

GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Lesson TWELVE EVANGELISM — COMMISSIONED BY GOD

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I. INTRODUCTION

It was God's plan from the beginning to provide salvation for all men through Jesus Christ. While under the old covenant, Joel prophesied: "*Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Joel 2:32 Amplified). Peter explains the new covenant revelation of Jesus as the promised Messiah: "*There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). Salvation comes by believing in Jesus—that as the Son of God, Jesus came from heaven to live as a man, to die for the sin of the entire world (past, present, and future), to be raised by the Father, victorious over sin, hell, and death for all men who believe.

"How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!' " (Romans 10:14,15).

God chose *evangelism* as the method whereby He would send the good news of reconciliation: "*That God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them*" (II Corinthians 5:19). Paul explains that the "ministers" of reconciliation are all those who have been reconciled (II Corinthians 5:18). In other words, every born again Christian has the ministry of reconciliation. Evangelism is the Church (a congregation of local believers) reaching out to the world with God's message—you are reconciled to God in Jesus.

Paul goes a step further to say: "*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we **beg** you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God*" (II Corinthians 5:20). God appoints every believer to be His ambassador — His personal, officially authorized representative to the unbeliever.

And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered.

Joel 2:32

"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:12

How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!"

Romans 10:14,15

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

II Corinthians 5:19

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

II Corinthians 5:18

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

II Corinthians 5:20

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And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Matthew 28:18,19

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

Mark 16:15

"That repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Luke 24:47

Jesus therefore said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

John 20:21

"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Acts 1:8

Ambassadorship is the highest, most dignified and respected rank in foreign service. An ambassador speaks with the same authority and finality as the head of his government would, if present. His words are backed by all the power that his nation wields. His commitment is to faithfully and accurately convey the message of the one he represents. As ambassadors for Christ, we officially represent the kingdom of God in this world. As His messengers, we have the power of God Himself backing us. We must be faithful to deliver His message with the same fervor and accuracy, as "*though God were entreating through us.*"

Evangelism has been misunderstood by the Church for centuries. Confusion and ignorance in this area have kept the people of God ineffective and frustrated. As a result, most of today's world has not been reached with the gospel. But God sent His final revelation when Jesus came. There won't be any other answer for the world but Jesus, and there won't be any other *messengers* of reconciliation but the *Church*. We are the missionaries for today's world. If the Church doesn't turn the world right side up with the message of the gospel, no one will.

II. THE GREAT COMMISSION

In His last conversations with the disciples, just prior to His ascension to the Father, Jesus outlined the divine plan for world evangelism—the Great Commission: "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations*" (Matthew 28:18,19). "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation*" (Mark 16:15). "*Proclaim forgiveness of sins to all the nations in My Name*" (Luke 24:47). "*As the Father has sent Me, I also send you*" (John 20:21).

Jesus directly commissioned His followers (the Church): 1) to *go* to those without Him, 2) to *preach* the gospel to them, and 3) to *disciple* them. He commanded them to continue His ministry under the authority of His Name, and promised them the power to do so (Acts 1:8). Every individual born into the family of God automatically receives the Lord's Commission. If you're no longer part of the problem (the kingdom of darkness), you're part of the answer (the kingdom of light).

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The Early Church accepted the call, and like Paul, they became witnesses of all they had seen and heard to the Jewish and Gentile worlds—*“To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God”* (Acts 26:18). They were consumed with His Commission; they were bold, courageous men of action, involved with life and people. They were imitators of Jesus, who sought out the lost and brought them to salvation (Luke 19:10).

In contrast to the first century believers, most of today's Christians are *spectators*. They are the silent sitters and watchers who expect the trained professionals to do the work of the ministry. They visualize the clergy as God's paid representatives, qualified to preach and make disciples by their years of schooling and varied degrees. They depend on their denomination to evangelize the world. When their lives are touched by the needs of others, they pray for God to minister to those needs, without offering their assistance. Spectator Christianity always looks to someone else to take the action as well as the responsibility—the pastor, the committee, the program, the denomination, God.

Christianity must be redefined if the Church ever hopes to see the world evangelized. The layman must realize he is called to go into his sphere of influence—into the world of business, industry, government, education, law, art—to share the gospel and bring people to Jesus. He must begin to see himself as God's representative, a witness and servant of the Lord Jesus, a minister of reconciliation, an ambassador with an urgent message (II Corinthians 5:17-20). Believers must get involved as active participants in the Great Commission — caring about men and women in need of Jesus.

The danger for each of us lies in the apathy that comfort and convenience can easily create. Christianity must never become a passive religion of sermons, seminars, books, and cassette tapes. The Word of God must never be studied merely for the sake of learning alone; truth is gained to be expressed in our living and loving.

“To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”
Acts 26:18

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.
II Corinthians 5:17-20

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A. CHRIST IN YOU

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.
I Corinthians 6:19,20

No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.
Ephesians 5:29,30

The mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
Colossians 1:26,27

"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."
John 15:19

"As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."
John 17:18

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."
Matthew 5:14-16

For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
II Corinthians 4:6

The reason the gospel has not been preached to all creation is that individual Christians have misunderstood what the Church is. The Church is not *merely* a building or cathedral, or even, more accurately, a denomination, congregation, or collective body of believers. The Church is YOU! Each individual believer represents God on this earth; we are all temples of God the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19,20). We are members of His Body (Ephesians 5:29,30), but each of us is personally responsible to allow Jesus to minister through us as individuals. *Your* body, not the corporate, universal Body of believers, is the flesh and blood means that Jesus will use to minister in your community. **Jesus is in you!**

"The mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26,27).

YOU are His hands, His feet, His mouth in this world. He reaches out to the lonely and fearful through people. Jesus will not come bodily into your neighborhood and preach the gospel for you; He is depending on you to allow Him to do it *through* you. You are Jesus Christ to many people. You may be the only Christian some of those people know; what you do and say may be the only contact they have with Jesus. God chose us out of the world to send us right back into it (John 15:19;17:18), equipped with divine power to effect change in people's lives.

1. Light of the world

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16 NIV).

God did not designate argument or debate as the means of dispelling darkness. Light overcomes darkness simply by shining. Unbelievers are not argued into the kingdom of light by our brilliant minds; they are drawn when they see the brilliance of Jesus in our hearts (II Corinthians 4:6). We are responsible to get close enough for them to see Him and to

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hear our message about Him: Jesus Christ is Lord (II Corinthians 4:5).

Jesus instructs us not to hide our light, but rather He exhorts us to display it, so the Father can be glorified. Paul reiterated this teaching to the Philippians: in a crooked and perverse world, we are to shine as lights—holding forth the Word of life (Philippians 2:15,16 KJV). Many Christians don't want to get near anything crooked or perverse, for fear of contamination! We are not called to isolation from the immoral people of this world (I Corinthians 5:9-11); we are called to go to them with the "*light of men*" (John 1:4).

A 50-watt bulb on a wall with 1,000 other bulbs appears insignificant, and if removed, would not apparently diminish the brilliance of the whole. And yet the same 50-watt bulb would shine gloriously in pitch-black darkness. No matter how young in the Lord you are, or whether you have failed in the past, **if you have been born again, you have been born to shine.**

2. Salt of the earth

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing any more, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men" (Matthew 5:13).

Through our lives, Jesus can make men and women *thirsty* for Him, the living "*water of life*" (Revelation 21:6). But salt trapped inside the shaker is ineffective, however great its potential may be. We must go out into the harvest fields with the message of Jesus to be of any benefit to people. But we must also offer a distinctly "salty" difference: as His witnesses, our lives must be characterized by personal holiness and purity. Although He sends us out *into* the world, we are not *of* the world.

3. Fishers of men

"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). The life of a fisherman is characterized by the very positive qualities of anticipation, faith and patience, hope, and basic skill. And very simply, every fisherman must go where the fish are and throw out some bait. A fisher of men must go where men are and share the gospel.

For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

II Corinthians 4:5

Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life."
Philippians 2:15,16

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one.

I Corinthians 5:9-11

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:4

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing any more, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men."

Matthew 5:13

And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost."

Revelation 21:6

And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 4:19

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The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach.

Acts 1:1

And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also."

Acts 17:6

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 5:42

How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:20,21

A good fisherman doesn't leap into the lake, chase the fish around, and try to grab them so he can force the bait into their mouths. He tosses out something attractive that will lure a fish and eventually hook it. We must find out what interests our non-Christian friends and concentrate on that. A simple, natural comment or question can often open the door for a witness.¹

B. NEW TESTAMENT EVANGELISM

In the New Testament, there were two types of evangelism practiced: mass evangelism and personal evangelism (Acts 20:20,21). Both Jesus and His disciples ministered before crowds as well as on a one-to-one basis. What "*Jesus began to do and teach*" (Acts 1:1), He continued through the Church — with the same methods and the same results.

One of the most amazing and significant facts of history is that within five centuries of its birth Christianity won the professed allegiance of the overwhelming majority of the population of the Roman empire and even the support of the Roman state. Beginning as a seemingly obscure sect of Judaism, one of the scores, even hundreds of religions and religious groups which were competing within that realm, revering as its central figure one who had been put to death by the machinery of Rome, and in spite of having been long proscribed by that government and eventually having the full weight of the state thrown against it, Christianity proved so far the victor that the Empire sought alliance with it and to be a Roman citizen became almost identical with being a Christian.²

Jesus spent most of His time discipling a handful of plain spoken, ordinary men, who in turn disciplined other men, who also went out and made disciples, and soon they were known as "*these that have turned the world upside down*" (Acts 17:6 KJV). We find that although the Early Church occasionally conducted mass meetings, the believers were *daily* witnessing and winning men to Jesus (Acts 5:42; 20:20,21).

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1. Jesus

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (I Timothy 1:15). The reason the Son of God came into the world was *people*. He laid aside the privileges of His divinity and took on flesh and blood *to care for people* — to seek them out and win their souls to God (Luke 19:10). Jesus went to their homes, and to wherever they congregated — the market place, street corners, seashore, and temple. He mixed with them, preached to them, and convinced them of their need for God. When the **multitudes** would follow Him, Jesus would take the opportunity to preach and minister to their needs, whether with healing or multiplying loaves and fish to miraculously feed them (Luke 9:11-17).

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

I Timothy 1:15

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Luke 19:10

But the multitudes were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing. And the day began to decline, and the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place." But He said to them, "You give them something to eat!" And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people."

(For there were about five thousand men.) And He said to His disciples, "Have them recline to eat in groups of about fifty each." And they did so, and had them all recline. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the multitude. And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full.

Luke 9:11-17

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And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

Luke 19:7

"And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.' "

Luke 14:23

And at this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together).

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:41

But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

Acts 4:4

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.

Acts 4:32 KJV

And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

Acts 4:33

And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number.

Acts 5:14

"We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

Acts 5:28

(con't.)

He sought out **individuals**, like Zacchaeus, the wealthy, highly unpopular tax-collector, whose heart was hungry for God. When He went to his house, the people grumbled, "*He has gone to be the guest of a sinner*" (Luke 19:7). Among the many religious taboos Jesus broke was associating with the "wrong" people. We must be ruled by this same compassion for the lost — to search out the unlovely and the unacceptable in our society, "*and compel them to come in, that (God's) house may be filled*" (Luke 14:23).

2. Early Church

First century church growth quickly reached astonishing proportions. On the day of Pentecost, there were 120 believers (Acts 1:15), with 3,000 responding that same day to Peter's sermon (Acts 2:41). 5,000 soon followed (Acts 4:4). By Acts 4:32, Luke was referring to "*the multitude of them that believed.*" The reason? "*With great power the apostles **continued to testify** to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was with them all*" (Acts 4:33 NIV).

In Acts 5:14, reference is again made to multitudes of men and women being "*constantly added to their number.*" In Acts 5:28, Peter and the apostles are brought before the Council and accused, "*You have **filled** Jerusalem with your teaching.*" Peter's response is, "*We are witnesses*" (Acts 5:32). The clue to the rapid multiplication of disciples in Jerusalem was personal evangelism: "*Every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ*" (Acts 5:42); "*The Word of God kept on spreading; and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem*" (Acts 6:7).

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The other cities in Asia Minor were evangelized in the same manner in **two years**, "so that **all** who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). That was possible only because of the active involvement of the *whole* Church in soulwinning.

C. CHURCH HISTORY

Theological controversy began to divide the Church as early as the second century. By the fifth century, Christians were headed into the Dark Ages, a result of compromise and genuine apostasy.

Martin Luther was one of the first churchmen to break through the spiritual darkness with revelations such as: "the just shall live by faith" and "the priesthood of the believer." The Protestant Reformation challenged religious hierarchy and put the layman back in touch with God's Word.

Christianity did not resume its world-wide spread until the sixteenth century, and in the next 250 years it saw unprecedented growth on every continent through the non-missionary extension of the Europeans and their influence.

Mass evangelism reappeared in the thirteen colonies during the Great Awakening, just prior to the American Revolution, through men like John Wesley. George Whitefield reportedly preached to 30,000 at one time on the Boston common — without a microphone.³ In the 1800's the "camp meeting" and "brush arbor" meetings were very popular. Hundreds and even thousands gathered for days to be exhorted in the Word. "Revival" and "evangelism" were viewed as the normal means for winning people to the Christian faith. Missionary societies began sending men and women to every continent in the world.

And yet, the practice of personal evangelism has not reappeared on a large scale. The one method that proved to be the most successful for reaching the lost in the New Testament has only been applied sporadically in modern times, such as during the years of dynamic personal evangelism by the Salvation Army in the last century, and most recently during the zeal of the "Jesus Movement" in the seventies. *Each one of us* has the responsibility to seek out the lost and share the love of Jesus with them.

"And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Acts 5:32

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 5:42

And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Acts 6:7

And this took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 19:10

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D. WHY NOT YOU?

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). *"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments"* (I John 2:3). Jesus commands us to preach the gospel and make disciples of men — to fulfill the Great Commission. This command requires each of us to make a decision: **we all must choose to obey or disobey**. We must either engage our wills to pursue souls for God's kingdom, or we must deal with our disobedience.

Most of today's Christians have a false concept of the Great Commission. Just the mention of those words triggers negative images in their minds — poverty, rejection, misery, loss, the snake pits of India. The devil does his utmost to conceal the facts: Jesus told us that the harvest is *ripe* (Matthew 9:37); souls are ready, interested, waiting. When we hear such lies as: "The faith life is too uncertain"; "The Bible is impractical and too demanding"; "Serving God is unprofitable, unpleasant, and impossible," we must recognize that the enemy of all righteousness is trying to keep us ineffective and our mouths shut.

What is our attitude toward the Great Commission? Are we frustrated and defeated by fear? Have we tried in the past to witness and given up out of discouragement or rejection? Do we feel like we don't know how and would do more harm than good? Do we think we don't have enough education? Do we care more about what people think of us? Or do we just not care? Are we procrastinating, or willfully disobeying? Did we know that there is a Great Commission? Are we selfish, treasuring our own comfort and desires, or are we self-seeking, pursuing affluence with no time for the work of the kingdom of God? Have the worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for pleasure choked the Word out of our lives?

Now is the time to examine our hearts and motives in the light of Christ's purpose for each of our lives.

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

John 14:15

And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

I John 2:3

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."

Matthew 9:37

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1. Fear

If we focus on fear and concentrate our energies and attention on worry, Satan will defeat us. When we listen to and put more trust in what the devil says than what God promises, fear is born in our hearts, and fear can then control us from *within*. Every believer can and must resist fearful thoughts, thoughts that come from *without* like flaming arrows. We have the spirit of power, love, and a sound mind *within us* (II Timothy 1:7). Fear is completely alien to everything the believer now is, being the complete opposite of faith.

Faith in Jesus and obedience in action will defeat fear every time. Conquer the unknown by learning how to do that thing which has seemed unconquerable. Concentrate on **love**: "*Perfect love (God's love) casts out fear*" (I John 4:18). If fear is in your heart and ruling your life, begin to drive it out with the Word of God. Search out, read and study, meditate and memorize those scriptures that promise the believer victory in the particular area of life that's been a problem for you. Replace fear with faith.

"No weapon that is formed against you (that includes fear!) shall prosper" (Isaiah 54:17).

"Greater is He (Jesus) Who is in you, than he (the devil) who is in the world" (I John 4:4).

"The righteous are bold (feel safe and secure) as a lion (The lion is king of beasts and frightened by no one)" (Proverbs 28:1).

"If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31).

"Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4).

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

II Timothy 1:7

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

I John 4:18

"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper."

Isaiah 54:17

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

I John 4:4

The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion.

Proverbs 28:1

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Romans 8:31

Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:4

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The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 5:5

But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men."

Acts 5:29

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:12

2. Indifference

Apathy is a condition of the flesh. The carnal man seeks to satisfy himself, and by remaining unconcerned and uninformed, he attempts to avoid the guilt that accompanies disobedience. But a desire to share Jesus with others can be brought to life in the believer's heart, and that desire to obey God can be stronger than the flesh.

We can ask God to quicken the love that He placed in our hearts when we were born again (Romans 5:5). When we see people serving the devil and destroying their lives with selfishness, lust, and pride, our hearts should be grieved, and we should be moved with compassion to reach out to them.

A good way to stir yourself up and shake off all complacency is to stand on a busy street corner and pass out tracts. Thrust yourself out of an isolated, cloistered existence where you avoid confrontation with unbelievers, and allow God to show you the hungry, desperate hearts of the lost. If you can't begin there, begin by leaving a tract on your table at a restaurant. Begin by sharing with a friend. But make yourself begin. The cure for listless, anemic Christianity is active involvement with Christ's Commission.

You can develop spiritual vigor by: 1) asking God to quicken the love He's placed in your heart, 2) resolving to obey His command (Acts 5:29), 3) allowing Him to change your defeated attitude to one of faith and confidence (Philippians 4:13), and 4) actively applying yourself to His grace — in the Word, prayer, confession, and praise.

3. Ignorance

We must dispel the ignorance that believes the man or woman with "everything" — money, success, good health, and a happy family — cannot be reached with the gospel. "Good" people, law-abiding, honest, moral, decent, "problem-free" friends, neighbors, and relatives will face eternal judgment without hope if they are without God (Ephesians 2:12).

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Read Luke 12:15-21.

Consider the parable of the wealthy man: He is successful, secure, with time to "eat, drink, and be merry" (v. 19). But God's evaluation looked past the superficial trappings to the man's heart (v. 20,21). More than anything else in the Western culture, materialism has alienated the affections of God's creation. The value of a man's life is most often measured by the "*abundance of his possessions*" (v. 15).

Read Revelation 20:11-15.

There are people we associate with every day who will be among the unbelieving dead at the great white throne judgment if we do not win them to the Lord. There are many whose names will not be written in the Lamb's Book of Life if we do not share the gospel with them. Let us stir ourselves to care more for our friends' souls than for our fear of embarrassment or rejection. Let us not be ignorant of *every* man's need for God.

Only God can reveal to a man his hopeless state. Only God can place the desire in a man's heart to call on Jesus to free him from sin's entrapment. Let us pray for the people with whom we are in contact that the Holy Spirit will convince them of sin, and then let us be alert to take every opportunity to tell them about Jesus.

III. THE SOULWINNER

God expects the Church (you and me) to develop a *world* vision and give our lives to it. We must look up, away from ourselves, to the ripe fields waiting to be harvested — next door, down the street, throughout *all the world*. As His laborers, we must offer our time, our finances, and our lives to His service. There is nothing more worthy of our best than the Great Commission. As spiritual beings, our lives will only be fulfilled and truly satisfied in spiritual pursuits. Many Christians who dearly love the Lord are searching for deeper truths, yearning for that place of contentment and peace in the Lord. They don't recognize that that place of peace and contentment comes in service — not another "deep" revelation.

And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." ' "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Luke 12:15-21

And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

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The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls.
Proverbs 11:30

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

II Peter 3:9

Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah 6:8

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

John 12:26

not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Romans 6:13

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

I Corinthians 10:31

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died.

II Corinthians 5:14

God calls each of us to be soulwinners. His assessment of the man who responds to the call is found in Proverbs: "*He that winneth souls is wise*" (Proverbs 11:30 KJV). Soulwinning has always been and always will be the wisest investment you can ever make, because it will reap eternal rewards. The only things we can ever take into eternity with us are people. People are what heaven is all about, and people are what we are to invest our energies and resources in.

"God is NOT willing that ANY perish, but that ALL come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall We send, who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I, Lord . . . send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8).

"If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him" (John 12:26).

A. OUR MOTIVATION TO WIN SOULS

Moody Bible Institute estimates that less than 5% of Christians have ever led a soul to Christ. Yet around 10% of the public in so-called Christian nations attends church at some time in their lives. That means God gets more cooperation from sinners than from Christians. ⁴

What will it take for *you* to step out of the crowd and cooperate with God? To become a doer as well as a hearer of God's Word will require a positive effort on your part to overcome whatever has defeated you in the past. Is it worth the effort? There are very valid scriptural reasons why *every* believer should be actively engaged in soulwinning. These reasons are our motivation to obey God and offer ourselves as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13).

1. Jesus

Our very first goal in life should be to honor and exalt the Lord Jesus in everything we do, first with the purity of our lives, and also by our obedience to the Great Commission (I Corinthians 10:31). "*For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died*" (II Corinthians 5:14). Our love and devotion for Jesus should

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compel us to carry out our responsibility to God. Unless love for Jesus motivates our witnessing, our labor arises from religious duty. Jesus asks us the same question He presented to Peter, "*Do you love Me more than these?*" (John 21:15).

If we will honor Jesus through obedience to His Commission, we will experience fulfillment and an enthusiasm for life. But we must begin now; now is the only acceptable day of salvation (II Corinthians 6:2). Now may be the last chance someone has to accept Jesus. Start sharing Him with others today.

2. Triumph in life

As children of God, we are born overcomers in this life (I John 4:4). We can be as confident as Paul that God guarantees our victory: Jesus Himself leads us in triumph (II Corinthians 2:14). Even when faced with adverse circumstances, we can overwhelmingly conquer through Jesus (Romans 8:37). Not one member of the family of God is without hope or power. God wills that each one of His children be a success in winning others to Him.

We are commissioned and sent to win (*succeed*), not to fail or suffer continuous frustration and rejection. When we team up with God to convince a lost man of the love of Jesus, we can expect results. Men and women world-wide want answers to the problems of life. You have the privilege of leading them to the One who can make them triumphant.

Don't accept defeat in any area of your life, especially in one so important as this. Conquer your enemy, overcome whatever silences you, and triumph in soulwinning.

3. Fulfill God's purpose in your life

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9).

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."

John 21:15

For He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you"; behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation."

II Corinthians 6:2

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

I John 4:4

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

II Corinthians 2:14

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

Romans 8:37

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

I Peter 2:9

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"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

"By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

John 15:5,8

"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."

John 15:11

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 3:36

"What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Luke 15:4-10

Each of us is called to proclaim His glory in our own unique and individual ways. In each of our hearts, God has placed a special desire to please and serve Him. It is God's particular plan for each believer to bear fruit that glorifies the Father and lasts forever (John 15:5,8). When we win souls, they inherit eternal life and the Father is glorified in the Son. Jesus said that His joy would be in us, and our joy would be made *full* (John 15:11). There is no more rewarding an experience in the Christian life than seeing others born again — as a result of *your* labors.

You are saved *out* of the world to enjoy fellowship with your Father. You are left *in* the world to lead others to Him. To experience fellowship with God and win others to Jesus is to fulfill God's purpose for *your* life.

4. The urgency

Nothing should deepen our devotion to Jesus or motivate us to witness as the realization that **Jesus is coming again soon** — very possibly in our lifetime. If we would live our lives in the light of the second coming, our focus and whole meaning in life would change drastically. The task of world evangelism would not be approached leisurely. There is no time to lose in reaching the lost; if they are not won into the family of God, they will face eternal torment without Christ (John 3:36).

Read Luke 15:4-10.

The shepherd has lost a sheep, the woman, a silver coin (one day's wages). Motivated by a sense of urgency, they both leave their routine activities and concentrate all their efforts on locating the one that is lost. They placed great value on the *one*, and when it is found, there is great rejoicing. Each individual soul on this earth, young or old, rich or poor, was valued so greatly by God that He sent Jesus to redeem them (John 3:16). Each one is worth the search and the effort, and when found, will draw the same enthusiastic response from the heavenly host (v. 10). There has never been a day when people are more receptive to the gospel. Jesus is sending each of us out to seek and save the lost (John 20:21), and we need to have a sense of urgency about taking the message to them (II Corinthians 6:1,2). Let us not regret, as did Jeremiah, missing one opportunity: "*Harvest is past, summer is ended, and we are not saved*" (Jeremiah 8:20).

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God charges each one of us to speak out against unrighteousness, to take His message of warning to all men. *"When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but **his blood I will require from your hand.** But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity; but **you have delivered your life**" (Ezekiel 33:8,9).*

Our responsibility is to share God's Word with the lost — to explain the danger of **delay** and the danger of **rejection**. *"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1). "Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2 NIV). "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).*

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."
John 3:16*

*Jesus therefore said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."
John 20:21*

*And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain — for He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you"; behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation."
II Corinthians 6:1,2*

*"Harvest is past, summer is ended, and we are not saved."
Jeremiah 8:20*

*"When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand. But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your life."
Ezekiel 33:8,9*

*Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.
Proverbs 27:1*

*For He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you"; behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation."
II Corinthians 6:2*

*And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
Revelation 20:15*

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B. OUR CONFIDENCE TO WIN SOULS

There is every reason to believe from God's Word that the Christian can and is expected to approach life with great assurance. Our confidence never lies in anything we had or were apart from God; it rests on the fact that God is at work in us, "*both to will and to work for His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13). Once we are born again, the resurrection power of God which brings the dead to life, begins to work inside us (Ephesians 1:18-20), enabling us to "*walk in newness of life*" (Romans 6:4). We receive a new spirit — of power, love, and discipline (II Timothy 1:7). We can be bold because of our new nature; we are fashioned in the image of Jesus and filled with His Holy Spirit. We can be daring and fearless because *He* is greater in us, than the devil is great in the world (I John 4:4).

Paul reminds us that our confidence is in God alone: "*My grace is sufficient for you, for (My) power is perfected in weakness. I am well content with weaknesses . . . for when I am weak, then I am strong*" (II Corinthians 12:9,10). We are weak and can do nothing apart from Jesus (John 15:5). And the Christian's glorious confidence is that **we have Jesus!**

It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 1:18-20

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:4

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

II Timothy 1:7

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

I John 4:4

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

II Corinthians 12:9,10

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If you are insecure in your faith, it may be a result of: lack of information, lack of fellowship with Jesus, lack of action (You must be a doer as well as a hearer for your faith to thrive — James 1:22-25). There is a remedy for each of these problems; it requires involvement, action, participation on *your* part. No one can do it for you, but YOU. Determine to seek out: 1) the Word of God, 2) Jesus, 3) the lost, and you will become a bold soulwinner.

1. The Holy Spirit

After delivering the Great Commission to the disciples, Jesus instructed them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father before going out (Acts 1:4,5,8). The Holy Spirit came to help the Church: to empower them to be effective witnesses and to lead them into all truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit infuses our life with His life, His mind, His strength and boldness. We can rely on Him when we're sharing the gospel — to know what to say and how to say it (Matthew 10:19,20). What could give us greater certainty than God Himself being inside of us to help us speak?

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."
John 15:5

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

James 1:22-25

And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Acts 1:4,5,8

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."

John 16:13

"But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."

Matthew 10:19,20

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Jesus has two powerful witnesses on the earth today — the Holy Spirit and the Church (John 15:26,27). When the Holy Spirit speaks the Word of God through the believer, He convinces the unbeliever of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). He supernaturally reveals the reality of the love and grace of God in the Lord Jesus. But we must remember, we also have a powerful witness; we possess the reality of transformed lives (I John 1:1-3).

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

John 15:26,27

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment.”

John 16:8

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life — and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us — what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

I John 1:1-3

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I Timothy 2:1-4

“And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.”

Ezekiel 22:30

2. Intercession

Jesus gave us the responsibility to pray for “*all men*,” because God “*desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:1-4). When praying for specific unbelievers, we should pray that the individuals will see their need, that they will recognize Jesus as the only one who can meet their need, and that they will decide to surrender their lives to the Lord on the basis of that understanding. We can “*stand in the gap*” for those who are uninterested and unable to seek God on their own (Ezekiel 22:30). We can *bind* the work of the enemy in their lives and *loose* the light of the gospel to shine in their minds (Matthew 16:19; II Corinthians 4:3,4). Prayer is the key to seeing laborers raised up and thrust out into the harvest (Matthew 9:37,38).

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Paul instructs us to *devote* ourselves to prayer. (To devote oneself to some activity requires setting oneself apart from other less important things to the purpose we value more highly.) Paul goes on to say: "*Praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ . . . in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak*" (Colossians 4:2-4). Spiritual indifference can be penetrated by asking God to open doors for the gospel. The Holy Spirit can make opportunities for each one of us to witness. And if Paul needs prayer in order to make the gospel clear to the unbeliever, how much more do each one of us need to pray for the whole Church. Our confidence is that we serve a God who answers prayer.

3. The Word/the gospel

"*You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God*" (I Peter 1:23). Because people are born again by the Word of God, our primary responsibility in witnessing is to sow the seed of God's Word. It is alive and powerful, able to expose the thoughts and intentions of the human heart (Hebrews 4:12). The gospel is "*the power of God for salvation to every one who believes*" (Romans 1:16). We are responsible to give voice to God's Word in clear, understandable terms. It is good for people to *see* our transformed lives, but faith to believe and receive Jesus comes from *hearing* the gospel (Romans 10:17).

"*And the Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will*" (II Timothy 2:24-26).

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 16:19

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

II Corinthians 4:3,4

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

Matthew 9:37,38

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

Colossians 4:2-4

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Romans 10:17

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Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

I Peter 3:15

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

II Timothy 4:2

And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them.

Mark 2:2

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

II Timothy 3:16,17

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

II Timothy 2:15

God expects us to learn answers to the questions unbelievers ask. We are instructed to teach and gently correct those who oppose the gospel; this requires **information**. Peter warns us, "*Always be ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence*" (I Peter 3:15). Paul tells us to be ready "*in season and out of season*" (II Timothy 4:2). Our answers are found in the same place Jesus found His answers — the scriptures (Mark 2:2; II Timothy 3:16,17). "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth*" (II Timothy 2:15).

We are not to *withdraw* and study the Word until we have memorized it cover-to-cover. We will never begin if we take such an approach. There is no excuse not to begin sharing what you have with others right now. But we should begin to aggressively pursue answers from God's Word to the questions which we will inevitably face from unbelievers.

"Don't get sidetracked by people's questions. Just preach the simple gospel." The tragic result of accepting such a view is that many thinking non-Christians conclude from our behavior that their honest questions have no answers. And we sometimes begin to wonder ourselves whether or not we have the truth: if we face the facts as they really are, would our faith hold water? ⁵

No brilliant answer from us could illuminate a man's mind apart from the Holy Spirit. But an intelligent answer to a valid question may be the very thing that opens a man's life to the gospel.

God's Word engraved on our hearts, understood in our minds, and acted out in our lives will make us effective and powerful witnesses to the grace and truth of God — Jesus Christ.

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C. OUR COMMUNICATION TO WIN SOULS

To harvest a crop, the following steps must be taken in the proper sequence: 1) prepare the soil, 2) plant the seed, 3) cultivate the crop, and 4) reap the harvest. We prepare the soil by *praying*. We plant the seed by *presenting the gospel*. We cultivate the crop by *continuing our communication*. We reap the harvest by *inviting* the individual to respond. Most of the process is spent in direct contact with the lost. Aside from the time we must spend in prayer and the study of God's Word, the major portion of our time will be spent actually talking to unbelievers.

It is essential that we know how to communicate our faith if we expect to win others to Christ. And it is possible to learn. Even though you may have made awkward attempts in the past, *you* can learn to relax and enjoy leading others to Jesus. If you can talk, you can be a soulwinner.

1. Begin

No amount of agreeing with it or talking about it can take the place of doing it. To do anything we must begin and the first step is frequently the hardest. If you see in the Bible that every Christian is meant to be a witness, and if you're born again, then you are responsible to act on that information regardless of what your emotions, reasoning, or any other excuse tells you. Sometimes the best means of beginning is to plunge in. Find an experienced believer and begin to pass out tracts with him. If anyone is interested in talking, you can watch your friend and learn by observation. Begin at the place where *you* can begin—talk to a friend, or a clerk at the grocery store, or hand a tract to the gas station attendant when you leave. But begin! And *make* yourself go a step farther today than you went yesterday.

Begin also to pray for the lost. Ask the Lord to send out laborers, and start by going yourself. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to share with your friends, and then get ready — He'll be opening doors that you won't want to miss.

Past failure is no excuse. God can redeem any situation. Launch out in love and faith, and make a fresh start where you are. God is greater than all our failures!

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2. Make contacts/take opportunities

The question to be addressed at this point is not *will* we witness, but *how* we will witness. First of all, you will have to **make contact with unbelievers**. Get to know your unsaved neighbors and coworkers; don't be a stranger to them. Be sure they know who you are, and that you care about them. If you haven't already, begin to pray for them every day, asking God to open their eyes and provide a means for you to share the gospel with them. People are hungry to be loved, but they are suspicious of ulterior motives. They don't want religion crammed down their throats, but they do respond to warm, sincere, and compassionate people. When they truly see a difference in your life, they'll be interested in you. Some will seek you out and ask for your advise. But many times, you will have to take the initiative to bring the conversation to Jesus.

As much as is possible, **prepare ahead of time**. Think of possible situations; consider what kind of "bait" you'll use, and how you'll answer the likely response. A vague reference to "religion" can usually open the conversation and lead to a series of questions: "Are you interested in spiritual things?" And regardless of the answer, you can follow with: "What do you think a real Christian is?" Due to the current media attention to born-again celebrities, your friend has heard the term on radio or television, or read it in the newspaper or in magazines. You could ask him: "What do you think it means to be born again?"

We must always **be alert for opportunities** to give our testimonies. When others confide in us about their anxieties, aspirations, loneliness, or disappointments, we can respond: "I used to feel like that until I had (or, "I *would* feel that way except for) an experience that completely changed my attitude toward life. Would you like me to tell you about it?" Because you've offered and not forced it upon him, he's able to decide if he's interested and really wants to listen. Most people appreciate that much thoughtfulness.

Your testimony is a powerful tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Leave out unnecessary details, be brief and to the point — tell how Jesus has changed your life and what He means to you now. It helps to sit down ahead of time, think it

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through, and write it out. And then when you share it, as much as is possible, relate your experience with God to the needs of the individual with whom you are speaking. If he's having a hard time with a particular problem, address that issue.

Prepare to **relate the gospel in everyday conversation** when questions or statements such as these arise: "Why are you so happy all the time?" "This world is going to self-destruct." "Why is there so much suffering in the world?" Take the time to think about such questions, and dig into the Bible for answers.

Give a person only as much as he can take at one time. Going too far can turn him off altogether. But when we're casual and relaxed, we usually maintain someone's interest much longer.

Be sure you **don't exhibit a condescending manner.** Arrogance and self-righteous, "holier-than-thou" attitudes are repulsive to everyone. Above all, **don't condemn** the unbeliever for smoking, drinking, doing drugs, or living with his girlfriend/her boyfriend. That gives the impression that if he cleaned up his life, then he could get saved. We need to project love and mercy.

You don't need to be a *close* friend to win someone to Christ. **Be especially on guard when ministering to people of the opposite sex.** Be careful not to share intimately with them, and never in a potentially compromising situation, such as alone together in your office after hours. We are not ignorant of the devil's devices. And with all your friends at work, make sure that *you* are influencing *them* for Jesus, being careful any worldly values and opinions are not influencing *you*.

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In your conversations about Jesus, **stay on track**. The main issue for discussion is Jesus, not religion, theology, philosophy, denominations, politics, or any other interesting side issue.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

I Corinthians 15:1-4

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

Bring the person to a point of confrontation with the reality of Jesus Christ. He must realize that he is responsible to decide — for or against Him. For those who lack the necessary information to make that decision, help them discover the facts. For those who know and understand, and yet have failed to act, pray. To push beyond a certain point for some people is to alienate them. Keep quiet and continue loving them and praying for them daily.

3. Understand the gospel

Many Christians do not understand the gospel well enough to be able to convey it with any clarity to an unbeliever. Some throw in a variety of true, but irrelevant facts that confuse the whole issue. Still others use such a “religious” vocabulary the message is lost to anyone other than

The gospel is Jesus — a person, not a philosophy or a way of life. The issue is not church membership or good works; the issue is the individual's relationship to Jesus. The gospel is repentance, faith, the death and resurrection of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

Make the gospel clear and present it within the context of real life. Aim it at a target — a need or concern. Have a basic presentation on which you can rely, and write it in the front of your Bible. One of the most popular is called the Romans Road; the individual is led to each of the following scriptures and then to a final prayer of commitment.

- 1) *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*
Romans 3:23
- 2) *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
Romans 6:23
- 3) *“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*
Romans 5:8

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- 4) *"Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."*
Romans 10:13
- 5) *"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."*
Romans 10:9,10

After you have gone through each of the scriptures, do not assume that the individual has understood what you have said (I Corinthians 2:14). Go through every point again and ask him questions that will allow him to vocalize what he believes. Personalize the questions, such as:

- 1) Do you believe you have sinned against God?
- 2) Do you believe that Jesus is able to give you eternal life if you accept Him as your Savior?
- 3) Do you believe that Jesus left heaven, died on a cross, and conquered death because He loves you?
- 4) Do you believe that Jesus would save you if you asked Him?
- 5) Do you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, and are you ready to confess Him as your Lord?

If he has replied yes to those questions, he's ready to pray!

We must ask God to give us wisdom in each situation we find ourselves (Luke 21:15). It is good to have a method, but it is even better to have the Holy Spirit—our supernatural Helper, Teacher, and Guide (Matthew 10:20).

4. Pray

Invite him to pray with you. Assure him that prayer is simply talking with God, and that when he prays, God will be listening. Tell him God is pleased with him and is waiting to make him His child and give him eternal life. Ask him if you can lead him in a prayer that he can repeat after you. Encourage him to pray out loud. Make the prayer short and to the point, similar to the following:

For "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."
Romans 10:13

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.
Romans 10:9,10

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.
I Corinthians 2:14

"I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute."
Luke 21:15

"For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."
Matthew 10:20

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Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me enough to die for all my sins. I believe in my heart that God raised you from the dead and that you are alive today. I turn from sin and my own way, and receive you now as my Lord and Savior. Thank you for forgiving me and giving me eternal life. Amen.

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.

I John 5:13

Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."

Hebrews 13:5

"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."

John 6:37

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

John 5:24

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Matthew 28:19

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

II Timothy 2:2

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

I Peter 5:8

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

II Corinthians 5:17

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

I John 4:4

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After you finish praying, tell him that he has received Jesus into his life. He is now a child of God. Ask him what would happen if he died that day. Make it clear to him that he has eternal life and heaven will be his home throughout eternity (I John 5:13). Explain to him that feelings have nothing to do with the new birth: they change from day to day, but God's faithfulness never changes. Assure him that God said He would never leave him or forsake him (Hebrews 13:5), nor would He ever reject him (John 6:37).

Jesus promises eternal life to the one who believes: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life*" (John 5:24).

5. Disciple

Jesus sent out His followers to make disciples, not converts (Matthew 28:19). Biblical evangelism helps the new Christian learn and grow into a faithful disciple who's able to train others also (II Timothy 2:2).

The new Christian needs immediate attention, a phone call or visit later in the day, and especially no later than the next day. The devil will come at him like a roaring lion and try to devour him (I Peter 5:8) with thoughts like these: "You made a fool out of yourself. *You* can never be different; nothing's changed. You don't *feel* saved, do you?" If you can't contact him personally and give him the following scriptures, write them down for him and tell him to read them when doubts start to come. Explain I Peter 5:8 to him, that it's normal for the devil to attack a child of God, but that he must be ready and resist him with these scriptures: II Corinthians 5:17, I John 4:4, Hebrews 13:5, Matthew 28:20, and Revelation 12:11.

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The best way to disciple new believers is the method Jesus used: **He continued to share His life with them.** Don't just give them a book or tell them to go to church. Someone must take personal responsibility for that individual, and if you've led him to Jesus, or if he's your friend, the candidate is *you*.

The new believer must learn to grow daily in: fellowship with Jesus, prayer, reading the Word, fellowship with other believers in a local church, and witnessing to others.

The first few days of this person's Christian life can set its entire course. Be faithful to God: encourage, love, and teach this babe so that he can truly experience the joys of knowing Jesus.

D. OUR COST TO WIN SOULS

If you will be obedient to the Great Commission, you must lay down your life (Mark 8:34,35). In order to save others, you cannot also "save" yourself (Mark 15:31). No one will ever have to be crucified again—Jesus did it once for all (Romans 6:10), but to bring others to Him, we must "crucify" our selfish aims.

Consider your commitment to Jesus in the light of eternity: "*For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*" (James 4:14 KJV). Our time on this earth is very short compared with the timeless eternity we all must enter. Will you settle for a life spent on your own pleasures? If you built the greatest empire the world has ever known, what will it amount to the moment you leave your body? Are you willing to "serve" God as long as it costs you no personal hardship or inconvenience? Consider David who refused to offer God that which cost him nothing (II Samuel 24:24).

Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."

Hebrews 13:5

"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:20

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony."

Revelation 12:11

And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it."

Mark 8:34,35

In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself."

Mark 15:31

For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Romans 6:10

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

James 4:14

However, the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

II Samuel 24:24

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“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Matthew 6:20,21

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

I Corinthians 15:58

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

Timothy 2:3,4

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12

To concern your life with those things that will last forever—God, His Word, and people, you must get your heart caught up in the Great Commission. Your treasure will be great in heaven (Matthew 6:20,21; I Corinthians 15:58).

1. The life of a soldier

“Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier” (II Timothy 2:3,4).

We are soldiers in the army of Christ, warring against unrighteousness and spiritual darkness to win back the prisoners of war that Satan holds captive. Fighting in a war requires dedication, hardship, sacrifice, and concentrated, calculated effort from *each* soldier. The war is not fought by the generals, but by the foot soldiers (Ephesians 4:11-13). Like Paul, every disciple must **“press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 3:14). We must “press” against resistance and opposition from an enemy who’s struggling to win. We must remain alert—our battle is not with flesh and blood (unbelievers); our enemy is the devil and his cohorts (Ephesians 6:12).

2. The life of an athlete

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (I Corinthians 9:24-27 NIV).

Studying the example of an athlete gives us an excellent idea of what soulwinning will cost us. The athlete must: 1) compete to win, 2) exercise self-control, 3) apply discipline, 4) throw off every hindrance, and 5) run with endurance.

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Compete to win. We compete against our flesh that wants a life of ease and non-involvement. We do *not* compete with other Christians—by winning more people to the Lord, knowing more, or praying longer. Our battle is to win out over a lazy, slothful, old nature (I Corinthians 15:57).

Exercise self-control. Our “training” to win includes feeding on a nutritious *spiritual* diet: daily Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship, and witnessing (I Timothy 6:3 KJV; I Timothy 4:6 KJV). Good *spiritual* nourishment builds strong spiritual muscles, spiritual eyes, spiritual ears, etc.

Apply discipline. Paul instructed Timothy: “*Train yourself to be godly*” (I Timothy 4:7 NIV). A disciplined life must be a *planned* life. Think through what goals you believe God has for your life, and then break those down into short-range goals that will help you achieve your life’s “vision.” Break those down even further to daily objectives, and then go to work and diligently apply yourself to them. Discipline is rarely pleasant to the flesh (I Corinthians 9:27), but always satisfying to the spiritual man.

Throw off every hindrance. “*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*” (Hebrews 12:1,2). Sin will weigh us down and cause us to stumble. Worry, the deceitfulness of wealth (the love of money), and the desire for things can make us unfruitful (Mark 4:18,19). To be an effective witness, we will have to examine our own lives and allow the Holy Spirit to show us what hindrances have held us back.

Run with endurance. Every runner experiences fatigue, especially toward the end of the race. But the winner pushes past the pain and weariness to finish. To endure as a soulwinner, we must have the proper diet and training, as well as the right *mental* attitude. By preparing our minds for action (I Peter 1:13 NIV), we can resist the weakness of our flesh and

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 15:57

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.

I Timothy 6:3 KJV

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

I Timothy 4:6 KJV

Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.

I Timothy 4:7

But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

I Corinthians 9:27

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1,2

“And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Mark 4:18,19

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refuse to give up. Will to take charge of your life and obey God. Decide to finish and run to win.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

I Peter 1:13 NIV

"Be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work."

II Chronicles 15:7

"And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

Daniel 12:3

IV. SUMMARY — TURNING MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Be strong and do not lose courage, for there is a reward for your work" (II Chronicles 15:7).

"They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the brightness of the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3 KJV).

The world can be reached with the message of reconciliation—not by the "superstars," but by masses of lay people trained to be laborers in the harvest fields. The task is worthy of the price we must pay, for that day is coming when we'll gather around the throne of God and rejoice throughout eternity with men and women we've won to Jesus. They'll be grateful **you cared!**