

## LESSON 7

### INITIATING EVANGELISM TRAINING

Since the time of Ignatius in the second century, the role of the pastor or bishop has been magnified in a large segment of the Christian Church. To guard against heresy and to achieve unity, Ignatius frequently reminded his congregation to be subject to the bishop. He stated that just as wherever Christ is, there the Catholic Church is, so "wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be." The growth of the Church has been greatly hindered by exalting the pastor and minimizing the role of the laity. The pastor is the leader of a congregation, but the laymen are ministers for Christ also. The pastor's responsibility is to prepare the laymen for ministering by sharing their faith (cf. Eph. 4:11ff.).

#### The Role of the Pastor

Members of most churches will not be effective witnesses unless the pastor enlists them in training. A pastor will not be effective in enlisting members for evangelistic work unless he sets the right example in personal evangelism himself. He must not feel that doing personal evangelism fulfills his responsibility in this area. Jesus, as a leader, spent most of His time training His followers to share their faith.

Some pastors feel that their churches do not have laymen qualified to be trained as servants of our Lord. All too often, the failure is not due to the lack of potentially well-qualified laymen, but the result of the pastor's failure to train his laymen effectively. Laymen are willing to witness when they have been trained to share their faith.

While the training of laymen to witness is not an easy task, it is an essential one. The primary goal of every pastor should be to enlist and train every member of his congregation to witness. Christ expects every Christian to witness. He began His ministry by calling upon the disciples to become fishers of men, and He ended His ministry by telling them to witness unto Him in their neighbourhoods, throughout the country, and to the ends of the world.

Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians that Christ has given to the Church "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (4:11f.). This verse actually means that leaders have been given to the Church to prepare the saints or congregation for ministering and building up the body of Christ. The pastor should ask himself this question: "How many members of the church have I prepared to do the work of ministering?"

The pastor who trains ten people to win others to Christ has multiplied his evangelistic ministry ten-fold. Actually the laymen has more opportunities to witness than the pastor. He works daily on the job with people who know not Christ as Saviour. The pastor has to seek out people with whom to share Christ, but the layman already knows many neighbours and co-labourers who need to have faith in Christ.

The pastor and laymen of a church are all\_\_\_\_\_.

(ministers)

Who is responsible for training the laymen for ministering? \_\_\_\_\_

(the pastor)

The pastor needs to lead out in personal\_\_\_\_\_.

(evangelism)

Following Jesus' example, the pastor also should \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ church members to witness.

(enlist, train)

Name the event at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and another event at the close of His ministry which set the example for training Christians to witness.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

(Jesus' calling His disciples to become fishers of men; His instruction to His disciples to witness to all the world)

A well-known Scripture passage which refers to training of the laity by church leaders is found in \_\_\_\_\_.

(Ephesians 4:11 f.)

The wise pastor multiplies his ministry by \_\_\_\_\_.

(training laymen to witness.)

### The Example of Jesus

The prophetic or preaching role of the pastor has been emphasized to the neglect of the role of teacher and trainer. Jesus was, first of all, a teacher. A pastor can choose no better example as a leader than Jesus. He needs to master the techniques used by Jesus in training the disciples.

The first three steps used by Jesus to prepare His disciples to witness were: (1) Calling and assigning spiritual responsibilities to them; (2) teaching them the message of the Kingdom; and (3) Giving them practical training through personal examples. Jesus did not expect His followers to know what to do without being taught. When He called the men to follow Him, He told them that He would make them "fishers of men". Too often in contemporary churches, new Christians are not informed about their responsibilities. Since older members of the church are not faithful in witnessing, new Christians fail to become aware that their Lord has commanded every Christian to witness. Christians who are not involved in sharing Christ must be informed and taught how to be faithful witnesses.

Jesus did not assign the apostles responsibility and expect them to carry it out without instructions. He taught them concerning the gospel of the Kingdom and the requirements for living as Kingdom citizens. He taught them what to say and to do before He sent them out.

Jesus did not sit in an "office" and send the disciples out into the fields and highways to bear witness. He went before them from village to village sharing the gospel of the Kingdom. Some of the most helpful instructions came to the disciples through their observing Jesus in action. The New Testament Church would never have grown if Jesus had not trained the disciples by taking them with Him.

The Apostle Paul also used the method of training by example. Young John Mark went along with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. Timothy and Titus were trained in the same way.

### The Role of the Layman

Discouraged and defeated churches experience new life when laymen become involved in witnessing. Worship services become vital and meaningful, Christians become more interested in their church, and the lost of the community become more concerned about their spiritual values. Christians who are busy for Christ do not have time for backbiting and gossip.

I was invited to serve as interim pastor of a small church which was discouraged due to problems within the church. Heavy responsibilities in school limited the amount of time which I could devote to serving the church. After praying about the best way to use the limited time available, I decided that there would be enough time to make one or two visits each afternoon after leaving the school office at five o'clock. Since the deacons of the church usually concluded their work day at the same time, I invited a deacon to accompany me on these visits each afternoon. Each Sunday, a schedule was planned for a different deacon to accompany me on my visits each day that week. Since the deacons knew the community better than I, I asked each deacon to select two or three homes to be visited. Sometimes the deacon would inform the family that we would be making a call between five and six p.m.

Over a period of several weeks, several people made professions of faith, and a new interest and spirit developed within the church. Spending just one hour a day for four or five afternoons a week in visitation, accompanied by a different leader

Jesus trained His disciples by—

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

New Christians often fail to witness also because they are not \_\_\_\_\_

(instructed)

Besides Jesus, who also used the method of training by example?

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Paul)

in the church, proved to be the most significant contribution I made to the church as interim pastor. To the surprise of the busy laymen, time could be found for sharing Christ. The laymen were somewhat apprehensive at the beginning of the hour of visitation, but the period always ended with joy.

### Preliminary Steps in Training Witnesses

#### Developing a plan

Definite plans should be adopted by the church for developing every member to be a witness. The pastor and laymen should work together in making the plans since the programme concerns every member of the church; it is not just the pastor's programme. He must give it leadership, however, if it is to succeed. The church should adopt a goal of training every Christian to be an effective witness. To reach this goal, plans will have to include more than a week's emphasis or study each year. To be effective, attention must be given to evangelism training throughout the year.

If a church has never emphasized witnessing, it may need to be prepared spiritually before it is ready to adopt and support extensive plans to train witnesses. Let the pastor begin by asking God to convict people in the church concerning their responsibility to witness. He should expect God to answer his prayer and to persevere in his requests until he sees people becoming concerned about their responsibilities for the spiritual needs of others. Sermons on the subject will be a means of informing and challenging the Christians to do God's will. An occasional sermon will not be sufficient. The thinking of most churches must be redirected to this neglected area.

The need for a witness training programme may next be discussed with the church leaders. Ask for their opinion as to what is needed for the church to return to the New Testament pattern of Christians proclaiming the gospel wherever they go. Be ready to suggest ways that witnesses can be trained.

#### Choosing the method

Two different approaches to training Christians to witness have been used successfully. One is through concentrated study in a school of evangelism, and the other is through practical experience in witnessing. Perhaps a combination of these two methods, as described below, is best.

*School of evangelism.*—This approach gives a week's concentrated training to all church members. It combines Bible study, instruction in techniques for presenting the gospel by using a salvation booklet, and practical experience in witnessing. Those in training share their faith by visiting lost people in the neighbourhood. In addition to the week in school, weekly meetings should be continued to permit additional study concerning the Christian life and how to deal with problems arising during a witness encounter. Continuation plans must also include weekly evangelistic visitation.

*Small-group training.*—The alternate plan would be for the pastor to select four or six church leaders to meet with him in special study sessions one hour each week. After four weeks of study, he should divide the group into teams of two and accompany each team on weekly visits into homes for the purpose of witnessing. The small group should continue in study sessions, in addition to their visitation, for three months. This plan would allow the group to divide the time between studying how to present the gospel and actual experience in witnessing. With small groups, the pastor can give more personal instructions.

Number in sequence the steps a pastor should take in making plans for witness training.

- \_\_\_\_\_ He should preach concerning it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ He should pray that God will convict the members of their responsibility.
- \_\_\_\_\_ He should discuss the need for a witness training programme with church leaders.

(2, 1, 3)

Two general plans for training Christians to witness are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Very effective training may be accomplished by a combination of a \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(school, evangelism, small-group training)

Both approaches have been used successfully in training Christians to witness. Whichever plan is chosen, the importance of practical experience should be emphasized.

A church will fail to be evangelistic only (1) if the pastor makes no effort to train the laymen to witness; and (2) if the programme of training is haphazard and periodic instead of consistent and perennial. Laymen are willing and can be trained to be faithful witnesses.

### Choosing the Tools

Training in evangelism has been ineffective in the past largely because the best instructional approach has not been selected for the people. Most adult Christians are busy on jobs and have family responsibilities limiting the time they have for study and visitation. Since they have been out of school for a number of years, memorization and concentrated study have become more difficult. These problems can be overcome by preparing and using material to guide the student in his studies and to use in a witness encounter.

The inexperienced adult finds assurance in having a salvation booklet for use in sharing his faith. His learning is facilitated if the training sessions are planned so that he is actively involved in the learning process. This can be achieved by actively involving the learner in discussions or by providing study materials with programmed learning activities.

### Recruiting the Witnesses

Although the pastor will preach on the great texts setting forth the Christians responsibility to witness, recruitment by personal invitation proves to be more effective. Thousands of sermons have been preached on the responsibility of Christians to witness, yet most Christians do not witness. After praying for God's guidance, Jesus personally invited the disciples to join Him in training and ministry. He was able to select those whom He thought were most qualified for the job. A pastor can have the assurance when he invites a Christian to train and participate in witnessing that he is inviting the Christian to do the will of God.

### Conducting a Training Programme

If the school of evangelism is chosen as the first step in the church training programme, it must be followed by weekly study sessions and witnessing visits. People are not adequately trained to carry out their responsibilities after only five sessions of study. The school prepares them to share their faith by using a booklet on salvation, and they can begin immediately to experience the joy of helping others to receive Christ. However, they must continue to deepen their understanding of the gospel and learn how to help those with problems. If additional plans are needed to give continual and personal help to those in training, the school is a good place to begin.

### The school of evangelism

If a church chooses to set aside a week for intensive training in personal witnessing, the school should include at least five nights of two hours each, plus a Saturday or Sunday afternoon for visitation. Actually, four two-hour periods are needed for Bible study and practical instruction, and two additional sessions for field work or visitation in homes. The four study sessions could be planned for the following times.

*Plan 1:* Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday nights for study sessions, using late Thursday afternoon or night and Saturday afternoon for practical field experience in witnessing.

Reasons a church will not be evangelistic are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Effective training in witnessing requires the best instructional \_\_\_\_\_ and

\_\_\_\_\_.

(approach, materials)

A week of intensive training in personal witnessing should include \_\_\_\_\_ study sessions and \_\_\_\_\_ witnessing sessions.

(four, two)

*Plan 2:* Sunday mornings and nights and Monday and Wednesday nights, using Tuesday afternoon or night and the following Thursday or Saturday afternoon or night for field experience.

*Plan 3:* A weekend school of evangelism beginning Friday night, continuing Saturday night, Sunday morning, and Sunday night, with practical experience in witnessing scheduled for Sunday afternoon.

Each of the four study sessions needs to include an hour of scripture study and an hour of practical instruction:<sup>1</sup>

*Session 1:* A scriptural study of "The Cleansed Life" and practical instruction on how to share a booklet on salvation.

*Session 2:* A scriptural study of "The Spirit-Filled Life" and practical instruction on how to share the victorious life with defeated and inactive Christians.

*Session 3:* A scriptural study on "Walking Daily in the Spirit" and practical instructions on how to open a conversation with a lost person.

*Session 4:* A scriptural study on "Growing as a Christian" and practical instruction on "Sharing My Testimony" and "How to Follow-up with Those Who Receive Christ."

At the time scheduled for visitation in the community, the group should assemble at the church or in a home to receive visitation assignments. The visitation plan may be either to take names of known prospects or to survey an area to discover those looking for a faith. After a time of prayer, the group should go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit in groups of two or three to share their faith. An hour and a half to two hours should be allowed for visitation. Those who visit should return to the church and be given an opportunity to share their experiences and to express thanks to God for His blessings.

After the conclusion of the school of evangelism, those who received training should continue to meet together once each week to study doctrines related to salvation, how to deal with questions or problems which arise, how to follow up with those who have received Christ and to help them in their growth as Christians. A time should be scheduled each week for those who have received training to share their faith and to assemble together for a period of reporting.

### Small-group training

If the alternate method of small-group training is decided on instead of a school of evangelism or in addition to the school, the following steps may be followed in developing a training programme for two or three teams.

**Selecting trainees.**—After praying for God's leadership, the leader selects the trainees. He should ask God to convince them concerning their responsibility to share their faith in Christ.

**Informing of plans.**—Those selected are then approached and informed of the plans to have a study group for the purpose of learning to share Christ. Women, as well as men, should be included. Select persons whose circumstances will permit teams of two to be formed.

<sup>1</sup> These suggestions are based primarily on *The Lay Institute for Evangelism* (LIFE) developed by Campus Crusade for Christ. Their training programme is highly recommended.

At the time set for visitation, the group should meet at the \_\_\_\_\_ or in a \_\_\_\_\_. They will receive assignments and have a time of \_\_\_\_\_

(church, home, prayer)

Time to be allowed for visitation is \_\_\_\_\_ hours.

Then the visitors reassemble and share \_\_\_\_\_ and express \_\_\_\_\_ to God.

(one and a half to two, experiences, thanks)

**Training sessions.**—The first four sessions might include the following activities:

*Session 1*

1. Make a prayer list of lost people and covenant together to pray daily for the salvation of those whose names appear on the list. Each trainee and the leader should present the names of lost people in whom they are interested.
2. Study Scriptures describing the justice and love of God in relation to the sinner.
3. Study how to establish rapport with the persons to be visited.
4. Make a home assignment of selected Scriptures to be memorized and exercises to practise which will establish rapport with people. Partners may work together.

*Session 2*

1. Pray for God's guidance in training and for the people on the prayer list.
2. Study Scriptures revealing man's condition in sin.
3. Study how to make a transition in the conversation to the lost person's relationship to Christ.
4. Make a home assignment of additional Scriptures to be memorized and exercises to do in practising transitional statements.

*Session 3*

1. Pray for God's leadership in training and for the lost people on the prayer list.
2. Study Scriptures revealing who Christ is and describing His sacrifice for man's sins.
3. Study an outline for presenting the gospel of Christ to the lost person.
4. Make a home assignment to memorize selected Scriptures and the outline for presenting the gospel.

*Session 4*

1. Pray for God's leadership in training and for the lost people on the prayer list.
2. Study Scriptures concerning God's gift of salvation received through repentance and faith.
3. Study how to lead one to receive Christ as Saviour, if he is ready, how to close a conversation, and how to plan for future visits with those who are not ready to receive Christ.
4. Make a home assignment of selected Scriptures to be memorized and exercises to do in practising a witnessing conversation.

**Practical training in visitation.**—The leader of training, who should be experienced in witnessing, schedules a time to make visits with the teams which have been studying together. Because they work during the day, the men teams will need to plan visitation at night. Women teams can usually visit during the day.

**Team visitation.**—The experienced witness should lead in the conversation during the first two or three visits. Those accompanying him should support him in prayer, be alert to deal with potential interruptions, such as the presence of children, and listen carefully to the conversation to learn how to share their witness for Christ. After a few visits have been made, one of the trainees should be designated to lead in the conversation during the next visit. The leader and the other trainee will give support as previously described.

**Activities of the trained.**—After four months of study and practical training, the trainees should be prepared to share their faith regularly and to become leaders in training others.

The subjects from Scripture to be studied during the first four sessions of group training are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your list with No. 2 in each of the four sessions' outlines.)

The person being trained in visitation should lead in the conversation after a \_\_\_\_\_ visits.

(few)

During a visit while one partner is witnessing, the other one should

1. Support him in \_\_\_\_\_
2. Be alert to deal with \_\_\_\_\_
3. Listen carefully in order to \_\_\_\_\_

(prayer, interruptions, learn)

*Continuing study.*—During the three months of practical experience in visitation each week, study sessions should continue. Subjects to be studied are: how to make follow-up visits with those who did not make professions; how to follow up on those who have made decisions; how to deal with various problems or questions which arise; how to witness to those of different religious backgrounds; and a deeper knowledge of doctrines relating to salvation.

### Practical Training in Witnessing

Regardless of the plan chosen to train Christians to witness, none will be effective unless it is supplemented with practical training in witnessing. Most Christians are timid about witnessing mainly because they do not know how and feel unsure of themselves. However, a Christian who has practical training with an experienced witness will soon gain confidence and learn to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit in witnessing.

Dr. James Kennedy went to a mission church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, upon finishing his seminary training. Although he was an evangelistic preacher, the people were not responding to his message and the small congregation began to diminish instead of increasing.

Shortly thereafter, Dr. Kennedy was invited to preach in a revival in Georgia. During this period, the pastor of the host church invited Dr. Kennedy to accompany him on his daily visits into homes to present the gospel. After 10 days of revival, 54 individuals had been led to Christ, mainly through the personal contacts made on these visits.

As a result of this experience, Dr. Kennedy changed his entire approach when he returned to his own church in Florida. Within a short period, many people had received Christ as Saviour and the church began to grow. Realizing he could reach only a limited number of people himself, he began training his church members to share in the evangelistic work. He organized a class of witnessing, and, after six lessons, he sent the members out to witness. Unfortunately, the class instruction failed to make faithful witnesses of the members. Dr. Kennedy felt that more training was needed, so he extended the classes to twelve lessons and tried again, only to fail the second time. He then recalled how he gained confidence during his visit to Georgia by accompanying his friend who had more experience than he in witnessing. He had not become a faithful witness until he had gained confidence as a result of going with someone experienced in witnessing. Consequently Dr. Kennedy decided to develop a programme to include field training in actual visitation and witnessing which is described in his book.<sup>2</sup>

This approach trains only a few members at a time but gives them personally-supervised witnessing experience over a period of three to four months. During the time of field training, they continue their study sessions, learning how to follow up with new Christians and how to handle the various questions and problems arising while witnessing. At the end of a four-month training period, most laymen will then be able to serve as leaders in training other team to witness.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Kennedy's experience and programme are described in detail in *Evangelism Explosion*.

The most important element in training Christians to witness is \_\_\_\_\_

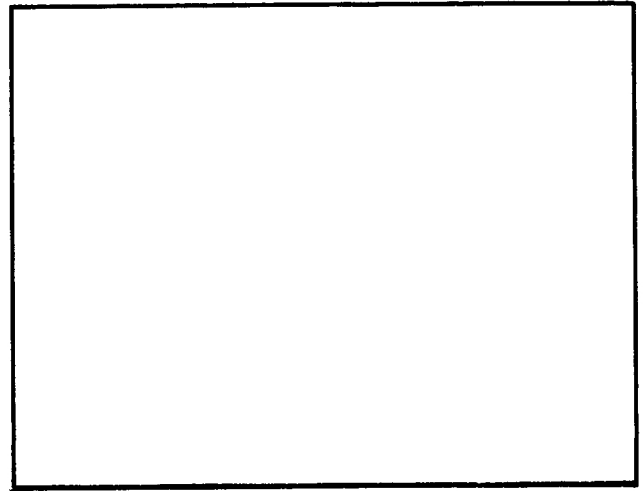
(practical training)

### Conclusion

This lesson has only outlined, in general, approaches which may be used in training Christians to share their faith. Details of each approach will be given in subsequent lessons.

Since the needs of each church and the resources for meeting those needs vary from church to church, no attempt is made to work out one detailed programme which will meet the needs of every church. Two approaches for training in evangelism have been suggested in this lesson. Both have been used successfully when they have received primary attention. A haphazard emphasis on witnessing is not sufficient. A church must plan for a continual programme of evangelism.

From the suggestions of these two tried and proven approaches for training Christians to witness, your church should be able to develop an emphasis which will meet its particular needs. This is an area which must not be neglected any longer.



### Home Study Exercise

**Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3).** After reading the content of the study guide, do the following.

1. What is the relation of the pastor and layman in ministering? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Name two important responsibilities of the pastor regarding evangelism. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What biblical precedent sets forth the training of Christians to witness as the primary goal of every pastor?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In the light of Ephesians 4:11f., what question should the pastor ask himself? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. List three steps used by Jesus in training leaders. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Give two reasons new Christians fail to witness. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Give two reasons the pastor should train Christians to witness. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. List three preliminary steps the pastor should take in making plans for witness training. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Name two general plans for evangelism training. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Give two reasons churches may not be evangelistic. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Give two reasons why evangelism training in the past has often been ineffective \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Why did Kennedy's initial efforts in training people to witness fail? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Suggest how a school of evangelism and small-group training can be correlated in an evangelism training programme. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. How many study and witnessing sessions are needed in a school of evangelism? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. List four items which should be discussed in weekly sessions following the school of evangelism. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. Give the number of persons and length of time involved in the small-group training. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. Name four subjects to be studied in the Scripture during the first four sessions of small-group training. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. How soon should visitation begin in the small-group training programme? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. What should the partner do during an evangelistic visit while the other is witnessing? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. How many visits may be made before a trainee leads in the conversation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Suggested supplementary reading (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. 166-191  
Taylor, *The Key to Triumphant Living*, pp. 115-130  
Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, pp. 1-19

## **Seminar Discussion**

1. Why are Christians not sharing their faith when Jesus commanded all to be witness? What are the differences between Christians today and New Testament Christians who “went everywhere preaching the word”? (See Acts 8:4.)
2. What must pastors and laymen do to return to the New Testament pattern?
3. What did Jesus do in training His disciples to witness?
4. Why should laymen be trained to witness?
5. Compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of the school of evangelism and small-group training.
6. Outline a programme for a school of evangelism in your church.
7. What are the steps in recruiting and training small groups?
8. Suggest a perennial programme of evangelism which will work in your church.
9. Give students opportunity to give reports on helpful information related to the lesson from their supplementary reading.