

# The Traveling Pulpit

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## God's Blueprint for Building a Biblical Church Part III

**“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)**

### Introduction

There have been many books written on the subject of witnessing and they can prove to be helpful in many ways. However, God has given us the BEST manual on this subject that the church could possibly have. That to which I refer is God's Holy Word, the Bible. The growth of the early New Testament Church was phenomenal. On the Day of Pentecost, 3,000 souls were saved and the Lord kept adding “to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:41, 47).

### The Early Christians were Evangelistic

The early Christians were so evangelistic that they filled the entire city with the message of God's saving Grace (Acts 5:28). Jerusalem was no small city, but yet the disciples made the way of salvation known to all the inhabitants. Just think, it was done without modern means of mass communication. Just because they “filled Jerusalem” with the message of Christ, didn't mean that all the city trusted Him as Lord and Savior

because most of the people refused to believe. We may be prone to think that it was easier back then to witness, but if anything it was just as difficult if not moreso. Remember, many Christians were persecuted and put to death for their faith in Christ. These early believers didn't know what a course in personal witnessing was nor had they ever heard of a weekly visitation program. But, they did know the living reality of God's power in their "daily" lives. Personal witnessing for the early Christians was a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week task that they considered joyous and not burdensome.

These followers of Christ were confused, frightened, and timid until they discovered the "power" of the "Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:8). On the "day of Pentecost" they were "filled with the Holy Spirit" and a sign of their supernatural ability was their speaking in "tongues" (Acts 2:4). This was no ecstatic utterance, but a simple reference to languages (Acts 2:5-12). People that spoke various languages heard the Gospel in their own native tongue from Christians who had never learned the language. Notice that when these Christians were "filled," they "began to speak." In order to be a dynamic witness for Christ, we must be vocal about it at the right time. It thrills the Devil to no end for those of us who have a correct doctrine to keep silent about it. As a witness for Christ, the Christian must strive to also live what he speaks.

The secret of effective personal witnessing is for a Christian to be under the control and power of the "Holy Spirit." Personally, I'm not especially fond of the manner in which the term, soul winner, is most commonly used by the majority of well-meaning people. My reason for feeling this way is because the Christian is only a witness and the "Holy Spirit" is the real Soul Winner (Jh. 15:26-27). It's true that every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit uses us as vessels to bear a witness, but the Holy Spirit is the One Who regenerates, gives faith to believe, grants repentance, and births the sinner into the family of God. In our modern day of easy believe-ism, man is guilty of trying to do the work of the Holy Spirit rather than the Holy Spirit doing His work through us.

The Holy Spirit indwells every believer at the moment of his new birth. However, just like a car that needs refueling, we need many fillings. Being filled with the "Spirit" is not a matter of us having more of God, but God having more of us (Eph. 5:18). In order to be the witness that God has commanded us to be, means to give Him total allegiance of our lives and rely upon Him to produce the results of our witness.

### **The Purpose of the Church**

The basic two-fold purposes of the church is to witness to the lost and to edify the believers in Christ. God expects local churches to be spiritually reproductive. The church that fails to evangelize is a church without a vision (Prov. 29:18). Most Christians open the church doors and expect sinners to flock in to get saved, but Scripture says for us to "go" (Matt. 28:19-20). The word "go" appears some 50 times in the book of Acts. The church is to "go" with the Gospel because it is the method God has ordained to elect His children unto Himself. Personal witnessing is useless if we only reserve it for weekly or monthly visitation. We must know what it is to represent Christ in the marketplace and be a "daily" witness.

Lest we forget, allow me to remind you that it's the job of every believer and not just the preacher to be a witness. It's believed that the members of the early church were active in evangelism and living out the gospel (Acts 8:3-4). One of the greatest privileges granted to a believer is to be in the delivery room of faith when a soul is born again. Have you ever been born again (Jh. 3:1-7)? If so, then God has called you to be a Christian witness!

### **A Good Question**

Have you ever shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ, often referred to as God's plan of salvation, with anyone? Are there people for whom you are burdened because of their lost condition? I'm afraid most churches are like a fisherman's club in the sense that they're always talking about fishing, but doing very little of it. Many Christians sing about standing on the promises, but all they do is sit on the premises. It's been estimated that the majority of professing Christians never vocally tell another person about Christ. Will you be one of those Christians who will not only live the Gospel, but speak it as the opportunity presents itself? Will you say that by the Grace of God I will be available for the Holy Spirit to use me as a personal witness?

Someone has said, "When the church decides to be a church rather than play church, growth occurs naturally and supernaturally." The world doesn't know what the Church of Jesus Christ is all about, but the sad thing is that many churches have also forgotten our Lord's commission (Matt. 28:19-20). One of the greatest needs in America is for the church to be the New Testament church that Christ intended it to be. Our one function as a New Testament church is simply to be the body of Christ in the world. That one function expresses itself in three specific ways. One, exalt the Savior. Two, to equip the saints. Three, to evangelize the sinner.

While it's true that God does give some in the church the gift of "evangelist" (Eph. 4:11), every believer should have a heart for evangelism. I'd be the first to admit that going one on one in personal witnessing is hard and that it's something that I automatically don't find easy to do. Remember, the reason it's so hard is because it's one thing that Satan most opposes in our Christian lives. When we enter into a one on one witnessing encounter, we can expect a real spiritual conflict and the majority of people that we witness to will not be saved (Matt. 7:13-14). God has not told us to do the saving, but to do the telling.

### **Market Place Evangelism**

Visitation, telephoning, and doing a people search are all good ways of witnessing, but of all the various methods, perhaps what we call marketplace evangelism is the best of all. Your marketplace is the place where you work and live-out your everyday life. Too often we keep Christ on the inside walls of a church building and never take Him out into the marketplace or recognize His control in our daily lives. Marketplace evangelism is for Christians who take the Great Commission and Lordship of Jesus Christ seriously. A Christian should be just as much of a Christian in the work place

and in his community as he is in the church place. We need to ask God to give us the courage, power, and sensitivity to look for opportunities to share our faith and live out the Gospel wherever we are in daily life. Until we learn how to take Christ out of the church house into the marketplace, all we're doing is playing church and having no impact on a lost world.

The attitude and method of Jesus gives us a good example for personal witnessing. Being the Great Physician, Jesus knew just how to diagnose a person's spiritual condition and administer the remedy. Properly treating an illness is just as important as having the remedy.

There's a story told of a woman who had just finished a first aid course. When she came across a man face down in a puddle of water, she quickly turned him over and began mouth to mouth resuscitation. After breaking away from her, the man informed the nice lady that all he was doing was trying to repair a leaking drain pipe. From this simple story, we're reminded that it's possible to have a good remedy, but apply it in the wrong way. Christian witnessing is good, but it's possible to go about it in the wrong way. I'll never forget my first experience at street witnessing and how I did a good thing in a very abrupt way.

The only remedy for man's sin sickness is Jesus Christ. As we go about representing Jesus to a person, it may sometimes be very helpful to understand something about that individual. It might be helpful to know such things as the type of religious influence that the person has been exposed to, if he has any sense of guilt, if he knows anything about the Bible or the plan of salvation, or if he has been confused by false teachers.

One thing is for certain, nobody likes to feel manipulated and talked to in a derogatory obnoxious fashion. Don't be arrogant and come across as a self-righteous smart-aleck. The reason for us sharing the Gospel should be done out of a heart filled with love, compassion, tenderness, and kindness. Arguing, fussing, and belittling others is no way to tell people about the love of Jesus Christ. Bearing a witness of the "Truth" (Jh. 14:6), must be done without compromise, but at the same time with a gentle spirit.

### **A Word From The Ministry**

Each quarterly edition of *"The Traveling Pulpit"* this year is dealing with the subject of **God's Blueprint for Building a Biblical Church**. This July edition is the third of a four part series. As it goes out, it's hard to believe that the year is half gone. The older I grow in years the faster time flies. Yet, as I look to the Lord, I can say along with the psalmist that "my times are in thine hands" (Ps. 31:15). God has blessed me beyond measure and for that I praise His Holy Name. Thank you, for taking the time to read this Bible Study and being a part of this little ministry. May the Lord bless the study of His precious Word. If everything goes according to plan, my fourth book, *"On What Day of the Week Was Christ Crucified? A Look at How Sacred Occasions Have Been Turned into Worldly Traditions"* will be sent to the publisher sometime in the month of July. It should be ready for distribution in several months. It is my prayer that God will use every aspect of this ministry to call out His elect and build up the body of Christ.

Because of His Sovereign Grace.....BWM