

# **Sowing the Seed of the Kingdom**



**A Study Guide on Personal Evangelism and Local Church Discipline  
Compiled by Paul R. Blake**

## **Personal Work Study Guide: Table of Contents**

Page 1	Lesson One:	The Greatest Need
Page 8	Lesson Two:	Keys to Growth in the Local Church
Page 15	Lesson Three:	Conversational Evangelism Part One
Page 17	Lesson Four:	Conversational Evangelism Part Two
Page 20	Lesson Five:	Conversational Evangelism Part Three
Page 23	Lesson Six:	Conversational Evangelism Part Four
Page 26	Lesson Seven:	Conversational Evangelism Part Five
Page 31	Lesson Eight:	Which Church Would Jesus Assemble with Today?
Page 35	Lesson Nine:	Local Church Discipline
Page 41	Lesson Ten:	Fellowship with Family Members Who Have Been Disciplined

The study guide on personal evangelism and local church discipline was prepared by Paul R. Blake in May 2022 for the Sunday Morning Adult Bible Class of the Trilacoochee church of Christ. Some of the notes and illustrations have been gleaned over the years from sermons and classes presented by other evangelists, as well as from lessons, articles, and experiences of my own as a preacher of the Gospel for the past 45 years. This is presented with hopes and prayers that we will all become more effective laborers in the fields of our Lord.

# **Lesson One: The Greatest Need**

(Compiled from a lesson by Brent Hunter, 1979)

Introduction:

A. Illustration: Fishing: Theory vs. Practice... Jesus said: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19).

Now it came to pass that a group existed that called themselves fishermen and there were many fish in the waters about them. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes and the fish were hungry. Week after week and month after month and year after year the group that called themselves 'fishermen' met in meetings and talked about those called to fish, the abundance of fish, and how they might go about fishing. Year after year they carefully defined what fishing meant, defended fishing as an occupation, and declared that fishing should be the primary talk of fishermen. These fishermen built large beautiful buildings for local fishing headquarters and their plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and that everyone should go fishing. However, the one thing they did not do: they did not fish!

In addition to meeting regularly, they determined to send out fishermen to places where there were many fish. They had great vision and courage to speak about fishing and to promote the idea of fishing in distant streams and lakes, and held meetings to define fishing, to defend fishing, and to decide what new streams should be fished. But the one thing the members did not do, they did not fish!

Training centers were organized whose original and primary purpose was to teach fishermen how to fish. Over the years courses were offered on the needs of the fish, the nature of the fish, how to find fish, and the beneficial psychological effects of fishing. Those who taught did not fish! They only taught about fishing.

Further, the fishermen built large printing houses to publish fishing guides. Presses were kept busy producing magazines devoted to fishing methods. Meetings were held with special speakers on fishing. After one stirring meeting entitled 'The Necessity of Fishing,' one young man left the meeting, went fishing and actually caught two fish! He was honored for his great catch and was scheduled to appear at all the big meetings to tell how he did it. So he quit fishing in order to have time to tell his experiences to the other fishermen!

After all, were they not following the Master who said, "Come and I will make you fishers of men"? Imagine their chagrin when someone finally tells they are not really 'fishermen.' Can one rightfully call himself a fisherman if year after year he never goes to the water, casts in a line, and catches fish?

## **I. WHAT IS THE GREATEST NEED FOR THE CHURCH TODAY?**

A. For the church to return to its original, Divinely ordained mission of seeking and saving the lost - Luke 19:10

1. God could have done anything He wanted with His Son, but He made Him a soul-winner.
  2. Eleven of the first twelve men Christ chose were made soul winners.
  3. The church has many capable workers in the assembly, but it is in desperate need of personal workers out among the lost - Luke 10:1-2
  4. Jesus Christ is the head of the body, but you are His hands and feet - Eph. 1:22-23.
  5. His work is not complete in this world until you have done your part - Eph. 4:11-12, 15-16
  6. We are the salt of the earth - Matt. 5:13
    - a. Salt has no effect on food until it comes in contact with it.
    - b. How can we influence the lost huddled together in the building?
  7. We are a light in the midst of darkness - Matt. 5:14-16
    - a. Like being with a frightened child in a dark room and refusing to turn on the light to comfort and reassure him.
- B. What we all need is more genuine concern for the lost.
1. Paul's heart had great and unending sorrow for the lost - Rom. 9:1-3
  2. Illustration: Your wife or child or mother has a terminal illness; your neighbor has the cure, but keeps it to himself. What do you think of him? We need more than mere "meeting house soundness," but also soundness in active works.
  3. Walk down the street in your neighborhood and look at the houses. How many are lost? - Jude 22; Matt. 7:12
- C. The need is fulfilled through the Lord's plan of evangelism.
1. The early church carried out the great commission in 29 years.
    - a. Jesus sent them out in Mark 16:16 in A.D. 33.
    - b. Paul wrote Colossians 1:23 in A.D. 62.
  2. Clearly, the Lord adds people to His church as they are saved (Acts 2:41, 47), but He does not do the teaching; we do.
  3. If every member of this church converted just one a year, and they in turn converted just one each year, in 22 years the whole world could be converted, seven years sooner than in Paul's day.
  4. This is only a theoretical example; Matthew 5:13-14 shows that most will reject the Gospel. However, if more had an opportunity to hear, more would respond.
  5. Teaching is the second half of the plan of salvation; evangelism is not complete until the evangelized become the evangelists - 2Tim. 2:2

### **Just Planning a Play in the Huddle**

By Bob Buchanan

In an editorial during football season several years ago, Reuel Lemmons wrote one of his more agreeable articles entitled "Let's Get Out of the Huddle." Part of what was said follows:

"A few days ago we were watching a great game on television. There was fierce competition: The score was close. Time was running out. The team that was ahead was in the huddle. They stayed there--in the huddle. They stayed and they stayed. The referee blew his whistle and penalized the team for delaying the game. They had stayed too long in the huddle.

"Huddles are necessary, but games aren't won in the huddle; they are won on the line. Strategy sessions are important, but we can stay in the huddle too long. Many an important piece of work is discussed in elders' meetings and postponed until next meeting, only to be discussed again and postponed. Elders should realize that the Great Referee may severely penalize them for staying too long in the huddle.

"And congregations do the same. They huddle every Sunday. They leave the huddle to re-huddle next Sunday. They never manage to get to the line of scrimmage. In fact, the whole church is gaining a worldwide reputation for huddling. We flock to ourselves; we talk to ourselves; we huddle with our heads down around the Lord's Table. And some in the team are even careless about making the huddle. Worship is essential and important, but only if it inspires us to get out and do something.

"The enemy is rolled back, not from the huddle but from the line of scrimmage. It takes all the effort every individual is capable of putting forth to win..."

"Are we concerned about trying to be what our Master was? His goal and purpose was to 'seek and save the lost'. If we are imitators of Christ, why is this not our goal also? If we want to be like our Master (Paul commanded that we do so), why don't we get out of the huddle and teach a lost and rapidly expiring world?"

"Instead, we had rather huddle back of the line of scrimmage and just talk about the battle rather than sit down and open The Book on someone's kitchen table and quote a 'thus saith the Lord'.

"The early church is our pattern, and on close examination we find that they gathered for worship, but then scattered everywhere preaching the Word. So it should be with us -- we have got to take the message into the market place and homes of our fellow man if we are going to teach.

"One or two Gospel meetings a year will not do the job. Why don't we baptize more people now? Could it be that the other 11 1/2 months of the year when there are no meetings, nobody is teaching?"

D. The scope of the need: the field is the world - Matt. 13:38

1. We are to teach every creature - Mark 16:15
2. Opportunities are unlimited - John 4:35-38
3. The Great Commission did not limit who we were to teach.

4. When Jesus said "the fields are white unto the harvest," He was not referring exclusively to the white middle class.

## II. EIGHT REASONS WHY ALL OF US NEED TO BE PERSONAL WORKERS

- A. It is a direct command - Matt. 28:18-20 - "Go ye" means "go me."
  1. We'd never dream of changing the Lord's Supper or of building a fellowship hall, yet we think very little of disregarding our Savior's last words to go teach. It is not optional - Heb. 5:12
  2. Christ said "go" not "invite." Instead of an outreach, we have an in-drag.
- B. It is necessary for self-preservation - John 15:16
  1. Like the barren fig tree, we must produce or be cut down - Luke 13:6-9
  2. Teaching another is one of the best means of personal growth.
  3. If we don't teach, their blood is on our heads - Acts 18:6; Ez. 3:18
  4. We are called to faithfulness, not results - 1Cor. 3:6, 9:16
  5. Noah preached 120 years with no results, yet he never quit. If he had, would he have been permitted to enter the ark?
- C. It should be a natural result of our love for others.
  1. What greater gift could you give to someone you love than to help him save his soul?
  2. If we really loved our fellow man, we wouldn't keep the Gospel to ourselves. We love to share our favorite health remedy with all who have the same issue - James 5:20; Rom. 1:16
- D. Because every soul is precious
  1. In this age, men know the price of everything and the value of nothing.
  2. Our souls are our most treasured possessions.
    - a. Matt. 16:26; 1Peter 1:18-20
  3. The salvation of one soul on earth has an eternal impact in heaven.
- E. Because we want to be sound like the early church.
  1. The church has a two-fold purpose: scatter seed and gather the saved.
  2. The early church went everywhere preaching - Acts 8:4, 26:20
- F. Because of the terror of the Lord - 2Cor. 5:11
  1. Do we really believe in Hell and that our unsaved friends are going there? - Mark 16:16
  2. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God - Heb. 10:31
- G. Because we are debtors - Rom. 1:14-15
  1. For all that Christ has done for us, this is the least we can do in return, share the Gospel with others - 2Cor. 5:14-15
- H. Because of the joy of being a personal worker.
  1. We increase the number of children of our heavenly Father.
  2. We cause the angels to rejoice - Luke 15:7

3. The personal joy we experience - Phil. 4:1; 3John 4
  4. There isn't a more satisfying feeling than to see someone you've taught obey the truth and continue with a transformed life.
  5. In a sense, we become immortal and live on through others - Dan. 12:3
  6. "It doesn't take much vision to see how many seeds are in each apple -- but it does take vision to see how many apples are in each seed."
- I. This need must be fulfilled or the local church will suffer decline and discouragement; internal problems always arise when we look inward instead of outward.

### III. OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

- A. Not enough talent? - Matt. 25:14-30
1. It is not about talent and knowledge; the most effective are those who go to work.
- B. Afraid? So was the one talent man and He was called into judgment.
1. The Gospel is the power - Rom. 1:16
- C. Don't know much - Share what you do know.
1. Best way to learn truth is to practice and preach it while we learn it.

### IV. "IT'S NOT ROCKET SURGERY." (Floyd Chappelle)

- A. It is not as hard as you might think. It is something every Christian can do.
1. Plan a strategy, start small. Set goals in steps; even God took six days to create the world, not one
  2. Start with what you know; you never will have all the answers; but, the unbeliever knows less about Christ than you do.
- B. Consider one simple plan: Reading the New Testament daily over the phone with a friend.
1. Ask a relative or a friend to join you in daily Bible reading by phone.
  2. Begin with Matthew and read two chapters aloud together, alternating.
  3. Keep your appointments faithfully until you have finished reading the New Testament together.
  4. In 60 days, you and your prospect will have read four accounts of the birth of the Savior, of His work and teaching, of His death, burial, and resurrection, and of His instruction to carry the Gospel to the entire world. You will have read Peter's Gospel sermon, multiple accounts of conversion, and of the beginning of the Lord's church. You will have had a multitude of opportunities along the way to encourage your prospect to become a Christian.
  5. Here is what you will have accomplished: You will have taught the Gospel to a lost soul who may obey the Lord. You will have changed

your relationship with that person forever. You will gain confidence to become a soul winner. You have helped to fulfill the Lord's work.

6. And what resources did you use? A Bible, a lost soul, love for that person, a little courage to ask them, and a prayer for help.
7. There are dozens of personal work plans. The reason they don't work has little to do with the plan; it is about the commitment of the people working the plan. Find one that works for you and work it.

### **The Parable of a Lighthouse**

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves, they went out day or night tirelessly searching for the lost.

Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station, so that it became famous. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding areas, wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought and new crews were trained. The little life-saving station grew.

Some of the new members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and so poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea.

They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in an enlarged building. Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they re-decorated it beautifully and furnished it as a sort of club.

Less of the members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired life boat crews to do this work.

The mission of life-saving was still given lip-service, but most were too busy or lacked the necessary commitment to take part in the life-saving activities personally.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boat loads of cold, wet and half-drowned people.

They were dirty and sick, and some of them had black skin, and spoke a strange language, and the beautiful new club was considerably messed up. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal pattern of the club.

But some members insisted that life-saving was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the life of all various kinds of people who were



shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast. They did. However, as the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. They evolved into a club and yet another life-saving station was founded. If you visit the seacoast today you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, but now most of the people drown!

### Questions for Lesson One

1. What is the greatest need for the church today?
2. How is this need fulfilled?
3. How does salt illustrate the work of evangelism?
4. How does a light on a lampstand illustrate the work of evangelism?
5. Why do you believe personal evangelism is not done by the members of the local congregation?
6. How many years did it take the apostles to preach the Gospel to the whole world?
7. List the eight reasons why every Christian should be involved in personal evangelism:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  - e.
  - f.
  - g.
  - h.
8. What should one do if he believes he does not have enough ability or knowledge to do personal evangelism?
9. What will eventually happen to disciples who are too afraid to do personal evangelism?
10. What is the first and primary work of any sound, faithful, local church of Christ?
11. Can personal work be done by proxy? For example, can the members of the local church pay the preacher to do it for them?
12. What can you do to engage in the work of carrying the Gospel to lost souls?

# Lesson Two: Keys to Growth in the Local Church

(Compiled from a series of sermons by Harold Comer)

Introduction: Eph. 4:11-16

I know there are several who work hard at this. Please be encouraged to continue. God's will is that every Christian be a soul winner; it is just as important of a command as it is to commune on the Lord's Day. When only a few do this work, it is just as if only a few took communion on Sunday.

## I. KEYS TO GROWTH

- A. Soul saving is the first work of a local church; all other works are second.
  - 1. On a scale of 1 - 10 in importance, where do most congregations rank teaching and converting the lost in their neighborhood?
  - 2. Two! (Survey done by Harold Comer) - Luke 19:10
- B. Leaders must model evangelism in their own lives.
  - 1. Elders and preachers must not leave the word of God to serve tables.
  - 2. Need to stop focusing on housekeeping. Similar to everyone in the house doing dishes and setting the table, but no one cooking the food.
  - 3. Elders - 1Peter 5:3
  - 4. Preachers - 1Tim. 4:12
- C. The local church must resolve to overcome the obstacles of those who do not want to grow.
  - 1. Adult babies (not "babes in Christ") refuse to grow up. They divert time and resources and are destructive. Spinning plates in a circus act.
  - 2. Some do not want the church to grow. Growth requires changes in relationships, and brings in persons who are different.
    - a. Illus. - Grandma Blake; Barry Kercheville's Harley rider
  - 3. Gal. 2:4; 3John 9
- D. Members must be given opportunities to use their abilities.
  - 1. We've been studying personal evangelism for long enough. It is time to put what we know to work.
  - 2. Like a ball team that is always practicing, but never gets in the game.
  - 3. The reason we ask for participation in Bible class is to give you practice expressing a scriptural thought, building up confidence in your abilities.
  - 4. The best preacher makes his job redundant and unnecessary.
- E. Balanced, "equipping"- oriented preaching is mandatory.
  - 1. 1Tim. 4:6; Titus 2:1
  - 2. Hobbies, issues oriented preaching, hyper-negativism, and debates over matters of individual conscience seldom edify, strengthen, or encourage - 1Tim. 6:3

- F. Members must seek out the lost and cultivate relationships with them.
  - 1. Salt doesn't season locked away in the container. A lamp doesn't shine hidden under a bushel.
  - 2. Aloof Christians are selfish and secretly arrogant, not pious - Matt. 5:13
- G. Members of the church must be able to speak with others of the Gospel and reinforce it with scripture.
  - 1. It takes from two to five years to become proficient; it is a process that must be started at some point. In the beginning, we are all beginners.
  - 2. 1Peter 3:15
- H. Training is ongoing, on the job, learn as you go. We don't wait around until we are good at it, and then go teach the lost - Neh. 3:1-12, 4:6
- I. Stop making excuses! God didn't ask for excuses, He asked for souls.
  - 1. Neh. 4:7-12 - "Give me another brick!"

## II. THE RIGHT MINDSET

- A. "We are no better at converting our brethren to personal work, than we are at converting the lost to Christ." (Harold Comer)
  - 1. The church grows to its leadership, from the top down.
  - 2. Our job is to save souls, not money.
  - 3. Why has Islam made over five million converts in the USA in 50 years?
  - 4. People will rise to your level of expectation, if you work to encourage the good to come out of them.
- B. Barriers must be removed.
  - 1. Clean the building - look like a place where people gather for worship.
  - 2. Clean the members - look like people gathered for worship.
  - 3. Warm the heart - cold routine isn't worship.
  - 4. The Bible is alive! Illustrate with Elijah running behind Ahab's chariot.
  - 5. Lazy, ill-prepared preacher - rebuke him. If that fails, fire him.
  - 6. Likewise with others who lead in worship.
  - 7. Obstructionist members - "Move please, coming through."
- C. Start with what you know.
  - 1. Simple, casual invitations work best.
  - 2. Take short steps at first. "You can't eat an elephant in a few bites." (African proverb)
  - 3. Build confidence and momentum.
- D. Say to yourself: Reachable Equals Teachable.
  - 1. Make new relationships. Don't be cliquish or clannish.
  - 2. "I don't want to neglect the friends I have."
  - 3. Who has the greater need?
  - 4. YOU have to make contact with the lost!

5. Increase is accidental; growth is on purpose.
- E. If it doesn't hurt you down in your heart and gut to know that someone you see daily is going to be lost, then you do not know the terror of the Lord.
  1. 2Cor. 5:11
  2. Make the effort and get to work. This isn't a union regulated work environment.
- F. God built difficulty and discouragement into personal evangelism, so that we would go sowing and reaping with our hearts deeply invested in it.
  1. Psalm 126:5
  2. No single system was used in the New Testament. They used what they knew, and success came and went. It will be no different today.

### III. HOW DO I BEGIN?

- A. "My, isn't it good to be here away from the wicked world around us!" (words of the self-righteous) Isolating ourselves from prospects.
    1. How do you speak of outsiders?
    2. Jesus ate with publicans and sinners.
    3. Don't talk negatively about them. "You can't teach a \_\_\_\_\_."
    4. Don't talk negatively to them. "You wouldn't want to study the Bible would you?"
    5. Some Christians have so hardened against sinners that they are without compassion.
  - B. Have you asked a friend to read the Bible with you every day?
    1. Most people find it easier to discipline themselves if they have a partner
    2. YOU have to ask. They may look at your number for years without calling.
    3. Illus: "Leaky BA." Insurance man who only leaves his card. Follow up.
- What kind of prospects are you looking for? You may be discarding jewels.
1. What do you think visitors are here for?
  2. What do you think they feel when they are ignored? - James 2:1

### IV. MISTAKES TO AVOID

- A. Don't start in the middle.
  1. Going directly to controversy is like trying to teach calculus to someone who doesn't know basic mathematics.
  2. Feeding meat to the unborn.
- B. Don't make it your goal to prove them wrong.
  1. You are there to win a soul, not a theological battle.
  2. This is like building the side walls before the footer is poured.
- C. Don't act smug or superior.

1. Do not interrupt. Listen and learn what they need to be taught.
  2. Do not tell them that they are wrong. Point out the scripture, let them read it and tell you what it means.
- D. Don't be afraid to admit you don't know the answer.
1. Never say, "We teach, we believe, we feel."
  2. Never use the word opinion when talking about what is written. Scripture truth is absolute. There is NO room for ambiguity.
- E. Accept changing times and methods.
1. End the old ways when they are no longer effective. Leave the old building, departing preacher, or obsolete methods. While the Gospel does not change, the means of carrying it to the lost do change.
  2. Accept the uneasy period of transition with patience. Get behind the new works, make the adjustment, and commit to making it a success.

## **V. USE YOUTH**

- A. Young people are not part of the next generation of the church; they are part of this generation.
1. They need more than just getting their Bible lessons, passing communion, and reading scripture.
  2. We avoid using young people because we are afraid they will make mistakes.
  3. Of course, we adults don't make mistakes -- right?
- B. Young people will reflect the same interest in the Lord's work as is shown to them by adults.
1. Members need to take the initiative in this. My job is to tell you how, not do it for you.
  2. Pray for the young, not just the elders and preacher.
  3. Commend the young, not just the elders, deacons, preacher, and song leaders.
- C. Make time to be with the young.
1. Leaders need to be accessible to youth.
  2. Have studies and potlucks from home to home so that everyone gets involved.
  3. Take them out of the classroom and put them in places and give them tasks where they can apply what they've learned with supervision.
- D. Cynics, nay-sayers, and those who think they are too busy -- get out of the way. This is the Lord's work and His church; we are going to do it His way.

1. It is not enough to be non-institutional and have the correct kind of worship. We must be doing the work for which He shed His blood -- saving souls! And we will start with our young people.

## **VI. HOW TO USE YOUTH**

- A. Let them help in classes at an early age.
  1. Teaches confidence, builds a sense of responsibility.
  2. One feels more of a sense of belonging and appreciation for matters in which they have invested themselves.
  3. Conditions: they must get their own Bible lessons for other classes, and they must behave in and out of the class.
- B. Have them greet other teens.
  1. Distribute bulletins.
  2. It tells visitors that young people are important in this congregation.
  3. The most frequently expressed factor in the decision of where to worship for new converts and for Christians who have moved is "where are the young people?"
- C. Visit the elderly, shut-ins, nursing homes.
  1. Take the kids. When I visit these folks, they tell me, "Next time bring your family."
  2. Educate your children. I've learned more sitting and listening to older folks than I learned in 12 years of school and four years of college.
  3. You will raise better children. Illus: Heather and sister Rice.
- D. Have them participate in Gospel meeting preparation.
  1. Keep the meeting preacher in your home.
  2. Have the children prepare mail-outs.
  3. Have them invite friends, and be there to provide transportation.
  4. Rule of thumb: need to invite ten in order to get one to come.
- E. Develop a supplemental song book of new songs that young people know.
  1. They love to sing. Provide more opportunities for them to get together and sing.
- F. Get them to Sunday and Wednesday Bible classes and to Sunday evening Bible drill. That is one of my earliest memories of going to services.
  1. No, you are not too busy.
  2. Adults, be quiet during Bible drill. Send the message that you think that class is important. Besides that, we might learn something!
- G. Train and use the young men in worship.
  1. If I hadn't been encouraged to participate and been entrusted with the responsibility, I would not be preaching today.

## VII. PROOF OF PRODUCTIVITY

- A. Prov. 22:6 - Not just the parent's job.
  - 1. Elders, preachers, teachers, grandparents must get involved by teaching, example, interest, and encouragement.
- B. Eph. 6:4 - Fathers, that's your job. You can't delegate it to your wife or to the local church.
  - 1. Children whose fathers had an active role in their spiritual upbringing are six times more likely to obey the Gospel and remain faithful than children taught only by mothers and the leaders in the local church.
- C. 2Tim. 2:2 - That's not just my job. This is a work that elders can do, also.
  - 1. Members can be encouraging the young to become teachers.
- D. Each one bring one.
  - 1. "A Christian wrapped up in his own life makes a pretty small package."
  - 2. Jesus could have made His apostles into anything He wanted. He made them soul winners.
  - 3. What makes contemporary Christians think that Christ expects any less from them? - Matt. 28:18-20
  - 5. Illus: Deer hunter skips services, hides from a storm in a hollow log. Wood swells and he is stuck. Believes he is going to die, considers his selfish life, feels very small and crawls out of the log easily.

Conclusion: "A soul I must save,  
If I would save my own;  
For heaven's gates are closed  
To him who comes alone."

### Questions for Lesson Two

- 1. According to the apostle Paul, is there an active work role for every member of the local church?
- 2. What is the first work of any local congregation?
- 3. What are some obstacles to growth in the local church?
- 4. What kind of preaching is essential in a congregation trying to grow?

5. What should members do first when trying to reach the lost?
6. Why did God build difficulty and discouragement into soul winning?
7. Why did Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners?
8. List four mistakes often made by new personal workers:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
9. What should you do when you don't know the answer to a question asked by the prospect?
10. What should personal workers do when their methods no longer appear to be effective?
11. Why do you believe older members are reluctant to use young Christians in the work of the local church?
12. List four things young men and women can do in the work of the local church.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
13. Whose responsibility is it to get the young involved in the work of the local church?
14. What do you think the Lord will say in the Judgment to the Christians who made not effort to share the Gospel with the lost?
15. What can you do today to facilitate the work of evangelism in your community?



# Lesson Three: Conversational Evangelism, Part One

(Introduction to Conversational Evangelism; compiled from Geisler Publications)

Introduction: Our commission - Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47

## A. Why are people at a given church?

1. 2% had special a need
2. 3.5% just walked in
3. 6% liked the preacher
4. 1% visited there
5. 5% liked the Bible classes
6. 3% liked the services
7. 0.5% attended a Gospel meeting
8. 79% an invitation from a friend or relative

## B. Overview of these studies:

1. Be a worker in your heart and mind.
  - a. Be a good neighbor (Good Samaritan; It's my job).
  - b. Don't worry; just do it.
  - c. Understand what works today (Get over the past).
  - d. Be a good steward of opportunity (Eagerly observant).
2. Be a worker in your words and actions.
  - a. Develop a prospect list.
  - b. Build bridges (Develop relationships).
  - c. Share the Gospel (In conversation).
  - d. Learn lessons you can share (CEUs).

## I. CONVERSATIONAL EVANGELISM

### A. What is it?

1. Sharing God's word in everyday conversation (sowing the seed by seasoning your speech).

### B. Conversational Evangelism - How to do it.

1. Pray about teaching the lost; after all, you pray for the sick, your job, the President, your children, why not this as well?
  - a. For God to use, help, and guide you.
  - b. Paul - Col. 4:2-4; Eph. 6:19-20
2. Be the world's Bible.
  - a. Light of the world - Matt. 5:14-16
3. Answer questions:
  - a. Members of the Lord's church used to be known as a people of the book; they knew their Bibles - 1Peter 3:15
4. Recognize opportunities.

- a. Make the best use of your time - Eph. 5:16
  - b. We often miss opportunities. Tips:
    - 1) If someone says "church"
    - 2) Conversations on moral issues
    - 3) You can use any conversation.
    - 4) Ask where they're going to church.
  - c. Practice: recognize opportunities or think of how to create them.
5. Stimulate spiritual conversations
- a. Like fishing, throw out a line. You will not catch a fish every time you cast, but you will catch no fish if you make no casts.
  - b. Tips:
    - 1) Spiritual vocabulary
    - 2) Current moral issues
    - 3) Include God in conversations
    - 4) Tell people about...
  - c. Homework: Be yourself and initiate spiritual conversations.
    - 1) Do not memorize a formula conversation like a telemarketer.
    - 2) Folks are not going to trust us with the salvation of their souls until they know that we genuinely care.

Conclusion:

- A. Find a place to start. It isn't complex and mysterious. Just do it.

### **Questions for Lesson Three**

1. What is conversational evangelism?
2. What is the most common reason given by persons in the community for visiting a local congregation?
3. How can praying for the lost lead to their salvation? Will the prayer save the lost?
4. What should we be praying about regarding the lost?
5. How will we recognize opportunities in conversational evangelism to teach a prospect?
6. How can we create opportunities in conversational evangelism to teach a prospect?
7. Why is it important to just be ourselves when conversing with a prospect?

## **Lesson Four: Conversational Evangelism, Part Two**

### Introduction:

- A. Second lesson on Conversational Evangelism:
  - 1. Lesson One - Introduction
  - 2. Lesson Two - Overcoming our own barriers, limitations, and liabilities
  - 3. Lesson Three - Learning to ask questions and listen to answers
  - 4. Lesson Four - Transforming the conversation into Bible study
  - 5. Lesson Five - Ending the conversation in conversion
- B. Find some love for souls - Acts 26:29; Rom. 9:1-3; 2Cor. 12:15
- C. Find the courage to speak for Christ - 2Tim. 17; 1Cor. 16:13
- D. Find someone to speak to - Woman at the well; Ethiopian eunuch; "Go"
  - 1. John 4:35; Acts 16:9-10
- E. Find a sincere and humble way to say it - Matt. 10:16; 1Thes. 2:7-13

### **I. GETTING OUT OF OUR OWN WAY**

- A. We often stress ourselves out by thinking of the "perfect" approach to start a conversation about God.
  - 1. However, evangelism is simply about teaching the truth from personal knowledge and experience.
  - 2. Do not become stressed about the "tactics and techniques."
- B. Be natural in how you broach a spiritual topic.
  - 1. Stay focused on the fact that this is conversation, not preaching.
  - 2. Do not be overly dependent on a step-by-step process; just as individuals differ one from another, so will the conversation.
  - 3. Be careful not to turn the conversation into a monologue.
    - a. Always remember to maintain a dialogue.
    - b. Encourage the other person to contribute his thoughts, so that you will get to know what he is thinking and address any concerns he may have.

### **II. DETERMINING TO AVOID**

- A. Getting them to "come to church."
  - 1. What is your goal? Saving a soul. Prospects are not made and cultivated in assemblies as often as they once were.
  - 2. The age of the Gospel Meeting method of reaching the lost is past. It may come again one day. So do we wait for years for it to return, or do we find other more effective means of going into all the world?
  - 3. I am encouraged by your confidence in me as a preacher, but I am also realist enough to know that four out of five people converted to Christ these days will be reached and taught by members, not preachers.

4. Get them to talk with you about spiritual matters; then teach them the Gospel; then baptize them.
- B. Treating prospects as objects or as souls to be cornered and captured.
1. Notching your Bible; swelling the numbers; filling the recently vacated pews; meeting a quota to keep a preaching position.
  2. Not why we become fishers of men
  3. Angling versus net fishing
    - a. Angling is solo effort -- Net Fishing is an enterprise of partners. Evangelism is basically a partnership.
    - b. Deceit and sudden strength are used in angling. Evangelism that is not upfront and open, that manipulates and pressures, will not create trust and stability -- Net Fishing is more natural. Sharing the Gospel in a relationship based on trust and friendship, developing the new Christian integrating him into the family of God through a sustained personal relationship.
    - c. Angling is treated as a sport; individuals are interested in personal trophies or glory -- Net Fishermen fish for a living.
    - d. Angler is interested in only the catching -- Net Fisherman is vitally concerned with the keeping.
    - e. The difference between fishing with a net and fishing with a hook has to do with our respect towards human beings as persons.
- C. Rushing through the Gospel in an effort to get them baptized, thereby compromising on the quality of instruction.
1. Converting people to baptism rather than to Christ (Marshall Keeble)
  2. This may cause the prospect to miss out some key aspects of salvation and not fully understand the meaning of the Christian life.
  3. This can result in the person falling away shortly.
  4. Brushing across the issue of repentance and true change, which may cause them to take it casually and without commitment.
  5. This may give new Christians the wrong impression that they can still continue living their old lives.
- D. Painting a perfect, rosy life for the prospect.
1. Dishonest to begin with.
  2. Satan doesn't ease up when the sinner becomes a saint; he increases the pressure many times over.
- E. Teaching without tact.
1. Threatening 'Repent now!' or 'Heaven or hell? 'Choose ye this day.'
  2. "You know you're going to hell, don't you."
  3. "This is so simple and easy to understand."
  4. How long did it take you to get it?

5. How long did it take you to get the courage to commit?
6. How would you have responded to someone telling you the above?

### III. OVERCOMING PERSONAL BARRIERS

A. Don't be afraid of the truth.

1. Hell is a real word for a real place for the unsaved - 2Cor. 5:10-11

B. Don't be afraid of yourself as an instrument of God.

1. Moses making excuses to God at the burning bush.
2. "Limited speaking ability" - God made your mouth and He made the Gospel to be transmitted by means of your mouth.
3. Limited Intellectual ability; worrying how to answer questions posed by intellectual types - God made the Gospel understandable and explainable by persons of all intellectual levels.
  - a. Matt. 11:25; 1Cor. 2:17-21, 2:1-2
4. Fear of rejection; it only hurts a minute - 1Peter 4:12-14
5. Limited power; thinking that it all depends on us, when in truth the power is in the Gospel, the will to obey it is in the prospect, and the One to whom he must answer is God. Your role is small, so your power need not be great.
6. In a nutshell, the only real barrier to sharing our faith is SELF. Trust in God to guide us, guard us and empower us.

### Questions for Lesson Four

1. Is there a single perfect approach to reaching a prospect?
2. For you, what is the best approach in reaching a prospect?
3. If past methods and means of reaching prospects are no longer effective, what should the personal worker do?
4. In the present day, who is more likely to reach prospects: preachers or members?
5. List the five things one should avoid when reaching the prospect:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  - e.
6. List the two common personal barriers to reaching the lost:
  - a.
  - b.

## **Lesson Five: Conversational Evangelism, Part Three**

Introduction:

- A. Third lesson on Conversational Evangelism
  - 1. Learning to ask questions and listen to answers
- B. What is conversational evangelism?
  - 1. Sharing God's word in everyday conversation; meeting people and making prospects for salvation by being ourselves and talking about God and His will.
- C. What do we need?
  - 1. Some love for souls
  - 2. The courage to speak for Christ
  - 3. Someone to speak to
  - 4. A sincere and humble way to say it

### **I. GET TO KNOW THEM FIRST**

- A. Col. 4:5-6
- B. Mark Copeland in Relationship Evangelism
  - 1. "Relationship Evangelism is a process of developing meaningful relationships with other people in which we allow the beauty of the Gospel to first be demonstrated in our lives, and by which we build bridges (develop relationships) with our prospects that allows the Gospel flow freely and naturally."
  - 2. That which involves gradually developing relationships with those who are lost, by working with an unlimited pool of contacts (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, etc.) and by normally starting with those closest to us and working outward.
  - 3. The development of relationships involves several progressive levels:
    - a. The initial contact
    - b. Becoming better acquainted
    - c. Being a servant
    - d. Being a friend
    - e. Sharing the faith
    - f. Testimony of the Assembly of God's people
    - g. Exposure to the Gospel
    - h. Invitation
- C. Conversational evangelism differs in that it addresses casual encounters after close relationships have proven fruitless.
  - 1. However, both begin at nearly the same place; one cannot teach another effectively without knowing where to begin.

## **II. THEY MUST GET TO KNOW YOU**

- A. Develop credibility - Matt. 5:14-16
- B. After all, you plan to tell them things that will re-shape their lives in this world, and determine their eternal destiny in the world to come.
  - 1. Why should they believe you?
  - 2. Why do you care?

## **III. LEARN WHAT THEY NEED**

- A. Acts 19:1-5
- B. Personal workers trying to baptize prospects before they become believers.
  - 1. We are not selling baptism or membership; we are here to teach them the Gospel that will save their souls.
  - 2. Conversion involves:
    - a. Hearing - what they need to hear
    - b. Believing - a process of exchanging an old system of beliefs for conviction in sound doctrine; often not easy or quick
    - c. Repentance - reversal of moral purpose, as strong desire to change life by changing direction, goals, habits, behaviors, lifestyles, relationships
- C. You can train a parrot to confess the name of Jesus; you can train an animal to be dipped in water.
  - 1. We must learn where people are and what they need in order to be converted.

## **IV. LEARN WHEN TO BEGIN COMMUNICATING**

- A. Acts 17:16-17, 22-23, 28
- B. Paul began by building bridges.
  - 1. He listened to learn where they were religiously.
  - 2. He commented on their personal practice of their religion.
  - 3. He made a connection from where they were to where he wanted to take them.
  - 4. He used their religious experiences as a springboard for the Gospel.

## **V. BE A GOOD LISTENER**

- A. Reasons:
  - 1. Set an example of sincere listening.
  - 2. You can't expect them to listen to you if you are unwilling (golden rule).
  - 3. You will learn things that will make your efforts more productive.
  - 4. You will communicate concern that builds trust in the relationship.
- B. James 1:19; Acts 18:24-26

## **VI. GET A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF WHERE THEY COME FROM**

A. Gal. 1:11-16; 1Cor. 9:19-23

B. Includes learning about the error they have been taught,

## **VII. KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BELIEF AND ACTIONS**

A. Gal. 2:11-14 - How can you preach about the Christ who loves the lost if you do not feel strong compassion for them and their plight?

1. You had better walk your talk!

## **VIII. LEARN THEIR LANGUAGE**

A. What do they mean?

1. They will use words differently than you are accustomed to using. You will not be effective until you know what they mean.

2. You do this by asking courteous questions and being a good listener.

B. Acts 21:39 - 22:2

1. This is not the time to highlight your differences.

2. They need to identify with you in order to imagine themselves in your place (as a Christian; "if you can do it, then I can, too").

3. Find areas of commonality; later on this will highlight the fact that you do not share the faith and salvation in common.

## **IX. ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR RELIGIOUS EXPOSURE**

A. Acts 26:27 - Feedback indicates you have been listening and understand.

## **X. LISTEN FOR VULNERABILITIES**

A. Prejudices, stumbling blocks, weaknesses; what has prevented them from studying and obeying in the past.

1. Will prepare you to help them overcome them as your Bible study begins and progresses.

Conclusion:

A. If you cannot be a good listener, you will not be an effective teacher.

B. Listening carefully will:

1. Build a relationship with the prospect.

2. Increase your usefulness as a teacher.

3. Make you a better person over time.



## Questions for Lesson Five

1. What is the first step in conversational, or relationship evangelism?
2. Define conversational evangelism?
3. What four things will you need in order to begin conversational evangelism?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
4. In Colossians 4:5-6, apostle Paul spoke of “those who are without.” Who are they?
5. How does Paul instruct Christians to address them?
6. How does one develop credibility with a prospect? (Matt. 5:14-16)
7. Why is it important to listen to the prospect when he/she speaks of their own religious background and experiences?
8. Conversion requires that one change what he/she has believed and thought about spiritual things. What are the three stages one must pass through before confess and baptism have any power to save?
9. In Acts 17:16-28, Paul did a number of things before teaching the truth to the Athenians. What are a few of the things he did first?
10. How did Aquila and Priscilla learn what it was that Apollos needed to hear?
11. Why is important for personal workers to live the same message they are trying to teach the prospects?
12. Is acknowledging the religious beliefs and practices of the prospect the same as validating them?

## Lesson Six: Conversational Evangelism, Part Four

Introduction:

- A. Fourth lesson on Conversational Evangelism
  - 1. Lesson Four - Transforming the conversation into Bible study

### I. ASK QUESTIONS

- A. Start with questions that lead to Bible study, not challenge or confrontation.
  - 1. Col. 4:5-6
  - 2. Matt. 16:13-16 - questions that teach
  - 3. Luke 20:1-6 - questions that answer
  - 4. Acts 21:37 - questions that manifest courtesy
- B. Help understand what they already believe, but from a new, scriptural perspective - Acts 17:22-31
- C. Trust the Gospel as you and your prospect move into deeper, more direct discussion - Rom. 1:16; Acts 2:36-38
  - 1. When did Peter tell them they needed to be baptized: before or after they asked what they needed to do? Let the Gospel convict them.
- D. Your immediate goal in conversational evangelism is the Bible study; when your Bible study begins, your goal will be his or her salvation.
  - 1. At some point you must ask for a more structured Bible study than mere conversation.
  - 2. Do not ask them for a decision to obey the Gospel; that time will come.
  - 3. Personalize the Bible study for them; avoid cookie cutter Bible classes and approaches.

### II. SEARCHING QUESTIONS

(By the way, you ought to be able to answer these questions about your faith.)

- A. What is the source of his belief? Where did his faith come from?
  - 1. The source of a person's belief needs to be brought out into the open so that its objectivity can be examined. After all, are you both not examining THE faith openly and objectively?
  - 2. The source of his belief can be religious organization, person, book, popular opinion, an experience, or his own ideas. Discovery of the source will prepare you for showing the unreliability of the source.
  - 3. The possible questions you may ask are:
    - a. "Where did you learn this? Did you hear someone say this, or did you develop this?"
    - b. If the source is a false religion, ask, "Where do you think they get their belief?"

- B. What are some of the essential details of this belief? What does it offer?
1. Why have you chosen to believe this, instead of some other belief? What evidence exists that it is true?
  2. What attracts him to his belief will help you to contrast the subjective reason behind his belief with the objective reason of coming to God, God's way.
  3. Asking about the evidence that a person's belief is true will reveal what is the basis for his belief. If his basis is not the Bible alone, the foundation for his belief is flawed. This prepares you to present evidence the Bible is the only authenticated revelation of God's way.
  4. "Some people believe as you do, and some believe differently. What has led you to accept that your belief is true and not some other belief? Have you examined all the evidence and concluded this? Or did you accept what someone told you?"
- C. Are you open to Bible teaching as God's only authenticated source of information about His plans and purpose for people?
1. "Are you willing to look at the evidence yourself (the Bible) to see what it says for itself instead of just accepting what other people say about it?"
  2. "If I could show you evidence that a living God created the universe for His purposes, and that the Bible is God's words revealing His plan and purpose for people, would that be of any interest to you?"

Conclusion:

- A. Remember our journey thus far:
1. We prepared ourselves for this work; preparation was the goal
  2. We found prospects as Providence and opportunity supplied them; finding someone to teach was the goal
  3. We began a conversation that evolved into a relationship; the rapport was the goal
  4. We developed a relationship that will lead to a Bible study; the Bible study is our goal
  5. We engage the Bible class to save the soul; salvation becomes the goal

### **Questions for Lesson Six**

1. Explain the value of teaching by means of asking questions.
2. What is the difference between a question that requires facts and a question that provokes self-examination?
3. From your own Bible studies, name three persons who taught by using questions?

# Lesson Seven: Conversational Evangelism, Part Five

Introduction:

A. Fifth lesson on Conversational Evangelism

1. Ending the conversation in conversion

## I. A SINCERE AND HUMBLE WAY TO COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL

A. God entrusted delivery of the most important message this world will ever hear to the limited ability of human communication. This suggests:

1. God's utmost confidence in the power of the Gospel to transcend the limits of our speech.

2. That our own natural speech combined with our zeal for truth and love for souls will be sufficient to communicate the power of the Gospel.

3. As Christ's fishermen who love the souls we seek to save, we should endeavor to communicate the Gospel to the best of our ability, and when we have done so, trust the Gospel to do its work.

4. Once we have done so, the rest is up to the soul we have taught.

5. The Gospel is the perfect message communicated by imperfect messengers. In speaking of the words of salvation, Paul said we carry this treasure in jars made of clay, "that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2Cor. 4:7). Many personal workers assume too much responsibility for the outcome of the message, worrying over whether or not they will use the right arguments incorporating the right words in the right way using the right tone of voice and the right body language in the right setting at the right time, etc. (et ad infinitum). Just be yourself and teach the Gospel; let the word of God do the work of converting the soul (Rom. 1:16; Ps. 19:7-11).

The Lord taught that Christians are to sow; the soil is accountable for how it receives the seed (Matt. 13:18-23). Take advantage of every opportunity to speak to your neighbor, thoughtfully prepare the message you intend to give him, express it to him with conviction and concern, and then allow him to decide whether or not he will respond to the call of the Lord. "When you have accomplished your task, go to sleep in peace; God is awake" (Hugo).

B. Conversational skills needed to go from conversation to conversion

1. Why do we bother building our communication skills? Because we want to be sure that our style of communicating the Gospel isn't blocking the seeker's ability to hear it. The way we communicate must reflect what we communicate.

2. Our attitude communicates content just as our words do. If we assume that people are eager to discover the truth of Christ, they probably will.

3. If we project enthusiasm and not defensiveness, and if we carefully listen instead of sounding like a recording of 'Answers to questions you didn't happen to ask', seekers will probably become fascinated.

4. Why are we sometimes embarrassed or apologetic when we share the Gospel? Maybe it's because pockets of unbelief still reside in our soul.
5. One way to build faith in God is to acknowledge our fears and doubts and then be willing to take a risk in spite of them.
6. Or we assume that our friends won't be interested in obeying the Gospel, so we don't expect a positive response. And that becomes evident in our manner.
7. Or we fear offending them. Our fear is communicated in our manner and will translate into questions of trust in the relationship.
8. We must refuse to assume a person is closed to God.
9. We must avoid an "us vs them" defensive mentality. Unfortunately, our insecurities and fears are often misinterpreted by seekers. When we act stilted and awkward, they mistake our sense of inadequacy for arrogance or clannishness that borders on the cultic.
10. It would be far better to acknowledge our fears instead of pretending we don't have any. Be up front in telling your prospect that this is so important that you feel inadequate as a messenger.

C. Welcome every question as positive progress.

1. No question is unacceptable.
2. Learn to delight in all questions seekers may pose, especially the ones you can't answer. Tell them that you don't know the answer but can't wait to investigate it.
3. A question we can't answer is grounds not for abandoning the quest but for further exploration.
4. As Martin Luther said, "Let us not be anxious, the Gospel does not need our help; it is sufficiently strong of itself."
5. We often feel it's up to us to defend God and prove by our own wits and wisdom that we are in right and they are in error.
6. The Gospel is sufficient. The eunuch was drawn in by reading the scriptures before Philip approached him, and he was convicted by the Gospel before Philip offered an invitation to be baptized. Trust its power and be content to simply be God's mouthpiece.
7. Expose the faith; don't impose it.
8. Donald Bloesch sums it up best, "Evangelism is not the imposition of a point of view, but the overflow of a thankful heart."

C. Relax; remain calm.

1. On one hand, we should feel a sense of urgency about sharing the Gospel. We want to share the good news because we care about them and their salvation.

2. At the same time we need to learn to relax. Our role is to be a witness to the truth of God's good news.
3. We need to remember that evangelism is a process. A common question is that of timing. When is it appropriate to share the Gospel?
  - a. Pray to God for wisdom.
  - b. Be aware of the progress made by your conversation.
  - c. Trust the Gospel.
  - d. Offer the invitation.

4. By this time, you have gone past level one surface conversations. Here we talk about things external to the person, e.g. current events, sports, TV programs, newspaper article, recreation, family members, friends, activities, interests, education, working experiences.

5. We should be at level two heart conversations where a person lives and feels. At this level, we talk about things internal to the person, things closer to home, to where she feels, or to what he needs. The heart is where you find your friend's joy and pain, reasons for his belief, values that govern her choices and decisions, life meaning and purpose, agony and anger, confusions and fear. This would eventually open a conversation about spiritual things because spiritual things have to do with the needs of the heart. This is where we live; this is where the Gospel has its power. Talk to them at this level. For example:

"We have spent a lot of time together over the past few months getting acquainted, talking about matters important to us, and helping each other to become better people. I consider you a dear friend and want nothing but the best for you.

"Your soul is so precious to God that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to redeem you from your sins. He values your eternal soul so much that He developed a plan for you to live with Him in heaven when your time here is complete, if you follow His will for your life. You can become content with the humble circumstances of your life because you can come to see yourself based on God's opinion of you. How much money you have, how much education you've received, how well you are known, how much influence you wield are all peripheral details in your life; you need not depend on them for self-knowledge. As a Christian, God will know you, and that will be enough.

"You can live daily with joy and confidence because you will have already taken care of your highest needs. By attending to the requirements of that inner most part that will live forever, the needs of the outer you will have fallen into place (Matt. 6:33). You need not be afflicted by constant anxiety over material things because you can trust God's conditional promise that when you cooperate with His will for daily living, He will bless you with fundamental sustenance for the body (Phil. 4:6-13; 2Tim. 6:6-11). You can provide for your future beyond retirement in this world. God will reserve an eternal home for you that cannot be reduced in value by steep declines in the stock market (Matt. 6:19-21; 1Peter 1:3-5).

“You can be happy because you will be in love; and, when one is in love, the world is a pleasant place. You are loved by the Creator, Sustainer, and Judge of this world (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8, 8:28-39). It is wonderful to be loved by spouse, family, and friends. Yet, how much more glorious it is to be loved by the One who gave you life, Who daily blesses you with all needs, and Who will give eternal life after the Judgment! God has showered you with numberless proofs of His love for you. How can you respond in any way except to love Him in return (2 Cor. 5:14-15)?

“You can be secure in the cocoon of protection God has built around you. You will live with the daily knowledge that you are already victorious over all opponents.

“You can rejoice because you are in a fellowship closer than that of family with the very finest people alive. No matter where you go in this country or around the world, you will encounter members of this special fellowship with whom you will instantly enjoy a bond of love and friendship unlike that of any other relationship on earth. There are no words to describe the privilege of sharing the blessings in Christ with a gathering of faithful, devout children of God. You are welcome to share in that, too.

“Dear One, can any amount of money, influence, education, or physical beauty acquire those things for you? Money is a means, not an end. Influence and education are tools, not product. Personal appearance is ephemeral and pointless if one has a sin-sick soul. These things are the tin toys and shiny beads Satan has offered to distract you from pursuing the wonderful blessings offered freely by the Lord.

“You noticed that my distinct way of life sets me apart from the rest of the world, and then you asked me how I can be so happy and secure in the midst of unpleasant circumstances. The Gospel of Christ gave me the power and freedom to choose to be this way; I am no longer limited to the dead-end options of this limited physical existence. Through the Gospel, I chose the immortal over the temporary, the impressive over the impotent, and the spiritual over the secular; I chose heavenly treasure over worldly junk. And you can, too. Will you obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ today?”

## **II. WHAT IF THEY SAY NO?**

A. “My life is not in order.”

1. Opportunity! This is your friend. Offer to help them do so.
2. Compliment them for honest self-awareness. Your Bible study has taught them self-examination. They are closer than they were before you began.

B. “It would mean my grandmother was lost.” Opportunity; your invitation has just been handed to you on a silver platter.

1. Ask direct questions: Did your grandmother want the best for you? Did she teach to always do right? What would she tell you to do if she learned the things you have discovered in our study?

C. “I need to learn more.”

1. Opportunity; the Gospel has opened their mind to their own limits and exposed them to a world larger than the one they live in.
2. They conscientiously want to know that this is the right thing to do and then they want to be certain to enter the kingdom the right way.

D. "Not right now."

1. Does not mean "not ever." You have made a friend; it was not time to ask. You did nothing wrong. Just maintain the relationship and give them time.

### **Questions for Lesson Seven**

1. The Gospel is a perfect message taught by \_\_\_\_\_ messengers.
2. God entrusted delivery of the most important message this world will ever hear to the limited ability of human communication. What does this imply?
3. Who is responsible if the message of the Gospel is rejected: the teacher or the hearer?
4. Why is the teacher not accountable if the Gospel is rejected by the hearer?
5. What impact does the teacher's attitude toward the Gospel have on the hearer?
6. How should the teacher view questions from the prospect?
7. What should the teacher do if he/she does not know the answer?
8. We need to remember that evangelism is a \_\_\_\_\_.
9. What is the difference between level one and level two conversations?
10. Personal workers will often encounter objections to elements of the message and the invitation to obey the Gospel. How would you answer the following objections:
  - a. "My life is not in order."
  - b. "It would mean my grandmother was lost."
  - c. "I need to learn more."
  - d. "Not right now."



## Lesson Eight: Which Church Would Jesus Assemble with Today?

(Compiled from a sermon by Sewell Hall, 1985)

### Questions:

- A. What does Jesus want of us today?
  - 1. He wants the same thing as His Father.
  - 2. 2Peter 3:9 - He wants us to be saved.
- B. How would Jesus want to accomplish that?
  - 1. The same question was asked in Acts 2:36-37.
  - 2. Peter's sermon caused them to fear retribution and to seek to avoid it.
  - 3. Peter's answer - Acts 2:38-40.
  - 4. It is what Christ wanted him to say - Luke 24:46-49.
  - 5. It's what He told Peter to say about obtaining salvation - Matt. 28:18-20.
- C. How many plans of salvation did Jesus give to His disciples?
  - 1. Jesus did not make exceptions; all people are to be saved by His instructions.
  - 2. If He made exceptions, God would have a double standard.
  - 3. He would be a respecter of persons - James 2:1-9; Acts 10:34; Deut. 10:17; Rom. 2:11
- D. Have conditions changed since then?
  - 1. Does man still need to be saved? - Rom. 3:23, 6:23
  - 2. Has God changed his word? - Gal. 1:8-9; Heb. 13:8
  - 3. If that was needed then to be saved, that is what is needed today.
- E. Once we have been baptized and our sins washed away, what do we do next?
  - 1. Most believers know they must become part of a body of believers.
  - 2. It is instinctive to become part of a church - Acts 9:24.
  - 3. Many see that joining with a denomination just divides up the believers.
    - a. John 17:20-21; 1Cor. 1:10
    - b. Different creeds, leaderships, competitiveness, prejudice, etc.
    - c. Fighting among religious groups that profess to be followers of a peaceful Christ!
  - 4. Options:
    - a. Join it anyway, marring their original good intentions,
    - b. Join with the intention to unite all of them together (soon discouraged),
    - c. Give up and worship alone (displeasing to the Lord).
  - 5. There is a fourth option: do what Jesus would do.

### I. WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

- A. What denomination would Jesus belong to today?
  - 1. "There were none in his day." Untrue!

- a. There were a number of sects or parties in his day, equivalent to modern day denominations.
  - b. Sadducees - had a great zeal for the temple, but did not believe in the resurrection.
  - c. Pharisees - had a great zeal for scriptures, but held to human tradition and hated government.
  - d. Herodians - obeyed the government but were morally bankrupt.
  - e. Essenes - believed in abstinence & purity, but were isolationists
  - f. There were denominations within the first 21 years -  
1Cor. 1:12-13, 3:1-4
2. Jesus did not become a member of a sect, but was simply a believer and follower of God.
- a. Did not try to organize all of the sects into one giant super denomination. (No unity in diversity)
  - b. Sought to unite himself with God rather than a sect of men.
  - c. He just did the will of God, His Father -  
John 4:23-24, 34, 5:30, 6:38
  - d. What did he accomplish by this? - John 10:30, 37-38
3. What denomination would Jesus be a part of today? He would not be part of a sect of men! He would be united in fellowship with God.
- B. What next?
- 1. The next thing Jesus did after uniting himself with God was to get others to be united with God.
  - 2. Get others to do the same - John 17:20-21.
  - 3. How; by creating some super denomination?
  - 4. By doing just what Jesus did - John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38.
  - 5. Can we know we are united with God?
    - a. When we keep God's will just like Jesus did - 2John 9; Eph. 3:3-4

## **II. IF JESUS DID NOT JOIN A DENOMINATION AND DID NOT TEACH US TO JOIN ONE, WHAT DENOMINATION SHOULD WE BECOME A MEMBER OF?**

- A. Acts 2 - What denomination did they join?
- 1. If they were just followers of Christ, why can't we be the same?
  - 2. What sermon would Peter preach if he were here today?
    - a. The same one he did on Pentecost.
    - b. If the message is the same, the response of the hearers should be the same, too.
- B. If Peter preached at the Local High School stadium and 3000 were baptized in the nearest body of water, to what denomination would they belong?
- 1. They would be believers and followers of Christ!

- C. Suppose some of them formed a denomination; would that make the rest of the faithful believers and followers of Jesus Christ denominationalists?
- D. Now what do these believers and followers of Christ do when they get home? (Forget the matter?)
1. Do what the believers did in Acts 2:42-47.
  2. The believers were in fellowship with each other.
  3. They assembled together as a body of followers of Christ, as some of the duties they were given couldn't be carried out individually.
  4. Some do not want to be part of a body of believers and followers of Christ as they do not want the responsibilities that come with the privileges.
- E. Groups of believers and followers of Christ in a given area were a local church
1. Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4
  2. That church had a doctrine - Acts 2:42.
  3. That church had fellowship and sharing - Acts 2:43-46.
  4. That church worshiped together - Acts 2:42, 5:42.
  5. That church had a treasury - Acts 4:31-35.
  6. That church had an organization - Acts 6:1-6, 15:6. 11:29-30.
- F. Not a denomination, but a body of believers and followers of Jesus Christ!
1. There is a difference between a body of believers and followers of Christ and a humanly devised denomination of men.
- G. That Church had a name.
1. Christ is the Head - Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23
  2. Christ is the Builder - Matt. 16:18
  3. Christ is the foundation - Eph. 2:19-20; 1Cor. 3:11
  4. Christ's blood bought - Acts 20:28
  5. Christ is Savior of the Church - Eph. 5:23
  6. Christ's doctrine rules it - 2John 9-11
  7. The Church is the Bride of Christ - Rom. 7:4
  8. The Body of Christ - Col. 1:18, 24
  9. All Blessings are in Christ - Eph. 1:3
  10. We are baptized into Christ - Gal. 3:26-27; 1Cor. 12:12-13
  11. We must preach Christ only - Acts 8:4-5, 12; 1Cor. 2:2
  12. Salvation is only in Christ - Acts 4:12; John 14:6
- H. Whose name should the Church wear?!
1. Jesus Christ would assemble with the Church that wears His name.
  2. Col. 1:18
  3. And now, where will you choose to assemble?

## Questions for Lesson Eight

1. What does Jesus want of us today?
2. How would Jesus want to accomplish that?
3. How many plans of salvation did Jesus give to His disciples?
4. Have conditions changed since then?
5. Once we have been baptized and our sins washed away, what do we do next?
6. What denomination would Jesus belong to today?
7. If Jesus did not join a denomination and did not teach us to join one, what denomination should we become a member of?
8. What denomination did they join in Acts chapter two on Pentecost?
9. If Peter preached at the Local High School stadium and 3000 were baptized in the nearest body of water, to what denomination would they belong?
10. Suppose some of them formed a denomination; would that make the rest of the faithful believers and followers of Jesus Christ denominationalists?
11. What do these believers and followers of Christ do after they have been baptized?
12. What five things identified the body of believers and followers of Jesus Christ in Acts chapter two as a church?
13. Does the word of God give a name to that body of believers and followers of Jesus Christ?
14. When one becomes a believer and follower of Jesus Christ made according to the New Testament pattern, with which church should he/she assemble?

# Lesson Nine: Local Church Discipline

## I. FELLOWSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

- A. It is essential that we understand what constitutes local church fellowship before we attempt to study withdrawing fellowship.
  - 1. "Fellowship" - a sharing or commonality; communion; giving a share, receiving a share, sharing together in common.
  - 2. "Church" - a called-out group; an assembly with a purpose.
    - a. Any assembly - Acts 19:39.
    - b. All of the saved - Heb. 12:22-23.
    - c. A local body of Christians - Rev. 2:1.
  - 3. "Local church fellowship" - the sharing or commonality of spiritual matters between and among members of a local group of Christians.
- B. How is fellowship established in:
  - 1. The universal church? Fellowship is Divine in origin, maintenance, and severance; human cooperation necessary - 1John 1:6-7
  - 2. The local church? Fellowship is originated, maintained, and ended by human beings as the church; Divine guidance is necessary.
    - a. Acts 9:26; 1Peter 5:1-2; 2Thes. 3:6
    - b. Fellowship at the local level is extended and withdrawn by the local church guided by spiritual leadership only.
    - c. Individual members do not extend or withdraw fellowship at the local level apart from the consensus of the church.
    - d. Once fellowship has been extended or withdrawn by the local church, the individual members acknowledge and practice fellowship with one another accordingly.
- C. Perversions of local church fellowship.
  - 1. Accepting those whom God has rejected - 2John 9-11
  - 2. Rejecting those whom God has accepted - 3John 9-10

## II. WHAT IS LOCAL CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

- A. Definitions of discipline.
  - 1. Secular - Training that develops; orderly conduct; submission to control; a particular system of rules; treatment that corrects.
  - 2. Biblical - To bind, discipline, correct, chasten, restrain; to reform by words or actions; the training of a child, including instruction; hence, discipline, correction.
- B. Types of local church discipline:
  - 1. Instructive discipline: preventative in nature (includes all teaching, edification, admonition, and instruction).

- a. Christ commanded it - Matt. 28:18-20.
    - b. Early church practiced it - Acts 2:42.
    - c. Apostolic examples - Acts 20:20-27.
  - 2. Punitive discipline: corrective in nature (reproving, rebuking, correcting, warning, withdrawing fellowship).
    - a. Christ commanded it - Matt. 18:15-17.
    - b. Paul was inspired to command it - 2Thes. 3:6.
    - c. Holy Spirit gave an example - Acts 5:1-14.
  - 3. Misuses of local church discipline:
    - a. Not used for revenge or getting even - Rom. 12:19; 2Thes 3:15
    - b. Not used to get rid of a dislikable person - 2Thes. 3:14; Gal. 6:1
    - c. Should not be a spring cleaning process - 1Cor. 14:40.
- C. The practice of local church discipline today.
- 1. The practice of local church discipline is rare in churches of Christ today
    - a. Due in part to churches abandoning scriptural elderships in exchange for the business meeting system.
    - b. Also due to elders in an age of declining membership fearing to risk more losses from the practice of discipline.
  - 2. The scriptural practice of local church discipline is even more rare.
  - 3. The scriptural and consistent, unbiased practice of local church discipline is rarest of all.

### **III. THE NEED FOR LOCAL CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

- A. Is seen in the effects of tolerated sin:
  - 1. Sinner loses soul - 1Cor. 5:5.
  - 2. Church loses influence - 1Cor. 5:6.
  - 3. God is displeased - Rev. 2:20.
  - 4. 1Cor. 5:1-6 - exegete
- B. Is seen in the need to respect Divine authority.
  - 1. Under the Old Law, those who rejected Divine authority died - Lev. 10:1-2; Heb. 10:28.
  - 2. Under the law of Christ, congregations who reject His authority are digressive - Rev. 3:1-6.
- C. Is seen in the purposes of punitive discipline:
  - 1. To maintain the authority of Christ - Luke 6:46.
  - 2. To maintain the purity in the church - 1Cor. 5:6-7; Eph. 5:27.
  - 3. To maintain unity in the church - Acts 20:29-31; Rom. 16:17-18.
  - 4. To maintain the good influence of the church - Acts 5:1-14.
  - 5. To save the erring - Matt. 18:15; 1Cor. 5:5; 2Cor. 7:10.

#### **IV. HOW TO PRACTICE LOCAL CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

- A. Five steps of local church discipline (It is essential to understand this)
  - 1. Public instruction - Acts 20:20, 27, 31.
  - 2. Private instruction - Heb. 3:13.
  - 3. Private rebuke and admonishment - Matt. 18:15-16; Luke 17:3-4.
  - 4. Public rebuke - Gal. 2:11-14; 1Tim. 5:20.
  - 5. Withdrawal of spiritual and social fellowship - Rom. 16:17; 1Cor. 5:9-13; 2Thes. 3:6; 2Tim. 3:5; Titus 3:10-11; 3John 10.
- B. Procedure in a matter of private sin - Matt. 18:15-17.
  - 1. Private meeting and instruction - Matt. 18:15.
  - 2. Private rebuke with two or three witnesses - Matt. 18:16.
  - 3. Private warning by the church (elders) - 1Thes. 5:14.
  - 4. Public withdrawal of fellowship by the church - Matt. 18:17.
- C. Procedure in a matter of public sin - 1Cor. 5:11; 2Thes. 3:11, 6; Heb. 10:25; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-11.
  - 1. Public instruction (for a large group) - Gal 1:6, 3:1.
  - 2. Private instruction (for a single individual) - Acts 8:20.
  - 3. Private warning by the church - 1Thes. 5:14.
  - 4. Public warning by the church - 1Tim. 5:20.
  - 5. Public withdrawal of fellowship - 1Cor. 5; 2Thes. 3.
- D. Procedure with a heretic or factious brother - Titus 3:10-11.
  - 1. Who are the factious and heretical?
    - a. False teachers - Rom. 16:17; Acts 20:29-31; 2John 9-11.
    - b. One who binds private opinion as doctrine - Rom. 14; 1Cor. 8.
    - c. The dominators and self-willed - 3John 9-10.
  - 2. These are to be granted very little patience - Gal. 2:4-5; Ecc. 8:11.
  - 3. A short procedure; two warnings only.
    - a. Private instruction - Acts 18:24-26.
    - b. Public rebuke - Titus 3:10; 1:9-14.
    - c. Mark and avoid - Rom. 16:17-18; 2John 9-11.
- E. If at any point in these procedures the sinner repents and confesses his sins, the process of punitive discipline ceases - Luke 17:3.

#### **V. WITHDRAWING FELLOWSHIP**

- A. Have the proper attitude.
  - 1. Right action can be negated by wrong attitude - John 4:24; Matt. 18:7-9.
  - 2. Do not lose sight of the purpose of discipline - 1Cor. 5:5-7; Matt. 18:15.
  - 3. Discipline with love - John 13:34.
  - 4. Discipline with firm resolve - 1Cor. 15:58.
  - 5. Discipline orderly - 1Cor. 14:40.

6. Discipline in unity - 1Cor. 5:4, 1:10.
  7. Discipline consistently - 1Tim. 5:21.
- B. Maintain individual Christian duties toward the disciplined.
1. We are our brother's keeper - Gal. 6:1-2; James 5:19-20.
  2. Respect the marking by the church - Rom. 16:17.
  3. Avoid association that implies endorsement of their manner of life - 2John 9-11; 1Cor. 5:11; 2Thes. 3:14.
  4. Consider them as erring Christians to be prayed for and admonished - 1John 5:16; 2Thes. 3:15.
  5. View them as unsaved (Matt. 18:17), but not as an enemy (2Thes. 3:15).
  6. Seek to restore them by means of repentance and confession - James 5:16-20.
  7. Forgive completely when they repent - 2Cor. 2:5-8, 7:9-12.

### **ANSWERING OBJECTIONS**

1. "We can't withdraw from them until every member has been to see them."
  - a. Jesus taught in Matt. 18:15-17
2. "The parable of the tares teaches us to leave them alone and not bother them."
  - a. Parable of the tares does not void the direct command to discipline.
3. "We might get sued."
  - a. Since when was that ever a consideration?
4. "It will just drive them further away from the church."
  - a. They are already leaving the church.
5. "It will make folks angry with us (inside or outside of the church)."
  - a. Should we change baptism to keep folks happy?
6. "They have already withdrawn from the church."
  - a. Doesn't change the Divinely mandated duty of the church.
7. "Everyone sins; what sins will you start with?"
  - a. Sins in which one persists without repentance.
8. "We have several people that need withdrawn from years ago. Are you going to go back and get them too, too?"
  - a. Should past mistakes determine present action? Repent of neglecting discipline and start doing it the right way.
9. "We don't have elders, so we can't withdraw from anyone."
  - a. We can't do anything commanded of the church, if this is true. Discipline is work of the church, not merely the elders.
10. "You're judging people. God decides who's in the church & who goes to heaven."
  - a. John 7:24 - You had to make a judgment when you received them into fellowship, didn't you?



11. "You can't talk about others' sins" - 1Tim. 5:20
12. "What if withdrawing from someone does more damage than good?"
  - a. The damage has already been done by the sinner. Sin has consequences, and the responsibility for those consequences fall to the sinner
  - b. Discipline is the God ordered means of healing the damage.
  - c. God's people do God's will regardless of how unpleasant it may seem.
  - d. What of those who have lost family and friends because they stood for truth against institutionalism, the instrument, etc.

### **WHAT MUST THE DISCIPLINED CHRISTIAN DO IN ORDER TO BE RESTORED TO FELLOWSHIP?**

1. Dropping back into services isn't enough. Time does not remove sins.
2. When it gets to the point that a congregation is about to withdraw from someone, that one must make a public confession of wrong.
  - a. He must confess the sins for which he is being disciplined.
  - b. The repentance and confession must be genuine. ("bring forth fruits meet for repentance")
  - c. The confession is invalid when it contains the word "if".
  - d. Denying the authority of the elders or business meeting in which one was disciplined does not constitute a confession.
  - e. An accusation of other brethren does not constitute a confession.
  - f. One who has made an invalid confession is still under the aegis of the disciplinary action. He is still withdrawn from.
  - g. The members of any congregation who continue to have fellowship with him commit sin and become candidates for discipline themselves.

### **Questions for Lesson Nine**

1. Why is it important to understand fellowship in the local church before considering the matter of withdrawing fellowship?
2. What is fellowship?
3. What is the meaning of the word church?
4. How is fellowship established in the church universal?
5. How is fellowship established in a local church?

6. What are the two perversions of fellowship in local churches?

- a.
- b.

7. What is the meaning of the word discipline?

8. What are the two types of local church discipline?

- a.
- b.

9. Is the practice of local church discipline a command or merely an option?

10. Give three reasons why local church discipline is needed:

- a.
- b.
- c.

11. List the five purposes of local church discipline:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

12. List the five scriptural steps of local church discipline:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

13. What is the difference in approach between local church discipline for a private sin vs. a public sin?

14. How does discipline for a heretic differ from other forms of disciplinary actions?

15. Describe the manner in which public withdrawal of fellowship should occur.

16. List some of the duties of individual Christians toward the disciplined.

17. Are any of the listed common objections to discipline powerful enough to void the New Testament command for local churches to withdraw from the impenitent erring member?

18. Can a disciplined member return to fellowship in the local church without addressing the matter of having been disciplined?

# Lesson Ten: Fellowship with Family Members Who Have Been Disciplined

- A. We are not addressing the following:
  - 1. The command for local church discipline,
  - 2. How to practice withdrawing fellowship,
  - 3. Who should be disciplined and why they should be disciplined.
- B. We are going to study the uncomfortable and somewhat controversial subject of eating with family members who have been withdrawn from.
  - 1. Some have considered this an eccentric scruple of conscience.
  - 2. Some do not believe this command is in the Bible.
  - 3. Some believe they do not have to keep this command.
  - 4. Some try to rationalize their way out of keeping this command.
- C. We will examine the following questions:
  - 1. What does the word of God say?
  - 2. Can we understand what God has said?
  - 3. In what scriptural circumstances is one excused from the command?
  - 4. What happens when a follower of God puts family before God's will?
  - 5. Can one make an objection to keeping God's command that He will accept on Judgment Day?

## I. WHAT DOES THE WORD OF GOD SAY?

A. All translations of the scriptures available to me (13) say essentially the same thing: do not eat with a brother in sin and under the discipline of the 1Corinthians 5:11 context. This is a matter of doctrine and not a scruple of conscience.

King James Version - "with such an one no not to eat"

New King James Version - "not even to eat with such a person."

American Standard Version - "with such a one no, not to eat."

New American Standard Bible - "not even to eat with such a one."

Revised Standard Version - "not even to eat with such a one."

World English Bible - "Don't even eat with such a person."

Weymouth New Testament - "With such a man you ought not even to eat."

Modern King James Version - "with such a one not to eat."

Bible in Basic English - "nor take food with him."

Contemporary English Version - "Don't even eat with them!"

Young's Literal Translation - "with such a one not even to eat together"

Montgomery's New Testament - "No, with such persons do not even sit at table."

Darby's Translation - "with such a one not even to eat."

## II. CAN WE UNDERSTAND WHAT GOD HAS SAID?

A. All commentaries available to me (10), written both by brethren and by denominationalists agree. We are not to eat with erring Christians under discipline. It is evident that this is a clear matter of doctrine and not a scruple of conscience.

B. J. W. McGarvey - "Have no interchange of hospitality which would imply brotherly recognition, lest the church should thereby not only be disgraced, but corrupted."

C. Michael Willis (Truth Commentaries) - "Church discipline is social ostracism; therefore, it is effective or ineffective in direct proportion to how well the members personally disassociate themselves from the sinner. If the congregation, as a body, withdraws from a brother but individually the members continue to associate with the brother, the disfellowshipping will not be effective. The prohibition against social intermingling is further defined to include not eating with the rebellious brother. To sit down together to enjoy a meal implies that one condones the actions of the other. By refusing this type of association with a brother, his conduct is being disapproved and he is being rebuked. Again, I should add that no animosity is intended in such a withdrawal of fellowship. The withdrawal should not be done with vengeance but with the intention of saving his soul. Any Christian who ignores this commandment of God and associates with those from whom the church has withdrawn should be disciplined himself."

D. Eerdman's Pulpit Commentary - "The reasons for this prohibition are obvious. (1) It could scarcely be other than injurious to our own moral nature to be intimate with those whose life belies their creed, whose hypocrisy is unmistakable. (2) Such intimacy would be interpreted by the world as meaning that in our esteem it is of little consequence what a man is, if he only professes to be Christ's. (3) And there can be no question that to cultivate the friendship of a hypocrite would tend to encourage him in his sinful courses whilst to withdraw from his society might lead him to repentance.

"Until he repents, we are not to have fellowship with him, not even to eat with him, but to show him by our conduct what has been expressed in the Church's decree that he is separated until repentance. If this were not so: 1. The force of Church discipline would be seriously weakened. It would become largely unmeaning. It would be very idle, as well as scandalously contradictory, to cut off from fellowship and to admit to it at the same time. 2. The effect upon the offender would be lessened. Church discipline does not lose sight of his welfare; it is directed towards his recovery and restoration. But if it is to produce this effect it must be felt. It cannot be felt if practically it is destroyed. 3. It would seem as though the evil were lightly esteemed. This would bring a great scandal upon Christianity. It would not only expose it to contempt, but justify contempt. 4. There would be much peril to the other members of the Church. We may not have fellowship: (1) for our own sake; (2) for such friends' sake; (3) for the sake of others who may observe our friendship, and, above all, (4) for Christ's sake, who

said, through his servant, 'Come out from among them ... and touch not the unclean thing, and will receive you.'

E. Albert Barnes - "Not to do anything that would seem to acknowledge him as a brother; with such an one not even to eat at the same table. A similar course is enjoined by John (2John 1:10-11). This refers to the course of common life. The true Christian was wholly to disown such a person, and not to do anything that would seem to imply that he regarded him as a Christian brother. This is required in keeping the church pure, and of not doing anything that would seem to imply that Christians were the patrons and friends of the intemperate and the wicked."

F. Adam Clarke - "You must not even thus far acknowledge a man professing Christianity, who is scandalous in his conduct. Let him have this extra mark of your abhorrence of all sin; and let the world see that the Church does not tolerate iniquity."

G. Jamieson-Faussett-Brown - "No not to eat--not to sit at the same table with such; whether at the love-feasts or in private course."

H. Matthew Henry - "Therefore on this occasion he tells them that they should not keep company with him, nor so much as eat with such a one. They were to avoid all familiarity with him; they were to have no commerce with him: but, that they might shame him, and bring him to repentance, must disclaim and shun him."

I. Robertson's NT Word Pictures - "Associative instrumental case of *toioutôi* after *sunesthiein*, 'not even to eat with such a one.' Social contacts with such 'a brother' are forbidden."

J. Gill - "But his sense was, that they should keep no company with persons guilty of the sins mentioned, who bore the name of Christian brethren, and were members of the same church; and indeed, so much familiarity with them should not be indulged, as even to eat with them."

People's New Testament Commentary - "Church members must not have social intercourse with one who has been a member who is guilty of the grievous sins named."

### **III. IN WHAT SCRIPTURAL CIRCUMSTANCES IS ONE EXCUSED FROM THIS COMMAND?**

A. Note that the assembled church is the body addressed in 1Corinthians 5:

Vs. 1 - "among you"

Vs. 2 - "taken away from among you"

Vs. 4 - "when you are gathered together"

Vs. 6 - "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

Vs. 12 - "those who are inside"

Vs. 13 - "put away from yourselves the evil person"

Is Paul speaking to local churches or individual families? Obviously, he is addressing the local church. One might object by saying "But my son in the flesh is also

my brother in Christ." Yet, that does not alter the fact that 1Corinthian 5 instructions are for the local church to carry out as an assembled body for the benefit of the local church.

Families are separate institutions, governed differently than the local church, and endowed with different responsibilities. Parents are to love, nurture, and provide for their children. Children are to respect and obey their parents. Husbands and wives are to dwell together in intimate communication with one another. The command to withdraw fellowship does not supersede nor make invalid our duties in the home; nor does fulfilling our duties at home imply fellowship or brotherly recognition and endorsement. Familial relationships in the home do not denote, connote, nor otherwise imply spiritual fellowship in the body of Christ. It is true that if a Christian fails to discharge his duties properly at home, he will lose his fellowship with God. However, one's relationship in the home is based upon his responsibilities to the home. His duties in the home are distinct from his fellowship in the church unless and until he fails in his duties at home.

Likewise one's duties in the local church are not limited by his duties in the home. Can a wife justify forsaking the assembling because her husband demands it? Similarly, decisions made in the local church cannot require that Christians violate God's instructions to them for the care of their spouses and children. A local church cannot require men to assemble so frequently and for so long, that they are unable to work and support their families.

Where does one draw the line in the home? All Bible students agree that social interaction implies fellowship. Do parents take the withdrawn from children on vacation? Do they attend their children's school functions? Does the wife of a withdrawn from man cohabit with him? Does a child take care of an elderly withdrawn from parent? If social interaction implies fellowship, and any activity in the home can be considered social interaction, then any interaction in the home is forbidden. It becomes clear at this point that local church discipline does not apply to all of one's relationships and responsibilities in the home.

In addition, one cannot limit the forbidden contact to eating only. Paul said in 1Corinthians 5:9 that they were "not to company with" the unrepentant, sinning brethren. Therefore, forbidden social contact is not limited to eating only. No one is prepared to carry the matter this far. Yet if one is going to advocate that he cannot eat with his withdrawn from spouse, then consistency demands that he not have any other social contact with her, too.

The Amish practice an extreme form of this isolation of the disciplined called "shunning"; the Mennonites call it "the ban." They not only refuse to eat with the shunned, but they also refuse to speak to them or have any contact with them except to teach them to repent. This is more in keeping with 2Thessalonians 3. However, they mistakenly apply it to the family.

However, there are limits to which withdrawn from family members one can eat with. One is limited to eating with only those to whom he has scriptural responsibilities.

Parents are responsible to raise their children. When the children are raised, that duty ends and there are no commands to be neglected. If they eat with the children after they leave home forming their own households, then 1Corinthians 5:11 has been violated. A child is required to "requite" aged, infirm parents. The command exists WHEN his parents become aged and infirm. If there is no condition of responsibility to be met, then one has no business socializing with the withdrawn from, even if they are blood kin. For example, what of one who is 40 has a withdrawn from fleshly brother who is five years older than himself? What duty does he have to him other than to admonish him to repent? None. Therefore, a social relationship with him is unjustified.

To simply claim family relationship is not a scriptural justification. The burden of proof falls to you to provide a clear passage of scripture to justify a social relationship. This is not opinion, application, or scruple; this is Bible authority. You must supply book, chapter and verse. Only where a clear command exists that directs Christians to maintain familial responsibilities may one eat with a withdrawn from family member.

#### **IV. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A FOLLOWER OF GOD PUTS FAMILY BEFORE GOD'S WILL?**

- A. 2Sam. 16-17 - Absalom shamed his father, plotted against the king, and lead a rebellion that thrust Israel into civil war that made the nation vulnerable to attack from outside enemies.
  - 1. David's answer - 2Sam. 18:5
  - 2. God's answer - 2Sam. 18:9-16
  - 3. David's response - 2Sam. 18:31-33, 19:1-4
  - 4. Joab's rebuke - 2Sam. 19:5-7
- B. Nothing good will ever come from putting family before the will of God.

#### **V. CAN ONE MAKE AN OBJECTION TO KEEPING GOD'S COMMAND THAT HE WILL ACCEPT ON JUDGMENT DAY?**

- A. "I have never seen it do any good." (refusing to eat with disciplined members)
  - 1. Personal experience is not an acceptable standard for authority. One could just as easily say that taking a stand against the institution did not do any good, since brethren are still firmly divided over it. We would not apply this standard to any other matter of revealed doctrine.
  - 2. There are reasons why this has not worked in the past:
    - a. The local church does not have a close relationship with the disciplined member so from his perspective nothing is lost by being disciplined.
    - b. The local church waits too long before discipline to the extent that the erring brother is gone so long that he no longer misses the fellowship.

- c. Not all members of the local church practice the command to avoid eating with disciplined members, thus negating the effect of withdrawing fellowship.
  - d. Discipline is not practiced consistently. Partiality negates the effect of discipline and destroys the influence of elders.
- B. "I believe the disciplined person might come back to the faith if we eat with him/her."
  - 1. This is the equivalent of saying, "Let us do evil that good may come." God did not tolerate it when King Saul brought back Agag and the animals for sacrifice. Certainly it is good to restore the erring, but it is not good to violate a clear instruction to do so. 1Sam. 15:13-23
  - 2. I know of a lot of people we could baptize if we had dinners here at the building. I know of a lot of neighbors who would come to church here if we had a softball team.
  - 3. How many people could we reach under the guise of trying to teach them if we are willing to set aside clear commands of the Lord in order to do so?
- C. "I know that what I am doing is not right, but please allow this to be."
  - 1. When Samuel rebuked Saul for disregarding God's will, Saul acknowledged his sin, but asked Samuel to stand with him in the presence of the people to imply that nothing was wrong and so that he would not lose face. The correct way to handle error is to be humble and repent. 1Sam 15:24-30
- D. "I know many faithful preachers, elders, and Christians who don't believe we need to keep this command."
  - 1. All the more reason to hold one's self to a higher standard of behavior and to live above reproach. Our priorities are as follows:
    - a. First -- we have a duty to the truth above all other considerations. Titus 1:9-16
    - b. Second - we have a duty to the local church to do all things for its spiritual well-being before we consider our own personal interests - 1Peter 5:1-4
    - c. Third - Our personal interests come after the first two priorities have been properly discharged.
  - 2. When faithful Christians choose to set aside this command of the Lord:
    - a. They place family before the will of God.
    - b. They place family before the spiritual well-being of the church.
    - c. They set a poor example before the disciplined family member by laying aside a clear command.



- d. Set up circumstances where conscientious brethren would believe they had been led to sin.
  - e. They increase the potential for disruption to the peace and unity of the congregation.
  - f. Increase the burden of faithful brethren who are endeavoring to keep the will of God in this matter.
- E. "People could sit at other tables and not eat with them."
- 1. This is a sophistry. Proximity is not under consideration in 1 Corinthians 5; purpose, intention, and implication are at the heart of the matter. For example, if I were to encounter a disciplined Christian in a restaurant, I would not be eating with him. I did not purpose to eat with him; I have no intention to have social associations with him; and therefore, I am not implying to him or to others that we are in fellowship. However, in the incident under consideration there was purpose to have a social interaction, there was an intent to be with him in the eating of a meal. The implication to him and others is that we find it more important to show him affection and acceptance than to shame him as commanded by the Lord. That shame, as unpleasant as it feels to us and to others, is designed to teach (discipline) him.
  - 2. One cannot purpose to attend such a function knowing that a disciplined member will be there and say he will not be eating with him. This is intellectually dishonest. The only circumstance where one would be guiltless in such matters is if he were not aware of his presence.

Conclusion:

- A. Matthew 10:37-38
- B. If you truly love the Lord and your disciplined family member, you will manifest this love to both of them by obeying the Lord's will in this matter. God knows what is best for both of you.
- C. Just as disciplining an erring child is unpleasant, but necessary to his well-being, so is carefully practicing local church discipline uncomfortable, but also essential for the salvation of the erring brother.
- D. Do not undermine the discipline commanded by the Lord and render ineffective our efforts to restore the erring by ignoring this command.

## Questions for Lesson Ten

1. Every local church is required to practice local church discipline. Are individual Christians required to support this action undertaken by the church?
2. Can we understand alike what God has said in this matter?
3. What is the New Testament command regarding eating with disciplined members?
4. When apostle Paul gave the command in 1Corinthians 5:9-11, was it directed to the local church or to individual family members?
5. Are there differences between commands given to local churches vs. commands given to individual family members?
6. What are the limits to which withdrawn from family members one may eat with?
7. What happens when one puts family relationships above the commands of God?
8. Can one make an objection to keeping God's command that He will accept on Judgment Day?
9. What will be the effects of ignoring the efforts of the local church to discipline an unrepentant erring member?
10. Does the fact that a number of local churches, as well as preachers and elders, do not practice local church discipline correctly somehow justify our own failure to practice it scripturally?