm 15?
6. Can you think of practical ways to demonstrate these principles in your life?
7. What about ways to demonstrate these principles to others around you so that it effects "who you are" in your personality and deeds? In doing so, you not only hear what God says, but truly listen and apply His "principles" in all that you do.
8. What happens when we are not following these or other godly principles?
9. Why would you or a church not want to follow these principles?
10. How will these principles be used to build your faith and church?

11. What would be the characteristics of a pretender or false teacher? Would he or she model the above precepts? How would you know?
12. Our focus must be on edifying and encouraging. So, what can your church do to make this a priority?

Listening and not doing is wrong; but, to obey what the Word of God reveals in Psalm 15 is being a *real* disciple! Because of Grace, we may be able to “dwell in the Lord’s Sanctuary” and place our home “on His Holy Hill,” but what good will it be if we do not show our gratitude and obedience for what He has done by living out His principles? “He who does these things will never be shaken.”

Let us use our lives for His glory so we point people to Christ with passion, integrity, and consistency!

Looking to Romans for our understanding of Faith: Romans is filled with theological knowledge so we can learn about real faith, to help us know it and apply it to our lives and church.

Lesson 2: The Main Theme of Romans is Faith!

Romans 1:16-17

This passage is the nuts and bolts of Romans where, in one sentence, Paul sums up his epistle and his life. Paul lived his life, not in theory, but in the fact that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and shows the only way of justification! Paul was totally surrendered and poured out to God with gratitude and indebtedness that infused and permeated all that he was and did. Our faith and trust in Christ must infuse us also so that all we do is a reflection of Christ working in us! If not, all we have is a religion and a philosophy—and not righteousness and impacting faith. As Christians, we are to live out our faith with passion and conviction, being not ashamed of who we are in Christ.

- Our *Power* refers to the life-changing power of the Word of God—the Gospel—and of the Spirit to totally transform us as He did with Paul. Only this power can remove our stubborn nature that bonds us to sin and that refuses His grace. We cannot receive His grace without the *Power* that intervenes and removes our bond of sin. (Rom. 5:6; 8:5-9). Power is Salvation; it is by the work of Christ alone, through the Holy Spirit!

- We are not to be embarrassed of who we are as Christians, nor, are we to fear sharing our faith! Thus, we as Christians must live by faith as this is the smart thing to do (1 Cor. 1:22-30)!
- Faith is based on knowledge given by God.
- Faith is not just simple trust; faith is not blind trust either, because we know the One who is leading!
- Our faith is based on historical evidence, logical reasoning, and valid testimonies. Our life must be dictated and expressed by what Christ has done for us.
- Faith is still trusting what is not seen and believing our God (Rom. 1:16-32; 5:1-11; 10:14-17; Gal. 3:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; James 2:14-26)!
- We did not earn our faith; hence, grace is the ultimate free gift.
- Every aspect of faith is built on faith, and nothing else; this is the corner stone of the Gospel (Hab. 2:4). This means we are to trust God and His promises and provision. In Habakkuk, those who survive the Judgment do so because of their faith in God. Faith in the O.T. meant to pledge one's life on the assertions that God gives (Jos. 24:15).
- Our response to faith is by godly living, and exercising out our faith with trust and obedience, whatever we face! It is not looking at our situation; rather, it is looking to God. God desires and deserves our whole-hearted loyalty, allegiance, trust, obedience, and devotion; so, what is stopping you?
- Have you realized that your debt has been cleared, your sin has been covered, and your dread has been replaced with wonder and eternity? Then, how has it affected your life? Do you obey His call and precepts? Does this transformed life impact others around you? Do you "get it" that everything you are is because Christ is in you? If not, why? What is in the way? Are you willing to go on your knees to seek His face and His righteousness for your life? Without it, you have nothing but debt and sin!
- Thanksgiving of faith; who Christ is and what He has done (1 Cor. 11:4; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess.1:2; 2 Thess.1:3; 2 Tim. 3:1; Philemon 4).
- We are to Obey the Holy Spirit and submit to His precepts and Will (Rom. 8:13)! Not our will (Eph. 1:15; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:3)!

- *Encouraged.* One of the chief purposes of the Church is to encourage and strengthen one another in faith for His service, something so few of us actually do (Eph 1:15; 4:15-16; Phil. 1:6-9)!
- Devout Jews in Paul's time would spend many hours a day in prayer—as do many dedicated Christians today!
- We have our plans; He has His. Guess what? His will win out!
- Paul's will was conquered with a sense of gratitude and indebtedness to Christ. Are you totally submitted to God's ways? Do you feel indebted, or do you feel owed (1 Cor. 6:19-20)? Being "poured out" means to take the focus off yourself and place it on others, as Christ did for us. Paul spent his life to express it! Jesus gives us the ultimate example of being poured out (Matt 26:28; Rom. 5:5)! Our response is John 3: 5; 30; Phil. 2:14-18!
- *Mutual faith* means encouragement, support, and using spiritual gifts, all working as a team. (Eph. 4:15-16) This is the strength of the church; without it, we will fail.
- Beware the failure to hear the call of our Lord because of the noise of our will. Being set apart for the Gospel is to be totally at the disposal of our Lord and master.
- Paul calls himself a "*bondservant*" (Rom. 9:3), the lowest form of a slave in Greek times who was totally at the master's disposal and even expendable; they rowed the boats of war with a whip at their back. This means totally surrendered devotion; the slave/disciple of the Lord has a will that has been sacrificed to God's will, and thus is totally at the disposal of our Lord! Paul's slavery is his freedom (Gal. 1:15; 2:20)!

Questions:

1. What does it mean to live by faith and express it? Make sure that you look for it in others to find a mentor for yourself. Not being ashamed of who we are in Christ is the key to the necessary courage needed for sharing our faith and building our church. Do you agree?
2. In view of the fact that we are free from sin, what are we going to do about it? How is it going to affect our lives and develop our purpose?
3. How does the Holy Spirit come into play with your courage?
4. Read 1 Cor. 1:22-30; what are your stumbling blocks?
5. How do you live out your faith with passion and conviction?

6. How can you live out your faith better with passion and conviction?
7. Are we, as Christians, focused on Christ and what He did for us, then showing that thankfulness back to Him and to those around us? Or, are we self focused, only caring about ourselves and giving God maybe a thought on Sunday? This focus will create our determination and purpose for our lives, based either on God or on our wrong doings!
8. Our response for what Christ did for us is godly living, and exercising our faith with trust and obedience in whatever we face! How have you done this? How can you do this better? What about when your life is crashing in all around you, maybe through a job loss, death or divorce of a spouse, cataclysmic sickness, or everything all at once?
9. Do you feel better, stronger, and more mature and ready to face things now that you have gone through adversity?
10. What can you do specifically to give God your whole-hearted loyalty, allegiance, trust, obedience, and devotion? What are the things that stop you?

Lesson 3: Hypocrisy Destroys Real Faith!

Romans 2:17-3:8

When we rest on who we are as Christians and then do nothing with our faith, we do like the Jews who reject Christ. We may have our salvation (which they do not), but what good is it? This is also the theme of James; faith without works is dead. You are saved, but no big deal if you do nothing with it! When you are teaching others, your first and primary task is to be instructed yourself! You cannot teach what you do not know or have not experienced.

Hypocrisy is heinous before our loving Lord, that is, teaching one thing and doing the opposite. This negates faith and dishonors our Lord! Hypocrisy is also one of the main causes of people being driven away from the church; it is so now as it was then (Rom. 2: 24). Hypocrisy is opposing faith and opposing Jesus!

God's Word was given to the Jews for the purpose of evangelizing the world. Their responsibility was to reach all the people groups on earth; all people and cultures traveled through Israel from up north and east into Egypt for trading (Gen 12:1-3). The Jews' responsibility, especially the Levites, was to be teachers of God, both to their fellow Jews and also to the Gentiles. However, the Bible

rarely records the Levite's adherence to their call. So, the people were not properly instructed in the faith and they easily fell into idolatry because they did not know better; they did not have faith. The Jewish leadership failed in their responsibility for education and modeling faith. Do not fail to teach and model faith!

- Christian education is a priority—not just for children, but for adults, as well. People who are not grounded in the Word are not prepared to deal with life or grow in maturity. The Jews, as with many Christians today, placed faith in ritual and tradition, boasting in their privileges and neglecting their responsibility and call.
- C. S. Lewis has a skillful argument, based mostly on this passage in Romans, proving the existence of God on the basis of man's sense of moral absolutes (his sense that he ought to do some things, and ought not to do other things). "Only God could be the source of such universal belief and conviction based upon them."
- There are no secrets from God. So, are you prepared to face Him (Cor. 5:10)?
- God will be glorified and His justice will be vindicated to all! Never make up stories or testimonies, or use sin to please God or reach people; this is dead wrong!
- We cannot hide behind our faith thinking; *hey, I am a good Christian because I go to a church, or, I perform a certain task* there. Nor, can we think we are a mature, growing Christian if we do some sort of ritual. Such thinking cannot place us in God's good graces. We may think we are a real, practicing Christian, but in reality, these mindsets bring misunderstanding and confusion about Christ to the world. Christ must impact your whole being so you are a completely changed and revitalized person—from your old self to Himself!
- For many Christians, their faith has not transformed them. Their faith is only an external showing when it is convenient, such as on Sundays at 10 a.m., but on Monday, the faith is absent and the faith that should be internal is withered and dry. So, their mindset, attitudes, and how they relate Christ to the world tends to be more carnal than Biblical. This was Paul's message to the Romans; does it need to be God's message to you? I know I needed it to be for me at times. What about you? If so, what are you going to do about it?

Questions:

1. Have you or have you known people who placed their comfort and faith in the fact that they were a member of a particular church or movement?

2. When we rest on who we are as Christians and then do nothing with our faith, we are like the Jews who reject Christ. We may have our salvation (which they do not), but what good is it?
3. How is hypocrisy a heinous act before our loving Lord? Do you believe that hypocrisy is one of the main reasons that people are driven away from the church? Why, or why not? Can you think of an example?
4. Having a relationship with Christ has nothing to do with our ethnicity, yet people, still to this day, will fight with each other. So, why do some Christians act prejudicially toward others?
5. How can you walk in/with God with deeper trust and obedience and with more commitment?
6. How can you show your faith outwardly from having it inwardly?
7. Today, a lot of churches fail at truly discipling their members. Most Christians who go to church on Sundays will only get a few minutes of preaching and just a little Biblical instruction. Some churches do not teach at all. How do you think God feels about that?
8. What are you going to do today, this week, to walk closer to Christ and less with hypocrisy?
9. Are you covering (hiding) your sin, or is God (redeeming)?
10. How much time will you be spending in prayer?

Lesson 4: Real Faith Realizes the Affects of Sin!

Romans 3:9-20

We humans have the natural tendency to play the blame game and refuse to accept responsibility for our actions, beliefs, and even our lives. We want to do as we please, so we do not, nor want to see the long-term consequences for our actions. We live for the “here and now” with our nose firmly planted in our desires and expectations. Then, we become unable or unwilling to see the big picture of what life is all about. Thus, when we experience life’s traumas from our own misdirected decisions, we go to God and blame Him. We must learn responsibility; we cannot hide behind the church, or, for the Jew, the Law. We must come to the realization that it is all about what Christ has done for us; therefore, we need to live our lives in response to what He has done for us.

This passage is telling us that everyone is condemned because of sin; no one can ever escape it. No one since Adam and Eve was ever born right; that is why we have to be *born again* (John 3). We also have to see God as pure and just and ourselves as not even close to that. If you choose to live as you please, be aware that one day there will be an accounting, and all of your excuses that may have worked in the past will wither before His Presence.

- When we do accept Christ, we should have the desire to please Him and excel to benefit society and His glory. We have no reason or basis to complain. We tend to always focus on the "whys"—*why did God allow this or that to happen?* However, God desires us not to focus on the why, for He is sovereign. He wants us to focus on the "who" and the "what." The "who" is Christ, and the "what" is His will. When we focus our lives, beliefs, and will upon Him, then the "whys" fall away. Because, it is not a question of why bad things happen to us, but what we can learn from them, and how we can grow to be better in character, faith, and strength for His purpose.
- Our faith is not a cover over our sin and unrighteousness, Christ is! We are totally lost and helpless without Christ!
- We must realize the impact of sin in all aspects of society and all aspects of our lives. If we do not see sin, we will not see Christ. Because, we will fail to realize our need for His cleansing. We have to be cleansed before we can help others understand and undertake Christ's cleansing (Matthew 7:1-5). With this mindset, we will realize that we are all under the same tent of offence, all in the same boat named *peccadillo* (sin); we are all the same—in Christ or outside of Christ. There are no favorites. We will realize our hypocrisy and pride and how we come across to others.
- We have no basis for pride. We will see Christ as who He is and be so overruled that He affects all of us all of the time!

Questions:

1. What can we do to focus ourselves with the correct attitude?
2. When bad things happen, we tend to always focus on the "whys"—why did God allow this or that to happen, and so forth. Why do we do that?
3. How can we get over our distress by focusing only on the Way? What does God want us to focus on?
4. How do we learn when bad things happen to us?

5. How do we grow to be better in character and strength for His purpose? How would that affect your faith and church?
6. Why would some Christians place their confidence in their denomination or church, and reject the truth and practice of the faith?
7. Why must we not rationalize our behaviors or form excuses to cover our tracks?
8. What can you do to make sure your attitude is Christ-centered in regard to blame and responsibility? What does this have to do with your faith?
9. What can you do to be committed to the truth that there is nothing you can do to earn God's favor outside of Christ? How would that affect your witnessing and personal attitude toward life?
10. As a pastor, how would your having more faith benefit your church?

Lesson 5: Righteousness comes by Faith in Christ!

Romans 3:21-26

Propitiation simply means that God takes our place. We cannot be saved by our own actions. We cannot rely on our own efforts, skills, personal connections, family background, or our beliefs. Only Christ can wash us clean and declare us righteous so that we are saved from our sins (Eph. 2:8-9). Jesus led the perfect, sinless life on our behalf; thus, He took our place, in His perfection, in life and sin through death. His Atonement covered us from God's wrath and covered God (protected) from being affected by our sin. Knowing what Jesus did for you should help empower your faith! The promises of God will be of no use to us unless we have the understanding of God and are obedient to that understanding! We must not have a trace of self-interest in us if we are to call ourselves His disciples! Never say you cannot surrender yourself! Without surrender, you will have a very weak and meaningless faith!

- *Righteousness* comes by faith in Christ. Paul was accused of promoting sin, because he was teaching a Gospel by faith and leaving out works—thus, no accountability. However, those who are saved by faith should have no desire for sin; and, if they do, they are to confess it before forgiveness can be granted (1 Cor. 10:13; 1 John 1:5-2:1).

- *Fear of God* is respect and reverence, which turns into trust and obedience. Without faith and trust, we turn to atheism which requires more faith and more trust than what is conceivable and rational.
- We are *Reconciliation* to God. God has a righteous basis for our justification through the sacrifice of His Son for our sins. Grace was not cheap for God. Christ paid a great debt by pleasing God's wrath, both in metaphysical pain and the human pain of the crucifixion (Lev. 16; Psalm 103:12).
- *Pride* is our biggest barrier to knowing Christ and receiving His redemption. It is also the biggest barrier to our growth in and application of faith!
- God increases our faith when we develop more confidence in Him and less confidence in ourselves.
- We, by our fallen nature, tend to only seek pleasure for ourselves, and are unable and unwilling to seek God. We have to be awakened by the Spirit to see Him as Savior and to receive His redemption. Without being sought, we would never have the faith to see or receive Him. We would just remain in our pride and blinded to our situation of sin. This means we cannot achieve anything spiritually on our own efforts. We cannot be saved, we cannot grow, we cannot worship, and we cannot even serve Him effectively. The great comfort is in knowing that He does the work; we only respond. But, if we say we are acceptable just by whom we are, that *I am OK; I do not need Christ for my salvation and or growth*, we have nothing but pride which will lead to our permanent death. Jesus Christ took your place and absorbed God's wrath, He paid your debt! So, be willing to allow Him to take you beyond your self, beyond your pride, so you remain in Him and increase your faith (John 3:5; 30; 15:5).

Questions:

1. What do you need to do to lead a righteous life by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the guidance from the Word?
2. How would you define faith? Now, how will you put it into practice?
3. How, and in what area has sin affected your life (yours and that of others close to you)?
4. What must the Gospel do to "wake us up," with passion and conviction, to the plight of other souls?
5. What happens when you and your church are not caring for others outside of your circle?

6. How can you best reflect His work in your life?
7. Those who are saved in faith should have no desire for sin; but, we do anyway. So, what are we to do?
8. What will you do today, this week, to confess your sin and seek His forgiveness (1 Cor. 10:13; 1 John 1:5-2:1)?
9. What will happen if you decide not to repent (Psalm 32; 37:23-24)?
10. The fear of God is respect and reverence. So, what can this insight do for you?

Lesson 6: Faith Builds Us and Others Up!

Romans 3:27-31

We are to shut our mouths and renounce our pride and arrogance so we are able to trust in our Lord. Being sinful creatures, we have no right to boast. Because, Christ lived the perfect life, on our behalf, by obeying His own law for us that we were not able or willing to do. He was both able and willing. Thus, the Judge, who is rightly able to condemn us for our sins, is now our Savior. Since we had nothing to do with our place in eternity, we have no reason to be prideful of anything, either because of our accomplishments or for our salvation. In like manner, we had no right to boast before our salvation because of our condemnation. Because, we are saved, and all that we are, and all that we have is from Christ alone, by His grace, and by no real or true effort of our own. Christ covered and protected us from the wrath of God, which we truly deserved!

The world may see pride as a sign of respect and dignity, that our worth as human beings is supreme, and that we deserve respect and even worship for ourselves. The world may take pleasure and satisfaction with pride because it represents achievements that we think we deserve. But, the source of pride is ourselves; it elevates us as a god when there is only One True God! Pride is conceit; when we are filled with conceit, we have a vastly exaggerated opinion of ourselves. We become the main show, and filled with self-righteousness; this is the result of our imaginations about ourselves, and not from the reality of who we are, or who and what we were made to be.

- We cannot hide in our pride as we cannot hide in the church from God's wrath. We cannot boast, because of our condemnation. Once we are saved, we still cannot boast because it was not a result our effort.

- Legalism is to elevate our traditions and ideas onto the same level as God's Law. Thus, it blinds us to the fact we have been freed by Grace. Legalism also serves as a power and control over others! Legalism opposes real faith!
- Beware not to have a trace of self-satisfaction left in you! We have to realize that just having knowledge puffs us up; but, the demonstration of love and care—put into action because of the knowledge we have in Christ—builds us and others up!
- God increases our faith when we develop more dependence in Him and less dependence upon ourselves.
- We must ask ourselves if our deepest desires and pleasures in life are dedicated to please Christ. Can we take a hard look at our life and see how others see us, how God sees us? Are our actions in life the result of our will, our desires, our inspirations, and our motivations; or, are they the result of living our lives to please God? Is there a distinguishable reality of the Lordship of Christ, versus the menagerie of living the lie of our desires? We must be set apart to be promoters of our Lord's Kingdom and Grace, to live that life of distinction, a life that honors Christ and motivates and encourages others.

Questions:

1. Why should we shut our mouths and renounce our pride and arrogance?
2. What gets in the way of our trusting in our Lord in this passage? How does pride affect your faith?
3. Does it surprise you that you are still under sin's nature? Why do most Christians assume we are washed clean from sin? If we were washed clean, why would we still sin? Is this just semantics, being washed versus being declared? (Being washed would mean being cleaned from; therefore no sin nature will remain. Being declared means God sees and judges us from the perspective that we are clean, because of Christ's work.)
4. We cannot hide in our pride any more than we can hide in the church from God's wrath. Where have you hidden yourself?
5. Why should we not be boasting?
6. What difference does justification have on you in your faith and walk with Christ (2 Cor. 5:21)?
7. How is our independence a slap in His face?

8. Why can Christ not do anything significant in us until pride is removed (John 3:5; 30)?
9. How does Legalism distort the church and its reputation in the community?
10. What can you do today, this week, to demonstrate a life that has been cleansed by the atoning death of your Savior, who bore your punishment and lived out the law on your behalf?

Beware not to have a trace of self-satisfaction left in you!

(For more information on pride and hypocrisy, see the series of articles on “Legalism” on the *Church Leadership* page under the *Problem Solving* channel)

Lesson 7: The Response of Faith!

Romans 4:1-25

The Jewish Christians were teaching the Gentile converts that they had to be circumcised and follow the law. Paul addressed the issue by showing in the O.T. that the promise was by faith and not by works. Abraham was saved by faith, not works, a prelude to God's grace, before he was circumcised (Gen. 15:5, 6, 16; 16:1-3; 17:1, 10, 23-27; Acts 10:47; 1 Cor 7:18-19; Gal. 5:6; 3:11; 6:15; James 2:21-26). Faith, not works, provides righteousness; faith, not ritual, or religion, or wages we earn can we brag about (Rom. 7:18).

- Faith is not feelings or emotions; it cannot be defined in subjective ways.
- Faith is not passive, but is a response, by knowledge and belief, through agreement and trust, demonstrated by obedience and commitment.
- Faith involves our will being surrendered to God's will, involving all of our being—heart, mind, and soul; all sealed by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 10:14).
- Abraham, without a Bible and past history to rely on, believed in God's promises.
- Faith is directed to a real and personal God who loved us first.
- Faith is not just obedience, nor is it in an object or idea. It is through faith we receive Christ.

- Faith excludes all other means of obtaining righteousness. The world believes that through pious acts, a person can earn his or her way, because God is love and will not reject the good. The Bible tells us we have no good. God had Abraham wait for his child of promise to remove the "human equation" and strength, so only reliance on God was left.
- The response of faith is developing the fruits of character (Isa. 40; Gal 5:22-23).
- Faith is not sanctification; faith is a result thereof, not a cause. The promise of salvation is through what Christ has done, and through our faith. If we try to go to God by our works, we are attempting to cheat grace and nullify its purpose and greatness.
- David's redemption (2 Sam .11; Psalm 32) was by repentance and then forgiveness, yet there was still the consequence (2 Sam. 12).
- Our salvation is accomplished by believing by faith, as Abraham did. Abraham looked toward the promise; we look back. Faith and promise go together as bread and butter, as Law and works. When we have a right relationship with God, our natural response will be to do as He pleases for us to do, out of our love and gratitude for what He did (2 Cor. 5:14).
- Our service must be motivated by our love, not an obligation or some kind of payback or barter. Abraham is our spiritual father, as he is the father of the Jewish nation (Matt. 3:7-9). He did not flounder at God's promises (Phil. 4:19). He ignored his abilities and wealth and possible actions, and trusted God (Isa. 55:8-9). He praised God and believed, even before God did anything for him (Isa. 40:15; Eph. 3:20). He is our example!
- Since we have been given faith, we must live it out and not let it fall lifeless (Gal 5:6; Eph. 2:10).
- James, chapter two, is not expressing "works-righteousness" as Catholic doctrine teaches; it is the outward expression of the proof and response of faith that has been received. Our works are only accepted by God because of what Christ has done on our behalf (Gal 5:17)
- Being prideful and arrogant is a slap in the face of our good and great God! We are to exercise humbleness, and reset ourselves to the example of our Lord Jesus Christ of goodness. We may not understand God's plans and purposes, but we can rest assured in His love; He is there, loving us, even when we do not feel it or see it. He is there! Glorious times will come—if not in this life, then in the life to come. Paul, even in his sufferings, adored the depths of God's wisdom, and the glory of His persevering love. God's

judgments are pure and perfect; He is sovereign, so we have firm reason to trust Christ, casting away our anxieties and fears.

Questions:

1. Faith, not works, provides righteousness. So, why does the world place the emphasis on being a good person and doing good works?
2. Is there a difference between boasting, or being glad of your position and communicating it to others?
3. When do we cross the line from confidence to pride?
4. Faith is not a feeling or emotion; so, how can it be defined without using subjective (feeling based) answers?
5. How can you keep faith from being passive? How can you demonstrate it?
6. Faith involves our will being surrendered to God's will. So, how can you do this?
7. Abraham, without a Bible or past history to rely on, believed in God's promises. How does his faith compare to yours? (Remember, you have a track record to look to in the Word and the testimonies of others!) Why would Abraham, a rich and prosperous man, feel he needed God and His promise? Why would he bother?
8. Abraham did not flounder at God's promises (Phil. 4:19). So, what can you do to take to your heart and mind God's goodness even when your world is crashing down?
9. Paul is writing about hope and faith in the mist of horrible persecution, wars, diseases, church strife, and chaos we can barely comprehend. So, how can you capture that passion for your life and ministry?
10. Abraham ignored his abilities, wealth, and possible actions, and trusted God. What do you have to ignore? Abraham praised God and believed, before God did anything for him. What has God done for you that you can praise Him for?

Lesson 8: Faith helps us Surrender our Pride and Self-Determination!

Romans 5:1-11

It is God's abiding love that keeps us attached in grace and purpose for His glory. We, alone, would quickly fall away into our sin, and forget who we are in Christ, just as the Israelites did throughout the O.T., especially in Judges, chapter two. The Holy Spirit is the glue who keeps us stuck together. *Justification* means that not only has God forgiven and accepted us, He has covered us with the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, we are pleasing to God. We who are justified by faith now have peace with God. Thus we are to rejoice in our hope (of what He did for us and Heaven to come), and rejoice and glory in troubles. The abundant love of God was shown to us when He reconciled us to Himself, by the death of his Son, while we were still unworthy sinners and His "enemies." And, to top it off, God assures us of our salvation, and motivates us to rejoice and glory in Him, no matter what happens or what we go through. Because, He has gone through more.

- As pastors, we must know what it means to rejoice in suffering (Phil. 3:10 ff; Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 10:13; James 1:2-4)! We must be able to surrender our attitudes and experiences to Christ, whatever the cost, even if it means suffering. We must be committed to surrendered prayer, bringing all problems, joys, and concerns to the Lord. We must be willing to be mentored by a more mature and experienced Christian.
- Surrender your pride and self-determination. This will help give you the desire to grow and mature in the faith, and recognize that Christianity is not a spectator sport.
- Repentance does not save us; repentance is only the realization of our salvation. We must place our focus on the cause (Christ), not the effect (what we do), then the effect will flow from a natural desire, and create growth and maturity.
- We need not be frustrated when we have Christ. Our confidence is in Christ and His character—not *self-esteem*, but *Christ-esteem*!
- True service is doing something for another which we do not usually like to do (2 Cor. 12:15). Christ no longer will hold our sins against us. Our identity is who we are in Christ, and nothing else.
- Once we fully realize that the love of Christ has been poured out in us, then we can identify ourselves in Him. We will be able to identify Christ's interests in others over against our own interests (John 15:3; Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 9:22).
- Our faith must not be guided by our desires or our needs. When we think we are important and special and others are not, we are of no use to Him. All we do is isolate ourselves. God calls us to be salt and light. Our goal is not to serve, but to be His child, to keep our eyes on Him, to keep our mind on

Him, and that devotion will lead us to serve. Trials work in favor for us (Rom. 8:28) and not against us. They actually promote spiritual growth!

- Trials build faith and character, allowing us to be better used to glorify God. Trials are not a personal attack against us; but, rather, they allow God to work in us in a deep way, to be of better use to Him for others.
- Faith helps us love! Love is that Christ died in our place. All this happened in God's timing (John 17:1; Acts: 2:23; Gal. 4:4); thus, we need to trust God in His timing and not ours.
- Christ will meet us in our deepest need. The love that flows from us is not from us, but from God through His Spirit (1 Cor. 13). We cannot prove love; we can only respond and obey it. Love is not from our nature, but from the work of the Spirit within us. The response is to put Jesus first (John 15:12; 21:17; 2 Pet. 1:5-7; 3:9; 3 John: 7) and let Him work in our lives. Thus, God will bring us to people and situations we do not normally like so we may learn true love. Love is also disciplined, constant, and spontaneous.
- Discipleship is our response to His love, to be passionate and obedient to our Lord.
- We must be careful that our faith is developed from God's nature and not ours!

Questions:

1. What frustrates you in life? How will faith help you *not* to be frustrated?
2. How can you show that faith and obedience are fruits—proofs, not instigators of the Christian life?
3. Our confidence is in Christ and His character, not in self-esteem. So, how do you apply this "Christ-esteem," that your self-worth is not about who you are, rather who you are in Christ?
4. How can you identify Christ's interests in others over your own interests? How does faith help you in this?
5. A lot of Christians think bad things happen only to those in sin or those that have little faith, that if you have enough faith, you will only receive blessings. Is this Biblical? If so, why? If not, why? Consider Scripture, not the teachings of other people!

6. How can you come to see trials and problems as means of allowing God to work in you in a deep way to be of better use to Him, and for others? What do you gain when you have gone through a trial?
7. Why does God need to use suffering to build us up?
8. The response of love is to put Jesus first. So, how can you do this?
9. How can you learn to be better and have more character by acknowledging and learning when God brings you to people and situations you do not like?
10. We must be careful that our faith is developed from God's nature and not ours! So, how can you do this?

Lesson 9: Exercising our Faith!

Romans 6:15-23

When we exercise our faith, we may still have struggles and setbacks, but the general underpinning and drive will be to seek Christ and yield to Him as our Lord. Then, we respond to Him and others because of what He has done for us. We do this along with seeking righteousness; this will translate into virtue, morality, justice, decency, uprightness, and honesty, which we will do completely—not just once in a while or when it is convenient, as the cross was not convenient to our Lord! Then we will see sin as unproductive and reprehensible, and be able to see its destructive nature both to us and to those around us. When we refuse to yield to Christ, we will earn the wages of death!

- As a pastor, you must know the desires that feed sin, and be able to confront others in love to bring them back to the church.
- As a pastor, you must be committed to wisdom, and seek discernment; do not rely on feelings, innuendos, and half-truths. Go to more mature Christians and to prayer.
- As a pastor, you must be committed not to allow sin to reign in your life or in your church.
- The liberty of the Christian life is by surrender, as it gives us freedom from law (Rom. 3:19; 6:14; -15; Gal. 3:23-25), forgiveness, acceptance, and access to His presence (Rom. 5:1-2).

- Our acceptance does not have to depend on our performance (Rom. 7: 7-11; 10:3).
- We have been freed from sin and declared cleaned (John 8:34-36; Rom 3:19; 6: 3-23; 1 Cor.15: 16; Gal. 3:10-20; 4:21-31)!
- Christ and the Holy Spirit give us the power to overcome and the motive to go in the right direction.
- Always remember, we are not obligated to do anything with our faith, but what good would that be? Self-interest only serves to place us on the wrong path with the bad boss and bad wages.

Questions

1. When you are facing struggles and setbacks, how do you, or how can you see the Lord at work to motivate your faith and determination?
2. What do you think of the statement, “we cannot be full of ourselves when we are full of Him?”
3. What do you need to do to fully trust in Christ, and yield to Him as your Lord, and not to your problems?
4. How can you not only see yourself as God’s willing bondservant, but also devote yourself to Him? How would your life, faith, and behaviors change? If they are not His, expel them!
5. How is sin not worth the effort?
6. Read Gal. 3:23-25; what has Christ changed in you?
7. Who is faith directed to? How can you make sure faith is real and personal?
8. Why is faith not just obedience? Why is faith not just an object or an idea?
9. What does the effect of church leadership, parents, or godly friends have on you when they are developing the Fruits of the Spirit and character (Gal: 5)?
10. God allows us to choose; what choices are you making? What choices do you need to make?

Lesson 10: Faith helps us with our Hope and Guidance!

Romans 8: 18–30

Even in the midst of dire circumstances, as with Paul in 2 Corinthians 11: 23-29, we can have hope beyond hope. We can have God Himself direct our path. Because, this life is a small wrinkle in time, a mere rehearsal to what is to come in the vastness of eternity. We are made for Heaven, and our life here is a classroom experience to learn and grow closer to God and those around us, to be our best for His glory. So, our true life is what we have not experienced yet, what is still to come. Thus, we should not get frustrated or lose faith. God has given us His Spirit to be our comforter and guide. In so doing, we can have greater trust and perseverance through good times and bad, as long as our eyes are upon the Lord!

- Faith helps us, with the Spirit's guidance, to know what sin is.
- As a pastor, you must know what is meant by and apply being "an offering." As a pastor, you must know what it is to be a conqueror. Do not just know that God is sovereign, but believe and live it!
- Real faith will help us to see what God is trying to accomplish in our lives and through us for others. We will be able to see where He is kindling and be the person that the Holy Spirit uses to fuel it on, so to create a roaring fire for His glory!
- We are to see the world by what its potential is, not just by the suffering we experience and see. This is where we apply our faith. Since we are His heirs, we should accept the responsibility and the inheritance (Matt. 19:28; Acts 3:21; 2 Cor. 4:17; Rev. 21:1).
- The world may live in sin and desire its evil, but there is a longing for order and a better existence; hence, the "felt" need to receive order and the Holy Spirit's role to reveal Christ that can fill that need.
- We must not remain in our ignorance and infirmity by receiving mercy, yet never giving it.
- When we lose hope, we lose desire to serve Him and receive His blessings.
- One of the Holy Spirit's roles is to reveal the deeper things of God. He wants not only to live through us, but work through us. He gives us the tasks and the strength; will we just accept it (John 14:16-26; 15:26; 16:7-15; 1 Cor. 12:4-13; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:6; 5:16-23)? He will carry us through all that we could ever face, from sufferings and sorrow to joy and jubilation (Luke 11:2-4). By the way, the deeper things of God will never contradict the Word of God!

- God turns our faith into reality (Matt. 6:33; John 14:9). Allow Him to do so!
- The goal of faith is not the work we do, but allowing Him to do His will in us! There is no such thing as chance; this is God's providence. We may not understand; all we can do is “hang tight” and trust Him.
- Beware of trying to run ahead with your desires or distractions, or behind God's timing. Faith is not an excuse to do what you feel or desire or want. It must be focused on Christ alone!
- The Bible gives us the precepts and the plan; the Spirit enables us to follow!
- We are made for prayer, and not just for our needs. Prayer is not a tool to get our way and will. Prayer is to bring us closer to Christ. Prayer and faith work together!
- Never waste time with God seeking what you cannot have. Just as the role of the Holy Spirit is to intercede for us, we are called to do the same with one another (Mark 11:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19; Heb. 7:25). So, do we? The Holy Spirit will "turbo boost" our prayers. He will fill in the areas that we do not understand and fill in the information we do not have. This is no excuse to be lazy in our prayers! We always need to know as much as we can and pray as specifically as we can!
- Faith helps us with patience as God will continually place people in our lives that we do not like. Our desire is to put them down or avoid them. Unless we are truly worshiping God, we will miss crucial learning and growth opportunities; if we persist, He may allow us to fall apart! When we are callous to one another, it is a slap in the face of God! Let us keep His *temple* undefiled!
- We must continue to fight against pride and selfishness that get in the way (Eph. 6:13-18). That is, we are to wrestle before God against our nature and never wrestle against God (Gen. 32:24-25), unless you desire to be crippled!
- God's purpose and plan is to make us His children (1 John). He is the good Parent who guides His children and protects them. At the same time, He does not over protect them so they lose out on life's opportunities to please Him, to the ultimate good. Here, we are temporarily looking to the hope we have now and to come. Christ will see us through if we trust and obey to be in His way.

Questions:

1. Do you have a problem receiving suggestions from others regarding your decisions? If so, why?

2. What is it that Scripture calls us to do in those times of hardship?
3. What is it that you need to do so you can have greater trust and perseverance?
4. How can your church, as a community of Believers, demonstrate a greater trust and perseverance to one another? If they did this, what difference would it make?
5. How can you accept the responsibility and the inheritance of being His joint heirs?
6. When we lose hope, we lose our desire to serve Him and receive His blessings. Do you think this is true? Have you seen this demonstrated by your life or that of others? What do you need to do to grow beyond your fears to embrace hope?
7. One of the Holy Spirit's roles is to reveal the deeper things of God. So, what are the deeper things of God? Remember, these deeper things will never contradict God's Word. If they do, they are not from God!
8. How can God turn your faith into reality to allow Him to do His will in you?
9. What happens when we try to run ahead with our desires or distractions, or behind God's timing?
10. Why do some Christians think that prayer is a tool to get their way and will? What is the true purpose of prayer?
11. What do you need to do to have hope beyond hope?
12. We should not get frustrated or lose faith. So, what do you need to do to listen for God, Himself, to direct your path?

Lesson 11: Do not allow your desires to disrupt your faith!

Romans 9:1–13

Paul was deeply grieved and disturbed emotionally, to the point that it cut to his soul, because of the stupidity of his fellow Jews. They rejected God and replaced faith in Him with meaningless trivialities and pride. At the same time, Paul lets us know that God is not obligated to do anything! We are not owed, nor do we deserve His grace; yet, by God's grace, we receive blessings even though

we may not see them. Remember, faith looks to Christ, not to what we experience or know. The Gospel is the powerful demonstration of God's saving grace, because it is through faith in Christ that a new, Eschatological Israel, composed of Jew and Gentile, is established in fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers! This is the magnification of God's grace and the exaltation of His sovereignty. Faith knows we are eternally secure!

- Christians, pastors and churches fail not just because of sin but because we place our desires over God's direction and plan. Do not let your pride and desires destroy the work of God or your church!
- We must abandon ourselves to Him, and never hold back with reasoning and logic, nor hide in our theology or our ignorance. Our drive must be to follow His character and not our own or our culture.
- My interests must be surrendered to His; His interests must be mine (vs. 1:1; Gal. 1:5) so that doing what we do not want to do is sheer pleasure because it is serving Him (John 15:13; 1 Cor. 9:22; 2 Cor. 12:15)! This is a clear and unequivocal instance of Christ being called God, *the eternally blessed God* (Rom. 9:5).
- We have no right to fight against God, or to complain or ask why. We cannot fit God in our extremely limited knowledge and reasoning ability and pass judgment on Him! God is righteous in all of His decisions, and we must trust Him in them, even when we do not like them or understand them. We must see our sin and weakness, and be humble before the Holiness of God. The result is, we have no right to ever be bitter; so, dig out the root of bitterness so it does not bear the rotten fruits of the self!
- Real faith will build in times of stress and confusion, whereas just having confidence without faith will diminish us (1 Pet. 1:7).
- Remember that Pride is one of the biggest barriers for us to hurdle (Phil. 3:1-11).

Questions:

1. When have you been deeply grieved by something other than a tragedy or death? How did faith in Christ help you?
2. What happens when moral awareness comes from our ideas and not from the Word and Spirit?
3. How can Paul's passion and sorrow be an example for us to follow today? Does your heart become sorrowful for others? If not, what is blocking you from God's call?

4. Passion, conviction and emotion are all part of the Christian experience, so why do so many Christians seem to lack it today?
5. In what ways have you quenched the Spirit? Or, your passion?
6. How, and why do Christians fail when they place their desires over God's direction and plan?
7. How can you abandon yourself to Christ?
8. How can we follow His character with passion, and not our own will or our culture?
9. How can we place our interests as surrendered to His? How can His interests be ours?
10. Why would God's plan not be thwarted?
11. God did not fail to work out His purpose with the Jews, nor will He fail to work out our purpose! How can this fact give you greater assurance in your faith and trust?
12. How can you dig out the root of bitterness so that you do not bear the rotten fruits of the self?

Lesson 12: Faith helps us Trust in times of Uncertainty and Confusion!

Romans 11:1-10

Even when we mess up, God is there with His grace and His persevering love. If you have ever thought that God has left you out, then you have thought wrong! When we do fall astray and mess up, we will have consequences to our actions, but our salvation is secure in Him when we have genuinely received His grace through faith. Thus, we should respond with a life where fear and anxiety are extinguished by the trust and fear we have of Him—trust in times of uncertainty and confusion, fear as in respect and reverence. Because, we are deeply loved and pursued by the only eternal and wise God!

- Never lose sight of who you are in Christ, and the magnitude and wonder of the gift of your salvation!

- Never lose the promises of God, and the fact that He is God and you are not! That God is omniscient, omnipotent, that is, all knowing and all-powerful; this defines His incredible greatness. This applies to us. No matter what we are going through, God is there—through the valleys and the mountaintops, and the roads in between.
- When we have a healthy grasp on God's power and authority, it gives us correct confidence to persevere through battles and difficulties, as well as to stay firm in Him when things are going great (Col. 3:2).
- God is our strength and heartbeat and vision for life, regardless of our understanding. This all translates into our testimonies. Testimonies are the proof text to God's power working in people!
- It is never as bad as it seems! We tend to want to give up, but God does not give up (Zech. 12:10-13:1; 14:4; Acts 1:11; 9; Rev.1:7).
- Our greatest comfort is that God does not reject us, even when we reject Him. God is active in us, even we are not active in Him; this is a classic, human sociological pattern through our entire history (Deut. 29:4; Isa.29: 10-13; Psalm 69:22-23).
- Spurgeon said of vs. 5-6, "This is the gospel in a nut shell. He who remembers these distinctions is on the right road to sound theology."
- When we know things about God yet do nothing with them, it is like having eyes, but being unwilling to see, or having ears, but refusing to listen, while Satan uses you for his glory.
- The goal of Bible study and worship is to develop His character, and follow His will. It is not just about the gaining of knowledge, but about the indwelling of His love. Everything about life—thoughts, deeds, and meaning—are all about God. God is everything (not *pantheism*). Our service is because He first loved us, and we give our love back to Him.
- As pastors, it is essential that we know how to build and apply a value system that lasts a lifetime. We must know the value of God's love and allow it to affect us and flow to those around us, and that we are living, in response to His love, in the value of love.

Questions:

1. Have you ever had the thought that God has left you out? If so, what did it take to shake you out of it? If not, what keeps you focused?

2. As a pastor, what fears do you or have you had? How does it make you feel to know that you have been deeply loved and pursued by the only eternal and wise God? How does God's pursuing love affect your daily activity?
3. What are the promises of God that you take to heart?
4. How can you take comfort in that no matter what you are going through, God is there—through the valleys, the mountaintops, and the roads in between?
5. Why would a healthy grasp on God's power and authority give us confidence to persevere through battles and difficulties, as well as to stay firm in Him when things are going great?
6. What is your understanding of God's strength? Why would God's strength be important for your spiritual growth? How can God's strength give you the heartbeat and vision for life, regardless of your circumstances?
7. Are people in your church relying on their good works, their performance, and what they or their family have done, or on grace, and their trust and faith in Christ?
8. Life is never as bad as it seems! So, how can you live your life knowing all things will work out (Rom. 8:28)?
9. When you go through distressing times, by your own wrong choice or not, God is there. Do you know this to be true? If not, what do you need? How can your greatest comfort become the fact that God does not reject you, even when you reject Him?
10. God is omniscient and omnipotent, that is, all knowing and all-powerful; His incredible greatness is proclaimed throughout the universe. (Just look at the pictures from the Hubble Space telescope.) How does this apply to you? How can you make sure you never lose sight of the magnitude and wonder of the gift of your salvation?
11. How should you respond in a life where fear and anxiety are extinguished by the trust and fear we have of Him?
12. When we say the *fear* of God, it is not what is under a child's bed; rather, this fear is respect and reverence. So, how can you trust Christ in times of uncertainty and confusion?

Lesson 13: Taking Faith to the Streets!

Romans 12: 1-2

We are to take faith “to the streets” in how we live—for ourselves, for others and even for our enemies. Yet, most Christians respond with a “rear end” firmly planted in a pew that goes nowhere in service or in glory to Christ. They hold on to a will that will not allow conviction or change to enter their routine or life. Thus, church is just a club for comfort, not a huddle to play the game and receive orders from the Coach. For many pastors, the church becomes a place of power and control. A pastor must allow the Spirit to transform him beyond his comfort zone and remove any fears of conviction; if not, how could, or why would God use him?

- *Living Sacrifice* refers to the fact that we belong solely to God, not to ourselves or anything else. (Rom. 3:25; 6:12-17; 8:13; John 15:13-15;37-38; 1 John 3:16) His shed blood paid for us!
- *Do not be conformed* means that our minds and our thinking must be based on Christ and Scripture, through which the Spirit guides us. (2 Cor. 4:18; 1 John 2:17). If this is not so, the culture and pleasures of life will sweep us away from God's best for us. Our faith will become neutered!
- *Renewing of your mind* is changing our false mindset from our selfish nature to His character and call. We accomplish this by reshaping our minds to conform to God's Word. Until we do this, the deeper things of God's Will cannot be available to us. (Rom. 8:5-9; 13:11-14; 2 Cor. 4:18; 1 John 2:17)
- Being renewed and conformed is our Christian life and purpose! Our standing before our Lord is solely upon His mercy, thus we are to reciprocate it. Since God forgave us, we need to forgive others. Do not just ask God to use you, but, rather give yourself to Him to use!
- The opposite of your being obedient is not just your being selfish or lazy, but, rather, creating *your own* opportunities with zeal, instead of the Lord's. In other words, it involves placing your passion on the wrong things. (1 Sam. 15:22; John 7:17; 13:17)
- We are to cling to His highest standard, not compromise to the flow of the group with whom we hang out (peer pressure). Will you obey?
- When we allow God's standard to be our "carrot on a stick," then our paths will be straight and every aspect of our life will be governed by our Lord, in perfect harmony. When we debate with God and refuse His guidance, we lose sight of His path, and fall on rocky terrain. Stop, drop to your knees, and wake up to Him. (Eph. 4:30)

- The question is, will we be dedicated to our Lord or to ourselves (1 Cor. 6:19; 9:27; Gal. 2:21; Phil. 2:12). Being freed from sin, we must show a response and a responsibility. So, what is yours?
- We can only build our trust as far as we know something for certain. The more you learn and know about our Lord, the more you can put your trust in Him! The knowledge we gain from the Bible of our Lord will build our intimacy and our faith (John 17:3)!

Questions

1. Have you ever taken a Biblical stand and been persecuted by other Christians for standing in the faith?
2. What is the barrier that keeps you from being convicted?
3. What needs to happen in your life to move you from complaining to faith?
4. Why would Pastors, who are in charge of the care for other Christians, elevate their desires, goals, and aspirations over anyone else's, even the Lord's?
5. If Satan were to sit down in a counsel of demons to implant a strategy to tear down your church, all he would need to do would be to place a few key individuals in each church to spread gossip and rumors. Do you agree with this statement? Why, or why not? What are you going to do about it?
6. Do you believe that, as Christians, we have the responsibility to act as the disciples of Christ wherever we are and whatever we do?
7. How do you influence others?
8. Are you putting on a performance, or are you genuinely focused on the Lordship of Christ, so that He flows to those around you?
9. For you, as a Christian, the time must come when the reality of who you are in Christ will hit home in power and conviction. Has this happen to you? If so, how? If not, what would it take to make this happen?
10. What can you do to further build up your trust in Christ?

Lesson 14: Faith brings Maturity and Growth!

Romans 14: 13b-23

This passage urges us to pursue peace and harmony and not let the childish and petty things of life divide us. We are not to cause people to stumble by our actions or inactions. Our faith and actions are monitored closely by God as well as by other people, and we must realize that our actions are more influential than our words. We will either lift people up or bring them down!

Maturity and growth in Christ is by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is also a choice we receive (Phil. 2). This is called *sanctification*, or, the Holy Spirit working in us. We are to never let our immaturity make us jealous of those who are mature. Do not seek an easy way to maturity. It takes years of discipline. Even Paul was disciplined for three years by Barnabas before he went on his missionary journeys, and Christ, Himself, directly interdicted Paul!

- Paul was overcome by his liberation in and by Christ (Mark 7:18-19). He stressed that we must behave and be responsible in the correct manner. We may enjoy our freedom, but freedom does not entitle one to do anything one wants, just as living in a “free” county like the U.S. does not.
- *Consecration* is the work we do to tear down the barriers of our self-will and pride that block the work of His sanctification!
- Our human tendency is to persuade others to agree with our views. God's purpose is to get us in line with His views. Yet, so many Christians spend all of their time as pursuers of argumentation and not pursuers of holiness! There are times when we need to take a stand for correct doctrine and virtue with His Word, and there are times we need to separate childish, petty things from real things.
- A true Christian will never destroy another person's faith just to have his or her own way!
- Our freedom must not bring dishonor, division, or disrepute to the church. We must not argue with people out of our petty presumptions and feelings. Rather, we are to let Biblical convictions and the core truths of our faith infuse us so we can maintain and model them!
- Conviction is the role of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17; Acts 1:8; 4:31; 10:45; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 3:16-17; Heb. 13:5-6). We must never we allow ourselves to be swayed from our convictions (ones that are Biblically based) by peer pressure!

Questions

1. What do you think it means to behave and be responsible?
2. Why do so many Christians spend all of their time and efforts as pursuers of argumentation and not pursuers of holiness? What do you suppose is their rationalization? How does faith come into play here?
3. There are times when we need to take a stand for correct doctrine or virtue. What are examples of this?
4. Why is fellowshiping with one other, regardless of the level of maturity and faith, important?
5. Why would a *true* Christian destroy another's faith just so he could have his own way?
6. What does *freedom in Christ* mean to you?
7. What have been some of the petty presumptions and feelings you have observed among some Christians? What about you?
8. How can you prevent your freedom in Christ from being a detriment to others?
9. How can you let Biblical convictions and the core truths of faith infuse you so you can maintain and model them?
10. How can your church pursue peace with one other in Christ?

Lesson 15: Your Faith is Important!

Romans 16:1-24

This passage in Romans is often just glanced over. You may never see a sermon or Bible study on it, because it is seen as just a list of names. But, is that all it is? Many people, especially we pastors, often forget those who contribute to the ministry, not necessarily out of callous disregard, but out of our hurriedness of the moment, or our focusing on ourselves and our needs over those of others. Paul cuts across cultural barriers and arrogance, and commends publicly, acknowledging many. We should be careful to always be people who honor and acknowledge others!

- No one, in the Lord, is unimportant! There are 27 names listed who were Paul's friends and who helped him. Many of them—nine, in fact—were

women. This is a testimony to the importance of personal relationships, of cooperation (working together for a unified vision and purpose), and the value of encouragement!

- It has been said that the service we give to others is the rent we give to live on this earth!
- Paul wholeheartedly and passionately warns that divisions will destroy the church! Paul admonishes us to discern between standing for truth and causing unrighteous divisions, confusing people's faith, and their relationship to God.
- Nothing will destroy a church or ministry quicker than strife, competition, dissension, and gossip, all of which eventually lead to divisions in a church. True faith will not allow this (Rom.13: 13; Gal. 5:19-20)! Such dissension causes "*offenses*," that is, it becomes a snare or stumbling block to others (v.14: 13).
- Many people call Christ, "Master and Lord," but they are far from serving Him. They serve only their carnal, sensual, worldly interests. That is, a "what is in it for me" attitude and mindset! They corrupt the church by deceiving its heart and the people with misdirected and corrupted passion.
- Those who seed strife and make divisions in the Church are not doing Christ's work, but are attempting to gratify their own selves. They cause people to follow a person and not the Person of Christ! Contentious, divisive people will cause others to stumble, so they must be avoided, and disciplined, which means removing them from fellowship if they persist (1 Cor. 5:9–13; 2 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 3:10)!
- This is a stern warning against false teachers, including those in and out of the church. Paul says to "turn away from them!" They must not be tolerated in the church, or on TV, or anywhere else! False teaching promotes false faith!
- Divisive people destroy the peace and unity of the church, but *God*, who is the source of *peace*, will *crush* this work of *Satan* through the wisdom and obedience of believers. (v. 8:28).
- If truth is abandoned, unity and peace will not last long. We must keep our hearts open to the Spirit with passion, and guard against that which is contrary to God's Word and plan with all diligence. This is so we will not be deceived. Pledge yourself, defiantly, not to be a deceiver.
- Faith will grow and prosper in times of affliction and sorrow only when we face Him and not the situation! God allows tough stuff to happen to us to grow us better, and for us to be of better use to others around us. It is to increase our

trust and dependence upon Christ; this will fuel our need for Him and move us away from our selves.

Questions

1. How can you be better at honoring and acknowledge others?
2. How would you react to someone "chastising" as well as "encouraging" you? How you handle this will point to your faith and maturity in Christ; how much maturity and faith do you have?
3. How would you feel if the church leadership came to you and told you that what you had said or done could hurt the church?
4. How does order apply to running a church?
5. Would you feel secure and more comfortable in a church that quickly put down division? Why?
6. What happens to the people when a false teacher gets in a church or a ministry? Why was Paul so passionate about removing false teachers?
7. How can your church be more open to people of different backgrounds?
8. How does the "me first" attitude and mindset affect your faith and the church?
9. How can you and your church keep your hearts open to the Spirit with passion, and guard with all diligence that which is contrary to God's Word and plan?
10. How can you find hope and encouragement in phrases such as, *approved in Christ, chosen in the Lord, the God of hope* (v. 15:13) and the *God of peace* (v.15: 33)?

Lesson 16: Obedience is the Willingness to go all out in Faith!

Matthew 3:1 -12

Obedience, willingness to go all out in faith, and a willingness to endure extreme persecution for the Lord characterized John the Baptist. He was the road builder, laying the path for the Lord. He removed the rocks of sin by tearing them up and exposing them, without fear of reprisal by the arrogant and prideful hypocrites. He was indeed extreme, and was needed to show a corrupt religious system its errors and point to the truly Righteous Messiah. I wonder if such a

person would be welcomed in a church today? Such extreme commitment is considered foolish amongst the “world,” and even among many Christians. We may not be called to eat bugs and curse pious frauds, but we are called to obedience in our hearts, minds, and actions! In addition, this does force us to take an extreme stand!

- *Repentance* was not just sorrow or emotion, but an actual change (Matt. 4:17; 27:3)! This change would then allow us to feel the *sorrow* of the hurt we caused, not only to ourselves, but also to the people around us, and even God (2 Co 7:10-11)! When one serves the Lord or has repented, the fruits will be manifested. If not, something is very wrong. Therefore, if a leader is gossiping, or a Christian is acting one way on Sunday and another on Monday, something is very wrong! (Gal 5)
- All that you do in life must be a reflection of a life surrendered to Christ. If you are so self-willed there can be no room for the living Christ, this may mean that others will use you, take advantage of you, get mad at you, ignore you, go around you, ridicule you, and persecute you! But, remember, what they do to you, they do to Him! Make sure you are not the one persecuting the Lord!
- Keep your eyes on God, not on people! If you only seek God for your “felt” needs, you will never understand or rely on God for your “real” needs! Neither will you understand yourself, or His wonderful plan for you (John 17:22)! Your faith will be on your terms only. How sad that would be! How much you will lose (Gal. 2:20-21).
- Our motives, obedience, and persevering will be the keys! Be in love with Him. Seek His presence, and be persistent in your prayers. If you fear you will ask Him for the wrong thing, remember, we all do that. As you draw closer to Him, you will learn the right things to ask. Prayer is persistence and learning!
- Obedience is not in words, but in deeds that demonstrate our words through practice and action (James 1:22-25)! When we read and/or hear the Word of God, we will have the desire and heed the call to put it into action. There will be times we do not feel like it, but our obedience will override our feelings so we do remain steadfast and secure (1 Thess. 2:23).
- By our obedience in faith, we may suffer temptations, trouble, persecution, and condemnation from the world. It may seem our foundation has shifted by that constant beating, but He will remain steadfast in us when we remain steadfast in our faith! Keep your faith real, valuable, and practical on His solid Rock. He will not leave you, nor forsake you (1 Cor. 3:11; 10:4; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4-6; Heb. 13:5). So, let Him be the Rock-solid foundation of your life (Matt. 7)!

Questions

1. Do you think that John's message is still needed and required today?
2. What does obedience mean to you?
3. How have you been obedient?
4. Is the Word of God sharp, and is it penetrating you, so that your life shows it?
5. We are called to obedience—in our heart, mind, and actions! Moreover, this *does* take an extreme stand! Have you heard His call, and have you responded to it? Have you made a stand?
6. Are you showing true acceptance of Jesus as your Lord? You can know this by.... (Luke 6:46)?
7. Prayer is persistence and learning! What does this mean, and how do you put this into your life and your church?
8. How can you speak and model to others so they might be inclined to accept the authority of Jesus Christ?
9. What needs to happen in your life to keep your faith real, valuable, practical, and squarely on His solid Rock? What needs to happen in your church?
10. God's desire is for all Christians to have—and use—great faith. What do you need to do to make this more of a reality in your life and in your church?

Lesson 17: Faith Builds Intimacy!

Matthew 7: 21-29

Even though we have a special intimacy with God because of what Christ has done, we have to be careful that we do not rest in this intimacy. The intimacy is important, but God is most concerned with what we do with what He gives us. The intimacy is the frosting; the cake is to do His Will. True intimacy with God is not found in our feelings, works, or deeds, or the saying of creeds, or even having the right theology in mind. Rather, intimacy is a deep affection and knowledge of Christ that is generated by our real, heartfelt devotion, commitment, and trust, and is demonstrated by our willingness and the action of moving forward in our journey of faith.

- When we profess Christ as Lord, or make a public testimony, we are declaring that Jesus Christ has a hold on our life—from now through eternity—that transcends human understanding. We are no longer of this world, but belong to Him as His child—saved, and redeemed.
- Do you feel your faith is distant and cold? Do you desire to have more intimacy with Him? Then, seek His will! Seeking to do God’s will *is* God’s will. It is striving further into the depths of one’s relationship with Christ, as LORD over all. By the surrender of our will (John 3:5; 29-30; Gal. 2:21-21), and the courage to make Him known to those around us (1 Cor. 8:2-3), we will gain closeness and more intimacy with Him!
- If your faith is not practiced, it will not last. That would also serve as a true sign that you never had it, or that you had not let it dive deep enough into you to create the transforming action from the fallen, sinful state, to redemption in the blood of the Lamb. These things are not up to our judgment. They are His. Your fruits will tell the true story to others around you.
- It is useless to call ourselves Christians unless we practice what He has taught us, which we are to believe and also teach.
- To achieve more intimacy with, and function for our Lord, we must be willing to take a look at ourselves to see where we are and on what foundation our lives are built. This passage tells us where we lay the foundation for our life. What is it that moves, stimulates, and inspires us? Will we be able to weather the storms of life, or will we be washed away? Is our life built on shifting sand, the ways of the world that distract us and lead us away from Him? Does everything we consider to be valuable and important just wash away from the stresses, chaos, misdirected deeds, and bad decisions of life—from SIN? Or, do we build on His foundation and from the precepts of His Word, where we remain steadfast and secure?
- When we build on the rock, we are securing a firm foundation with our obedience and trust in what Christ has done, as we put it in all aspects of our life. So, our motivation is based on who we are in Him. This is not done by our proclamations and speeches, it is manifested by taking the knowledge of our Lord and His work, and the relationship we have with Him so it becomes the transforming force to motivate us. If all we have is knowledge, we have nothing. If we do works in His name without the knowledge of who Christ is, we have nothing.
- To weather the storms of life and to please and glorify God we must be real, authentic Christians, whose lives are transformed and built on His foundation. As we will be tested in life in preparation for eternity, being only a “fair-weather” Christian, who has never struggled or who has never taken seriously

his/her faith, may soon find out that he/she had neither faith nor a relationship with Christ as Lord! So, do you?

- To be His disciple means personal, passionate devotion that contains the humbleness to surrender one's will to Him, and the boldness to proclaim Him. This will result in a response of our love and gratitude, glued with the faith to make it real, and powered by the Holy Spirit so it is impacting upon you and flowing to others around you (Luke 14:26-27; 33; Rom. 5:5).

Questions

1. How are you devoted to our Lord?
2. If your faith is not practiced, it will not last. Why would this be so? How long do you think you can go before breakdown?
3. How can you take Jesus' sermon more seriously?
4. What more can you do to take to heart, in a deeper manner, the fact that your true treasure is the knowledge that God knows you, and that you can know Him?
5. How can you make the finding of God's will and rule the number one priority for your life? What is in the way of this?
6. Are you doing the Father's Will?
7. How can you be sure that you have built the right foundation in the right place so your life can withstand the storms?
8. What can you do to prepare for that knock/storm?
9. What do you need to do to approach Jesus with humility?
10. What do you need to do to be bolder in your faith?

Lesson 18: Faith must have Humility!

Matthew 8: 5- 13

Jesus sees the value of faith as paramount over anything else; faith is lifted up as the most important thing we have or do. Yet, all too often, we do not seek faith, but rather, just what we can get. This can and will distort our thinking

and direct our actions in the wrong direction. Faith encourages humility and gives us the realization of who we are in Christ. Without humility, we cannot come to the Lord, because we will never admit our need, surrender our will, nor be able to grow in faith. We will not be able to serve others, because we will think them unworthy, just as the people did toward that soldier's servant.

- The more you find God in the midst of your problems, the more your problems will disappear or seem irrelevant (Col. 3:2).
- Obedience and the willingness to go all out in faith and prayer shows persistence and learning! How can you speak and model this to others so they might be inclined to accept the authority of Jesus Christ?
- *I am not worthy.* The Centurion realized his depravity and the fact that he did not even deserve for Jesus to go to his house (Luke 7:1-10). He did not have only faith, but also humility—rare qualities for a powerful soldier and leader, but, qualities essential for the Christian, and vital for the Christian leader. The Centurion knew that a Jewish leader would not go to his house, but Jesus was willing to anyway. Here is where faith comes in. He probably witnessed, first hand, miracles of Jesus for others, and, with Jesus being there physically, realized Jesus' authority and discipline. He thought that perhaps Jesus could just say *the word* as a command, as he, as a soldier, commanded others. This was a thought not even considered by Jesus' closest disciples. Later, at His trial, Jesus is flogged (whipped) by Centurions. (Matt. 27:26). Just imagine the compassion Jesus must have had knowing what his "friends and colleagues" would do to Him later! As Christians, we must realize that we, too, are unworthy. That is why grace is so special and faith is so vital to overcoming our sin and depravity. Even though we do not deserve Christ and His grace, we can boldly ask for and have fellowship with Him, with the confidence that He is there listening and working in our best interests all of the time (Romans 8).
- Faith is paramount. It is the most important possession you have and the most important thing you do. Faith is what we take for granted. We assume that all Christians have it, although the Bible says no, not all do have it (Mark 4:40). Some have just a little (Matthew 6:30), while, for others, we do not observe them having great faith, as is so in this passage (vs. 8:10 and Matt. 15:28).
- Faith does not mean we say the word and do nothing. Christ did not do "nothing." He healed the servant. We are still to work while still relying, a synergistic blend, because if we do not, we will think of faith as a vending machine, and never get off our couch and into life, as our Lord demonstrated for us to do.

- God's desire is for all Christians to have and practice great faith! He tells us that faith is to be planted, grown, and cultivated, as one does a seed (Matt. 17:20). So, it is something we are initially given, but it is up to us to make it grow. We cannot sit around, put it under the couch, and expect great things to happen. Faith requires action.
- John tells us that our feelings will lead us astray, but faith will be the foundation to give us victory to be the Christian God wants us to be (1 John 5:1-5).

Questions

1. Read Romans 10:17; James 1:1-8; 1 Pet. 1:1-9 and 1 John 5:1-5: How can God's Word also empower Faith onward?
2. What needs to happen in your life to keep your faith real, valuable, practical, and squarely on His solid Rock? What needs to happen in your church?
3. God's desire is for all Christians to have, and use, great faith. What do you need to do to make this more of a reality in your life and in your church?
4. What is in the way of your being fully assured in Christ and His Lordship over your life so you can put your faith, trust, and cares upon Jesus! How can you then teach this to others close to you?
5. Why do you think many preachers never take the time to do *real* ministry or exercise faith, but just love the pulpit, thereby not following the example that our Lord has given?
6. God responds to faith, not position. How have you seen this so in your spiritual journey and/or that of others?
7. Why is humility an essential quality for the Christian? What happens when we do not have it, or we refuse to acknowledge it?
8. Why, as a Christian, must we realize that we, too, are unworthy? What happens when we refuse to do so?
9. Have you ever taken Faith for granted, assuming that all Christians have it? How do you feel knowing that the Bible says that *no, not everyone has it?*
10. Why do you think God designed faith so it is up to us to make it grow? Why not just give it to us all in one, big, lump sum?

Lesson 19: Faith is relying on God's Power!

Matthew 8: 23-27

This passage is about relying on God's power. The disciples saw and believed some incredible events, but somehow, what they had observed and participated in firsthand did not create in them an ability to trust. We will see this theme tested within ourselves when the storms of life buffet against us. This includes the tempests of frustration, the chaos of stress, the gossip from toxic people, the daily grind of life, wrong choices, people conflict, and, of course, sin. How we deal with this is paramount to our ability to trust God. If we prepare to trust in Christ, we will be taken safely across. If we do not, we may sink.

There will be times when we are afraid. Sometimes, we will be just a little nervous; sometimes, we will be outright panic-stricken, as the disciples must have been. We will see the storms of life come against us, causing us to feel overwhelmed and frustrated. Even those who have been through them before and have grown and matured will become tired and weary. The danger is when our faith breaks down into fear so we will not venture out with it. We become stuck, refusing to learn or grow.

He may even take you through the storm to the very edge of your breaking point to get your attention. But, the only thing that will be broken will be what must be broken, your will; the rest of you will become stronger. Just as most fishermen were unwilling to venture past the coastline (for good reason for them—not for those of us with faith), if you do the same in your walk in Christ, you will sink in those shallow depths. You will not realize that Jesus is there to take you through it; all you will see is the storm and not the growth and fruits that it can bring you. You will neither develop true confidence in our Lord, nor will He be able to take you where you will learn the most and do the most good.

- To help our faith and relationship with Christ and others to grow, and for Him to work in our lives, especially to touch others, we also have to be willing to trust and obey Christ as Lord over all things—including our lives.
- A common theme in the Gospels is that hearing the Word is not enough; you have to obey it (Luke 8:8, 18, 21-25).
- We can stay close to the shore of our *comfort* in the Christian life, and never take risks; or, we can exercise real, impacting faith. To pursue the Christian life and make an impact requires that we venture where we may not want to go. But, we only do this by His leading, and only move by His empowering. We merely trust and obey. This is also the pattern for life. We do not see what is ahead. We do not see how our choices, sin, and events may collide, causing sudden and violent storms of stress, chaos, strife, pain, and suffering.
- Sometimes we feel Jesus is asleep, as life overwhelms us. But, rest assured. He is still there, caring and carrying us. Even if He was asleep (He does not)

and our troubles kept multiplying (and they will at times), we would still be safe when we remained in the boat—in Him (John 14-15)!

- Jesus was relaxed during the storm, a picture of faith for us to emulate. We can rest under His cover and still be tranquil in composure and free from our stress (2 Kings 6:16-16, 32; Psalm 4:8; Prov. 19:23).
- *You of little faith.* What a sting those words must have been to the worrisome disciples, as they realized they had messed up again. It is amazing how dense they were, they were with God Himself yet only saw their fears! The secret to remaining joyful in the face of adversity is our faith—our confidence and assurance that He is there in the boat with us. Jesus will not let the boat capsize. But, even if it did, He is still there.
- Jesus is Lord over creation, but you have to exercise your will to move it out of the way so He can be Lord over your life. He will rarely bully His way over you; you have to reach out to Him by faith, even though He reached out first to save you. It is by faith alone we receive His grace that is offered to us.
- These miracles over nature helped the disciples to develop and increase their faith in Jesus. (Mark 4:41)
- The key to unlocking fear so it opens into contentment is our worship and prayer time. Sometimes, that is all we can do; but, it is not a last resort. It is our front line and most important defense. It is to be our preparation for the weathering of a storm. It will help us build our relationship with Christ so our faith, confidence, and courage will grow. Then, those storms and crises will make us stronger and help us help others through them, too. When we fully learn to trust, then we can obey. That will build our confidence so we can sail across those storm-tossed seas of life as Jesus Christ is there beside us, manning the helm!

Questions

1. Why are you afraid at times? What causes your faith to get wet from the storms of life?
2. What do you do when the storms of life buffet against you? Such as, frustration, chaos, stress, gossip, toxic people, the daily grind of life, wrong choices, people coming against you, and, of course, sin?
3. How we deal with the stress of life is paramount; it shows us what our faith is made of, if it comes from God or from our self. So, how should you deal with stress?

4. It is one thing to believe in something and quite another to trust—and even more to obey an idea, plan, or cause. To follow Christ requires all three. Why is this so? How have you seen this apparent in your life?
5. Big problems sometimes creep up to us without warning—hidden behind mountains. What are the mountains for you? Are they such as pride, not looking at a situation carefully, not looking at things long term, or....
6. What can you do to prepare for the storms of life?
7. It is easy to stay close to the shore of comfort in the Christian life and never take risks or exercise real, impacting faith. What is your comfort, your reason for not venturing out further in your faith?
8. What can you do to be willing and able to pursue the Christian life with more vigor, and make more of an impact?
9. Real faith will be shown when the storms come. What would your faith show now?
10. Storms are a part of our lives in a fallen world. Perhaps you are in a storm, or you just got out of a storm, or you are headed into a storm. So, are you prepared?

Lesson 20: Faith Follows Christ!

Matthew 9: 9-13

Jesus was calling His follows to *Follow Me!* In so doing, He called the common laborers of Jewish society, such as fishermen, and then He sought after the most hated person in Jewish society at that time, a tax collector, who collected duties and fees like a troll under a bridge. Jesus comes to those who are sick to heal in ways we cannot fathom. He seeks us out, and we sinners become His friends as He offers us fellowship, and the transformation of our sickly selves to healthy, robed in His righteousness.

Matthew responded to Jesus' radical command to leave all and follow Him. He could never return to his job, as he would be viewed as a traitor. For us, as well as for them, it required steadfast faithfulness, obedience, and trust to undertake His path. Matthew actually got up and followed! This man, with so much to lose by the world's standards, left it all. Yet, he gained so much more. Matthew showed great faith by being willing to leave his prosperous position and

follow Jesus to a life—from his perspective—of the unsecured and unknown. In reality, there is nothing more secure than following Jesus!

Jesus saw Matthew, and called him with two simple words, *follow me*. Two words, when powered by the Spirit, will change a person to the core if he makes the response by his faith. Matthew made such a response, and showed great faith to permanently leave his prestigious job, and with overwhelming gratitude, throw a big feast in Jesus' honor so his friends could see for themselves this most incredible God-Man.

The Pharisees were puzzled by Jesus' excellent teaching, and by His bizarre behavior of hanging out with sinners. They did not realize He was the Great Physician, who came to heal, and that one cannot heal another without seeing and touching that person.

Since this is the Gospel that bears his name, and he compiled it without any superfluous words to describe himself, we see that he was also a humble man and did not want to draw attention to himself. He rather pointed to the One who deserved the attention. How many authors do you know who would do that?

Jesus makes it clear that the sinners are indeed sick (Psalm 14:1-3; Mark 7:1-8), and need redemption, but ignoring them does them no good. The *healthy Pharisees* (Luke 18:9-14), refers to the health in their own minds, not in reality. Jesus is breaking down the “works-earned righteousness” philosophy of the Pharisees, and is giving us a glimpse of Grace (Psalm 51:1-18; Luke 19:9; Rom. 3:22).

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. This is a retort—that a self-righteous person will not realize their need for salvation, because they are too full of themselves to see a need. However, an admitted sinner will see his depravity when the Spirit points it out.

Follow me are two very powerful words, yet are so easily blocked when we are too puffed up with ourselves. If you think you do not need a doctor, you are very mistaken, for you would be the sickest of all. Jesus did not come for the righteous because there are no righteous people. There are only those who think they are. Their invitation to join His Kingdom will never be opened and read, because there is too much of them in the way; the words cannot be seen. The faith to respond will never grow in the shallow soil of pride.

Questions

1. What is it about Jesus' words, *Follow me*, that cause some to respond with passion, and others to flee in anger?

2. What do you think motivated Mathew to show great faith by permanently leaving his prestigious job?
3. What is in your life that requires steadfast faithfulness, obedience, and trust, for you to undertake His path? How will this affect your faith?
4. What is in the way of your responding to the *Follow Me* call?
5. Matthew actually got up and followed! What is the cause and motivation for you to get up and follow Christ?
6. What do you see as important in your life that you just could not lose? Compare your list by the world's standards versus God's.
7. Do you really believe, with confidence, that there is nothing more secure than following Jesus? What does *secure* mean to you, considering eternity versus the material?
8. Have you ever made a big response of gratitude for what Jesus has done for you? If so, what was it? If not, what could it be?
9. Matthew saw what he was to gain! What did you see when you came to Christ?
10. Why do you suppose that most people only see what they will leave behind? How does this impede your faith?
11. How can you be the influencers of godly character to those around you who do as they see fit, without your also doing as you see fit? What about in your church?
12. *Follow me* are two very powerful words, yet are so easily blocked when we are too puffed up with ourselves. How can you make a commitment so this will not happen to your faith?

Lesson 21: Be Determined in your Faith!

Matthew 9: 27-34; 10: 34-42

God calls us to be earnest, that is, to be pursuing a serious, deep rooted and determined faith. It is a call to persist in our faith and determination, regardless of obstacles—physical limitations, spiritual depression, spiritual warfare, or our circumstances. If everything came to us instantly, there would be

no growth, no appreciation, no maturity, and no faith. Faith requires resistance and struggle to make it flourish and grow. God is not the One Who always holds us back; it is usually our refusal to reach out and seize the opportunity. It is we who refuse to exercise our faith and grow. It is we who speak just a simple prayer with no earnest thought behind it, with no zeal or realization of God's mercy and grace. We get so caught up in our own struggles that we do not look past the crowd to call His Name. We do not realize that He will stop, look, and listen—just for us!

- What we ask for in prayer is usually determined by our will and desires. Do not let it be; rather, be determined to seek His will by faith!
- When our eyes are on obstacles rather than on possibilities, on self and not on Christ, we may miss an opportunity as Christ walks on by, not responding because we do not have the faith to call out. We will miss His call, as our eyes are too preoccupied with the junk of life, or the busyness of our own will.
- What we seek can be wrong, and even be an insult to the One who created and loves us. We need to see with a vision that goes beyond our eyes, a vision of faith and determination, based on His Word and precepts rather than what we desire and think we need. Be the one who looks up and sees who the Lord really is, and be willing to call His Name. Be willing to surrender all to Him, as LORD!
- John tells us that He must increase and we must decrease (John 3:29-30). If we refuse this vital call, God just may allow those hardships to come our way, breaking us down so we will yield and grow as His child. Just as a good loving parent will discipline his child, God will discipline us. But, this is not a personal attack; rather it is a way we can grow and be better used by our Lord (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:27; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23-24; 1 Pet. 1:5).
- We have to be willing to be identified with Him no matter what the cost, as the rewards will be far greater than we could ever imagine! So, are you willing to reduce yourself to the real you? The person you are called by Jesus Christ to be so that He is greater in character and precepts in your trust and faith, and in your obedience and application of life? And, so you become less in your will, aspirations, lust, and sin? If not, what is in the way of God working in you?
- A step of faith is easy when we can see; but, in a storm, we usually cannot see. We cannot wait until it clears up; we have to step out and obey His precepts, regardless of the weather or what others say. Do not let doubt and fear adjoin to the storm. See Jesus cut across the storm, so you can see His hand (Matt. 14: 22-36)! We must obey with joy (John 2:5)!

Questions

1. Read John 3:29-30. What does God want you to do with this passage?
2. What do you need to do to initiate His *increase* and your *decrease*? What would that mean and/or look like?
3. Why is it hard to be willing to be identified with Him no matter what the cost?
4. What can you and your church do to help facilitate your yielding and growing as His child?
5. Are you willing to reduce yourself to the real you, called by Jesus Christ, "me"? If not, what is in the way?
6. What can you do to be more earnest, that is, to develop a more serious, deep-rooted and determined faith?
7. What can your church do, collectively, so to keep everyone's eyes on the possibilities and not the obstacles? (First, you may need to define what the obstacles are, and what the possibilities could be.)
8. What is the secret to remaining joyful in the face of adversity? What can you do to make sure this does not remain a secret?
9. How can Jesus' work, power, and purpose help you through desperate times of waiting, confusion, and hurt?
10. What can you do so that doubt and fear will not adjoin to the storms of your life, making them worse? How can you see more clearly that Jesus cuts across the storm?

Lesson 22: Growing through the Crises of Faith

Matthew 11: 1-19

Take a look at Isaiah 35:4-6; 50:10! We will all experience crises of faith as some point, where our experience and expectations converge, yet do not meet. This will happen when we venture beyond our comfort zone into His service and we find our circumstances are challenging our faith (Phil. 4:19). We will wonder if our life has been meaningless. *Did I do the right thing? How come, even though I have been faithful, I have experienced such suffering and disappointment?* This is what the book of Habakkuk is all about. Habakkuk starts out cursing and complaining to God. God reveals Himself; Habakkuk repents,

and ends by worshiping God, even though his circumstances did not change. His perspective and outlook changed!

When a crisis comes, do what John the Baptist did; go tell Jesus! Get in His Word and allow it to give you assurance and peace. Allow God to refresh you and give you strength; He will come and save you. Turning back in defeat, distrust, or disillusionment is no real answer. Realize that your faith needs to be challenged so it can grow, and glow (Heb. 13:5-6)!

- What we think we know pales in comparison to who Christ is and what He does for us. When we feel we are wise, we are like a four-year-old thinking he knows better than his parents. How far can a four-year-old carry himself in life?
- How far can we carry ourselves in life without Christ? We may think we are doing well, but when we look back, with eternity as our guide, our ways are revealed as very pathetic indeed! We need to allow God's truth to reign in us by trust and obedience. When we do this by trusting instead of worrying, we will grow, and real wisdom will flow to us and through us to those all around. Just be aware that God will not give you more faith, more wisdom, or more gifts until you have mastered what He has already given you (Luke 16:10; 19:17; John 7:17; 14:12; Heb. 12:6)!
- *Come unto me* (Matt. 11: 28) is a promise of wisdom and the offering of God's strength—and perhaps the most endearing words uttered by our Lord! It is so simple for the humble to see and accept, yet so hard for a mind preoccupied with the pride of self. Without humbling ourselves to acknowledge Him, we cannot receive the Savior. Rather, we get a need unmet and a soul empty. Jesus' load is heavy and requires our fullest for His Highest; yet, it is easy when our eyes and faith are on Him (1 John 1:7)!
- Believing something does not mean you live it. Faith must be real and invoke a response from within you. It cannot be just academic!
- People then, as people today, differentiate others by their words, and more importantly, by their actions. What do your actions say about what is in your heart? To confess one thing and do another was what Proverbs and the Jew would heartily say was a *fool*! Thus, our faith will produce our actions, but our actions will demonstrate our faith (Duet. 6:4; Matt. 12: 22-37; Mark 12:29)!

Questions

1. We will all experience crises of faith as some point. So, what do you need to do to prepare your mind, will, and faith to expect and accept whatever comes, then turn it into a learning and faith-building experience?

2. How can you become stronger through harsh and difficult experiences such as suffering or disappointment?
3. How can God's Word give you assurance and peace in all situations?
4. God is more concerned with our obedience than our knowledge. This is so essential for us to understand and apply! What do you need to do to make this real in your church?
5. What can you do to make sure your Faith is real? What would invoke a response from within you?
6. Most Christians have a faith that is mainly academic; that is, they may believe and know, but do little or nothing with it. What can be done to show them that their faith needs to be real, and their actions say what is in their heart?
7. In what manner do you practice confession about God? How would this improve your spiritual and emotional maturity? If you do not already, what do you need to do to start this vital aspect of declaring your faith and honoring who Christ is and what He has done for you?
8. Complacency is the evil of our will that does not see what He has done before, so, we do not look ahead to trust Him. What can you do so that complacency does not rule in your heart?
9. What do you need to believe and do so that you are able to forget your will, forget your past, and forget what you may not be able to see, and reach out and take His hand in life?
10. What do you need to do to keep your eyes on important matters, such as His Word and how to apply it, rather than following the latest trends?

A crisis comes. How often we forget that Jesus got us through the last one. We always need to see where we came from to see where we need to go; we need to see how He once guided us in order to have the assurance that He will guide us through again. They did not wait for Jesus' intervention; the disciples jumped into the crisis without Jesus (Psalm 106:13; Matt. 14:22-33). We have to see where He has led us so we can realize He will help us again. Each problem that is solved in our life is an increase in our faith storage; let us use that storage and not keep it so tightly shut that we do not even remember it when we need it again. How can you know when you are unable or unwilling to apply God's Word into your life? How can this awareness help you apply His truth?

Lesson 23: How God Multiplies our Faith

Matthew 14: 13-21

We, as a Church, tend to forget the impossible; we leave out faith and trust; we hoard what little we have; we fail to surrender to His Lordship or precepts. Regardless of this mindset of ours, Jesus stands at the door that we have closed in His face. He could just kick it down, but, He does not. He lets us live with what little we have when we could have so much more—5000 times as much!

This passage is about letting go, giving to Him, and allowing His multiplication to be glorified! This passage has a powerful lesson for us on faith and surrender. All too often, we in the church are much better at sending people away, stemming from our own misdirection. We forget that Christ is the One who calls us to Him. He says, *bring what you have to me*, while we focus on, *what can you do for me?* It is about how we can serve and glorify our Lord. Out of our poverty, He seems to use us the most, because, we are emptied from our pride and trivialities and are able to focus upon Him. We are to give Him all we have so He can meet our needs. When we do this, Jesus will multiply our efforts and we will be able to be used so much more effectively, giving the glory back to Him. Allow Him to do the miracle; then, distribute it! Remember, Jesus begins where we are and uses what we have. Therefore, we can grow more and He can use us more! So, let us give what we have, along with our faith, talent, time, and treasures, so He can make more with it!

- Jesus is our High Priest who intercedes for us. We do not need to worry about His busy schedule or if we are interrupting, He is there for us; He is there for you (Heb 7:23-28)! This passage demonstrates how much God loves and cares for us (Num. 27: 15 -17).
- We can also demonstrate His care by showing hospitality and the proclaiming of His Word in truth. It has been said, *people will not care what you say until they know you care* (1 Cor. 5:8; 2 Cor. 4:2; Col. 1:3-8)!
- Jesus forsook His own needs! This is not just concern, as in sympathy. It is, rather, a deep, heartfelt awareness that leads to action (Num. 27:15-17; Psalm 23:1; 53; 77:20; 78:52, 70-72; 80:1; Ezek. 34:11, 14-15; Matt. 20:24; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13).
- Mark adds *sheep without a Shepherd*, meaning a reflection of abandonment by unfaithful leaders who chase their own whims, forsaking God and His people (Jer. 50:6).

- We may think we do not much to work with, but, we have to remember—it is not what we can see we have; it is what He is able to do!
- The disciples must have known that Jesus was powerful enough to meet their needs, but, did not consider it in this situation. How much is this like our spiritual lives—that we do not consider Jesus when we need Him, and, especially when we do not think we need Him? They quickly switched to the normal way of their culture, unaffected by the One whom they had with them!
- Jesus challenges the disciples to care and then become the care equippers, ministers of His provision. Christ is looking for hands that can pass His basket with clean hearts, and a will focused on His.

Questions

1. Most churches forget the impossible, and leave out faith and trust. What are the things some churches—perhaps yours—hoard? What do they need to do?
2. Read Hebrews 7:23-28. What would it mean to you not to worry? What do you worry about? What can you do about it? What can Jesus do about it? Remember, His schedule is not busy; we cannot interrupt Him; He is there for us; He is there for you! How does this make you feel?
3. How does this passage demonstrate how much God loves and cares for us? What are some other passages that testify to this?
4. It has been said, *people will not care what you say until they know how much you care*. What does this mean to you? How can you be better at modeling care? How does care reflect your faith?
5. Why do you suppose that the disciples only considered the “normal” way to feed the group? (Keep in mind the other miracles prior to this!)
6. Most Christians only look at what *they* can do. But, in Christ, it is not what we see we have; it is what He is able to do! Are you limited by your vision and thinking?
7. Why do you suppose the disciples, who must have known that Jesus was powerful enough to meet their needs, did not consider Him in this situation? How many times do you fail to consider Jesus when you need Him, especially when you do not think you need Him?
8. How is Jesus the Host, Caregiver, and the Provider for you?

9. Why is Christ looking for hands that can pass His basket with clean hearts, and a will focused on His? Will you be His hands?
10. Why is it that out of our poverty, Christ seems to use us the most? What is poverty? What would it mean for you?
11. We are to give Him all we have so He can meet our needs. What must take place in your heart and mind and your church to make this a reality?
12. How, where, and when can you allow Him to do the miracle, then, distribute it! What miracle do you need? What stops you from distributing it?

Lesson 24: Faith Learns Trust and Reliance

Matthew 17:14-27

After seeing God's glory, the disciples had to learn trust and reliance. Jesus brought the disciples from their incredible emotional mountain top experience directly into the valley of daily life where they were met with opposition and failure. The valley was filled with unbelief, Jesus' coming suffering, and taxes. The disciples put into practice what they saw and learned, and quickly hit a wall of opposition. They saw that taking both what they had learned and their experiences, then applying all of it took more than merely an attitude of, "just do it." Jesus had already given the disciples the power to exorcise demons; they were perplexed that, for some reason, they were unable to follow through (Matthew, chapter 10).

- The disciples sought to do an exorcism under their own power, neglecting God's power as well as prayer. After trying to do the work of God without prayer or trust, they had to learn how to take their knowledge and make it real and impacting in their life.
- We can never just stay in the glory of great experiences and insights, of worship and growth. There has to be a time when we take what we have learned and apply it. When the reality of Christ's power and purpose hits us, we must also realize that others will not have the same beliefs and experiences. We will face the daily trivialities of life that seem to take a toll on us. We will face people who will reject us. We will try to put into practice what we have learned and we may fail. We can become frustrated and give up unless we focus, learn, and do not give up. We can best get through by our prayer life, and by our trust and reliance on His work!
- Do not let your lack of willingness to grow in the faith rob you of His plan for you. We can enjoy the mountain top, but we also have to get busy in the

valley where we live. When we do succeed, we need to be sure it is His success that is motivating us.

- Enjoying success and blessings is not a result of faith or what faith is about. Faith helps our relationship with God by bringing us closer to Him so He can use us more. Our experiences and ideas tend to get in the way, so God sometimes has to knock us off our stool of pride so we will look to Him (Job. 13:15; 2 Cor. 5:7).
- The disciples had confidence, and seemed to be surprised that their exorcism did not work. They could have also taken for granted their position and not exercised trust. Confidence cannot precede faith; confidence must come from faith and one's growth in Him. Confidence without faith is pride—a heinous sin!
- Submissiveness to God shows faith more than any deed (Mark 9:29).
- We have to be on guard that we do not overlook how God is working. We can be so busy serving and trying to please Him that we do not bother ourselves to know Him through prayer. Nothing God calls us to do is impossible when we are focused on Him with our faith, trust, obedience, and mindsets.
- A person's personal prayer life is key to being used by God and to using God's power (Mark 9:29).
- We, as Christians, should always focus on His truth and not our rights.

Questions

1. If you could do literally anything with your faith, what would you do? What stops you? How have you learned trust and reliance?
2. What do you still need to learn?
3. What have been the realities of your daily life, such as, what things trouble and tempt you?
4. What do you do when you face unbelief and frustration? What can you do? What should you do?
5. Why is it outside of God's will and plan to have confidence without faith?
6. How is a person's personal prayer life the key to being used by God and using God's power? Can you give an example?

7. How would the Church and society benefit if Christians always focused on His truth and not our rights?
8. Has it hit you that with faith, nothing is impossible, that you can stretch beyond your own ideas and experiences? What would that mean to you? What would your life look like if you lived by this kind of faith? How has this happened to you? If not, what do you need to do to make this happen?
9. There has to be a time when we take what we have learned and apply it. Yet, most Christians, including most pastors, will never really apply their faith. Why is that?
10. What can your church do to motivate and encourage its people who moan and object to a stretch in their faith?
11. What can you do to avoid becoming frustrated and giving up with your faith when faced with the realities of daily life and/or failure?
12. What are you going to do so you do not let your lack of willingness to grow in the faith rob you of His plan for you?

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
Hebrews 11:1

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Section VII: The How and Why of Evangelism

We are going to look at two principle passages in Scripture that tell us why and how we should evangelize. One is Romans, Chapter 10, which tells us why evangelism is important, and the other is Matthew, Chapter 10, which tells us how to do evangelism.

Why we should do it? We are to evangelize because God calls us to!

Romans 10:5-21

This is a great passage for all those who do evangelism! (Actually, we all are called to do it, yet so few do because so few respond!!!) Paul, with all of his passion, love, and zeal, bats a near zero in witnessing to the Jews. So, when you are discouraged and find so few people responding to your efforts to witness, remember; Paul, himself, did not do so well at times, especially with his own people. So, be encouraged; continue in obedience, and keep your feet beautiful!

Over the years, Jews have not only turned their backs on the Gospel, but also on their own faith. They have become agnostic, antagonistic, and bitter, holding onto their culture while rejecting truth and faith. They hide behind the faith of their ancestors and persecution as an excuse to "pew-sit" and do nothing.

- As people who are called to make Christ known, we must identify with God and what He had to do with His Son. We must also be aware of our witness and how we are characterized by others. Our integrity and character are the most important things we offer to a non-Christian!
- The true Believer is the one who bases all his or her life—IT ALL—upon Christ, with full trust and assurance by faith and obedience. There is a big difference between "self-imposed" righteousness and obedience to righteousness (Ex. 20:1-17; Duet. 30:1-6; Lev. 18:2).
- God desires us to have "beautiful feet" to bring the Good News (Isa. 52:7). This is why (vs. 14-15) we send missionaries and evangelists from our churches. These are the further marching orders from Matthew 28:19-20 to evangelize and disciple, yet so few Christians ever do it; so few churches do it! What an extreme insult we must be to Him to ignore His call!
- "General Revelation" (Psalm 19:1-4; Rom. 1) means that God reveals Himself through creation; thus, people have no excuse not to know Him. His moral character and duty is in all human kind, even if they do not know Scripture. ("Special Revelation" is the Word of God.) Thus, we are truly blessed to have such an abundance of both revelations!

- Remember, it is not our efforts that save; but it is our responsibility to preach and witness, regardless of results. Christ is the true preacher and witness (John 10:16; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:15-7).
- This point is so important to understand, because when we do not, we get depressed and give up. *We are not responsible for results; we are only responsible for obedience.* That is, we are called to tell others about Christ, but we are not responsible for how they respond or if they reject us. They are truly rejecting Christ. We are only called to preach and disciple. We cannot convert anyone; that is the role of the Holy Spirit. He uses our voices and words, but only He can change a person's soul. We must obey by being His voice and words! If you ever feel discouraged with praying and witnessing with no results, remember Paul and Jesus. Keep it up; keep your feet beautiful!
- People reject God because of misunderstandings about righteousness (Rom. 6:14; 8:4; Gal. 3:24; Col.2:14), as did Israel. They did not understand what God really required (Joel 2:32; Micah 6:8; Acts 2:21). Be aware that we have no excuse (Duet. 32:21; Isa. 65:1) not to know Him or to make Him known, or not to evangelize. We will be judged regardless of our understanding or beliefs.
- Remember, your efforts are never a waste of time. It may take years for the message God uses you to convey to hit someone so that they respond. Real evangelism takes consistency and time.
- Misunderstandings are mostly the fault of the hearer; the one who receives has the responsibility to receive the message. We still must make every effort to make our words and deeds clear and contagious.
- Never just rest your faith in a simple sinner's prayer and nothing else. Christ's grace gets us admission to the "club" of eternity, but what good is the club if we never use it? That is why discipleship is essential! Our faith and practice must be real; so use the club, but do not just rely on its privileges!

Questions

1. Have you ever purchased a gift for yourself? If so, what is more exciting to you; to give your own gift to yourself, or receive it from another person? Did you know the greatest gift you could ever give someone is the knowledge of who Jesus is and what He can do for them?
2. Tell the story of one of your witnessing efforts.
3. Have you felt discouraged because you told others about Jesus yet received little response?

4. Has your passion and zeal for witnessing grown or diminished over the years? What were the reasons?
5. What can you do to re-ignite your passion for the lost?
6. Why would someone, who is a Christian, refuse to share their gift of salvation by telling others?
7. What causes bitterness in people? How does bitterness come into play when you witness?
8. When some one is antagonistic to you because of your faith, how do you feel? How do you react and respond? How should you?
9. Imagine you live in a country that is non-Christian, and even against the law to be a Christian. How would you hold onto your faith and reliance upon the Lord? How would you witness? What would you do if you were persecuted?
10. What are the distinctions, character, and personality of a Christian who bases all his or her life, "IT ALL," upon Christ, with full trust and assurance by faith and obedience? What will this do to your evangelism efforts?
11. How would you define "self-imposed" righteousness? How would you define "obedience" to righteousness?
12. How do we get to be righteous? What is the key ingredient?
13. Some Jews, as well as people in general, do not feel they have the need for Christ; what can you do to show them the Light?
14. If you and your family have been Jews all of your lives, and for many generations, how do you think you would respond to Christ?
15. If you are able to change, and Paul, the "chief sinner," was able to change, how does this give you hope for others and perseverance to be a good witness?
16. Christians receive the gift of grace, but do not give the gift to themselves. How does it make you feel to know that you cannot earn or buy God's most precious gift?
17. What has your church done, or could do, to cause our Lord to weep?
18. God desires us to have "beautiful feet" to bring the Good News! What can you do to keep your feet beautiful?

19. Evangelizing and discipling are the main goals of the church (Matt. 28:19-20) and what Christ has called us to do and be. In what ways do you and your church do this? How can you do it better?
20. From your experience, what are some of the misunderstandings about Christ that cause people to reject Christ?
21. Despite Paul's passion, and the willingness of God to gather His chicks, Israel rejected God anyway. Why did Paul keep it up?
22. Given the fact we are not responsible for the results of evangelism, how can this keep the fires of perseverance and zeal lit under you?
23. How can you keep yourself and others from being discouraged from witnessing or obeying Christ when it is hard to do?
24. Take a close look at verses 9-13, what can you do with them? That is, who in your life, at work, school, at the shoe store, or wherever has not confessed these words? How can you bring these most precious words to them?
25. Make a commitment to memorize verses 9 – 10!

How We Should Do It

The greatest Evangelistic Plan is the one Christ gave!

Matthew 10: 5-15:

This passage gives us the blueprint for missions and evangelism. This mission was in preparation for "The Great Commission" to come, where His apostles were called to make disciples of all the peoples of the world. The pattern was to present Christ to their own people (Matt. 10:5-15), then to others, and, finally, to the entire world, including rulers and kings (Matt. 10:18; 28:18-20).

Jesus called His twelve Disciples to venture out and put into practice all He had taught them. This was their first great mission, and the testing ground for learning, growth, and the practicing of their faith. They were going from the classroom to the field, taking a chance by being without the usual necessities one would normally take on such a journey. Jesus gave them the empowerment, along with key instructions to stay away from certain people groups (This was before the call to go to all peoples in Matt. 28!), to shake the dust off their feet if the people did not listen, and not to pay for anything. All were contrary to what is normally done during a journey and sojourn. They were sent out as

commissioned representatives of Christ, just as their title, *apostle*, meant. They had to learn first-hand what it meant to be an apostle, and what it meant to follow Christ. However, the way they learned to follow Him did not mean just picking up and following. They had to put into practice what they had learned, and then do it. Follow? Yes. But, also do as He instructed.

- Jesus calls us to the *lost sheep*—the people who have lost their way, as in sheep that are lost from their master. God is their Master, and they have strayed from Him. Jesus comes, as the Good Shepherd, to rescue His lost sheep. This was a common OT theme, and referred to people as dumb sheep that go astray very easily, as a lot of real sheep and people do (Isa. 53:6; Jer. 50:6; Ezek. 34:5).
- *Go first to the lost sheep of Israel.* This meant the message of God's redemption was to go first to Israel. Israel's responsibility then was to proclaim it to the Gentiles, which they did not do very well (Gen. 12:1-3; Amos 3:2). Jesus is not discounting the Gentiles, as He already responds to them (Matt. 8:10). Rather, He means that the "heirs to the Kingdom" are to be first. Later, in this passage, Jesus calls His disciples—and us—to reach the Gentiles.
- *As you go:* The apostles, (meaning *sent ones*), were modeling what Jesus had done Himself, and was instructing them to do. This mission was from practical, hands-on learning, to tactical (seeing it done), and being told all the "ins and outs." They were then commissioned to do it on their own. Evangelism takes time and practice. You will not always win, especially when you first start out. Have patience and try to see people as Christ sees them!
- This mission was in the parameters of what the Master had instructed. It was not, "See if it works, and let me know." Rather, it was putting faith to practice, regardless of response, or how one was treated. Our reverence is to be to God, regardless of what others think of us (Phil. 2:12).
- We, as Christians, are responsible to proclaim Christ as Lord with whatever means are at our disposal, using our gifts and abilities. But, we are not responsible for how or why people respond to us. It is not our responsibility that they convert, believe, or act in a certain way. We are only responsible for acting in His character and proclaiming His name (Gal. 1:10).
- Many times, when Christians see that people do not respond as expected, they quit almost as soon as they start. Too many give up too soon, thinking no one is listening or even cares. Truly, most will not listen or care, but that is not our problem. We must break away from the feelings of personal rejection. This will be difficult, but we must do so in order to be effective for the Kingdom.

- The instructions were that they were to travel light, and be totally committed to the mission, as Elijah and John the Baptist had been. *Preach, heal, cleanse, and raise*. The Disciples were empowered by Christ to perform miracles, as we read in chapters eight through nine.
- The Disciples were empowered to freely give the message of the Gospel without any compensation. To *peddle the Gospel*, as to charge money for people to hear it, is a grave insult to God. God will sustain those in His service.
- *Having one cloak* meant to not show off wealth or to offend the peasants to whom they were preaching. Also, they were to trust in God to provide, and not to take comfort in personal possessions. If we become tied down with possessions and worldly concerns, we will miss His call for our participation in His mission. Wealth is not wrong in itself; when it distracts one from His call, it becomes a hindrance, and sometimes, even evil.
- God is our provider. We have to realize that when we walk in Him and follow His mission, we need not fear or worry.
- *Shake off the dust* was a symbol of contempt and piety. A righteous Jew would not allow himself to be contaminated by pagan dust and dirt. Jesus uses this phrase to demonstrate that one should treat unresponsive and unsupportive people as pagans, and as unworthy (Matt. 7:6; Acts 13:42-46). This is an indication that the Gospel is real, and if you do not receive it you will be shaken off in contempt and judgment (Acts 13:51).

This passage has some valuable insights for us today. God will not call us where He will not equip us. Therefore, we can go without fear. If He provides, we are doing it right. If not, we need to inquire as to *why not*. This passage also prepares us to not be in shock when strangers and even family friends no longer accept us because of Christ. We must be prepared as Jesus prepared His disciples. We are to go first to the people we know. Then, as we get better, we go to others; and, finally, to those with whom we may be uncomfortable (Matt. 16:15). If they show no interest, we are to leave them alone, while we keep them in prayer, for a better time, for the Spirit to open their hearts. We are not to be nuisances or obtuse to others—even those who are “unworthy.”

Questions:

1. If you were to go on a short-term mission trip, what fears would you have? If you have been on one, what fears did you have? How do you feel about those fears now?
2. What have you done in your life that required you to venture out and put into practice all that you had been taught in school, church, or work?

3. How do you think the disciples felt as they ventured out, for the first time, to practice their faith?
4. What comes into your mind when you see the phrase, *follow Me* (Christ)?
5. Did Jesus put limits on this mission? If so, what were they, and why?
6. In the practice of your faith, did you ever feel you had to avoid someone or something?
7. Jesus comes as the good Shepherd to rescue His lost sheep. How are you, or could you, be comforted with this truth?
8. What are you focused on? Is it money, job, family, hobbies, food? How is your focus related to God's focus?
9. Why did Jesus tell His disciples to go to the Jews first?
10. When you are putting your faith into practice, how do you feel when people reject you or treat you badly?
11. Paul was viciously and personally attacked; and, for what? For spreading the true Gospel. Read how he responds in Gal. 1:10. How can you be further empowered to serve and witness, knowing that you are not responsible for how or why people respond to you?
12. What holds you back from embracing God's call to you?
13. How much does fear affect your motivation to be involved in a ministry?
14. If we become tied down with possessions and worldly concerns, we will miss His call to participate in the mission He has for us. What are your thoughts on this?
15. How can a Christian balance wealth with their call? When does wealth, possessions, jobs, or money (if you think you are not wealthy, think again—especially if you live in the US, where the poorest of the poor live five percent above the rest of the world) become hindrances, and even evil to what Christ calls us to do?
16. When you do outreach, most people will not listen or care; but, that is not your problem. What can you do to break away from feeling rejection, knowing that it will be difficult not take it personally, in order to be effective for the Kingdom?

17. How can this passage prepare you not to be in shock when strangers and family friends no longer accept you, because of Christ?
18. If people show no interest for the Gospel, you are to keep prying. How can you do this without being a nuisance or obtuse to others?
19. What is your church doing now about evangelism?
20. What should your church be doing now about evangelism? What are you going to do about it?

Developing a Program to Make Christ Known

A principle fact we must know before we venture out into evangelizing is this—when you ask someone, “Would you like to be a Christian?”, what you are, in fact, saying is, “Would you like to be like me?” Are you a good “me”? Are you the person others should strive to be like? Be honest! We must be careful in our daily actions, words, and deeds, and how we tell someone about the Lord. Remember, in Matthew, chapter 23, Jesus warns us about misleading people. People will look to you for a model of the Christian life; if you are not modeling it or modeling it wrong, then do not tell people about it, because you will do more damage than good. Make sure that your life is focused on Christ before you tell others to do so!

The Basic Evangelism Plan

What do I do? How do I do it? Where do I start? There are many ways to preach, and reach people for the Lord. The main thing is that our personal prayer and devotional life must be growing and active. We cannot do the work of God unless we are the people of God! We must be in prayer, and we must present Christ in the clearest, truest way possible. Remember, He is the Holy, Eternal God of the Universe; He loves you and He loves others, too! We present and represent Him by knowing the Scriptures and proclaiming Him with **passion** from our spiritual growth, from **conviction**, because we know He is true, from **clarity**, so we make sense, and have **compassion** and love for the people with whom we are sharing. In addition, we are to proclaim Christ in **Truth**. That is, we never make up testimonies, or skew the truth of His Word to fit our agenda or ideas.

The Word is cross-cultural and cuts through all languages, people groups and time; it does not need us to make things up or bend it out of shape. It does not need to be diluted or watered down to make it palatable. All you have to do is explain it, in love, with the above precepts of passion, conviction, compassion, clarity, and Truth. The Word is the peg that goes into both the round and the square hole! You do not need to reshape the peg of His Truth. You are to know

the culture of others and be relevant, but love that is real, along with the Gospel, needs no modifying. Essential doctrine is crucial because we are proclaiming God, and God is a God of Truth! We are His ambassadors; we are never to misrepresent Him!

The Primer

So, how do we go about it? A good model for us to follow would be how Philip, in the book of Acts, witnessed to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:12, 26-40; 1 Cor. 3:6).

- **Philip knew and trusted in God.** His responsibility was to obey by faith and be a person who was usable to God. He knew God would work out the details, as He is sovereign and in control. God is the One who can do extraordinary things! So, no matter what happened, his reliance was on Christ. God's timing is perfect and our efforts are never a waste, whether we lead one person, hundreds of people, or no people, as long as we are striving and are obedient. Are you usable (Prov. 21:3; Matt. 12:33; Mark 1:35; Phil. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:2, 14; 1 Tim 6. 14-16)?
- **Philip was a man who had good character** and bore witness to Christ. For those reasons, he was chosen to reach the eunuch (Acts 6:3-5). He was a man whose passion was to glorify Christ as Lord. He was not self seeking; he did not seek power, glory, or personal desires; he only sought Christ! Our lives must demonstrate that we know Him and that His fruit is working in us—and not rotten fruit! Do you have good character (Gal. 5: 16-26; Col. 3:12-15; 1 John 2:26-29)?
- **Philip was infused with the Holy Spirit.** We must realize that any effort is fruitless without Fruit, His Fruit! Philip obeyed the opportunity and went. We may not get direct orders from Jesus or an angel, but we can pay attention to the opportunities around us and make the most of them! It is the Spirit working in us that makes us contagious and uses us to influence those He seeks out. Do you allow the work of the Spirit within you? This is not a charismatic idea; it is a Biblical point and truth (Psalm 1:2-3; Matt. 7:16-18; 12:35; Phil. 1:9-11; 1 Pet. 3:8; 2 Pet. 1:5-8)!
- **Philip was prepared in his heart and knowledge.** He realized that God is the Teacher and guide, and he followed Him. He is the One who gives us the opportunities, the willingness, and the abilities to carry out His directives. He gives us the boldness and casts out our fears so we will have the courage to witness. We need to realize we cannot look at witnessing lightly, or do it when it is convenient or when we feel like it. Witnessing comes from our devotion and love life for our Lord. Because what He has done for us, we are excited and want to share that “info” with others. To do this, we must be prepared,

and we start with our hearts. How is your devotional life (John 15:4-8; Heb. 4:16; 10:19-25; 1 John 4:7-21)?

- **Philip was using the Scriptures!** He was able and willing to sit down with the eunuch to explain the passage in Isaiah. For us to be effective, we must know the Scriptures; or, if you are new at it, be on the road to discovery. We do not need to know every answer, but we need to have mentors and resources where we can go to find out and then get back to the person's question. Never neglect your study of our Lord! Are you willing to learn and use His Word (Mark 6:2; John 3:10; Col. 3:15-17; 2 Tim. 3:16)?

Our responsibility is to know Him and make Him known. To do this, we need to be usable. We need to tune ourselves before we go out, just as a musician tunes his instrument before the performance and not afterward. We can only do this by an intimate, growing faith, maturing in His Truth and our spiritual formation. We need to see the plight of those around us and not be so involved with our own lives that we condescend or neglect others. With our faith in line, we can see that we are to care for others. We are to share with others with truth and compassion. We are never to condescend, be overbearing, stalk, or be a bad witness in any way. Our faith is essential; with His Word and Spirit empowering and infusing us, we can step out into the world boldly and powerfully. So, allow God to gift and empower you to be His ambassador! He gives us the opportunities; we respond with our faith and obedience. So, get in step with Him by your faith, and then step out with your proclamation of the faith!

The Plan

Using the principles of Scripture and adding over twenty-five years of evangelism research and experience, I devised a simple step-by-step process that anyone—regardless of age or experience—can use to step out for Him! The key is simple; rely on God. The how is simple; we are to pray! Every real and great revival was sparked and fueled by prayer. The Spirit uses our prayers. When you pray, God will use you as well as the others you are praying for! Our prayers line us up with His truth and allow us to be usable for His glory. If you are too young, too old, or incapacitated, and all you can do is pray, you are doing the most important work!

Step I: Pray! (Romans 10:1; Ephesians 1:15-22)

Spend as much time as possible just praying for at least a month before embarking on witnessing. Pray for a particular person—for their salvation and opportunities to share for one month before you witness to them, unless God gives you a clear and open door beforehand. If you are going door to door in a neighborhood, spend at least one month walking that neighborhood in prayer before you talk to people. Your full time job will be to pray for them (Matthew 17:19, 21; Philippians 1:3-4; Heb. 4:16).

- Get as many as possible to pray for the person, neighborhood, or area you want to evangelize. The more people involved and time spent in prayer, the more effective your efforts will be, and more glory directed to our Lord!
- Ask for the heart, strength, perseverance, patience, gifts, and the willingness of your church to obey. Ask for more prayer warriors!
- Effective witnessing comes out of our devotional life and gratitude toward Christ, not out of obligation!
- Ask God what the needs are, and for Him to reveal and make opportunities known.
- Make sure you care and have the attitude of love and care for the people and/ or person you are witnessing to; if not, do not! Care is absolutely essential; people will not care what you have to say unless they know you care!
- Ask God to send His Spirit to soften the people to hear His message and to respond.
- Make a list of all the people you need to pray for, the concerns of the town in which you live, and other concerns God gives you.
- Depend on the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:4-5)!

Step II: Develop Real, Authentic Relationships! (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

It boggles my mind how many Christians I know who have no relationships, friends, or even acquaintances outside of the church. This is a travesty! Yes, we are to have fellowship, and our principle relationships should be with people who are in Christ. But, how can we be salt and light if we never go where the salt and light is needed? God does not call us to separate from others; in fact it is the opposite. We are to go to them without being contaminated by them. Scripture warns us that we are to be the influencers, not the ones being influenced (Matthew 5:13-16; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20; Ephesians 4:20-24; Colossians 3:5-17; 1 Peter 3:2-3).

- Who are you going to? We need to have a target before we can aim the Gospel (Acts 18:18; 2 Cor. 13:1)!
- Caution! Be genuine; guard against only getting to know people so you can witness to them. Yes, that is a primary aspect. But, we are called to be in relationships. If people find out you are only interested in proselytizing, your witness will be compromised to nothing (Mark 4:21-23; Rom. 12:9; 1 Pet. 1:22)!

- Do not be a nuisance, especially at work. A good Christian always does his or her work with excellence and fortitude and does not use company time for Gospel time (1 Cor. 7:23; Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3: 22-25, 28).
- We have to be willing to go where the people are, and spend the time with them. It may take years for a missionary on the field to learn the language, the culture, and build connections before he or she can be used effectively.
- The purpose of our witnessing is to offer people a relationship with Christ. This is best done when we have a relationship with them. We are first winning them as friends before we win them to our Lord!
- Smile at people! It takes seventy-two muscles to frown, but only fourteen to smile. People love a smile! Think about how you feel when someone smiles at you, and realize how important it is to do so to others, too.
- Call people by name! Take the time to remember someone's name, and use it. The sweetest music to anyone's ear is the sound of one's own name!
- Speak to people! Take the chance! Step up to that plate and beyond your fears to engage someone in dialog. Be willing to keep your friends close but also to go outside of your *clique* and comfort zone to talk to others. There is nothing as nice as a cheerful word, or an honest, friendly greeting! You know it when you get a nice greeting; so, why not give one to others?
- Be friendly and helpful! Most people I have known and observed, who have few or no friends, do not make the effort to be a friend. If you would like to have friends, then, be friendly!
- Be genuinely interested in people! Take the time to listen and show your care. Plan your schedule so you have time for people. If you are always in a rush, your relationships will suffer greatly. People whom God has brought to you will be ignored, thereby wasting the help, ministry, and influence you could have given. Christian empathy means involvement, and showing that you care!
- Be pleasant and cordial! Be a person who is nice and engaging to others. Speak and act as if they are the most important persons in the room, and do so as if it is genuine pleasure!
- Be considerate with the feelings of others! It will be appreciated. Each person is unique, created and loved by God. Acknowledge this, and make your responses to others in this light.

- Be thoughtful of the opinions of others. There are three sides to every controversy or disagreement, yours, that of the other person, and that of God—which is the right one! We must not rely on our own presumptions and assumptions, because, we do not have all of the facts. Seek to know and understand the other person's perspective, and start your dialog with those agreements.
- Be generous with praise! Seek to find something that person has done that is good—a personality trait, what they are wearing, or a smile that you noticed—and let them know. Be the person who takes the time to encourage others, but, do so honestly; no one likes a pretentious pretender.
- Be cautious with criticism! No one likes to be condescended to or put down! There are times we are to correct others or motivate them in a better direction, but do so with an attitude of love and care, showing patience, respect, and tact.
- Be ready to give your witness! What counts most in life is who we are in Christ and then responding with our gratitude for what He has done for us by doing for others!

Step III: Pray Specifically! (1 Thessalonians 5:16-25)

The best prayers tend to be targeted to specifics. God is a God of details, He knows them, and He wants you to know them too. Prayer is not when it is convenient or for short periods of time when we can remember; prayer is to be continual and persistent. It may start small, but as you pray, it will grow. Your persistence is key (Luke 18:1-7; Acts 9:11; Eph. 6:18)!

- Keep your relationships in prayer! For individuals, find out (without gossip) their needs and concerns, and then pray. While in prayer, look for opportunities to share (Psalm 17:1-6).

Identify any demonic influences there. These are called “strongholds” and include cults, temples, sin-based businesses such as adult bookstores and sleazy bars, and pray against them (Matt. 12:29; John 10:10; 2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 4:27; 6:11-17; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8).

- Satanic strongholds are the devil's campground to war against the work of God. Satan cannot take any ground that Christ will not allow!
- Find out the problems and needs of your city such as adult bookstores, false religions, poverty, fatherless families, jobs, and corruption. Pray as you walk, pray at home, and pray at your church.

- You can take the strongholds down simply by focused prayer (Mark 9:28-29; John 8:47; 10:10; Eph 4:27; Rev. 12:10)! Pray as you walk by them, pray at home, and pray at your church.
- Make sure you have confessed your sins and repented before you dare do this! Repentance is essential; after you repent, you can resist the devil. So, be prepared for a backlash to your efforts. Keep up the prayer with your eyes and resolve focused upon Him!

Step IV: What are the Needs? (Acts 18:1-4)

Churches that have successful ministry and evangelism programs are geared to fit a need in their community. For my church, one of the things we do is children's tutoring. We tutor children, and through that program, we witness to the parents—mainly by our willingness to help and know them. In a previous, inner city church where I was on staff, I looked for the needs of our youth's parents such as jobs, cars, and such. Then, I networked with others to find them jobs, cars, and shoes, or whatever they needed. This program became too successful and we could not handle all the people coming. For an individual, remember that we all have needs; be a listener and find out, then help out without being pretentious or condescending.

To effectively engage the community, we have to find out what the community needs and what the church can do to meet those needs. There are three questions to keep in mind when seeking God's will to evangelize:

1. What are the needs in my community?
 2. What can I and my church do to fill those needs?
 3. What would be the proper Biblical response to strangers, considering outreach and evangelism along with discernment and protection, especially for young people and women?
- What can you do to improve your church's cooperation, encouraging them to work together for a unified vision and purpose, and for the value of encouragement? Then, how do you take that to your neighborhood?
 - Be sensitive to culture and feelings. Be the person who loves, cares, and listens. People need to be listened to!

The needs could be to hold seminars of interest, such as "Effective Parenting" or, "How to Handle Your Teenager." You could have a date night program and "baby-sit" community youth for free so parents can get out; start a job help and training center; develop an "Alpha" Program. If you are overseas, it

could be to dig a well, or make a road, or start an orphanage, or sponsor a school; start a business-help plan or school to help people start their own businesses; provide no to low interest loans for new businesses, or create a youth center. The options are as numerous as the people you are reaching.

Step V: Have Prayer Walks through your neighborhood! (Matthew 10:5-16)

This is the **Matthew 10 principle**. After praying for the communities for at least a month, go door to door and just ask people how you can pray for them; then pray as a group for those needs. About a week later, go to them again and see if there is anything else you can pray for; then pray. Ask if they would like to hear about the Lord. Have a short presentation ready and, if possible, some information they could use to learn more and get in touch with you or another Christian. In countries where this is illegal, you will have to be cautious and discreet. Remember, your character and attitude are more important than your words (1 Thess. 5:16-22)!

- Divide your neighborhood, section by section, until the whole city is prayed for (within reason—if your church is in LA, not realistic). Then, just pray in authority for your city. Pray as you walk, pray at home, pray at your church.
- Then, in teams of two, go to each house, knock on the door, and ask how you can pray for them. Give none of your church propaganda (unless they ask for it) or even an invitation to church; just ask their prayer needs, and then go back to the church and pray for them. If there is a request you can fill, then fill it! You may even get a bulletin board for your church entrance and place all the prayer requests on them so the members have a chance to fill them. Have the cards number coded, so they remain anonymous to every one except the director and the people in the loop.
- Pray where the people are. Public school teachers, you can come to your class early, sit in your student's seats, and pray for each of them, so each student gets prayed for at least once a week. Pastors and church leaders should do this for those who just attend the worship services as well as for those in the Sunday school classes. This also works for your work and your family; just make sure you do not intrude or violate their privacy!

Step V: Church Planting! (Isaiah 60:21)

If you already have a church, then funnel the people into it. Make sure it is a church that teaches the gospel with truth, clarity, compassion, conviction, and with passion. If no church is available, or if one is needed, then, plant one (Acts 2:47; 5:14; 20:28; Eph. 5:22)!

- Follow the Matthew 10 principle to plant a church. Spend a month in the village/town just praying before engaging in witnessing, unless God opens up clear opportunities.
- Provide for the people who come to the Lord discipleship training, encouragement, and start a Bible study that also has worship and prayer.
- Use the Bible study to plant your church; if your church fails, do not be dismayed or give up! Do not neglect the people; feed them into your and/or another church. God's timing may not be right, and most church plants fail! When you are ready and called, try again.
- When you share, do it with care! It starts with prayer; then we care, then we share, and then, we continue to pray! After that, we disciple and plant the church. If you leave out any of the above, you are not planting; you will be as 1 Corinthians 13:1 puts it, *a noise!*
 1. Have assigned people to pray for each church planter, pastor, and missionary of the church on a constant basis. Do this for both individual prayer warriors and, collectively, for a prayer group.
 2. Once the Matthew 10 principle is finished (it may take months, and can be revisited at any point or be a continuing ministry), visit each member and potential member of the church in prayer teams; pray for them and with them at least every six months. Assign people to keep them in prayer, daily!
 3. Have "Concerts of Prayer," on a monthly basis and, eventually, on a weekly basis. That is, have a prayer service with directed prayer and silent prayer. Pray for revival, for individuals, for government, for...
 4. Have 24 hour prayer vigils on a regular basis, where two or more people are at the church, potentially praying all the time in short sessions so they do not burn out.
 5. Fasting is for today! It is not a tool to force God to comply, but for us to comply with His will.
 6. Have a trained team of people to pray for people after each Bible study and church service. That way, a sufficient number of people are there partaking so no one is being rushed.
 7. This may sound on the edge, but it is not, and is totally Biblical. Have a trained team of people to engage in spiritual warfare. Simply put—pray against the strongholds. Keep it simple, and focused upon Christ and the work of the Spirit.

8. Have a team of prayer warriors to pray for government offices. Invite city and government officials over for social events in the church, and see if you can pray for them in person. Be cautious, tactful, and never force yourself on others. See if you can make appointments with them at their offices, and ask their permission to keep them in prayer. Pray for them on the spot if they desire. You will be surprised at the response; most elected officials will not turn you down. If they do, then do as Matthew 10 tells us. If you are in a country where Christianity is outlawed, this approach may put you in danger, so it may be best just to pray at home.

Practical Strategies for Praying for Evangelism

Saturation Prayer

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: `Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation (Luke 11:1-4, NIV).

This passage is not a prayer, but rather a model for us to follow of how to pray. The closer we follow this passage, the closer we come to our Lord. The closer we come to attaining the fullness of our spiritual potential, the better we pray. As members of the body of Christ, it is our responsibility to be always teaching one another how to pray; the best teacher is the one who models it in his or her life. We are to model this in all of our activities and pursuits in the church! We are to be specific, simple, and follow the above aspects, so that our prayers are relevant and not too general or crude. We must be honest and open with our Lord and our will is opened because of what He has done for us, who He is, what we wish to do, and who we are to Him; then, we can share our burdens and intimacy.

Then, before each activity, meeting, or event at your church or potential church, pray! Prayer is the platform that plans begin on, end on, and rest on. There should never be anything that goes on at a church that does not have prayer at its central core! Remember confidentiality! Prayer requests are not ammunition for gossip! If your church is not a church of prayer, your church is not in God's will, nor is it focused on Christ! Your church is a mere club for the prideful (Hab. 2:5, 9; Rom. 16:17; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

1. Begin each meeting in prayer, and spend at least four-fifths to one-third or more of that meeting in prayer! You say you do not have the time? Well, most meetings are taken up by poor preparation, not following the agenda, and trivial discussions that go in circles. Have the agenda given out a day before

and require all to read it before the meeting. Then, by putting the focus on prayer, meetings actually go faster because people are in one mind and direction! (Well, mostly.)

2. Spend significant time in prayer between meeting sessions about the decisions that need to be made. Do not just fret over them. This will move the focus away from our perceived agenda and into His agenda. We then can surrender selfish ambitions to what is best for His church.
3. Have a specific core of people pray before each worship service and event at the church. So, if the Junior High group is having a "lock in," have a small group come before it starts and just pray. Before the event, for safety, get specific requests from the leaders of the event. Have teams pray before and during ministry programs, such as ones for children and youth. While the youth meeting is going on, have a prayer team in another room praying. Do this for all ministries and activities of the church.
4. Sunday service prayer group is a small group of people who are there early to pray (the longer the better), and pray in authority for satanic removal. This type of prayer is in the authority and the name of Christ. The group can literally go through the church and cast away demons and any evil curses, incantations, hexes, spells, etc. One would be surprised at the number of satanic and witch groups in our towns and cities, trying with all their little hearts to distort and destroy you in the name of satan!
5. Continue to have prayer walks through your neighborhood.

Prayer is the essential key to evangelism; if you are not praying, you are not evangelizing or being used by God very much!

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Section VIII: Evangelism Insights and Encouragements

Proverbs 12:25; Mark 4; 16:15; Acts 1:8; Revelation 14:6; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 4:1-6; Ephesians 4:12; 1 Peter 3:15

This article is a collection of insights I have learned and collected from over 20 years of evangelism in church and Para church ministry. I hope you can find these insights useful to encourage you to serve Him more powerfully and effectively! We all need encouragement. Billy Graham told me a few years ago that he needs it, and he said I need it, and I believe you may need it, too. So, here are some encouragements for you!

Witnessing can be scary. Many Christians will cower away from their call, seeking other things to fulfill the void of that unused call. It is important to seek our Lord's precepts on who we are in Him, how He can use us, and how He is our love and empowerment for living and for sharing. If not, those distractions we pack into our lives to hide His call will become our god and lord over us, preventing us from taking advantage of the precious opportunities He has for us. These distractions can also prevent our growth and faith development. In the faith, we are called to walk in Him. We are not forced to proclaim Him; rather, we are encouraged to live a life of distinction and of service. We have a choice to either impact others for the Lord or cower from our call and live a self-fulfilled life. Saved? Perhaps; but, as the book of James tells us, for what good would it be? We can choose to walk away from, walk around, or walk to the person in need. We can embrace His call to share His love, or we can fill that call with trivial, meaningless, expectations that block our hope in Him. We need to realize the importance and relevance of His call to proclaim His name. When we do so, we are encouraged to stretch out and share that love we received from Christ! What is stopping us? Well, most Christians just do not know how, and/or they are fearful.

It has been my experience and observation that people who are good witnesses are confident in their faith. They know they have the Good News! They know Jesus, not just as a Savior, but as LORD (Luke 6:46)! He is all things to them. Is He Lord of your life, too? This realization impacts and fuels them to proclaim Jesus to others. Because they know His power and impact, they show it to others. I know that in my life, my effectiveness is directly correlated to my walk and my prayer life. How much I trust and obey becomes the power that helps sway. We need to know that telling someone about Christ is not like selling toasters; it is telling others the promise of life everlasting. This is the real and imperative stuff of the Christian life. If He is your Lord and Love, and the most important entity in your life, are you showing it to others? If you get a new car, do you not show it off to your friends? Is not Christ so much more powerful and valuable than the greatest car you could ever wish for? Then, what is stopping your life from being His showroom (Mark 16:15)?

Points on Being Effective in the Faith and As a Witness:

One of the main factors to our effectiveness is the need to be excited about our faith! We need to see the Christian life as a wondrous adventure; we need to see the positive and let that positive shine through in our attitude and approach. If you are not a person who is excited about your faith (and I do not mean overly emotional), how can you be contagious with the faith? Think this through! People respond to the temperament and attitude of others; how is yours? Most people come to the faith through people who are, themselves, new to the faith! Why? Because, they are excited! Even though they may be ignorant of theology and procedures on how to lead a person to Christ, their enthusiasm becomes contagious. Their lives have been transformed; they know this, and it shows to others! How does your enthusiasm show (Mark 12: 29-31; 1 Pet. 1:3-9)?

- Be a person who is grounded in God's Word and who encourages others to do so, too. It is those who are growing in maturity and are excited whom God uses the most. Do you want to be used? Then, be obedient and allow Him to grow you (2 Peter 1:5-7; Heb. 6:1-12)!
- Over the years, some misguided Christians have pronounced that evangelizing is not the role of the church or the Christian. It is purely the work of the Spirit. Thus, we do not have to witness. This is true and, yet, it is very not true. Yes, we do not have to witness. Even though Jesus used an imperative in the Greek tense as a command to do so, it does not affect our salvation. And, yes, salvation is the work of our Lord Jesus Christ through the role of the Spirit; however, we are still called to proclaim Him powerfully and boldly, but with care and love. These misguided people are not stopped because of theology; it is their refusal to obey. So, they rationalize their faulty views (Matt. 28:29; Acts 2:38; 8:4; 13:15; 18:4, 11; 2 Cor. 5:16-21)!
- We are partners with God in evangelism; He saves, and uses us as the means. Remember, He is the witness! We cannot convert anyone; however, He may use us to convict and to be an example. We are only able to witness by His power working in and through us (Matt. 11:28; 2 Cor. 3:4-6; Eph. 3:20-21; Phil. 2:13; Rev. 22:17)!
- Your witness is more rooted in your attitude than in your words (Acts 8:4-8)!
- Your passion and conviction will show through to others. If you are not passionate for our Lord, get right with Him before you tell others about Him. The key is to realize what Christ has done for you, and share it with excitement (2 Cor. 1:3-7)!

- Joy is indispensable for sharing love! It is not just what you know; it is Who you know. He is Christ. Your love of Jesus is the picture people need to see so they can better see Him (Josh. 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 1:24)!
- Being judgmental or hypercritical is the worst thing a Christian could ever do. It is so repulsing to non Christians, and is the direct opposite of our call! This will have far more negative influence on a non-Christian than the greatest evangelism plan with the greatest evangelists who ever lived (Matt. 7:1-5; Rom. 2:1-4; 14:1-15; James 4:11-12)!
- The Gospel is the power! Our main encouragement is that He is here with us. We are not doing this alone; we have the God and Creator of the universe at hand! What more could we need (Heb. 4:16; 2 Pet. 1:10-11)?
- A lot of Christian leaders are obsessed with the size of their ministry and the numbers of souls saved. This is sad, because God's call is the size of our heart and our obedience—not the numbers (John 14:15; Heb. 10:8-10)!
- Your self image is also a major factor. For some, this instigates fear and trepidation in sharing the word of Christ with others. Your self image is who you are in Christ, not how people respond to or treat you (John 3:30; 2 Cor. 2:9-10)!
- Relationships are the ideal way to make Christ known to others. You are far more effective if you build a sincere relationship with others before you preach to them. That way, you get to know them and pray for them; they get to know you, and realize that you care. You then will have more opportunities for listening and sharing (Rom. 16:3).
- When I went through the training at the *Billy Graham School of Evangelism* and the "Crusade Training," they made the point that over 90% of the people who come to a Crusade are brought there by others, such as friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, etc (Col. 3:12-17).
- The apostle, Andrew, was the first Christian evangelist; he is also a great example of one having faith, then sharing that faith with others (John 1:39-45)!
- If you are in a leadership position, it is essential that you do as you teach! That is, you cannot expect others to do something that you are not willing to do. To be encouraging to others, you need to set an example; be constant, and be encouraging (1 Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; Heb 13:7)!
- A good witness realizes not only the love they have received from Christ, but also the need to share with others care and prayer before they share their witness (John 21:16; Phil. 4:6)!

- It is essential that your church have a good vision and purpose. If you do not know where you are going in life and in ministry, you will not be able to lead others in a good way. (Prov. 29:18).
- The Church is called to teach and nurture trust, obedience, and prayer in her members, then invite and share this with others around them. And, when people become Christians, they are to continue equipping, training, and caring for others so they, too, can be deployed and carry on their faith to others, and so forth. If the church does not train, they cannot deploy, and they will not be honoring God favorably (Hab. 2:2; Rom. 10:13; 1 Thess. 2:7)!
- It is also essential for an effective, witnessing church to be people-centered and not just program-centered. Programs are to help train and develop relationships, not become a substitute for them (1 Cor. 3:5-11; 11:1)!
- Try to be as clear as possible in what you say and how you say it. Why? Because, we represent Him—not just our church and not just ourselves (Prov. 12:12; 2 Cor, 5:20; Col. 4:5-6)!
- You need to see the plight of others; try to see how their life is from their perspective. Have compassion! Listen! And, have a heart for the lost! If you are not hurt and sorrowful for those who are not saved, your heart needs a check up! We have to see the lost, as best we can, the way God sees them—with compassion, patience, and understanding (Matt. 28:19).
- Jesus is with you! We are empowered by Christ for whatever endeavor He gives us; whether we dig a ditch or witness to a stranger, He is there. We need to see Christ as the Equipper, so our focus is on Him and not on how people respond to us or on our circumstances (Matt. 28:20)!
- Your successes and failures mostly reside in how you live and model the faith. Are you authentic and real, living and caring? If not, watch out, as others will find you out. Authentic living is your witness; allowing Christ to live and work in you will be the real show that others see. Being a person who allows the Spirit to grow and form your fruit will make all of the difference in your efforts and willingness. This Fruit can be faked for a while, and we can fabricate it; but, soon the farce will be found out. Your authenticity is the key to being able to touch others for the Lord. To touch others, we, too, must have been touched; our fruit is the proof text of our authenticity and touch! (Gal. 5:18-22)!
- Christ's love and grace are realities in history and in life. They are not just ideas; they are events. He will empower you with the fire of the Spirit (Luke 3:15; Rom. 1:16)!

- We need to be able to see the reality of sin and hell. It is not that others *might* go to hell without Christ; they *will* go to hell! People are in sin and they are going into eternity forever separated from God—separated in the depravity of darkness. You just may be the only person who can reach them, or to whom they will respond. Yes, God is sovereign, and He will not send anyone to hell who willfully does not want to go there, but we also need to see our responsibility to be the ones He uses to reach others (1 Cor. 9:22; Heb. 12:1-2)!
- Training is essential for effective witnessing! Do not expect people to naturally evangelize. Some may do so; however, the vast majority does not know how, and is fearful. Training and encouragement reduces fear and motivates your people (1 Cor. 3:6)!
- For people to come to your ministry or church, you have to be welcoming to them. Watch your attitudes and how you come across to others! If you are not sincerely inviting and welcoming people into your midst, then you are repelling people away. There is no in-between ground. You are the front door of your church, and you are also the back door! Will you welcome people in, or just show them the back door with your attitude or carelessness (Rev. 3:20)?
- What are the main obstacles to evangelism? Fear and busyness! Being too busy and never budgeting your time wisely will cut you off from God's most precious opportunities—even if all those things are good! Fear is also a big factor, but remember what casts out fear; **love** (Duet. 5:14-15; John 11:9; 1 John 4:18)!
- Being patient, honest, hospitable, friendly, gentle, kind, and respectful of others is not only essential to being a good witness—we are called upon to do so when we witness (Mark 12:28-31).
- Do not force people! It amazes me how many misguided Christians share the “love of the Lord” out of hostility and not out of love, or use deception and scare tactics, then wonder why they have no results. Furthermore, they think they are right in doing so. We must not be the Christian fool; rather, the Christian witness of love and respect (2 Cor. 4:1-6; Phil. 1:3-6)!
- Being willing to listen and being vulnerable and open will be very attractive to others. But, be aware! You will be hurt by others, both intentionally and unintentionally. So, be susceptible to others; but, at the same time, guard your heart. Be both open and cautious. Be open to others with a good attitude, sharing in love; know that they can hurt you, but still be open. How do you do this? By keeping your focus on Him and not on how people respond to you (Prov. 4:23; Mark 7:21; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; James 1:19-25).

- Never rush, coerce, manipulate, or lie to people. It is never acceptable to lie about a God of Truth! Consider how you would have wanted to be treated. Remember, people will be friendly with us when we are friendly with them (1 Pet. 3:15)!
- Most people will reject your advances even though yours is the truth and theirs is a lie. We cannot force people; we can only influence them for Christ. If they want to remain in their sin, there is nothing we can do except pray. It is the Spirit, and only the Spirit, who can interdict upon them. And, be patient; the Spirit may still use you down the road (Eph. 5:15-18).
- It is OK to fail! It is *not* OK not to share just because you are afraid to fail. There were numerous occasions when Paul and the apostles did not succeed. Missionaries in tough countries will spend their entire careers in faithful service and only lead a handful of people to Christ. God is in charge; He knows what He is doing; be confident in Him. Witnessing is not about numbers, it is about obedience (Acts 19:23-41; 22:17)!
- We cannot fix people; only the Holy Spirit can do that. He will use us, and give us insights and resources, but the prime issue is the matter of their heart and will conforming to His (Jude 1:22-23).
- Sometimes, experiences of life and disappointments in other Christians will leave a person cold and turned off. Do not be offended, even though they may take it out on you. It is all about Christ, not our feelings! Be patient, be affirming, and be constant in your character. Never give up praying for them (Matt. 5:11-12; Phil. 1:27-30)!
- We need to believe in people, even when they let us down—because everyone will. Only God will not! Thus, have patience and consistency! Sometimes, it can take years to lead a person to the Lord. If you are in haste, you will waste your connection and opportunity, and God cannot use you until perhaps sometime in the future (Ezek. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- Do I have to leave my job to be effective for Christ? Usually not. God normally uses you best where you are in life with people in your age and gender, people in your line of work, people in your social economic class, and people of your culture and language. And, of course, He can use you cross-culturally and cross-class, too! But, your best witness is to the people around you whom you know and who know you (Acts 8:26-40).
- *Got testimony?* We all do, but can you share it in a few minutes? Write out your testimony as a story! Keep it short, simple, and true. People love stories; allow your life to touch others through your personal story. How has God helped you? How has your life changed for the better? How can you tell this to others (Acts 5:21)?

- When you witness, be relaxed and caring. Do not be uptight or stern. Humor that is not condescending is very helpful as is your good attitude and smile (Matt. 5:16)!
- Do not know what to say or where to begin? Just share the Word of God, then, what He has done for you (Eph. 2:8-9)!
- The better you get at it, the more the *evil one* will come against you! Do not fear; Christ is with you. But, you still have to prepare yourself (Eph. 6:10-20; 8:4)!
- We have to realize the fact and veracity of Spiritual warfare! Satan is scheming, as we speak, to thwart your efforts; however, always remember, “He that is in you is greater than He that is in the world (2 Cor. 2:9-10; 1 John 4:4-6)!”
- Your witness is not dependent on your answers; it is dependent on your character and commitment. Learn all you can; but, if you cannot answer a question—that is OK! Just say, *I will check on that and get back to you*. Ask someone else, such as a pastor, or, do a little research, and then get back to them with the answer (1 Cor. 1:10).
- Evangelism, no matter how much you fail or how successful you are, is all about glorifying our Lord. It is not about who gets to lead more people to Christ. Numbers are great, but God is more interested in your faith and your obedience (2 John 1:4-6)!
- The more organized you are in your evangelism campaigns, the more successful you will be (Duet. 31:12)! Who are the prospects? Who will witness to them? How will you do it? What are the people’s needs? How can you meet those needs, such as digging a well or building a youth center? How will you follow up and disciple them? Have a map of your city and target area. Divide it among people, with a supervisor for each region. Have committed prayer warriors for each region and mark your progress (Luke 10:1).
- For American and Western Churches, clear, open, and effective parking is essential. People love their cars; if you do not have room for their cars, you do not have room for them!
- Having a “follow up” program to disciple people is essential. Without it, all of your witnessing efforts may be in vain! Most people who accept Jesus as Savior go back to their normal lives after a few weeks! The main reason is that they did not fit in! The church did not welcome them, did not treat them

well, or did not mentor, place, encourage them (John 8:31-32; Acts 6:7; 11:25-26)!

What is the key to remembering all of this? It is not just about believing and knowing; it is about doing! We may forget points, but if we never forget to be faithful in Him, we will always be used by Him! Being faithful in prayer is the essential mechanism to reaching others for the faith. Be faithful in your personal spiritual growth. The other key is not to isolate yourselves in the Christian subculture; get out and get involved, and remember to love and care before you share. Remember, the Christian life is not about you; it is about glorifying Christ. So, is He Lord of your life? Are you following Him? If not, what is in the way (Mark 8:34; 2 Cor. 2:14; 1 John 4:8)?

Do you realize there has never been a time in Church history where we have more books and resources for training, evangelism, and discipleship? Yet, it seems the Church is doing less training, evangelism, and discipleship than ever before!

Checkout our Website www.intothyword.org for new and updated information on witnessing and evangelism on our new Evangelism Channel being launched in the Summer of 2004!

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