

UNIT II

INVOLVING CHRISTIANS IN EVANGELISM

The conversion of the lost is the work of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit works through the lives of Christians. There must be definite planning, training, and use of techniques by Christians who make themselves available to God in the conversion of the lost. The past extreme attitude that "If God wants the heathen converted, He will do it without my help or yours" is not biblical and must be avoided. The other extreme is to conclude that the lost can be saved through human efforts and techniques. The biblical position is "We are labourers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9).

The obvious fact is that Christians of today are not faithful and effective in witnessing. The previous unit has dealt with one of the primary reasons: Christians are not claiming the available power of God for victorious living and serving. Unit II deals with another primary reason: Christians do not know how to share their faith effectively. This unit emphasizes the church giving attention to training Christians to witness.

Lesson 6 discusses the responsibility and opportunities of Christians to witness. Three preparatory steps to witnessing—preparing daily by prayer, becoming aware of those who need a witness, and establishing rapport with strangers—are discussed. *Lesson 7* discusses the importance of a church setting up a definite and perennial training programme. The role of the pastor, the importance of the programme to the church, and various plans for training in evangelism receive attention. *Lessons 8 and 9* give a detailed outline of a one-week school of evangelism.

LESSON 6

TRAINING CHRISTIANS TO WITNESS

In obedience to the command of Christ, every Christian is obligated to be a witness. Many Christians do not witness because they have not been trained to share their faith. It is difficult to train thoroughly all of the church membership at one time, but some scheme must be devised which eventually will train each member effectively.

Two approaches for training Christians to share their faith are suggested. The *first approach* is the school of evangelism which is usually a week in length with nightly sessions. The school of evangelism should include every member of the church who is twelve years of age and above. This approach does not give the thoroughness and depth of training most desired, but it does give comprehensiveness. A *second approach* emphasizes training of small groups by actual experience. After limited instruction, the pastor takes two people with him each week as he witnesses in homes. He may plan to make visits with two or three teams each week. This approach gives thorough training, but it must be limited to a few persons at a time. It requires a minimum of four months for each group of four to six people to be trained. Dr. James Kennedy of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, has developed and used this small group plan effectively.¹ It is suggested that the second, more individualized approach, be used as a continuation of the training begun in the school of evangelism.

Thorough training for witnessing involves help in the following areas:

1. How to live an abundant and victorious life in Christ;
2. The art of prevailing prayer;
3. How to recognize opportunities and to plan contacts for witnessing;
4. How to open a conversation leading to an opportunity to share Christ;
5. How to present the gospel of salvation clearly;
6. How to lead the lost person to receive Christ as Saviour;
7. How to help new Christians grow.

Some of these areas will be discussed in this lesson, and the rest will be discussed in subsequent lessons.

The Importance of Experiencing Victory

The Scriptures studied in the first five lessons are basic to living an abundant and victorious life. Unless a Christian has the joy of the new life in his heart, he will not be an effective witness. These studies should be included in a church training programme of personal witnessing. In addition to using the concepts in sermons leading up to an emphasis on evangelism training, the Scriptures should be carefully studied during the school of evangelism. The truth that every Christian can experience the

Why is every Christian obligated to be a witness?

(To confirm your answer, read Acts 1:8.)

One approach to training Christians to share their faith is _____

Its advantage is its _____

(the school of evangelism, comprehensiveness)

Another approach is training small groups by _____

Its advantage is _____

(actual experience, thoroughness)

After reading the list of areas involved in training for witnessing, try to write at least four of them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Read them again; then write two more.

5. _____
6. _____

(Now compare your list with the text.)

Basic to effective witnessing is a Christian's _____ life.

(victorious)

¹ This programme is described in Kennedy's book, *Evangelism Explosion*.

power of God working through him when his life is cleansed of sin and Spirit-filled is the foundation to effective witnessing. The life of the Christian is the channel through which the power of God flows in convicting and bringing about the conversion of the lost person.

The fact that the conversion of sinners is the work of God and not the accomplishment of man removes the pressure of man's having to succeed in witnessing by getting people to make decisions. If the witness feels that he is responsible for getting people to make decisions, he feels defeated each time someone to whom he has witnessed rejects Christ. Defeat discourages effort. When the witness understands that he is responsible for sharing his faith and for inviting the sinner to receive Christ, but the results are God's, the pressure of succeeding in witnessing is removed. Paul recognized that a man is not required to produce certain results in his service; he is required to be faithful in service and leave the results to God: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6f).

Every Person Has Opportunity to Witness

Each Christian actually has many more opportunities for witnessing each day than he is aware of. A dear Christian lady who was confined to her bed became concerned that she was not sharing her faith. At first she consoled her conscience by concluding that her invalid condition secluded her to the extent that she had no contact with lost people. But the Spirit of God continued to speak to her about her responsibility to share her faith. She acknowledged her responsibility to God and asked Him to show her opportunities for witnessing. Soon thereafter, the young man who delivered milk to her door came in to receive payment for it. She inquired concerning his relationship to God. He had never received Christ, but he wanted to become a Christian. She shared her faith and invited him to ask Christ to forgive his sins and to take control of his life. He did. At the end of the week, the boy from the store delivered groceries to her home. He, too, was under conviction and was ready to respond when someone told him how to be saved. Before many days had passed, the woman realized that the paperboy and postman came to her door daily, and they often brought the paper and mail to her bed. No one had ever explained to them how to be saved. Then on occasions neighbours would come in for short visits. She had never asked them whether they were prepared to die. If a woman so limited in contacts has so many opportunities to witness, how often each day we must have opportunities to share our faith if only we had the spiritual sight to see them! The place to begin the new venture of sharing Christ is with the prayer that our eyes will be opened to our responsibilities and opportunities. "Lord, teach us to pray!"

Effective Praying

Many of our prayers are unanswered because we do not expect them to be answered. Others are unanswered because they arise from selfish interests which conflict with God's will. The prayer promises of the Bible are positive and indicate that answers to prayers should be expected. Christ made many great promises with reference to answers to prayer. He said to His disciples, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7f.). However, the disciples could not expect answers to their prayers if they only uttered pious words or selfish requests: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not

When is the pressure of succeeding in witnessing removed?

(When a witness understands he is responsible for sharing his faith and inviting a sinner to Christ but the results are God's.)

Many prayers are unanswered because of lack of _____ . Selfish prayers that conflict with _____ cannot be answered.

(faith, God's will)

be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward" (Matt. 6:5).

Requirements for effective prayer

Faith in God.—If one prays in faith, he expects to receive what he asks for. Jesus said, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22). On another occasion, the disciples had attempted to heal a lad without success. When the disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast out the devil, He replied: "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. 17:20).

Submission to the will of God.—The attitude of the one who prays must be for God's will to be done rather than selfish desires to be met. This condition should be of no hindrance to the Christian since he knows that if sinful and evil men desire to give good gifts unto their children, "How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11). Jesus taught his disciples to pray. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). For God's Kingdom to come on earth, His will must be done in the lives of His servants. His will is best for them. Sometimes, man does not know what to ask for, and he may ask amiss. God knows what is best for man, and He responds with His best gifts to prayers of submission.

Sincerity.—The Lord's Prayer (Model Prayer) is often repeated insincerely. When it is repeated by the congregation, many of those who say it are not willing for God's will to be done through them. God's will requires not only that Christians confess their sins but repent of them (give them up). It involves following Christ in dedicated and sacrificial service. To pray for God's will to be done on earth but to refuse to surrender one's life to Christ as Lord and Saviour is hypocrisy.

Unselfishness.—James stated, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (4:3). Their intentions were to spend in sensual pleasure the gifts they requested of God.

Purity of heart.—The psalmist stated, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (66:18). The first request of each person should be for his life to be cleansed of sin. Confession should precede petitions. First John 1:9 should be claimed before John 14:13. Only after James states, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed," is he able to say, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16).

A heart of love and reconciliation.—If a person is unwilling to forgive, he will not be forgiven: "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15). Prayer is the most personal and intimate form of worship. Jesus warned that "If thou bring thy gift to the altar (as an act of worship), and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23f.).

Persistency of effective prayer

Jesus gave the illustration of a woman whose grievance was unheeded by an unjust judge. The woman returned to petition the judge so frequently that he decided to attend to her need to end her disturbing him. If the unjust judge would respond to the

List six requirements of effective prayer and a Scripture reference to substantiate each.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

(Compare your list with the text.)

woman's pleas, Jesus used the argument of the lesser to the greater by asking how much more will God who loves us answer our prayers?

The nature of effective prayer

Prayer should be specific and not general. In the prayer of confession, specific sins should be named. When petitions are made for the salvation of the lost, specific individuals should be named. General prayers do not come to grips with specific needs in our own lives nor in the lives of others. To pray the general prayer, "Forgive my sins," does not result in cleansing because it is not genuine confession.

Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. Since prayer is not primarily getting things from God but is fellowship with God, the prayer should open with a reverent recognition of the heavenly Father and an adoration of His holy name which represents His being. The next step should be submission to His will which is to recognize His rule and control of our lives. Dependence on God for our daily bread should be recognized, confession of our sins should be expressed, and petitions for His guidance and blessings should be made. The prayer may be closed with thanksgiving for the greatness and glory of God who is able to bring to pass the answers to our prayers. Dr. Andrew Blackwood suggested that every prayer should include the following:²

Adoration,
Confession and Consecration,
Thanksgiving, and
Supplication.

The attitude in prayer

Prayer is talking to God and should be reverent but not cold and formal. God is our Father; he should be approached with respect and joy as a child would approach his father who loves him.

Since Christians can expect their loving Father to bestow beneficial gifts, they should ask in an attitude of expectancy and thanksgiving. The child of God can thank his heavenly Father in advance for answering his prayers. By faith he knows that God will hear and answer as He promised.

Only Christians who learn the art of prevailing prayer will excel as soul-winners. The conversion of the lost is by the power of God flowing through the witness. God wants the lost to be converted; therefore, the witness has the assurance that lifting those before God whose names are on his prayer list will not go unheeded.

Becoming Aware of Those Who Need a Faith

Relatives

It is difficult for most people to witness to relatives; however, the salvation of our loved ones should be of great concern. The fear of offending a parent or a relative outside the immediate family has been used by Satan to bar many from the Kingdom of God and to bring later grief to the timid Christian.

The Christian should consider the spiritual needs of those within his own family first and place their names on his daily prayer list. He should ask the Lord to prepare them spiritually by revealing to them their spiritual needs. When there is indication

² A lecture at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1953.

Circle the correct word.
Prayer should be (general, specific).

(Circle *specific*.)

Because prayer is fellowship with God rather than primarily getting things from God, prayer should include:

A _____

C _____ and C _____

T _____

S _____

(Adoration, Confession and Consecration,
Thanksgiving, Supplication)

Christians should pray in an attitude of _____
and _____

(expectancy, thanksgiving)

Sometimes a Christian finds it most difficult to
witness to his _____

(relatives)

that the Holy Spirit has been working in their hearts, the witness should speak to them personally about their relationship to Christ.

After praying for relatives who are not seen as frequently as member of the immediate family, the concerned Christian should remain alert to the time when he is alone with the relative and the conversation can be shifted to the subject of faith in Christ. He may first tell how Christ has made a difference in his own life. Exaggerations and meaningless general statements should be avoided. The mercy and grace of Christ instead of personal accomplishments should be stressed.

Parents should pray for the salvation of their children and frequently ask the Lord to give them wisdom to know how to teach them the way of salvation. Great care must be taken with children under ten years of age lest the child make a public expression of faith to please the parents instead of responding to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit deals with children in spiritual matters on their own level of understanding. Parents should be sensitive to evidences that their children are under conviction and help them with positive guidance to understand how to receive Christ by faith. Children from six to ten years of age should not be encouraged before they are ready. They do need positive help and encouragement when they reveal inner spiritual disturbances by asking questions about death or by showing uneasiness during invitations at the close of worship services. Parents make mistakes when they discourage children because the parents assume they are too young to understand what they are doing. Some children do join the church without understanding the meaning of salvation, but so do some adults. It is better for a child to be permitted to join the church before he has experienced real conviction by the Holy Spirit than to prevent a child from receiving Christ and following Him in baptism when the Holy Spirit is dealing with him.

Close friends

Frequently Christians are guilty of failing to share their faith with close friends. Perhaps the unbelieving friends often wonder if Christ is of any significance to their professing Christian friends. If He is, why have they not shared the experience? The first step might be to invite the friend to attend church. The responsibility, however, does not end until the friend understands how to be saved and is encouraged to make the decision.

Neighbours and business or work associates

Neighbours and business or work associates are aware of the church attendance and different attitudes and values of Christians. If it is evident that Christ really means something to the Christian, his neighbours and work associates expect him to talk to them about spiritual matters. Their names should be placed on a daily prayer list, and the Christian should be sensitive to their spiritual needs and any indication that they are interested in discussing their relationship to Christ. Men who work together frequently discuss religion—a favourite pastime; however, some do not desire the conversation to become too personal in the presence of others. Usually the best time to share Christ with a fellow-worker is when he is apart from others and a period of time is available when there will be no distractions. The best approach might be to schedule an appointment after work hours. They will not object to being approached about their relationship to Christ if they detect a spirit of genuine concern and have observed a difference in the life of the Christian. The attitudes that “I’m right in my beliefs and you’re wrong” or “I’m much better than you because I’m a Christian” must be avoided.

Parents should be sensitive to evidences that a child is under _____.
(conviction)
What do children usually need most when they reveal inner disturbances? _____
(Positive help and encouragement)
Others besides relatives with whom a Christian is obligated to share his witness are: (1) _____ (2) _____ (3) _____
(close friends, neighbours, business or work associates)

Strangers

Casual meetings.—It is natural for people to communicate when circumstances bring them together. Friendliness is an admirable virtue. When circumstances bring a Christian into contact with a stranger for as long as ten minutes, perhaps the Lord has prepared the appointment for His servant to share Christ. Advantage should be taken of the opportunity to bring the conversation around to the subject of what Christ means to the witness. In a subsequent lesson, suggestions will be given for introducing the subject of faith to new acquaintances.

Strangers have occasion to meet and converse under various circumstances. Public meetings concerning school or politics, travel on public transportation, business in stores, or leisure time spent on the street frequently bring strangers together and provide enough time to share Christ. Occasionally a Christian fails to share with a stranger, not knowing that the stranger may never have another opportunity to make his decision for Christ. A friend of mine sat down by a man who looked dejected and troubled. He invited the stranger to share his burdens. The stranger shared some of the troubles of his life, but he was a little incoherent because he had been drinking liquor. My friend prayed with him but did not present Christ because of the semi-intoxicated condition of the man. The stranger committed suicide before the week ended. We never know the depth of the spiritual needs of strangers whom we meet. Jesus never met a man or woman who was without the need of spiritual help.

Visits in homes.—Christians must go into the homes of the community to share Christ if the Great Commission is ever to be fulfilled. Actually, the home provides the best environment for sharing personal faith in Christ.

Planned visits to homes usually result from one of four situations: to get better acquainted with families who have visited the church services; to get acquainted with new families who have moved into the neighbourhood; to visit families mentioned by friends as needing a spiritual ministry; and to take a religious survey to discover the spiritual needs of the people of the community. Any of the four circumstances provide two important reasons for making the visit: interest in the person as a friend, and the opportunity to share spiritually with those in need of a faith or who carry heavy burdens.

Establishing Rapport with Strangers

Expect to establish friendships

Most people want to be friends. There may be some hesitation to offer friendship to strangers before the desire for it has been communicated and trust has been established. The initial word in becoming acquainted is usually the most difficult one. Sometimes a friendship develops from a smile. Most people will respond readily when they detect a genuine interest being shown in them.

When an unknown family is visited, two questions usually arise in the mind of the person answering the knock at the door: "I wonder what he wants? Who is he?" These questions should be answered by the visitor as soon as possible to allay distrust and uncertainty. The casual meeting of a person in a public place and the exchange of friendly comments permits rapport to be established before these questions arise. The questions are usually answered during the process of getting acquainted. To explain your interest in the spiritual needs of people will usually not provide an unfavourable response unless a previous visitor has been obnoxious. Even in the case of people who first show a negative response to the visit, the difficulties are removed if circumstances permit the parties to get to know one another.

Often there are opportunities with a _____ when a Christian should share Christ.

(stranger)

Planned visits to homes usually result from the following situations:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The questions in the mind of a person on whose door the visitor knocks are:

_____?
_____?

(Who is he? What does he want?)

In preparing to visit an unknown family, remember the following points:

1. They will respond in friendship to those who are friendly and who show an interest in them and offer to be helpful.
2. They may hesitate to respond with friendship to those who give the impression of having ulterior or hidden motives.
3. They want to know who you are and what your purposes are.

Avoid certain attitudes

Avoid the attitude that your job is to judge a person's relationship to Christ. Human nature has a strong element of pride which becomes defensive when the image of the person is threatened. Only the Spirit of God can break through the outer defence and "convince the world of sin." Our task is not to pronounce judgement or condemnation on a person, but to share the righteousness of Christ and His love for sinners.

Avoid the attitude of being interested in the person only as a prospective member of your church. Even though they are members of another denomination and hold different doctrines, Christ is the common Saviour of both. If Christ is not the Saviour of the person whom you are visiting, you should seek opportunity to share Him. Christ can be shared with people of other churches without proselyting.

Avoid the attitude that you are superior in doctrine or knowledge. This attitude leads to arguments with each person attempting to impress the other with his knowledge. Your mission is to share Christ. If some doctrinal question arises which you are able to help the person to answer, there should be no hesitation to present the teachings of the Bible pertaining to doctrines other than salvation. It is usually better not to discuss the controversial question of which denomination is scriptural until the question of salvation is settled. Of course, the question cannot always be avoided when the person has been taught that salvation is equivalent to membership in a particular church.

Three attitudes a witness for Christ should not take are: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ (Compare your answer with the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide, answer the following questions.

1. Name two approaches for training Christians and give an advantage of each. _____

2. List six areas of training needed by witnesses. _____

3. Why should a study of the victorious life be included in the evangelism training? _____

4. What should a person understand about his responsibility in witnessing? _____

5. Give two reasons many prayers are unanswered. _____

6. List six requirements of victorious praying. _____

7. List five elements which a prayer should include. _____

8. Name two characteristics of a right attitude for prayer. _____

9. How should a parent respond with regard to questions about salvation from his child under ten years of age?

10. Name four groups of associates in which there may be individuals who are in need of Christ. _____

11. Why should Christians be concerned to share Christ with strangers? _____

12. List four occasions for visiting in the homes of strangers. _____

13. What two questions does the person have who answers a knock at the door? _____

14. List three attitudes to avoid when witnessing. _____

Suggested supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Do one of the following reading assignments, make a summary or brief outline of what you read, and be prepared to share the significant points with the seminar.

Bright, *Revolution Now*, pp. 142-165
 Taylor, *The Key to Triumphant Living*, pp. 104-115

Seminar Discussion

1. Which of the seven areas needing attention in evangelism training is most urgent?
2. What is the importance of human endeavour and techniques if the conversion is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit?
3. How aggressive should a Christian be with a stranger in presenting Christ?
4. What is a successful witnessing experience?
5. What are some characteristics of effective prayer?
6. How can a Christian know when he should share his faith?
7. Why is it difficult to witness to relatives and close friends?
8. Should Christians visit in the homes of strangers to share Christ? Give reasons for your answer.
9. Students should be given opportunity to report valuable information gained from their supplementary reading.