

# THE FUNCTION OF DISCIPLESHIP



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# THE FUNCTION OF DISCIPLESHIP

**The organic body of Christ in the first century exploded with growth out of Judea into all the world in only a few decades. It is exciting to study reasons why the growth of the early church grew so rapidly throughout the world. It is the purpose of this book to search through the inspired record of the expansion of the early church in order to glean from the behavior of the disciples practical functions by which the organic body of Christ carried out the mandate of Jesus to preach the gospel to all the world. The inspired record of the early disciples' lives has excited millions throughout the world to emulate in their own lives the commitment and zeal of the early Christians. In reference to discipleship, function does not exist without motivation. The early Christians first started with motivation. Their motivation then sparked them into action. Their action in world evangelism resulted in the early expansion of the body of Christ throughout the Roman Empire. It is our task, therefore, to investigate both their motivation and their means of function.**

## INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has studied the New Testament, especially the document of Acts, is immediately struck with one fact. That fact is the phenomenal growth of the New Testament church in the first century. This growth first began with one hundred and twenty apprehensive disciples on the day of Pentecost in an upper room somewhere in the city of Jerusalem in the year of A.D. 30. In one day that number jumped to three thousand (At 2:41). Then the Lord continued to add to them daily (At 2:47). In a very brief period, "*the number of the men came to be about five thousand*" (At 4:4). But it did not stop there. "*And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women*" (At

5:14). "*And the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly ...*" (At 6:7). And on it went. There was no end to the phenomenal growth that was sparked into life by the preaching of the gospel by highly motivated disciples.

There was a reason for this growth. It is the purpose of this book to study some of those reasons that caused this early expansion of the body of Christ. Other books have adequately dealt with the message of the gospel that was the primary factor for the growth. In this book we want to introduce **the methods, or means of the function of the body** that was characteristic of the early disciples. We are convinced that the man-

ner of evangelism of the early disciples was a major key to the effectiveness of the early church in world missions. We are also convinced that the nature of their fellowship with one another in the midst of great hostility was a major appeal to the world in which they lived. If we investigate and practice in our Christian living similar methods and the type of fellowship they maintained, we can have similar growth today.

We would also like to introduce some doctrinal beliefs that were the foundation of their behavior. However, we must rightly divide the word of God by distinguishing doctrinal principles of belief from expedient actions of work in response to those doctrinal beliefs. We must alert ourselves to the fact that we are studying the examples of the New Testament Christians as they carried out the truth of the gospel in their lives. We would be presumptuous to affirm that simple examples of evangelism should be considered doctrinal, and thus, bound on the church today. We say this because another interpreter may look at these evangelistic methods in a slightly different light. The fundamental truths in relation to salvation are binding on Christians. The response of the early disciples to these truths is an example of obedience. Therefore, please accept a word of caution as we study the behavior of the early disciples in response to Jesus as the resurrected Son of God.

Christianity is unique. It is different from the religions of the world that have been designed after the imagination of men. While world religions often moti-

vate their followers by either guilt or fear, the early disciples were primarily motivated by love. Jesus meant for it to be this way by what He said in John 13:35, *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* Christians loved because God first loved them (1 Jn 4:19). Such is the unique trademark of the true church of Christ. There can be no counterfeits of this identification mark of Jesus’ disciples.

Christians are evangelistic because of their love of the message they know and the people to whom they want to go. The more one appreciates the message, the more he or she will want to tell others. The more one loves others, the more he or she will want to share the hope of heaven. This is what evangelism is all about. If one is not evangelistic, therefore, it is a problem of love, not knowledge. All of us know that we must be evangelistic. But not all of us love to be evangelistic.

Because Christians are bound together by love, they desire to be with one another. They are a motivated group of followers who are highly committed to Jesus and His mission to get the gospel message to the world. They are committed to one another because they are committed to Jesus. Therefore, the real answer to church growth in this century is to discover the true nature of Christian love. Evangelism primarily happens because of what one is, not because of what one is assigned to do.

We carry out the work of evangelism because of what has been done for us.

And what has been done for us is that we have been made sons of God as a result of His grace. Paul explained this motivation in His life. *“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”* (1 Co 15:10).

Throughout this book, we want to challenge you to look into the beliefs and behavior of the early disciples. In some way we must find the answer to the early evangelistic successes of the early believers. By discovering the reasons for their success, it is assumed that the growth of the early church can be restored today.

There was no single reason for the evangelistic phenomenon of the early church. We believe it was a combination of many things. They had the right message. It was a message of grace from God in the midst of a world that was filled with legalistic religions. However,

they had something else. We have the same message today, but our evangelistic outreach is somewhat flawed. We live in a time when many churches, especially those in Western urban centers, are stagnate. Some are dying. It is a time, therefore, when we should seriously consider the New Testament message of the gospel, as well as the New Testament response of the early Christians to the gospel. We live in times when restoration to the simplicity of New Testament Christianity should be seriously considered.

As we study through the contents of the chapters that follow, we must challenge ourselves to reconsider where we are at this time in our lives. We must challenge ourselves to reevaluate our evangelistic outreach. If we are not carrying out the great commission in our lives, then we must pray that the spark of evangelistic zeal be revived our lives to take the gospel to all the world.

## Chapter 1

### The Evangelistic Nature Of The Disciples

The first Christians recognized that it was their job to evangelize the world. They did not dream up this idea as a collective agreement to start a new religion. The first disciples had simply been with Jesus. And being with Jesus meant being captivated by the sonship of Jesus and His mission to a lost world. The early disciples grasped the mission of the Master, and thus set out from the streets

of Jerusalem to proclaim to the whole world that God had visited this planet.

The first function of effective missions is to understand and be captivated with the mission of Jesus to preach the gospel to all the world. Unless one understands the mission of the Founder of Christianity, he or she will have little effectiveness in challenging others to be evangelistic.

## A. The evangelistic work of Jesus:

It was Jesus' work to evangelize, that is, to come and preach the great news of His sacrificial atonement for man (Mk 1:14,15). He proclaimed, "*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Lk 19:10). Such was His mission to the world. Before coming to this world, Jesus was with God. He existed in the form of God. However, He "... *made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant*" (Ph 2:6,7). Do not miss this point. If Philipians 2:5-8 teaches anything, it teaches that Jesus, as a missionary from heaven, came to identify with and save the lost. Jesus' coming into the world, therefore, gave a living example for His early disciples. In other words, the interpretation of Matthew 28:19 would be, "Go and do thou likewise."

There could be no cultural difference between two cultures here on earth that would be greater than the differences between heaven and earth. The extremities of the difference between the environments of heaven and earth exemplifies the sacrifice Jesus made in coming from heaven to earth. The better we understand the extent to which Jesus humbled Himself in order to accomplish His mission for us, the easier it will be for us to humble ourselves to go to any underprivileged cultures of the world. The more we understand how far He came to save us, the better we understand that there is no economical or cultural distance too far to which we can go in order to preach to others.

If we would consider it too great a sacrifice to move to a different culture and economic standard of this world, we should think again of the drastic humiliation Jesus went through in order to become in all ways like those whom He had created out of the dust of the earth (Jn 1:14). This was true love. This is the type of love that will motivate those of the higher economic cultures to humble themselves to go to other cultures and live by the standards of the developing world. This will motivate those of the developing world to come out of their world in order to go to other cultural groups, to people who speak other languages. Because of love, Paul said, "*I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*" (1 Co 9:22). He was willing to do all that was necessary in order to win souls for eternal dwelling.

## B. The evangelistic commands of Jesus:

Jesus came to seek and to save those who were lost. His first objective was to accomplish a special mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt 10:6; 15:24). When He first commissioned His disciples, He sent them first "*to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Mt 10:6). When we consider the great commission in the context of Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus' commission is definitely beyond the house of Israel. Jesus said, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all*

*things that I have commanded you ...”* (Mt 28:19,20).

The disciples were to make disciples of **all nations** (Mt 28:19). These were Jesus’ last words to the disciples. And surely, the disciples who heard these words did not at the time fully understand the implications of what Jesus was saying. Nevertheless, when the Spirit came upon them a few days after the meeting of Matthew 28, the disciples were ready to go. They were ready to go into all the world. The following are important concepts that every evangelist should know are taught in the context of Matthew 28:

### 1. *We must come close to Jesus.*

Matthew recorded in Matthew 28:18 that on this particular occasion Jesus **came** to them. Here is the Greek word *proselthon* which means that He approached close to them. In other words, Jesus came close to the disciples in order to give them a personal commission. He does the same for us. He is close if we stay close to Him.

If we could use the historical situation of Matthew 28 in a metaphorical sense, we would say that we today must spiritually come close to Jesus in order to feel the authority of the King. “**All authority**” (or, power) had already been given to Jesus at the time of the event of Matthew 28 (See Mt 11:27; Jn 3:35; 13:3; 17:2). During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He spoke from this authority that **had been delivered** to Him by the Father (See Mt 7:29; 9:6). Therefore, He had all authority in prospect of exercising it when He ascended to the throne of

David, which He was about to do in the context of Matthew 28:18-20 (See At 1:9-11). When we are close to Jesus, we understand His universal authority over all things. He is King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). When one is close to the King in heart and mind, then he is motivated to carry out the desires of the King.

2. *We must recognize Jesus’ authority.* All authority **in heaven and on earth** had been given to Jesus by the time of the occasion of Matthew 28. Jesus had galactic authority (See Cl 1:16,17). He is the head over all things for the sake of the church (Ep 1:22). Because of the expanse, or extent of His authority, **He had the right to issue the universal commission of Matthew 28:19,20.** This is brought out in the word “therefore.” In other words, what Jesus was saying was that because He had universal authority He was delivering a universal evangelistic commission. Only one who has authority over all things has the right to issue a universal commission like that of Matthew 28:19,20.

3. *We must make disciples.* In Matthew 28:19 it was Jesus’ command that His disciples take up His mantle of evangelism. “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” Unfortunately, many English translations of this verse do not bring out the imperative command of the verse with emphasis on the right word. Consider this. The verb “go” is an **aorist participle** in the Greek text. Therefore, **its action is dependent on**

**the action of the main verb (*matheteusate*) “make disciples”** which is translated “teach” in the *King James Version*. “Make disciples” is an **aorist verb** in the **imperative mood**. Therefore, the word “go” could just as well be translated “**having gone,**” which would emphasize its participle action. The text would better read as the *International King James Version*. “*Going, therefore, disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*”

From the above grammar, it was not so much Jesus’ purpose in the context of Matthew 28:19 to command the disciples to go. The emphasis was on their **making of disciples**, and then, baptizing those disciples. **He was assuming that they would go.** The disciples had been with Jesus for a little over three years. They knew what they needed to do. No command to go was necessary. The nature of the Master and His message demanded that those who possessed it should go into all the world. In other words, the strength of the aorist participle, “having gone,” is in the fact that no imperative command was needed to send them into all the world. If we truly understand who Jesus is, and the message He has for the world, then we need no commands to go preach the gospel to all the world.

There is at least one great concept here for the evangelist. One must spend time with Jesus in order to be captivated by His mission. The disciples had been with Jesus long enough to understand that there was serious work to be done.

Through the ministry of Jesus, they did not know all the implications of what was going to happen. Nevertheless, they did know that something was up. They at least had the message of the resurrection and a catalog of teachings they had received from Jesus for over three years. They were thus on their way. However, Jesus held them up in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high (Lk 24:49). He commanded them to **tarry** in the city until they were empowered with power from on high. Once empowered, they set out on a world journey that has taken them through two thousand years of impact with the message of the gospel.

#### **4. We must go to every ethnic group.**

On the Matthew 28 occasion Jesus also said that the disciples should go to **all nations**. The emphasis here is not geographical locations. The emphasis is on **all ethnic groups**. The Greek word Jesus used is *ta ethnē*. This is the word from which we derive the word “ethnic.” What Jesus was teaching in Matthew 28 was that He wanted His disciples to go to every ethnic group of the world.

Earthly religions are often ethnically linked, and thus culturally located in a specific region. We even make the church culturally located. We develop a cultural behavior of church function that sometimes makes it difficult to preach the gospel to other cultural groups throughout the world. But in order to accomplish the great commission to take the gospel to every ethnic group, we must be able to separate culture from the truth of the gospel.

In Mark 16:15 Jesus said, “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” (See Lk 24:47). There are over 32,000 ethnic groups throughout the world today. Jesus was specific. He wanted us to go into the world in order to contact every ethnic group. Every group must have a chance to hear the gospel. It is the responsibility of the disciples, therefore, to identify and evangelize every ethnic group of the world. No one is to be left out. A part of good missions includes the identification of ethnic groups throughout the world in order that the gospel be preached to every creature.

The fact that Jesus said that we must go to every ethnic group means that we must be willing to do just that. Do we have a choice? Paul was sent by God to the Gentiles. Peter was allowed to stay with the Jews (Gl 2:7,8). Though individuals may feel more comfortable with different ethnic groups, every group must be covered. This is not a matter of choice. It is a matter of commitment to get the gospel to all the world.

**5. *We must feed the sheep.*** Jesus finally commissioned the disciples to teach the immersed disciples everything that He had taught them (Mt 28:20). This would certainly include the teaching of the commission of Matthew 28:19,20 that they go to every ethnic group of the world. He could not have personally evangelized the world. Therefore, they (we) would be the extension of Jesus. Paul expresses this same thought in different words in 2 Timothy 2:2. “*And the things that you have heard from me*

*among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*” Timothy was the extension of Paul. Jesus commissioned Peter to “*feed My sheep*” (Jn 21:15-17). Peter was the extension of Jesus. It is the responsibility of the evangelist to feed the sheep of God. Effective evangelism does not simply entail baptizing disciples. It includes nurturing newly born disciples in the pure milk of the word of God (At 14:21,22). In doing this, the life of Jesus is extended into all the world throughout all history. Every disciple must see himself or herself as an extension of Jesus. This is world evangelism.

The emphasis of Matthew 28:19,20 is both evangelism and edification. Jesus was placing a divine function or principle upon the shoulders of the small group of disciples who were not all that certain concerning their future. He was saying, “*Having gone into the world, disciple every ethnic group.*” This was and still is an imperative command. We must make followers of Jesus in every ethnic group of the world. The nations of the world contain thousands of cultural or ethnic groups. Jesus says to go and disciple every one.

### **C. The evangelistic nature of the gospel:**

It is the nature of the gospel, the great news, that it should be broadcast everywhere. “*Go into all the world and preach the **gospel** [great news] to every creature*” (Mk 16:15). We do not believe that Jesus had to tell His first dis-

ciples that they must go. They knew they had to go. They had the good news about His resurrection. The nature of the great news was expressed by the angel to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus. *“I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people”* (Lk 2:10). Even at the time of Jesus’ birth there was good news to be told.

The news was **good** news and **great** joy. The nature of the news itself motivates one to take it to others. In fact, if one does not take the good news to others, he or she really has not yet discovered the greatness of the news or the essence of the message. When we understand that the good news is a message of grace and salvation for others, then we must be motivated to act.

Those disciples that are not growing and are not evangelistic are those disciples who do not recognize the hopelessness of the lost of the world. They have forgotten the good news of God’s grace for a hopeless world. Because they do not understand that people are lost without obedience to the gospel, they do not realize the need of delivering good news to this hopeless age.

One can travel to all countries of the world and see people who want hope. In many countries of the world today there is a sense of futility, uselessness, and despair. People struggle for a small morsel of food in Somalia just to live another day. Orphan children dig from garbage cans in Sao Paulo, Brazil in order to survive another moment in time. Poverty of the world has brought despair and discouragement to masses of people.

These people have no hope of a better physical environment. They have no hope in governments that often make life worse. They have only one chance for hope. That one chance is to hear of the hope that Jesus has to offer. It is our responsibility, therefore, to give them an opportunity to have hope in Christ.

#### **D. The evangelistic nature of the word of God:**

It is the nature of the word of God, which is the **seed** of the kingdom, to be sown (Lk 8:11). It is the nature of the gospel, the great news, to be heralded throughout the world. It is the nature of the seed to be planted in the hearts of men in order to bring forth fruit to the glory of God. The point is, if there is no sowing, there is no fruit, and thus no glory given to God. When Christians do not sow, they do not give glory to God. Unevangelistic Christians are an embarrassment to God. Is this not why Jesus said this statement to the Christians in Laodicea: *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth”* (Rv 3:15,16).

The situation of the world is that “all have sinned” (Rm 3:23). And it is the nature of **servants**, who we are, to serve the bread of life to those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness. There is an urgency about this which says, “Now is the acceptable time.” We must act.

Jesus said, “*And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free*” (Jn 8:32). Christians know that which is able to deliver men from the bondage of sin. It is the truth of the gospel. And knowing that truth should move one to tell the message of freedom to others.

With a knowledge of the word of truth comes the responsibility of telling it to others. It is the nature of truth to be made known to men. We claim to have and know the truth. Therefore, we have the responsibility of making that truth known to others. If we do not make it known to others, then our attitude toward the truth is wrong. In Jesus’ parable of the Pearl of Great Price, the one who found the pearl sold all that he had in order to buy the pearl (Mt 13:45,46). So it is with those who rejoice over their discovery of the truth. They seek to tell others the truth they have learned. One certainly does not have the truth of the

gospel if that truth does not motivate him to tell others. What great hypocrites we are when we claim to have the truth, and yet, fail to proclaim it to the world.

Any successful mission effort will begin with a soul search. Those going as evangelists must endeavor to thoroughly know Jesus, His purpose, His mission, His love. The evangelist who fails to “see” and know Jesus before he goes, will walk blindly among the people to whom he goes. We must know our Lord before we can know His mission. We must know God before we can know how to explain Him to others. This must always be the first goal of any mission effort. We must know the Man and His message before we can make Him correctly known to others. In other words, we will never make Jesus mean anything to others unless we make Him mean everything to us.

## Chapter 2

### The Evangelistic Motivation Of The Disciples

Motivation is the key to the success of any evangelistic outreach. It is true that knowledge must precede action, else we continually stumble over a “zeal without knowledge.” However, unmotivated knowledge is wasted knowledge. The *Simple English Bible* translates James 4:17, “*A person sins when he knows he should do something good, but doesn’t do it.*” We must know what to do. Knowing what to do is necessary in order to accomplish that which needs to

be done. However, unless we put into action what we know, nothing will be accomplished. Is it right for one to know the lost state of another, and yet, not tell that person that he is lost? Does our knowledge of God’s grace make us responsible to tell others about the gospel? Certainly!

The early Christians were highly motivated people because they knew that the world needed to know the truth of the gospel message. God commissioned

Jesus to be a teacher of a better way of life. He said, *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly”* (Jn 10:10). Those who live in this world need the abundant life. If we have the key to this life, then certainly we must be motivated to unlock the door of hope for others.

Most important of all, Jesus taught during His ministry the grace of God that would soon be revealed from heaven through His death on the cross for the sins of all men. Therefore, He taught daily in the temple (Mt 26:55). He *“went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom ...”* (Mt 4:23). Jesus educated the multitudes concerning who He was and the gospel of grace that He brought. The urgency of His message was manifested in the intensity by which He worked to proclaim it. The early Christians followed in His example.

There is a nature about Christianity that motivates its adherents to reach out to others. Those who are captivated by the true nature of the gospel are highly motivated to reach out to the lost. It is our opinion that this is the heart of effective evangelistic function. If the following factors are intact in the life of the believer, then there will be evangelism. The church will grow. Therefore, the following are the central motivating factors that move Christians into evangelistic action:

#### **A. We must be motivated by love.**

Jesus knew that the disciples needed

motivation. This motivation had to be more than words, or even a legal obedience to commands. He had to demonstrate to them a nature that they would want to incorporate into their own lives. He thus demonstrated a life of **love**. Jesus said to His disciples, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another”* (Jn 13:34). This command had substance to it in the sense that Jesus had manifested love for His disciples. *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you”* (Jn 15:12). Love was the organic power that moved the disciples into action.

Jesus knew that knowledge alone would not move the disciples into all the world. Their nature had to change. The disciples had to have an inward motivation that would move them out of themselves and into all the world. His strategy worked. John wrote, *“We love because he first loved us”* (1 Jn 4:19, KJV). Paul explained in 2 Corinthians 5:14, *“For the love of Christ constrains us ...”* Good and righteous men and women will always be motivated by the love of God and their love for Him. When one recognizes the great love that was poured out by God to save us, he or she is motivated by this love to share the gospel with others.

Jesus said, *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments”* (Jn 14:15). We thus keep His commandment to go into all the world to preach the gospel because we are motivated by our love for Him. The simple fact is that if one does not

love Jesus, he or she will not be moved to obey Jesus' command to preach the gospel to every creature.

### **B. We must be motivated by fear.**

It goes without question that one source of motivation always lies in what will happen to us if we are not moved into action. We do believe that God used the motivation of fear in order to get the early disciples out into the fields, not only for their own benefit but also for the benefit of those to whom they went. Paul wrote, "**Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ...**" (2 Co 5:11).

There is a certain stimulation in knowing that "*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*" (2 Co 5:10). When Paul "*reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid ...*" (At 24:25). Surely this was a motivating factor to stimulate the early disciples to evangelize, as well as to stimulate a response from their preaching. The time is coming when all of us must stand before the Judge of all men and give account. Those who have disobeyed "*will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life*" (Mt 25:46). There is a sobering effect about this realization. It is one that strikes fear in the hearts of those who know the truth.

The early disciples were also motivated by their fear of the circumstances

that developed in Judea concerning the Jews' persecution of the church. The persecution was first started by Saul who breathed "*threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord*" (At 9:1). For fear of persecution, the disciples scattered for their lives. After the death of Stephen, the disciples were scattered everywhere (At 8:4). Could it be assumed that God allowed the persecution to happen in order to get the disciples out of Jerusalem and Judea and into all the world?

We do not serve a God of terror. He is a God who "so loved the world" that He gave us His Son (Jn 3:16). However, He is a God who means business concerning the populating of heaven. When His mouth piece on earth keeps quiet, He will not be able to do what is necessary in order to get the message of the gospel of grace to all the world. Men cannot be saved without obedience to the gospel. It is imperative, therefore, that the gospel be preached to all the world.

### **C. We must be motivated by urgency.**

God motivated the early church by explaining the **urgency** of the matter of preaching the gospel to the lost. Evangelism is not a matter that can be delayed until a more convenient time. It is as Jesus explains, "*... lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!*" (Jn 4:35). When wheat is ripe, it is ready for harvest. If it is not harvested, it will fall to the ground. Jesus' metaphor speaks of urgency. We must reap the harvest before it falls to the ground in unreceptivity. The recep-

tive souls of any one culture do not stay ripe forever. The harvest of cultures throughout the world first ripens, and then it falls to the ground. Those who are perceptive to receptivity take advantage of ripe fields. They realize the urgency of preaching the gospel to the lost.

Paul urged, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Co 6:2). There is an urgency about evangelizing the world that was characteristic of the work of Jesus while He was on earth. Jesus said to the disciples, “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work” (Jn 9:4).

As Jesus’ disciples, we must follow His example of work. The night is coming. It is coming upon a lost world that needs to hear the Light of the world. The lost can hear only if we proclaim His name to all. Paul was right. This is the acceptable time for evangelism. Every generation of the church since the first century must be ready for evangelism. With urgency, therefore, we lift up our eyes and see the receptivity of this generation of mankind. It is our responsibility to get the message of the gospel to our generation lest at our death we leave an unevangelized generation with which our children will have to deal. An unevangelistic generation of the church only makes the task of world evangelism more difficult for succeeding generations.

#### **D. We must be motivated by debt.**

God intended to move us by paying

our **debt**. All have sinned by rebelling against God (Rm 3:23). However, “*the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men*” (Ti 2:11). Jesus suffered for our sins. While we were yet sinners, He “*bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sin, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes we were healed*” (1 Pt 2:24). Because of this free gift of salvation, we are debtors to Jesus. We owe Him for what He did for us. Paul expressed such in his letter to the Romans. “*I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also*” (Rm 1:14,15). Every Christian must realize his or her debt to Jesus. This debt should motivate us to proclaim that which freed us from our sin.

#### **E. We must be motivated by grace.**

Before he became a Christian, Paul was religiously zealous for his faith. He persecuted the church with zeal, binding and confining countless people to prison. No one would question his dedication to that which he thought was right.

But when Paul realized his error, and then perceived the grace of God toward him, he was overwhelmed with thanksgiving. God’s grace toward him moved him to work harder than when he lived under the legal system of Judaism. He wrote, “*But by the grace of God I am what I am. And His grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but*

*the grace of God that was with me*" (1 Co 15:10). When one understands how far Jesus had to come to manifest the grace of God on the cross, then he understands that there is no limit to how far he will go into all the world for God. Grace moves us to allow God to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can imagine.

Paul recognized that he was saved by God's grace. He could not have saved himself. He could not have meritoriously performed good works in order to demand salvation. Therefore, his recognition that he could have been saved only by the grace of God moved him to work in thanksgiving of his salvation. God's grace moved him to work abundantly in thanksgiving. And so it is with those who recognize the grace of God in their lives. **They work because they are saved, not in order to become saved.** Their appreciation of God's grace moves them to "pay their debt" for God's salvation which He freely poured out on the saints. God's grace in Paul's life, therefore, was not a useless effort on the part of God. It was not in vain. It was not in vain because Paul labored abundantly in thanksgiving of his salvation.

We could justly conclude that those who do not work abundantly in the kingdom do not have an appreciation for the grace of God. God's grace is in vain in the lives of too many who claim to be Christians, and yet, raise not one hand to share the gospel of grace to any lost people.

#### **F. We must be motivated by a lost world.**

All the world is as the Gentiles were before the coming of Jesus. Paul wrote of them, "... *that at that time* [when they were outside Christ] *you were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world*" (Ep 2:12,13). God motivated the early Christians by explaining to them the **hopelessness of the lost world**. This is the situation of the world today. The more one recognizes the lost state of man, the more he or she is motivated into preaching the gospel to all the world.

Judgment is coming upon those "*who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Th 1:8). "*These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*" (2 Th 1:9). When the concerned Christian realizes the desperate state of the lost world, he or she is motivated to do something about it. When one realizes that his friends and family who have not obeyed the gospel have no chance of salvation, he is motivated to share the hope the gospel offers.

We are always amazed at the intensity of the motivation of the early Christians. The effectiveness of their motivation stands as a testimony of the genuineness of their desire to populate heaven by the preaching of the gospel. Their success stands as a testimony of what can happen if we become motivated in the same manner. We must challenge our-

selves to thoroughly investigate our motives as a Christian. The more we understand the true nature of Christianity and what Jesus has done for us, the more evangelistic we will become. The more we understand the nature of God's love and grace, the more we will be motivated to preach the gospel to the world.

Every one of us must search deeply within our hearts. We must be honest with our own evaluation of what we find. Is there a sincere love of God and lost souls in there? Is there an awesome respect for the very presence of God? Do we feel the desperation of the lost world that is searching for something that the confusion in the religious world has handed them? We must search deeply in order to determine our motivation for being a Christian.

It may be that we have created a religion after our own desires. It may be that we have deceived ourselves by creating a type of god we feel is satisfied with our lack of evangelistic zeal. We may have created in our minds this god who is satisfied with our indifference and laziness. If we have discovered that we have created a religion after our own desires and a god after our own indifferent attitudes, then it is time to repent. It is time to change. If the faith that we now have does not move us to the lost, then it is not a faith that is alive. It is a dead faith, and one that will produce in the end, a second death. It is a faith of our own making that we might content ourselves with sitting at ease in Zion while a lost world moves off into eternal condemnation.

### Chapter 3

## The Evangelistic Commitment Of The Disciples

It is one thing to recognize a command. It is another thing to have the commitment to do it. We must have a commitment to obey evangelistic commands and a commitment to use what is in our hands to accomplish the work of evangelism. The storage room of Christianity is filled with many good ideas and intentions that were discarded there because no one was committed enough to put them into action.

One thing that has always amazed us concerning the evangelists of the New Testament church is the extent and intensity of their commitment. We believe

that the church in general today has to some extent lost the true spirit of Christian commitment, especially in reference to evangelistic outreach. In societies of indifference, lethargy, pessimism, and just pure laziness, it is easy to lose the commitment to Christianity which Jesus demands. Our Christianity often digresses to a commitment which is measured by "perfect attendance" or a "good contribution." However, these outward manifestations often become mechanical and legal and can sometimes be a sign of an inward death. Our obedience to limited legal commands to maintain a

superficial commitment often becomes an excuse for not doing other things that God demands must be done, especially preaching the gospel to the lost.

We cannot “buy off” our responsibility to personally be involved in evangelism by giving a large contribution. One must give as he or she prospers. However, we must also be working to save the lost through our personal contacts every day. Everyone must be committed to share their faith with their neighbors.

The sacred Scriptures place a far greater signal of commitment on the shoulders of Christians than we often think. We do not think that most of us have yet discovered the cross of commitment we must endure with our faith. Jesus gave a lot through the incarnation and cross. He expects the same of us. The first century disciples captivated that commitment. Our challenge, therefore, is to restore the first century commitment that motivated the disciples to an unprecedented evangelization of the first century world. In capturing the spirit of the first century, we will be moved to captivate souls for the Savior.

The following is a brief review of the commitment that is called for in the New Testament. Our task in studying this subject is to discover the extent to which commitment must take us in being what God wants us to be. No counterfeit commitment will do. No commitment we have created after our own desires will do. We must investigate and restore today that which motivated the early church to evangelize in the first century

in their generation. Methodology in missions is to no avail if we do not generate within ourselves a commitment to Jesus that takes us into all the world.

### **A. Jesus called for sacrificial commitment.**

Jesus had signified during His ministry that His disciples would have to commit themselves to the work as a result of their belief. “*If anyone desires to come after Me,*” Jesus said, “*Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*” (Lk 9:23). When Jesus made this statement, the disciples knew something was up when He mentioned the word “**cross.**” They knew what crosses meant. They had seen men and women die agonizing deaths on crosses as a result of commitment to causes. The Romans had given them many examples of death on crosses by putting down Jewish insurrectionist movements with the execution instrument of the cross. Therefore, the disciples had no difficulty in understanding the commitment for which Jesus was calling when He made the above statement that they must take up their cross.

Jesus stated that the world would hate His disciples just as it hated Him (Jn 15:19; 17:14). Because of this, they would drink the cup of suffering and be immersed in the overwhelming burdens of leadership that were characteristic of men who lead movements (See Mt 20:22,23). The disciples’ choice to serve the Lord with commitment meant that in being a living sermon they would con-

demn the wickedness of the world. Such would bring on them the persecution of the world. Nevertheless, Jesus reminded them of the first and greatest commandment, “*And you will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength*” (Mk 12:30).

During His ministry there was a time when “*great multitudes went with Him*” (Lk 14:25). In Luke 14 Jesus made some demanding statements that were meant to sift out those who would not be committed to the work. “*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brother and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple*” (Lk 14:26). Jesus continued, “*And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple*” (Lk 14:27). He becomes more demanding than this. “*So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple*” (Lk 14:33). Some in the multitudes surely said, “Jesus, you are asking for too much!” Some today still say the same. But Jesus replies, “*Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I do not come to bring peace but a sword*” (Mt 10:34).

Jesus’ intensity of commitment in our lives will cause contention between the committed and those who seek to allow the devil to control their lives. Jesus would remind us, “*For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes will be those of his own*

*household*” (Mt 10:35,36). If we would seek to be a disciple of Jesus, then the intensity of commitment for which He calls on us to give must be given.

## **B. Paul manifested the commitment for which Jesus called.**

We often wonder concerning the extent of the commitment that was manifested in the life of Paul. The reason for the intensity of his commitment is seen in his statement of Galatians 2:20. “*I have been crucified with Christ,*” He wrote, “*it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me ....*” Commitment means that we must live as Christ lived on earth. The intensity of commitment that was manifested in His life must be manifested in our own.

Paul believed in commitment. It was because of this commitment that he was able to walk in the shadow of death in order to proclaim the gospel to the lost. He walked not there ignorantly, for the Holy Spirit testified that in every city “*chains and tribulations*” awaited him (At 20:23). Concerning this shadow of death that seemed to follow him everywhere, he said, “*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God*” (At 20:24; see 21:13,14).

Paul practiced commitment. He taught commitment to the churches. He commanded the Roman disciples to present their “*bodies a living sacrifice,*

*holy, acceptable to God ...*” (Rm 12:1). It is no wonder the Holy Spirit allowed Paul to write the following to the Corinthians: “*Therefore I urge you, imitate me*” (1 Co 4:16). “*Imitate me,*” He added, “*just as I also imitate Christ*” (1 Co 11:1). Paul’s example of commitment should be a model for us to follow. Paul did what Peter stated in 1 Peter 2:21. “*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps.*” Paul followed in the steps of Jesus in that he willingly suffered as Jesus in order to accomplish his God-assigned mission to preach the gospel. For this reason the Holy Spirit allowed Paul to write the scripture, “*Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ.*” If we imitate Christ, we will go to the cross with Him.

### C. The early evangelists exemplified the commitment of Jesus.

The first evangelists were as Paul and Barnabas, “*men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (At 15:26). Paul wrote to Timothy, “*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*” (2 Tm 3:12). Paul even taught the churches the concept that we must go through many persecutions. “*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God*” (At 14:22). He taught this concept in his strengthening of the churches. New converts must understand that with commitment to Christ, comes persecution and suffering. It is a prin-

ciple of Christianity. The devil will not simply go away when his kingdom is under attack. He will bring persecution on those who seek to destroy him.

Regardless of the persecution, the early disciples remained committed to their faith. The early evangelists went forth to proclaim the word. They did not turn back because of fear. Early disciples remained faithful to their commitment to the gospel of Jesus. Some fell away when times were tough. However, the vast majority were faithful unto death (Rv 2:10).

Commitment to the work of evangelism is a function of the body. Without such an attitude in one’s work as a Christian, he will become indifferent. One will not do that which Jesus calls on us to do in sharing our faith with the lost. If we are not thoroughly committed to Jesus, we will not function. Committed members “*are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul*” (Hb 10:39).

Commitment as a body member is manifested when times get tough. It is sometimes easy to make a commitment to go into all the world. However, to **stay** in all the world often demands more commitment than getting there. Committed Christians should not be as Demas who “*loved this present world*” and returned to Thessalonica (2 Tm 4:10). World evangelists must have the commitment to get to the field, but then stay there during hard times. When they follow this level of commitment, then they can say in the end, “*I have fought the good fight,*

*I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*" (2 Tm 4:7). Every disciple should be able to say this at the end of his life. Our commitment to stay in the battle

against the forces of Satan will certainly be rewarded by an eternal presence with our Lord.

## Chapter 4

### The Evangelistic Fellowship Of The Disciples

Jesus was with the twelve on a daily basis. The disciples were close to Him and talked with Him (See Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 1:1-3). This close relationship was copied by the early disciples. They experienced a closeness that has been forgotten by many today, especially those disciples who live in urban centers. Nevertheless, this is a principle of spiritual growth we must seek to restore. The commitment of the disciples to network with one another on an individual basis is a key to unleashing the power that comes with the function of the organic body.

When the body was initially born, *"all who believed were together, and had all things in common"* (At 2:44; see 1 Jn 3:16-19). The disciples continued *"daily with one accord ..."* (At 2:46). They were together. They were a close community of God because of their oneness in a hostile environment that was contrary to the Christian world view.

The early Christians were taught to *"exhort one another daily ..."* (Hb 3:13). They were to *"consider one another in order to stir up love and good works"* (Hb 10:24). They were taught to confess their *"trespasses to one another, and pray for one another ..."* (Js 5:16). The

"one another" nature of the early organic body kept them together. The disciples kept one another out of the world and the world out of one another. Here is a notable characteristic of the body that we would do well to emphasize in our lives today.

Some cultures have a difficult time with this concept of Christianity. We have noticed that those of urban cultures are more distant from one another in their relationships in everyday life. By this we mean that in these cultures, community is not as important as the economic success of the individual. The individual is more important than the community. As one climbs the economic ladder, he has a tendency to separate himself, or his possessions, from those around him. This separateness thus comes into the relationships that disciples have with one another in the cities. The members often have a hard time being together as the community of God. Assemblies often become brief encounters with one another in a time-oriented schedule of a busy life. Fellowship digresses to appointments, not quality encounters with fellow members of the family of God.

In those cultures where community is a very important part of life, fellow-

ship among the members is often good. The cultural impact of the community greatly influences the nature of our relationship with one another. This is especially true among farming cultures of the world. The community relationships that exist among farmers is often brought over into the fellowship of Christians. However, in urban cultures of the world, community is often not an important element of life. Big city life simply dents personal relationships. One develops a coolness with his fellow man in order to survive the city. Metropolitan churches, therefore, struggle to maintain close fellowship among members. At least, maintaining community among the disciples is a greater challenge in urban churches than among rural churches where community is a principal aspect of the culture.

The church in the New Testament was very communal in the members' relationship with one another. They did not live in what is often referred to today as a commune. They were simply of one heart and mind. Luke recorded concerning their behavior, "*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common*" (At 2:44). These

early Christians were communally responsive to one another's needs. Luke again recorded, "*Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold ...*" (At 4:34).

Christians must be encouraged to have this communal atmosphere. Members must be taught to enjoy the fellowship of one another in an atmosphere of love. If this strategy of work is not incorporated within the disciples' relationships, they will not bond in order to depend on one another in times of struggle.

In the initial stages of developing discipleship relationships, it is important to establish a community of fellowship. This is one advantage of establishing house fellowships within communities. A house fellowship is a natural environment in which members grow in close relationships with one another. It is an environment in which members quickly bond. In bonding quickly, the close fellowship that was characteristic of the first century is restored. When this relationship is restored, Christianity is restored. (More on this later.)

## Chapter 5

### The Evangelistic Hospitality Of The Disciples

New Testament Christians excelled in hospitality. Hospitality was a central part of their organic function as the body of Christ. It was a common practice that in their travels, that evangelists lodged in the homes of Christians. Luke records

that when Lydia was baptized, "*she begged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay'*. *And she constrained us*" (At 16:15). When Paul and Silas were released from prison in Philippi,

*“they entered the house of Lydia”* (At 16:40). This was also the custom of Gaius who regularly received traveling evangelists and sent them out on their journeys (3 Jn 1-6). Peter lodged with Simon the Tanner (At 10:5,6). Paul stayed with Philip (At 21:1-6). It was a common strategy of mission work in the New Testament that the evangelist stayed with members of the church.

Jesus taught the disciples during His ministry to accept the hospitality of others in their travels. In Luke 10 He encouraged the disciples He sent out to stay in the homes of people to whom they went (vss 6,7). In assuming that these disciples would do such, He exhorted, *“But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it ...”* (Lk 10:5,6). He continued, *“And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house”* (Lk 10:7). The context of this situation may be a little different from ours today. In Luke 10 the disciples were going into the houses of fellow Jews who were evidently not disciples of Jesus. After the church was established, Paul and the early evangelists traveled to the homes of Christians. The principle would be to stay in the house of anyone who would accept an evangelist. If the person is not a Christian, then we have a great opportunity to teach that person the gospel of our Lord.

Jesus mentioned that whoever would leave father and mother, brothers and sisters, and houses for His sake, would re-

ceive a hundredfold in this life, and in the world to come, eternal life. He said, *“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers, or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who will not receive a hundred-fold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life”* (Mk 10:29,30).

Jesus’ lesson here has been reaffirmed a thousand times over by evangelists throughout the world. The evangelist who has left blood family receives a greater spiritual family throughout the world. We can personally testify that we have driven into some cities of the world and been held up for some problem. We have called a brother and he has invited us to stay with him. In fact, in some areas of the world it is offensive to stay in a hotel when there are brothers with whom one can stay. In the first century, Jesus’ teaching on this subject was taken very seriously by those brothers who understood why He said what He said. And the reason He said such, was to emphasize the community of God in taking the gospel to the world. This is one of those teachings on hospitality that has been of great benefit to the propagation of the gospel throughout the world. The traveling evangelist has a home in every city of the world where there is another brother. The fellowship of the church is reaffirmed every time a door is opened to a stranger who is traveling for the name of Jesus.

## Chapter 6

### The Evangelistic Faith Of The Disciples

The early disciples depended on God alone as a foundation of strength to evangelize. Paul wrote, ***“For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day”*** (2 Tm 1:12). While in prison for preaching the name of Jesus, he proclaimed, ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”*** (Ph 4:13). He encouraged those Christians who lived in Rome, the seat of paganism, by saying, ***“If God is for us, who can be against us?”*** (Rm 8:31). He continued, ***“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”*** (Rm 8:37). Could we not say, therefore, that one of the primary methods of evangelism is one’s total dependence on God for strength?

Our trust in God should be as that expressed by David in Psalm 62:2. Notice the words of David in which he expressed total dependence on God. ***“He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I will not be moved.”*** God is the rock foundation on which we establish our work. He is their defense against the trials through which every disciple struggles in order to preach the gospel.

The strength of an evangelist would be, ***“O my God, I trust in You”*** (Ps 25:2). One of the most beautiful themes of the Psalms is the expression of one’s com-

plete dependence on God for strength. The Psalms are the evangelist’s daily fountain of sustenance.

The character of the early Christians is often astounding. One stands amazed as he reads of the bravery of great evangelists as Timothy, Barnabas, Silas and Paul. On one occasion Paul wrote, ***“For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus”*** (At 21:13). These are the words of a man who had been thrown into prisons, thrown to beasts, beaten several times, stoned, shipwrecked, lost at sea, robbed, lived in nakedness and starved of food (2 Co 11:22-33). Nevertheless, he could write, ***“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”*** (Ph 4:4).

The world called such men mad (At 26:24,25). But those who knew them called them committed. These Christians trusted not in man for their finances; they learned to be content in whatever state they were at any one time (Ph 4:11,12). They trusted not in man to stand by them in times of trouble; they knew that the Lord stood by them (2 Tm 4:16,17). They trusted not in their own personal abilities or reputation; they counted all such things as rubbish (Ph 3:7,8). They trusted in God alone.

Evangelists who are truly committed to God start movements. They inspire men and women to follow Jesus. They inspire commitment to the Christ of the

cross. Dedicated men and women have served throughout the world today with great dedication. One of the most inspiring things a prospective evangelist can do is to read the stories of dedicated evangelists who have given their lives to the propagation of the gospel.

Throughout the years numerous books have been written by world evangelists. If one is working in world evangelism, it would be good to read as much as possible about the faith of those who have copied in their lives the committed faith of the first century evangelists.

## Chapter 7

### Making Plans

Failing to plan is planning to fail. In order to succeed in accomplishing goals and dreams we must plan. The first century evangelists evidently knew the meaning of planning in order to successfully preach the gospel to the lost. At least, such is evident from what we read of their work in the New Testament. We read about what they accomplished through the work of God in their lives to bring about their plans. To some extent, our study of the New Testament does not give us information concerning all the prayer and planning the early Christians did in order to accomplish the work of world evangelism. However, when we see the results of their work, there is a definite indication of a strategy to accomplish specific works. We must not assume that the early work of the first century disciples was a haphazard effort to reach out to the lost world.

Jesus emphasized forethought. *“For which of you,”* He said, *“intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it ...”* (Lk 14:28; see vs 28-32). The context of this passage is counting

the cost for service to our Lord. This is what one must do before becoming a Christian and this is also the first thing an evangelist must do in order to effectively reach out and evangelize the lost. Evangelists must plan ahead in order to make a strategy of what they are going to do.

Paul seems to have always had a plan of where he wanted to go and what he wanted to do. Acts 19:21 reads, *“Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem ....”* After he and Barnabas had accomplished a mission in Asia Minor, he said to Barnabas, *“Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord ...”* (At 15:36). Though we would not assume that the plans the early evangelists made were the complex organizational structures that some come up with in the corporate world today, they at least sat down and shared dreams and their determination to accomplish specific works.

Paul planned his work in going to Corinth and Macedonia. To the Corin-

thians he wrote, “*And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit—to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea*” (2 Co 1:15,16). There was also the time when Paul made plans to go to Spain (Rm 15:24,29).

From the above it can at least be concluded that Paul made plans to go to specific areas of work. It can also be concluded that he was going in order to do a specific work. The work was to preach the gospel. From reading Paul’s activities in Acts, however, it appears that the way he approached some situations was to determine what to do when he arrived on the scene. At least, there are enough spontaneous events in his life to draw this conclusion. There were times when he was moved in the spirit to preach to Athenian philosophers (At 17:16ff). There was also a time when he went to the river to pray where he found some people he eventually converted (At 16:13-15). It was his custom to first preach to the Jews by entering the synagogue and preaching in every city to which he went (At 17:1,2). However, as Jesus, he preached whenever the opportunity presented itself. We assume one thing was characteristic of his ministry. **He was spontaneous in meeting the needs that presented themselves to him.** Such would be good advice for evangelists. Flexibility is the key to a profitable work. If one is not willing to change to meet changing circumstances, he or she will miss many opportunities for preaching the

gospel.

Keep in mind also that Paul almost always traveled into unevangelized territories. Therefore, he often did not know what to expect. In such situations it is difficult to make definite plans on how to accomplish a specific evangelistic effort. Nevertheless, **general plans** should be made in order to establish the purpose of one’s work and the general direction. But when making such plans, as stated before, one should always be flexible. One should plan flexibility into his plans. Inflexible plans will lead to stymied work on the field.

Because of Paul’s travels into unevangelized territories, it is apparent that he was flexible. He was able to adjust his plans to the situation that presented itself. There was the time he wanted to make an evangelistic trip into the region of Bithynia. Luke recorded, “*Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them*” (At 16:6,7). Keep in mind that it was the Holy Spirit on these two particular occasions who said Paul could not make these trips. The Holy Spirit had other plans for Paul, which plans came to him in a vision in the night (At 16:9). What we do see in the life of Paul on these two occasions was that he was willing to change according to God’s leading. He was willing to change his plans in order to go with God into unplanned regions.

Churches and evangelists must be flexible with their methods in order to meet the needs of the hour. We must remember that our plans are not doctrine. Our plans must be made applicable to the culture in which one is working. And when one is in a particular culture, he or she must be willing to change to changing circumstances within that culture. This principle is apparent in Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 where he concluded, "*I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*"

What is most important of all is to make plans the best one can and then do the work. The Holy Spirit said, "*Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the **work** to which I have called them*" (At 13:2). In the historical context of this statement, we assume that the disciples in Antioch were quite excited about this special call of the Holy Spirit. We can imagine the many hours of dreaming and planning that went into the work in the homes of the Antioch brethren after the Spirit made the initial calling of Barnabas and Saul. The Spirit gave the direction. The disciples put together the plans and sent out the evangelists.

John Mark went with Paul and Barnabas on the first journey of Paul. However, he became discouraged on the journey and did not go on with them "*to the **work***" (At 15:38). Nevertheless, Paul and Barnabas completed this Holy Spirit assigned **work** (At 14:26). There was a specific work which the Holy Spirit had planned for them to do. They

completed that work; they fulfilled their plans according to Acts 14:26.

There are some who believe in the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in mission efforts. These often sit and wait, thinking that the Holy Spirit will directly lead them into doing something. When they do eventually go, but become involved in an unsuccessful work, they have to blame the Spirit for their misguided conduct. On the other hand, we believe Christians were given the command to go over two thousand years ago (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). From this initial command of Jesus we have the responsibility to make our plans. We have the responsibility to initiate our plans. If the plans fail, then we can only blame ourselves. The Spirit of God works in our lives. However, He does not work in order to make the plans for us. We are responsible for failures, not the Spirit. And if we are inactive, we are responsible for being inactive.

God expects us to use our common sense in planning. We pray that God works in our lives to work out our feeble efforts to accomplish His work. At all times, we recognize as Paul, that Satan works against us in every way. We must plan our work, and then work our plan. But we must make plans for God to work in our plans. We must always remember what Paul said to the Ephesians. "*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us*" (Ep 3:20).

When it comes to working our plans, we must remember that God works in our

lives. We must remember that His work in our lives will always be greater than our plans. Even if our personal plans go wrong, keep in mind that God is working for our good. Paul wrote, *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”* (Rm 8:28). We must believe that God is working in our lives and that He is working everything together for our good.

When things go wrong, we must remember that God is still working. It is a

principle of God to use Satan’s work against him. The perfect example of this principle is the cross of Jesus. God used Satan’s work to have Jesus crucified in order to accomplish the work of redemption. When calamity occurs in our efforts to preach the gospel, we must look for the good that God will eventually accomplish out of the calamity. Satan is not omniscient. God does not let him know that what he works against us, God is going to turn against him.

## Chapter 8

### Sent Out By Churches

We assume that the early evangelists were sent forth by local disciples, though the New Testament information on this matter is not given in great detail. Other than the case of Acts 13, there is little information concerning “church sponsorship” of evangelists. A generally accepted practice of church-supported mission work today is the concept of a “sponsoring church.” This is a commonly practiced strategy and one that makes good sense. As a sponsoring church, a single group of disciples accepts the responsibility of sending out a particular evangelist or team of evangelists. This sponsoring group receives all contributed support for the evangelist, and then forwards this support on to the evangelist wherever he may be located.

Though the sponsoring church system of support may be one of the wisest methods of carrying out the financial ar-

rangements of the evangelist, this is not something we read about in the New Testament. Nevertheless, it is a strategy that is very expedient. In other words, God is silent in this area of sponsoring churches. His silence on this matter allows us the freedom to use a little common sense. It takes little common sense, however, to determine that an evangelist should keep his dealings with contributed money as open as possible with the disciples. How one spends his personal money is his own business. However, how we distribute the money of other disciples to evangelists should be known by all the disciples. Individuals who are raising funds from churches without all the contributors knowing who is contributing to the evangelist, can often lead to temptation on the part of the evangelist.

**Acts 13** is a good place to start in

examining the relationship between the evangelist and the sending disciples. It was in this passage that the Holy Spirit initiated the mission effort by saying to all the Christians in Antioch, "*Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them*" (At 13:2). Verse 3 states, "*Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they [all the disciples] sent them away.*" In this case the Antioch disciples sent them away. Those who were sent away were Paul, Barnabas and John Mark. It is interesting to note that in verse 4 the Holy Spirit is given credit for sending them away. It was only the disciples in Antioch who "laid hands" on them. What was happening in this case was that the universal organic body was continuing the process of world evangelism out of Antioch.

We would assume that the members of the body in the region of Antioch financially made it possible for this first recorded evangelistic team to initially go forth. After the mission effort was completed, it was to these disciples that Paul and Barnabas returned (At 14:26,27). We could justly say that Acts 13:1-3 is a group of disciples who sponsored a mission effort. At least, we would gain from this context that the Antioch disciple in some way contributed financial support to the effort. There is no evidence in the context that the Antioch disciples continued to be financially involved in the effort after the evangelists left the region.

We might assume that some money was given to Paul and Barnabas for the initial stages of their journey. As will be

discussed later, it was Paul's practice to support himself. And since there were no bank transfers of money, no traveler's checks or postal system by which to send money, we must assume that the money given by the Antioch Christians soon ran out after Paul, Barnabas and John Mark left Antioch. They surely did not carry with them two to two and a half years worth of gold for their support. The Antioch "sponsored" the effort through initial contributions, prayers and fasting. This is the extent of church sponsorship that we can read about in the New Testament.

We often use the term "sponsorship" in our discussions of church-supported mission outreach. However, we define this term as we desire. It is simply a modern-day term that we use to refer to evangelist/church relationships in mission efforts. The nature of that relationship often varies. The concept of sponsorship includes anything from the initial sending of disciples to determining every move of an evangelist. Our definition of sponsorship, therefore, may be subject to our own practices in church-sponsored missions. However, we must first realize that there is much room for personal opinion in this area simply because there are no Bible mandates concerning the sponsorship of churches in relation to mission efforts. Although we must seek to work after a biblical manner, we understand that many practices of Paul in this area are not matters of doctrine. They are methods that he considered best in the particular situation he was in at the time. When we discuss

sponsorship of an evangelist, therefore, we are in an area where there is little biblical definition. And since there is little biblical definition, there is much room for opinion.

Paul, Timothy and Silas had a close relationship with the few disciples in Philippi. Close examination of Philippians 4 seems to indicate that their relationship was in the area of **common cause** and **finances**. (We will discuss Philippians 4 in more detail in a later chapter.) The young Philippian church “had fellowship” with the above evangelists in the matter of “*giving and receiving*” (Ph 4:15). They had “*once and again*” sent aid to fulfill the evangelists’ needs when they went on to Thessalonica (Ph 4:16). This indicates that the Philippian Christians had a great concern for the work that was being done in other areas. They desired to support the work of world evangelism. Beyond financial support and prayers, however, there is no evidence that the sending disciples in some way controlled the work of Paul, Timothy and Silas. As members of the organic body, the Philippians did not assume that they had control over the work of the evangelists in another region. Such is an important point in an economic business world where some brethren feel that they must control a mission work as they control branch offices in the business world.

From what brief information we have on the subject of sponsorship in the New Testament, it is a valid conclusion to assume that evangelists of the first century exercised a great amount of freedom in

the area of decision making concerning their work. This is a logical conclusion from the very nature of the work itself. How can disciples who are many miles away from a particular mission work control the activities of an evangelist or church in another region? The evangelist is the one who is trained and should know how to “set things in order” (Ti 1:5). Sending disciples should never send an evangelist out in the first place if they do not have confidence in the ability of the evangelist to do the work of an evangelist. If the evangelist is worth anything, then certainly he must be trusted to get the job done without someone controlling him ten thousand kilometers away by remote control.

Christians in one area do not work by remote control the activities of Christians in other areas. The early organic function of the body was not a universal Catholic Church control system. Peter referred to the responsibility of elders to “*shepherd the flock of God which is among you*” (1 Pt 5:2). This certainly indicates that elders have responsibility over those among whom they are, not over those who are in another country. The immediate disciples in the mission area, with the evangelist, must determine where and what to do. This does not negate the new converts asking for advice from godly shepherds in other areas. Neither does this assume that the disciples in one area have authority over disciples in another region. It would certainly be unwise to neglect the advice of godly men who have experienced many things. Godly advice, however, is not

authoritative control. New Christians throughout the world have the right to ask for godly advice from elders anywhere in the world. The giving of advice does not mean that the elders are taking control of a specific work.

It would be good to add here the case of Apollos in Acts 18:24-28. Apollos arrived in Ephesus and was a very capable man in proclaiming the Scriptures. After spending some time in Ephesus, and learning more from the teaching of Aquila and Priscilla, "*he desired to cross to Achaia*" (At 18:27). Therefore, **it was Apollos' initiative to go to Achaia.** The church sent a letter of recommendation in order that other disciples receive him. The point is that in this case the evangelist made the decision both to go and where to go. The local disciples stood behind the decision of the evangelist and encouraged him in the effort.

Different evangelists are suited for different fields of work. We see this in the commissioning of both Paul and Peter. Peter was given the special mission work to the Jews and Paul was to go to the Gentiles (Gl 2:7-9). Each had their special abilities to reach these different groups of people. Some can go to the bush, whereas others are better suited for urban evangelism. It certainly would not go well to put a bush-oriented personality in the middle of Hong Kong. On the other hand, the same would be true of putting an urbanite in the middle of the jungles of the Central African Republic. There is room for judgment here, judgment that can be exercised to save a lot of frustration on the part of those who go.

It is God who "calls" evangelists into mission efforts. By call, we mean that it is the evangelist who must rise up and believe that God wants him to be an evangelist. Local disciples do the sending and praying. Evangelists initiate and encourage local disciples to get the job of world evangelism accomplished. Any would-be evangelist who does not have the initiative to stand up and preach the gospel to the world is not one who should be sent. The key to successful evangelistic work is **self-initiative**. If one does not have this key personality characteristic, he cannot be an evangelist. He cannot be an evangelist because he will not take the aggressive initiative to talk to the lost. And one who does not talk to the lost is not an evangelist.

In the first century God used self-motivated evangelists to motivate churches to reach out. He is still using evangelists today to awaken the church to move out into the present world. We must encourage evangelists to arise to the calling of awakening the church to accept its responsibility to evangelize the world. This is the work of an evangelist in relation to the church. If an evangelist has to be called by a church to preach the gospel, then the person called is not working out of a personal desire to go into all the world. Our calling first comes from within, though others may present the opportunity to go. Unless one has a personal heartfelt call to preach the gospel to the world, he should stay home. It takes special people to go into all ethnic groups of the world. When one goes to a culture that is vastly different from the

one he or she leaves, he or she should be thoroughly convinced that it is his or her mission to go.

The sponsoring church arrangement is one of the best ways to guarantee effectiveness in a mission effort, as well as guard the integrity of the evangelist. It is not wise for an evangelist to receive support from independent sources who usually have no knowledge of one another's financial support of the evangelist. This practice has led to dishonesty on the part of some evangelists. It has ruined the reputation of a few men who have greedily heaped upon themselves great financial support from foreign sources. The concept of a sponsoring church helps protect the evangelist from accusation. It helps protect him from dishonest gain. It is thus a good practice to have all funds for the evan-

gelist sent to a sponsoring group of disciples, who in turn, can distribute those funds to the evangelist. The sponsoring church has the responsibility of reporting to all supporting churches or individuals the source of the funds and the distribution of the funds. Thus, the evangelist is protected from being accused of "preaching for hire" by receiving funds from independent sources. His financial well-being is better cared for by a church. He is not out there on his own, but has the financial care of godly sending disciples who have committed themselves to bear fruit through the evangelist. When this relationship between sending disciples and the evangelist exists, great things happen to the glory of God. When our focus is on functioning as the universal body of Christ, world evangelism naturally happens.

## Chapter 9

### Accepted Responsibility To Support

This subject can be challenging. It is not difficult to understand the New Testament teachings and practices of evangelistic support. It is difficult to convince brethren of their financial responsibility to express their concern for the lost by the sending of evangelists. We have found this especially hard in developing world situations where brethren, in many cases, have yet to understand the responsibility of sending out evangelists. Where a foreign supported evangelist has worked with a local group of disciples for several years, the local dis-

ciples have often accepted the thinking that missions is dependent on the foreign source of funds for the support of the evangelist. When it comes to evangelizing an area, the local folks immediately think that the foreigners should support the local evangelists to get the job done.

Foreign support of local evangelists develops a host of psychological problems on the part of local disciples. Foreign support is often continued over many years to the point of handicapping the local Christians of taking ownership of supporting their own local work, let

alone sending an evangelist out to another area. The local members often become so dependent on the foreign support that they fail to grow in their responsibility to support their own work.

In this and the next three methods, we would like to concentrate on some New Testament studies that might give us some ideas of how the support of evangelists was carried out in the first century. Since contributions to evangelism are an important part of God's plan to evangelize the world (Rm 10:15; 1 Co 9:14; 3 Jn), it is necessary to understand how the New Testament body of Christ supported evangelism in the first century. Paul asked, "*And how will they preach unless they be sent?*" (Rm 10:15). Every disciple must answer this question. Depending on how one answers it will determine what one does in response to Paul's question. After all, Paul was writing to Christians, and if one is not a Christian in attitude and practice, then the question means nothing. The very fact that he asked the question assumes that every Christian has a responsibility to support those who are to preach the gospel to the lost.

In this specific point, there are some basic concepts we must first understand before studying the practice of financial support of evangelists. Understanding these fundamental principles will help avoid several problems that are incurred with supporting evangelists. The following fundamental concepts must first be taught to the church in order to encourage the sending of evangelists:

### **A. Christians are commanded to support elders and evangelists.**

In relation to the support of elders, Paul wrote, "*Let the elders who direct well be counted worthy of double honor ...*" (1 Tm 5:17). "Double honor" here refers to **double pay**. We do not know how the support of church workers could be emphasized greater than this. The double pay was not in reference to the elder being worth a double salary. The double salary referred to the responsibilities of his work. He was the one who was working where immediate needs had to be serviced. The elders of the early church were the benevolent outreach medium of the regional disciples. They were working among the flock to make sure needs were met. The second salary, therefore, went to helping the needy. The benevolent nature of elders necessitated that they be given the extra money by the church in order to help those the church should be helping. It is in the nature of godly shepherds that they constantly give to others. What Paul was instructing in 1 Timothy 5:17, therefore, was a guarantee that shepherds not give themselves into poverty.

Paul wrote concerning those through whom the church is to accomplish her work, "*You will not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'*" (1 Tm 5:18). In Galatians 6:6 he wrote, "*Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.*" In other words, Paul is saying that the one who is taught

the word of God should pay the teacher. This teaching comes directly from Jesus (See Lk 10:7). Paul concluded a section in 1 Corinthians 9 on this matter with the following admonition to the Corinthian church. “*Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel*” (1 Co 9:14; see Rm 10:15).

It is clear from the preceding scriptures that **the church must pay those who labor in preaching and teaching the word**. This responsibility needs to be taught to all disciples. This responsibility must be practiced by every Christian. Any Christian who neglects this responsibility has not yet grown to maturity. He or she has not learned the very principle of Christianity—that it is more blessed to give than to receive (At 20:34,35).

## **B. Christians are to “send forth” evangelists.**

It is necessary to understand a very important Greek word in the context of the support of evangelists. The word is *propempeo*. In the old *King James Version* the word was usually translated “set forward,” or “bring on the way.” Thayer’s lexicon of Greek words gives the meaning of the word as, “to fit him out with the prerequisites for his journey.” The *Arndt and Gingrich Greek Lexicon* agrees with this meaning. Arndt and Gingrich define the word “to help on one’s journey with food, money, by arranging for companions, means of travel, etc.” In other words, the word

means to financially make sure one can continue on his journey. It refers to sending out others by caring for their needs of travel, whatever those needs may be.

The Greek word *propempeo* in the New Testament context is often used in reference to the sending out of evangelists. Notice Paul’s teaching of the disciples in Achaia: “*But it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me [propempeo] on my journey, wherever I go*” (1 Co 16:6). In his second letter to the disciples in Achaia, Paul told them that he hoped to pass by them in order to “*be helped [propempeo] by you on my way to Judea*” (2 Co 1:16). Concerning their sending forth of Timothy, Paul commanded them to “*send [propempeo] him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me ...*” (1 Co 16:11). The word *propempeo* is used in many other contexts of the Scriptures in reference to the sending out of evangelists (See Ti 3:13; 3 Jn 6). It has a meaning that is not hard to understand. Christians have the responsibility of sending evangelists and supporting them on their way.

The Greek word *koinonia* is generally translated “fellowship” in English versions. It is also used in the New Testament in reference to the church’s responsibility toward evangelists. The word means more than fellowship. It refers to “joint participation.” If one would have fellowship with another’s afflictions, he would participate in those afflictions according to the meaning of this word (See 2 Co 8:3,4; Ph 4:14). The same meaning should be carried over into

the area of supporting evangelists. If a disciple supports an evangelist, then that disciple is having “joint participation” in the evangelistic work of the evangelist.

In Galatians 6:6 Paul told the Galatian Christians, “*Let him who is taught the word share [koinonia] in all good things with him who teaches.*” In other words, let the students pay the teacher. In relation to the Philippians’ financial support of Paul, he wrote to them in Philippians 4:14, “*Nevertheless you have done well that you shared [koinonia] in my distress.*” The Philippian members of the body had joint partnership with Paul in his distress in that they made sacrifices in order to meet his needs. In both the Galatian and Philippian context, Paul commanded and commended brethren in the financial fellowship they had with those who preached the gospel to the lost, as well as taught them in all good things.

The conclusion to this point is that the first century disciples’ strategy of getting the gospel to other areas was to financially support evangelists to get the job done. They obeyed the commands to support the laborer who went forth for the specific purpose of preaching the gos-

pel to the lost. We must do likewise.

The significance of this point cannot be overemphasized. The nature of Christianity is that those who take on the name of Christ must be of the character of God, and God is a giver. He so loved that He so gave (Jn 3:16). Anyone who would be godly, therefore, must be of the nature of the Great Giver. If one does not sacrificially give, then truly, that person has not learned the nature of God. Jesus stated this principle of Christianity as, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (At 20:35). Those who do not understand this principle do not understand Christianity; they do not understand Jesus; they do not understand God. Giving is at the very heart of the Christian life. If one fails to discover the spirit of giving, he or she has failed to have the heart of that which he or she proposes to be. If we propose to be Christian, then certainly we must be a sacrificial giver. If one is not a giver, then certainly he is not of the nature of the Founder of Christianity who gave all to seek and save the lost. Evangelism is not a program, but the nature of who Christians are.

## Chapter 10

### Church Supported Missions

There are some key passages in the New Testament that deal with the subject of financial support of evangelistic efforts. Though there are many sections of Scripture that deal with this subject, many churches have greatly neglected

their responsibility in this area of New Testament teaching. In our travels we have discovered that too little teaching has been done on this subject, and subsequently, too little effort has been made on the part of many disciples to fulfill

their responsibility of sacrificial giving.

We must keep in mind that the lack of support of missions is not simply a problem of a lack of knowledge of Scripture on the matter. The problem is deeper. It is a problem of not understanding the nature of Christianity and the necessity of spreading the good news of God's grace to those who are lost. When Christians understand the teaching of the New Testament on the matter of giving, and are truly committed to follow the Founder of the body, there is usually no problem with supporting evangelists to broadcast the message of the gospel.

In order to initiate an evangelistic effort, we must first be knowledgeable of the biblical responsibility to financially support evangelistic efforts. There are some principal passages in the New Testament that deal with this subject. These passages are Philippians 4:10-19, 3 John 7,8, 1 Corinthians 9 and 2 Corinthians 11:8,9. The general instructions of the Holy Spirit in reference to our support of evangelistic efforts is covered in these passages.

### A. Philippians 4:10-19:

We have visited many small and struggling groups of disciples. Many of these disciples have never supported missions or evangelistic efforts outside their local region. Those disciples who are negligent in their support of evangelism often offer one or more reasons for not doing such. They often give the excuse that "**We are young Christians** and must grow into accepting this responsibility."

With this feeling comes the idea that they are a mission point and that evangelists should come and aid them in their outreach.

Other groups of disciples have said, "**We are too small.** We must grow in members before we can support evangelists to go out." Some have referred to this as the "grasshopper complex," that is, they feel as the Israelites who considered themselves too small in reference to the Canaanites they were to displace from the land of Canaan. Somehow, it is only an excuse that size determines whether a group of Christians has or has not the responsibility to send forth the gospel to regions outside their particular locality.

Still others have complained, "**We are too poor.**" This excuse is usually given by those groups of disciples that reside in developing world environments. They feel that poverty is a valid excuse to relieve one of his or her responsibility to preach the gospel to the world.

The above complaints that we are either **too young, too small, or too poor** have plagued the process of world evangelism **too long.** As stated before, most of the problem lies in understanding what Christianity is all about. Once one understands the greatness of the gift of grace, the excuses for not supporting the preaching of this grace are usually forgotten.

It is interesting that the Philippian disciples could have given all of these excuses for not supporting evangelism outside their locality. However, Philip-

pians 4 is a good example of a young, small and poor group of disciples reaching out with the gospel to evangelize areas outside their local area.

**1. *There were few disciples in Philippi.*** Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke preached the gospel in Philippi on the second missionary journey of Paul (See At 15:40; 16:1-15,31-34). There are some interesting facts about the birth of the organic body and its growth in Philippi that are good lessons for us today.

To begin, Luke, the author of Acts, joined Paul, Silas and Timothy when they left the city of Troas. Luke refers to all of them as “we” in the verses after verse 10 of Acts 16. In Acts 17:1 Luke remained behind in Philippi while the others went on to Thessalonica. He indicates this in writing the book by using the pronoun “they” in 17:1 to refer to the others who went on to the next city.

While the evangelists were in Philippi, **Lydia and her household** were converted. A household in the first century included the sons, daughters and servants. Therefore, we will be optimistic and estimate that there were from five to seven in this business woman’s household. There are some interesting things about Lydia that should be noted that manifest some of the great characteristics about this woman. She was from the city of Thyatira, thus she would be considered an expatriate in the city of Philippi. She was a professional woman in the sense that she was dealing in trade. She was evidently single, for Luke states that those who were baptized were of **her**

household. She was religious because Paul found her where people were praying. We could say that at the time of her baptism, the church in Philippi had one wage earner. Lydia’s household depended on her trade of selling purple, therefore, the first disciples in Philippi was a very responsible person.

In Acts 16:31-34 Luke records that the **jailor** and **his household** were also converted. This would possibly add another five to seven members to the group in Philippi. The jailor had a government job, which would probably be a low paying job since he was only a jailor. This would make two wage earners in the Philippian church. One was a traveling salesperson and the other had a government salary. Their households depended on their paychecks.

Now consider the size of the church. If we added the two households together, at the most there would probably be no more than **ten to fifteen** in the group. **This was a small group of disciples.**

After these few conversions, Paul, Silas and Timothy went on to Thessalonica while Luke stayed in Philippi (At 17:1; Again, notice the change of the pronoun from “we” to “they” in the text.) Thus, a small group of disciples was left in Philippi to grow at the hands of the physician, Luke.

**2. *The Philippian disciples were new in the faith.*** Immediately after Paul and Barnabas were released from prison in Philippi, they had to leave town (At 16:39,40; 17:1). They had probably been in Philippi no more than three or four weeks when they had to leave. Acts

16:12 reads, “*And we were staying in that city [Philippi] some days.*” This is not some weeks, months or years. It is some days. Therefore, the Philippian church was a **young** church at the time the evangelists Paul, Silas and Timothy left.

**3. The Philippian disciples were economically poor.** In the context of 2 Corinthians 8 Paul was discussing the famine contribution that was made by the “churches of Macedonia” for the famine stricken churches of Judea. The churches of **Thessalonica** and **Philippi** were in the province of Macedonia. These were not rich churches. **They were poor.** Notice what Paul said of them in verse 2: “... *that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.*” These were not just poor disciples. They were disciples that suffered from **deep** poverty. Nevertheless, in 2 Corinthians 8 they freely gave to a benevolent outreach. They gave “*according to their ability ...*” (vs 3). They gave according to what God expected them to give.

But notice what else Paul says of their contribution in verse 3. “*Yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing.*” In other words, these brothers and sisters went without in order to make this contribution. Because of their commitment they were willing to financially afflict themselves in order that others be relieved of suffering. This is genuine Christian love. Keep in mind, therefore, that the Philippian church was a **poor** church.

Another interesting point concerning the Philippian Christians that is brought out in 2 Corinthians 8 is their nature in reference to their giving the gift. Paul says in verse 4 that they begged “*us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*” These were “begging” disciples. It was not that they were begging that other disciples give to them. **They were begging that others receive their contribution.** Those who truly understand the nature of Christianity and the greatness of God’s grace will beg for others to receive their free gift. Churches can determine if they are churches of Christ by identifying who is doing the begging.

Remember the situation during the ministry of Jesus where a widow came to Jesus and contributed her two coins? When the widow had contributed, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, “*Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood*” (See Mk 12:41-44). Jesus did not tell them to give the two coins back to the widow. He did not because she had to do what she did. Those who do not understand what went on with this contribution of the widow do not understand the nature of Christianity. She had to give the coins. When one realizes the greatness of his or her salvation, the free gift of grace he or she has received, then he or she must give. Those who do not give simply do not ap-

preciate the free gift of God's grace. It is as simple as that. No appreciation, no contribution. Both the poor widow and the poor Philippians realized the greatness of their salvation and the free gift of God's grace. Therefore, they had to give. They begged Paul to receive their gift.

From the above, we must remember that the Philippian church was a **small** group of disciples. In its beginning it was composed of Lydia, the jailor, and their households. They were **young** in the faith at the time Paul, Silas and Timothy left, for they stayed there only a few days before going over to Thessalonica. They were also **poor** Christians. Keep these thoughts in mind when reading the context of Philippians 4. One might find himself in the text if he is a disciple residing in the developing world.

Several years after the church was started in Philippi, in Philippians 4:10-19 Paul wrote from a Roman prison concerning the early beginnings and their evangelistic zeal in the early days after their conversion. What stimulated the Philippian letter was that the Philippians had again sent a contribution to Paul (vs 10,14). In verse 15 of chapter 4, he goes back to the time when they were first established, back to the time of Lydia, the jailor and their households when they met in a house in the poor section of town. Paul reminisced, "*Now you Philippians know also that **in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but***

***you only.***" This is an amazing statement of commendation of these new Christians. Do not miss this point. Here is a young, small and poor group of Christians who financially supported Paul, Silas and Timothy on their missionary journey to take the gospel to other areas. In a matter of three or four weeks this group of disciples learned and accepted their responsibility to freely give because they had been freely given to. We know of Christians today who have been such for years, and yet, they have not sent out one cent in order to preach the gospel to other areas. **This is not right.** Paul adds in verse 16, "***For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.***" The Philippians, therefore, did not just give one time to this mission effort. It was an ongoing contribution from these poor brethren to get the gospel message out. This is commitment and dedication to world evangelism. Every Christian must do likewise.

When Christians discover the true spirit of the nature of Christianity, God is able to do exceedingly abundantly with them above all they can dream. **We believe that many Christians do not support mission efforts simply because they have never understood the true nature of Christianity.**

Paul encouraged the Philippians, "*Nevertheless you have done well that **you shared in my distress***" (Ph 4:14). As in their sacrificial contribution to the Judean famine fund (2 Co 8:1-4), they also "distressed" themselves for evangelistic purposes. They went without necessities of life in order that Paul be filled

(Ph 4:18). Their contributions to evangelism went up to God as “*a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God*” (Ph 4:18). May God help us to find more Christians who are after the nature of the Philippian disciples. This is the organic body of Christ functioning properly. Lydia and the Philippian jailor set the example in the early days of the establishment of their group. Their leadership in organic function was followed by those who came after them.

### B. 3 John 7,8:

3 John is a letter that was written to an individual. It was written to Gaius who was a member of a small fellowship that was having some problems. In this case, the problem was with an individual who was hindering the organic function of the body in the sending out of evangelists. When John wrote to Gaius, he wrote with instructions that dealt with this problem.

In 3 John, John emphasizes three reasons why Christians should support traveling evangelists. He wrote that the evangelists, “*went forth for His name’s sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth*” (3 Jn 7,8). This statement contains three reasons why we should support evangelists.

1. **We should support evangelists because they went forth to preach the gospel for the sake of the Name of Jesus (3 Jn 7).**

2. **We should support evangelists because they took no contributions from the unbelieving Gentiles to whom they preached (3 Jn 7).**
3. **We should support evangelists in order that we be fellow workers for the truth (3 Jn 8).**

Individual Christians as Gaius were asked to support evangelists in the context of this passage. And supporting evangelists was what Gaius was doing. Evangelists go into the world for the purpose of spreading the precious name of Jesus. They are not to take up a contribution from the unbelieving audiences to whom they present the gospel, lest they be accused of preaching for money. Therefore, they must be supported by those who have the desire to spread the gospel to unevangelized areas. All who would be fellow workers for the truth, therefore, must support evangelists who go out to preach the gospel. This is God’s system of world evangelism.

Philippians 4:17 is at least one motivation for individually supporting evangelists as they go forth. Paul told the Philippian church, “*Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.*” When Paul left Philippi and traveled to Thessalonica, he went on behalf of those who sent him. In this case, it was Lydia and the jailor. In the context of 3 John, the evangelists were going forth on behalf of Gaius. Individual members like Gaius sent support once and again to the support of the evangelists. In Thessalonica Paul produced

fruit. The fruit of his labors in Thessalonica went to the account of Lydia and the jailor because they supported him in the work. Therefore, the work of Lydia in selling purple and the jailor at the prison was just as important as Paul's preaching in Thessalonica. In God's system of evangelistic outreach, there must be senders and those who are sent. To the Roman Christians Paul wrote, "*And how will they preach unless they are sent?*" (Rm 10:15). Lydia and the jailor understood this principle from their very first days as disciples.

It takes both senders and those sent to accomplish the plan of God to evangelize the world. In the case of 3 John, Diotrephes was hindering this organic function by intimidating those who would support evangelists. He even threatened to disfellowship them from the body of disciples (3 Jn 9,10). It was for this reason that John wrote to Gaius. In reading the letter of 3 John, one understands that we must be very careful not to hinder the work of God by discouraging those who support evangelism by the financial support of evangelists. If we truly seek to evangelize the world, then we will encourage every means of support.

### C. 1 Corinthians 9:

Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 9 is that the evangelist has a right to receive financial support from the body of believers. This principle is affirmed by his quotation of Deuteronomy 25:4. "*You will not muzzle an ox while it treads*

*out the grain*" (vs 9). The evangelist who preaches, therefore, "*should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope*" (vs 10). Paul questions, "*If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?*" (vs 11). The answer is that the evangelist has a right to reap the material things.

In reference to the priest of the Old Testament, Paul wrote, "*Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?*" (vs 13). From this Paul relates to all Christians the following commandment of the Lord, which is forsaken by too many. "*Even so the Lord has **commanded** that those who **preach the gospel** should live from the gospel*" (vs 14). It could not have been stated more clearly. If we would paraphrase this command, Paul is simply saying, "Every Christian is commanded to pay the evangelist who is preaching the gospel to the lost."

It is interesting to note that 1 Corinthians 9:14 is specifically discussing the support of **evangelists who go forth to preach the gospel to the lost**, not a local teacher who continues to teach the saved. **The gospel (good news) is a message to the lost, not to the saved.** The saved have already obeyed the gospel. The word "preach" means "to proclaim." It is the gospel that is proclaimed to the lost. It is proclaimed to the lost, not to the saved. Therefore, the command of 1 Corinthians 9:14 is in reference to those who have gone forth to

preach the gospel to the lost. The organic body must support those who are proclaiming the good news of the cross to the lost. **1 Corinthians 9:14 is a commandment of the Lord that the members financially support those who are preaching the gospel to the lost.** If a disciple is not doing this, then he is disobedient to the commandment of the Lord.

#### **D. 2 Corinthians 11:8,9:**

The nature of this passage and its context is a rebuke of the Corinthian disciples for not taking ownership of supporting evangelists. In his initial evangelistic outreach to Achaia, Paul received wages from the Macedonian Christians (1 Co 11:9). It was the duty of the Corinthian Christians to do as the Philippians had done. However, Corinth had a social problem. It was a custom to support philosophers and a host of false religious leaders in the area who often proclaimed nonsense and led the people into philosophical and religious confusion. Such religionists were often accused of preaching for hire. Paul chose to disassociate himself from these financial opportunists. He chose to make tents in Corinth and to receive support from other Christians (At 18:1-3). Nevertheless, though he chose to do this in order to escape the accusations of the false teachers of the area, and especially those among the disciples, the disciples as a whole were obligated to support him. Because they did not do this, Paul said that he had to **rob other churches in**

**order to preach to them** (2 Co 11:8).

This is often the case with many churches today. Established churches are still putting their evangelists in the position of having to rob other churches in order that the word be preached to them. In view of what Paul said to the Corinthian disciples in the context of 2 Corinthians 11, we wonder about the wisdom of this. It is not wise for disciples outside a regional area of disciples to continually support the preacher of a long established group of disciples of that region. As long as such is continued, the local disciples will not accept their responsibility to support their teachers. Paul told the Corinthians that they should be supporting him. But because they would not, he had to rob other churches in order to preach to them. What is needed today are more churches with the Philippian mentality for world evangelism. What we actually have is a host of churches with a Corinthian mentality.

Supporting evangelism is one of those areas of spiritual growth that is always a challenge to develop. Those disciples who have captured the spirit of Christianity are usually great givers. They are sacrificial givers. On the other hand, there are many "Corinthian churches" out there who need the exhortation of the 1 Corinthian letter on the matter of giving. A revival is needed among these disciples in order to restore them to New Testament Christianity. When Christians continue to think that they are a mission point, they will always feel that they cannot grow without extending a cuffed hand to other Christians.

Christians who take ownership of the lost in their region, and the lost world, will always seek to do all that they can in order to either send or take the gospel to

the world. This is the nature of being a functioning member of the body of Christ.

## Chapter 11

### Individually Supported Missions

In the preceding point it was emphasized that the members of the body supported evangelists in the first century. They did so because they believed that **individuals** must take it upon themselves to fulfill their responsibility to preach the gospel to the world by supporting evangelists. When reading the New Testament, we must conclude that a great amount of the burden of financial support of evangelists was laid on the shoulders of individual Christians. As functioning members of the organic body of Christ, it was the responsibility of every member to preach the gospel to the world.

#### A. Individual support of Jesus:

There were no churches who made committee decisions to support Jesus. He and the disciples moved from house to house, receiving support from those who believed in Him. There was a common fund, a “money box,” into which contributions were made (See Jn 12:6). These contributions originated from individuals. When Jesus sent the disciples out on preaching journeys, He instructed them to enter the houses of individuals in order that these individuals care for them while they preached in a particular city

(Mt 10:5-15; Lk 10:2-7). He instructed, “*And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages*” (Lk 10:7). The disciples continued this practice long after the ascension of Jesus and the beginning of the church in Acts 2. Those who went forth, went forth while staying in the homes of faithful members who were concerned about world evangelism. They went from house to house as they preached from house to house. Homes were the natural place for accommodation, and thus the natural environment in which to preach.

#### B. The generosity of Gaius:

Gaius was a great Christian who has given an example for all to follow since the time John recorded the inspired words of 3 John. There was a man named Diotrophes among the disciples where Gaius lived. He refused to support evangelists. Diotrophes not only refused to support traveling evangelists, he also forbade others to do so. Diotrophes loved to be first among the disciples, and thus, he worked to keep competition of his influence away from those over whom he had control. The reason for this is obvious. When one wants to be first, he does

not want any outside competition coming in among those over whom he exercises his control.

Nevertheless, John exhorted Gaius to continue his practice of sending out the evangelists whom he was receiving (3 Jn 6-8). It was through this function in evangelism that evangelists would be sent to all the world. If every member assumes his or her personal responsibility of supporting evangelists, then the world will be evangelized. Gaius simply played his small part as a functioning member of the body of Christ.

### C. The responsibility of Titus:

Paul wrote to Titus, “*Send [propempe] Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing*” (Ti 3:13). In this passage Paul was also laying the responsibility for the support of evangelists on **the shoulders of evangelists**. There is a fellowship among evangelists that is emphasized here that must be recognized. In our travels in evangelistic efforts, we have found that this particular principle is almost always carried out by faithful evangelists. They understand the nature of their work and the need for world evangelism. God will greatly reward such sacrifices on the part of evangelists who show great hospitality to their fellow evangelists.

### D. The hospitality of Aquila and Priscilla:

Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers

by trade. Caesar Claudius had forced all Jews out of Rome around A.D. 49. As a result, Aquila and Priscilla were made refugees, and thus fled to Corinth. When Paul arrived in Corinth, he stayed with Aquila and Priscilla (At 18:3). Both Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers, and for this reason, Paul stayed with them when he arrived in Corinth. The indication of the circumstances is that Paul joined with them in the tentmaking business. However, their business arrangement made it possible for him to reason in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuade Jews and Greeks (At 18:4). Here is a good example of a Christian couple working in order to support the preaching of the gospel. They not only supported the preaching of the gospel, they were missionaries themselves as they traveled about preaching and teaching the gospel.

### E. The example of Paul:

When Paul was in Ephesus, he supported himself and those with him through the making of tents. When he passed by Ephesus on his last journey to Jerusalem, he said to the Ephesian elders, “*Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me*” (At 20:34). Not only did Paul support himself while in Ephesus, he also supported those who were traveling with him. (More on this later.)

Individual Christians should feel a great responsibility to support the

preaching of the gospel in other areas. Whether a local group of disciples accepts such a responsibility is beside the point. The responsibility is still on the shoulders of individual Christians to send forth the gospel. Some fellowships of members have joined together in their efforts to support the preaching of the gospel to the world. Every member of the body of Christ should be seeking to preach the gospel to the world. It is for this reason that each member has the responsibility to support world evangelism, regardless of whether each member is involved in evangelistic support.

Since the body of Christ is a world organism, it is necessary for each member of the organism (the body) to work to sustain and propagate the message of the body. Regardless of where a member of the body resides throughout the world, that member must assume the responsibility of making it possible for those who have gone forth to preach the gospel to be able to continue their work.

Sometimes those who are against evangelism can block those who know they should be evangelizing. Gaius was in this situation. However, John encouraged Gaius to fulfill his personal responsibility to get the job done. The point of 3 John is that an individual is not relieved of his or her responsibility to support evangelists simply because there may be others who neglect their responsibility of supporting the preaching of the gospel.

Christians in the urban business/industrial world exist in a corporate community of business meetings and bud-

gets. In many ways, the impersonal atmosphere that is often created by this corporate world has affected the thinking of the disciples. Churches thus deal with church/evangelist relationships on a very impersonal basis. A corporate decision is made, a budget is set, a check is signed, and a name is placed in the bulletin under the title, "missions." The corporate church is satisfied that it has its "department of missions," which department is fulfilling its duties, and the corporate body carries on. Are we missing something here? Has the corporate church relegated missions to a committee and lost sight of the fact that this is actually what we are all about as the organic body of Christ? Has the very function of the body been consigned to a brief point on the outline of a church's organizational structure.

The church in the business/industrial world has to a great extent supported evangelism for many years. The problem is not so much the church in the business/industrial world as it is the church in the developing world. Christians in developing world environments have a difficult time supporting evangelists. Most of the evangelists that we know in such situations are usually local farmers or self-employed people who take it upon themselves to evangelize their areas. The body as a whole in these areas often do not send out evangelists. It is true that there is often little money to send out someone. However, what little there is must be used for more than just buying communion fruit of the vine and bread for the Lord's Supper. Churches in develop-

ing world environments must be challenged to assume their responsibility to be evangelistic wherever they are. Once can never

grow spiritual if he is dependent on “foreign aid” blessings from someone else.

## Chapter 12

### Self-Supported Evangelists

It was Paul’s ministry to preach the gospel to the world. He was careful on certain occasions not to be accused of preaching for money. He thus supported himself during most of his life. In fact, when reading the account of his work in the New Testament, it appears that during the majority of his time in preaching, he supported himself. It was only on certain occasions that he did not have sufficient support. But throughout his ministry from the time of his conversion to the time of his death, he maintained the principle of supporting himself.

#### A. The fact of self-support:

Paul wrote, “*Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel*” (1 Co 9:14). There is no question concerning the church’s responsibility to support evangelists. We must not muzzle the ox who treads out the grain (1 Co 9:9). The laborer is worthy of his hire (1 Tm 5:18). These are unquestionable mandates to the church to send forth evangelists to preach to those from whom they do not take support (3 Jn 7,8). Therefore, we ought to support evangelists in order that we be fellow workers for the truth. As we study through this chapter, we must not forget this point. It is the commandment of the

Lord that local Christians support the preaching of the gospel to a lost world.

In reference to sending forth evangelists, we have often failed to emphasize the efforts of self-supporting evangelists who have gone forth. The self-supported evangelist is the evangelist who has chosen to support himself in his commitment to fulfill the great commission. Paul was one of those men. During most of his life after his conversion, he was of that group of evangelists who sought to support themselves. Though he was at times supported by the church, a close examination of his ministry suggests that he mostly supported himself rather than be supported by the church. We must assume he carried out his Christ-given commission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, Jews and kings by supporting himself (At 9:15,16).

Paul was a tentmaker by trade (At 18:3). This was a self-employment type of work that could be carried out at any place in the ancient world of Paul’s day. A needle, thread and cloth was all that was needed in order to set up shop and start producing tents. It was a self-employment job where Paul was not punching the time-clock of an employer. Therefore, the job allowed Paul to be independent and mobile. It was the ideal trade for one who had a mission to preach the

gospel to the world. All he needed for travel was a needle. He could go to the market places for thread and material for making tents. Paul was a preacher with a needle. That needle allowed him to be a world evangelist.

Now consider the source of his support throughout his preaching ministry. Paul was converted between A.D. 40 and 42. After his conversion, he spent three years in Damascus and Arabia (Gl 1:17,18). We could assume that he was supported by the brethren in Damascus while he was in the city. However, we do not know how he lived or where he lived when he went to Arabia. We do not know how much of the three years he mentioned in Galatians 1:17,18 was actually spent in Arabia. Whatever the case, according to the tenor of his life after his conversion, we could assume that he supported himself most of the time in Arabia. He was certainly not supported by the church in Jerusalem, for they did not accept him when he came back from Arabia and Damascus. And we would not assume that he was supported by the church in Damascus, for he was in Arabia.

From Damascus he went to Jerusalem and stayed for two weeks (Gl 1:18). While in Jerusalem he was unknown to the disciples of Judea, and thus he stayed with Peter (Gl 1:17). From Jerusalem he traveled to Syria and Cilicia (Gl 1:21). It is believed that he stayed in the region of Syria and Cilicia from five to seven years before going to Antioch. During this time we would assume two things. First, we would assume that he contin-

ued to preach the gospel. Secondly, we would assume that he made tents, and thus, supported himself throughout this period. We have no revelation in the New Testament concerning what Paul actually did during his many years in Syria and Cilicia. However, we could assume that he was not quiet concerning the gospel which was confirmed to him on the Damascus road. Since he was unknown by face to the disciples in Judea prior to his visit in Acts 15 (Gl 1:22), we could also assume that these disciples did not support him, and thus, he supported himself.

After the death of Stephen, many were scattered abroad to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (At 11:19). When converts from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch, they preached to the Greek-speaking Jews, many of whom were converted. Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem in order to exhort these new disciples (At 11:22,23). After exhorting the brethren, Barnabas went on to Tarsus in search of Paul in order to have help in teaching the new disciples in Antioch (At 11:25). After Barnabas returned with Paul from Tarsus, both of them taught the new disciples in Antioch for an entire year (At 11:26). We would assume that during this year Paul could have either supported himself through tentmaking, or he and Barnabas could have been supported by the Antioch disciples. From what Paul wrote of himself and Barnabas in 1 Corinthians 9:6, it appears that they both worked on the first journey and in Antioch in order to support themselves. He wrote, "*Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working.*"

We could correctly assume, therefore, that from the time of his conversion until his arrival in Antioch, a period of possibly seven to ten years, Paul supported himself most of the time.

After some time in Antioch, the brethren in Syria took up a special famine relief contribution and sent it by the hands of Paul and Barnabas to the brethren in Judea (At 11:30). We would assume that the church would have supported these two evangelists on this benevolent mission to Judea. We do not know how much time Paul and Barnabas spent in Judea, but they later returned to Antioch, bringing with them John Mark (At 12:25). We could assume, therefore, that since neither Paul nor Barnabas had time to set up their tentmaking work on this trip, they were fully supported by the church of either Antioch or Jerusalem.

What is commonly referred to as the first missionary journey of Paul, began in Acts 13:3,4. When the Antioch disciples sent Paul, Barnabas and John off on this journey, we would assume that they gave them some money to sustain them for several weeks. This first missionary journey lasted a little over two years. We would not think that the Antioch church gave Paul and Barnabas two years of gold coins to carry around on their person on this journey. Such would have been impractical and unsafe. Neither were they given a Visa card or a check book. We would conclude that they had to support themselves after the Antioch support ran out.

A few years later when Paul wrote of

his mission travels with Barnabas, in 1 Corinthians 9:6 he spoke of he and Barnabas both foregoing church support in order to support themselves. We would conclude that both evangelists made tents on the first missionary journey, and thus, they were self-supporting on most of the journey. Paul boasted of his preaching without charge (1 Co 9:18). He did not seek the support of those to whom he preached in order that he might be free from the strings that are often attached with the support. He wrote, "*For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more*" (1 Co 9:19).

At the conclusion of the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch of Syria (At 14:26). They remained in Antioch "a long time" (At 14:28). During this time we would assume that the Antioch church supported Paul. However, because it was his principle not to eat other man's food without charge, and what he said of himself and Barnabas in 1 Corinthians 9:6, we could also conclude that he set up his tentmaking business while he stayed in Antioch. When he was working in the area of Ephesus he "*coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel*" (At 20:33). He worked with his own hands in order to support himself (At 20:34). While in Thessalonica he did not eat bread free of charge (2 Th 3:8). In the recorded cases where Paul spent any length of time, it seems he supported himself without taking the support of the local brethren (See At 18:3). We could thus conclude that when he stayed in Antioch he supported himself.

Around A.D. 50, the Antioch church sent Paul and Barnabas, with some other brethren, to Jerusalem in order to deal with a conflict over judaizing teachings (At 15:2). We would assume that the Antioch church supported these men on their journey to Jerusalem and during the time of their stay in the city. After the Jerusalem meeting, Paul returned to Antioch (At 15:35).

Around A.D. 53 he set out on his second missionary journey with Silas as his fellow worker. We would again assume that the Antioch brethren gave them money to last throughout the first part of their journey. However, when the money ran out, they were back to making tents.

From Antioch, Paul and Silas traveled to Derbe and Lystra, where they were later joined by Timothy (At 16:1). From Galatia Paul, Silas and Timothy went on to Troas where they were joined by Luke (At 16:8). From Troas they went to Philippi where they stayed for only a few days (At 16:12). From Philippi, Paul, Silas and Timothy went on to Thessalonica (At 17:1). Luke stayed in Philippi.

While in Thessalonica, Lydia, her household, the jailor and his household, sent support once and again unto Paul, Silas and Timothy while they were in Thessalonica (Ph 4:15,16). However, when Paul later wrote to the Thessalonian church, he rehearsed the fact that he worked to support himself while preaching in Thessalonica. *“For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God”* (1

Th 2:9). They did such in order to establish a “tradition” that in working we should help the poor (At 20:34). When Paul wrote the second letter to the Thessalonians, he stated, *“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you”* (2 Th 3:7,8).

From Thessalonica Paul went on to Berea (At 17:10). From Berea he went to Athens (At 17:15). Since the Philippians were sending once and again to his needs (Ph 4:15,16), we could conclude that at least some of his support came as a contribution from brethren while in Athens. However, when he went over to Corinth he established himself with Aquila and Priscilla who were also tentmakers (At 18:1-3). Throughout Paul’s eighteen months in Corinth he did not receive any support from the Corinthians (1 Co 9:6). He preached to them “free of charge” (2 Co 11:7). He did not want to be a financial burden to them (2 Co 12:14). Titus also followed the same principle when he visited them several years later (2 Co 12:18).

Though Paul did make tents in Corinth in order to support himself, what he lacked was made up by contributions from the Macedonian churches. He wrote to the Corinthians, *“And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I*

*will keep myself*" (2 Co 11:9; see Ph 4:15,16). However, the nature of his statement in 2 Corinthians 11:9 indicates that it was his custom to make tents in order to support himself, which support was supplemented by church support. It was not the other way around. He was not supported by the church, and then supplemented his support by making tents.

The Macedonian churches, therefore, supplemented his tentmaking. Because of this, Paul later rebuked the Corinthians by saying that he robbed other churches in order to minister to them (2 Co 11:8). Though he said he wronged the Corinthians by not taking their support (2 Co 12:13), he said that in the future he would continue not to take support from them because of the arrogant false teachers among them who were accusing him of preaching for hire (2 Co 11:10-12). Because he did not take their support, he could boast that he preached to them without taking support (1 Co 9:15). He used his self-support as a challenge to his accusers that they should do the same if their motives were genuine.

From Corinth Paul traveled on to Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla (At 18:19). He left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus and went on to Jerusalem. From there he returned to Ephesus (At 19:1). He stayed two years in Ephesus. He again supported himself. He taught in the school of Tyrannus. We are not told if he taught in this school for a salary. However, when he talked of his tenure in Ephesus with the Ephesian elders a few years later, he said, "*Yes, you yourselves*

*know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me*" (At 20:34). He did not take support from the church while he was two years in Ephesus. He supported himself. His reason for doing this was as he stated to the Ephesian elders. "*I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'*" (At 20:35).

Paul concluded his third missionary journey around A.D. 58. He was arrested in Jerusalem and imprisoned in Caesarea from A.D. 58 to 60. He was another two years in prison in Rome in A.D. 61,62. During these four years he was on government "support."

It would be difficult to determine exactly how much time during his missionary journeys he was supporting himself. However, one thing is quite clear. It was a principle of his life that he support himself. It almost seems as if Paul would accept support from the church only as a last resort for survival. He had learned "*not to speak in regard to need*" (Ph 4:11). He wrote to the Philippians, "*I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need*" (Ph 4:12). His answer to living the committed life without great concern for his financial well-being was, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Ph 4:13). These are impressive words when one considers the fact that they were written by one who

was in a Roman prison on trial for his life.

Paul's determination to accomplish his God-given destiny did not depend on the support of others. He accomplished his work regardless of church support. The tremendous lesson that he teaches us through this principle of his life is the fact that every self-supporting, wage-earning Christian has a ministry like Paul. Paul's priority was on preaching the gospel. Such should be the priority of every Christian. How one supports himself in his personal ministry to preach the gospel is a matter of opinion. Paul sought to leave us an example. He left a tradition that by laboring night and day, we should minister the gospel to the lost (2 Th 3:6-9).

### **B. Purpose for self-support:**

An interesting argument for self-support is made by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9. It is evident that the Corinthian society was plagued with those who would teach or proclaim some doctrine for the purpose of receiving financial aid from the audience. This practice had evidently moved into the church. The Corinthian church, therefore, was not only supporting some of these hireling preachers, they were supporting some who were attacking Paul's apostleship. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul challenged these hirelings by defending his right to receive support for his work as a Christ-sent apostle. However, his challenge to these attackers was that he preached to the Corinthians without taking support from them.

In 1 Corinthians 9:11-14 Paul stated the principle that one had a right to receive support from the church. *"If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?"* The answer to this question would be "no" in view of the fact that even the Old Testament law taught that the priest were to be supported (See vs 9). The point is this: *"Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?"* (vs 13). That was how it was under the Old Testament law. So it is today. *"Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel"* (vs 14). However, Paul says, *"I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me ..."* (vs 15).

Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that he was not writing in order to gain their support. The reason for this is that he did not want anyone to *"make my boasting void"* (vs 15). Paul boasted in the fact that he preached the gospel while supporting himself. This is a most significant fact. Those preachers who support themselves while preaching the gospel are the ones who have a right to boast. There is no room for boasting in this area by the ones who are supported by the church.

Paul wants every preacher to know a very important point. *"For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship"* (vs 17). If one will not

preach the gospel unless he is supported by the church, then he has not accepted his stewardship of the gospel. If he has to be supported in order to preach, then he would be a hireling if he preaches because of the support. This is Paul's argument to those in Corinth who were preaching simply because the Corinthian church was supporting them. Paul's point is stated in one verse. *"What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel"* (vs 18). The preacher who preaches without the financial support of the church is the preacher, as Paul, who could boast of his work. He has a reward. However, the preacher who is supported by the church is producing fruit for the supporters. This is Paul's teaching in Philippians 4:17. *"Not that I seek the gift [that is, their support for preaching], but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account"* (Ph 4:17). Because the Philippian church *"sent once and again"* unto his necessities (Ph 4:15,16), they received the fruit of Paul's work. When a preacher preaches while receiving the support of the church, the fruit of his labors goes to those who support him. Fully supported preachers need to remember this. If they would produce fruit that would go to their own account, then they should support themselves while they preach.

One reason why Paul supported himself is given in 1 Corinthians 9:19. *"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more."* By not receiving support

from the church, he was "free from all men." He could determine where to preach, and in the Corinthian context, what to preach. Because the brethren were not able to "pull his strings" by their support of him, he could preach where and what needed to be preached. This was opposed to what the Corinthians were doing with those they supported among the disciples of Achaia. The self-supported preacher truly understands what Paul is stating here. And, we would suppose that those who are supported by the church also understand. When brethren support one to preach, there is often the practice of the corporate business world involved. When the "employee" is supported by the company, the supporters want to tell the employee what to do and say. But this cannot be the situation between preachers of the gospel and the church. The preacher is obligated to *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2 Tm 4:2). Preachers are to do this because of what Paul told Timothy in the context of this statement. *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables"* (2 Tm 4:3,4). Blessed is the brother who preaches the gospel without receiving the support of the church.

At times Paul did receive support from other disciples. We must keep in mind, however, that **his preaching of the**

**gospel did not depend on the receiving of support.** He preached the gospel regardless of receiving support from others. He could do this because he depended on God and his tentmaking business. Such is a good example for evangelists today.

Again, keep in mind that the tentmaking business was a self-employment work. Paul was not working for someone else. He could make tents Monday through Thursday, shut down the store, and then preach Friday through Sunday. His hours of work were not regulated by a boss. He was “his own boss.” And in being one’s own boss, there is freedom to shut the store down at will.

The tentmaking trade was also a universal trade. If one would use a “tentmaking” type work to support himself as an evangelist, it would be best to have such a trade that could be used in many different areas of the country or world. There are numerous types of tentmaking trades that can be used throughout the world. Such trades would be automobile mechanics, house construction, English teaching, agriculture, plumbing, electronics and computer science. These types of trades can be set up and carried out in many places to which the evangelist goes. In such works, therefore, one is self-employed within a particular culture and not subject to the demands of an employer.

The world will not be evangelized by

simply sending out full-time evangelists. The need is too great. The world is too big. We must emphasize the motivating, training and sending out of evangelists who have a trade they can use to support themselves. In fact, the call is for men to arise to the occasion to be evangelists and to support themselves. The church has concentrated so much on the concept of fully supported evangelists that we have overlooked the New Testament norm of “tentmaking” evangelists. We have made the exception the rule. Acts 8:4 reads, *“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”* We are sure that these were not full-time evangelists. They were Christians who were scattered because of the persecution. They fled Jerusalem. Wherever these Christians went they preached. Such is what is needed today. This is one principle of evangelistic outreach we must restore in the thinking of the organic function of the body of Christ today.

World evangelism will never be accomplished simply by sending out full-time evangelists. Men must adapt the mentality that they are going to evangelize regardless of whether they are supported. Church support does not determine whether one is an evangelist. Proclamation of the gospel determines whether one is an evangelist. Therefore, if one would be an evangelist, he must preach the word regardless of how he receives his financial support.

## Chapter 13

### Recommending One Another

Paul's exhortation to Timothy to lay hands hastily on no man was a wise principle (1 Tm 5:22). Christians must not be hasty to give recommendations to new converts or new arrivals in reference to leadership among the disciples. In the first century there were false brethren who were going about among the disciples (Gl 2:4). In this context, therefore, the Christians often wrote letters of recommendation in order to guard against those who would lead disciples away after themselves.

It was undoubtedly a custom in the first century for the disciples in one region to write a **letter of recommendation** that would be taken by the person who was traveling to other regions. Acts 18:27 is such a case. When Apollos "*desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him ....*" This was a letter of recommendation to notify the brethren in Achaia that they in Ephesus had laid their hands on Apollos. They wanted to exhort the brethren in Achaia to receive Apollos also (At 18:27).

When Paul arrived in Rome he did not have this advantage when he approached those Jews who were not Christians. When he arrived he called together these Jews and explained why he was there. But they answered, "*We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of*

*you.*" "But," they said, "*we desire to hear from you what you think ...*" (At 28:21). The letter of recommendation was evidently a Jewish custom that existed before the beginning of the church. The Jews' statement in the context of Paul's arrival in Rome indicates that this practice was continued by the Jews on a regular basis.

When Paul arrived in Rome, it would have been good for him to have had a letter of recommendation from Jewish Christians in Judea, though he was speaking to those who were not Christians in Acts 28. Nevertheless, such a letter would have possibly made it easier for him to be received by Jews in Rome. Of course, such a letter may have been sent, but it would have probably been lost in the shipwreck at Malta. On the other hand, we do not think it would have been necessary for Paul to carry around a letter of recommendation on his journeys. He had the confirming miraculous hand of God working with him (Mk 16:17-20). Why would he need a letter? What is interesting in the Acts 28 incident is that he did not resort to a miraculous confirmation of what he said. He relied solely on reasoning from the Old Testament Scriptures, which he did also on other occasions. **The power was in the word.** Because he did not rely on the confirming miracles helps us to know that we can be as affective today in evangelism without miracles. **The power is in the**

**word.** Paul used the Old Testament prophecies to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. We have the same Scriptures today, plus the New Testament. We need no confirming miracles.

Keep in mind that the letter of recommendation was sent to introduce

Apollos to the church in Corinth. It was not a letter to send him. Apollos had already made the plans to go. The letter was probably a statement to the Achaia disciples that a faithful evangelist was coming and that they would do well to receive him.

## Chapter 14

### Traveling Together

The early evangelists almost always traveled in the company of someone else. This particular strategy of work was an understood custom of travel in the first century. It was safe to travel together. It also gave the evangelists greater witness to those to whom they went. It gave them the opportunity of working together as a team. There are numerous examples of this in the New Testament.

Jesus practiced group evangelism in Luke 10. In verse 1 of this limited commission He sent out His disciples two-by-two on teaching trips. After the establishment of the church in Acts 2, there are few times when an evangelist went out on his own. Evangelists almost always went in teams of two or more. Peter and John were teamed together to go to Samaria (At 8:14). Peter, and certain other Jews, went to the house of Cornelius in Caesarea (At 10:23). Paul, Barnabas and John Mark went on what is commonly referred to as Paul's first missionary journey (At 13:1-3). When the time came to return to strengthen the disciples that were converted on the first

missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas teamed up with other men. Paul took Silas (At 15:40). Barnabas took John Mark (At 15:39).

While Paul was on his journeys he seems to have always had someone with him. Silvanus (Silas) was with him in Acts 15:40. Silas, Timothy and Luke were with him in Acts 16:11. Seven brethren were with Paul in Acts 20:4. Team evangelism was undoubtedly Paul's way of going forth.

There are some examples, however, of evangelists going out on their own. Apollos seems to have traveled alone in Acts 18:24-28. Philip also made a journey by himself to Samaria and the regions of Caesarea (At 8:5,40). However, in view of the numerous cases of team evangelism, the cases of evangelists traveling on their own must be considered the exception to the rule.

The advantages of going in company are many. The following are just a few advantages of going on mission trips in the company of others:

1. The safety of traveling together in the first century, as well as today, makes much sense in many situations.
2. Two or more traveling together and preaching together is a self-exhorting social environment. In times of great trial the evangelists and their wives can encourage one another to continue the work.
3. The spiritual testimony of the group to the unbelievers is always greater with a group.
4. More work can be done when there are more working together in specialized areas of work.
5. Each team member can specialize with his talents to contribute to the team effort.
6. Two heads are always better than one when it comes to making decisions.
7. As a team everyone has the advantage of discussing Bible subjects with fellow workers. It is always best to put oneself in an environment where his thinking can be challenged.

We could add to this list. Those evangelists who have actually gone out on their own can offer a number of reasons why one should go forth with the companionship of fellow workers. Evangelism into unevangelized areas can often be a very lonely work. The comfort and prayer support of a fellow evangelist can be a great advantage to one working on the field.

All the above are good suggestions for effective foreign missions. This is especially true in reference to evangelists who go on their initial venture into a foreign culture. When young families go together into a mission area, great

things can happen. However, going as a team does not mean that this is the only way things can happen. Young and inexperienced evangelists today often first go forth in a team effort. After years in the work, however, and after much experience in the field, we have seen many missionary families go individually to different areas or works. We have noticed that older missionaries can work effectively by themselves after they have fully blended into the particular culture in which they live. After all, the evangelists who plan to be “lifera” in world evangelism do not necessarily need the continual companionship of those from the country from which they came. If they do, then there is probably something wrong in their identification with the culture in which they live. And if there is something wrong in their identification with their new home, then often they will not become “lifera” in world evangelism.

It is a tremendous accomplishment on the part of those evangelists who have made a foreign culture no longer foreign. When their home of birth becomes a foreign country, then they have truly become world citizens. It is this group of men and women who need to be commended for making home where they are, and thus, settle in for life. We need more men and women who will immigrate to the nations of the world. We need evangelists to arise to the occasion of serious international proclamation of the gospel to every nation of the world on a long-term basis.

There are those evangelists who can continually move about in their evangelistic work. They can live as single men as Paul or Barnabas. However, there are those who need to be as Peter. Paul and Barnabas were single men who could go about from one city or nation to another. On the other hand, Peter was married. He had to move and stay, move and stay. Our record of his life indicates that he remained in Jerusalem for several years

after the initial beginning of the church. From Jerusalem he went on to Antioch. When he wrote his final letter, he was in Babylon. He gives us an example of a married evangelist. We need those evangelists, therefore, who can move to a particular region and stay. These are nurturing evangelists who preach, and then exhort disciples in a particular region. These evangelists are needed to reach out to local regions.

## Chapter 15

### Preaching To All People

When the early evangelists went forth in the first century, they went forth with the worldwide commission of the Founder of Christianity (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:14). The basic plan of the disciples is expressed in Acts 8:4. *“Therefore, those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”* If they had a strategy, it was to simply preach the gospel throughout the world. It was the nature of the message they had (the good news) that it be preached everywhere. The nature of the life they lived stimulated people to ask concerning their hope (1 Pt 3:15). To shut up what was in their hearts in some convent or monastery would certainly have been contrary to the very nature of the organic body of Christ. The early disciples could not but speak those things that they had seen and heard (At 4:19,20).

In studying through this and the next four functions of the organic body, we must focus on the behavior of the early

disciples to reach people. Wherever the disciples were, the influence of their lives permeated the environment. Should we not follow this function of Christian influence as we go forth today?

The early disciples preached to everyone, but concentrated on the receptive by preaching in the religious centers of the principal towns of the provinces. From firmly established groups of disciples in these central areas they evangelized large geographical areas. As a result of this type of strategy, they were able to establish solidly grounded Christians who were able to reach out to other areas. New converts quickly became disciples with a mission. As they were helped, so they helped others. No disciple became a dead end. Freely they received, freely they gave. They were debtors to have the gospel preached to others because someone had sent an evangelist to preach the gospel to them. God had sent the first missionary to earth. They

all followed that example.

When we study the preaching of the early disciples, it is evident that they did not limit themselves to preaching to a particular class of people. They preached to priest, prince and pauper alike. The gospel was not to the Jews only, but also to the Gentiles in every village, town and city. So it should be today. We must go out to preach to any receptive ear. Every creature must have an opportunity to hear the gospel.

### A. They preached to poor people.

When John the Immerser was in prison, he heard of the work of Jesus. He may have been somewhat discouraged at the time, because he sent some of his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the one who was coming. Jesus told his disciples to return to John with two evidences that He was the Messiah. Jesus said, *“Go and show John again those things that you hear and see. The blind receive their sight and the lame walk. The lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear. The dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them”* (Mt 11:4,5). Not only did the miraculous works of Jesus prove that He was the Messiah, but also the fact that He preached the gospel to the poor. The preaching of the gospel to the poor, therefore, is the nature of the work of evangelists who follow after the example of Jesus.

We must keep in mind that any work that ignores the needs of the poor cannot be true Christianity. If the work of an evangelist ignores the needs of the poor,

his work is not true. If he establishes churches that ignore the needs of the poor, then his work is flawed. One of Jesus’ proofs to John was that He ministered the good news to the poor. If our work ignores the poor, then certainly we are preaching a different message than what Jesus preached.

The disciples of Macedonia were composed of the economically poor. Of these disciples Paul wrote concerning their contribution to the famine stricken victims of Judea, *“... in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality”* (2 Co 8:2). It may not be certain that Paul approached the economically poor on his first visit to Macedonia (See At 16:14,15,27-34; 17:4,17). However, by the time he wrote this message, there were some very poor Christians who were suffering from the depressed economic situation of the area. Out of their poverty, however, they were willing to reach out to others. The Philippians sent once and again unto Paul’s need (See Ph 4:10-18). Of the Thessalonians Paul wrote, *“For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything”* (1 Th 1:8). We must not think, therefore, that poor brethren cannot reach out to others.

2 Corinthians 8, where Paul spoke of the poverty of the Macedonian disciples, was written after what he wrote to the Thessalonian disciples in 1 Thessalonians 1:8. Some of the Christians in the

Macedonian area may have fallen into poverty by the time he wrote the 2 Corinthian letter. However, when he wrote the first letter, these Christians were probably not over a year and a half old in the faith. Nevertheless, regardless of their economic poverty and youth in the faith, they were highly evangelistic in reaching out with the gospel to the province of Macedonia. The point is that they preached everywhere and to anyone.

### **B. They preached to rich people.**

Acts 17 indicates that Paul and Silas preached to the upper class in Berea. Luke records, *“Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men”* (At 17:12). These were “prominent women,” not simply because they were known in the community, but because they were also of substantial wealth. It is also indicated in 3 John that Gaius was a prosperous member of the church. Philemon was a slave owner, and thus, was probably a wealthy member of the church. Philip preached to the treasurer of a nation (At 8:26-40). We must always keep in mind that the wealthy are also receptive to the gospel. Paul told Timothy, *“Charge those who are rich in this world that they not be high-minded or trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God who richly gives us all things to enjoy”* (1 Tm 6:17). When Paul wrote this statement to Timothy, there were wealthy brethren among the disciples to which he ministered. It is not wrong for brethren to be rich. However, they must be reminded

that they not consume their riches upon themselves in a manner by which they ignore the poor.

### **C. They preached to prominent people.**

In Athens Paul encountered and preached to Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill (At 17:18). He also preached to and converted those *“who are of Caesar’s household”* (Ph 4:22). Even some of the Roman palace guards were converted in Rome (Ph 1:13). In Thessalonica he reached some “leading women” of the community (At 17:4,12). He preached before kings and rulers as Agrippa, Felix, and Festus (See At 9:15). *“Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch”* had also been preached to and converted (At 13:1). The early disciples preached to Roman government officials (At 13:4-12), Ethiopian government officials (At 8:26-40), and kings (At 24:10ff; 25,26). Everyone had a right to hear the gospel once.

### **D. They preached to all classes and cultures of people.**

If Paul tried to reach any particular group of people, it would have been the religious groups of his day. He was persistent about entering into the synagogues on the Sabbath in order to reach his fellow Jews. Luke mentions this enough times in Acts that we must conclude that Paul was specifically interested in converting those of his religious heritage (See At 13:5,14; 14:1; 17:1,10,17; 18:4,19).

His prayer and supplication to God was for the Jews, that they might be saved (Rm 9:1-3). He wrote, “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved*” (Rm 10:1). Because the gospel was first to the Jew, and then to the Gentile, Paul made a special effort to always approach the Jews with the message that Jesus was the Messiah. This is why he made his way to every synagogue in every city to which he went.

Social and economic classes did not seem to have influenced Paul’s direction of evangelism. Jesus had said that few who are in high places and rich places are called (See Mt 19:23,24). However, He did not say we should neglect preaching to these people when we have an opportunity. Neither did He say that none in these “places” would be converted. He simply said that few would be converted. Therefore, we must preach the gospel to everyone in order to find these few.

There is no indication that Paul made a special effort to reach any particular economic class of people. The account of his preaching gives no indication that he made it a point to preach on the streets to the curious, though his preaching certainly sparked the curiosity of all. His outreach seems to be to anyone who

would listen. When the opportunity made itself available, he preached the word.

It has been our observation in preaching the gospel that the ones who firmly ground the disciples in communities are those who are leaders in the social, economic and religious structures of the communities in which they live. Those who are stable in their cultures and leaders in their societies will produce stable and leading churches in their communities. This may be why Paul took so much time to reach the religious Jews and Greeks of the synagogues. These were religious leaders in their communities. This may also explain why he could designate elders among the disciples of Asia so soon after their conversion (See At 14:23). Those he had converted were often wise leaders in faith. They were stable in their cultures. Paul simply took them from where they were religiously and led them on to a greater knowledge of the truth. After their obedience to the gospel, they were able to carry on with the work among the disciples as they grew in the faith. Evangelists, therefore, must always be looking for those who are seekers of the truth. Once a seeker is found, he will obey the gospel and grow in the faith.

## Chapter 16

### Reaching Regions

In the following few points of how and where the early evangelists preached the gospel, there is an underlying principle that was always in their minds.

They were concentrating on the mission of the Master to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15). Their strategy of out-

reach into regions, cities and religious centers was based on the goal of getting the gospel to all the world. As we study through the following function of the evangelistic organic body, therefore, we must not lose sight of what their focus was. They were going into all the world village by village, city by city, region by region. If we establish churches today with this world vision, we will have the same multiplying effect throughout the world.

In reading the book of Acts it appears that Paul in his evangelistic efforts emphasized going to the provinces of the Roman Empire. Luke records in Acts 16:6, “*Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.*” Paul, Silas and Timothy wanted to go into the area of Asia and preach. However, the Holy Spirit had other plans for them, knowing that all Asia would eventually hear the word when Paul would teach in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus at a later time (See At 19:8-10). Therefore, the Holy Spirit diverted Paul from going into the region of Asia.

When the Holy Spirit directed against their going into Asia, Luke records that the mission team determined to go into Bithynia. “*After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them*” (At 16:7). Though the Spirit did not permit them to go into Bithynia, it is noteworthy to see that they wanted to go into this region.

The regional effect of the early evangelists’ work was indicated on Paul’s first

missionary journey. Luke recorded the effects of their work in southern Galatia, “*And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region*” (At 13:49). Subsequently, when opposition arose, they were expelled from “the region” (At 14:5,6). But by the time they were expelled from the region, many had been baptized and added to the body.

It is also interesting to note that though Paul went to the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica in the province of Macedonia, he was actually called in a vision to “*come over to Macedonia*” (At 16:9). When Paul wrote the Corinthian letters, he was addressing all those in Achaia (1 Co 16:15; 2 Co 1:1; 9:2), referring to those of **Macedonia** and **Judea** (2 Co 1:16). To all the churches of Macedonia, Paul boasted of the willingness of those in Achaia (2 Co 9:2). We might be making more of this point than what was actually intended on the part of Paul in making his plans, but this is what actually happened. Paul and the early evangelists evangelized provinces by focusing on population centers.

It seems that those people whom Paul converted recognized this strategy. The Philippians supported Paul, Silas and Timothy on their continued journey to Thessalonica and beyond (Ph 4:15-17; 2 Co 11:9). The Thessalonians in turn evangelized all Macedonia and Achaia (1 Th 1:7,8). The Antioch disciples sent evangelists to Asia. From Ephesus all Asia heard the word (At 19:8-10). From the initial beginnings of the church by Paul and the early evangelists, entire regions heard the gospel.

Some of the major Roman provinces were evidently heavily populated areas. They were important areas that had strategic capitals of the Roman Empire. In application of the above function of the body today, it would be natural to concentrate on taking the gospel to those areas that have major population concentrations. Focusing on population centers offers the opportunity to reach the regions around the centers.

The early evangelists had a greater view of evangelism than the establishment of a single group of disciples. They saw the evangelization of regions through the population centers. There is a very important function of the organic body embedded in this point. The disciples of a region become sterile if they cannot think beyond themselves. If disciples in a particular city do not have a vision beyond where they live, then they will become introverted and stagnant. Evangelists who preach the gospel can help prevent this self-destructive mentality. In the initial stages of evangelism, the new converts must be given a vision of regional and national evangelism. This seems to be what Paul did with the Christians of Macedonia. At least, the Thessalonian and Philippian churches in the first few months of their existence were evangelizing the province of Macedonia. From where did this vision originate? It

was taught to them by those evangelists who originally converted them.

We have experienced too many disciples that were initially converted with an introverted mentality. Years years after their conversion they were still the only disciples in their region. They spiritually die as a true witness Jesus because they never reached out in their regions to preach to others. These disciples are sterile counterfeits of what they claim to be. They came into the body as a virus of death, never having caught the spirit of world evangelism and multiplying themselves so that others in their regions could hear the gospel.

On the other hand, there are a host of examples, especially in Africa and India, where evangelists have evangelized entire regions by baptizing those who are truly converted to walk with Jesus. When individuals are truly disciplined to Jesus before they are baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they will be the spiritual incarnation of Jesus throughout their regions. And being, they will be motivated to reach beyond their city limits, beyond their national borders, and into all the world. When we make disciples as Jesus instructed, it is our purpose to teach believers that they must carry on with the mandate of Jesus to go into all the world (Mt 28:19,20).

## Chapter 17

### Preaching To Key Cities

In order to make sure that we are discussing the correct population centers, it

is necessary to introduce this point with some general definitions. In our modern

and postmodern world, there is a difference of character between a village, town and city. There is a vast difference between the cultural atmosphere of a village/town and city. Anyone who has grown up on a farm and moved to the city understands that there is a vast difference between the culture of rural communities and the culture of metropolitan cities. The difference is vast. It is interesting that farm people can move to the city, but city people rarely move to the farm. Why is this?

After completing our first six years of school in a country school wherein there were only eight students from the first grade to the eighth grade, we went to what we called the “town” school. Now the town in which this school was located had a total population of 265 people. We also went to school in another nearby town that had a population of 2,500 people. In African definitions, these would be villages, though we called them towns in central Kansas. There may be some differences between an exact definition between whether these were villages or towns. It depends on where you were born and grew up.

The point is not so much in the definition between a village and town, but between a village/town and a city, especially modern cities that are millions in population. There is a vast difference between the cultural makeup of a village/town and the mega cities that exist today in the modern world. Those who have never lived in the multi-million populated urban cities of the world today do not really understand what we are saying on

this point. You will have to take our word for it that there was a tremendous difference between the cultural atmosphere of a small town and the overwhelming population of a city like Sao Paulo, Brazil, one of the mega-cities in which we once lived. When we talk about Paul going to key “cities,” we must understand this difference because of the environment of the modern cities of our world. The correct terminology would be that he went to key villages and towns, simply because towns like Corinth and Ephesus were small population centers that had not lost their heart.

When a town progresses to a multi-million populated city, it loses its heart. People become cold and indifferent to one another. The work schedule of the wage earning father or mother becomes almost overwhelming. People often work from 7:00<sup>am</sup> to 6:00<sup>pm</sup>, with an hour of commuting between job and home. There is little time for family, and there is little time for other Christians. These mega-cities that exist in developing world countries today are cauldrons of civilization wherein citizens struggle for survival. In this struggle, the people lose their “country” heart for one another. They lose their community, and thus their receptivity. There is no comparison between the millions of Nairobi, Johannesburg and Tokyo and the Ephesus, Corinth and Philippi in the New Testament. If you have lived in a modern “Corinth” of approximately 50,000 citizens, and then moved to a mega-city of three, ten or fifteen million, you know exactly what we are saying. There is a

vast difference between the cultural atmosphere of the two environments.

When we come to the evangelistic methods of Paul, it seems that he evangelized the provinces by concentrating on the heart of the provinces. The key towns of those days were usually the centers of administration of Roman government for the area. They were **centers of religion** for the province. Whether Jew or Gentile unbelievers, people of the rural areas often looked to the religion of the towns for guidance. In other words, the religion of the principal towns (“cities”) greatly influenced the religious atmosphere of the surrounding rural areas. This is a principle that was characteristic of the towns to which Paul went, but it is a characteristic that is not necessarily true today in the large cities of the world. In fact, the reverse seems to be true today. The large cities of the world are centers of sin and crime, whereas, the rural areas, or rural towns, are the seats of religious belief and communal activity.

In the first century, the principal towns were the **centers of the culture**. These principal towns/cities usually determined the direction of cultural development and expansion within any particular culture. This is usually true today as the cities of any country determine the cultural direction of the nation as a whole. As go the cities of any particular culture, so goes the nation.

Large cultural centers in the first century were the **central points of commerce** of the entire province. The strategic network of Roman roads penetrated

the principal cities of Paul’s day. It was natural, therefore, that world trade would thrive around such harbor towns as Ephesus. Because of their strategic importance, the towns offered the mechanism from which the provinces could be evangelized. By establishing strong churches in the major cities, the gospel could then be proclaimed throughout the region.

In Luke 10:4 the *Simple English New Testament* translates Jesus as saying to His disciples on a limited mission outreach, “*Don’t stop to talk with people along the road.*” This is a peculiar statement in view of the fact that the disciples’ purpose for being sent forth was to announce the coming kingdom of God. Our understanding of this statement stems from verse 1 where it is said that Jesus “*sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.*” In view of the urgency of His evangelistic work, it seems that Jesus did not want His disciples to get bogged down on the road. When considering the time factor, it appears that He wanted His disciples to hurry from one city to another in order to prepare His way by preaching. If they would have stopped at every house or individual they met on the road, then they would have never accomplished what He wanted them to do. Because Jesus wanted to get the job accomplished as soon as possible, He sent the disciples to the cities.

There was certainly more to the above command of Jesus than urgency. The cities were where the people lived. It is interesting to note that in His ministry Jesus would not allow Himself to be

stranded at one city. He said to a group who were trying to hold Him up in one city, *“I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent”* (Lk 4:43). Evangelists must look beyond one city of a nation to many cities. They must seek to establish disciples in cities who have the vision to reach to other cities until an entire nation is reached.

The above was evidently a pattern for Paul’s rapid evangelism of the Roman world. Paul placed great emphasis on principal cities as Ephesus, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Berea and Antioch. For two years he stayed in Ephesus teaching in the school of Tyrannus (At 19:9). As a result of this strategy, *“all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks”* (At 19:10). When Paul and Barnabas preached in Antioch of Pisidia, many believed. As a result, the whole region was affected. Luke recorded, *“And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout **all the region**”* (At 13:49). Though the preaching of the evangelists was focused on the city of Antioch, the whole region was affected. When the opposition expelled them, they were expelled from the region, not just the city of Antioch (At 14:5). Therefore, it was Paul’s strategy to evangelize the provinces by evangelizing the principal cities of the provinces. His focus was always beyond where he was physically located.

Though Paul went to “cities,” we need to challenge one of the often accepted mission strategies that many have taught for years that actually does not fit

the modern-day situation. The problem has been associating the environment of the mega-cities of our modern world with the “cities” of Paul’s day. As stated before, there is a vast difference between these two environments.

In many mission studies there is often much teaching “in the way of Paul” that it is the evangelistic principles and practices of successful evangelists to concentrate on urban centers. It is often argued with persuasiveness that from the urban centers one can reach urban rural areas. It is often taught that a solid base of outreach must first be established in the cities. Evangelists can be trained in the cities, and then sent to the rural areas. Paul’s steps through Ephesus, Troas, and Philippi are often quoted in order to put some biblical claim behind this theory. And the conclusion was right. Paul did emphasize urban areas when initiating the church in provinces. A casual reading of Acts clearly proves this point. At least in the historical context of Paul’s ministry, this is what he did.

However, reality would challenge us to rethink our thoughts on comparing Paul’s experience with our modern-day experience of mega cities that Paul never entered. The following are a few considerations we would like to reconsider in order not to rationalize going to cities simply because that is where Paul went. We set forth these thoughts in order to generate ideas and strategies that lead us to also consider the rural areas as valid areas to target in world evangelism. At least, we must reconsider going to “rural towns” as a strategy to evangelize regions.

## A. Misunderstanding case history:

We often misunderstand the biblical case history of urban missions. Paul did go to urban centers. But we must be careful here concerning our definition of an urban center. When we use the word “urban,” different definitions will click in the minds of different people, depending on where one lives. If you live in Gobabis, Namibia, a city of about 20,000, you will understand “urban” to mean something different from the person who lives in “urban” Mumbai, India, a city of over 15,000,000 people.

There is certainly a vast difference between the “rural” atmosphere and culture of small urban first century centers as Ephesus, Thessalonica and Athens, whose populations were measured in thousands, and the environment of the mega-cities of our present world whose populations are measured in the millions. We cannot say that the environment of these two urban centers are the same. Anyone who has lived in one of the mega-cities of our world today knows that there is a vast difference between a rural-oriented city of forty to fifty thousand people and a city in the millions that has lost its heart. It is for this reason that we must distinguish between “urban cities” and “rural cities.”

We would here suggest a definition of terms. There are those cities we define as **urban cities**. These are mega-populated cities with a population in the millions. Then there are those **rural cities** with populations that range from from a few thousand to a population of a few

hundred thousand. We have lived in the environments of both urban cities and rural cities. This is why we are saying that there is a difference of environment between urban cities and rural cities, though determining when a rural city transitions to an urban city is very subjective.

The problem with large urban cities is that they desensitize the human spirit. These cities consume the “evangelistic time” of the individual Christian who struggles to survive in these centers of mass humanity. They impoverish the uneducated who are relegated to sustenance and low income housing (shacks). We cannot parallel the modern-day atmosphere of the modern urban city with the rural cities that existed in the first century.

When determining the receptivity of a field of evangelism, we must determine if a city has lost its heart. If there is no heart in the city, then there is no receptivity. We might like living in the large city. But as an evangelists, we must determine how we can reach these people with the gospel. If a city has lost its heart, then there is no receptivity. After all, God called Lot out of two cities that had lost their heart, and their morals. These cities did not number in the millions. But the moral culture of these cities proves the point. There are some cities that digress into unreceptivity and are deserving of the fire and brimstone of God.

We must keep in mind that we may judge a city as unreceptive only because we are trying to import into its culture a concept of church that is rural, or a be-

havior of church that does not meet the needs of the modern urbanite or function well in a modern urban center. If we changed our concept of church function we might discover that the supposedly unreceptive urban center of today does have some receptivity.

### **B. Survival in the modern urban city:**

The average working man in the modern urban city of today does not have the amount of “free time” as the average citizen of the rural city. Between the time of leaving for work and arriving home, he has spend two hours on a “cattle car” mass transit system and sat ten hours in a non-air-conditioned factory. When he gets home late in the evening, he is tired. It is difficult for him to leave home again for either Bible study and teaching when it is now late in the evening. The simple fact is that this Christian is tired from a day’s labor. He has little time after eating in the evening to do evangelistic work outside the home. He needs to be with his family, for often he will have to work on Saturdays in order to survive in this mega-city of the modern world. This is not the way it was in the rural-oriented city of the first century. We cannot compare Ephesus with Tokyo.

Economic survival in the modern urban city is difficult. Little time is left for evangelistic purposes. It is for this reason that church growth in the mega-city is often slow and difficult.

### **C. Difficulties in modern urban city assemblies:**

Modern urban city assemblies of the church are very difficult to maintain. In establishing churches in a developing world environment, we often hold on to the “big assembly” concept that is prevalent in the business/industrial First World cities where members have access to automobiles, which automobiles allow great mobility on the part of the average member. We forget that our modern urban city dweller in the developing world environment does not have three automobiles parked out in front of his hut. He has to spend a small fortune to get his wife and five children on a bus or train in order to get them to the assembly. He pays bus, taxi and train fare for six people both to and from the assembly, and thus often depletes his income on commuting to the assembly. Try doing this three times a week in order to be considered “faithful” in view of the legalistic definitions of some today to consider one faithful if he attends some assembly three times a week.

We might say a brother and his family need only attend once a week in order to be considered faithful. But can he and his family receive enough spiritual food and fellowship with one meeting a week in order to spiritually grow? Because developing world families cannot afford to pay the transportation costs of the entire family to frequent the assembly of the “big church,” their families often suffer because we have not given them other options of “assembly.”

Western evangelists have often imported into developing world urban cities a methodology of assembly that does

not work. In order to enhance assemblies and organization of the work in the large urban cities of the developing world, local disciples must come up with other ideas that meet the logistical needs of the members. It is for this reason that the house fellowship assembly of the first century better meets the needs of the modern urban city of the developing world.

The emphasis of this point is that the church struggles to grow in the large urban centers of the developing world. It is difficult for Christians to function in these centers, and thus, it is difficult for them to evangelistically reach out to others. We need to seriously rethink our methodology of modern developing world urban evangelism. Are we stuck with a concept of “church function” that does not allow us to reach the needs of the large urban centers of the present postmodern world into which we are going?

#### **D. Faster growth in rural cities:**

Rural church movements have proven to grow faster than urban cities. Some of our mission statisticians would do us a favor by thoroughly researching some of our mission efforts on this point. We have visited over eighty countries in the last forty years. In places as India and Africa, the body of Christ is by far stronger in the rural areas than in the urban centers. Though the focus of evangelism in the 70s in Brazil was on the large urban centers, the church grew faster in the rural areas. The same is true

of Africa. While the growth of the church struggles in large urban centers throughout Africa, the real growth of the church is in rural areas. It seems that even if our focus in a particular country is on the cities, the rural work is more productive. There is a reason for this. The large mega-cities have lost their heart, and the rural urban cities have not. Rural people are the same around the world. Cities consume the individual with possessions and activities. There are thus too many diversions. Rural people have time to think about God. They have time to focus on what is important in life. They do not busy themselves with so many activities that often distract them from focusing on God and family. They are not consumed with a great desire to make money in order to surround oneself with a household of possessions.

#### **E. Population flows from the rural to the urban:**

In cultures of the developing world, the population flows from rural to urban, not urban to rural. This trend has been going on for a century and does not seem to be subsiding. We once assumed that the gospel would go from the urban modern city to the rural cities. Because of the population flow from the rural to the urban, this principle of missions has not been that successful. The flow of populations from the rural to the urban proves that evangelism of a nation will not work in the reverse. At the time of this writing, we live in Cape Town, South Africa. The church was established in this urban

center around 1895. The problem is that throughout the existence of the church in Cape Town for the past one hundred years, the Cape church has established only a few churches in rural settings. Add to this the fact that the Cape church has not sent out many evangelists to other areas. This failure on the part of the urban Cape Town church could be blamed on many factors, but the fact is that few planned evangelistic efforts have gone out of this urban center for the last one hundred years. The Cape Town church has been no different than the church in other urban centers throughout the world. Though we are making changes in this in Cape Town, the fact remains that for almost one hundred years the church sent out few evangelists to other areas of the Western Cape Province.

We have discovered that in the modern urban city of the developing world, people are not moving from the urban city to the country. They are moving from the rural to the urban. They are seeking jobs in the cities. This move has changed the thinking of the populations of many nations. Once in the city, the population does not go back to the country. After a generation or two in the city, they have forgotten the country. As a result, there is a certain fear in those of urban cities to live in a rural setting. The urban culture is so different from the rural setting, that few people ever move from the cities to the towns and villages.

Land in many farming communities in developing world situations has become overpopulated. Children thus move to the cities for jobs that they believe are

in abundance in the cities. In the last half century, the movement of population throughout the world has been from the rural to the urban. We must not allow the methodology written in mission books that were published in the predominately rural cultures of the nineteenth century to affect our strategies of the twenty-first century. As long as populations continue to move to the city centers, we must rethink our urban strategies. Our strategies must not be focused around evangelizing a first generation of move-ins in the city. We must focus on evangelizing permanent city-dwellers who have lived in the large urban centers of the developing world for two or three generations, and subsequently have no intention of relocating to rural areas. And since they are usually composed of the poor in the urban cities, they do not have the finances to support evangelists to go to rural cities.

Once populations move to the urban cities, they stay. Second and third generation people now live in the modern urban centers of the world today. They do not know rural life. They know only struggle in a slum in Calcutta or Lusaka. It is unreasonable to expect these people to return to the country. They would not know how to survive in the country.

Consider a preacher who has been trained in an urban Bible school. How would he be supported if he returned to the country? Could he farm? Is there employment in the area to which he desires to go? If he came from the rural to the city to train as a preacher, chances are that he will remain in the city. In developing world economies, there is usu-

ally no support for him from economically poor churches. And there is usually no employment outside the urban centers. Therefore, once the church leader comes to the city for training, he will usually stay in the city.

What may be an ideal in evangelistic theory, simply does not happen in the real world. The fact is that the church moves very slowly out of the modern urban centers of the developing world to the rural regions of a nation as a whole. Once the church is established in the city, it does not want to move back to the country. Second and third generation urban Christians have lost contact with their roots. Their lives evolve around the city, and thus, that is where they and their children will stay.

#### **F. Evangelists flow from rural to urban:**

Some might point out that the present rural strength of the church in some nations resulted from evangelists who did go to the urban centers in order to train, and then return to the country villages and towns. To some extent this is true. It is especially true of young men who went to an urban center where a Bible school was set up to train preachers for a two to three year period.

When we set up Bible schools in the urban centers, we call young prospective evangelists to ourselves. We call them into our environment wherein we seek to train them in a classroom atmosphere that is often far removed from their rural culture. We keep them in this environ-

ment for two to three years, after which it is our plan to send them back to the village. The problem is that the student often does not want to go back to the village. By the time of his graduation from our school, he has become a city dweller just like we are. He likes what we have come to enjoy and consider vital to the sustenance of life.

It is in the country that we presume the graduated student will find some support. This is the problem. There is no support in the rural developing world church. It is poor. It is truly the developing world. Now that we have trained this new evangelist to be “full-time” for two to three years in a “full-time school,” he finds it difficult to return to an economical environment wherein he again has to work with his hands to feed himself and his family. If he wants to be supported by the church, he will have to stay in the city, for it is only the urban church of the developing world that has the possible financial ability to support evangelists. Therefore, the trained evangelist wants to stay in the city. As a result, few evangelists go to the rural areas with the gospel and a lifetime commitment to preach the gospel in the villages. Is this the model we seek to leave the next generation of evangelists?

If one has been working with the church in a region of what is commonly referred to as a developing world socioeconomic environment, then we are sure that this person has encountered the above scenario. It could be repeated many times over throughout the world.

Now here is a good point to remem-

ber when considering our work as evangelists. Whether one personally works among ten thousand people in a small rural town or among ten million in a mega metropolitan urban center, **he will still only personally contact and influence so many souls.** On a personal basis one can visit, teach and be with only a limited number of people. The same is true whether in a large city or small village. However, we would estimate that one can build a group of two hundred faster in a small village or town than he could in a large city of two to ten million. The point is that the number of people around which we are surrounded does not determine the amount of souls to which we can preach the gospel.

There are a great number of faithful evangelists in small villages and towns who are doing a great job. Our overemphasis on urban evangelism has sometimes moved us to overlook the labors and results of these faithful workers. When a large urban city loses its heart, the inhabitants are not as receptive as those who dwell in the rural-oriented cities and towns of any region of the world.

We must reconsider our emphasis when we run into unreceptivity. We must always go to those who are eager to receive the word with all readiness of mind. And in most of the countries of the developing world that has a large agricultural population, there seems to be great receptivity in the country.

## Chapter 18

### Preaching In Religious Centers

It seems that Paul was even more selective as to where he would concentrate his evangelistic energies. Not only did he concentrate on key cities to reach the provinces, but he also concentrated on the particular cities that were key religious centers of those provinces. It was in these cities that he could find those religious leaders who could be converted and then sent out to the province. At least it was in these religious centers where he could convert solid religious leaders on whom new converts could lean for spiritual growth.

The Jewish synagogues were located in the major cities. The first place to which Paul went when he preached in

Thessalonica was in the synagogue of the Jews (At 17:1,2). When he arrived in Berea, the first thing he did was to go to the synagogue of the Jews (At 17:10). The first place he preached in Athens was the synagogue of the Jews (At 17:17). In Corinth *“he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks”* (At 18:4). In Ephesus he preached in the synagogue (At 18:19). Luke records this custom of Paul in Acts 17:2. *“Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures”* (See also At 9:20; 13:5,14; 18:26; 19:8). Paul certainly worked the strategy of going first to the Jews, and then,

to the Gentiles. However, the serendipity of this mission was that among the Jews there was strong religious conviction and leadership.

Paul was commissioned to be the apostle to the Gentiles. However, he knew that the Jews had been introduced to Jesus long before he arrived at the synagogues to which he went. We must keep in mind that during His earthly ministry Jesus made at least three trips to Jerusalem during Passover and Pentecost. During these trips there was no little talk about His teachings and works. Many Jews from synagogues throughout the Roman Empire, specifically those synagogues to which Paul went, could have visited Jerusalem on Passover and Pentecost during the ministry of Jesus. If they did not go to Jerusalem during the earthly ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus, then certainly they went during at least one Passover and Pentecost between A.D. 30 and the early 40s when Paul arrived in places as Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth and other synagogues that he visited. When these religious pilgrims returned from Jerusalem after Passover and Pentecost, they announced to the Jews in the synagogues that something was stirring in Jerusalem concerning Jesus. Therefore, when Paul arrived at these synagogues, the soil had already been plowed for the seed that he would sow. As a result, many in the synagogues were converted. It was for this reason that Paul concentrated on going to every synagogue in the cities to which he went.

For the above reason, we can understand why it was the practice of Paul to

initially go to the religious centers of the cities, specifically to the religious centers of the Jewish religion. He went to the Jews first as was his custom, because this was a center for religious people. This practice was expanded to the Greek religious centers also. In Athens Paul “stood in the midst of the Areopagus,” a religious and philosophical center of the region (At 17:22). In Ephesus he wanted to go into the midst of a riotous crowd in the pagan temple of Diana (At 19:30). Paul not only entered the principal cities, he also entered the principal religious centers of the cities.

Entering religious centers is one possible approach to evangelism that evangelists should seriously consider today. Not only should we enter into the cities of religious influence, but we must also enter into the temples of religious influence. Paul went to strategic cities, but he also went to the synagogues and temples of those cities. Today, we often enter the cities, however, our religious prejudices have often hindered us from entering the “synagogues” and “temples” of the religious people of the cities.

It would seem reasonable that evangelists should at least make an effort of preaching in the churches of the religious people of a particular area. The people who worship in these places maybe be misguided. If so, then they need the truth as the Jews who worshiped in the synagogues. We should at least seek for invitations to preach to those who assemble in any religious place in order that we preach the gospel outside our circle of fellowship. It was Paul’s custom to do

this. He went to where he had an audience, and in going to the places of worship, he sought a religious audience. We should do likewise.

We must take people from where they are religiously on to victory through the truth. So often we neglect an opportunity in this area of preaching that is wide open. We have found that it is easier to get into the churches that are **independent** from the central control of church organizations. These are churches that are not connected with some ecclesiastical authority. These are often churches that were started by sincere men who know little about the Bible, but seek to praise God. They have struggled to do what they know. By a humble approach to these leaders, friendships can be made for Christ. We must keep in mind that we do not know everything, and thus can learn from others.

Those churches that are entangled in the doctrines of religious confusion will often reject the preaching of the truth. However, those who operate independent from denominational authorities will frequently allow one to enter their premises

if approached in a humble manner. Though religious prejudices, both on our part and their part, will often keep us away from preaching in the assemblies of religious people, we must at least make an effort to strive for unity that is based on word of God. Satan has a way of getting people satisfied with division. However, we must be persistent in trying to reach religious people who are searching for the truth. It is our work to preach the gospel wherever there are those who want to hear.

When one preaches to the religious people of a particular group, one of two things will happen. Either they will ask you to come back or they will run you away. The same happened to Paul. In Corinth he preached in the synagogue. But when some opposed him, he departed from the synagogue and went to meeting in the house of Titius Justus (At 18:6,7). But when he preached in the synagogue of Ephesus, he was asked to stay longer (At 18:19,20). The point is that Paul made an effort to preach in the assemblies of all religious groups.

## Chapter 19

### Preaching To The Receptive

Paul preached to those he considered to be receptive to the gospel. In order to find the receptive, he had to approach the masses. The early disciples also went to those who were receptive. In order to follow their example, we must also believe that every man has a right to hear the gospel at least once.

The difficult part is to determine who is or is not receptive. It would certainly be a matter of opinion to determine a group either receptive or not receptive. The impatient evangelist might judge a people to be unreceptive when after a short time of work, there are little or no results. At the same time, a patient evan-

gelist might after years of patient work, judge the same people to be receptive. Each evangelist will have to make his own decision concerning the receptivity of any particular people. As we study through the following points, we should keep in mind how to judge receptivity as we investigate particular incidents in the work of the early evangelists.

We would at least conclude that a people are unreceptive when they are antagonistic to the preaching of the gospel. A people would obviously be unreceptive if they openly launched violent persecution against the evangelist. A people would be judged unreceptive if they were so steeped in religious tradition that they would openly be hostile to anything that would change their system of religion. Regardless of how we might judge a people to be either receptive or unreceptive, this will be one of the most difficult judgments an evangelist will have to make in his work.

It was an unspoken principle of evangelistic outreach that the early disciples concentrated on those who would listen. They first went into all the world. They went to the masses. However, when they were rejected by certain people among the masses, they had already found those who were receptive to the preaching of the gospel. It was to this receptive group that they then turned their attention. They would then give their time to the receptive. They spent their time with those who would function as disciples. The following are some specific incidents in the ministry of Jesus and the early disciples that manifest this strategy of evan-

gelistic outreach:

### A. Jesus sought out the receptive.

It is interesting to note that Jesus had little receptivity in Nazareth. Mark even records that Jesus “*marvelled because of their unbelief*” (Mk 6:6). Consequently, He did little work in that area because of the unreceptive attitude of those to whom He preached.

It is not known exactly how much time Paul spent in Tarsus after the time of his conversion in Acts 9:30 and the time of Acts 11:25. But in comparison to his time spent in evangelizing other areas, it was significantly short. What Jesus said of Himself also applied to Paul and others, “*A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house*” (Mk 6:4).

This brings us again to the concept of receptivity. Neither Jesus nor Paul spent much time where the message was not readily accepted. The urgency of the time, and the preciousness of the gospel, were too demanding. They knew that they must reach as many people as possible. It was not that the unreceptive are not important. The fact is that they do not want to hear. It is not that they do not have an opportunity to hear. The manner by which they are judged unreceptive is because they have been given an opportunity to hear.

Then again, it may be that God has not prepared the hearts of some people in order to listen. National tragedy or economic depression often prepares

people to wake up to the fact that this life is not all there is. It is sometimes through these trials that God prepares people to be receptive. In Africa, war has prepared many to be receptive the gospel. From five to ten years after a civil war is over, the nation in which the war raged becomes very receptive. This is the time when people start forgetting the atrocities of war and start thinking about the spiritual side of man. This is a time of great receptivity when evangelists need to enter these areas of former conflict. Effective evangelists perceive the receptivity of those to whom they seek to preach the gospel.

The evangelist must be preceptive to receptivity. Sometimes, it is just not there. When Jesus was in the country of the Gaderenes, He healed one called Legion. The demons that possessed Legion were allowed to possess some swine that subsequently ran violently down a hill and drowned themselves in a lake (Lk 8:32,33). The people who witnessed this happening fled because they feared that which they did not understand. When those of the city and surrounding country came out to meet Jesus, they *“asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear”* (Lk 8:37). Because these people did not understand, they feared. Their fear moved them to ask Jesus to leave. Luke recorded concerning the actions of Jesus, *“And He got into the boat and returned”* (Lk 8:37). Jesus knew that these people were not receptive at the time. He did not stay and debate their theologies or calm their fears. He simply got in the boat and left.

Jesus said, *“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces”* (Mt 7:6). Jesus was concerned about receptivity. We do not see anywhere in His teachings the concept of continuing efforts to convert the unreceptive. He said to the seventy whom He sent out, *“But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’”* (Lk 10:10,11).

In the above instructions of Jesus, the clear implication is that time must not be wasted on the unreceptive. Once a people have judged themselves unworthy of the gospel, Jesus says to move on. The mission of the seventy was too urgent to be bogged down in the debates and struggles that go with a people who are antagonistic to teaching. There are too many people who are yet to hear the gospel once for us to waste time on those who keep rejecting it over and over.

## **B. Paul and other evangelists sought out the receptive.**

Paul and the early evangelists practiced the above principle that was taught and practiced by Jesus. In Antioch of Pisidia Paul and Barnabas were severely persecuted. As a result, they did as Jesus had instructed. *“They shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium”* (At 13:51). They had told the Jews in Antioch, *“It was necessary*

*that the word of God should be spoken to you first, but since you rejected it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles”* (At 13:46). A similar incident happened in Corinth concerning Paul and the Jews. Luke records, *“But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles’”* (At 18:6).

The above actions of Paul did not mean that he was unconcerned about his fellow Jews. In Romans 10:1 he wrote, *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved”* (See Rm 9:1-3). Paul’s turning to the Gentiles in cities where the Jews rejected him does show that he was not going to waste time on those who were openly hostile to the gospel. His practice was to take advantage of open doors. To the Corinthians he wrote, *“But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me”* (1 Co 16:8,9). A great door was also opened for him in Troas (2 Co 2:12). He also asked for one to be opened while he was in prison in Rome (Cl 4:3). When he reviewed his work in Asia before the church in Antioch of Syria, he emphasized the great open door that had been opened unto the Gentiles (At 14:27). It is evident, therefore, that Paul was one who concentrated on open doors. Open doors meant that people were receptive. And it was to these receptive people that he went.

As stated before, the difficulty of ap-

plying this concept to our work today is the difficulty of determining what doors are open and what doors are closed. In other words, our determination as to when people are unreceptive is subject to our human decision which can often be faulty or based on misinformation or simply our lack of patience.

How can we determine when a door is opened? This is the great challenge with determining receptivity. Some fields demand the planting and nurturing of the seed for many years before fruit is brought forth. Other fields produce fruit almost immediately upon the arrival of the evangelist. It is often difficult to determine when we should stay or when we should go on to other fields.

To help solve this challenge we should first notice Paul’s situation with the Jews. The cases of Acts 13 and 18 are easy to understand concerning this point. In both cases Paul and company turned from unreceptive Jews in order to preach to the Gentiles. In Acts 13:50 the Jews *“raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.”* In Acts 18:6 the Jews *“opposed him and blasphemed.”* Paul’s decision, therefore, to turn from some unreceptive Jews, was based on **open hostility** toward him and his message. He judged these particular Jews unreceptive because of this hostility. We could therefore conclude that any people who are openly hostile toward the preaching of the gospel are not receptive.

What about those situations where a great amount of time is needed in order to produce fruit? First, we would sug-

gest that we **investigate the methods** that are being used to reach these people. We would secondly suggest that **the ones who are doing the preaching be investigated**. Sometimes the methods are wrong. Sometimes the preaching or preacher is wrong. After making these considerations, we could then consider the receptivity of the people. It is a difficult decision to make concerning whether or not one should continue an effort in an area where little fruit is produced, when at the same time, he or she could be working in an area that would produce much more fruit in a short time. Nevertheless, these are decisions that must be made by every evangelist.

We would suggest caution in two areas. First, church-supported evangelists need to be sure they do not stay in a field that is unreceptive just because they like to live there and that is where they are going to stay regardless of the receptivity. Second, we must not think that receptivity is always better somewhere else. Sometimes growth is taking place before our eyes and we do not perceive it. We must be patient. Fight the good fight of the faith with all diligence where you are. Fruit will come forth from planted seed. Evangelists must keep in mind that it is their job to plant and water. It is God's job to give the increase. We too often worry about God's job when we should keep our hand to the plow in planting and watering.

In visiting areas where the gospel has been preached for some time we have heard members say that their area is unreceptive. They reminisce that they have done this and that in order to evangelize the area but people are no longer listening. This is sometimes true. In rural areas, this problem often develops. However, the real problem is often not the receptivity of the community but a group of disciples who are dysfunctional because they have lost their first love. Souls are not being saved in the community simply because the disciples are not teaching. **Dead churches are not a basis upon which to judge a community to be either receptive or unreceptive**. Sometimes the members need a revival. This is especially true in those communities where the disciples have lost their first love and the candlestick has been removed.

Determining when an evangelist should move on to another area can also be based on the work of an evangelist. An evangelist or preacher is one who proclaims good news. He is one who announces the gospel to the lost. When the gospel has been proclaimed to everyone in a particular region, then it is time to preach somewhere else. It is the responsibility of elders to nurture the flock. It is the responsibility of the evangelist to preach the gospel to the lost. Once this is accomplished, then the evangelist must move on.

## Chapter 20

# Preaching At Every Opportunity

There is really only one answer to the question as to why the early church grew so fast. Every disciple accepted the responsibility of being a proclaimer of the gospel message. No one felt exempt. Neither was preaching relegated to one person in the community or to the preachers. Disciples felt the necessity to function in the organic body by sharing the gospel event with the lost. The early Christians believed that this was the function of their everyday lives. It was a matter of everyone preaching everywhere they went. They communicated to the spiritual and intellectual needs of their audiences. They preached in public places, in houses, in synagogues and in temple court yards. They subsequently converted entire households. Hundreds, even thousands, were converted to the faith because of their persistent preaching. They were relentless in their efforts to preach the gospel to the world.

They organized the new converts into functioning groups that reached out to their communities. From the houses in their communities they reached out to the lost. They served the needs of their neighbors. Their Christianity was not centered around their assemblies. It was centered around their communities where they lived. Their Christianity was not centered around being a spectator in an audience on Sunday morning. It was centered in relationships that every member made with those who were in need. They

did not turn over their Christianity to a “full-time” preacher who assumed their responsibilities. They were all involved in the work. As a result of such thinking, the gospel was preached. We can expect the same results today when we restore this function of the body. In the next five functions of the organic body, we must understand the evangelistic nature of the body. Christianity is a community improvement behavior of life that changes societies by changing people. The early Christians knew this, and thus, went to work evangelizing their communities.

In order to be effective in community outreach, we must be as the early Christians who established relationships with those in their communities. The religiosity that we have adopted today often leaves us motionless in an assembly-oriented religiosity, trapped between an opening and closing prayer. We sit as idle spectators who listen to a sermon from the only active participant of the assembly, the preacher. We sing in order to try to generate some feeling, but the spirit of our singing has often long died, and thus, we mouth words of songs we no longer meditate upon. The early church was involved in their communities. They were involved with one another. They were slaves servicing the needs of the body and the community. They considered themselves as messengers of a message that everyone had to hear. The result of their spiritual energy

was an evangelized world.

### A. They believed in individual ministry.

Individual ministry means that every member of the body is excited about sowing the seed because he or she is excited about the need. One often wonders why the early body of Christ spread like wild fire across the Roman Empire. The answer to this phenomenal growth lies partly in how the early Christians seized every opportunity to proclaim their faith. They had an attitude of “*redeeming the time*” and being “*ready in season and out of season*” (Ep 5:16; 2 Tm 4:2). Paul preached, “*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*” (2 Co 6:2). From reading of the book of Acts it seems that from Calvary to the crown, the early Christians caught the vision of being individually evangelistic in an unevangelized world.

Everyone was functioning as an active member of the body of Christ. Everyone was evangelistic. And herein is the key to effective evangelism. When we view the ministry of every member of the body having an evangelistic function, then evangelism happens. Every member must be evangelistic in his or her own way. We must not clone everyone into being evangelistic in the same way. This would hinder the gifts of the individual. This would also destroy the freedom we have in Christ to express ourselves according to the gifts that God has given us. However, we must use our gifts in a way that influences others for Christ. When everyone is doing this as a func-

tioning body, then evangelism happens. Souls are saved.

### B. They did not cease preaching.

Luke recorded, “*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ*” (At 5:42). They could not but speak the things that they saw and heard (At 4:20). No persecution, no matter how severe, was able to deter their intense efforts to proclaim the Prince of Peace. Counsels accused them. Romans beat them. Herods beheaded them. But nothing would stop them from obeying God rather than men (At 5:29). They had to fulfill the commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mk 16:15).

### C. They taught everyone everywhere.

The early disciples were **highly motivated people**. Their motivation stimulated their determination to evangelize. And because of that motivation **they took every opportunity to preach and teach in every environment and at every opportunity**. Therefore, we find them preaching to kings (At 25). They preached to people who were about to offer sacrifice to them (At 14). They preached to mobs that were about to stone them (At 21:27-22:29). They preached by the riverside (At 16:13,14). They preached to philosophers on the streets (At 17:22-31) and to sailors on sinking ships (At 27). One can read the New Testament and find scores of locations

and situations in which the early disciples preached and taught. They just went about and preached everywhere (At 8:4).

Such teaching in every place and to everyone was only following the example of their Lord. Jesus sat daily in the temple teaching (Mt 26:55). He taught on mountains (Mt 5:1,2). He taught on the Palestinian highways as He walked with His disciples. Jesus and the early disciples had no school house. School was in session as they trudged along the Palestine pathways. The school bell rang the first moment one became a disciple and classes were not dismissed until that disciple was called to his great final exam, and subsequently, graduated into Paradise.

Our evangelistic work today would be much more effective if every saint would catch the motivation of being a student-teacher for Jesus. The problem with much of our Bible education is that it is confined only to the classroom. Such confinement has led to a great deal of ignorance of activation of the word of God in the lives of the disciples. Our preach-

ing has been echoing within the walls of classrooms so long that ears have become numb to its appeal. Worse yet, our preachers spend most of their energy preaching from a stand or pulpit to unmotivated people who have long forgotten their purpose and mission to the lost. We spend more time preaching to the saved than we do to the lost. We must be moved out of our assemblies and into the highways and hedges.

We must direct the majority of our preaching and teaching to the unbelieving world. Disciples need continual edification. However, the unsaved must be saved. And how will they hear without a preacher of the gospel? How will they hear the preacher unless he goes to the lost? As we consume our preacher's time upon our own wants, a world goes untold of the precious gospel of Jesus. Let us rise up and "*go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in*" that God's house be filled (Lk 14:23). The church must give their preachers back to the lost of the world.

## Chapter 21

### Preaching The Gospel First

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received ...*" (1 Co 15:3). Paul explained to the Corinthians what he preached to them on his first visit to the city. What he first preached to them on his first visit was the incarnation, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. In other words, he preached the gospel (1 Co 15:1-4). Can we say that this was a function

of the early evangelists? **They preached the gospel first when they went forth to preach to the nations.** They did not preach churchianity. They preached Christianity that was based on Jesus and on what He did for us at the cross.

Jesus had commissioned, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mk 16:15). Read the major sermons of the book of Acts. No-

tice in each one the preaching of the gospel event of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. The following is a list of those major messages wherein is contained the gospel as the first event to be preached to those to whom the early evangelists went. The priority of their message was concerning Jesus and the atonement of the cross. It was not a system of assembly or an order of worship. It was not some supposed name of the church or the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. They preached Jesus Christ and His crucifixion for our sins.

ACTS 2:14-39 (Note vss 29-32)  
 ACTS 3:11-26 (Note vss 13-15)  
 ACTS 4:5-12 (Note vs 10)  
 ACTS 5:25-32 (Note vss 30,31)  
 ACTS 7 (Note vss 37,52,55,56)  
 ACTS 8:12,13  
 ACTS 8:26-40 (Note vss 32-35)  
 ACTS 10:28-43 (Note vss 36,40)  
 ACTS 13:16-43 (Note vss 28-30,34-37)  
 ACTS 17:22-32 (Note vs 32)  
 ACTS 22:3-21 (Note vss 5-10)  
 ACTS 26:2-23 (Note vss 15-18, 23)

### A. Peter first preached the gospel event.

Peter centered his preaching on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 around the very heart of the gospel message. He proclaimed, *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (At 2:36). On another occasion Peter preached that Jesus was *"... the Holy One and the Just ... the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead ..."* (At 3:14,15). Peter urged faith, repentance and obedience to the gospel by

immersion (At 3:16-19). This was the central message of all New Testament preaching since all preaching of the gospel was to the lost.

Peter went on an evangelistic trip to Caesarea as the result of a special vision from the Holy Spirit in Acts 10. It is interesting to note the context of this trip and the message he preached. He preached that Jesus is *"Lord of all"* (vs 36). He preached that God anointed Jesus with power; that He raised Him from the dead (vs 38-40). It is interesting to note what he said in verse 42. *"And He [Jesus] commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead."* Here is a good point for all evangelists to remember as they go forth to preach the word. First preach the gospel and present the lordship of Jesus over all things.

### B. Philip first preached the gospel event.

Philip went on a short mission trip to Samaria. He had very good results, for *"when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized"* (At 8:12). In this context it is evident that Philip centered his evangelistic work around the preaching of Christ. When first establishing the church in any region, we must first come with the message of the gospel. This is the foundation upon which men and women believe.

### C. Paul first preached the gospel event.

Paul began his sermon in Athens in Acts 17 by appealing to the religious nature of the Greek philosophers. He turned to a quotation of a philosopher in verse 28. But when he went to the central reference point of New Testament preaching, he preached Jesus and His resurrection (vs 32).

We must not assume that all of what Paul preached to the Athenians was recorded in Acts 17. Paul always preached the complete gospel of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope (See 1 Co 15:3,4). When the Athenians heard of these things, they were curious. They desired to hear more. What is important to note is that the foundation of the message was the gospel.

In bringing together the major principles of all the addresses given in the New Testament, we could say that the early evangelists consistently preached the following six points in their first messages to the lost:

1. There is only one God.
2. Jesus, who was crucified, has been raised from the dead and is reigning in heaven.
3. God's wrath is ready to be released upon sin.
4. The judgment is coming.
5. Jesus, whom God has made Lord of all, will judge those who reject the gospel.
6. Those who believe should repent and obey the gospel in order to become a part of God's family.

How can we apply this function of the body (strategy) of the first century preaching to our work today? Here are some suggestions.

**1. Preach the gospel on the initial visit.** The recorded messages we have in the book of Acts were messages that were preached on the evangelist's **initial contact with the audience**. Therefore, it would be advisable that our first messages to the people to whom we go should contain the facts of the gospel event. Those early evangelists had a sense of urgency in preaching that which was most important, and that which was most important was the historical event of the gospel. Therefore, they preached the gospel to the people first of all.

**2. Preach the Bible.** The preaching of the first century was biblical. The early evangelists did not preach pleasing sermons that idle and rebellious sinners wanted to hear (See Gl 1:10; 2 Tm 4:3,4). They preached God's word in a manner that cut to the heart of the unbelievers (See Hb 4:12). It is the same message that we must preach today. Preachers of the gospel must be known for preaching the Bible.

**3. Preach the whole counsel of God.** For two years Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus (At 19:8-10). During this time he did not preach and teach only the gospel message. While he was a resident for two years in Ephesus, he spent time in teaching the Old Testament. He certainly taught Christian ethics, family principles, motivational living in Christ, and a host of other bibli-

cal themes. He encouraged Timothy to be diligent in life and study (2 Tm 2:15). Therefore, in their personal lives, evangelists should study in order to cover a wide range of material to be preached and taught to the disciples. As Paul said to the Ephesian elders, “*For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God*” (At 20:27).

Paul probably explained the context and thrust of his preaching in Acts 20:21. He stated to the Ephesian elders that he had testified “*to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*” The content of Paul’s preaching can also be seen in his address to Felix and Drusilla. As Paul “*reasoned about righ-*

*teousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid ...*” (At 24:25). In 1 Corinthians 2:1,2 Paul wrote, “*And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*” He had earlier written, “*... we preach Christ crucified...*” (1 Co 1:23). Paul’s preaching centered around the cross. This was the foundation upon which all later teaching was to be built. For this reason, the message of the gospel must first be preached and established in the hearts of new converts. When it is, they will spiritually function as members of the body of Christ.

## Chapter 22

### Appeal To Spiritual And Intellectual Needs

As previously stated, the first evangelists proclaimed first of all to their listeners the gospel of Jesus. In presenting the message of His death, burial and resurrection, however, they appealed to the spiritual and intellectual needs of the audience.

#### A. Peter addressed spiritual and intellectual needs.

In Acts 2 Peter preached to the house of Israel, the Jews (vs 36). He specifically preached to **those Jews who had encouraged and actually participated**

**in the crucifixion of Jesus.** He proclaimed, “*Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death*” (At 2:23). It is not surprising, therefore, to understand why Peter **quoted much from the Old Testament and appealed to the conscience of the Jews who had crucified Jesus** (vs 36). His appeal for a response was directed specifically to the Jews who were present, for the promise was to them (vs 39). Therefore, Peter made his sermon **applicable to the felt needs of the people.**

## B. Stephen addressed spiritual and intellectual needs.

Stephen was also faced with a Jewish audience in Acts 7. It was an audience that was quite hostile to him and his message. What is important to note in his sermon is a step-by-step journey through Jewish history to the coming of Jesus. **He used those illustrations and concepts that his audience thoroughly understood.**

## C. Paul addressed spiritual and intellectual needs.

Paul's sermon on Mars Hill in Acts 17 is another example of preaching to the needs of the people in terms with which the people could relate. Paul undoubtedly knew the philosophies of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. It is interesting to note that he quoted one of their fellow philosophers in his appeal to their interests (At 17:22-34). **This is a good example of one perceiving the thinking of the audience and approaching them on their ground.** Once the thinking of an audience is understood, then one can begin his appeal to people according to where they are.

Application of this approach to preaching today in evangelistic efforts is without question of utmost importance. To communicate the gospel across cultural barriers is indeed the supreme task of the messenger of Jesus. To be effective, the evangelist must make God's love story understandable and appealing to the hearts of sinners. To do this one must be

sensitive to culture while understanding the values of the peoples to whom he goes. He must know how and what his hearers think. This is what Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians 9:20-23.

*.... and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. **I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.***

Our relationship with other cultures goes back to the idea of **identification**. By identification we mean that one must **identify cultural characteristics of other people. Once these characteristics are identified, one must relate his or her behavior to these characteristics.** Usually, the evangelist who does not identify with the people to whom he goes is less effective than the one who does. In identifying with people we can better understand how other people think and what they think. By understanding how and what others think we can better understand their needs. We can better communicate the message of God's word with terms that people will understand. When we understand the thinking and needs of the people to whom we are seeking to communicate the word of God, we can more effectively deliver the message

of Jesus to them in terms that can be easily understood and applied to their lives. It is for this reason that effective evangelists are always students of the people to whom they preach the gospel. They are always trying to learn the hearts of those

to whom they seek to communicate the gospel. They are always seeking to understand and learn skills of communication in order to better explain the love of God that was revealed on the cross for the salvation of those to whom they go.

## Chapter 23

### Making Preaching Our Primary Work

In conjunction with the preceding study it must also be noted that the early Christians viewed the preaching and teaching of the gospel their primary work. One might think that this is an obvious point. However, we must never underestimate the clever works of Satan to divert our work as evangelists away from the saving of souls. There are some important points to remember concerning the work of the evangelist and some areas of diversion of which we also must be aware. There are often diversions from the work of the evangelist that often turn his attention away from the work of saving the lost.

#### A. Diverted to make money.

James 4:13 is probably not discussing the work of an evangelist in the first century. James is speaking to Christians in general. However, it is a good warning to those of us who go forth as evangelists. James wrote, *“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’.*” In verses 14-16 James rebuked these money seekers. The emphasis of this text

seems to be a warning to those who would go forth and conduct their Christian life by using Christianity as an advantage for gain. There seems to have been some in James’ reading audience who took financial advantage of the goodness of others. This was a problem then. It is certainly a problem today.

A **vocational or occupational missionary** is an individual who seeks employment in an unevangelized area for the purpose of preaching the gospel in that area. If we are going to evangelize the world, the majority of those who go forth must support themselves. We must have Christian families who move to unevangelized areas to seek employment in order to start churches. However, this is not the type of people James is discussing in James 4. James is discussing the spiritually bankrupt materialist. This is the person who represents a negative life-style to the people to whom he goes.

Review the life of Paul. He worked as a tentmaker when he went forth to preach the gospel. To the Ephesian elders he said, *“Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me”* (At 20:34). He said this concerning

his initial evangelistic work in the city of Ephesus. However, from reading Acts 20:18-20, we learn that from the very first day Paul arrived in the city of Ephesus, his primary purpose was the preaching of the gospel. This was his reason for going to the city in the first place. He did not go to capitalize on the tentmaking market. He went to optimize on soul-making opportunities.

Philip's primary purpose for going to Samaria was to preach (At 8:5). Peter's primary purpose for going to Caesarea was to preach. Acts 8:4 explains the purpose why those early disciples went out. *"Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere **preaching the word.**"* They were not scattered to make money. They were scattered to preach the gospel.

Vocational missionaries need to be careful in their going. One can have the correct motives for going forth at the beginning of his mission effort. However, one can later be beguiled by the love of money, and then be drawn away from his first love. This is a constant danger for the vocational evangelist. Paul was very careful not to leave the impression that he was "there to get gain." He was there for the love of souls, not money. His tentmaking was for survival, not to acquire riches from the people he was trying to save.

When Paul wrote to Timothy as an evangelist, he warned Timothy concerning the deceptive nature of the riches of this world. He wrote, *"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harm-*

*ful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (1 Tm 6:9,10). Paul warned the evangelist, *"But you, O man of God, **flee these things ...**"* (1 Tm 6:11).

A full-time evangelist in a foreign country must be careful about seeking secular employment after arriving in a country on a "missionary visa." Some evangelists have gone into a country on a missionary visa and later sought secular work. This is fine if everything is worked out in a legal manner. Usually, one has to change his visa status if he changes from the work of a "full-time missionary" to secular work. Some evangelists have made this change without notifying the authorities. When we first arrived in the country of Antigua to do missionary work in 1980, one of the first things the authorities wanted to know was whether we were going to stay as "full-time missionaries." Some religious missionaries had previously changed from full-time missionaries to secular workers in Brazil and caused the same problems. Our point here is that if you do change, make sure everything is legal according to the law of the land. If one is able to change his resident status, and thus support himself in a mission effort, then he guarantees his stay in the country. He does not have to depend on the support of others to continue his mission.

Whatever one does, preaching the gospel must be our primary work,

whether we go as a full-time evangelist or as a vocational evangelist. If going as a vocational evangelist as Paul is the only way we can go, then go as such. When it comes to the task of world evangelism, evangelism should be our primary focus. The church will never be able to support enough full-time evangelists to accomplish the task of world evangelism. It is for this reason that evangelists must be encouraged to go forth as tentmakers. Our call is to go into all the world. We must get into all the world in order to get the gospel delivered to those who are yet to hear of Jesus. If we firmly believe that God wants us to go, then we must go with our vocations.

In developing world economies the only possible means by which one can usually go forth as an evangelist is to support himself in some way. Churches in the developing world have little money. However, this does not mean that they do not have the responsibility to send forth evangelists. Evangelists simply need to come up with ways to support themselves. The primary means of support for such evangelists is self-support.

Many evangelists have been blessed with the support of other Christians for many years. But this is not always the case. We have experienced many evangelists who have been on the field for more than five years who see their work as a lifetime commitment. Because of the possibility of losing the support of disciples back home, these evangelists have tried to work out some type of manner by which they could support themselves in their work as evangelists. This

is commendable. It would be even better if supporting churches would have this foresight and actually work with evangelists in helping them to become self-supporting.

When we study through the New Testament, there seems to be little emphasis placed on the support of evangelists who go forth to preach the gospel. There is teaching that those who go forth have a right to be supported, but there is no emphasis on one not going forth to preach the gospel if he is not supported. In their function as the organic body of Christ, it seems that the early disciples went forth to preach the gospel whether or not they were supported by sending disciples. Their desire to preach had priority over their desire to be supported.

God bless those churches who are both committed to their supported evangelist and mission area. Evangelizing a nation demands decades of vision and commitment. Churches must arise among us who have a long-term commitment to a particular field. We need to have more immigrant evangelists.

## **B. Diverted to social work.**

When the early evangelists went forth, **preaching the gospel was their primary focus**. Benevolence was secondary in the sense that people had to hear first the gospel of Jesus. However, do not misunderstand this point. These evangelists were both evangelistic and benevolent at the same time. Evangelism, though, was first on the list of priorities.

Jesus was compassionate. However, He stated that “*the poor you have with you always*” (Jn 12:8). Paul commanded us to do good to all men (Gl 6:10). In his evangelistic journeys he took up a collection for the “poor saints of Judea.” He said, however, that **he was sent to preach the gospel** (1 Co 1:17). But in Galatians 2:10 he stated, “*They [the other apostles] desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.*” Paul remembered the poor throughout his preaching journeys. However, keep in mind that his priority was to preach the gospel, and then remember the poor. It was not the other way around.

Evangelists must be benevolent in their going forth, though benevolence is not the primary purpose for their going forth. Focusing primarily on benevolence must not divert the evangelist from his primary purpose of world evangelism. He must remember that the lost need that which will save their souls. Evangelism is first on the evangelist’s work list and benevolence is secondary for the simple

reason that people must obey the gospel in order to be saved.

Many mission efforts have forgotten the above principle and substituted benevolence for their evangelism. We must note that Jesus never did this. He did not heal all the sick and lame of His day. He did not feed all the poor with bread and fish. His primary work was to “*seek and save that which was lost*” (Lk 19:10). This must also be our primary work as evangelists. In order to accomplish the mission of our Master, we must accept the goal of our Master. That goal is to seek and save the lost. If we would evangelize the world, every Christian must in some way accept the responsibility of getting the message of Jesus to all the world. Every Christian must say to himself that it is his purpose to seek and save the lost. Being disciples of Jesus and maintaining a Christ-centered life means that we have assumed the mission of Jesus to preach the gospel to the world. Without the preaching of the gospel, there will be no one who will be saved.

## Chapter 24

### Preaching In Public Places

Good news must be proclaimed to the masses. Since the good news refers to the salvation of men’s souls, then mass media must be used in order to get the message to as many people as possible by the quickest means possible. Herein is the necessity for proclaiming the gospel through mass media means.

“*Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus*” and **publicly preached** to the

philosophers who were assembled there (At 17:22). “*He vigorously refuted the Jews publicly ...*” (At 18:28). He told the Ephesian elders, “*... I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house*” (At 20:20). Paul made it a part of his strategy to preach and teach in a **public manner**.

The early disciples proclaimed the

message in public meetings. This afforded them the opportunity to reach the most people possible in the shortest time. It also gave them the opportunity to be public with what they believed and taught. They had no printing presses or newspapers to reach the masses. Therefore, in order to find the truth-seekers in the masses they stood on public platforms to call such from the crowds of humanity. They sought those who were seeking the truth in the midst of great religious confusion.

We would do well to be just as public. Street preaching in many areas is an accepted strategy of preaching. We have fought off bugs in public night preaching in Ghana, Grenada, Guyana and a host of other countries throughout the world. However, this strategy is not accepted in some countries of the world. Street preaching in New York City would not produce many results. Nevertheless, there are other means of accepted public preaching as radio, television and the Internet.

One of the most effective methods of mass evangelism that is directed to the public as a whole is the work of Bible correspondence course programs. There have been a number of Bible correspondence course programs that have been effectively used by evangelists throughout the years. These programs have generated an interest in the minds of local members who seek to have a part in world evangelism. The local members can simply send out courses from their homes to people throughout the world. This is a most effective way of going public with the gospel of Jesus Christ and one that

local disciples would do well to initiate.

Evangelists moving into any area should be as public as possible in their proclamation of the gospel. We must use any means possible in order to get the message out. We must find those truth-seekers who will obey when they hear. Our message is urgent. Our time is short. We must proclaim the cross from the mountain tops to as many as possible in our lifetime.

One of the most advantageous means of public preaching and teaching is the use of radio or television. Through these mediums of teaching vast audiences can be reached over large regions. Many people today are effectively using the Internet to get the message of the gospel out. There are countless means through the social media by which friends and family can be reached with the message of Jesus.

The foundation principle for public proclamation of the gospel is the fact that there are truth seekers in every audience. God encouraged Paul to stay in Corinth regardless of opposition. God said, "*I have many people in this city*" (At 18:9,10). In order to find these people, one must make public proclamations of the gospel. Once truth seekers hear, they are drawn away from the crowds in order to be taught privately (At 17:33,34). It would take a great deal of time to find those who are searching by going from house to house. However, if some means of public mass media can be used in order to preach to the masses, those who are searching for truth can be quickly identified.

In these times where the Bible has been distributed throughout the world, we must always assume that there are “disciples” out there who have studied themselves out of religious confusion. Finding them is an “Acts 19” means of evangelism. In the case of Acts 19 Paul returned to Ephesus and **found certain disciples**. In Acts 19:1 the Holy Spirit guided Luke’s hand to call them “dis-

ciples.” However, they believed something doctrinally different than what Paul taught. They believed in the baptism of John. Nevertheless, Paul somehow found them. After some discussion, they were baptized in the name of Jesus (At 19:5). The point is that they had been meeting for some time, possibly many years, before they were found. It is our work as evangelists to find people as this.

## Chapter 25

### Small Group Assemblies

This is one function of the early disciples that has always generated a great deal of discussion in these modern times where religious groups function so differently in reference to assemblies than the first century church. However, we must consider this function of the early church in view of the nature of the function of the body. Today, we have led ourselves to believe something in relation to the growth of the body that is not necessarily true. In fact, we must consider some factors where the church building and assembly oriented behavior of today often lends itself against growth.

In the context of this discussion, here are a few concepts about which we must be honest and open. Arguing for the existence of a structure (a church building) is found nowhere in the New Testament, and is often a waste of time when considering the very nature of Christianity. So to begin, here are some points to consider. Jesus taught on several occasions in houses to a more select group of lis-

teners (See Lk 10:38; 19:9). Not only did Paul teach in public, but he also taught “house to house” (At 20:20). Peter also taught in small groups in house locations (At 10:25). Jesus’ had a house-to-house ministry while on earth. This was the normal function of His ministry and His body. In our building-oriented religious world today, however, this fact is often overlooked. Nevertheless, there are some very important points concerning this function of the body that we must review for our learning.

The advantages of small groups of Christians meeting together are many. There is a **more personal atmosphere** in small groups. The **fellowship** of a small group of members is closer. The **teacher can deal one-on-one with questions** the hearers might have. In fact, there is a **greater chance that the questions will be asked** in the first place. When teaching in a private home with five to fifteen listeners **one can become more personal. Problems can be dealt**

**with directly.** In many cultures people are often very timid and shy in large assembly classes. The result of this is that usually the women go home with unanswered questions. In a small group class situation, however, the shy and timid are more likely to ask questions and not feel so intimidated in the presence of so many. The advantages of small group fellowships are countless.

Public proclamation of the gospel will produce contacts, and often converts. But at some time in one's evangelistic outreach he must face individuals on a one-to-one basis. If any personal relationship is to be established, one must become personal with people. We can do this only by talking with people "from house to house." Christianity involves relationships. In small groups relationships are established.

In the early beginnings, the organic body of Christ did not have church buildings. The assemblies of the disciples were conducted in the **houses of members** (Rm 16:5; 1 Co 16:19; Cl 4:15; Pl 2). There were thousands of Christians in Jerusalem in the beginning (At 2:41; 4:4). But where did these Christians meet? How did they carry on the work of Bible training and edification? The answer to these questions is in the function of a "house to house" ministry. **Their Christianity was not focused around or in a purpose-built church building. Their Christianity was centered around their homes and expanded into their communities where each member lived.** An unfortunate digression in Christianity today is that our

identity and behavior is often focused around a church building. Many Christians feel they can behave like the devil during the week, but pretend to be saints on Sunday in a building. This mentality has come from an assembly-oriented Christianity that places emphasis on an assembly and little on holiness in the behavior of the members between the assemblies.

There are no New Testament commands concerning the **place** of assembly of the disciples. New Testament instructions center around **not forsaking our assembling together** (Hb 10:25) and conducting assemblies in an orderly manner (1 Co 14:40). How and where the disciples decide to assemble is left to the decision of the disciples.

### **A. The church in assembly:**

Under this point we would like to make some suggestions concerning the assembly of the disciples in order that we accomplish the purpose for which the disciples are to assemble. These suggestions are based on the reality that in most areas of the world there are no church buildings that are built and owned by the members. Of the thousands of disciples in the developing world, very few meet in their own building. Most meet in schools, homes and under trees wherever they might be located. Therefore, the real situation with the meeting of the disciples throughout the world does not involve the necessity of a church building, for most Christians cannot afford buildings. In view of this, we must understand that

God knew that this would always be the case throughout the history of the church. When we study the New Testament, our interpretation of Scripture on this point must be in view of the fact that God knew that Christians would always have a difficult time in finding locations where they could meet together. He knew that most of the time His people would be meeting in small groups here and there in order to carry out in their lives admonition and exhortation of one another.

All of us have had a variety of experiences in reference to the meeting of the saints. The following points are some practical suggestions in relation to the assembly that may help in keeping our attention focused on the purpose of the assembly. There is very little information in the New Testament concerning the assembly of the church. For this reason, we must conclude that God intended that we have freedom on how, when and where to assemble in order to accomplish the function of exhorting and admonishing one another.

**1. *Determine a location for the assemblies of the disciples.*** If it is possible for many Christians to assemble together in a particular location, then the members can determine a central place of meeting. In mission areas, many times members have to walk great distances. Because of these distances it is usually best to have one meeting on Sunday or have the disciples meet in smaller groups in the areas where they live. Those who come from great distances to a central assembly of many members can have

time to fully participate in an edifying assembly of the disciples and fellowship meeting with members.

The length of assembly may vary. The length should be determined by the majority of the members. It is often difficult to find a facility large enough to accommodate large groups, therefore, assemblies in homes or smaller facilities are more expedient. We must keep in mind that the disciples in a particular area remain to be members of the universal body of Christ regardless of whether the members meet together in one physical place on Sunday at the same time. The inability of members in an area to have the privilege of a large facility in which to meet does not divide the members from one another. They are still one church.

Keep in mind that Hebrews 10:25 is an exhortation that members can assemble together either partially or in whole in order to accomplish the task of “stirring up love and good works” (Hb 10:24). The passage says nothing about how many times the members must assemble. It says nothing about when to assemble. It says nothing about how many of the members in a particular region must assemble together at the same time. It says nothing about the time when Christians are to assemble. The Hebrew writer simply says that disciples not forsake the assembly. Therefore, as long as the church is maintaining assemblies of the members, the admonition of Hebrews 10:25 is being accomplished.

If all the members in a particular geographical area cannot assemble together in one place, then they should do what is

suggested in the following point in order to accomplish the need for assembly.

**2. Conduct small assemblies in the houses of members.** Since there are no New Testament instructions on this matter, many Christians have chosen to assemble as the New Testament church did. The early church had no church buildings, therefore, they assembled in the homes of the members (See Rm 16:5; 1 Co 16:19; Cl 4:15; Pl 2). In many places of the world today the church does not have a meeting place, nor can it acquire a rented building for large assemblies. Sometimes, the meeting of the disciples in any place is illegal. Many Christians in these areas have simply chosen to meet quietly in their homes. Leaders are selected for each house assembly and the shepherds circulate among the assemblies in order to accomplish their work of teaching. This is what the early Jerusalem church did since it was composed of several thousand members but had no common meeting place for assembly as a whole.

**3. Conduct evangelistic study groups in houses during the week.** This is a suggestion concerning the meeting of the disciples in conjunction with their need to assemble, as well as reaching out to the community. We must remember that our Christianity must not digress to simply being an assembly of the saints. **Christianity organically functions in our communities where we live. It functions when we establish relationships with other people.** Christianity is who we are, not how we perform in an assembly. We minister and teach in and

around the place where we daily live and work. The Sunday assembly is a time of remembrance and celebration. Too often, however, members become inactive in their communities with their friends and neighbors. As a result, they confine their “Christian activity” to a Sunday assembly. This is **not** Christianity. Therefore, the disciples in a village or city would do well to conduct evangelistic group meetings in their homes in order to reach out and teach their neighbors. The home offers a great environment in which to make close friends with those we want to lead to Christ. The following ideas, therefore, are based not only on the need that we assemble together, but also that we assemble for the purpose of drawing others to Jesus.

## **B. Church assembly in small groups:**

Many members have come to realize that in order to grow big, you have to go small. In other words, members must meet in smaller groups in order to establish relationships and encourage visitors to come. Many have come to realize that in order to establish and maintain a closer relationship between individual members, the members must meet in smaller groups. The advantages of small groups are many. This is especially true in reference to evangelistic meetings to reach out to friends and neighbors. Evangelistic group meetings can be conducted on any day or night of the week, depending on the decision of those in the particular group who conduct such meetings. These meetings are usually one hour in length.

The meeting is usually started with a brief introduction of those who are present. An important point to remember is that visitors must feel welcome. We must not forget that the purpose of the meeting is evangelistic. And in order to be evangelistic, our Christianity must reach out to those who are visiting.

During such meetings, most people conduct a brief Bible study or Bible reading for about thirty minutes. The subject of the study should be on a passage that has a life-principle that will help people in their struggles of everyday living. We have found that it is best to use **only one teaching from one section of scripture**. In other words, one context and one thought are to be taught for one meeting. We do not move from one passage to another during the meeting since there are usually visitors present who do not know the Bible.

Many conclude these meetings with fellowship, and if possible, refreshments. Some groups, however, leave off the refreshments and simply close with friendly communication among all who are present, especially the visitors. One of the keys to the success of this type of meeting is the Christian hospitality of the host family. This chosen family must make every effort to make visitors feel at home in their house.

The purpose of the evangelistic Bible study group should be directed toward **the application of Bible principles to the needs of those who are present**. To obtain this objective, most small group leaders study one Bible principle that can easily be applied to making one's life

better. These meetings are not the place to study doctrinal passages that are controversial. Save such teaching for one-on-one studies after the meeting or at a time when one can meet alone with the individual who is having a problem with a particular scripture or teaching. When we conclude a group meeting, we must be sure to **make an application of the passage**. We do not allow arguments. We allow freedom for expression, even if someone has an erroneous belief. The purpose of group meetings is to **establish a close relationship with our non-Christian friends and neighbors on the common ground of Bible study**. After the group meeting, one can work with visitors on more personal matters concerning their salvation. The purpose of the meeting is to draw people to Jesus through close relationships that are built on a love of studying the Bible. Once this relationship is established, we have earned the right to deal with the problems of our friends. When we have made someone our friend, they will not flee from Bible teaching even though we make direct application to their lives with the word of God. The following are some advantages of evangelistic groups:

1. Members are challenged to approach their neighbors with a simple invitation to study the Bible.
2. Members' function as the body is expanded out of their houses and into the community.
3. Close relationships with others is encouraged.
4. More members can become involved

in evangelism.

5. One's concept of Christianity changes from simply being in an assembly on Sunday to real relationships with those having needs in the community.
6. A foundation for the leadership training of members is established in the group setting.
7. Non-Christians can be approached in a friendly atmosphere of love and fellowship.
8. Friendships can be established with non-Christians before their conversion, thus ensuring their faithfulness after conversion.
9. The problems members encounter in their everyday life can better be detected and prayed for in a small group situation.

If one has been involved in small-group evangelism, then he can probably think of more advantages. Effective group evangelism has proven to be one of the most successful strategies of evangelism. This is especially true when assemblies become very large. When a local church has several hundred in attendance, it is very difficult for individual Christians to establish meaningful relationships with one another. Small groups provide an opportunity for a closer relationship with our brothers or sisters in Christ. However, there is much more to the leading of a successful evangelistic group than what is mentioned here. As we develop this work, our understanding of the advantages of group evangelism will increase. It is an exciting work

and one we must be challenged to try.

### C. Remembering simple Christianity:

The religious world in which we live places tremendous pressure on the church concerning necessity of church buildings. Add to this the fact that Christendom itself has a long history of church buildings. These two influences have greatly affected our thinking in missions concerning the proper use of buildings in reference to evangelism and church establishment.

We are often deceived into believing that effective church growth can be accomplished only if the local disciples own some type of building. We have often heard the statement, "The community will not think that we are permanent if we do not have a building." We have also heard it stated that the church's identity in the community will be established only if others see that we have a building. We have heard statements that the members will maintain a better fellowship if the church has its own building. All such beliefs are indications of the real problem. This problem centers around our understanding of the true nature of Christianity. In our efforts to keep up with the nations around us, we have lost a clear perspective of the nature of true Christianity and the spiritual identity of the organic body of Christ. We have become as the nations around us. In order to attract those from the religious world, we have started to think like those of the religious world with their temples and cathedrals.

Our desire for a building manifests a misunderstanding of the nature of Christianity. These preceding statements may also indicate that some denominational mentality has influenced our understanding of the church and its identity. **True Christianity deals with the submission of men's hearts to the lordship of Jesus. Those of this common submission are bound together by love (Jn 13:34,35). That bonding by love is the signal to the world that we are the people of God.** The growth of the church in a community is not dependent on anything that is physical. In fact, the claim that we must have something physical in order to grow may be an indication that we have not yet understood or restored New Testament Christianity. The more emphasis we place on a building often results in less growth once we have the building.

The greater the desire to have a building in order to enhance church growth, the more the building becomes a hindrance to growth. The reason for this is simple. The more members believe that they must have a building to enhance the growth of the church, **the more they are taking evangelistic responsibility off themselves in order to make a building do the work of evangelism for them.** There are too many cases where brethren expected their new building to bring in the converts. Around six months after the construction of the building, reality is finally discovered. Now what sets in is stagnation. Those who are drawn to the assembly by the building are not the type of people who cause growth. Because members had great expectations

when the building was built. When these expectations are not fulfilled, members often settle down for non-growth. We must keep in mind that the more we want a building, the worse the situation is when we get it. Buildings do not evangelize. People evangelize.

The early disciples understood the true nature of Christianity. This is why there are no references to the importance of buildings in the New Testament. In Acts 2 there were about 3,000 members of the church in Jerusalem on the first Sunday. However, there were no church buildings. In Acts 4:4 the number of members in Jerusalem is recorded to be about 5,000 men. But there was still no church building. Luke records in Acts 5:14, "*And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.*" But still there is no emphasis placed on church buildings.

Now someone will bring up Acts 5:42, which reference manifests the misunderstanding of many concerning what the text says and what was happening in Jerusalem. "*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*" **This is not a reference to the assembly of the church for worship.** It is an evangelistic statement. "Teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" is something that takes place with an unbelieving audience. The church already believes that Jesus is the Christ. The early Christians continued in the temple courtyard in order to convince people that Jesus was the Christ. The temple area was their field of evangelism, not a place for worship

on Sunday morning. The Jewish authorities would certainly not allow the Christians to assemble for worship in the temple. There were temple guards to prevent this.

The dilemma that newly established churches have is, “Where are we going to meet?” In Jerusalem, the Christians met in the temple courtyard for evangelism and in houses for assembly (At 5:42). Paul wrote in Philemon 2, “... to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, **and to the church in your house.**” The practice of meeting in Christians’ homes was the answer to not having a church building (See Rm 16:5). Meeting in homes can also be an answer today for the problem of a lack of meeting places.

Historically speaking, the disciples began meeting in the houses of members. As their grew, the synagogue sometimes became a place of meeting since many in the synagogues were converted. It was over 300 years after the establishment of the church in Acts 2 when churches actually began to meet in purpose-built church buildings. It is important to note, however, that the phenomenal growth of the church was in those years when it had no property. This is significant. It indicates that the early Christians did not regard a permanent place of meeting as a necessity for church growth. Because they had no buildings to confine them to a specific location as a church, they could easily go forth everywhere in order to preach the gospel (At 8:4).

The impression one gets from a study of the New Testament is that **the early**

**Christians simply met where it was convenient.** If they could meet in a house that was available, they met there. Their emphasis was not on a place but on the Prince. Church buildings were not considered to be a necessity for church growth simply because they had no idea of what a church building was. They knew nothing about meeting in church owned property.

**It is not wrong to have a church building.** However, it is wrong to use the lack of such as an excuse for nongrowth. It is wrong to identify our Christianity with a physical structure to the point that we have a spiritual inferiority complex if we do not have our own church building. It is wrong to center our Christianity around a building to the point that we cannot establish churches beyond commuting distance to a building. The total lack of emphasis in the New Testament on church buildings, or even the assembly of the saints, is a message for us not to center our Christianity around a physical structure, or identify ourselves by our assemblies. We must keep in mind what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman. “**Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain or in Jerusalem worship the Father**” (Jn 4:21). Jesus’ principle was clear. Worship of God does not take place at a specific place.

Christianity is a way of life. The more emphasis a church places on a building, the more focused the members’ Christianity becomes centered on a building. And the more centralized the Christianity of a church is around a building

the less it is manifested in and around our communities where we live. We often seek to escape the responsibility of evangelizing our communities by driving across town to do our “churchianity” in a building. We would caution ourselves, therefore, that when and if we

build a church building, we must not forget the true nature of Christianity. We must not house our Christianity in a physical structure. We must remember that God does not dwell in temples made with hands (At 17:24). Neither does the body of Christ.

## Chapter 26

### Household Conversions

In view of the preceding point, we would like to emphasize the fact that on many occasions the early evangelists converted entire families or households. This occurred for at least two reasons. First, the early evangelists concentrated on going specifically to houses in order to teach and preach (At 20:20). Second, the reason for household conversions lies in the fact that entire families made spiritual decisions together to follow God. These hospitable households were often very spiritual in their worship of God. When it came to making a radical change in their religious beliefs, they made the decision together as a household.

The first case of a household conversion in the New Testament was for a special purpose. Cornelius and his family were assembled together when Peter preached to them (At 10,11). After the Holy Spirit had fallen on them in order to reaffirm to Jewish Christians that God had accepted the Gentiles, Peter commanded that they all be immersed (At 10:48).

Another household conversion is recorded in Acts 16. In Acts 16:14,15 Paul,

Timothy, Silas and Luke taught and converted the entire household of Lydia.

There are household conversions throughout the New Testament. In Acts 16:31-34 the household of a Philippian jailor was converted. Crispus and all his house believed in Acts 18:8. Paul baptized the household of Stephanas in Corinth (1 Co 1:16). There were certainly persons converted individually. However, from the above we would understand that the first evangelists did make a special effort to convert entire households.

The following are some reasons why household conversions manifest the organic function of the body of Christ as it spreads throughout communities:

#### **A. Households produce a solid foundation for faithfulness.**

When we convert either the husband or wife of a family or a son or daughter, immediately that convert is placed in a situation that can be very trying. Though most have survived and remained faithful after being converted in such a man-

ner, some on the other hand have fallen by the wayside. Family pressures can be hard and sometimes cruel, especially in Muslim areas. However, if emphasis is placed on teaching and converting the entire family, the situation can be different.

### **B. Households produce a solid foundation for new converts.**

Household conversions are advantageous when the conversion takes place in an isolated location. This may explain why there are so many household conversions in the New Testament. In mission areas, household conversions are usually the beginning of a church in someone's house. The household remains faithful because the members have one another for encouragement. They often worship together for several months before another person or family is converted. The church survives in these remote areas simply because a household was converted to begin the church in their house.

In teaching the entire household as a group, all members of that household know what is being taught. If only one or two members are converted, at least the others know that to which they were converted. And if the head of the household is converted, then usually the entire family will be brought to Christ. There-

fore, we would encourage teaching an entire family at first if it is possible. If rejected, we can then go to the individual members who would want to study. One or more of them may be receptive. In other words, in household conversions we would not spiritually set family member against family member until we had first approached the entire family.

Nevertheless, if part of a family rejects the gospel, we must go to those who will accept the truth. Remember, in this situation the words of Jesus may come to pass: **“And a man’s foes will be those of his own household”** (Mt 10:36).

We must keep in mind that emphasis on household conversion does not mean that we neglect individuals. After all, Jesus said that His coming would often bring division between family members. He said to His disciples,

*Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. **For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes will be those of his own household.** He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me”* (Mt 10:34-37).

## **Chapter 27**

### **Cultural Identification**

In 1 Corinthians 9:22 Paul made a statement that was a principle of his evan-

gelistic work. **“I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means**

*save some.*” The principle of this statement is very important concerning the cross-cultural communication of the gospel. Every evangelist must learn the principle of what Paul did in reference to communicating the gospel across cultures. It is important to learn the principle of cross-cultural communication simply because doing what Paul did in this area will enhance our effectiveness with those people to whom we go in every nation of the world.

Identification with local people, that is, accepting their customs, seems to have been a common practice of Paul and the early evangelists. Paul had a sense of respect for other cultures. As long as those cultural practices were in agreement with his Christian values, he accepted them into his behavior. To Greek philosophers he spoke of things that were familiar to them (See At 17:22ff). With the Jews he behaved as a Jew. He said, “... *to the Jews I become as a Jew, that I might win Jews...*” (1 Co 9:20). He knew the culture of the Gentiles, and thus, when he preached to the Gentiles he became as the Gentiles.

One of the principal steps in identifying with another culture is in learning the language of the people to whom one goes. Knowing Hebrew certainly helped Paul in Acts 22:2 where he spoke Hebrew to the rioting Jewish crowd. Luke records the effect. “*And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent.*” Learning the language of a particular culture is the door through which one can enter in order to learn that culture.

One of the first things to learn about another culture is that one never completely learns another culture. If we move into a culture that is not the one in which we were born and reared, learning the new culture is a challenge. There is always a limit to which evangelists can identify with another culture, especially if one moves from a first world economic culture to a developing world environment. These two cultural settings are generally very different from one another. Nevertheless, when one moves from one to the other, specific efforts must be made in order to learn the new culture.

Regardless of the difficulties of learning another culture, this should not discourage one from giving it his or her best. Realizing that we will always be a foreigner in the second culture only adds challenge to the task of what we want to do. And what we want to do is preach the gospel to the world. This one goal is enough motivation to move us to do the best we can in learning cultures.

In order to begin the process of acculturation, we would suggest that one at least be sensitive to the following areas in culture:

1. How do the local people conduct themselves in greetings at the door? How are the hands used? What is said? How does one say “Good bye”? How does one greet another?
2. How do the local people conduct themselves when entertaining guests in their houses? How do you sit? Where do you sit? How do you serve?

3. What are the manners or practices at the table when eating? Do you use eating utensils? What utensils do you use? How should you hold them? With what hand should one eat when there are no utensils?
4. What is the accepted dress of the local culture? What is formal dress? What is casual dress? What clothing should be worn on certain occasions? What is considered modest dress?
5. How are greetings made on the street, in a public place, in a house, or on formal occasions?
6. What are accepted business practices?
7. How do a husband and wife conduct their affections in public?
8. What are the accepted behavioral practices of a young man and woman before they are married? What are the customs surrounding marriage?
9. What are the time schedules for various types of appointments? Should one be early for appointments? Should one be late?
10. When one speaks, what words or phrases should one not use? What words or phrases are offensive?
11. When assemblies are conducted, what are the procedures surrounding such? How long should one speak? Where do males and females sit in the assembly? How does one sit?
12. What do husbands and wives do in relation to keeping the home?

If you have lived in a foreign culture for any length of time, you can add to this list. If one has the privilege of working with an evangelistic team, there are times for cultural debriefing where all members of the team can meet together in order to go over newly learned cultural practices. If one is not a member of a team, then a husband and wife can work together in order to make learning a new culture an exciting part of cross-cultural communication.

Everyone can learn another culture. This is true because if we had to, we could. However, there are some things that must be confessed in order to deal with this challenge of evangelistic work. The older one is the more difficult it will be to learn another culture. The more tough-minded (hard headed) one is the more difficult it will be. If one is very ethnocentric, then get ready for a challenge. If one is somewhat arrogant, then he will have a difficult time accepting the culture of another people. Culture has a way of humbling the most ethnocentric personality. However, we must keep in mind that one can learn and must learn in order to get the gospel to all ethnic groups of the world. The simple fact that we are seeking to preach the gospel to the world is enough motivation to learn the culture of those to whom we go. Because we have been saved by the grace of God means that there are no barriers that will stand between us and preaching the gospel.

## Chapter 28

### Day And Night Labor

In order to be effective in evangelism, one cannot be a lazy person. Concerning the nature of the disciples, Paul said that disciples not be “*lagging behind in diligence,*” but that they be “*fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord*” (Rm 12:11). Paul practiced what he preached. He “*did not cease to warn everyone **night and day with tears***” (At 20:31). To the Thessalonians he wrote, “*For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; **for laboring night and day,** that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God*” (1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:8). In 1 Thessalonians 2:9 Paul related that he prayed “night and day” for the Thessalonians (See 2 Tm 1:3). From the above scriptures it is evident that Paul diligently labored as an evangelist.

It is interesting that the context of 1 Thessalonians 2:9 and 2 Thessalonians 3:8 where Paul mentions laboring “night and day,” reference is to his supporting himself. In other words, he worked hard with his hands in tentmaking in order to support himself. Add to this his labor in preaching the gospel where he worked with his hands and one understands that this evangelist was a hard worker.

Evangelists must be hard workers. An evangelist will have little effect if he does not put the necessary time into his work. We knew of one evangelist who played golf at least two times a week. Playing golf is not all that bad. It is a

relaxing game. However, playing golf too much can add up to just plain goofing off. Paul did take time to relax. However, he gave us an example of total dedication to the work of evangelism. And if one would be effective in his work, he will have to be driven to work hard.

The evangelist is a slave of Jesus. He is a slave to the church. Jesus said, “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Mk 10:45). A good evangelist comes to be the servant of all and to give his life in sacrifice for the work of Jesus. Paul expressed it correctly in Galatians 2:20: “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*”

We must remember that Paul was a single person. He had no wife and he had no children. Therefore, he could devote a tremendous amount of time to the work of evangelism. He could easily travel from one place to another. On the other hand, Peter was married. When Jesus called Peter to apostleship He certainly did not call Peter and the other apostles to a life of celibacy. Neither did He call them away from their wives and children. Peter’s life-style, therefore, was somewhat different from that of Paul and the other single evangelists as Timothy and Silas. Peter worked in Jerusalem for

a period of time and then in Antioch. He did go into all the world. As with the other apostles, he led his wife into all the world (1 Co 9:5). However, he was not as Paul who moved about on a regular basis. Evangelists who are married, therefore, should follow the example of Peter, not Paul. It is unfortunate that some married evangelists forsake their wives and children in the name of Christ in order to do what they think they should do as evangelists. Jesus does not call us to desert our wives and children in order to evangelize.

If one feels God wants him to preach, then he can still preach without forsaking his wife. If his wife is against his preaching, that is something different than what we are discussing here. Nevertheless, if one feels he must preach, then he must preach, regardless of any opposition, including his own family. One must love Jesus more than husband or wife (Mt 10:37). However, one must not use preaching as a justification to forsake his duties toward his Christian wife or his children. God does not allow

us to do wrong in order to accomplish good. Evangelists must care for their wives and children in the Lord.

The work of an evangelist in some mission areas is hard work. It is hard because there is so much to be done. Most evangelists we have known are driven men. They are driven by their hearts because they are intense about getting people to heaven. They are driven because they feel a tremendous obligation to those who support them. When one accepts support from brethren in order to work on a full-time basis, he has obligated himself to produce fruit for those who are sacrificing to make his full-time work possible. Full-time workers are the slaves of those who support them. They must, therefore, be good stewards of their time. And being a good steward of one's time is not wasting time. We have discovered that those who are truly committed to the word of the Lord are always frustrated that they do not have enough time to do what they want to do for the Lord.

## Chapter 29

### Legal Rights

Whether this point could be considered a strategy of evangelism might be subject to some debate. Nevertheless, Paul's resorting to his Roman citizenship in times of trouble is worth noting. At least, the evangelist should be knowledgeable of the laws of the land in which he lives and resort to those laws if he is unjustly treated.

Under Roman law it was not lawful to scourge a Roman citizen who was uncondemned by a court of law. Paul was about to be scourged in Jerusalem when he kindly reminded the chief captain that he was a Roman by citizenship (At 21:37-40). In Philippi Paul and Silas were beaten without trial and cast into prison (At 16:22,23). It caused no little

stir among the officials when they learned that these two preachers were Roman citizens. Paul resorted to his citizenship when he answered the officials' pleas for them to quietly leave the city of Philippi. He said, "*They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out*" (At 16:37). Paul was here standing up for his human rights as a legal citizen of the Roman Empire. He and Silas had been unjustly treated. He was going to exercise his rights under the law.

It was also a Roman citizen's right to appeal his case to Caesar, though Caesar did not let too many cases go unpunished. Nevertheless, Paul appealed to Caesar in Acts 25:11. He said to Festus, "*For if I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.*" This appeal began his long journey to Rome and delivered him from the unjust judges and false witnesses of Judea.

The force of Paul's example here is in the principle that an evangelist should appeal to his lawful civil rights. To allow oneself to be unjustly prosecuted in a court of law would certainly be unwise. Paul was not ignorant in these matters and neither should we. Foreign evangelists would do well to familiarize them-

selves with the laws of the land in which they labor. We must learn about immigration laws. One must know if he can do secular work, though on a "missionary visa." One must know about work permits. We would advise that if the evangelist is in a foreign country, he should contact the embassy of that country before he makes a move. Consulates or embassies can give a great amount of information concerning the legal or work situations of the countries they represent. It is good to know as much as possible about the country to which one is going as an evangelist.

We would give one word of advice here. One of the quickest ways to be deported from a country is to get involved in the politics of a foreign country in which one resides as an alien. Getting involved in politics at home may be fine, especially in those areas that affect morality. However, when one is in a foreign country in which he does not have citizenship, it is not wise to become involved in the political structure of the country. As an evangelist, we must do the work of an evangelist. And it is the work of the evangelist to preach the gospel. The advice of Paul would be good here. "*No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier*" (2 Tm 2:4). We are enrolled in the Lord's army. Let us be about the business of our Father.

## Chapter 30

# Organizing Ministries For Growth

In Ephesians 4:11-16 Paul wrote concerning the work of ministries for the purpose of causing organic function and spiritual growth. In the context of his statements, he wrote, *“And He gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ...”* (Ep 4:11,12). When the church is organized into applying individual ministries to fulfill the needs of the body, growth will occur. It is the work of every member of the body to carry out his or her ministry in a manner that will lead to the edification of the body. The disciples multiplied exceedingly in the first century because each part of the body used their gifts to minister to the whole of the body.

On Paul’s first journey he established disciples in the cities of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (At 13,14). In the conversions in these cities, many of the first converts were godly Jews who had been waiting for the announcement of the Messiah. Acts 14:21-23 states that Paul and Barnabas returned through these three cities on their way back to Antioch of Syria. In verse 23 Luke records, *“So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”* In other words, shepherds were designated among these disciples less than six months after they were baptized.

This is a very interesting action on the part of Paul and Barnabas. The disciples of the cities of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were quickly organized into body function with qualified elders shortly after Paul and Barnabas had preached the gospel in the cities.

Some have often wondered how this could have been done in these regions. The answer is in the fact that Paul and Barnabas converted several godly Jews. These Jews, of which many were possibly elders of Judaism, had the qualifications to serve as shepherds even before they were baptized.

In Acts 16:10 Paul, Timothy, Silas and Luke went into the region of Macedonia. They produced disciples by preaching in Philippi and Thessalonica. They were probably in Philippi about three weeks and then moved on to Thessalonica (See At 16:12). Their preaching also resulted in disciples in Berea. Over a period of a few months they converted and encouraged the disciples who in turn supported them in order to send them on their journey (See Ph 4:15,16). Only a few months after their conversion, the Thessalonian church was evangelizing their region (1 Th 1:6-10). All this activity indicates that soon after their conversion the disciples of Macedonia were quickly using their gifts in the function of the body by carrying out their responsibility to evangelize their areas.

The same could be said of the dis-

ciples in Corinth, Athens or Ephesus. The point is how could these infant disciples be left on their own to govern and instruct themselves only months after their conversion? They did not have Bibles as we have today. One answer for their growth would be the miraculous gift of prophecy that they received by the laying on of Paul's hands, or another apostle who may have come their area (At 8:18). From the Holy Spirit, they received inspired instructions through the preaching and teaching of inspired prophets in their midst (See 1 Co 12). The miraculous gifts that are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 were given to more people in the first century than we usually think. The gifts of prophecy, faith, wisdom, and words of knowledge were **used for the building up of the body of Christ** (See Ep 4:11-16).

The work of the Holy Spirit through inspired preaching and teaching did not guarantee correct behavior of the men who possessed the gifts, or those to whom they preached and taught. Through the preaching and teaching of the inspired preachers and teachers, the disciples were given Scripture. But it was still the choice of those who spoke and heard as to whether they would obey what was spoken. Therefore, this is not actually an answer as to why new converts were able to be organized into functioning members so early after their conversion.

The miraculous gifts do not answer all the questions concerning the leaving of infant disciples on their own. We must conclude that the early evangelists worked to give as much responsibility as

possible to converts. In several cases, it is evident that Paul left someone with the newly baptized disciples in order to nurture them on to growth. In Philippi he left Luke (Compare At 16:11,12 where Luke joins Paul with At 17:1 where the pronoun changes back to "they," thus indicating that Luke stayed in Philippi.) In Thessalonica and Berea Paul evidently left Timothy and Silas, for he went alone on to Athens (At 17:15). He left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus (At 18:18,19). These key leaders remained with new converts in order to build them up in the faith.

Though someone was left with the newly converted, the responsibility of evangelizing the local area was **the responsibility of the newly converted**. This is exactly what happened in Thessalonica. Paul later wrote to them, "*For from you **the word of the Lord has sounded forth**, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that **we do not need to say anything***" (1 Th 1:8). The Thessalonian disciples accepted the responsibility of freely giving to the lost that which they had freely been given. Newly baptized disciples today would do well to follow this example.

Christians must be left in the care of the word of God. When Paul was leaving Ephesus, he stated to the elders, "*And now, brethren, **I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified***" (At 20:32). The implication here is clear. We must entrust believers

to the word of God. We must teach them to be their own students of the word, for God will build them up through His word (1 Th 2:13). They must be given the freedom to study and apply the word of God for themselves.

Many converts have been lost to the world because they were not educated in the word of God. What we learn from the New Testament examples, however, is that new converts must be given the responsibility to organize themselves as a body of Christ in their local communities. They must be taught the fundamentals of the faith that will direct their decisions to serve the Lord. Only through acceptance of responsibility can there be growth. The attitude that the evangelist is the only one who can be trusted to organize the saints hinders the spiritual growth of new Christians. It would be good that new converts be taught that the evangelist will soon be moving on.

Disciples that are centered around one man, particularly the evangelist, are disciples who will reach a plateau in spiritual growth. The evangelist will become the dominant figure, and thus, the work will not grow beyond his ability to minister. We must always keep in mind that the church has only one head, only one authority. That head is Jesus and the only authority by which He controls the body is the word of God.

How long the evangelist should stay with a new group of disciples can be debated. From New Testament examples, however, the fact that he must move on to either establish or build up other disciples is evident. Though the practice of

leaving someone with new converts was part of Paul's approach to effective ministry, those he left soon went on to other areas after they had accomplished their work with the converts. At least this is indicated in Titus 1:5 in reference to Paul leaving Titus in Crete. "*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city ...*" (Ti 1:5). The assumption is that when the elders were designated in Crete, Titus would move on to other areas.

It has been our observation that when a full-time evangelist stays a prolonged period of time with a particular group of disciples, the members often cease to grow. The local members become too dependent on his evangelistic work. Certainly, this is not always the case, but there are enough cases out there that should caution us on this point. It is a New Testament teaching that evangelists do the work of an evangelist (2 Tm 4:5). The "work of an evangelist" can be defined only by the New Testament. The work we see evangelists doing in the New Testament is proclaiming the good news to the lost. When evangelists confine themselves to one group of disciples, their work usually turns from doing the work of an evangelist to doing the work elders should be doing. Evangelism often ceases and the evangelist spends most of his energies with the local members of the body. His model of evangelism has ceased, and subsequently, his role of reaching the lost turns into caring for the sheep, which job is for the shepherds. Thus members have no model of evangelism, and the church

often sinks into stagnation.

Churches need a restoration in evangelism by returning their evangelists to the unsaved world. It is the work of the shepherds to care for the flock through teaching. It is the work of the evangelist to be among the lost. When churches give their evangelists back to the lost, then they will restore growth. When the ministries of individuals are activated for the purpose of building up the body of Christ, the church will grow. Every ministry must be applied to the right use for the purpose of the body building itself up in love.

In organizing the disciples to take ownership of the work, the apostles allowed the disciples to make their own decisions. Their reason for this was based on what they said to the disciples when they came to the apostles about the problem of neglected widows. *“It is not desirable that we [the apostles] should leave the word of God and serve tables”* (At 6:2). It was the work of the apostles to teach the word of God. As Christ-sent apostles who went out into the world, it was their work to deliver “all truth” that they had received by the inspiration of the Spirit (Jn 16:13).

## Chapter 31

### Group Decision Making

The apostles did not exercise dictatorial authority over the disciples. Though they functioned in the capacity of delivering all truth to the church, they did not function as ecclesiastical rulers over the affairs of members of the body. Their function was to deliver the truth. Therefore, it appears that they stayed away as much as possible from directing the internal affairs of the disciples. In the area of teaching and morality, the apostles played a direct part in delivering God’s will to the members of the body (See 1 Co 5:1-8). However, in the area of how the members should function with their gifts for ministry, the members were given the freedom to do as they determined.

The work of the apostles was to first preach the gospel (1 Co 15:1-4). Those

who obeyed the gospel were given truth by which to conduct their lives in a relationship with the one true and living God. Beyond this, the the members of the body were to take ownership of their ministries in carrying out what they felt they must do as functioning members of the body.

#### A. Group decision-making in benevolence:

The apostles encouraged the group decision-making process in the affairs of function. At least this is what they did in Acts 6 when a problem arose among the disciples in Jerusalem concerning the feeding of Grecian widows. The apostles took the initiative to solve the problem by first assembling the members (vs 2).

Notice, however, that they laid the responsibility for taking care of the problem on the shoulders of the members. *“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business”* (vs 3). The members then took the initiative in order to take care of the problem. Gifted men were chosen, and these chosen men carried out the function of taking care of the widows. The apostles could have chosen the men. But they did not. They allowed the members to solve the problem, and thus function as the body of Christ.

## **B. Group decision-making in outreach:**

Acts 15 is an example of group decision-making in a matter concerning the writing of a letter to Gentile brethren. The background problem surrounding this example of decision-making was that certain men were binding things on the Gentile brethren in Asia Minor for which they had no divine authority (vss 1,5,24). In reading the complete chapter of Acts 15, one can see that the matter was brought before the apostles, elders and the whole church (vs 2,22). James, the brother of the Lord, made a suggestion in verses 19 and 20. The suggestion *“pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas ...”* (vs 22). A letter was thus written from the apostles, elders and church in Jerusalem to the brethren of Ga-

latia (vss 23-29). It should be understood that doctrinal matters in this situation were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Verse 28 firmly states this. This particular decision was not the result of some dictate handed down by an uninspired council of men. The decision to write the letter, however, was a decision of all the group that met. Instructions in the contexts of the letter were from the Holy Spirit through the apostles and prophets.

The New Testament clearly teaches the concept of group decision-making. When there was a group of disciples in any area, a **plurality** of elders was chosen (At 14:23). The Holy Spirit directed the members of the body to select this plurality of men to function as shepherds of the flock. The fact that there was to be a plurality of elders indicates that God never intended that any group of members be controlled by one man alone. The purpose for the plurality was that there would always be group decision-making among the shepherds. The apostles never directed Christians with a dictatorial policy outside the realm of the revelation and practice of divine truth. They did not organize disciples to function under the authority of one man. We should always allow a plurality of men to direct the affairs of the functioning body.

The Acts 15 example indicates that all the members in Jerusalem were involved in the decision-making process of the letter that was sent to the Galatian brethren. This would indicate that neither the apostles nor elders went behind closed doors to make decisions, and then,

hand those decisions to the church to be obeyed. In areas where the church is carrying out the command of God, it is the church that must work together to do such. It is not the work of the elders to function as a board of directors to hand down dictates to the church. It is not the function of the evangelist to do such. When Paul addresses churches in the New Testament concerning matters of the function of the church, he directs his instructions to the church as a whole. The apostles did not function with dictatorial power over the church in those areas where God has been silent, and thus given every member freedom to make decisions.

An example of the above in the life of Paul is seen in Acts 15:36-41. In this context Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement concerning John Mark. In the context, however, Paul did not resort to some dictatorial apostolic authority in order to get his way in the matter. He did not overrule Barnabas with a strong hand. Barnabas had just as much say in the matter as Paul. The same situation is found in 1 Corinthians 16:12 where Paul firmly besought Apollos to go to Corinth. Paul did not resort to any apostolic authority. He could not command Apollos with divine authority to go to Corinth, for he had no such authority.

We must continually keep in mind that there is no authority on earth that would compete with the authority of the head of the church, Jesus Christ (Mt 28:18). Whenever men start exercising authority on earth, they start stealing sheep from the Chief Shepherd.

In view of these examples, and the fact that not even the elders as a group are to “lord over the flock” (1 Pt 5:3), one would have a difficult time finding any teaching in the New Testament concerning decision-making in churches that was not in some way group oriented. The idea of one-man rule in churches was not practiced by the apostles of Jesus. Therefore, no preacher should assume such a position among the members of the body. Neither should an elder or group of elders assume such a position in relation to the church. God has simply not appointed dictators in the church.

Diotrephes set himself up as a dictator (3 Jn). But the Holy Spirit highly condemned his actions. Those who would follow the example of Diotrephes would do well to thoroughly consider the condemnation of John against such behavior. It was evil behavior.

It would be good to review here the case of Titus in Crete. Paul left Titus in Crete that he “*should set in order the things that are lacking, and designate elders in every city as I commanded you*” (Ti 1:5). This cannot mean that Titus was made a one-man ruler over several churches in several cities. Not even Paul exercised such lordship. What it did mean was that Titus, as an evangelist, was to direct the order of the disciples by preaching the word of God. In view of the fact that these disciples had no New Testaments, it was the responsibility of the apostles and prophets to deliver God’s will to the churches by the preaching of the truth. When this was done, the churches would take the initiative to carry

out the word of God. This is the example of Acts 15. It should be our example today in view of the fact that the Holy Spirit has already given the divine directives in the New Testament concerning the doctrinal aspects of what must be done

to live the Christian life. This is undoubtedly one reason why the first century churches grew. Self initiative on the part of the leaders was stimulated by the preaching of God's word.

## Chapter 32

### Financially Independent Churches

One principle that Paul emphasized in the organic function of the body was growth of the members of the body. This principle is seen in Galatians 6:5. *“For each one will bear his own load.”* One important principle of Christianity is that one must be taught to bear his own responsibility for spiritual growth and good works. The body grows when members take ownership of their own spiritual growth.

This function of the organic body is especially critical in the developing world. Throughout the years in Africa, a “foreign aid” mentality was culturally developed where people depended on outside financial help. During the colonial years the colonial countries brought in help to “take care of” the people. Roads were built by the colonials. Schools were built. Institutions were constructed. If something was constructed other than the huts of the local people, the colonials built it. Then the colonials left. The handouts, however, did not cease. The former colonial governments continued to give foreign aid. Shrinking economies were propped up by foreign aid money in order that governments survive. When

the foreign aid ceased, there was a drive for debt relief from past loans. African countries wanted their debt to the World Bank cancelled. What has developed through all this foreign support was a “foreign aid” mentality. If something is to be done, the financing must originate from foreign sources. In fact, a new definition of “partnership” was developed. The new meaning is that the foreigners supply the money and we in Africa will do the work.

Foreign mission churches have often nourished this mentality by continuing the foreign aid policies. Church buildings are built by foreign sources. Song books, Bible school literature, sound systems, communion trays, etc. were sent to churches throughout the continent. And thus, the foreign aid mentality continues among the churches. Foreign aid is expected by the local folks and the foreign donor church often continues this crippled mentality by providing the crutch. Leaders must recognize that this thinking affects the function of the body because regional parts of the body, whether in India or Africa, or wherever, do not take ownership of their regional work.

When studying the New Testament, the above is not what happened in the first century. Responsibility to bear one's own load is what Paul preached and practiced. *"Each one must bear his own load"* (G1 6:5). This is what must be practiced today in order to develop a biblical foundation on which church growth can happen. The following points are some thoughts that might help in emphasizing the necessity of establishing self-sufficient disciples who take ownership of their own spiritual growth, as well as the growth of the body in their region. These are disciples who will take the initiative to do the work of evangelism without feeling that they must hold out their hand to some donor. This is what the early disciples did. It worked in the first century and it will work today.

### A. They produced indigenous-thinking disciples.

The word "indigenous" means to be self-contained or independent. An indigenous disciple is one that is **self-supporting, self-motivated** and **self-propagating**. The early evangelists taught the disciples to be indigenous within their own region. **Because they were established as indigenous parts of the body, they were evangelistic to reach out to help others.** Because they did not see themselves as a mission point, they were mission-minded to reach out to others. The fact that they felt a sense of independence gave them a self initiative to reach out. The fact that these first disciples were not psychologically crippled by depen-

dence on help from outside, they had a sense of self respect and determination to reach out to evangelize their own regions.

In reading the New Testament one looks in vain to find an example where the early evangelists took money from one group of disciples in order to prop up the work of other disciples in other areas **on a continuing basis**. There are no examples of where an evangelist brought funds from parts of the body in one region in order to support the local preachers in order areas. Though it is not necessarily wrong to do such, one looks in vain to see this practice carried out in the New Testament. If we are trying to discover functions of the body that will make the body grow, then there is a very important principle of church growth here that cannot be ignored. Could we today be violating a common sense principle by doing what the early evangelists did not do in the first century? And in violating this principle, have we established sterile Christians who will not grow in Christian responsibility because they are dependent on outside help?

Paul came into cities with the simple gospel. He had nothing else to give. The first converts could not look to him for a handout. They could plead for nothing from a man who had nothing. When they asked, he could only reply as Peter, *"Silver and gold I do not have"* (At 3:6). In fact, Paul taught the first converts to support the evangelist. *"Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches"* (G1 6:6). If the Galatian letter were written a short time after the first missionary journey, then

this exhortation went to Christians who were probably not over three to four years old as Christians. The early Christians were thus taught to support their elders (1 Tm 5:17). On most occasions, Paul worked to support himself and those who traveled with him (At 20:34; 2 Co 12:13; 1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:8-10). He did not come into town in order to give a host of workers a salary or to build local church buildings. He came teaching that each one must bear his own load. He knew that this principle of life helps the individual accept responsibility, and in accepting responsibility, growth occurs.

## **B. They produced self-reliant disciples.**

Here is where common sense must prevail. If local disciples are taught to depend on outside help in order to do what the New Testament says it must do, then they become spiritually crippled. If the evangelist of a local church is continually supported by a church from outside its locality, then the local church never assumes its responsibility to support him. Its growth is thus hindered. The local Christians continue to see themselves as a mission point that must continue with the outside help of foreign donors.

When Paul went to Corinth he supported himself with the help of the members of Macedonia (2 Co 11:9). Upon his arrival in Corinth, he, with Aquila and Priscilla, preached the gospel in Corinth. In order to avoid the accusation from the pagan Corinthian culture, and the false teachers among the disciples, he worked

with his own hands and received added support from other Christians in Macedonia (2 Co 11:9-12). However, in a letter that he later wrote to the Corinthians, he said that he had **robbed** other churches in order to preach to them (2 Co 11:8). (More on this later.)

There is a principle in the preceding. Paul confessed that **he did the Corinthians wrong by not taking support from them** (2 Co 12:13). However, the necessity of escaping accusations that he was preaching for money was greater than receiving their support. Nevertheless, the principle of robbing other churches in order to preach to them was still true. The fact is that they should have volunteered to support him. Paul is so direct about this matter that he calls it “church robbery” when foreign funds have to be brought in to support a local evangelist when the local church should be supporting the evangelist.

By not taking funds for his preaching from the Corinthians, Paul knew he was violating a common sense principle. However, it was a matter of choosing a higher, more important principle over another. It was more important that he not be accused of preaching for money in order that the gospel be received without question. It was secondary that the local disciples be taught to support their own teachers. Nevertheless, when outside money is brought in to support a local work on a long-term basis, the growth of that work will eventually be hindered. This is the principle to which Paul is referring in this context. Local churches learn to rely on the crutch of outside help

when they do not support their own teachers. They do not learn self-sufficiency.

Outside funds can be used to begin a work. However, **the longer those funds continue, the less the church growth over a long period of time.** The self respect of a church is slowly destroyed as outside support continues to take the place of the responsibility of local Christians. The members know that they should be supporting their own work. However, when they find it easier to let someone else pay their bills, they lose their self respect as giving disciples for Jesus. Freely a church receives the gospel by a paid evangelist who is sent to them, freely the newly converted must send the gospel to others. This is God's plan (Rm 10:15). If we work against this New Testament principle of common sense, the less we will grow.

The example of the Philippian disciples always works best. These members became a missionary-sending group from their very beginning (Ph 4:15,16). They did not look for a handout from others or evangelists to do their evangelism. They did not call on others to come in and do their work. Though they were poor, they were truly indigenous and insisted on helping others who were more destitute than they (See 2 Co 8:1-3). They did not let their poverty become an excuse to forsake their Christian responsibility to reach out to others. We would do well to follow their example. When

Christians discover the spirit of reaching out to help others, then they are on their way to great spiritual growth.

Being financially independent has more to do with an attitude of mind than the actual possession of money. The Philippian disciples were poor. Nevertheless, they were financially independent. In other words, these Christians worked with what they had. They did not let their poverty become an excuse for not doing what they should do as members of the organic body. The Thessalonian disciples were of the same nature. They assumed the responsibility of evangelizing their region. Of the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, "... *you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth ... in every place*" (1 Th 1:7,8). They did not ask for an evangelist to come and take care of or take over their responsibility of evangelism. They accepted the responsibility of personal Christian duty, and thus preached that which they had received. Churches today would do well to do likewise. When Christians today arise to the occasion by accepting their responsibility to evangelize the world, the world will be evangelized. We must have Thessalonian members of the body today who will sound forth the message of the Master. We must preach Jesus to those in our own communities.

## Chapter 33

# Growth-Oriented Churches

Though Paul and the other first century evangelists left most of the newly converted disciples after a brief period of time, the number of those disciples grew. Initial growth principles were implanted in the hearts of these new Christians that carried them on to numerical and spiritual growth. A few examples will illustrate some of the principles that explain why they grew.

### A. Growth in Thessalonica:

The Thessalonian members of the body are a good example of indigenous growth and evangelism. Paul and Silas stayed only a few weeks in Thessalonica. However, when Paul wrote to these Christians around A.D. 51, a few months after the first converts, he commended them for their evangelistic fervor. He wrote, *“For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything”* (1 Th 1:8). This is certainly an example of members of the body carrying on the responsibility of evangelism. They needed no one else to come through in order to encourage them to grow. They accepted the responsibility to carry on with the work of God in their locality.

### B. Growth in Ephesus:

The Ephesian disciples were unquestionably of the same nature as the Thessalonians. Through Paul’s motivation and teaching in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus, *“all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus”* (At 19:9,10). *“So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed”* (At 19:20). International evangelism was a trademark of this group of Christians. The Christians in Ephesus accepted the responsibility of evangelizing their area. They did not feel that someone should do their evangelism for them. They reached out to their region, as the Thessalonians, to preach the gospel.

The Holy Spirit states that the “word of God” grew mightily and prevailed. The point is that when the word of God is preached, honest believers respond with obedience. The word of God thus prevails over error when men and women accept it as the word of God, and then preach and teach it to others.

The responsibility of preaching the gospel to one’s own area is a principle of evangelism. Jesus said, *“... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Mt 28:20). Paul said the same in 2 Timothy 2:2. *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* Both Jesus and Paul taught disciples to preach and teach the gospel

to all men. When the early evangelists established new Christians, therefore, they taught them the fundamentals of the truth and evangelism. One fundamental of evangelism is that one share the message he or she receives.

A good evangelist knows how to **make disciples**, not just baptize people. He knows how to invest his life in the lives of others and how to motivate others to follow Christ by his example (See 1 Co 11:1). Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "... we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, **but also our own lives ...**" (1 Th 2:8). To the Philippians he wrote, "*The things that you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do ...*" (Ph 4:9). As an evangelist, Paul gave an example of evangelism. Those early Christians he taught grew because he gave them an example of evangelism that stayed with them for many years after their establishment in the faith.

Discipling people is more than teaching doctrine. One must first deliver the gospel to unbelievers. However, after the initial response of people to the gospel, one must then teach the fundamentals of the faith. The word of God must be entrusted to those who have responded to the gospel. In the process of doing all this, the evangelist must give the new believers an example to follow. What they see in the evangelist in the first year of their Christian life will stay with them for many years to come. This is why an evangelist must **teach** and **live** the gospel.

An interesting statement in the New

Testament is made by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. He made these comments in reference to evangelists who produced fruit in areas where they preached the gospel.

*According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. **But let each one take heed how he builds on it.** For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. **If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.***

In the above statement, notice specifically what Paul said concerning the result of one's labor as to how he built. A good builder must carefully plan his work (vs 10). "*Let each one take heed to how he builds ....*" One must concentrate on laying Jesus as the foundation upon which people base their lives (vs 11). The church does not belong to the preacher. Preachers should not try to steal the church from Jesus by seeking to claim that which God builds. Through one's example of submission to Jesus, he leads others to do the same.

Some churches are built on a solid

foundation as gold, silver and precious stones (vs 12). However, others are built on weak foundations as Paul symbolized by wood, hay and straw. When the fire of trials comes, the disciples of wood, hay and straw will not stand. Evangelists will receive a reward for those converts that stand through the fires of persecution (vs 14). On the other hand, the evangelist who has built members that do not endure the fire of trials will suffer loss, though the evangelist will personally be saved. Paul's point is that evangelists should take caution concerning that on which they build disciples. They must build on Jesus. Those groups of Christians that are not built on Jesus will digress into social religious clubs that will soon lose their purpose and meaning.

Only those disciples that are truly built on Jesus will endure. Social club members will exist. However, their existence will not be based on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Evangelists, therefore, must be careful to build on Jesus, not on any other foundation. The only way one can build on Jesus is through a Christ-centered life. Our example of putting Jesus before all things, and living according to the directions of His teaching, will guarantee that we set the proper example for others to follow. As we follow Jesus, so others will follow our example in putting Him first in their lives. Growth-oriented churches, therefore, are Christ centered. They grow because of Jesus working in the lives of each member.

## Chapter 34

### Commitment To Struggle

Throughout the New Testament there is a principle of teaching that deals with **commitment to struggle**. This one teaching is so central to Christianity that we would consider it a principle of growth of the organic body. It is a concept that aided in the spiritual growth of the early disciples. Commitment was taught not only by Jesus, but it was also a founding principle on which the early disciples built their lives.

Commitment to struggle was not a persecution complex. It was a persevering attitude that was taught to every potential convert. Individuals were taught to count the cost of discipleship **before** they were baptized. This commitment

to Christ would then preserve them through the greatest of struggles. The teaching of this concept was their function of discipling men and women to Christ. If one is not willing to bear the cross of Christ, then he or she cannot be a disciple who is useful for kingdom business.

#### A. Jesus taught the necessity of struggle.

In the context of Luke 14:25-35, Jesus defined the extent to which one must be committed. At the time Jesus made the statements of Luke 14:25-35, He was beginning the process of deter-

mining who would stay with Him through the greatest struggles. He made those who would follow Him count the cost of being a disciple. In delivering these words to the multitude of disciples who were following Him at the time, **Jesus was teaching the concept that not everyone can be a disciple.** Not everyone can be a disciple simply because everyone is not willing to pay the cost of discipleship.

Jesus said, *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, **he cannot be My disciple**”* (Lk 14:26). The parallel passage in Matthew explains what Jesus meant. *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me”* (Mt 10:37). In other words, those who are not willing to put Jesus before fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters **cannot be Christians.**

Jesus continued, *“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me **cannot be My disciple**”* (Lk 14:27). Jesus again placed a **condition** on discipleship. This condition is commitment to bearing the responsibility of suffering for Jesus as Jesus suffered on the cross. Jesus then asked, *“For which of you, intending to build a tower, **does not sit down first and count the cost ...**”* (Lk 14:28). Those intending to live the Christian life must commit to the struggles that are necessary in order to get the job done. If there is no commitment to the struggle, then there will be no completion of the job.

## **B. Paul taught the necessity of struggle.**

The cost of being a disciple was the enduring struggle one would have to undergo to receive the crown. Paul stated this principle in his message to those who would be disciples. In Acts 14 he returned to the churches of Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, *“**We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God**”* (At 14:22). He exhorted Timothy, *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ **Jesus will suffer persecution**”* (2 Tm 3:12). Paul had *“fought the good fight”* as every Christian must do (2 Tm 4:7). The one who said that it was easy to be a Christian has never been engaged in a cross-bearing struggle to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. We must be warned that it is always tempting for one to take the road of least resistance. In Christianity, this can be devastating to one’s faith. If one loses his conviction, he loses his faith. The early evangelists knew that every convert to Christ would go through the fires of persecution. It was their strategy of evangelism, therefore, to make sure every potential disciple counted the cost of what they were getting themselves into.

The very nature of the Christian life and work will bring struggle. The Christian is in the world but not of the world. And because of this Jesus said that the world would hate His disciples as it hated Him. Jesus said, *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated*

you. *If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you*" (Jn 15:18,19).

The Christian life is of such a nature that Satan will not remain silent while his kingdom is torn asunder by the active labors of the saints of God. Paul wrote, "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood ...*" (Ep 6:12). "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds*" (2 Co 10:3,4). The more active and effective Christians become in their evangelism and struggle against the forces of evil, the more Satan will heap on them the fires of persecution.

The Christian is involved in a struggling warfare against the forces of evil. It is not strange, therefore, that we encounter persecution (1 Pt 1:5-9). Peter wrote, "*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you*" (1 Pt 4:12). Struggle should not be something that is strange to the Christian. It is a principle of the Christian life that develops faith. Peter exhorted, "*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (1 Pt 1:6,7). James wrote, "*My brethren, count it all*

*joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience*" (Js 1:2,3). For this reason Peter said, "*Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter*" (1 Pt 4:16).

Those who would be the disciples of Jesus, therefore, must be taught the concept of struggle. They will have to be taught to do as Peter and the other apostles did in Acts 5. After having been beaten and charged not to speak in the name of Jesus by an unbelieving council, "*they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name*" (At 5:41).

The early Christians recognized that through commitment and struggle there was the purification of faith. And with such purification came true growth. That growth can never really spring to life without the Christian truly letting his light shine. But in shining light there are always shadows of darkness. The shadows of struggle will always fight against the light. However, the intensity of the light is exemplified by the darkness of the shadows. We must keep in mind that the greater the light shines, the darker the shadows become. We must remember, however, that "*God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*" (1 Co 10:13). When we recognize the principle of struggle, we will be able to endure those struggles that purify our faith, and thus, build our

spiritual character in Christ. It is then that we will discover that the way of escape is through faith in Jesus who also was tempted in all ways as we are tempted. He is thus the One who gives us victory over every temptation. When we maintain our faith in Jesus, He will deliver us

from our weaknesses. He will give us victory over all obstacles that Satan will put in our way. We must therefore remain in the battle of kingdom business because Jesus has already given us the victory. Being committed to Jesus means being committed to struggle.

## Chapter 35

### Feeding The Sheep

Before His ascension, Jesus restored Peter to the fold of the disciples. It is interesting to see the emphasis Jesus placed on feeding the sheep in His exhortation that Peter accomplish this ministry. Jesus said to Peter, “*Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these*” (Jn 21:15). Peter replied, “*Yes, Lord....*” Jesus said, “***Feed My lambs***” (Jn 21:15). Again, Jesus asked if Peter loved Him. And again Jesus answered the reply of Peter, “***Tend My sheep***” (Jn 21:16). For a third time Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. To Peter’s third reply Jesus said, “***Feed My sheep***” (Jn 21:17). Peter got the point of both the commitment and the task of feeding the sheep of God. This is a specific work of leading disciples and one that will generate spiritual growth in the lives of the members of the body. The sheep must be fed.

Though the early evangelists stayed a short time in one specific location on their initial visit to establish a group of disciples, they placed a great amount of emphasis on developing leaders who would continue to feed the sheep. In fact, it seems that a small group of disciples

were initially converted, and then a great amount of emphasis was placed on teaching this small group in an effort to truly ground them in the faith. At least one thing is clear in studying through Paul’s travels. Part of his work was to strengthen the disciples whom he had converted. Consider the following thoughts in reference to the strengthening of the members of the body:

#### A. Disciples were grounded through teaching.

Paul stayed in Ephesus, “*reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus*” (At 19:9). This carried on for two years. He had also taught the members in Ephesus, teaching them from house to house. He reminded the Ephesian elders, “*I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house*” (At 20:20). He also taught the Thessalonians by word of mouth and epistle. He wrote, “*Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle*” (2 Th

2:15). He delivered the inspired traditions to the Corinthians on a personal basis (See 1 Co 11:2; see also 2 Tm 1:13; 2:2; 3:14; Ti 1:9). Acts 5:42 explains the system of teaching of the early disciples to the communities in which people lived. *“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”* Though this statement is made in reference to their evangelistic work in the temple courtyard and from house to house, their coming together for such purposes was encouraging to all the saints.

When Paul and Barnabas established the body of Christ in Asia Minor, they returned to the members of the body, *“strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith ...”* (At 14:22). The incentive for the second missionary journey of Paul was to visit these disciples. He said to Barnabas, *“Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing”* (At 15:36). This very important function of Paul’s work is a vital work that must be carried out continually by evangelists. Brethren who are new in the faith must be strengthened. Though it is not the primary work of the evangelist, it is certainly a principal work that he continually build up disciples through the teaching of God’s word. Paul’s instructions to Timothy concerning the responsibility of the evangelist in reference to the church are brought out in 2 Timothy 4:2. *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuf-*

*fering and teaching.”* Though this statement is made in reference to Timothy preaching the word to the lost world, it would certainly also apply to continually preaching the word of God to the saved.

## **B. Disciples were grounded through discipleship training.**

Preaching the gospel to the lost is the primary work of the evangelist. However, teaching is a work of the shepherd to those who are converted. In order to be effective as a shepherd, one must be able to teach the disciples how to disciple others. Discipleship training is more than the teaching of facts and the memorization of Bible passages. It involves the investing of one’s life in the life of another. It involves teaching others the skills of how to teach others. This is something that is not only accomplished in a classroom. It is accomplished as one leads a Christian example for others to follow.

Jesus said, *“... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Mt 28:20). We must be excited about baptizing people into Christ. However, the preceding statement of Jesus was made concerning what takes place **after baptism**. As leaders, we have the responsibility to continue teaching the new convert after we have baptized him into Christ. How many newly converted disciples have fallen away because we were more concerned about getting people baptized than disciplined? We too often rush for quantity and forget quality. Simply baptizing people does not

grow the body. Paul seems to have focussed his attention on the first few converts in order to produce the quality that would eventually lead to the quantity in years to come.

The key to follow up is in discipling one before he obeys the gospel. Notice carefully what Jesus actually said in Matthew 28:19,20.

*Going, therefore, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the ages."*

Jesus' process of conversion is (1) making disciples, (2), baptizing disciples, and (3) teaching disciples. Where we often fail in this process, is minimizing the making of disciples before we baptize them. If we would focus more attention on making disciples, then we would have a greater retention rate of those we baptize.

People are rightly concerned about the follow up of any evangelistic campaign. This concern is justified. The problem with the follow up is that we are often in a rush to immerse without first discipling. Discipling means that we are bringing one to a commitment to be a follower of Jesus. Once this is accomplished, then Jesus said to baptize this person.

Paul wrote, "*Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort you by the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more,*

*just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God"* (1 Th 4:1). Paul taught in the above passage that the Thessalonians should give heed to the "**how to**" that they had received from him. It is the same as he told Timothy. "*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*" (2 Tm 2:2). In this passage Paul is exhorting Timothy to teach those who are **able** to teach others. We must not only teach truths, we must teach people how to be teachers. This is equipping the saints unto the work of ministering (Ep 4:12).

A good Christian will take heed to live that which he teaches in order to give an example of Christian teaching in action. To the Philippians, Paul wrote, "*The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you*" (Ph 4:9). It is important, therefore, that mature disciples spend time with new converts in order to invest their lives in theirs. If the new believers are not taught how to be teachers, and motivated to teach others also, they will often become dead-end Christians. They will not reach out because we did not reach out to them.

A very important context in reference to this function in evangelistic work is Ephesians 4:11-16. This passage is given in the context of Jesus' ascension to heaven and His giving of gifts for the function of the organic body. In verse 11 Jesus introduced key functions of evangelism and edification as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds who are

teachers. Verse 12 is significant. The ministries of teaching were introduced for the *“equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”* The function of the teaching ministries of verse 11 are for the purpose of *“equipping the saints for the work of ministry.”* Good leaders will accept this responsibility. They will give heed to exhortation in order to train the saints in how to minister to the needs of others. Good church leadership involves the training of members in the skills of how to be teachers, servants, benevolent workers, personal evangelists, mothers, husbands, wives and fathers.

The purpose for discipleship training by those who minister teaching is that the disciples *“no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive”* (vs 14). The shepherd’s concern for the flock of God will motivate them to prepare the flock to stand against the imaginations of misguided religionists who proclaim their doctrine. Paul thus explains the final purpose of discipleship strengthening in Ephesians 4:16. *“... from whom [Jesus] the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*

The point of Ephesians 4 is that ev-

ery member of the body must be disciplined into using his or her gift for the edification of the whole body. Every member must supply his or her talents for the edification of others. Every member must do his or her part in order that the whole body be edified. This is discipleship. Leaders must know how to both train and encourage the disciples into a self-edification group of disciples who can continually build themselves up in the Lord. The purpose for this is that the leaders must move on to establish other disciples, and also train them to edify themselves unto the work of the ministry.

It is the work of the evangelist to preach the gospel to the lost. It is the work of the elders of the body to continue teaching the members to carry out their responsibilities in reference to the function of the universal body of Christ. When evangelists are held up by doing the work of the elders, then the body does not reach its full potential for being evangelistic to the whole world. It is imperative, therefore, that evangelists maintain their focus on the lost while elders focus on edifying the saved. In this way the lost are evangelized and the saved are edified. When the gifts that are given by Jesus are carried out in their proper function, then the whole body grows unto its own edification. Every part, therefore, must function in order to accomplish this task.

## Chapter 36

### Revisiting Churches

This point emphasizes the universal function of the organic body of Christ. The whole body functions to supply the spiritual needs of the worldwide body. However, emphasis here is on the fact that evangelists must make a special effort to visit new disciples in order to build them up in the faith. This is a vital part of the function of the body of Christ. It is a common-sense work that must be carried out by the evangelist. New babes are not born, and then left to themselves. They must be nurtured in order that they grow into spiritually healthy and functioning parts of the body. New disciples need tender loving care in order that they grow into members that will be able to carry on with the function of the body.

In Acts 15:36 Paul said to Barnabas, *“Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.”* On several occasions, Paul revisited the brethren in order to build them up (At 14:21). His purpose was to continue to exhort new Christians to remain faithful to their calling.

One wonders why Paul did not travel to the Gentiles in Egypt, or Babylonia or other places where he could have preached the gospel. Could the reason

for this have been that he wanted to establish the disciples where he could easily revisit them? We could mark on a map the places where Paul preached and people were baptized. We might assume that he went to those places where he could revisit the new converts in order to build them up in the faith. His ministry of evangelism would thus include the ministry of edification.

We should preach in areas that will allow us the opportunity to revisit for the purpose of special seminars or meetings through which the new Christians can be edified and equipped (See Ep 4:11-16). Revisiting new members that we have converted may not always be possible. However, where it can be done, it would be good to make an effort to do so. As far as encouragement for the evangelist is concerned, we would conclude that there is nothing more encouraging than to revisit faithful brethren who were converted in years past. Experiencing the growth of our “sons in the faith” is a tremendous joy. John wrote, *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth”* (3 Jn 4). Evangelists should take the opportunity to revisit his work.

## Chapter 37

### Meditation Time

The next eight functions of the body focus on the spiritual life of the disciples of the first century. There are some characteristics about the spiritual growth of the members of the body that are very important to notice in the New Testament. These would be considered functions of growth simply because without practicing them, spiritual growth does not occur.

One of the key practices of the early disciples was to entrust the word of God to local converts. Disciples were left with the word of God as their spiritual guide for growth. No hierarchy of authorities was set up among the disciples in order to guarantee their spiritual direction and organization. The apostles and prophets delivered all truth to the disciples in order that they be directed by God, not man. The early evangelists, therefore, expected the first Christians to be obedient to this truth. So it is today. We must entrust people to the word of God. The Bible must be our authoritative guide in Christian conduct and teaching. It alone must determine our direction. After all, we will stand before God in the final judgment according to the word of God.

In order that the word of God have impact on our lives, it is necessary that we take time to meditate on its teachings. David said, *“Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day”* (Ps 119:97). This is the means of the Christian’s relationship with the word of God. It is his

meditation all day long. In order to be our meditation, we must read and study the word of God every day.

Jesus often prayed alone in a solitary place. Mark records, *“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed”* (Mk 1:35). Of Jesus’ practice of prayer alone, Matthew also recorded, *“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on a mountain by Himself to pray”* (Mt 14:23; see also Mt 14:22,23; 26:36; Mk 6:31,32; Lk 5:16; 6:12; 9:28,29).

Luke 4:42-44 is one of those contexts that explains the personal solitary time that Jesus practiced on a regular basis during His ministry. Luke records in verse 42, *“Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them.”* Jesus went to a deserted place to be alone. He had been working hard in His ministry for the needs of the people. However, it came to the point that He needed time alone. So He sought out a solitary place. This is the type of environment to which leaders must go in order to pray and meditate alone.

In the text of Luke 4 it says that the “crowds sought Him.” The members usually do not understand that leaders need special time to pray; they need time alone in a solitary place. And usually, the members will not respect the need of

the evangelist to be alone. When the crowds found where Jesus was, they came to Him. Not only this, they “tried to keep Him from leaving them.” It is certainly natural for those who need leadership to try to keep their leaders from leaving. However, they must understand that the leaders must have time alone.

Jesus’ answer to the crowds, who sought to keep Him from leaving them, must be the answer of every evangelist to the church in order that the church not steal away the evangelist from the lost. Jesus responded, *“I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent”* (vs 43). The multitudes did not understand the mission of Jesus, and thus, they tried to keep Him from leaving them. What was happening was that they were trying to steal Jesus away from His ministry. Churches do this type of thing. They steal the evangelist from his mission to the lost. The church thus gains a pastor and the lost lose a preacher of good news. But Jesus would not let this happen. Luke recorded, *“And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee”* (vs 44). Jesus simply carried on with His work regardless of the desires of the multitudes. He was a man of destiny, the Son of God with a mission. And so must be evangelists today.

As Jesus, Paul was an evangelist who labored day and night. He was also an evangelist who took time off for rest and meditation. This is a very important function for effective evangelism because it is a function of body life that preserves the mental health of the evangelist. This

function of the body concentrates on guarding the evangelist from mental and physical exhaustion.

Acts 16:13 indicates that Timothy, Silas, Luke and Paul had a regular time of prayer. At least they went to where people had a regular time for prayer when in Philippi. Luke records, *“And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made ....”* In verse 16 Luke also recorded, *“Now it happened, as we went to prayer ....”* These verses indicate that these evangelists took time to pray and meditate.

It is only a few kilometers from the city of Troas to Assos. In Acts 20:13 Paul walked those few kilometers alone. The men who were traveling with him rejoined him in Assos (At 20:14). The record does not explain why Paul wanted to walk alone from Troas to Assos. We can only assume that he wanted to be alone. This was his “mountain top time.” Every evangelist who does not take his “mountain top time” is headed for trouble.

When one takes time alone, he has an opportunity to lay before God those things that fall heavy on his heart. He can exhaust himself in prayer in order to relieve himself of the exhaustion of the work. He can take his mind off the needs of the people and focus on God. Every Christian must take time alone. We would suggest that a brief period should be spent every day in quiet meditation. We would also suggest that longer periods of time be made for prayer and meditation every few weeks. If one has a healthy fasting and prayer life, he or she will have a rewarding spiritual life.

## Chapter 38

### Mountain Top Time

A **furlough** is a time that one takes away from a specific environment of work. It is usually for the purpose of changing one's surroundings and work over an extended period of time. We might say that Paul and Barnabas went on an extended "quiet time" at the end of Acts 14. They returned to the disciples in Antioch from which they had been sent out. Luke recorded,

*From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. And when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. **So they stayed there a long time with the disciples** (At 14:26-28).*

In Acts 18:22,23 we read of another return to the brethren in Antioch. This was after Paul's second missionary journey. Luke recorded, "*And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. **After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over all the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.***" We could call this furlough time. **It was a time when they took a rest from their intense contact with the unbelieving world.** After struggling hard with oppo-

sition, Paul undoubtedly felt the need to escape to an area of rest and fellowship with brethren.

We would do well to encourage this function of the body in reference to our evangelists. Evangelists sometimes become discouraged with the work in which they are involved. The work is often hard, and sometimes, one works under the threat of persecution and death. When enduring the burden of the work for some time, it is time to take a rest. This is especially true if one is married and has children. A period of time should be taken away from the environment that often robs wife and children of husband and father.

Working in developing world environments can often be very stressful. The evangelist often becomes the center around which local people depend too much. The evangelist becomes the source of help in every area of life. When someone is sick, he goes to the evangelist. When someone loses a job, he goes to the evangelist. When there are problems among the new disciples, the evangelist is usually right there. If someone has to go to the hospital, it is the evangelist who must be there. Those evangelists who live in such environments have a tremendous burden on their shoulders. After some time, this burden becomes too heavy. There must be time for rest. Jesus took brief furloughs to solitary places. If His humanity is manifested in these times

when He went to some solitary place, then certainly the normal evangelist to-

day is no greater in mental constitution than Jesus.

## Chapter 39

### Personal Study Time

The early evangelists were good students of the word of God. Timothy had been taught the Scriptures since he was a babe (2 Tm 3:15). Such influence by his mother and grandmother certainly established in his behavior a desire for Bible study. Paul exhorted him to continue his studies of the word (2 Tm 2:15).

Paul himself was a continual student of the Bible. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Though he was one who wrote inspired Scripture, late in his years he never ceased to study. He made a very interesting request in 2 Timothy 4:13 which was probably his last epistle. In prison he requested that Timothy bring to him *“the books, especially the parchments.”* Paul wrote inspired epistles, but he continued to study. We should at least be this diligent to present ourselves approved to God through diligent Bible study.

Faith still comes by hearing God’s word (Rm 10:17). Evangelists who continually put out but never bring in will often run out of spiritual energy. An evangelist is in danger when he does not give time to applying himself diligently to a deep study of the Sacred Scriptures. It is through regular and in-depth studies that one draws closer to God. Faith still comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Rm 10:17). We would say that fasting, prayer and Bible study

are essential ingredients in the life of a spiritually healthy evangelist. Neglect one of these, and one cannot reach the full capacity of his ability to spiritually grow and be effective in preaching the gospel.

Too often evangelists are so involved in teaching first principles that they never investigate the meat principles of the word of God. By not being a good student of the word of God, the evangelist hurts not only himself but also those to whom he ministers. The spiritual growth of disciples is hindered when their leaders have reached a level of growth where they have ceased studying the Scriptures. New disciples must see an example of love for the Bible before they will strive to obtain nobility by searching the Scriptures daily (At 17:11). It is a deception of Satan to feel that true spiritual growth occurs apart from diligent study of God’s word. One can spiritually grow, but the problem is that one often creates a religion after his own desires if he is not a thorough student of the word of God. Christians must *“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Pt 3:18) in order that they *“no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine ...”* (Ep 4:14).

Effective evangelists never stop studying. It is the individual responsi-

bility of Christians to learn the Bible. If they fail to give themselves to a thorough study of God's communication to man, then certainly they will spiritually die. Therefore, every evangelist must lead by

being a good student of the word of God. Effective and diligent Bible students encourage others to search the Scriptures. Their partnership in the faith is the foundation for their partnership in Bible study.

## Chapter 40

### Special People Emphasis

An obvious focus of Jesus' ministry was the choosing of key disciples with whom to closely worked in order to train. Though this was a common system of discipleship training that dates back to early Greek cultures, it was a very effective strategy by which one could propagate his message through the medium of faithful disciples. Every evangelist would do well to examine thoroughly this function in leadership training and implement it in his work as an active part of the body. The good leader continually seeks to train others.

#### A. Jesus chose disciples to follow Him.

Jesus made a special effort to select those whom He would instruct to accomplish His greater mission of world evangelism (See Jn 1:35-51; 15:16; Lk 5:27,28). From all those who followed Him, He chose only twelve. Luke records, "*And when it was day, He called His disciples to Him; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles*" (Lk 6:13). Out of all the disciples who followed Him, He gave special time to the twelve. Of the twelve, He showed special miracles to Peter, James and John (See Mt 17:1ff; Mk 5:35-

43; 14:33). The reason for this function of discipleship training was to focus on the quality of the disciples' spirituality, not numbers. Jesus knew that the few would be able to evangelize and disciple the many. In order to do this, the few needed special attention and training.

#### B. The disciples chose disciples.

The early disciples seemed to have worked in the same manner as Jesus. Barnabas chose to be with Paul when Paul was first converted (At 9:26,27). Barnabas also chose John Mark, with whom he worked in order to nurture him in the faith (At 15:39). Paul chose many and worked with different individuals throughout his ministry (See At 15:40; 16:2,3; 20:4; 1 Tm 1:3; Ti 1:5).

The choosing of another disciple or disciples with whom to give special attention and training was a common function in leadership training by Jesus and the early evangelists. Through those whom he trained, great things happened.

We must emphasize this point in the principle of 2 Timothy 2:2. Paul wrote, "*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach*

*others also.*” It was Paul’s strategy of discipleship training to reach out to the masses through individuals. In 2 Timothy 2:2 he urged Timothy to do the same in his efforts of evangelism. In other words, Paul exhorted Timothy to see the masses through the personal contacts in his immediate company. Good leaders, therefore, will always look beyond the immediate disciples with whom they are working in order to see the masses.

The Holy Spirit reemphasized this principle of multiplication in the evangelization of Asia Minor. In Acts 16:6 Paul and his company were planning to go into Asia, but *“they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.”* When they came to the city of Mysia, they again tried to go into Asia, though at this time attempting to go only to a province of Asia, Bithynia. *“But the Spirit did not permit them”* (At 16:7). What was the Holy Spirit trying to do here? Was it not the will of God that the gospel be preached in Asia? Certainly! What was wrong was the **timing** and the **method**. It was not the right time to preach in Asia. Paul and his company were to be sent into Macedonia (At 16:8-12). The plan was not right, for the Holy Spirit was not planning that Paul should **personally** go into Asia. We do not learn this until Acts 19.

Several years after the events of Acts

16, Paul came to the city of Ephesus in Acts 19. As usual, he reasoned in the synagogues (At 19:8). *“But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus”* (At 19:9). We do not know the exact nature of this school. However, we do know that as a result of his teaching *“all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, Jews and Greeks”* (At 19:10). This was the right time for Asia to hear the word. It was also the right method.

The Holy Spirit could see the opportunity with the school of Tyrannus in Acts 19. He knew that through the opportunity of training others all Asia could hear the word of God. We do not have today a special revelation or vision from the Holy Spirit to direct our steps as Paul. However, we can understand 2 Timothy 2:2 and God’s system of training faithful men who are able to teach others also. Every evangelist, therefore, should seek out young men who can be trained and encouraged to go forth. Every father and mother should set a goal of training up sons who will be evangelists for God. We will evangelize the world when evangelists see the world through those they train to teach others also.

## Chapter 41

### Training On The Job

In this function of the body the previous study concerning the choosing of special people to do a special work of evangelism is emphasized. The questions

to be asked concerning leadership in the early church are not whether the early disciples trained leaders. The questions must all be focused on **how** they trained leaders. In the context of this study it appears that the system of training was patterned after that of Jesus. The apostles were personally with Jesus for more than three years. Jesus' function with them in teacher training was engrafted into their life-style. It is not an assumption, therefore, to say that **the early disciples were trained to function in teaching as they had been influenced by the Christ-influenced apostles.** The following are some thoughts on Jesus' teacher training by which He worked with His immediate disciples. Such gives an idea of how the early disciples functioned in their own teacher training.

### A. Jesus trained on the job.

Jesus called His disciples by saying, "*Follow Me*" (Jn 1:43). The implication is that Jesus was saying, "Come follow Me and I will show you what to say and how to do the job." Training His disciples to be fishers of men was a three-year strategy of investing His life and work in the lives of His disciples. The validity of His system of teaching is shown in the fact of His disciples' success in teaching others. We cannot argue with success. This is certainly true in reference to Jesus' training of His disciples. He subsequently evangelized the world through His disciples.

The true teacher has not completed his task until he has invested his life in

the lives of those he leads. Leadership is the science of influencing the multitudes by influencing only a few. **Through a few chosen disciples,** Jesus was able to win a phenomenal victory throughout history. A leader, therefore, sees his immediate students as a means to reach the masses. However, through them he sees the work he is ultimately trying to accomplish with the masses. **He leads the masses by leading the few.** He sees the many through the few.

In our efforts to evangelize the world, there is one concept that we must always keep in mind when it comes to leadership training. That concept is that **we must train local leaders to evangelize their own regions.** The evangelist must not see himself as the sole evangelist in his region of work. He must see the evangelization of any particular area through those he can train to get the job done. Local men must be trained to evangelize local areas.

We often go forth with a "pastoral" practice that often hinders the growth of the church. This is the concept that one goes to establish a particular group of disciples "over which" he functions as the pastor. This goal of an evangelist's New Testament description of the work is short sighted, if not contrary to the nature of the work of an evangelist. It is not the work of the evangelist to establish a group of disciples for which he can preach every Sunday. His work is to preach the gospel to the lost, then then move on. Those who preach only to the believers are not evangelists. They are doing the work of shepherds to feed the flock.

Those evangelists who go with the vision of establishing one church for which to preach, usually have only one established church after many years of work. It is not the goal of the evangelist to establish a group of disciples for which he can preach. It is his goal to start a movement. And in order to start a movement, he must train leaders to be the teachers and leaders of the disciples who are converted and need continued edification.

To accomplish His work, therefore, Jesus was **with** His disciples. He ate with them. He slept with them. He rejoiced and prayed and laughed with them. The disciples could see His vision because they could see Him in action every day. But once they were discipled to follow Him, He moved on to heaven.

It is not enough just to impart facts to a disciple. The student must receive more than facts in order to learn how to be a disciple. He must **see** his teacher in action. He must **feel** his teacher in action. What the teacher does always communicates more than what he says. This is the principle Paul mentioned in Philippians 4:9. *“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”* God instructed that those who are directed by the word of God in their lives should set an example for others to follow (1 Co 11:1).

## **B. Paul trained on the job.**

When one examines the ministry of Paul, he can instantly see that his function in discipleship training was patterned

after that of Jesus. This was not by coincidence. This was the system of education that was acceptable in that day, a system that was very effective. Paul said, *“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”* (1 Co 11:1). Paul imitated Jesus’ teaching and life. He called on those whom he discipled to follow him as he followed Christ (Ph 4:9).

Jesus said to the apostles that they should teach the baptized to *“observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Mt 28:20). The same concept, yet in different words, is found in 2 Timothy 2:2. However, in His statement of Matthew 28:20, Jesus had commanded the disciples to disciple all nations of the world. So how could they obey the command to disciple all the world, and at the same time, teach disciples all things that He had taught them? The answer is obvious. **They would have to take some of the key disciples with them on their journeys and instruct them while on the road.** These trained disciples would in turn do the same to others. The trained disciples could be left with new disciples in order to edify other newly converted disciples. This appears to be what happened when Paul hurriedly went through Crete. He left Titus to finish an uncompleted job. He later wrote to Titus, *“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking ...”* (Ti 1:5). This was the manner by which Paul seems to have operated in his efforts to evangelize the world. This is how Jesus worked with His disciples. Could this be one of those reasons why the Roman world was evange-

lized by the time of the writing of Colossians 1:23 in A.D. 62?

We must notice that the early evangelists always had someone with them on their journeys. It was Paul and Barnabas, for example, who went on a major mission journey in Acts 13 & 14. Peter and certain other brethren went together (At 10:23); Barnabas and John Mark were together (At 15:39); then Paul and Silas (At 15:40); Paul, Timothy, Silas and Luke (At 16:11); Paul, Gaius, Aristarchus, Secundus, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus (At 20:4). This list could go on. The point is that Paul had a “traveling school.” One cannot but conclude that when Barnabas, Silas, Timothy or the others finally graduated from Paul’s care, they also took men and followed the instructions of 2 Timothy 2:2.

We could rightly assume that Paul’s stay in Ephesus in Acts 19 was a “resident” type work of teaching in the school of Tyrannas. He stayed in Ephesus on this occasion only two years before he moved on. He could have stayed and taught in this school for many years. However, he was an evangelist and the duty of an evangelist is to personally see to it that the gospel is preached to all nations. It is not his work to evangelize only **by proxy**, that is, to evangelize through the training of someone else.

**Evangelists must be personally involved in the work of preaching the gospel to the lost.** In doing this, those they are teaching can see the work of an evangelist in action. This is how the early evangelists trained evangelists.

Evangelists must train by the example of their evangelistic lives. We have witnessed many situations where the evangelist has been held up by a local group of disciples who have hired him to be their local “preacher.” The evangelist becomes so involved in local counselling, hospital visits, committee meetings, etc. that his focus changes from the lost of the world to the saints. He stops being an evangelist and starts doing the work of the elders and deacons. We still call him an evangelist, though he is not functioning as such. The church thus loses its model of what an evangelist is, and the next generation of young preachers become “pastoral evangelists.”

Churches need to give the evangelist back to the lost. It is the work of an evangelist to proclaim the gospel to the lost. Let the elders do their work of teaching the local disciples, and let the evangelist be supported to do what he is supposed to do, that is, preach the gospel to the lost. Churches that change the New Testament job description of evangelists usually stop growing.

## Chapter 42

### Personal Letters

John wrote, “*And these things we write to you that your joy may be full*” (1 Jn 1:4). The apostle John wrote to those who knew him in order to give them

instruction and encouragement. He wrote, *“To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth”* (2 Jn 1). Also, *“To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth”* (3 Jn 1). Paul wrote to Timothy, to the Christians in all Achaia, and to others for the purpose of instruction and encouragement. The Holy Spirit directed these men to first write, and then guided them to write without error. The Holy Spirit does not inspire Sacred Scripture to be written today. However, is there not a universal principle here that we must understand in reference to what the Spirit did in the first century?

The Holy Spirit did not inspire Jude and James and the other New Testament writers to write with the intention that their letters were directed only for the immediate readers. These letters were to be circulated among the early Christians (See Cl 4:16). Today, we are thankful that the letters were copied and circulated. The message of the letters is of great encouragement and guidance to the body of Christ. By use of these letters, we can do the same, as well as add our instructions to explain the word of God. Through the social media that is used for so many other non-spiritual things, Christians should use such for the purpose of teaching and encouragement.

The early evangelists communicated through letters to the Christians they knew personally. This was a function of the organic body to both encourage and correct dysfunctions in the body. Beyond the writing of a letter, we have the means

for mass communication. Printing presses, computers, copy machines and the Internet have allowed us the opportunity to circulate biblical teachings throughout the world. The world has grown bigger since the days of Paul. However, the means of communication has also increased. We must use these means to reach the masses of this world’s population. It is a marvelous thing to understand that God created the means to reach the masses. We must understand that the God-created laws that make printing presses run are there for our use in world evangelism.

One of the central subpoints of the world view of Christianity is that Christianity is not stuck in a time warp. That is, Christians do not have to live in the Dark Ages. It is the nature of Christianity to move man to progress, and in progressing to use what God has created to His glory. If we are stuck in the pass, we will fail to use what God provides in order to propagate the gospel throughout the world. God gave man a mind, and when man uses his God-given mind, then progress happens. It would be foolish to assume that progress is against Christ. Since Christ created all things (Cl 1:16), then we must assume that all things are to be used for the glory of God.

Tools as computers are not toys to play computer games. They are essential tools that expand the outreach of the evangelists. Some brethren need to come out of the Dark Ages and understand that every piece of technology that can enhance the work of the evangelist must be used to get the gospel to all the world.

We understand that in some situations there is no need for “high tech” instruments in many mission areas. However, in those situations where such can en-

hance the outreach of the evangelist, we must use the instrument. It is our work as Christians to affect as many people as possible throughout our lifetimes.

## Chapter 43

### Sending Messengers

In conjunction with the preceding point, it was a common practice in the first century to send a messenger to churches with a letter of instruction. Epaphroditus took the Philippian letter to the church in Philippi (See Ph 2:25-30). Onesimus undoubtedly took Paul’s letter to Philemon (Pl 10,11). The household of Chloe probably brought a letter from the Achaian disciples to Paul (See 1 Co 1:11; 7:1). A letter was sent with Apollos when he went from Ephesus to Corinth (At 18:27,28).

Because there was no real postal service, there was the necessity of sending letters with personal messengers. However, the personal messengers were able to bring not only the letters, but also the loving fellowship of the senders. The personal messenger also answered questions that might arise from the letters. This is undoubtedly what Paul meant in Ephesians 6:21, “*But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing,*

*Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you.*”

What was happening in the first century was communication between disciples through disciples who continually traveled from one region to another. In the letter of 3 John there were brethren (evangelists) who were traveling from one region to another. Gaius, as well as other local brethren, helped these evangelists on their journey.

In order to minister to the body, it was necessary that evangelists visit, teach and inform as many disciples as possible concerning instructions to correct behavioral and doctrinal dysfunctions, as well as report news of the experiences of the body in other regions. When an evangelist came through, it was a time for reporting. It was a time when the disciples assembled together in order to hear what great things God was doing among the nations (At 14:24-38).

## Chapter 44

### Entrusting To The Word Of God

In his departure from the Ephesian elders for the last time, Paul said, “*And now, brethren, I commend you to God*

*and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanc-*

*tified*" (At 20:32). What Paul was doing here was a common approach to the organic function of the body. Evangelists must understand that the church does not belong to them. It is the church **of Christ** (Rm 16:16). It is the church **of God** (1 Co 1:2). In order to build the church to God, we must entrust it to God's word. **Disciples must be allowed to be their own interpreters of the word.** They must be allowed to make application of what they interpret from the word. Only when each individual member of the body is allowed to be his or her own interpreter of God's word, only then will the body come to its fullness of trusting in God.

Peter commanded that the disciples to which he wrote must "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord ...*" (2 Pt 3:18). The very reason why the New Testament was written in the first place was to unify the body of Christ upon the teachings of Christ. When the apostles and prophets died, the universal church of Christ was **commended to the word of God**. There are no inspired interpreters today. Disciples must be given the freedom to rightly divide the word (2 Tm 2:15). They must be given the right to apply that word to their own lives.

It is unfortunate that some leaders often hinder those to whom they teach by blocking the members from hearing teachings with which they might disagree. This was what Diotrephes did with the disciples over which he took dictatorial control (3 Jn 9,10). Diotrephes would not allow either John or other evangelists to come to those he controlled. He

even threatened the members with expulsion from fellowship if they encouraged other evangelists to come and speak to the church. Such practices work against commending the church to the word of God. Paul left Ephesus and intended that the Ephesian church trust in their understanding of the word of God. Good evangelists will do likewise. Evangelists are not the saviors of the church. Jesus is. It is through His word that the church is guided unto victory.

To the Ephesians Paul put into words the mystery of God that had been revealed to him. He said, "*When you read, you may understand my knowledge of the mystery of Christ*" (Ep 3:4). Paul allowed the Ephesians the freedom to interpret the letter of Ephesians in order that they better understand the mystery of Christ. Good evangelists, therefore, will allow members of the body to study the letter of Ephesians and also be able to understand the mystery of Christ on their own without being prejudiced by the interpretations of others.

Growing disciples are those disciples who search the Scriptures (See At 17:11). The church belongs to God, and thus, the church must be entrusted with the word of God. It is the word of God that builds up the church. When Christians sense the fact that they must depend on the word of God in order to grow, then they will take seriously the task of teaching and practicing God's word.

Paul did not entrust the Ephesian members to a preacher. The reason he did not do this is obvious. Men go wrong, but the word of God continues un-

changed. When people are entrusted to men, the faithfulness of the people depends on man, not the word of God. What Paul did with the Ephesian elders was more than an example. All members of the body must be entrusted to the word of God. It is upon the foundation of the word of God that we remain faithful.

Since we know the way of God only through His word, it is imperative that every disciple be a student of the word. The word of God is the foundation upon which we base our faith. It is our guiding map to better relationships with others. A disciple who is ignorant of the word of Christ can never be free of false teaching.

## Chapter 45

### Locally Established Foreign Churches

According to the United Nations figures in 2014, there were over fifty million refugees throughout the world. This presents a challenge to the evangelistic function of the organic body.

Locally established foreign churches are the work of converting expatriates or refugees who are either voluntarily or involuntarily for some reason displaced from their local environment. In Africa several successful works have been carried out among refugees. Churches have been established in refugee camps. When the refugees went home after the termination of regional conflicts in their homelands, the church went with them in the sense that the converted refugees went home. And thus, the church was extended into a foreign country (the original home of the refugees) by being first established locally in the refugee camps of the country in which the members were refugees. The same thing happened in the first century, though the ones among whom conversions were made were voluntarily away from their homes. Much of the evangelism of the world in the first century oc-

curred through the conversion of those who were scattered from their homes. Consider the historical situation surrounding the Jews and the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world by the early disciples.

From His youth, Jesus, as all Jews, regularly made annual trips to Jerusalem during the feasts of Passover and Pentecost. Pentecost was the fiftieth day after Passover. Thus, there was a period of seven weeks between Passover and Pentecost for which the Jewish sojourner had to make provisions in going to Jerusalem for these special feasts of the Jews.

On one of these Passover/Pentecost visits of the Jews something spectacular happened in Jerusalem. Jesus was crucified just before Passover and the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost. The year was A.D. 30, and Jerusalem was buzzing with emotion and proclamations that Jesus was the Messiah (the Christ).

On the A.D. 30 Passover/Pentecost there were the usual visitors from many nations of the world. In fact, representatives were in Jerusalem from as far away

as Rome, Africa and the Far East. They were all present when Peter proclaimed, *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know ... God raised up ...”* (At 2:22-24). After proclaiming the gospel message, Peter concluded, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (At 2:36). You know the rest of the story. About three thousand were baptized (At 2:41). What is significant is stated in Acts 2:42. *“And They **continued steadfastly** in the apostles’ teaching ...”* From this we understand that they continued to receive teaching. Certainly, they were taught more than Peter’s initial speech. And certainly, of those three thousand who were converted, there were those who had come from distant countries. The occasion, therefore, presented itself to be a great opportunity for world evangelism. This is one reason why the Lord wanted the event of the cross, and subsequently, the initial preaching of the gospel, to happen during Passover/Pentecost.

Jews from the entire Roman world were present in Jerusalem on Passover and Pentecost. From the conversions that were made on the A.D. 30 Passover and Pentecost, the gospel was subsequently preached in Rome and other distant cities. Though the conversions were first made in Jerusalem, the church was started in Rome and all the cities from which Jews had come for Passover and Pentecost. The gospel was preached in Crete and Egypt,

but the first converts were baptized in Jerusalem. The gospel was preached as far east as Mesopotamia, Media and among the Parthians, but the conversions first occurred in Jerusalem.

The new converts of these distant regions of the Roman Empire were first made in Jerusalem. They were at the apostles’ feet receiving instruction before they returned to their homes in far off countries. They had come to Jerusalem from these countries only for a fifty-day stay from Passover to Pentecost. However, after their conversion, they ran out of money as they sat at the apostles’ feet to receive more teaching before they returned to their homes.

So what did the local Jerusalem disciples do? Luke records, *“Now all who believed were together and had all things in common, **and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need”*** (At 2:44,45). One might say that this was the first “discipleship training school.” These visiting Jews, who were now parts of the universal body of Christ, would return home. When they went home, they took the gospel with them, and thus, preached the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. This helps us understand why Paul affirmed in the Colossian letter that the gospel had been preached to all the Roman Empire by A.D. 61,62 which was about thirty years after the A.D. 30 Passover and Pentecost (Cl 1:23).

This also helps us understand why the apostles remained in Jerusalem for about fifteen years after the initial establishment of the church. Unconverted Jews from

all the world continually came to Jerusalem for the annual Passover/Pentecost feast. And in Jerusalem were the apostles, continually preaching the gospel. Every day *“in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ”* (At 5:42). *“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus”* (At 4:33).

The Jerusalem conversions and teaching of sojourners continued until another sale had to be made of possessions in order to support the students. During this second sale, the local Jerusalem brethren even moved to selling their houses and lands in and around Jerusalem. There was none of the visiting new converts *“among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them ...”* (At 4:34).

Every year a new group of foreign students arrived for Passover and Pentecost. Many were converted, and then, sent back home with the gospel. This happened annually since there was a

Passover and Pentecost in Jerusalem every year. The apostles remained in Jerusalem for about fifteen years after the establishment of the church in order to take advantage of this tremendous opportunity. In this, locally established foreign churches came into existence every year in Jerusalem when those who were visiting Jerusalem eventually returned home after Passover and Pentecost. It would have been great to be there. The Jerusalem brethren should be highly commended for their sacrificial giving that made world evangelism possible.

When Saul of Tarsus began a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem (At 8:1-3), there was a great “graduation” of disciples in Jerusalem who were scattered throughout the world. *“Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word”* (At 8:4; see At 18:1,2). And thus, the gospel was preached to the whole Roman Empire (Cl 1:23). God always uses Satan’s work against him.

## Chapter 46

### Roving Evangelists

The work of an evangelist is to herald the gospel to the lost. When Paul instructed Timothy to do the work of an evangelist, this is precisely what he had in mind (2 Tm 4:5). This is God’s means of taking the gospel to all the world (See Rm 10:15).

The New Testament work in evangelism that surrounded the specific work of an evangelist (Ep 4:11), was to con-

tinually go out to preach and teach the word of God. Philip was an evangelist (At 21:8). He was subsequently called on one occasion to preach in a desert area (At 8:26,27). After his work was completed there, he went to Azotus. When he left Azotus, he preached in every city from Azotus to Caesarea (At 8:40). He did the work of an evangelist by going to places where the gospel needed to be preached.

Paul left Titus in Crete (Ti 1:5). Titus was left there to “set in order” things that needed organizing in order for the young Cretan house fellowships to carry on with the work. The logical conclusion to his commission that was given in Titus 1:5 is that after things were set in order, he would move on to other areas in order to preach and teach.

Gaius was supporting evangelists who were going about among the disciples (3 Jn 6-8). They were bearing witness of his love before the universal church (3 Jn 6). These were evangelists on the move who were supported by faithful members as Gaius.

There is one outstanding truth in the New Testament concerning the actions of New Testament evangelists. **They were on the move.** They went about preaching to the lost. They went about strengthening the churches (At 14:22). The exceptions to this rule concerning their movements were that they stayed for a brief time at some location in order to build up the local disciples. Paul stayed two years in Ephesus (At 19:8-10). He stayed at least a year and a half in Corinth (At 18:11). However, he stayed in these cities in order to take advantage of unique evangelistic opportunities. He stayed in Corinth because God specifically told him through a vision that there would be many people converted as a result of his continued teaching (At 18:9-11). He stayed in Ephesus because of the opportunity of teaching in the school of Tyrannus. As a result of this teaching opportunity, “*all Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus*” (At 19:10). Thus his stay in these areas was not for the purpose to work specifically with a local group of disciples, but

for the purpose of evangelism.

For some period, Timothy also stayed in the region surrounding Ephesus (1 Tm 1:3). His purpose for being left there by Paul was to “*charge some that they teach no other doctrine*” (1 Tm 1:3). We do not see in this statement that Timothy set up for ten to thirty years in Ephesus in order to accomplish this purpose. In the second letter that Paul wrote to Timothy there is the indication that Timothy may have become stranded in this work, and thus, stopped his evangelistic outreach to the lost. Therefore, Paul exhorted him to do the work of an evangelist, that is, get after the task of preaching the gospel to the lost (2 Tm 4:5). There comes a time in the life of an evangelist when he must be reminded that his work is to the lost. It is the work of the elders to focus on the saved.

When evangelists cease being evangelists, their evangelistic model to the church terminates. The next generation of preachers then pattern themselves after the non-evangelistic model of the unevangelistic “evangelists.” And so, evangelism by those who are to be reaching the lost passes out of the movement of the church. For this reason, it is critical for the growth of the body in any particular region that the evangelists do their work, that is, that they preach the gospel to the lost.

We must seek to restore the New Testament work of the evangelists for they give models to the disciples as to what we are to be doing in the world. And what we are to be doing in all the world is preaching the gospel to every creature (Mk 16:15).