

God's Plan for World Evangelism

You can win a soul to Jesus Christ. Yes, you who are listening to this record right now, can be used as of God to lead someone to the Lord Jesus Christ. My heart's desire is to do this.

When I enter that beautiful city, far removed from earth's sorrow and fear, I want to hear somebody say, "I am here because you invited me here." When to welcome me over the river, the loved ones of the earth should draw near I want to hear someone whisper, "I'm here because you invited me here." When at home in those mansions eternal, the saved of the nations appear, I want to have someone to tell me, "I'm here because you invited me here." When the glad harps of heaven are ringing with music so tender and clear, I want to have somebody singing, "It was you who invited me here. It was you who invited me here. It was you who invited me here. To this happy home I might not have come, had you not invited me here."

Wouldn't you, listening friend, like to lead somebody to Jesus Christ?

The Greatest Thing

Someone once asked Lyman Beecher, probably the greatest of

all the Beechers, this one question, "Mr. Beecher, you know a great many things. What do you count the greatest thing that a human being can be or do?" Without hesitation the famous pulpiteer replied, "The greatest thing is not that one shall be a scientist, as important as that is. Nor that one shall be a statesman, vastly important as that is. Or even that one shall be a theologian, immeasurably important as that is. But the greatest thing of all," he said, "is for one human being to bring another to Christ Jesus, the Savior."

Surely, he spoke wisely and well. The supreme ambition for every church and every individual Christian should be to bring somebody to Christ. The supreme method for bringing someone to Christ is indicated in the story of Andrew, who brought his brother Simon to Jesus. The supreme method for winning the world to Christ is the personal method. The bringing of people to Christ one by one, that is Christ's plan. When you turn to the Holy Scriptures, they're as clear as light that God expects every friend that He has to go out and see if he cannot win other friends to the same great side and service of Jesus. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," said Jesus, "Both in Jerusalem and all of Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." The early church went out and in one short generation shook the Roman Empire to its very foundation. It was a pagan, selfish, sotten, rotten empire and yet in one short generation, that early church had shaken the Roman Empire from center to circumference and kindled a gospel light in every part of the vast domain. They did it by the personal method. I say that every Christian, no matter how humble, can win somebody else to Christ. I say that you can win somebody to Jesus.

The Poor Seamstress

There is the most interesting and instructive story told of the nobly gifted Boston preacher, Dr. O.K. Gifford, who preached one morning to his congregation, making the insistence that it is the

primary and fundamental business of Christ's people to go out constantly and win others to the knowledge of the Savior. As he brought to bear his message upon his waiting auditors, with words that breathed and thoughts that burned, the minister came on to say, "Every Christian can win somebody to Christ."

When the sermon was done and the people were sent away, there tarried behind one of his humblest auditors, probably the humblest, with reference to this world's goods, for she was a poor seamstress. She tarried behind to make her plea to the preacher, that his sermon was overstressed. Greatly moved she was, the preacher stated. As looking him in the face, she said, "Preacher, this is the first time that I've ever heard you when you seemed to be unfair." "Pray, where was I unfair?" the preacher asked. Then the little widow, seamstress said, "You kept pushing the truth down upon us that every Christian could win somebody to Christ. You did not make any exceptions. Surely, I am an exception. Pray tell me, what can I do? I am but a poor seamstress. I sew early and late to get enough to keep the wolf from the door from my fatherless children. I have no education and no opportunity and yet your statement was so sweeping that even I was included. I think that you were unfair. The first time I ever knew you to be so."

When she had finished her protest, the minister looked down at her in all her agitation and said, "Does anybody ever come to your house?" She said, "Well, certainly a few people come." Then waiting a moment he said, "Does the milkman ever come?" "To be sure," she said, "every morning he comes." "Does the breadman ever come?" "Everyday he comes." "Does the meatman come?" "Everyday he comes to my cottage." Then waiting a moment for his questions to have their due effect, looking down earnestly at her, he said, "A word to the wise is sufficient." He turned upon his heel, abruptly leaving her.

She went away and nightfall came and she went to her bed to ponder late and long the searching message she had heard that morning. She had not even tried win anybody to Christ. She had never made the effort. She claimed to be Christ's friend, and yet,

had never opened her lips for Him at all. She said, "I will try. I'll begin tomorrow morning with the coming of the milkman." Accordingly, she was up before daylight came, there waiting to speak a word to him about salvation. The milkman greeted her and made the remark that he'd never seen her up quite so early before. She stammered out some embarrassing reply, not saying what she had gotten up to say. He left her and the gate clicked behind him as he left. But she summoned her strength and courage and called out, "Wait a minute, I had something to say to you." The milkman tarried to hear it. This little widow lady poured out her heart, "Do you know Christ? Are you a Christian? Are you a friend and follower of the glorious Savior that came down from heaven and died so that you might not forever die?"

Almost dropping his milk pails, he looked into her face, with anguish in his own and he said, "Little woman, what on earth provoked you to talk to me like this. For two nights I have been unable to sleep and the burden of it all is that I am not a Christian. I do not know how to be saved. If you can help me, help me now." So, there in the early hours of that day, this little widow lady led her milkman to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The story goes on that before that year was out this same little widow lady had led six other adults to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the place that they had become active workers in the church. So, I want to repeat, you can do personal work, you can evangelize, you can lead a soul to Jesus, if you will only do it.

Now I want to give you three simple words that spell the success of leading souls to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The first simple word is "GO." We find this word from the instructions of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as they are written in Matthew 28:19. Jesus said, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Excuses We Offer

How do we usually read this scripture, which is familiarly called The Great Commission? Ordinarily we read it like this, "Go ye therefore, but if you don't want to go, you can sing in the choir as a substitute and let someone else go for you, teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Sprit." Other people read it like this, "Go ye therefore, but if you don't want to go, you can teach a Sunday School class on Sunday morning as a substitute for going and let someone else go for you teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Or, sometimes folks read it like this, "Go ye therefore, but if you are afraid to go or don't want to go, you can paint on the church building as a substitute and let someone else go for you teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." There's just one thing wrong with all these various renditions of the scripture as the church members ordinarily read it; it's not in the Bible. No matter what you say when you get out your Bible, you will still read Jesus saying to you, "go YE therefore and teach all nations." It does not say anything about if you do not want to go or are afraid to go. It simply says, "GO!" I'm afraid that we in the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ of America have not been going like Jesus Christ told us to go.

Gallup Poll

The Los Angeles Times for December the 25th of 1957 carried an article by George Gallup of Gallup Poll fame. Stating that in 1957, some 25 million Americans made one or more call in the interest of the church. About 30 million homes were visited or about 60% of the homes in America received at least one call. This means that 40% of the homes in America did not receive one single call from anybody. This is the way the various groups showed up in

the survey. Who do you think made the largest number of personal visits in 1957? The Baptists are number one on the list. Does this tell you why they are the fastest growing denomination? This surprised me, the Roman Catholics were number two on the list for personal visitation. The Methodist denomination was number three. The Lutheran denomination was number four. The Jehovah Witnesses were number five. The Presbyterian number six. The Christian Churches were listed as number seven in the United States in the number of total visits made in 1956. What a tragedy. We have the pure and simple truth of the Word of God, and yet, we are so selfish with it. Six other groups were more willing to go and to tell others than we were willing to to.

The Elder was Unwilling

I shall never forget the disappointment that was mine in 1959, when we had a united effort in the Danville, Illinois area for evangelism. Some nineteen congregations came together in one unity effort to lead souls to the Lord Jesus Christ. There were some 35 congregations in the Danville area that should have entered this effort, but many did not. I was personally acquainted with one of the congregations that did not respond, so I contacted one of the elders of this congregation to ask him why. He gave me this sad word. He said, "Reggie, when our elders met together and discussed this program we decided not to enter it because it would take too much work. Our elders were not willing to go and make the calls, the personal visits that would be necessary to be a part of this evangelistic campaign." I was shocked and I said to this man, "I would not call myself an elder in the Church of Jesus Christ, if I were unwilling to obey Jesus' great commission and go!"

The Bible is as plain as the nose on your face. Jesus expects every friend that He has to go and tell somebody else.

It's Murder

What would you think of a person if they had an incurable disease and then all at once they found a doctor, who was able to cure this disease that was formerly thought to be incurable? Then suppose you contracted the same disease and you would go this friend and say, "Please tell me, quick, the name of the doctor that cured you of this terrible disease. I have it and I want to be cured also." Suppose your friend said, "I'm not going to tell you." You can't imagine such a thing, can you? You can't imagine anyone being that selfish. You can't imagine anyone committing murder, because that is what it would be if they had the knowledge that would save you and would refuse to give you that knowledge, it would be murder.

Soul Murder

My Friends, I submit to you that many are guilty of soul murder. Many people, perhaps even you, have the knowledge of Jesus Christ. You know that Jesus can save and yet you have been selfish with that knowledge. You have not been willing to share that knowledge, you have not been willing to go to help save somebody else. Why is it that the best personal evangelists in the church are always the new Christians? The converted drunkards, the converted harlots, the converted liars, these are the people who are most anxious to go and tell others and win others to the Lord Jesus Christ. But those who have been members of the Church for five years and ten years and fifteen years and who have the knowledge are not willing to go.

These are the people who say, "Well, everybody in town knows that the church doors are open. Everybody knows that they can come and hear the Gospel and be saved. If they want to be saved, let them come and hear the Gospel in the church house and be saved." But, my friend, there is not a single verse of scripture in all the Word of God that says that sinners are to come to the church

house and hear the Gospel there and be saved. Every verse of scripture in the Bible that pertains to the subject says that Christians are to go to the sinners and win them to Christ. We see that the word GO is the first word of Jesus Christ on the subject.

We want to come quickly to the second word that will spell success in leading others to the Lord Jesus Christ.

II The second word is the simple word, "TAKE." Take to these people, as you go, the Word of God. Back in the Old Testament in Psalm 126:6, we read what has been commonly called The Great Commission of the Old Testament, "He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him." In Matthew 28:19 again, Jesus said, "Go ye therefore teaching all nations." What are we to teach? We are to teach the Word of God. We are to teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As Paul said in Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God and the salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." You are to go and you are to take with you the Word of God. If you take with you the Word of God, the Word of God, which is the power of God and salvation, will convict those whom you visit of their need of Jesus Christ. The Word of God will convince them of their need for Jesus Christ. The Word of God has the power to bring them to Jesus Christ.

Winning Souls — Farming

Winning souls to Christ is much like farming. Who has the biggest crop in farming? Is it the smartest farmer? Is it the most handsome farmer? Is it the most talented farmer? Not necessarily. The man who usually has biggest crop in farming is the farmer who works the hardest, who plows up the most ground, who sows the most seed, who cultivates the most soil. This is the man that has the greatest crop. A farmer may be ever so smart, ever so hand-

some and ever so talented, but if he did not work and till the soil and sow the seed, he would not have a crop in spite of all his intellectual ability and his good looks and his talents. I hear people say, "I can't win anybody to Christ, I'm not smart enough. I can't talk good enough. I'm not talented enough. I'm not handsome enough. I'm not beautiful enough." My friends, all these things may be good if you have them, but all these things put together would not be able to lead one soul to Jesus Christ.

A Lesson from Daddy

I remember learning this lesson so well long ago. I was seventeen years old. I was holding a revival meeting in the little town of Afton, Oklahoma. For two weeks I preached the Word of God in this little church. The preacher's name was A.Z. Matthews. He was a distinguished looking, white haired gentleman. He came to this church every other week, just on the weekend to preach. He was known as a half-time preacher. The congregation could not afford more preaching than that. During this revival meeting, I can remember so well how we would go to the nearest creek. I would see this old, white haired minister as he would bury the people in baptism and raise them up to walk in newness of life. At the end of this two week revival, 40 souls had been saved and ushered into the Kingdom of God.

You can imagine how a 16 year old high school boy would feel about something like this. I was on the clouds. The last night of that revival meeting, I remember my father and mother came down to take me back home to Miami, Oklahoma. On the way home that night, my dad spoke just the right words to me. Sobering words they were. Words that brought me back to earth again. He said, "Reggie, remember that your sermons did not save those souls. Some of your sermons were pretty poor. Remember that it was not the arguments that you put forth in your sermons, the logic of those arguments, nor their convincing power that brought these

people to Christ." He said, "Oh, Reggie, whatever you do, please remember that those 40 souls were brought to Christ because of the power of the Word of God. It was the Holy Spirit working through the Bible that brought those people to Christ, not Reggie Thomas." All through the years I have never forgotten those words that my father spoke to me so long ago. As we go, we are to simply take the Word of God.

My friends, we come to that third word that spells success in winning souls to Jesus Christ.

III. The third word is simply, "BRING." I find this word in the Gospel of John, the first chapter, the 41st and 42nd verses. Speaking of Andrew, it says, "He first findeth his own brother Simon." That is Andrew found Simon, his own brother." And he sayeth unto him, 'We have found the Messiah,' which is being interpreted the Christ, and he brought him to Jesus." Notice that Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus Christ. His own brother, he brought him to Christ. How did he do it? It was the personal method that worked. There is no substitute for personal work. Every businessman understands this, every politician understands this. Oh, that the church of our Lord Jesus Christ would understand that the personal method will win. Many times I hear people saying, "What's wrong with the church?"

What's Wrong With the Church?

Well, friends, there is nothing wrong with the church. Many times there is something wrong with the members of the church. They have to be patted by the preacher and coddled by the preacher and fed lumps of sugar by the preacher, and I will tell you whenever there is anything wrong with the church members, I know what it is, they aren't out doing personal work. Because, whenever I find a member of the church of Jesus Christ who is out trying to win someone to the Savior then I know that member is not going to

have to be pampered by the preacher. That member will be so busy striving to win somebody to Christ that he will be perfectly happy.

Jesus, Himself, set the example in personal soul winning. He preached His great sermon on the new birth to one man at night time. Jesus preached His great sermon on the water of life to the woman at the well. So, Andrew, following in the footsteps of Jesus, became a soul winner. As he rushed up to his own brother, Simon Peter, and said, "We have found the Messiah."

Winston Churchill's Tribute

During the dark days of World War II, it looked like Great Britain was going to lose out in the fight. Night after night they were bombed by the Germans. Then, a brave handful of men took to the skies and began to fight back. These men were called the RAF of Great Britain. RAF stood for Royal Air Force. There wasn't much royal about this air force, because they only had a few, old, broken-down planes, some of them practically held together by wire. But they were great men, heroic men. Night after night they fought back. Because of the heroic efforts of the men in the RAF of Great Britain, the tide of war turned. At the turning of the war, Sir Winston Churchill gave one of his famous speeches. During this speech he gave tribute to the men in the RAF, "Never in the history of the world did so many owe so much to so few."

If you who are reading, right now, will go out and win somebody to Jesus, you'll never know how your influence will extend. It may be like Andrew, he brought Simon to Jesus, Simon brought 3,000 others on the Day of Pentecost. You can win somebody to Jesus Christ. The somebody you win may win multitudes of others, so that even before the Throne of God someday it may be said in reference to you, "Never in the history of the world did so many owe so much to so few."

Winning the World is Possible

Doctor Andrew Murray has reminded us of this fact. If there were only one Christian in the whole world and that one Christian would work one whole year to win just one other to Christ, and in the second year if those two Christians would go out and work a whole year to win one other each to Christ, and in the third year, if those four Christians would go out and work a whole year and win just one other each to Christ . . . if all that were led to Christ would continue in personal evangelism, taking a whole year to win one other each, to Christ, it would take only 32 years to win the vast population of this earth, more than four billion people, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, can't you see how important it is that you go and win somebody to Jesus. Remember, you can do it if you will.

The Lord once had a job for me, but I had so much to do that I said, "Lord, you get someone else or wait until I get through." I don't know how the Lord came out, no doubt that He got along, but I felt kind of small, and I knew I had done Him wrong. Then one day, I need the Lord and I needed Him right away, but he didn't answer my call at all, and I could hear Him say right down into my accusing heart, "I've got too much to do, you go get somebody else or wait until I get through." Now when the Lord has a job for me, I never try to shirk, I drop what I have on hand and go do the good Lord's work. My own affairs can run along or wait until I get through, for nobody else can do the work God has for me to do and nobody else can do the work that God has for you to do.

You can do personal work and win a soul to Christ.