

# The Traveling Pulpit

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## **God's Blueprint for Building a Biblical Church** **Part IV**

This edition will be an expanded version as we bring to a conclusion our yearlong study on the subject of "God's Blueprint for Building a Biblical Church."

**"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**

As students of our Master Teacher, let's look at three case studies from the Gospel of John as to how Jesus dealt with individuals regarding sin and salvation.

### **Jesus Dealt With Nicodemus (Jh. 3:1-21)**

Nicodemus was a religious Pharisee that held strictly to Jewish doctrine. He was a ruler of the Jews and a member of the Sanhedrin. This man reminds us of the sincere religious person of our day who is relying on his own self efforts for salvation. However, Scripture teaches that self-effort is not

acceptable to God. Church attendance, baptism, and tithing are all good in their place, but these will never produce the New Birth.

At first, Nicodemus didn't understand the regeneration that Jesus was talking about (Jh. 3:4). Being "born again" is not a product of human ingenuity, but a transformation wrought by the "Holy Spirit" (Jh. 3:5-8). Salvation is not a matter of our understanding or our works, but Scripture teaches that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The New Birth results in a new nature and new life that can only be accomplished by the Spirit of God. To be "born of water" can possibly refer to one's first birth simply because one cannot be born the second time without being born the first time. However, the way in which Jesus speaks of a person being "born of water and of the Spirit" leads us to believe that He is referring to a spiritual cleansing that can only be brought about by the Holy Spirit.

After one is "born again," God will "sanctify and cleanse" His church "with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). We use "water" to take a bath and to get clean. The Holy Spirit cleanses us when we are "born again" and continues to cleanse us as we bathe in the Word of God. In personal witnessing, we're not trying to find out if one is religious, has a denominational affiliation, or if his grandfather was a preacher, but whether or not that individual is "born again." Without being "born again" a person won't get close enough to heaven to insomuch as "see the kingdom of God."

## **Jesus Dealt With The Samaritan Woman (Jh. 4:1-26)**

The Jews considered Samaritans social outcasts. However, Scripture reminds us of a Good Samaritan that helped a man in trouble when he was passed up by two Jews (Lk. 10:33). Regardless of how low in sin a person may be, he's never too low for God to stoop down and save. Just like Jesus, we need to constantly maintain a loving attitude toward the sinner while at the same time never compromising with his sin. As Christians, it's our responsibility to witness to people of other races and even those living in deep sin.

It's interesting to notice how Jesus struck up a conversation with the Samaritan woman and how He introduced a spiritual subject by the use of the "well" (Jh. 4:7-10). After breaking the ice (so to speak) with casual conversation for a few minutes, it's good to work into a spiritual conversation. Some like to ask the question, "if you were to die today, stand before God and He asked you, why should I let you into my heaven, what would your answer be?" You may find it helpful to use an object within the home or a subject of interest to work your way into spiritual matters. In searching for things to talk about, you may want to pick out a family picture and talk about being a member of God's family or you may comment about their lovely home and the heavenly home that Jesus has gone to prepare for His people, or if they have a beautiful lawn with flowers, you may want to talk about God's creation and how He placed Adam and Eve in the garden at which time they sinned. In personal witnessing, Satan will most likely try to get you off the subject just as the woman at the well tried to get Jesus into a racial argument. Therefore, we must stay on guard and stay on the subject.

Anytime we deal with a person about their soul's relationship with Christ, the sin issue MUST be dealt with (Jh. 4:16-18). Jesus brought the woman face to face with her SIN. The reason man needs to be saved is because he is a SINNER, but before he'll ever turn genuinely to Christ, he must know a godly SORROW for his SIN (Lk. 13:3). Some people believe that there are two separate approaches in personal witnessing. The negative approach emphasizes repentance and the positive approach emphasizes God's love gift in Christ. I personally believe that both should be emphasized.

Repentance means to turn TO something FROM something. Regarding Salvation, we turn TO God FROM our sin. Sorrow in itself isn't repentance, but conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit will bring genuine sorrow that will bear evidence in repentance. There can be no genuine salvation apart from repentance; however, repentance alone does not save. Salvation comes as a result of the Holy Spirit birthing us into the family of God, giving us faith to believe and the gift of repentance (Acts 11:18).

Jesus must be presented as our Substitute for sin. Merely knowing about Jesus does not save. He must be trusted as one's Savior, Lord, and Master. It's never our place to scold people for their sin, but recognize that only the Holy Spirit can convince and convict people of their lost-ness. Whatever we do, we must never give the impression that we're a holier than thou personality. Always remember that we're just a sinner bearing witness to another sinner. We just need to let Scripture speak for itself and once the sinner admits his disease, he's ready to be told about the only remedy for it. There's nothing wrong with urging and encouraging the lost to trust Christ, but we should never succumb to high pressure sales tactics or cheap emotionalism.

## **Jesus Dealt With The Pharisees (Jh. 8:12-59)**

Pharisees were the religious Jews who tried to please God by their good deeds and were more concerned about their reputation before people than in their relationship with God. Even though the Pharisees bitterly opposed Jesus, He still witnessed to them. This passage is a reminder that not all will appreciate our witness and receive "the truth" (Jh. 14:6). Many people oppose Christ because they want to continue in their sin undisturbed. Others oppose Him because they have closed minds to God's "truth."

Once again, we are reminded never to let the devil get us sidetracked into an argument in witnessing (Jh. 8:52-54). Always remember that it takes two to argue and God sends us out to witness and not to argue. Even if a person is resentful as were the Pharisees, we must remain pleasant, courteous, and truthful. Don't ever agree with something that is wrong in hopes of winning that person's friendship or favor and don't ever force yourself on anyone. Pushy people do more harm than good. If a person refuses to admit his ailment, then he will most certainly refuse the remedy (Lk. 9:5, Acts 13:51). Always remember, that God has called us to be witnesses and that it's the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to do the saving.

## **Matthew 10:1-42**

The instructions of Jesus to His disciples reveals some interesting things about evangelism as He organizes them for an outreach campaign (Matt. 10:1-42).

First of all and foremost, we need the power of God in order to be an effective witness (Matt. 1:1-6). For something like three years, Jesus taught and trained His disciples to carry out His earthly ministry. Like His disciples of yesteryear, we still need spiritual training and God has given His Word, the Holy Spirit, and spiritually gifted men to the New Testament church in order to equip the saints for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). As we have already seen, witnessing is not an option for the believer, but a mandate and we need to learn how to yield ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit so that we might realize His power within us. Witnessing should be as natural for a believer as eating and breathing on a daily basis. However, there are times and occasions when an organized outreach effort is good and acceptable. As we organize ourselves to go forth in the name of Christ, it's good and biblical to go in pairs for the purpose of prayer, protection, and encouragement (Mk. 6:7).

Secondly, a witness for Christ has not been called to give out personal opinions, but preach the Gospel message of grace (Matt. 10:7-8). One of the most important duties of a Christian is to present the Gospel to those with whom he associates (Matt. 28:19, Mk. 16:15, Acts 1:8). There is no way that a believer can escape the force and thrust of Christ's divine orders for His church. To follow Christ means that we must learn how to put first things first (Matt. 4:18-20).

Thirdly, the souls of men should be more important to us than material belongings or even our own livelihood (Matt. 10:9-10). Usually, sin doesn't lie in how much we possess, but in what possesses us and if we're not burdened for lost souls then something is wrong with our hearts. Effective witnessing begins with prayer as the heart becomes burdened for souls (Matt. 9:36-38). Jesus told His disciples

to pray for laborers to be sent to minister to needy souls. Prayer is the place to begin all of God's work, but we need to remember that it's only the beginning. Oftentimes, the first step in being a personal witness is for God to burden our hearts for a particular person in prayer, but after we pray we need to remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading to communicate with that person.

Fourthly, anytime we take a stand for God as a witness we can expect opposition. However, along with opposition we can expect God's divine care over us (Matt. 10:11-28). When God tells us to "fear not," He's telling us to have faith. Far too often the general response to the thought of being a personal witness is to cringe with fear. One reason many people will not talk with others about spiritual matters is fear of what men will say to them. Perhaps another reason Christians don't verbally witness is the fear of rejection. However, the only fear that the Christian should have is a fear of disobeying God.

Fifthly, confidence in God is a major key in being used of the Lord (Matt. 10:29-42). Whenever a life is controlled by the Holy Spirit, then even such a mundane thing as giving a "drink" of "cold water" to a thirsty person can be used of God. Our witness might be as simple as saying a kind word to a hurting heart or passing a gospel tract to someone on the street. Regardless of what form our witness may take, only the Holy Spirit can bring conviction to a lost soul. It's possible for us to win men unto ourselves and to a local church, but only the Holy Spirit can win people to Christ. Personal witnessing is not a work of super salesmanship or human skill, but a deep spiritual work of God in the human heart. There are various methods that one may use to present the Gospel, but regardless of the method it is the Holy Spirit Who convicts and converts men to Christ. It's important that we not try to copy the methods of others. Some of the best advice that I could give is to be yourself in the Hands of God and let God use you for His glory.

## **The Plan of Salvation**

There are no magic verses of Scripture that will guarantee instant results when presenting the story of God's redeeming love through the Lord Jesus Christ. God does have a plan of redemption that was fulfilled in the death of Christ on the cross whereby He saves His people from their sins. Scripture tells us that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The Holy Spirit will use whatever verses He so chooses to bring conviction and conversion to the sinful heart. We must never forget that it's our privilege to do the telling and the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to do the saving.

With that being said, let me also say that there is nothing wrong with us thinking about how we can approach and present the Gospel to others. However, the first prerequisite in bearing a witness for Christ is that the one doing the witnessing needs to have a personal testimony and make the Gospel message clear and simple (I Cor. 15:3-4). In other words, one needs to be saved before telling someone else how to be saved and at some point in our presentation of the Gospel, it's good to give your own personal testimony of conversion to Christ.

Regardless of which verses you select in sharing the Gospel, it's good to develop a plan (explanation) of salvation that can be explained in clear and concise terms of what it means to be saved. For example, let me use some of the following scriptures to illustrate what I'm saying.

**John 3:16** - The best news that one will ever hear and the greatest discovery that one will ever make is that God loved us so much that He sent Jesus to be our Substitute for the punishment for our sin

**Rom. 3:23** - Every man is a sinner and our sin has separated us from God and apart from salvation in Christ man is doomed to eternal Hell

**Rom. 6:23** - Because every man is a sinner, we deserve punishment and that spiritual death is eternal separation from God, but faith in Christ alone is a God given gift that imparts eternal life

**Luke 13:3** - Like faith, repentance is a gift from God and we must see ourselves as sinners, sorry for having sinned, and in need of salvation before we can ever turn from sin to the Lordship of Christ

**Rom. 10:9-10** – There is a difference between intellectual assent and saving faith as we see many today believing facts about Christ, but never trusting Him alone for salvation; therefore, we must make it clear that salvation is by grace alone, faith alone, and Christ alone

Following our presentation of the Gospel story, if one expresses a desire to follow Christ, let me remind you that praying a prayer does not save a sinner. The repentant sinner may very well want to talk with God in prayer, but that prayer does not save him. Putting words in his mouth or getting him to repeat a prayer after you, may not be the best way for a truly saved person to begin his Christian walk. However, following ones profession of faith, we need to encourage the individual to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ through baptism (Acts 2:41), studying the Bible (II Tim. 2:15), praying (Phil. 4:6-7), and attending church services (Heb. 10:25) in a good Bible believing congregation.

## **Witnessing**

Witnessing for Christ is not a matter of acquiring knowledge from the outside (intellectual understanding) as much as it is releasing the “power” (Acts 1:8) of Christ from within. The early believers not only talked about Christ with one another, but they went out into the highways and hedges of life as faithful “witnesses.” So often, we find it easy to talk about Christ with fellow Christians, but shy away from telling the lost about Him. Don’t ever forget that the Christian is under the obligation of “love” (II Cor. 5:14) and the same “love” that constrained Christ to come into the world should constrain us to take the Gospel into all the world.

The eighth chapter of Acts gives us a glimpse into the life of “Philip” the evangelist. He was not just one of the first seven deacons, but an outgoing witness for Christ. We learn some good lessons about witnessing by looking at the life of Philip. To begin with, he was “full of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 6:3). The Holy Spirit works through faithful yielded believes to bring others to faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit prepares hearts ahead of time just like He did with the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip was sensitive to God’s leading and obedient to His will (Acts 8:26-30). God’s timing is always perfect as we see the eunuch reading Isaiah 53 that was an Old Testament prophecy about Christ (Acts 8:31-33). Philip’s message focused on JESUS (Acts 8:35). After responding to the Gospel, the eunuch was baptized (Acts 8:36-38). Believers are to be baptized in obedience to the command of Christ as a public testimony to their salvation. It will never save a sinner from their sin, but it is an outward expression of an inward change brought about by faith in the crucified, buried, risen, and ascended Christ!

Looking back at the early church, we’re reminded that their top priorities were “prayer ... and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Like the early church, we need to get back to basics and not only preach the Word in the church place, but take it out into the marketplace. We need to claim God’s promises of power so that we can overcome all “fear” (II Tim. 1:7) in personal witnessing.

## A Word From The Ministry

In our quarterly Bible Studies for this year, we have been looking at the subject of personal witnessing. As a result of spending time on this subject, I trust that God will use it to make us more aware of the opportunities around us to be witnesses for His glory and that we'll have a biblical approach in doing so. God has given us a "Blueprint for Building a Biblical Church" and unless a New Testament Church is built God's way, it will be built the wrong way. Don't ever say that you can't be a witness for Christ. Because of the indwelling Holy Spirit in every Christian, we have the power to do "all things through Christ which strengtheneth" (Phil 4:13) us. Paul also put it this way in Second Corinthians, chapter three and verse two, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men." The truth of the matter is that every Christian is to be a living epistle as we live out the Word of God. It's been said that the Christian life is the only Bible that some people will ever read. Let's make sure that when the world looks at us, that they will see Jesus.

I'm happy to report that my most recent book is ready for circulation, "**On What Day Of The Week Was Christ Crucified? A Look at How Sacred Occasions Have Been Turned into Worldly Traditions.**" There is no charge for any of my books and is free for the asking. Let me also remind you that these books are not paid from this ministry account. My books are a ministry to help get God's people into the Word of God in hopes that the Word of God will get into them. I don't ask that anyone agree with me in my writings, but if you disagree, love me as a brother in Christ regardless.

Our sixth radio station has been added to our list of weekly broadcasts. Several months ago, Wilkins Radio Network informed me that they had included us in their newly acquired FM station in Richmond, VA. It is WDZY-FM 103.3 at 9:15 AM on Sunday Eastern Time. All of our programing can be heard live stream over the Wilkins Radio Network on [www.wilkinsradio.com](http://www.wilkinsradio.com). Simply click on "Listen To" and find the station and time of the broadcast as listed in the heading of each quarterly edition of "**The Traveling Pulpit.**" Also, our radio programing can also be heard over our website at [www.covenantofgraceministries.com](http://www.covenantofgraceministries.com) under the audio page and our printed Bible Studies can be found under the publications page.

Thank you for being a part of the COGM family. May God bless the proclamation and study of His Word. His promise is that it will not return unto Him "void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it" (Isa. 55:11). As always, thank you for your financial and prayerful support. May the Lord richly bless you each and every one.

Because of His Sovereign Grace.....BWM