

Reaching
The Lost
With the Gospel!

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*(Ideas and concepts are shared from the book, "Concentric
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The outline of messages are my own.*

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Preface

Should fruit bearing becomes one of our greatest concerns? If a Church is “*commission and command driven*” as it ought to be, will that make a difference in what takes place in the church and in our lives?

Could it be that we are majoring on minors and minoring on those things that ought to be major in our lives?

What would happen if we truly were burdened with what burdens God? If we were truly under the Holy Spirit’s direction and control as the Lord of the harvest would we change our lifestyle and the priorities of our lives? These question beg our answer! It is my prayer that the Lord uses these outlines of messages to speak to YOU!

-- Dr. Edward Watke Jr.

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The Most Important Word in Any Language!

Introduction:

- If I were to ask you, “*What is the most important word in the Word of God?*”, apart from proper nouns -- such as God, Christ, etc., I wonder what you would say. In fact I doubt if we could come up with the most important word, or even agree about the most important word!
- Maybe it would be grace or redemption, or forgiveness, salvation, or deliverance or cross!
- If we were talking about proper nouns -- then it might be God, Christ, Jesus, Savior, Redeemer, etc.
- Consider -- that the most important word in any language is **relationship!** “You or I might say, NO, NO, that can’t be -- it has to be LOVE!”
- But love means nothing outside of relationships. In fact love only exists in and through relationships.
- When we traveled to Uruguay, S.A., Lithuania, and Bolivia, (or any other country where I or Joyce and I have been) we could only touch people’s lives through the teaching and preaching of the word of God because of relationships!
- There can’t be godly, biblical love in receiving or giving without the blessedness of the right kind of relationships.

Through Relationships, we

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. build or blast others, | 2. edify or destroy, |
| 3. lift up or tear down, | 4. encourage or discourage, |
| 5. strengthen or weaken, | 6. bless or blight. |

I. CONSIDER: THE Author of RELATIONSHIP!

A. God created as Author of relationships!

1. In Genesis we read about God making man “*in our image,*”. *WHY?* For God came down in the cool of the day to fellowship with His creation. “*WHERE art thou, Adam?*” God asked Adam when they had sinned. You see, God had come to fellowship with Adam.

B. God called a nation, unto relationship!

1. God called Abraham, the father of the Israelite nation -- out of His will, plan, purpose and
2. God is not finished with the Israelite nation. *In fact consider God’s concern about this relationship!* Look at these texts: Exod 19: 4-5; Deut. 14:2
I Chron. 16:12-17

C. God calls people unto Himself...in salvation. Lk 19:10; Jh 10:10; Jh 17:3; Psa. 23:1 God has called every saved person unto Himself. What a blessed relationship is ours in Christ.

1. Acts 15: He is -- *calling out a people.* Jh 6:44; 37-40; Heb. 2:9-13
 - a. Power to become a child of God: Jh 1:12-13
 - b. heirs and joint heirs --
 - c. chosen generation -- I Pet. 2:9-10
 - d. a royal priesthood --
 - e. a peculiar people --

2. Who were not a people, but are not the people of God.

D. God is the Author of fellowship -- Fellowship comes out of relationships and without relationships there can be no fellowship.

II. CONSIDER -- THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS:

A. Who would like to be rejected or unloved and unwanted? It is proven, little newborn babes will actually die if love, attention, etc., is withheld from them.

B. God gave us a nature that desires relationships. It is natural for us to desire to be accepted, loved, needed, wanted, and fulfilled.

C. These desires are all fulfilled through relationships. In fact, we are commanded to build relations and to give acceptance. Rom. 15:1, 7; 12: 10 Jh 13:34-35; Gal. 6:1-4

D. Our greatest sorrows come from broken, ruptured, or hindered relationships.

Consider some of the crises of life:

1. teenager and parents in great conflict,
2. a child, just a young teen - a runaway from the home -- on drugs, blasting their lives, in drunkenness,
3. resentment or misunderstanding that divides you from your best friend.
4. Loss of a parent or spouse -- remember the emptiness the heartbreak, the sense of utter loss at the death of a loved one.
5. Or arguments, strife, anger, hatred, destroys relationship and ends up in divorce.
6. A crisis with an employee or an employer,
7. Times of resentments and rupture of a family.

In a farm family in Iowa, a father and son had spoken to one another for some years. Then God got a hold of their lives through two of our meetings and they were reconciled. Praise God for a relationship was restored.

8. Churches in turmoil, sorrow, division and strife.

List all the sad times, unhappy, sorrowful times in your life --

1. you will see that vast majority of these were **created** by ruptured, or strained, or broken relationships !
2. Every broken business, every broken home, every broken friendship is a broken relationship.
3. This can be expanded to a city, nation, to international problems, to every crime committed, to every war fought. *Oh the destruction, loss, sorrows, and degradation that comes through broken relationships.*

E. What if we could solve every relationship problem? Then --

1. There would be no divorce, no wars, no employee-employer disputes.

In the 1960's we lived in Montana and I pastored at Laurel, Montana. There was a gas refinery in the community where a number of our church people worked. When they went out on strike many terrible things took place. Some men's trucks were destroyed, lives were threatened and there was conflicted among some of our people because some were company employees and some were members of the union. The church suffered the result of very strained relationships. Yes, serious things take place when relationships are not right.

2. Then man's most perplexing problems would be solved for right relationships would produce:
 - a. solid, happy, for saved godly marriages,
 - b. stable, successful homes,
 - c. successful businesses,
 - d. ministering, powerful, victorious churches,
 - e. good governments, and strong nations.
3. Our most wonderful times in life were in times of blessed relationships !!
RIGHT??

III. CONSIDER -- the TWO MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS OF LIFE:

Vertically --With the FATHER and CHRIST, the Son, **horizontally** with people.

If we are not right with the Heavenly Father we can't be right with people! When a person establishes by faith the proper vertical relationship with the Father, the person is then able to have right horizontal relationships with others and deal with the basic problems of the world.

If you solve the relationship problems at home, you have solved problems between husband and wife, parents and children and between brothers and sisters.

WHO sets the pattern, the **conditions**, the way we can have right relationships -- only God!

A. In Salvation we establish our relationship with God.

1. We must come on the basis of God's provision and God's conditions, for we can't be saved our way -- it is God's plan of salvation and God's only.

Reaching People For Christ!

2. Many people struggle in the process of coming to Christ for salvation.

Every person that comes to God for salvation must abandon their conditions in coming and accept God's conditions, whatever they are and whatever they costs. And then God will reveal Himself to us in salvation. Each one must give up and say, "*I must come just as I am and repent and accept Christ as Savior, as God's provision for my lost condition.*" Acts 4:12; Jh 14:6; II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6:23

3. If I am to be saved, I must accept God's conditions, be in total agreement with Him about salvation, and the Christian walk afterward. Col. 2:6,7
4. Have YOU accepted God's conditions?
 - a. In establishing a relationship with him,
 - b. we then must accept his conditions for establishing horizontal relationships with people.
 - c. What is the major purpose of our relationships in this life? That others might come to Christ!

B. What is the New Testament Pattern?

1. What was the strategy of the N. T. church?
2. What is the God-given strategy or method?
3. The gospel moved along lines of relationships first in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 1:8; Rom. 9:1;
4. It was not house to house down the street, but house to house via relationship, from one family to another, though they might have been a distance apart, I think this is what is meant in Acts. 20:20.

So Andrew went to Peter, **Philip**, to Nathaniel, then the **woman** of John 4 went back to her city. **Cornelius** went to his own household. The Philippian **jailer** to his household. The **wild man** of the Gadarenes (now clothed, and in his right mind) was told by Jesus to go home to his friends and to tell them what great things the Lord had done for him. *The gospel is to move on contiguous lines -- on lines of relationships!*

5. It should be natural to reach out to those we know best.
6. If we have something genuine in our life, it should be we would want to share it with those we know best. Isn't that reasonable?

B. God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation to others.

II Cor. 5:19-20

1. People are saved, brought to Christ, because of relationships. It is relationships that causes most people to come to Christ!!
2. *Discipleship* takes place through relationships.
3. The *growth* in my life over the years has happened in the context of relationships.
4. You can never lead anyone closer to the Lord than you are for evangelism must flow out of a life.
5. Bringing others to reconciliation is not something you can learn in a text book, take tests over and make A's and then be assured of success.

Consider a high percentage of Bible School grads, and pastors are not soul winners, neither are the professors who do the teaching! **How sad!**

6. We have been basically trained to reach out to person X. The person we do not know! I think they practiced *life-style evangelism* in the New Testament and did not begin with person X, but they worked through relationships!

We try to reach out to person X, who we don't know, who does not know us, who we think we might influence, and maybe we are glad they do not know us. Maybe we have made a mess of our lives, have hurt many people, and we don't get along with others near us. Maybe we are difficult people so we turn to someone we don't know.

C. When we have ruptured relationships horizontally, we also have a ruptured relationship vertically, with God.

1. With person-X maybe we feel our life-styles do not have to be consistent.
2. We can talk and then be on our way.
3. There is nothing wrong with talking to person X about Jesus. We are suppose to do that. God will bring these people into our lives;
4. But if we cannot tell people in circles 2-6 about the Lord, something is very wrong -- maybe we are even hypocritical. Possibly we are play acting or we are not genuine. We should want to share Christ with those closest to us.

D. We are accountable for those whom God brings into our circles of influence:

1. We are accountable for all those who God gives to our spheres of influence.
2. Maybe we would rather take the gospel to circle # 7 , to those who do not know us. Is that because of ruptured relationships in our circles 2-6?

Conclusion:

1. Christianity is a reflection of *relationships*.
2. The unsaved man has no *relationship* with God, and until such a *relationship* is established through salvation in Christ, he has no hope of salvation. (Eph. 2:12,13)
3. A *relationship* between Christians and the unsaved person has proven to be the most effective means of influencing unsaved people to get saved.
4. ***Working through existing relationships was used effectively during the earthly life and ministry of Christ.***
 - a. John the Baptist introduced Andrew, one of his own disciples, to Jesus. Jh 1:5-36
 - b. Then Andrew immediately introduced his brother, Simon Peter to Christ. (vs. 41,42)
 - c. The day following Jesus found Philip a resident of the same town as Andrew and Simon Peter. Friendship played some part in Philip meeting the Savior.
 - d. Philip applied the principle of bring others to Christ through relationships and immediately finding his friend Nathaniel and introduced him to Jesus.

What Do You See In the Real “YOU”?

The Importance of **you...** the person God wants to **use!**

Introduction:

- We want to look at the center circle -- **YOU, me, self** and what makes us tick. What makes us DO what we do and respond as we respond!
- It is Christ’s concern that out of your inner most being will “*flow rivers of living water through your life.*” (John 7:37-39) We are to be channels only, through whom the Lord can flow! Ministry begins with YOU, as one indwelt by the Holy Spirit!
- Self is your **biggest** problem and my biggest problem. *Living for self* is possible our most basic sinful practice!

I. THE SELF-CENTERED PERSON:

What about me, Lord? Our thoughts, considerations, priorities, purposes, life-styles, etc., for we are generally all wrapped in self.

A. We must face the fact that more than likely there is one person we are basically living for: *called me, myself, and I.*

B. Possibly our thoughts, attitudes and actions in life come out of the basic sinful approach to life, that says, “*I love me and I want you to make me happy.*”

C. Our thought is ... “**As long as you meet my** conditions, everything is going to be all right”. But that will not work!

D. There are two basic relationships in life!

1. One is the horizontal relationship we have with people.
2. But the most important relationship is with the heavenly Father.
3. God has laid down the basis for all our other relationships in life.

The only way we can come to the Father is on the Father’s conditions. Accepting His conditions for relationships means that we *forfeit forever the right to choose whom we love.* The kind of love we will express -- who we will love -- if we will love the other person -- *has nothing to do with looks, age, shape, size, color, race, sweetness, hostility, or personality.* **Anyone Jesus chooses, we are to love.**

4. In **relationships** -- marriage, business, or any interpersonal relationship with anyone, we must accept Christ’s LORDSHIP or we will basically live a self-centered, self-willed life. Rom. 5:5; II Cor.5:14
5. When Jesus is **Lord** of our lives, He is going to **draw** people into our circles who will not be lovely. Jesus said, that any sinner can love any other sinner. By His grace we can love anyone!

Our problem is that our attitude is: “*You love me; I’ll love you. You don’t love me; I won’t love you.*” *We become a mutual admiration society!* Remember that when you are saved, God does not change your *personality*, but He changes your *character*. There is a *vast* difference.

He wants YOU to be YOU... But He wants to be **Christ in YOU**. He wants to **reach out** through you. *When we are self-centered our thoughts, desires, interests... yes everything about us is centered on self -- not on God or His will and **rights** in our lives!*

E. There are self-centered churches!

1. These churches become mutual admiration societies. People have banded together just to be their own needs met. They find a solitude and a comfort in having their own needs met. *They exist for self, but now self is just a larger number.*
2. These churches become cliquish -- are ingrown, exist and for their own. In such churches over 90% of the money given is for their use -- to meet the interests, concerns, and desires of their own.
3. The group loves each other, want no threat, and desire to control things as they are. *They like their little safe world and don't want things to change.*
4. Some churches never make it, do not grow, and gradually die. Sunday School classes become that way -- comfortable with our friends as they live in the comfort zone.

What was God's plan for the church? They stayed in Jerusalem and God had to send persecution to get them to take the gospel. Then they went everywhere for a while but many only wanted to go to the Jews. God had to change all this! They were even self-centered in who they wanted to see saved!

F. The church is to be a body: (Rom. 12: I Cor. 12)

- growing
- using gifts
- making disciples
- having self-centered people means having a self-centered church.
- developing
- meeting needs
- seeing lost coming to Christ.
- ministering,
- reaching out

II. THE SELF-DEPRECATING PERSON:

I can't! I just don't have the ability, gift of gab, etc.!

A. Usually such people are unwilling to trust God to use them.

B. They are often fearful, apprehensive, lacking boldness, courage, the desire may be strong, but the human flesh is weak.

C. Such a person is unsure of himself, and feels inadequate unable, even though possibly very desirous.

D. Such a person lacks trust that God has gifted him.

1. Rom. 12
2. Eph. 4
3. I Cor. 12

God has given spiritual gifts -- but we must use them to build up the body of Christ.

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5. This brings us back to the fact that God wants to use us, to love people through us and to use our gifts to complement one another.

E. GOD wants you to feel good about YOU! There is the right kind of self-image. The right kind of self-understanding. *You are to have the right kind of love toward self or a sense of self-worth!*

1. Husband is commanded to love his wife as he loves himself. (Eph. 5:29)
2. We are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. (Matt. 19:19)
3. What do you do when you love yourself? *You meet your God-given needs:*
 - a. you feed yourself, b. cleanse yourself,
 - c. brush yourself, d. shine yourself, e. clothe your
 - f. warm yourself, g. paint yourself,
 - h. cool yourself, i. entertain yourself, etc.

You don't stand and look in the mirror, and say, "*Oh, I just love me, you don't get goose pimply over looking at yourself in the mirror.*" If you do, you have a problem.

F. Such people often have a deep inferiority complex!

Maybe you don't just have an inferiority complex, maybe you are just plain inferior! According to surveys, comments of those who are supposed to know -- they say that 95 to 100 % of all people have an inferiority complex by the time they are six years old.

1. As the child grows up he may say, *How do I feel about me?* **He may take a number of different approaches.**
2. He may be aggressive, "*and adults conclude that he feels very secure in himself. He knows who he is... he is all right!*" Often that is nothing more than his trying to get attention because he is not sure of himself. Maybe as a youth he plays the *hot-dog* because in getting attention to himself he feels better about self.

But we may think the aggressive person as a spiritual person! That is not necessarily the case! Or he may play the wall-flower -- the shy person, afraid to say anything outside a certain realm of life. We make so many mistakes judging the lives of fellow Christians. *God desires to use all personalities -- but He would seek to change our character! **We NEED BALANCE!!***

III. THE SELF- SEEKING PERSON:

We often seek what will please us, fulfill us, make us feel good about ourselves, often our major thoughts is about how we feel or what life is doing to us or what others are doing to us.

A. The problem we face.

1. Self needs *balance!* Our lives are much a like a seesaw... the balance represents you, and me.
2. Problems come, *pressures* push us down to make us think less of ourselves. But we are concerned about # 1 or self.

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3. This pushes the Old Adamic *sinful nature down*, then we feel guilty. But that old Adamic nature wants back up. All of this begins at an early age.
4. Someone tries to help us, but we are *sensitive*, insecure. We think others are trying to push us down, so then we work to push ourselves back up.

B. Why Do We Intimidate others?

1. The aggressive person, who has a deep inferiority complex must dominate everybody and run the show or he is not happy.
2. He intimidates everyone -- at home, in business, at the church because it makes him feel good about himself.

C. Why do people seek to achieve?

1. One thing many try is achievement -- it will pull me back up help me to feel balance. What is the real motive? We must look within our hearts.
2. Maybe we think-- If I am an achiever, people will not criticize me. They will praise me, that praise will lift me up so I must become an achiever.
3. Nothing is wrong with achievement but to do it for self- to honor self - to glorify self then it is sin.
4. We want to achieve so we feel good about self. God wants us to achieve for His will, His glory, and His honor.
5. Solomon was an achiever -- for self -- what did it bring him?? He had many "I" problems --

C. Why do people build an artificial world ?

Could it be to build a hedge about themselves so they don't feel accountable for others? Could it be that some have been hurt and they never get over those hurts and go on and allow the Holy Spirit to use them?

D. Why do so many try to Reached the TOP? Is it not the result of self-centeredness?

IV. THE GOD - USED PERSON:

A. Used because we are His -- and we live as His called people.

Jh 15:16; II Tim. 1:9

B. God Used to Bring Forth Fruit! -- Jh 15:16

C. God Used as a Clean Vessel -- Study II Timothy 2:20-26.

D. God Used Because of being a Yielded Vessel -- Rom. 6:13; 12:2; II Cor. 5:15

E. God Used Because of Staying at the Foot of the Cross!

Conclusions:

- Relationship is what Christianity is all about.
- The result of sin is a broken relationship between God and man . . . the death of Christ made possible a reestablishment of a relationship between the Heavenly Father and His lost children.
- Evangelism is using relationships we already have or we build in order to reach the person for Christ.
- Using *concentric Circles of Concern* or our *Circles of Influence* is the principle of reaching others through natural relationships -- our immediate family, our relatives, our neighbors, associates, and person X.

Dr. Elmer Towns share an interest survey in one of his books... He spoke at a combined Sunday School of youth and adults at North Syracuse, (NY) Baptist Church, The auditorium filled with over 400 in attendance. Dr. Towns was giving the challenge to the church to get involved with *Friend day!* (A special effort to bring a friend) Dr. Towns took a survey by the raising of hands... here it is:

1. How many were influenced to receive Christ or join the church through advertising? -- 2 hands
2. How many were influenced to receive Christ, or join the church because of pastoral contact? -- 8 or 10 hands
3. How many were influenced. by an evangelistic visit from the church? -- 8 - 10 hands.
4. How many were saved because of an evangelistic service? no hands.
5. How many became a Christian because of the influence of FRIENDS OR RELATIVES? A multitude of hands, too many to count.

National survey gives us this: On what influenced people to salvation.

Advertise -- 2% Organized visitation -- 6%
Contact by Pastor -- 6% Influence of Friends & Relatives -- 86%

So just how important is your life and influence?

What About Your Family Tree?

Introduction:

- Consider that the warm, *joyful*, happy times come to us because of the blessing of relationships.
- **It is relationships that make you what you!!** Right relationships with parents leave you *mentally and emotionally ready* for marriage and for a baby brought into the family. For new relationships are a part of life.
- When people *cease* to treasure relationships --then hatred, hostilities, unforgiveness, wrath, & bitterness will prevail. *Then we may not care who we hurt, or how we hurt them.*
- The gospel moves on *contiguous lines* -- on the lines of relationships.... not house to house... down the street, but house to house through the impact of relationships.
- God holds you *responsible* for every person who comes into your spheres of influence -- into your circles of influence.
Consider circles 2 - 3 Your immediate family will be those who live under your roof.

If you are away from your home and not married, your circle 2 will include your mother and father. If you are married, your immediate family will be your spouse and children. The rest of the family will be in circle 3 -- the rest of our other relatives.

I. HOME -- THE PLACE WE MUST LEARN TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.

A.Importance of Relationships:

1. Many youth don't do well in high school, and possibly not in college either -- then they get saved, go to a Bible college with new purpose, goals, and values in life.
2. Those students find school difficult, they *lost a back ground in the school of knowledge.*
2. They had not taken the *tools* seriously which they were given on which to build the rest of their lives.
3. Education is a *discipline.* Education is an *opportunity* to learn how to use your tools. You then use these *tools* the rest of your life.

B. The same principles apply to relationships:

1. If you *blow the opportunity* of learning how to use the tools of relationships that God has given you in the home, then you have blown everything.
2. If, as individuals, we do not take relationships seriously then we will *experience* brokenness, hurts, and be disrupted in relations with others.
3. And if, as parents, we do not take it serious to teach relationships, our children will *experience rejection, loneliness, and be distraught and torn* by most every circumstance, event and person in their lives.

We have all seen children who are in **trouble** -- trouble with the police, has already been in trouble in himself. He is not free with himself, So he is trouble with his parents; he is in trouble with his teachers, he is in trouble with Providence. He is trouble with everyone because he did not learn right relationships in his home.

If we do not use the home as the basis for building relationships, we and our family have lost their tools.

But most people are not learning relationships at home. Our best school for teaching relationships is not teaching as it should. We have tried to place the task elsewhere : schools churches, Sun. School, youth organizations., government -- ***but the Homes is where we are learn to be what we need to be.***

C. The Importance of Personality Tools:

1. Using the heart!

- a. It is almost a miracle to find a person who is truly more interested in others than in himself.
- b. It seems almost a miracle to find someone who approves others, who accepts others as they are no matter how they live or what they say or do.
- c. This does not mean we approve their sin but that we ***accept their person.***
- d. The lost person must sense a feeling that he or she is totally accepted as a person. There must be genuine interest in the other person.
- e. Do we really want our relatives, loved ones to be saved? Do we go around looking hungrily at those in our circles of influence, visualize them saved and serving the Lord.

2. Using the Lips, the mouth:

- a. Here is the most potent of personality tools. *Do we have dedicated lips?*
- b. We are usually devoted to self interest -- using the lips to give love, appreciation, showing concern, interest, care, etc. is unusual. Do we say, " *I like you, I appreciate you,*" --*discover the power of words!*

3. Using the eyes:

- a. Eyes must also be ***dedicated*** to the Lord.
- b. Look for, train your eyes to see, take inventory concerning things that are praise worthy.
- c. A monument of our selfishness is that we can look at people without really seeing them.
- d. There is something about every person that is worthy of interest and comment. Prepare yourself to see others -- to show interest.

4. Using the ears:

- a. It is a ministry to hear with a burdened heart.

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- b. A dedicated listener can minister. Christ had ears to hear the cries of the lonely, the burdened, the weary, the sin sick, as well as the physically ill.

We can show unfeigned love... listening often can bring the first steps of healing and lead to the opportunity to present Christ and the Word of God.

People can easily detect whether we are genuinely interested in them or are only speaking to them with some ulterior motive.

II. HOME -- THE PLACE WE MUST LEARN TO LOVE:

A. We Must Recognize Needs:

1. What must we do in the home? We must face our daily responsibility to those who are our own....
2. God has put these people into our lives, we did not put them there -- and we must accept His conditions for relationships with these important ones.
3. We are there to meet their needs, whatever those needs are.
4. Our children need to hear, to learn the language of love! To know how to show love, interest, concern.
5. Often there is static in the sending station and in the heart of the receiver....

B. We need to be *in tune with others needs!*

1. *in our marriage --*

In our day and time, the trouble is that we do not understand what Jesus meant when he spoke of love. We usually say, *"I love me and I want you to make me happy. If you do not make me happy, then I am going to split."*

A Christian marriage means I am committing myself first to Jesus Christ and then to my spouse. My first command. is to Christ, but ***I accept my mate on his conditions with all the immeasurable love that he has.*** My attitude toward my spouse must be like Jesus' attitude toward the church, He love it, He died for it. ***He poured out His life for the church.***

2. *meeting children's needs!* What about their needs? *God has put us in a school the home, and the subject is relationships!*

- a. Parents are to meet children's needs.
- b. Babes cannot meet their own needs.
- c. Relate to your child's needs -- pray for those who have influence in their lives, authority,

C. Loving Your child (wife, husband) means listening to meet needs!

1. Listen to your teens and hear from them what their needs are.
2. Sometimes what we feel their needs are -- isn't really what they are at all.

Listen, your teen is crying out for love, crying out for mothers and father to really know what they are going through and to really know what their needs are right now.

III. HOME -- THE CENTER FROM WHICH WE MUST REACH OTHERS:

A. Reaching those of our immediate family --

B. Reaching your relatives:

1. You may not really know your relatives -- you may have neglected them for years.
2. You may feel there are too many for you to even try to know -- or to reach out to love.
3. List the names of your relatives. Get as much information about them as you can. Fill out a survey sheet for each person.
 - a. The **key** is to find out what their needs are.
 - b. Then to **reach** out in interest and love to meet those needs.
 - c. For all you do, then, is to **show** an interest and a love, show that you **care, for love is meeting needs.**
4. Begin to **pray** for them - daily... maybe you can't pray for all of them each day but consistently pray for each one.

Susanna Wesley -- with 19 children in 22 years. She lived a very unusual life of ministering to all those children and she had a dynamic prayer life for them as well as instructing them in the Word of God in powerful ways.

5. Pray in specifics -- not just bless them, dear Lord. James 4:2
6. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading for He will show you what you should do. He will make you aware of those in deepest need.

Trust the Holy Spirit to burden you, to direct you, to encourage you, to use you, to fill you, to anoint you, to go before you, to prepare the hearts, to lead you at the right time, relax in His leadership, care, direction. **He is the Lord of the Harvest! Walk by Faith, trust Him to use YOU.**

Reaching Your World!

Introduction:

- Here are the *last earthly words* spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, and they provide the **key** to our Father's plan for this age.
- We call this another statement of the Great Commission, Christ's command that we, as His disciples, are to *take the Gospel to all the world.... to our world*.
- Here, in *Acts 1:8*, the Great Commission is given on the Mount of Olives, immediately before His ascension.
- In Matthew 28:18-20 the Great Commission is given when the "*eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them*..." soon after His resurrection.
- Given in Mark 16:15, the word of the Great Commission was given, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature...*" this was spoken "*as he appeared unto the eleven*" as they ate with Him just prior to His resurrection.
- In Luke 24:46-49 the Great commission was given just before they went out to Bethany on the Mount of Olives where He ascended.
- The words of John 20:21, in John's Gospel, are these..."*As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you...*" these words were spoke the evening, of the day, He arose from the dead.
- So, we see Christ repeated the Great commission over and over again... and now we examine the fifth time as it relates to us today. **Acts 1:8; Rom 1:14-16**
- In Acts 1:8, we have a sweeping view of the whole program of the church, the plan and program for every saved person.
- *Friends, we can devise many different plans to win the world to Jesus, and that is as it should be.. that is how it had better be but I am not talking about global evangelism. I am talking about YOUR EVANGELISM... YOUR WITNESS.*
- **Christ left us here on earth, after our salvation so we would build relationships -- that YOU that person in the center of these concentric circles... these circles of influence -- that YOU would share your witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

I. THE SUBJECT OF YOUR WITNESS.... "*unto me*"

A.A personal testimony -- of His saving grace!

You see, friends, when you received Christ you received a new life in Him that you might show forth Christ! That you might proclaim the Word of God. The Word is to be real in your life.

Our life ought to demonstrate that we are His disciple and a fruit bearing disciple we must be.

Reaching People For Christ!

1. YOU have a witness to share of a blessed Savior. We are not the originator of it, nor the discoverer of it, and it is not some philosophy, but the *message of saving grace in Christ Jesus, our Lord.*
2. God has a plan, a certain strategy to reach our world that we might say, *“Lord this is your world, and I am going to take it.” I am talking about your world.*
3. We have a wonderful message to every person in those circles and they must hear.
4. It comes from *personal experience*, and it must *become a personal expression* about the Person of the Lord Jesus.

B. We have a testimony of Christ’s Ministry.

It is the ministry, the message of those early disciples.

1. We testify of the Resurrection of Christ -- *proving His Divine power, position, authority, and finished work* --
 - a. 1:22 *“Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.”*
 - b. 2:30-32 *“... according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ that his soul was not left in Hell, neither his flesh did see corruption... This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”*
 - c. 3: 15 *“And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.”*
 - d. 4:2, *“Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”*
 - e. 4:33; *“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”*
2. We have a message of the Remission of sins - *Oh, the message of His death, atonement of our sins, receive forgiveness...*
 - a. 5:31, 32; *“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins... and we are witnesses of these things...”*
 - b. 10:43; *“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”*
 - c. 13:38, 39 *“Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Consider Acts 26:18.*
3. We must shared about the Reign of Christ -- *He must be King, Lordship*

Reaching People For Christ!

- a. 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
- b. 8:12, "But when they believed Philip preaching the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ...." Also read Acts 28:23, 31.

Friend, the highest calling in the world is not to preach the gospel, the highest calling in the world is to be a Christian. In reality every one of us, is a minister and has a ministry within his own concentric circles.

II. THE SPHERE OF YOUR WITNESS... both in....

"in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." ... these extending circles stand for great principles as well as for geographical locations:

A. Immediate Family... relatives... shared in the previous chapter. We are to go to our Jerusalem... then all rest of the circles!

B. We must make a survey to know who is in our circles! (if we are to reach them, minister to them.)

1. **WHY?** You need a **structure** for your evangelism, for your outreach of witness.
2. Nothing ever becomes **dynamic** until it becomes **specific**.
3. As you take your survey you become conscious of people that you never would have thought of for they are in your circle -- perhaps in no one else's.
4. You must do a survey... *it is extremely important*. It is the structure upon which you build a ministry.
5. Remember you are *building a life-style of meeting needs* --- of *building relationships* -- of *ministering* to people. So that includes the saved as well as the lost.
 - a. Your concentric circles -- circles of influence will include many saved.
 - b. Do you pray for them? They have needs, hurts, and burdens, so meeting needs must become part of your life-style.

C. Circle 4 --

Our close friends for sometimes they are closer than relatives, this happens. Sometimes we are so close we are afraid we will offend them, so we don't share Christ. Close friends have needs, too, often they are unsaved. We best not forget them.

D. Circle 5 --

This includes neighbors, business associates, school friends, etc. Remember, it is important to write down information about them on your survey sheet You must get to know them. Why do this? Because we care and you naturally find out about people for whom you care, don't you?

My neighbors will not believe that I want to be in heaven with them, if I do not want

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them in my home for dinner or if I do not say hello when we are in our front yards, or I don't show interest in them.

Get to know your neighbor, allow the Lord to love them through you. *Love is meeting needs and to meet their needs I must know them.*

To take our world... to have a testimony and witness that is vital and we must fall in love with our Savior. Do YOU love HIM?

E. Circle 6 --

Who is an acquaintance? Anyone who works at the grocery store, restaurant, etc. Try to get to know them... be *sensitive* to their names... show interest... be aware of the difficult day they might be having, be interested, sympathetic, manifest to them, they are of value!

Let them know you... be open, transparent, etc. Get to know their names, be interested in them as a person, not a servant who is there to care for you.

F. Circle 7 --

Person X -- that person we do not know. These represent the lost world out there who need Christ, but we don't even know these people.

All these circles represent our world. The world to which God would send us. Person in your circle X may be in someone else's circle 2 or 3 and the Holy Spirit wants to use you to help reach them.

Go to your world for your world is not mine, but if we put these together we can take the whole world? That person my pass through like a comet. (Jh 7:38) Let God use you to touch that person X through you. *He knows who needs loving and He will put that unknown person into your circle 7.*

God will draw some of these into your circle -- not only circle 7 -- but move them into other circles as well. You say, *I don't see anyone lost out there from day to day*, Then you are spiritually blind. I have found that God has a way of drawing people into my circles when I am walking with him. They just materialize and I see them.

III. THE SOURCE OF YOUR WITNESS --- *the Holy Spirit and His power!*

A. We have no power of our own -

1. Do you know what I have discovered? When God is filling me with His Spirit, He has ways of drawing people into my circles... and giving me influence with them for Christ, for Salvation!
2. If you love everyone in your circles you will have a *holy magnetism* through your life. God will draw people *through* you to Him. Remember, *love is meeting needs.*
3. We must think of the whole world. Remember reaching those in your circles is reaching out to the whole world.

B. The Holy Spirit is our power for boldness, for unction, for ability, for wisdom, etc. Acts 4:31-33;

1. The Christian who is in right relationship to the Holy Spirit allows Him to control, to fill and has His power upon his life.
2. The Holy Spirit is always resident in the life of every Christian, but *when He is*

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allowed to be free, to constantly move in and through the saint of God -- He will meet needs through us. He will draw people to Christ through us.

C. The Holy Spirit, as Lord of the Harvest... will: (Matt. 9:36-38)

1. Engineer circumstances to bring people to the Savior.
2. He will bring about circumstances to open doors for your witness, for your sharing... meeting needs... opportunities to show love, meeting needs of your friends, neighbors, associates, and school friends, etc.
3. He engineered the circumstances to bring Peter together with Cornelius. Philip with the Junk... etc.

Conclusions:

1. Determine that you want to be used of God.
2. Be willing to give yourself to the Lord, to the Holy Spirit to lead and use you.
3. Decide you WILL reach out to the *circles of influence* God has given you... and realize you are accountable.
4. Be willing to prepare a notebook and begin a survey of each of the circles of concern.
5. Expect God to use you! Plan to build relationship!

Review of past messages!

Most important Word in any Language:

That Word was **relationship**. We saw that **GOD** is the author of relationships. We noted the **power** of relationships, and the two most **important** relationships -- with God, the Father and with mankind.

All ministry is based on relationships, discipleship takes place through relationships, evangelism takes place through relationships, our problem is so often we have ruptured, broken, hurt relationships. We must build relationships to bring others to Christ.

The Importance of YOU.. The Person God wants to Use

You are in the middle of these circles... It may be the **self-centered** you, or the **self-deprecating** you, or the **self-seeking** you...but God wants to use you. God wants it to be...**the God-Used YOU** -- a controlled, clean and yielded vessel.

How About Your Family Tree?

Circles 2 and 3 -- Home, the place we must **learn to build relationships**. Home - the place we must **learn how to love**, Home - **the center** from which we must reach others.

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- The subject of Your Witness.
- The Sphere of Your Witness.
- The Source of Your Witness!

Reaching Out By Loving ... Love Is Meeting Needs

I John 3:16-18

- God designed human beings for love and from the Book of beginnings, Genesis to the Book of Revelation there is one command from the Father above all others and that command is to LOVE.
- What is the first and great commandment? Deut. 6:5 *“Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all they might.”*
- In the New Testament, we are told that the first and greatest commandment is to love God with all our hearts and souls and minds. Matt 22:37-38; Mk 12:30.
- Let’s consider a number of questions as a means of looking at the subject-- LOVE IS MEETING NEEDS!
- One of the greatest phrases is all the Scrip is the simple, yet profound... *God is Love! From that phrase we gather that God is concerned about us in a infinite way.*
- It is one of strongest factors in our nature; which bridges distance, defies time, triumphs over impassable barriers, radiates with golden light, changing circumstances and people, it is the mysterious affinity between parent and child, friend and friend, husband and wife.

I. GOD’S LOVE FLOWS TO US THROUGH THE CHANNEL -- THE BELOVED:

Eph. 1:6

It is not that God loves us because our Savior interposed between His wrath and us or that made God have to love us. God did not love us because Jesus died, Jesus died because the Father loved us. (I Jh 4:9,10) Therefore, in Christ, we are accepted in the *Beloved, Christ*, What a gracious truth, a wealth of significance for in the love of the SON, IN Him, I am accepted.

A. God’s love was not with-held because of our SIN. Eph. 2:4;

1. We withhold love for various reason or excuses. Feel we have a legitimate right to withhold our love. We can be hard, harsh, unrelenting, stiff, indifferent.
2. God loved us when we did not deserve it for we were depraved, enemies in our minds, rebellious, transgressors, spurning His love, ignoring it, and refusing it. Yet He loved US.
3. He loved us when we were unlovely. Isa 64:6; Jere. 17:9 He knew all about us.
4. God loved with a great love, He sought after us, gave us a bestowment of mercy, of grace, of salvation, and the gift of the Savior.

B. This is a love that passes knowledge: Eph. 3:17-19

1. We may *apprehend* it; but we can’t *comprehend* this kind of love; we *know* it in Christ, but we cannot understand the *immensity* of that love.
2. We can know it be personal experience, but will never attain unto a full view of it in this life.

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3. We know the *expression* of His love, but the total *essence* of it is unknowable to us now. The faithfulness of that love, the tenderness of it surpasses our comprehension. Why He would love us so! **This is unspeakably precious!**

C. This is love expressed in a Supreme Sacrifice: Eph. 5:2

1. True love is giving, giving, giving, to the point of sacrifice. This is agape love.
2. God is love, every thought, act, every word of the Father is an expression of His love, and by His love which is the very essence of His person.
3. His love is a self-effacing love for He loved us when we were in desperate condition.
4. It was a self-sacrificing love for He who is lovely, sinless, pure, and perfect was made sin for us as He became our ransom that we might be redeemed.

D. This love passes into and through human hearts:

Eph. 5:25, 28, 29, 33; II Cor. 5:14

1. In marriage, in relationships; in daily life, in reality, in action, through faith -- to cherish, nourish... as Christ cherishes and nourishes the church.
2. His love is shed abroad in our hearts. Rom. 5:5

II. HOW CAN WE DEMONSTRATE THIS LOVE?

How do I love God? *He doesn't have any needs. How am I going to show God that I love him... if love is meetings needs?*

A. Consider Matthew 25:35-40. We show love to God by what we do toward Him, and toward Christ? HOW?

1. To the extent that we do (service) unto others in need.. ***we do it unto Christ.***
2. When we love people in Jesus' name, we are loving Jesus.
3. When those *who are precious to Jesus become precious to us... to you.. then you are loving God with all your heart and soul and mind.*
4. You are not really loving Jesus until you become a **channel of his love in meeting needs.**
5. Then in Matthew 22:39; and Mark 12:31 we are told that the second commandment is to *love thy neighbor as thy self.*

B. The test of Christian love is meeting needs! I Jh 3:16-18

1. I Jh 3:16; Christian love involves sacrifice and service. Look at verse 17.
2. Christ did not simply **talk** about His love; He died to prove it (Rom. 5:6-10).
3. Jesus was not killed as a martyr; He willingly laid down His life.
(Jh 10: 11-18; 15:13)

4. *Self-preservation* may be the first law of physical life, but *self-sacrifice* is the first law of **spiritual** life.

C. We demonstrate love by loving the unlovely.

1. Remember, when Jesus comes LORD of your life, you forfeit forever the right to choose whom you will love.
2. We must be Loving, serving forever is on God's terms, not ours.
3. You may feel you love the world but do you love that difficult person? "*But he is cantankerous you say, and I don't love him, I could love almost anyone but not that person.*"
4. Why were we left here on planet earth?? So that God can love through us... minister through us and bring people to Christ through us. Rom.5:5
5. The quality of Christ's love was demonstrated on the Cross. What **kind of feeling** did Jesus have when he died on the Cross for us?
 - It was not a feeling that sent him to the Cross, dear friend... it was **our need that send him** there.
 - He had a deep feeling for us, but the feeling came because he looked down at our sin, and saw our deep need.
 - **Agape** love **transcended the agony** of the cross. By His act he said, "*I will meet you needs.*" He saw our need and met it.

II. HOW CAN HIS LOVE. . FLOW THROUGH US?

A. The importance of His love through us!

1. God tells us that *he that loveth not knoweth not God.* (I Jh 4:8)
2. What God is telling us is that "*as He is, so are we in this world.*" **(4:17)**
3. The fact that Christians love one another is evidence of their *fellowship* with God and their *son ship* from God, and is also evidence that they *know* God. **Does our life show we know God?**
4. *A person who claims he knows God and is in union with Him must be personally affected by this relationship.* A Christian ought to **become what God is and God is LOVE!**

B. That Love is to be SEEN in deed and in truth... not word or tongue only!

I Jh 3:18

1. True Christian love means loving in **deed and in truth.**
2. The **contrast** is to love in *tongue* and *words* with nothing concrete about such love.
 - to love in *word* means simply to *talk* about a need, but to love in **deed** means to do something about meeting it.

- Verse 17 is the verse that demonstrates love in **action...in deed...** look also at **James 2:15-16**.
 - To love in **tongue** is to love **insincerely...** to love in **truth** is to love **genuinely**, from the heart and not just from the tongue.
3. We are to even love our **enemies** and to pray for those who persecute us...
Matt. 5:43-44.
 4. How do you love your enemies? *Find someone you love and then treat your enemy the very same way... love is treating all people the very same way.*
 5. When Jesus became your Savior and Lord, you **forfeited the right to choose** whom you will love.
 6. Love is **not showing** favoritism. **James 2:8-9...** The royal law is “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*”

For your concentric circles, your circles of influence, your circles of responsibility --

Pray, Father, “*reveal their needs to me..Here I am, you know all the responsibilities I have; but wherever I go and whomever my life touches... I will be salt... I will be salt to touch and preserve... to help and to heal... and I will be light to show the way... Lord just allow me to meet needs, to love those around me in a practical way.*”

“Father, engineer circumstances in the lives of those around me so I can minister to them... help me see their needs.”

III. HOW CAN WE WHO ARE SINFUL, WEAK, FAILING -- GIVE GOD’S LOVE?

Genuine, God-given agape love does not depend upon feelings... *Feelings* fluctuate; love is *stable*. Love stems from a deep motivation and that motivation does not come from circumstances.

A.The Resource of meeting needs --

1. You don’t meet needs from the reservoir of your own ability.
(Rom. 5:5; Eph. 1:23;
2. God planed for HIS LOVE to flow through your life and for HIM to reach out to others and meet their needs through us! That is awesome and so frequently we act as though it all depends upon us.
3. We are to be that **channel** -- a yielded, available, surrender, and clean vessel. God desires to build a relationship cemented by His love.

So YOU can build a relationship with anyone and God draws that person to himself through that relationship.

4. We must remember God loves all those difficult people and He can give you ability to shower forth His love through you.

B. The motive for meeting needs:

1. You do not get your motivation from loving people enough but from loving HIM, the Savior and Lord, the Heavenly Father who urges you to go.
2. You and I are not the source of meeting needs, but we are the channel.
3. Our love for God must precede our love for the lost... for the needy... for those in all our circles of concern. How much do YOU love God?
This is your motivation!

Do we LOVE GOD?

Do we LOVE OURSELVES and want to be served?

OVERCOMING BARRIERS . . .SO THAT WE CAN REACH OUT

Introduction:

There are many barriers to evangelism. *These barriers serve to keep--*

- the Christians separated from the unsaved,
- and the unsaved separated from the Christian.
- Barriers are often equally difficult to cross from either side.
- These barriers are both spiritual and natural. (Consider I Cor. 9:22.)
- A barrier is anything in our lives or the life of the unsaved that hinder sharing the gospel.

These barriers exist --

- on the part of the saved who should be reaching out into their circles of influence.
- and on the part of the unsaved, who resist the message of the gospel.
- One of the first principles of evangelism deals with barriers or hindrances that keep people from getting saved.
- The more barriers placed between a lost person and the gospel, the more difficult it is to get that person converted to Christ.

I. BARRIERS ARE ERECTED FROM BOTH SIDES:

Barriers are like the fence around a prison, or some fence built to be a barrier. We all have seen security chain link fences around some fancy homes, or some business. Sometime these can even be topped with three or four strands of barbed wire to keep intruders out or people in!

Some churches have some symbolic chain link fences surrounding their churches making it very difficult for the unsaved to cross over into salvation or into the church.

A. Failure to recognize the existence of barriers or to overcome them is devastating to the cause of evangelism.

B. If barriers are not removed, that can be removed, it becomes very difficult to win the unsaved.

II. SPIRITUAL BARRIERS ARE from WITHOUT AND WITHIN:

Some barriers grow out of the very nature of the gospel message. These barriers cannot be removed, they are spiritual in nature, and there is no way to remove them, *nor can we **water down** the message!*

from without--

A. To some there is the barrier in message of repentance.

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1. The message of **repentance** is often a barrier to those who do not want to even recognize their own sinfulness. (Acts 2:38, 17:20, 20:20-21)
2. The **desired sin** of the lost person may be involved in an act, place, or person, and he does not want to face his sinful life-style. Salvation is inviting a person, the Lord Jesus Christ into their life. It is a matter of conversion, of turning from sin to Jesus. They may feel they can be saved and hold on to their sinful life-style, for they do not want any change in their life.

B. The message of the gospel is considered to be **foolish** to some.
I Cor. 1:18 , cf. Rom 1:14-16

C. The message of the gospel is an offense to many as they feel offended with the idea of being a sinner, lost, undone, without hope, etc. Gal. 5:11; Eph. 2:1-3

D. The message that “works won’t do” offends them:
Eph. 2:8-9, Titus 3:5

1. The belief of the unsaved person is to save himself, or perform good works,
2. So the conditions of grace are a barrier to his salvation in his thinking.

E. The message is so foreign to the lost for it is not understood, and to many it just does not make sense. I Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 4:3-5
The conditions of salvation are often **misunderstood** and **undesired** by the lost person. (I Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 3:9-18)

F. The message brings conviction they don’t want:
Acts 26:

1. The barrier is sometimes from the conviction they experience by being in a church service, or in the presence of the people of God.
2. They may sense impending judgment (II Cor. 2:15-16) that produces both fear and discomfort.

from within --

A. There is the barrier we erect from our mistaken idea of separation:
II Cor. 6:14-17; Jh. 15: I Jh. 2:15-17

1. Christians build the barriers from inside the church. We build up and stay within our cloistered walls therefore we do not have any friendships with the lost around us.
2. Some construct the wall with the fear of being contaminated by the influences of the world.
 - We would rather the unsaved come through the front door of the church, and respond to the gospel.
 - We would feel more comfortable to just stay inside our Christian walls we have build, and not go out to the outsider.
 - The unsaved would rather remain outside the walls of the church and go on in their natural life without the convicting presence of the people of God.

- Outside the church they are not faced by those truths that they do not understand.
- 3. Even though the Christian should be separated from sin and the influence of the ungodly, he must not erect a barrier between himself and the lost person through a separation that is not biblical.
- 4. Reaching them is not a matter of trying to be *like the unsaved, and live like them... play music like them, go where they go.. etc.*, in fact we are to be so different that the difference is what draws them to want our Savior.
Consider: Titus 2:11-14; I Pet. 2:

B. There is the barrier we erect by our judgmental attitudes: Acts 10:
Peter had many prejudices that kept him from wanting to go the Gentiles.

1. We are prone to measure the unsaved by our list of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. (Sin is sin... but we may feel their sin is so obnoxious they we stay away, or when around the lost they sense our judgmental attitudes.)
2. Our ideas in this may be a mixture of Biblical truth and tradition, or our prejudice.
3. Non-Christians begin to sense our disapproval.

Often they will even apologize for their conduct, but such apologies are often not meant. In reality many resent having been censored. Instead of the Christian attracting the sinner to Christ, the Christian has used his legalism to drive the sinner away. Peter had his used legalistic stand and desired to stay away from Gentiles!

Remember the law brings conviction of sin, but the law never saves, and the law when wrongly presented, is a legalistic barrier to presenting the gospel.

III. NATURAL BARRIERS:

There are many natural barriers that are constructed by the church, by the saved. Some create barriers by their bad breath when calling on the unsaved, or they use poor grammar, or by adding church membership to the message of salvation, or a dozen other things.

A. There is the barrier of our FEAR:

I Cor. 2:3) Paul wrote about his fears.

1. Paul had a problem with fear. We would not expect that would impact Paul's life. In his first letter fear was an apparent barrier to Paul.
2. He requested the Ephesians that they would pray for him that he might preach the gospel without fear. Eph. 6:19
3. God encouraged Paul... because of his fear. Acts 18:
4. God has not given us the spirit of fear. II Tim. 1:7; Acts 4:23-33
5. Fear is a very real barrier to evangelism.

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- In Acts 4:29-33 we read that the early church prayed for **boldness to witness!** It is God's will to give us boldness and ability to share the gospel to those we know the best.
- In I Peter 3:15-16 we are commanded to "*sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, being always ready to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us...*"
- Christians are often reluctant to witness because they fear rejection. We naturally desire to feel accepted and liked, and this is a basic human need.
- The very possibility of rejection strikes fear in the lives of many Christians.
- Or we fear we won't succeed, and the possibility of failure, especially in serving God and seeking to win a lost loved one becomes a barrier.
- Since they are lost, undone, etc., can we cause them to be more lost than they already are? Some have stated to me they are afraid they will say the wrong thing... but can we make them more lost by what we say?

B. There is the barrier or separation that comes through linguistic, ethnic or cultural barriers.

1. There are diverse speaking groups in our large cities.
2. There are cultural barriers and language barriers even in the U.S.

C. There is the barrier of broken relationships:

1. First, we may have **broken relationships** with those close to us.
 - Ruptured relationships **hinder** the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of the lost person. (Gal. 5:13-17, 22-26)
 - Our witness is neutralized. Our words **are rejected** because of the broken relationship. (Gal. 6:7-10)
 - Hurts **close the hearts** of those who we should influence for Christ.
 - We must **correct** those hurts, make restitution, ask for forgiveness, and give forgiveness. (Col. 3:8-14)
2. **The issue is:** Do we love the Lord and obey Him?
(Read and study John 14:21.)

We must agree with what God has told us to do! When we **obey HIM**, then He becomes very real. The Lord becomes conspicuous or real in our lives if we obey Him. He will reveal Himself to us! (John 14:21-23)
Christ wants to be so real you feel His presence and you can't ignore Him or make a decision without Him. **He will give boldness!**

3. Maybe we have never reached out in love to people in their *circles of influence* because we **have never truly known HIM who is LOVE.**

Reaching People For Christ!

- Do YOU truly know Christ as Savior Lord? (I Jh 5:11-13)
- Has He made you His child? (Jh 1:12-13; 3:1-7)
- Do you have the assurance of being His? (Jh 6:37; 5:24)
- Do you have a *new life in Christ*? (II Cor. 5:17-20)
- By virtue of having Christ, the *love of God is shed abroad in your heart!*
Is that true of you? (Rom. 5:5)

IV. BARRIERS ARE TO BE OVERCOME:

In spite of barriers. . . we are to share the gospel. . . The Good News!

A. What is the great message? II Cor. 5:18-20

1. It is the *good news*, used 75 times in the New Testament.
2. It is the Greek, word, *euangelion*, meaning *good sound*, the message of God's good news about man's redemption.
3. It should be only natural that we share the most *blessed news.... the gospel* with those who are close to us with whom we have developed a relationship.

B. Often Christians are artificial, and hypocritical.

1. We carry the good news out to Person X somewhere, but we will not carry it to the ones around us whom we know well.
2. We say -- "*It is too hard to witness to those I really know.*"
 - If that is true, something is wrong with those relationships.
 - In reality our love and concern is greater for ourselves that it is for those who are closest to us.

C. Some reasons why we fail to take the message to those we know:

1. We forget that **we are to be *ambassadors***, taking the gospel to all who God puts in our path. (II Cor. 5:17-21)
 - An ambassador is one who *represents someone* other than himself at the court of another.
 - We are left here on planet earth (after salvation) that we might present the Lord to those who do not know Him.
 - Wherever we go -- teaching school, running a business, buying groceries, at the office, at the factory, on the street -- *we are to represent Christ and the gospel message.*
 - ***He has given to us the ministry of reconciliation!***

2. **We feel we must wait until we are ready**, therefore we never get around to ministering to our *circles of influence*. (II Pet. 3:15)
 - We must be involved NOW! God takes you, uses you NOW, where you are, based on your availability!
 - It is not a ministry sometime later -- don't waste a life, it is now. (II Cor. 6:2; Heb. 2:1-3)
 - Allow the Holy Spirit to fill your life, to control you. *He will use your personality as He produces Christ's character in your personality.* (Eph. 5:18; Rom. 14:17)
 - He will set you free to speak freely, openly, joyfully about Christ.

CONSIDER:

Do you want Christ to be real in your life?

1. Then **obey** Him. (Jh 14:21; Matt. 28:18-20)
2. You must say, *"Father, I do not care what it costs. I do not care what I have to do. I will obey your will, your Word."*
3. **The criteria is God's criteria** -- to *"make disciples of all nations."* Consider the meaning of Matthew 28:18-20.
4. **You and I are responsible for everyone in our circles of influence.** Not the whole world, but our world!
5. **God's grace is sufficient, we just must be available!**

Do you want true, biblical fulfillment in your life?

1. It comes when HE is in control in your life!
2. It is real when you are right with others with no broken relationships. (Matt. 6:14-15)
3. We have fulfillment when pride is put away and we sweetly, obediently reach out in Christ's love.
4. What makes you happy? What excites you, what satisfies you? When you build loving relationships and reach those for Christ.
5. Ever been around someone who really loves you and cares for you? ***That satisfies -- then go and do likewise!!***
6. Come to the Cross, allow the Lord to meet the need of your heart, your spirit, your inner man! Let Him FILL YOU with His presence! (Jh 14:13-21, 27; 15:9-17; 16:13-15, 23-24, 33)

"Father, as we reach out to our circles of influence, show us the barriers in our lives that need to be overcome. Help us to be obedient to you and to take comfort in your presence and love."

BUILDING BRIDGES. . .TO THOSE WHO ARE LOST!

Introduction:

- **First we must do our survey (note the survey sheet).** This ought to be done for each *circle of influence*.
- **Second**, we must begin to **really intercede for those** in our *circles of influence*.
- **Third**, we will need to do out very best to **tear down the barriers**.
- **Fourth**, we will need to **build bridges to these people**. (I Cor. 9:22)

I. WE MUST DISCERN THE NEED:

A. We Need to Work With the Receptive-Responsive People:

1. We must realize that some people are *receptive-responsive people*, and some are, at any given time.
2. Those in our circles of influence are the ones most likely to be receptive-responsive, if we have been doing our part.
3. We must invest our priority-time reaching those who are receptive because:
 - time is short,
 - resources are limited,
 - it follows the biblical example,
 - through discipling others we will produce the greatest results.
4. We need to reach out to those who are receptive-responsive:
 - so we can be as fruitful as possible,
 - so we can reach the winnable, while they are winnable.
 - Their receptivity may not continue a long period of time.

B. People Vary In Receptivity at Different Times!

1. Some who may be receptive today may be closed of heart tomorrow.
2. Receptivity varies from person to person, and also from time to time.
3. People change with the passage of time and the change of events.
4. Those who are unreceptive and indifferent can be cultivated.
5. Those who have a hard heart toward God can become soft of heart.
6. Such changes in receptivity could be referred to as "*Seasons of the soul*."
 - Just as there is a season to plant and a season to harvest, so there are times in the seasons of people's lives when they are "*ripe to harvest*," or they become *responsive to the gospel message*. (Jh 4:34-38)
 - The *season of the soul* is a tender time in the heart of the unsaved.

7. Consider these questions:

- What produces seasons of the soul?
- What makes a person more receptive to God?
- What softens a person who is hardened to the gospel?

Some will be more receptive at times of joy, others at times of sorrow and loss, some at times of special milestones in life. We need to be aware of these times.

C. Factors that produce Seasons of the Soul!

1. **Super-natural factors** that make a person receptive-responsive:

- The conviction of the Holy Spirit that causes the person to see his sinfulness, lostness, and its result in his life.
- The convicting power of the Word of God that has been shared.
- The guidance of the Holy Spirit that brings a person to understand his lost condition and the provision of salvation in Christ. (Tit. 3:5)

2. **Natural factors** that make a person more receptive to the Lord.
These produce some of the *seasons of the soul*.

- marriage,
- sickness,
- job change, such as being fired,
- financial stress or loss,
- being jailed, or some other crisis,
- moving to a different location,
- experiencing rootlessness,
- birthdays,
- special events.
- the birth of a child,
- or death in the family,
- anniversaries,

All of these have to do with some shock to the person, some loss or tragedy in life, some special time of joy, celebration, or it can be a dramatic change that changes the way the person views life!

II. WE MUST DISCERN OUR PART;

A. Receptivity Must Extend to both Message and Messenger!

1. People do reject both at times.
2. Maybe some will reject the message while they accept the messenger.
3. Others may accept the message of the gospel, but reject the messenger.
4. Consider Matt. 19:21-22; 13:54-47; I Cor. 1:23; Rom. 11:9; Matt. 10:14.
5. Many times those who are close to us are also receptive to the gospel, if they see Christ in us, know our love, and are responsive to us personally.
 - If the relationship is positive -- a trust has been built.

- If a close relationship has been established -- hence, we should use that relationship to share the gospel.

B. We Must Build Bridges to Others -- for Receptivity CAN Be Cultivated:

1. It begins by winning the person to ourselves . . . by building the kind of relationships we have already shared.
2. Before people will hear the gospel from your lips, you must establish credibility by winning them to yourself.
3. You must take the initiative to contact them, begin building a friendship if you have not been doing that.
4. Paul clearly taught that Christians should make contact with people for the gospel's sake. (I Cor. 9:20-23)
5. Once you win the person to yourself, you must then win a hearing for the message -- the gospel -- the good news of salvation in Christ.
 - You demonstrate that Christ is meeting your needs. (II Cor. 9:8)
 - You must point out that Christ Jesus is also sufficient to meet their felt needs.
 - Share with them the sufficiency of Christ by both victorious Christian living and verbal testimony of what Christ has done for you.
 - Be open and transparent with people you are trying to influence for Christ.
 - Allow them to see you have problems, burdens just like they do, but God helps you through them. (Phil. 4:19; 4:13)
 - Share with them how God is meeting your needs and lifting your burdens.
 - Use the Word of God in this process. (Rom. 10:17; I Pet. 2:2; 1:23)
 - Expect the Lord to use YOU. (Heb. 11:1-2, 6)
 - Trust the Holy Spirit to DO his WORK in the life!

Stair-step the person to Christ!

7. *I repent of my sin, and accept Christ.*
6. *I am willing to be saved.*
5. *I recognize I am reconciled to God through Christ.*
4. *I realize my sin has alienated me from God.*
3. *I realize I am a sinner.*
2. *I know I am responsible to God.*
1. *I know there is a God.*

Consider:

1. Showing people that *they are special to you* is part of building bridges.
2. Building bridges takes time, but there are few things that over the years will bear more fruit.
3. There are many practical ways you can show people they are special. (If such are shared in a class time, write them down, use them.)

4. An excellent time to build bridge, for example, is during times when the person is sick, or there is a death in the family.
5. During times of sorrow, (maybe in midst of marriage problems, difficulties with a child, etc.) people are far more apt to be open to one's interest and love shown to them.
6. Building bridges is a continual process. It should become a part of your very life on a daily basis.
7. The closer we are to the Lord (loving Him) the more person-oriented we will become.
8. **We must work at building bridges to our circles of concern:**
 - our immediate family,
 - close friends,
 - business associates,
 - and person X who we don't know.
 - relatives,
 - neighbors,
 - acquaintances,

We must build bridges to the whole circle of influence God has given to us!

9. Ask the questions:
 - *How can I touch this person?*
 - *What can I do that will allow the Lord to use me to reach the person for Him?*
 - *How can I build a bridge, make a point of contact?*
 - *How can I converse about the things that will interest him?*

ARE YOU BEARING FRUIT?

John 15: 1-12, 16

Introduction:

- What should our priorities be? Are we living for the nonessentials, the things that do not really matter?
- Have you looked at your life recently? Have you asked yourself if you are majoring on the minor things, and minoring on the major things of life?
- If you looked back over the years since you have been saved -- are you satisfied with the fruit in your life? Are you happy about what has taken your time, what has received your affection, what you have lived for?
- What is the major purpose for our existence?

I. THE BLESSING OF BEARING FRUIT!

A. What is fruit?

1. Bearing fruit comes from the **nature** of the seed.
 - a. Whatever the nature of the seed will also be the nature of the fruit.
 - b. If you plant a peach pit, you will get a peach tree. If you plant a plum seed, you will get a plum tree. A watermelon seed produces watermelon vines.
 - c. Therefore if the new nature we have in Christ is in control, the fruit will be the result of the power of that new nature.
2. Fruit comes from the nature of the seed, and the seed is the Word of God.
3. The Word of God tells us that *God wants to produce His character in our lives.* -- so to bear fruit means that we allow the character of God to be produced in our lives. Gal. 5:22-23;
4. So fruit bearing will bring the results of the Holy Spirit's presence. It will include winning souls, (Rom. 1:13) tithing, serving or good works, laboring, praising, praying, etc. (Eph. 2:10) It is the result of the fruit of His presence in our lives.

B. This is seen in Christ's life: (John 4:34; 5: 6: 8: 9:4; 17:

1. Fruit is the very character of the Father. When Christ came to earth; He lived the God life.
2. What He saw the Father do is what He did. What he heard His father say is what He said. (Jh 14:10-11)
3. Jesus was in total submission to the Father. As a result of that submission, the Father manifested his character in Jesus.
4. Jesus came to earth not only to die for us, but also to manifest the character of the Father so that people can see what God is like.

5. Jh 1:14; Jesus the Word came bearing fruit. Fruit for us is bearing the nature of Jesus. ***Bearing fruit is Jesus Christ manifesting His character in our lives. It is living Jesus's life style.***
6. He gives the ***privilege of the Word of reconciliation, the ministry of reconciliation to us.*** We have the privilege of building bridges to people that others might get saved.

C. What are the Results of Fruitfulness?

1. There is the privilege of prayer -- ***the upward reach.***
We are to know the spirit and life-style of answered prayer. Jas. 4:2;
We are to become an intercessor; I believe the greatest battle in evangelism is at this point of having a prayer life.
We are dependent upon HIM for every thing and He must do the work in lives!
2. There is the privilege of ***inward joy*** -- 15:11
The word ***joy*** here comes from the Greek word ***makarios*** It means a blessed state; living with the sense of total satisfaction, a sense of fulfillment, a sense of the joy of blessedness.
We find Him sufficient and our life is filled with a sense of His fullness.
Eph. 3: Not because of good outward circumstances, but because of HIM. Life may not be tranquil but IN Him it can be joyous.
3. There is the joy of ***outward agape love:*** Jh 3:16; Jh 15: Eph. 2:4-5; 3:17;
Love is meeting needs. Loving may not be a feeling; for it does not depend upon feelings for it is a love of commitment of the will saying, "*I am going to meet those needs out of the resources of God.*"
Feelings may or may not follow. But the real essence of the love that Jesus spoke about --that love that will flow through us is best illustrated when he talked about how God loves? (Read the stories of losses in Luke 15.)

II. THE DETERMINATION TO BEAR FRUIT:

A. It is the result of abiding, Jh 15

1. Being at home in the Lord;
2. the Word of God being at home in us.

B. It is the result of commitment, Jh. 20:21
Willing to be sent, to do, to be His ambassador.

C. It is the result of desire;

1. Fruit bearing is ours because of the choice of the will, the submission of the life and the dedication of the faculties of life.
2. Fruit bearing comes from "*follow me and I will make you to be fishers of men.*" (Matt 4:19)
3. Fruit bearing comes as a result of the recognition of the fact that *He has chosen us!* (John 15:16; II Tim. 1:9)

III. THE HINDRANCES TO BEARING FRUIT:

Matt. 13:4-8; 19-23; Mk. 4: Lk. 8:

The seed represents God's Word, the sower is the servant of God who shares the Word with others; the human heart is like soil. The soil must be prepared to receive the seed before the seed can take root and produce a harvest. Like seed the Word of God is alive and able to produce fruit, but the seed must be planted and cultivated before the harvest will come.

A. The hardened heart -- the seed is stolen:

1. The person hears, but immediately allows the devil to snatch the seed away.
2. This person of Mark 4:4, 15 resists the Word of God and makes it easy for Satan (the birds) to snatch it away.

The soil is hard, matted down; the *wayside* was the path that ran through the common field, separating the plots; the foot traffic hardened the soil. Whatever goes into the ear or eye finally enters the heart, so be careful what is allow to "*walk on your hearts.*" *Thee is the danger that some allow many different influences touch them and they develop hard hearts!*

3. But it also applies to us -- maybe even more so. Did you hear what was preached last Sunday, or taught in a Bible class? Did you listen very closely?
4. The key to fruit bearing is the germination of the seed. It makes no difference how much seed is sown if the seed does not germinate, it does not bear fruit.
6. Satan is not concerned about how many people gather in a service, if all they do is sit and listen and leave and their is no application. Satan does not care how much seed is sown as long as he *can steal it away.*
7. There needs to be an encounter with the God and an encounter with His Word.
8. The seed is the Word of God and it needs to be dropped into people's hearts and then germinated by faith. Then the Holy Spirit takes it and produces new life.
9. Lives are no different, we do not bear fruit so we do not touch the world!
10. This assumes that the Word of God has been sown and many times the problem is the seed, the Word of God, was not truly sown at all.
11. Satan does work to (as a supernatural power) snatch away the Word of God from us. Satan does not mind how much you have been under the sound of the Word of God if it does not fall into your heart and germinate and bring forth fruit.

B. The seed falls on shallow soul -- 13:20-21 the shallow heart

Every hear a message that seemed just for you? Maybe it was a message of encouragement, correction, insights given, etc. What a blessing, but then the testing will come.

Here is a ***spiritual principle*** --the moment the Word of God germinates and takes hold the processes of nature take hold to see if the seed is going to bear fruit.

Reaching People For Christ!

This is represented by the thin soil on a rock, very typical of Palestine. A substratum of limestone covers a thin layer of soil. Shoot can grow up, but the roots cannot go down, the sun withers the rootless plant. The sun represents the testings that comes to all professing believers to prove their faith. The sun is good for plants *if they have roots but persecution comes. Persecution can actually deepen the roots of a truly saved person.*

1. This is **true to life** -- the sun comes out and the seed is **tested**. Is the sun there to destroy life? No, but the sun is there to help that seed produce luxurious fruit.
2. But the same sun that produces fruit in one seed **scorches** another plant. For those who truly trust the testing is not to destroy the fruit -- it is to produce it!

God allows a set of circumstances move into one believer's life and he remains or abides in Christ, he soaks up the strength in the vine, takes the life of the vine and produces the character of Christ... **but** another person under the same set of circumstances does not abide in the vine as he should and could. He knows the principles but instead of bearing fruit, he becomes bitter and hard and angry with God. He says, "*Why did this happen to me? Why has this come?*" *His fruit withers and dies. No fruit!*

God takes His children and puts them in circumstances that have potential for bearing fruit. How we **react by faith determines the fruit.**

3. **God will allow** your resolve to be used -- to be **tested**. God will allow that truth to be tested in your life. He will show you that He is adequate for any circumstance just as His Word says.
4. Every circumstance that comes into your life is an opportunity for God to demonstrate His power in your life.
 - a. The heat comes as the heat of circumstances,
 - b. the heat of persecution, the heat of wrong feelings,
 - c. or the heat of crises that come into your life.
5. But how many times have you **wilted**? How many times has God put you in situations where you received an insight from His Word, you received it -- **then the test came and blow upon it and you wilted!**

As you think about, and pray through your Concentric Circles, if great pressures sudden come, don't be alarmed. If when you share with some, they chew you up one side and down the other, God just wants to demonstrate his love and gentleness in return by your turning the other cheek. God wants to demonstrate HIS character in your life.

C. The Seed is Choked: the crowded heart! Matt. 13:22

This pictures the person who receives the Word of God but does not truly repent and remove the *weeds out of his or her heart!* This hearer has too many different kinds of seeds growing in the soil -- worldly cares, the desire for riches, a lust for things -- and the good seed of the Word has no room in which to grow. To change the image, a person wants to walk the **broad way and the narrow way** at the same time (Matt. 7:13-14) and it can't be done.

1. Does this seed germinate? yes. And was it growing into a fine plant? yes.

2. But all of a sudden other things choked it out. Did it bear fruit? NO. Something choked it. What chokes us?
3. The number one problem is **worry, little anxieties**. You cannot praise God and worry at the same time.
4. The word translated **worry** in verse 22 is found in a number of places in the Scriptures -- it means (Matt. 6:31) **to not be anxious**; (I Pet. 5:7) **casting all your anxiety upon Him**, (Phil. 4:6) **Be anxious for nothing**.
5. You are not to allow anxiety to eat you, to grasp you,

I have a hoe and leave it in the garden, soon I find rust on it. This is oxidation, and it has eaten into the hoe. This is the meaning of the Greek word. God is telling us not to allow the corrosive care of this world to eat on us. And the deceitfulness of riches and the materialism of this age chokes the Word of God.

D. Fruitful seed sown in a fruitful heart:

This pictures the truly saved person because fruit of a changed life is the evidence of true salvation. (II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:8-10; Gal. 5:19-23) The other three produced no fruit, so we conclude that they belong to persons who have never been born again. Not all true believers will equally produce, but all will.

1. This person bears much fruit; he is controlled by the Holy Spirit;
2. He does not allow things of this life to choke the Word nor does he allow the testing times to trip him up, nor does he allow the Devil to snatch away the good seed, the Word of God.

Christ was not impressed by the great crowds that followed Him.

He knew that most of the people did not really *hear the Word and receive it in their hearts*. He gave this story to encourage the disciples in their future ministry, and to encourage us today. When you consider the much teaching, preaching, and witnessing that goes on in the course of a month or a year, you wonder why there is such a small harvest. Often the fault does not lie with the sower or the seed but the problem is with the soil of the human heart. Such will not submit to God, repent, and receive the Word and be converted.

Conclusion:

1. Fruit bearing comes from surrender or allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us.
2. Fruit bearing comes about because we seek to tear down barriers that are in the way.
3. Fruit bearing is possible because we build bridges. We work at building relationships as we expect God to use us.
4. Fruit bearing is our experience because we love people and *love is meeting needs*.
5. Fruit bearing is a blessed reality because we intercede; we are willing to travail in prayer, to become fervent in prayer trusting God to use us.
6. Fruit bearing is our joy because of our relationship with the Lord, and His ministry through us.

Confronting Others With the Gospel!

Introduction:

We must confront others with the gospel, but you say, “Well, I will just live my life before someone, for I am not good at talking.” But we talk about everything else. We talk about how to bake a cake or tell someone about a football game, or any dozen other things.

Consider: If you feel that you can just live your life before them and that would be your witness then you **must** live a better life than Jesus did because He not only lived the gospel, but He talked about it also. If you just live a good life and no one knows the source of the power for that life -- how will they come to Christ?

A. Suggestions about Sharing the Gospel:

1. Do not browbeat people, just talk to them naturally, in love... like you would talk about anything else in life.
2. Don't be fearful. When you begin to really pray for people and to love them, and to meet their needs, the Lord will prepare their hearts, and He will prepare yours also.
3. Just simple share, talk about what the Lord means in your life. Share John 3:16, etc.
4. What is the worse thing that can happen to you because of sharing life in Christ?

B. Realization About the Gospel:

1. Our love for God must precede our love for the lost.
2. If you really love Him, we will love whom He loves.
3. We must realize man's lost condition without salvation. If we believe the Word then we don't have any option. Jh 14:6; Acts 4:12;
4. If it did not take the *death of Jesus Christ to redeem* man, then the cross was a **travesty**. It was useless. NO, He had to come and die. There was no other way... Consider Romans 5:12; 5:19; and 6:23.
5. If He is the only way, then men are lost without him. We need to weep over that. A person cannot be saved unless he realizes he is without Christ and is **hopeless** and **helplessly lost**.
6. **Those in your circles... are lost!** It is **churchianity** that people have been presented for the most part. Most people have never heard a clear, simple, but complete message about salvation in Christ alone.
7. They have heard a mere **caricature of the Lord**. They rejected a **concept of churchianity** and most have never heard the claims of the person of Jesus Christ and what they need to do to have fellowship with Him.
8. How great is our God? Can He save? Is He sovereign? Think of the immensity and power of our Sovereign being who is our Lord.

9. We need to see people as God sees them -- lost, undone... bound for Hell... rather than just having a curiosity about people.
10. We must confront people in a normal voice, and tell them *what Jesus has done for them*. **Who** He is, **What sin** is, and **How** God has provided for their forgiveness.

Here is a model presentation that you could use!

MODEL PRESENTATION OUTLINE

-- SHARING THE GOSPEL PLAN --

NOTE: This outline, exploratory questions, transitions, and Scripture verses and references *must be memorized word for word* from the King James Version. (Learn how to talk through the illustrations.) After memorizing this model, it is then easy to adapt it, change it, and form your own model.

I. INTRODUCTION -- Talk about these four things as a means of building a relationship (rapport with them).

A. **Family** -- their background, children, etc.,

B. **Occupation** -- where they work, interests, hobbies

C. **Religious** -- background, attendance, knowledge

D. **Message** -- sharing Christ, giving the gospel story

II. EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS -- For the purpose of opening the conversation toward spiritual things and to begin sharing the gospel. (The questions below -A,B,C - are merely suggestive. You may not want to use them at all or only part of them. They are usually very helpful.)

A. *Have you ever come to the place in your life when you knew for certain that you have eternal life and that you will go to heaven when you die?*

B. *If someone (a child, or a friend) asked you how to get to heaven, what would you say?*

Transition : The Bible says, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."* (I John 5:13) I know for certain that when I die, I will be with Christ. (Give a brief testimony of your salvation at this point.) Or use one of the questions above or the one below!

C. *Suppose you were standing before God right now and He asked you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?"* What do you think you would say?

III. THE GOSPEL STORY

A. **God's Purpose:** (Sharing these will help you to build an interest on the part of the hearer.)

God has a wonderful gift that He wants us to have right now. That gift is eternal life, and it is a free gift.

The Bible says, *"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23b).

God has a wonderful plan for your life and he wants you to have life and "life more abundant."

Jesus said, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10).

God wants us to know that we will spend eternity with Him in Heaven.

Jesus said, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:3).

B. **Our Need:** (Be thorough in sharing the condition of the lost.)

We all have a great problem we were born with. It is something we would rather not admit, but God is very clear about our need. Let me show you what our need is, and we will look at God's remedy, as well. There are four basic facts we need to look at:

1. God says we are all under sin. We are under its power, guilt, control, and penalty.
(Romans 3:9, 10) *"What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."*
2. Notice also that none of us can do perfectly right, or there are none righteous. If we were to get to heaven by works, it would have to be perfect works.
3. We have gone our own way in sinfulness.
(Romans 3:12) *"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* None that do good in comparison to Christ's perfection. For God declares that we are all sinners and fall short of what He would want us to be because of our sinfulness.
(See Romans 3:23)
4. We can't do a thing to improve our state. God says that we are totally without strength. We are as helpless as a sick person on a hospital bed, unable to do a thing to help his condition.
(Romans 5:6) *"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."*

Transition: We cannot save ourselves. It is *"not of works lest any man should boast,"* according to Ephesians 2:9. God is holy and just and must punish sin, yet He loves us and has provided forgiveness and reconciliation for our sin. John the Baptist said, *"Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* (John 1:29).

C. Now We Will Look At God's Provision:

1. Jesus is God, and became man.

(John 1:1, 14) *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* (Christ is the living WORD, and is equal with the Father for He is the GOD-MAN.)

2. God, the Father, gave the Lord Jesus to die for us that He might pay for all our sins.

(Romans 5: 6, 8) *"For when we were yet without strength, in due time CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY." "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST DIED FOR US."*

(You may also desire to use I Timothy 1:15, I Timothy 2:5 , and I Peter 2:24 at this point. Emphasize that Christ paid for ALL our sins.)

Book of sin illustration: Let me illustrate it this way. Let my left hand represent me and my right hand represent Jesus. (Hold up a book or other object with the left hand.) This book represents a record of all my sin, my wrongs, my imperfections. God loves me (point to the left fingers) but He hates my sin (point to the book) and must punish sin. Because of His love, God sent Jesus into the world (Lift up the right hand parallel to the left hand). The Bible says, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6). (As you say the words, laid on Him, transfer the book in one distinct motion from the left to the right hand and leave it there.) When Jesus died on the cross, God laid on Jesus all my sin and guilt.

3. Jesus is alive and can save fully, totally, any who come to Him.

(Note Hebrews 7:25.)

(Romans 4:25) *" [Jesus] was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."*

4. God has provided a gift of eternal life, or we will experience eternal death; it is our choice.

(Romans 6:23) *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Death is the result of our sinfulness. Death means separation, for we can be alive physically and be dead spiritually. Eternal death is to be in hell, separate from God forever.

God offers eternal life. It is available through His son -- not through works, being good, doing our best, baptism, or anything we can do. We cannot work for a gift; it must be received.

Transition: The only way Jesus can affect our lives is for us to receive Him. We have seen the facts of our sin and of God's provision. The Bible says, *"But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name"* (John 1:12).

D. We Must RESPOND to the Fact Of Our Need and God's Provision:

1. We must repent of our sins.

(Acts 3:19; 20:21) *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Repentance is not just feeling sorry for our sins. It means to have a change of mind, heart and will, as we turn from our sin to Christ.

Military command illustration: Repentance is similar to what happens in the military when all the soldiers are marching in one direction and the command is given, *To the rear march*. Everyone turns immediately and marches in the opposite direction. When we repent, we turn from our sins and turn to Jesus.

2. We must place our faith in Jesus alone.

(Ephesians 2:8) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

Chair illustration: As we put faith in a chair, accept the chair to sit on, so we must put faith in Jesus alone -- accepting Him, resting in Him, relying upon Him. ***Faith is taking Him at His Word*** and acting upon what He tells you to do right now.

3. Now we notice in Romans 10:9, 10, that we must, with our mouth, confess our need of Christ and with our hearts, put our trust in Him as our personal Savior and Lord.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10).

As we pray and accept what Christ did on the Cross, and put our faith in Him, we must trust Him with our whole being, with all our heart that HE WILL SAVE US as we ask.

4. Accepting Christ should take place right now, and He will make you His child at the very moment you receive Him as your Savior.

(John 1:12) *"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."*

Marriage illustration: In marriage we believe in a person, put faith in that person, and receive that person as a spouse. We know about the person, but we must go beyond that to putting faith in the person. This we do at the time of the marriage ceremony. As we receive the person into our lives, *so we must accept Christ into our lives with expected change. We must trust ON Him.* (See Acts 16:31.)

IV. LEADING TO A COMMITMENT

A. Commitment Questions:

1. Willingness question: *"Is there any reason why you would not be willing to*

receive God's gift of eternal life?"

2. Commitment question: "Are you willing to turn from your sin and place your faith in Jesus right now"? (It is a matter of putting trust in Him for the very purpose for which He came, just like you trust that chair to hold you up.)

B. Clarification:

To receive Jesus as your Savior you must:

1. repent of your sins,
2. place your trust in Jesus alone, and
3. surrender your sin and your life to Him.

(Romans 10:13) "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (If you truly want the Lord to give you eternal life, and you want Him as your Savior, tell Him out loud.)

C. Pray, Accept Right Now:

1. The soul winner ought to lead in prayer. Praying for the person with whom you are dealing. Pray for understanding and for God's work in the heart.
2. Encourage the person to pray and ask Christ to save him. Possibly have him repeat to you what he wants Christ to do for him.
3. If necessary, lead him in a prayer of decision, have him repeat after you a prayer of acceptance, if you feel he understands and is very sincere.

D. After the Decision:

1. Rejoice with him in his new decision, and encourage him to immediately say, "Thank you, Lord, for saving me."

Note: I think that when someone is willing to pray and from the heart thanking the Lord for saving them... it is a good evidence that they mean it from the depth of their being. I think the Scripture is clear that no one can call Christ "Lord" without meaning it. In other words, it is not likely that they are just saying something they do not mean, and the Holy Spirit would not allow them to say "thank you, Lord," if they were not genuine.

2. Lead in a prayer of thanksgiving.
3. Share some verses of assurance.
John 1: 12; 3:14-17; 5:24; 6:37-49; 10:26-29

Personal Note:

This is a compilation of a presentation that I have used for many years with good success.

It is important to be very truthful to the Word of God, not unduly press for a decision, but instead be certain that the Holy Spirit is truly working in the life and the decision is not of your making.

Decisions can be made due to your good salesmanship, or personal effort. Spurious decisions are not hard to get if the Holy Spirit is not at work and the person makes a profession merely to please us, or to get us off their backs, or to please someone else. Or it may be they think they can accept Christ and then live as they please. Salvation is not a ticket to heaven.

-- Dr. Edward Watke, Jr.

