

## A Crash Course in Evangelism

# 6

## Honing the Method III

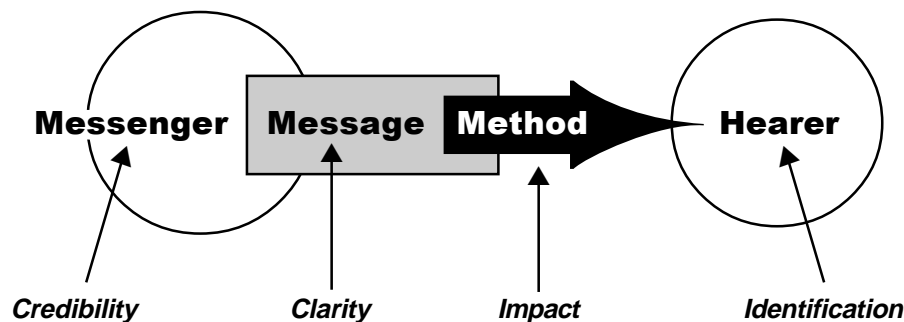
In this lesson we continue looking at the Method, particularly at a simple framework that will assist you in personal evangelism. We will be continuing to use the Human Model (otherwise known as the Incarnational Model) in order to learn how Jesus and his disciples conducted personal (one-to-one) evangelism.

Now here's the all-important fact about the Human Model of Evangelism. *It's all about identification!* Remember what we saw in the last lesson? There's a two-way identification:

- You firstly identify with the unbeliever.
- The unbeliever then identifies with you and with Christ.

With this mutual identification in mind, let's take another look at the Messenger-Message-Method framework for evangelism:

- Seeing the Harvest
- Making the Messenger
- Clarifying the Message
- Honing the Method I
- Honing the Method II
- ▶ **Honing the Method III** ◀
- Witnessing in Power
- Entering the Battle I
- Entering the Battle II
- Keeping Appointments
- Making Disciples
- Reaching Your Community



In this lesson, we are not seeking to present a rigid formula for evangelism, but rather a framework that can be used in *any* situation and at *any* time.

## **Two Styles of Personal Evangelism**

In the last lesson, we saw how you can use either monologue (preaching) or dialogue (conversation) when you witness to someone. But your *style* of witness is also important. There are two styles of sharing the Gospel:

### ***Formula-based***

Most evangelistic training centers around “The Formula.” By following a preset formula, a Christian can lead an unbeliever through the process of discovering Jesus and bring him to the point of decision. The beauty of such a formalized system is that anyone can learn it by rote and know how to push toward that crucial stage: the challenge to commitment. There are drawbacks, however. The formula-based style can create a production-line mentality. It can depersonalize witnessing and put an emphasis more on sales-style techniques than on genuine human interaction.

### ***Situation-based***

Rather than being based on a *formula*, your witness should be based on *sensitivity* – sensitivity to the unbeliever’s unique background and situation. This sensitivity, of course, does not come overnight, but is the result of two things:

- Openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- The actual experience of talking with people – of constantly being sensitive to their needs.

Sun Tzu, in his ancient book *The Art of War*, wrote:

“As water shapes its flow in accordance with the ground, so an army manages its victory in accordance with the situation of the enemy.”

This principle applies just as much to “The Art of Witnessing.” Water, as it flows down a hill, shapes its flow according to the terrain. In the same way, our witness should be shaped according to each unbeliever’s particular situation.

In this lesson, we will be emphasizing a situation-based method of Christian witness. Not only is this a better approach, it is also the approach used by Jesus and his disciples. Here are just a few examples of how Jesus himself shaped his witness according to his hearer’s situation:

**Read John 3:1-21**

**Read John 4:5-30,39-42**

**Read Mark 10:17-23**

**Read Luke 13:1-5**

**Read Luke 19:1-10**

You will notice that Jesus never had a set formula. Each evangelistic opportunity was specifically geared toward the individual’s unique background and situation. This is the style of witness that we will be learning in the next few pages.

## **A Christ-Like Style of Evangelism**

**Romans 8:29** tells us that the Holy Spirit is in the process of conforming us to the likeness of Christ. This applies as much to our evangelism as it does to our character and lifestyle. As we look at Jesus in one-to-one evangelism, we discover that he was natural, situational and relaxed. In the light of this, the best witness style for you should also be natural, situational and relaxed.

- **Natural** means in accordance with your personality. You don't need to be anything false in order to be a witness. You don't need to be larger-than-life. It's simply about *you* being a witness to what you have seen, heard and experienced in Christ.
- **Situational** means in accordance with the unbeliever's situation. There is no set formula that must be used when sharing your faith with someone (although, as we will see, there are some guidelines that can help). What shapes your witness is the hearer's own unique background and situation.
- **Relaxed** has to do with your attitude to evangelism. If it is pressured – “I *have* to lead this person to the Lord” – it will show through. But if you are relaxed in the same way that Jesus was relaxed – willing to work with the Holy Spirit to speak and challenge as far as he allows – then the other person will be more relaxed too. Tension breeds tension, and there is no tension worse than the pressure to produce results.

We are not in a “numbers game.” We are not in a competition to see how many we can lead to Christ or to see how fast our church can grow. We are in the “people business,” and if we are genuinely people-conscious, this will also show through in our lives and in our witness.

## **The Secret to Evangelism**

There is, believe it or not, an extremely simple secret to evangelism. It's not, as most people presume, some kind of special formula, but it *is* a methodology. It is called the methodology of the Holy Spirit.

Without the active participation of the Holy Spirit in Christian witness, everything we look at from this point will end up as (God forbid) a formula. How easy it is to look at methods of approach, presentation, discovery, and challenge and somehow think that we will gain some kind of pat “evangelistic system” that will apply to every situation. It simply doesn't work that way.

So before we go any further, what is this underlying Secret to Evangelism? It is this. You will only be successful in Christian witness through cooperation with the Holy Spirit. So important is this principle, it is framed as the sixteenth principle of evangelism:

**Evangelistic Principle #16** – Evangelism is only truly effective when you work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

Your initial response may well be one of “I think I’ve heard that before,” and so it should be, for it is the underlying secret upon which the whole of the Biblical Studies Course is based. In fact, the Secret to Evangelism is exactly the same as the Secret to the Christian Life – the Holy Spirit!

Believe it or not, it really is as simple as that. The art of evangelism is the art of cooperating with the Holy Spirit when reaching out to the lost. All the methods we will be examining in this lesson are subservient to this one basic principle. In short, without the Holy Spirit, evangelism doesn’t work!

Someone once said: “If you took the Holy Spirit out of the book of **Acts**, you would be left with only about 5% activity. But if you took the Holy Spirit out of the activities of today’s Church, you would likely still be left with 95% activity.” How true is this of our evangelism? God wants us to return to a Spirit-empowered witness, which will only happen if we are living a Spirit-filled life.

Evangelism and the Spirit-filled life are so tightly integrated that you cannot have one without the other. According to Gene Edwards:

“It is hard to say which has caused what: a lack of emphasis on soul-winning causing a lack in emphasis on the Spirit-filled life; or the reverse. Nonetheless, there must be a re-emphasis of both. A vital experience with the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for a return to soul-winning.”<sup>1</sup>

We will now examine what we call the Five-Fold Method of Personal Evangelism, but as we do let’s keep **Evangelistic Principle #16** always in mind. Simply put, *none* of this works without your ongoing cooperation with the Spirit of God.

## **The Five-Fold Method of Personal Evangelism**

The bulk of this lesson will focus on a simple five-fold framework for *any* kind of witness. Remember, we’re not dealing here with public (one-to-many) evangelism but personal (one-to-one) evangelism.

This Five-Fold Method of Personal Evangelism involves:

- The Method of Approach
- The Method of Discovery
- The Method of Presentation
- The Method of Challenge
- The Method of Reinforcement

Let’s now examine each of these in detail.

### **Method of Approach**

This is the first step in the Five-Fold Method of Personal Evangelism. Obviously, you cannot begin sharing Christ with an unbeliever unless some kind of *approach* is made to that person.

There are many ways used to approach non-Christians with the Gospel message, but they all boil down to three basic types of approach:

- Cold contact
- Hot contact
- Warm contact

### ***Cold contact***

In cold-contact witnessing, the witness and the unbeliever are strangers. This is the kind of approach most Christians think of when the word “street evangelism” is mentioned. You approach a total stranger, challenge him with an initial question, such as “Are you a Christian?” or “Are you saved?” and then proceed to present to him the message of salvation.

The problem with cold-contact witness is that you must break through an initial barrier of suspicion and discomfort before a genuine communication of the Gospel will take place. If this barrier remains intact, the unbeliever may begrudgingly listen to you, but he will not really hear the Gospel message. It will fall on hard ground, because his heart has not been prepared for the message (**Matthew 13:19**).

**Pros:** The cold-contact approach breaks open new territory and touches a wider circle of unbelievers than the hot approach can. Someone who has no real contact with the Church or with Christians can come into contact with the Gospel through cold-approach witnessing.

**Cons:** Cold-contact approaches need a “defrost introduction” before real communication takes place. Most city people have a “stranger-danger” reaction to cold-contact witnessing, and it may take a while before suspicion is allayed.

### ***Hot contact***

In a hot-contact approach, the believer and unbeliever already know each other. A relationship has already been built and there is a natural basis for conversation.

**Pros:** The hot-contact approach needs no introduction, and there is little or no suspicion. The witness has the right to speak, by virtue of an already established relationship. The witness knows the background of the unbeliever and can tune his message more effectively to communicate to the hearer.

**Cons:** Hot-contact witness generally takes place over a longer time. The circle of unbelievers a witness knows personally is usually limited.

Both cold contact and hot contact are valid types of approach. But they are not the only two options. There is a third option, which we call *warm* contact.

### ***Warm contact***

Like cold contact, warm contact involves speaking with a relative stranger, but *unlike* cold contact, it does not involve a forced presentation of the Gospel. Instead, it involves making conversation, and potentially making a friend, *before* you share the Gospel.

The art of warm contact is in reaching out to those around you. Every day you have the choice of keeping to yourself or expanding your interaction with people. If you choose to reach out in simple ways – running the full spectrum from a simple “hello” to a light conversation – you will find that amid all of these warm contacts opportunities to share the Gospel will appear.

Now it is important not to enter into such a conversation under pressure to evangelize. That is not the purpose of a warm-contact approach. The purpose of such approaches is *genuinely* to befriend people, or at least to share a portion of your life with them. Anything less than this destroys the warm-contact approach and makes it just another version of the cold-contact approach.

The warm-contact approach only works under the following conditions:

- **It must be a matter of lifestyle** – The impact of the warm-contact approach is accumulative. If even just 1 in 20 such warm-contact approaches actually results in an opportunity to share the Gospel, you will be able to avail yourself of such opportunities only by *consistently* applying the warm-contact approach to evangelism.
- **It must be part of life in the Spirit** – The warm-contact approach only works if you are sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and you will only be sensitive to the Holy Spirit if you are walking with him consistently each day. Do you see how everything comes back again to you and your walk with the Lord? You just can’t escape it. This is because evangelism is not a program. It is not an event. It is a lifestyle that flows out of your relationship with Christ.
- **It must be acted on boldly** – When opportunities do come up (and they will), you must be ready to speak the Gospel naturally but boldly.

The warm-contact approach is life-based rather than formula-based, which means it is an ideal tool in the Human Model of Evangelism.

**Pros:** The warm-contact approach needs no introduction, since the introduction has already been made as a part of natural conversation. No barriers of suspicion need to be broken through.

**Cons:** This method must be applied consistently, as part of a lifestyle of evangelism. (Is this really a negative?)

Cold Contact	Hot Contact	Warm Contact
Formula-based	Life-based	Life-based
Salesman Model	Human Model	Human Model
Must “defrost” unbeliever	No “defrost” needed	No “defrost” needed
Often relies on techniques	Relies on Holy Spirit	Relies on Holy Spirit
Based on a rigid plan	Based on readiness	Based on readiness
Breaks new ground	Limited in influence	Breaks new ground

Each of these three methods of approach – cold contact, hot contact and warm contact – have their value, but the warm-contact approach blends the pros of the cold-contact approach with the pros of the hot-contact approach.

In order to see how it works, let's watch the Master Communicator at work.

### Read John 4:7

In this verse, we see a classic use of the warm-contact approach. The woman who came to the well was a stranger to Jesus. But you don't see him launching immediately into the Gospel proclamation. Instead, he asks her for a glass of water. This becomes the opening for the questions he would later bring, which penetrate her defenses and open her heart to the Gospel message.

The warm-contact approach can be used in everyday life. You can strike up simple conversations with anybody – on the bus, when in line to see a football game, even with the guy behind the McDonalds counter. Make your approach a life-based approach, rather than a technique-based approach.

**Evangelistic Principle #17** – Reach out to people around you on a consistent basis – making new friends, starting light conversation – and be ready when the Holy Spirit opens an opportunity for sharing the Gospel.

## Method of Discovery

Sharing the Gospel is all about participation in a discovery process. You yourself have discovered the wonderful reality of Jesus Christ, but the unbeliever you are conversing with has yet to make this discovery. If he commits his life to Christ, he will have the joy of discovery, just like you had, but you have the privilege of participating in this discovery with him.

Oswald Chambers once wrote:

“We preach to men as if they were conscious they were dying sinners, they are not; they are having a good time.”<sup>3</sup>

Never make an assumption about any unbeliever. There are miserable unbelievers, but there are also happy ones. There are unbelievers who have failing marriages, but also unbelievers who have strong marriages. There are unbelievers who have lost all hope, but also unbelievers who have great purpose in life. There are unbelievers who are conscious of their sin, but also unbelievers who feel they are OK with both man and God (and by outward standards, this may even appear true).

The point is this. No one formula of discovery will work for the same person. For this reason, each unbeliever's path of discovery must be *personalized*. And only the Holy Spirit can help you find the right path of discovery for each unbeliever. And when you hit that path, both you and the unbeliever will experience the thrill of discovering Jesus. For the unbeliever, it is a first-time discovery; for you, it is a re-discovery – discovery all over again! But the joy is the same for both of you.

There are two basic methods of discovery:

- Pre-packaged discovery
- Personalized discovery

The difference between the two is simple. With a pre-packaged discovery, you seek to present a clear set of facts that you hope the unbeliever to understand and embrace as truth, at the end of which you will challenge him to decide for or against Christ. The only problem with a pre-packaged method of discovery, however, is that, as we have already seen, no two unbelievers are identical. Each person is unique in his understanding of God and of himself.

With a personalized discovery, however, nothing is pre-determined. You have a goal in mind, of course. You want the unbeliever to understand clearly the fundamentals of the Gospel and what is required of him by God. But the path of discovery is dynamic. It unfolds as you travel it.

But how does this personalized discovery of the Gospel work? It is through the asking of questions. In fact, the art of personalized discovery might also be called the art of asking questions.

This establishes the next principle of personal evangelism:

**Evangelistic Principle #18** – The Hearer should be guided into a personalized discovery of Jesus Christ, not a pre-packaged discovery. This personalized discovery can be aided by asking questions.

## ***The Path of Discovery***

### **Asking questions**

Questions play a vital role in personal (one-to-one) evangelism. That is because questions help in three ways:

- Questions get the other person talking, setting up a dialogue-style platform for the Gospel rather than a monologue-style one. Questions help the Christian to *listen* more, rather than just do all the talking.
- Questions help identify where the other person is (what stage of harvest he/she is at and what his/her perceived needs are). The way a person answers the questions you ask sets the path of discovery.
- Questions can stimulate the other person's thinking, grab their interest and hold their attention. Nothing is more gripping than a question to which a person genuinely wants to know the answer.

Questions can, of course, come from either you or the unbeliever. But the questions that you yourself ask can set the pace for your presentation of the Gospel. You will find, as you gain experience in sharing the Gospel in personal evangelism, that you will build up a “question bank” – a list of questions that you personally find useful when talking with an unbeliever.



## Answering questions

If a genuine dialogue has been created, then the unbeliever will naturally ask questions. There are two types of questions that may be asked:

- **Genuine questions** – These are questions that are genuine barriers to the unbeliever placing his faith in Christ. They reveal the heart of the unbeliever – what it is that is troubling him and what it is that must be overcome in order for the Gospel to have full impact.
- **Diversionsary questions** – These are questions that seek to deflect the attention away from the unbeliever onto something outside of his life. They are the “red herrings” mentioned in the previous lesson.

Should you answer every question? Not necessarily. If it is a diversionsary question, you may say, “Well, I’m happy to answer that later, but the really important question is...” or “I tell you what. Let’s go on for a moment, and then we can always come back to that question...” Or if you genuinely don’t know the answer to a question, admit it. Once again, your answer may be, “Well, I don’t know the answer to that one, but...” or “Would you allow me to ask someone about that? But here’s another question for you...”

How can you tell the difference between a genuine question and a diversionsary one? Sometimes it is obvious, but often it requires the help of the Holy Spirit. The important consideration at all times is this: “Does this question help this person on their path of discovery?” If the question is one more step in the path of discovery, then answer it as clearly and simply as possible. But always make that answer a stepping stone to the discovery of Christ and his Gospel.

**Evangelistic Principle #19** – Questions from the unbeliever should be welcomed but evaluated in terms of how the question enables further discovery of Christ. Each answer you bring should be a stepping stone toward discovery.

## Answering excuses

No one likes to reconsider their beliefs. As a general rule, unbelievers have a comfortable set of assumptions which undergird their life and make them feel “OK” with the world. When you begin challenging these fundamental assumptions, this can cause psychological discomfort, and the automatic psychological reaction is to throw up defenses. These defenses may come in the form of questions – “Ah, but if God is a God of love, why do so many children die of hunger” – or they may come in the form of excuses – “Yes, but the Church is full of hypocrites!” How should you handle these?

There are four ways you can handle an excuse:

- Discuss it in detail
- Ignore it politely and continue
- Answer it quickly and simply, then continue
- Make it a stepping stone toward discovery

Which is the better way? Let the Holy Spirit help you decide. Generally speaking the last option, if possible, is the best. But one thing you should never do is get into a heated debate. Even if you win the debate, you may end up losing the person.

As you become experienced in being a witness, you will find that the Holy Spirit will help you to pre-empt excuses. You can do this by actually voicing the excuse before the unbeliever does, bringing the answer straight away.

Let's use Chris and Bill as an example. As Chris is sharing with Bill, he senses in the Spirit that Bill may respond with the excuse, "Yes, but I'm as good as the next person!" So Chris says, "You know Bill, if the Lord Jesus were standing next to you, and God was to compare you with him, would you be able to say that you were as good and perfect as Jesus?" Bill hesitates, then responds, "No, I guess not." Chris then says, "Neither could I, Bill. No one can. And that's the problem. We all fall far short of the standard God has set..."

Do you see how Chris not only answered the potential excuse, but actually used it as a stepping stone on the path of discovery? And you will also notice how Chris has included himself in the picture. It is not just Chris preaching to Bill, but both of them discovering together the wonder of the Gospel. This mutual discovery process even defuses another potential excuse that Bill might raise: "Yes, but the church is full of hypocrites!" To this, Chris can answer: "That may or may not be true, Bill. But you and I aren't hypocrites, are we? You and I are both interested in the real thing..."

### ***The Focus of Discovery***

Although the path of discovery almost always involves the asking and answering of questions, the discovery process itself can have one of two points of focus:

#### **A problem-answer focus**

This is the classic path of discovery. You start by identifying a problem in the person's life and lead them to understand Christ as the answer. As a general guide, there are five areas of need in every person's life, and these can be used as the basis of the discovery of Christ as the answer to life. These five basic needs are:

- ☞ To be loved
- ☞ To be needed
- ☞ To be secure
- ☞ To be creative
- ☞ To be a success

Using a problem-answer discovery focus can be effective, if the unbeliever is conscious of his needs. This approach is a bottom-up approach – it leads the believer from problem and sin consciousness to an understanding of God's salvation.

#### **A purpose-challenge focus**

Another approach is to set the standard of God's plan for the unbeliever's life. This is a top-down approach to the discovery process. It leads a person from an understanding of the glory of God, then shows how we've all fallen far short of it.

Which focus is better? Both are just as effective, but which you use will depend entirely upon the situation of the person to whom you are witnessing.

## **Method of Presentation**

The presentation of the Gospel is the final bend on the path of personalized discovery. This is where the Gospel is laid out clearly and the end-goal of the presentation is to bring a challenge to accept Christ. In fact, if the unbeliever has been led along a path of personal discovery, the presentation itself will have already been largely made. The presentation then becomes more of a summary of the discovery already made.

But if the presentation needs to be made, there are two basic ways you can present the Gospel – an objective way and a subjective way.

### ***The Objective Presentation***

The objective presentation describes the facts of the Gospel clearly in point form. One good example of an objective presentation of the Gospel is called “The Four Spiritual Laws,” pioneered by the Navigators and now used widely around the world. While this is not the only type of objective presentation, it is a good example of what can be done.

- **First Spiritual Law** – God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life. Scriptures that can be used: **John 3:16** and **John 10:10**.
- **Second Spiritual Law** – Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he *cannot* know and experience God’s love and plan for his life. Scriptures that can be used: **Romans 3:23** and **Romans 6:23**.
- **Third Spiritual Law** – Jesus is God’s *only* provision for man’s sin. Through Jesus you can know and experience God’s love and plan for your life. Scriptures that can be used: **Romans 5:8** and **John 14:6**.
- **Fourth Spiritual Law** – We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Only then can we know and experience God’s love and plan for our lives. Scriptures that can be used: **John 1:12** and **Revelation 3:20**.

You’ll note that this is a formula of sorts. When it comes to final presentation, there’s nothing wrong with using a formula, because the whole time of witness is situational and personalized. But whether you use a formula like this, or simply direct the person toward an understand of the Gospel, the objective style of presentation is based upon a clear presentation of the facts of the Gospel.

### ***The Subjective Presentation***

An entirely different style of presentation is the subjective presentation. We generally call this kind of presentation a “testimony.” It is the story of your own experience – what you have seen, heard and experienced in Christ.

If you use this style of Gospel presentation, don’t feel you need to give a complete autobiography (starting when you were young, in great detail). Your full testi-

mony need only cover three important points:

- What it was like before you gave your life to Jesus
- What made you give your life to Jesus
- What happened after your gave your life to Jesus.

You should also be able to share these three points as a condensed testimony. The rule of thumb is about five minutes. Under special circumstances you can, of course, go longer, but be aware that anything over five minutes creates a monologue-style situation that may impede communication.

Which is better – an objective presentation or a subjective presentation? Once again, both can be just as effective, depending on the situation. Be ready to share the Gospel either way, or even as a combination of both. But whether you use an objective presentation or a subjective one, the end of the presentation should be geared toward a personal challenge to the unbeliever.

**Evangelistic Principle #20** – Your presentation of the Gospel can be either subjective or objective, but should lead the Hearer toward the challenge of commitment to Christ.

## **Method of Challenge**

This is where some Christians “pull their punch.” They present the Gospel clearly, but don’t give the final challenge for commitment to Christ. If there has been a genuine discovery of Christ, then the end challenge will be natural and the response is likely to be positive.

The challenge you bring should be two-fold:

- **Commit to Jesus as Savior** – this means placing faith in Christ as the only means of salvation and reconciliation to God.
- **Commit to Christ as Lord** – this means the transferal of authority from self to Christ.

Can you lead a person to Christ with a half-challenge? Of course, you can. Will he be saved? Absolutely. But will he be launched into everything that God has planned for his life? No. It is by far better to challenge the person to receive Christ as both Savior and Lord right at the beginning, rather than seek to explain this added dimension of the Christian life later.

The words we use are important. Many Christians challenge the unbeliever to “accept Christ” as Savior and Lord. But this creates a man-centered concept of the Christian life. As A W Tozer explains:

“The trouble is that the whole ‘accept Christ’ attitude is likely to be wrong. It shows Christ applying to us rather than us to him. It makes him stand hat-in-hand awaiting our verdict on him, instead of our kneeling with troubled hearts awaiting his verdict on us. It may even permit us to accept Christ by an im-

pulse of mind or emotions, painlessly, at no loss to our ego and no inconvenience to our usual way of life.”<sup>4</sup>

A superior way is to challenge the person to “commit your life to Christ” or “make Jesus the Lord of your life.” Remember, this is an already-established covenant between God and man. You are challenging a person who is presently outside of that covenant to enter into that covenant upon its terms and conditions. What are the terms of the New Covenant? One only – faith in Christ. But how should that faith be expressed? By submitting to the Lordship of Christ and receiving the salvation offered in Him.

When it comes to bringing the final challenge, there are many possible ways. One way is to ask two final questions, which focus the challenge:

- **Do you understand what God requires of you?** – This question helps to clarify exactly what the challenge is. If the answer is, ‘No,’ then you may ask, “What is still unclear?” or you may explain the Gospel again in a nutshell. If the answer is, ‘Yes,’ then the hearer is ready for the next question.
- **Would you like me to lead you in a prayer of commitment to Christ?** – This is the final challenge. The answer will be either ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’ If it is ‘No,’ don’t be worried. You have a choice at this point. Either close off the time or witness, or, if you feel the person is open, ask a few more questions. (Anyone who has had experience in personal evangelism will tell you that ‘No’ doesn’t always mean ‘No.’ In fact, it can sometimes mean, ‘I still don’t understand and I’m not sure if this is really for me.’ Be sensitive to the leading of the Lord at this time). But if the answer is ‘Yes,’ then lead him in a simple prayer of commitment to Christ.

What should the prayer of salvation include? There are no set rules, but as a guideline it should contain three parts:

- **A prayer of salvation** – this should include most or all of the following: the concept of sin, the Cross, forgiveness, faith in Christ and eternal life.
- **A prayer of commitment** – including the giving of the person’s life to Christ and acknowledgement of Christ as Lord of his whole life.
- **A prayer of personalized need** – including any specific need that may have come up during the time of witness (sickness, marriage problems, hopelessness, etc).

Here’s a simple example. Chris has just challenged Bill to commit his life to Christ and Bill has said that wonderful word, “Yes!” During the time of witness, Bill has shared that he is regularly depressed (“Just a mid-life crisis, I guess!”), and this becomes a stepping stone for Chris to share the wonder of God’s plan for his life.

When it comes to the prayer of commitment, Chris asks Bill to follow him in prayer. And this is what he prays (with Bill echoing each statement):

“Dear Father God...I thank you...that you love me so much....enough to send Jesus to die in my place...I know I am a sinner in your eyes...I ask you to forgive me...and give me eternal life in Christ...I now commit my life to you...and acknowledge you as Lord of my life...I thank you...that I am now part of your family...I ask you, Lord...to bring meaning to my life...and a greater understanding of your purpose for me...I ask this in the name of Jesus...Amen!”

Do you have to lead in a prayer exactly like this? No – remember, there are no set rules. It can vary considerably from person to person. But what if you leave something out? Don’t worry about it. The covenant has already been established in Christ forever – through an eternal transaction at the Cross of Calvary. You are simply leading the person into that covenant experience. It is not a magical formula. It is not an entrance examination. It is simply a prayer of commitment. The issue is not what is said, but rather whether or not there is genuine faith in Christ. The prayer is simply a focal point for this faith.

## **Method of Reinforcement**

But that is not the end of your witness. After making the prayer of commitment, there is a short time of reinforcement of the message.

- Feel free to congratulate the new believer on becoming a member of the family of God.
- Explain again briefly the core of the Gospel – what it means for him personally and what’s required of him in his walk with God.
- Get his contact details and organize a time of one-on-one follow up.
- Invite him to church or to a weekly Bible study (Remember, however, that this may be an overwhelming experience for a new believer. It can, on occasion, be advisable to follow up one-on-one or in a small group setting as a first step into the corporate Christian experience).

This, of course, is not the end of the reinforcement of the Gospel message. Remember, Jesus commissioned you to “make disciples” not just to “get decisions.” For this reason, there is an ongoing reinforcement of the message. But this is the subject of a later lesson in this module.

**Evangelistic Principle #21** – Seek to reinforce the Gospel message after the Hearer has committed his life to Christ. Establish the next appointment for follow up and further reinforcement of the message.

## **Recognizing the Work of God**

If the entire Method could be condensed into a nutshell it would be the words of Jesus from **John 5:19**:

“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

What, you might ask, was Jesus' methodology? Quite simple. Doing what he saw the Father doing! This is the Method of Christ. This is the Method that has maximum impact. All the frameworks we might use are simply aids to help us do one simple thing: To see what God is doing in an unbeliever's life and to join him in that work.

The key to being an effective witness is this:

- Realizing that God is at work in the life of the unbeliever.
- Identifying which stage that work of God is at.
- Cooperating with the work of God.

This takes a lot of pressure off you! You don't need to do the *whole* work! One of the dangers in personal evangelism is to believe that you need to start from the beginning with each person, go through the whole "witnessing" process, then push for a decision here and now. It's called the old "if-I-don't-lead-him-to-a-decision-now-what-if-he-get's-hit-by-a-bus-tomorrow" syndrome.

The destiny of an unbeliever is *not* your responsibility. Each person is responsible themselves before God for the decisions they make toward the Lord. Your sole responsibility is this: To be a *part* of the work of God in reaching out to people with the good news, so that they *can* make a decision.

Do you remember what Jesus said in **John 5:17**? "My Father is *always* at work to this very day, and I, too, am working..." This is the what Christian witness is all about – a partnership between you and God.

And so, as you witness, ask the Holy Spirit to show you at which stage of harvest the unbeliever is – the plowing stage, the sowing stage, the watering stage or the reaping stage. How can you know what stage an unbeliever is at? There are three simple rules:

**Rule #1** – Don't judge by outward appearances. Just because a person responds gruffly at the beginning of witness doesn't mean that he is hardened against the Gospel. Surprisingly, he may even be in the reaping stage.

**Rule #2** – Keep asking the Holy Spirit to guide you. Only the Lord can reveal just how ready a person is for harvest.

**Rule #3** – It is during the time of Approach and Discovery that you will most likely determine just how open the Hearer is. If discovery is taking place, then keep pressing through because it is likely that the Hearer is at the reaping stage.

## Discovering Your Style

Should you take a cold-contact approach, a hot-contact approach or a warm-contact approach? How should you ask and answer questions? Should you present the Gospel in an objective or a subjective way? How should you challenge the unbeliever toward commitment to Christ? How and when should you lead the

new believer in a prayer of salvation? What is the right way to reinforce the message and follow up the new believer? All these questions have no strict answer. They are part of a fluid and dynamic system of evangelism that can be learned only through doing it. As you do, you will soon discover your own personal style of witness – a style that is unique to your personality and effective in reaching those in your culture and community.

## Exercise #6

- **Pray** – Ask the Lord to enable you to reach out in warm-contact conversations this week.
- **See** – Watch for opportunities where you can reach out to people around you – whether it be in simple greetings or in longer conversations.
- **Act** – Just befriend people. Enter into conversation, if this opens up. And if the opportunity to share the Gospel opens, be ready to lead the person upon a path of discovery. But the main purpose of this exercise is simply this: Start a warm-contact lifestyle – and keep consistently reaching out in this way.

<sup>1</sup> Gene Edwards, *How to Have a Soul-Winning Church* (Tyler, Texas: Soul Winning Publications, 1963), p.51.

<sup>2</sup> Gene Edwards, *How to Have a Soul-Winning Church* (Tyler, Texas: Soul Winning Publications, 1963), p.51.

<sup>3</sup> Oswald Chambers, quoted by Edythe Draper, *Draper's Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0.

<sup>4</sup> A W Tozer, quoted by Edythe Draper, *Draper's Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0.

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