

God's Plan for World Evangelism My Heart's Desire

“When I enter that beautiful city, far removed from earth’s sorrow and fear; I want to hear somebody saying: I’m here because you invited me here. When to welcome me over the river, the loved ones of earth shall draw near, I want to hear somebody 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 somebody tell me, I’m here because you invited me here. When the glad hearts of Heaven are ringing, with music so tender and clear, I want to have somebody singing; it was you who invited me here, to this happy home I might not have come, had you not invited me here.”

Somebody once asked Lyman Beecher, probably the greatest of all the Beechers, this question, “Mr Beecher, you know a great many things, what do you count the greatest thing a human being can be or do? And, without any hesitation, this famous man 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 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 Christian should be to bring somebody to Christ. This is my heart's desire. The supreme method for bringing people 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 come to the Holy Scriptures they are as clear as light that God expects every friend He has to go out and see if he can win other friends to this same great side and service of Jesus. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me", said Jesus, "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to 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, sodden, rotten empire. Yet, in one short generation that early church had shaken the Roman Empire from the center to the circumference and kindled the Gospel light in every part of the vast domain, and they did it by the personal method. I say that every Christian, no matter how humble, can win somebody else to Christ.

I. I want to use three simple words that spell success in leading souls to the Lord Jesus Christ. The first simple word is "GO". You find this word in 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." How do we Christians usually read the scripture which is familiarly called the Great Commission? Ordinarily, we read it like this, "Go ye therefore, but if you do not want to go you can teach a Sunday School class as a substitute and let somebody else go for you." Some Christians read it like this, "Go ye therefore, but if you are afraid to go, you can paint a church building as a substitute and let somebody else go for you." Probably more Christians say it this way than any other, "Go ye therefore Preacher. We all know it is your job. That's why we are paying your salary." There is just one thing wrong with all of these various renditions of the scripture as church members ordinarily read it — **THEY ARE**

NOT IN THE BIBLE!

The Los Angeles TIMES on December 25, 1957, carried an article by George Gallup of Gallup Poll fame, stating that in 1957 some 25 million Americans made one or more calls in the interest of the church; 30 million homes in America 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 a single call from any church member. This is the way the various groups showed up in the survey: The Baptists were number one. The Catholics were number two. The Methodists were number three. The Lutherans were number four. The Jehovah's Witnesses were number five. The Presbyterians were number six and the Christian Churches were listed number seven in the number of total visits made in the year 1957. What a tragedy! We have the pure simple truth of the word of God and yet we are so selfish with it! Six other groups were more willing to go and tell others than we were willing to go.

The Bible is as plain as the nose on your face; Jesus expects every friend He has to go and tell somebody else. What would you think of a person if they had an incurable disease and then found a doctor that was able to cure that disease; then suppose you contracted the same disease and would go to this friend and say, "Please tell me quickly the name of the doctor that cured you of this terrible disease, I have it and I want to be cured also"? Then suppose your friend would say, "I'm not going to tell you." You cannot 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 knowledge that would save you and would refuse to give you that knowledge. My friends, I submit to you that many are guilty of spiritual murder, for many, many Christians have the knowledge that would save people and yet they are not willing to share it with anybody else. Why is it that the best personal evangelists in the church are usually new Christians? The converted drunkards, the converted harlots, the converted liars; these are people who

are most anxious to go and tell others about the Lord Jesus, but those who have been members of the church for years, who have the knowledge, are not willing to go. The old time members of the church are the ones who say, "Everybody knows the church doors are open. If the sinners want to be saved, let them come to the church house and hear the Gospel and be saved." Dear friends, there is not a single verse of scripture in all the word of God that says that sinners should come to the church house and hear the Gospel and be saved. Every verse of scripture in the Bible that pertains to the subject says that Christians are to GO to the sinners.

Three or four years ago the New York TIMES reported on an incident in Kew Gardens, New York. Kitty Genovese, a pretty young woman of 28, drove home from work late one night. It was 3:20 in the morning. She parked her car in the lot next to her apartment house. As she started towards her apartment door she saw a man at the far end of the parking lot. She immediately made her way toward a police call box. She got as far as the street light and a man grabbed her. She screamed, lights went on, windows were opened and voices were heard. Later, police determined that 37 people watched. The man stabbed Kitty Genovese and she screamed, "He stabbed me! Please help me!" One man called out, "Let that girl alone," and the assailant walked away. Miss Genovese got up and started towards her apartment. The man came back and stabbed her a second time. She screamed, "I'm dying! I'm dying!" But no one lifted a finger to help her or even bothered to call the police. The assailant got into the car and drove off. Miss Genovese crawled around to the back of her apartment. The assailant came back and stabbed her a third time. This time it was fatal. One of Miss Genovese's neighbors finally called the police. They arrived in two minutes, but she was dead. Assistant Chief Inspector, Fredrick Luffen, later told the New York Times reporter, "The assailant had three chances to kill this woman during the 35 minute period. He returned twice to complete the job. If we had been called when he first attacked, the

woman might not be dead now." The neighbor, who finally did call the police, did so after considerable hesitation because he said, "I didn't want to get involved." Another neighbor was asked why she didn't call the police. She said, "I didn't want my husband to get involved." A man who witnessed the attacks without coming to Miss Genovese's aid was asked why. He said, "I was tired and went to bed." Before you condemn these people too much, I ask many Christians if perhaps you are not guilty of the same thing. All around you, men and women, boys and girls are being starved to death spiritually by the devil. They are crying for help, but you are not willing to go and visit them because you say, "I don't want to get involved in the calling program of the church", or "I'm tired and want to go to bed", or "I'd rather stay at home and watch TV." Dear friends, if this world of 1972 is going to be evangelized, you must be involved; you must be willing to obey the orders of Jesus and GO.

II. The second word that will spell success in My Heart's Desire, which is to lead others to the Lord Jesus, is the word "TAKE". Take the word of God to the unsaved. Back in the Old Testament, Psalm 126:6, we read what is commonly called the Great Commission of the Old Testament: "He that goes forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." In Matthew 28:19 Jesus said, "Go and teach all nations." What are we to teach? We are to teach the word of God. Or as Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." As you go you are to take the word of God, the word of God which is the power of God unto salvation will convict those whom you visit of their need of Jesus Christ. The word of God will convince them of their need of Jesus Christ, and the word of God has the power to bring them to Jesus Christ.

I hear people say, "I can't win anybody to Christ because I'm not smart enough", "I can't talk to them", "I'm not talented

enough”, “I’m not handsome enough.” My friends, these are excuses. Leading souls to Jesus 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 the biggest crop in farming is the farmer who works the hardest, who plows up the most ground, who sows the seed, who cultivates the soil, and who is available in the time of harvest to bring in the crop. I’m sure it would be good if you were intellectually able and handsome and talented, but all of these things put together would not be able to lead even one soul to Jesus Christ. I remember learning this lesson so well long ago. I was 17 years old and was holding a meeting at the little town of Afton, Oklahoma. For two weeks I preached the word of God. We would go to the nearest creek where the old, white-haired minister, A.Z. Matthews, would bury the people in baptism. At the end of this two weeks revival, 40 souls had been saved. You can imagine how a 17 year old high school boy would feel about this. I was on the clouds. The last night of the revival meeting 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. 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 you preached that brought those people to Christ, not Reggie Thomas.” All through the years I have not forgotten those words that my father spoke to me so long ago. If I want to fulfill My Heart’s Desire, to bring people to Jesus, I must simply TAKE the word of God.

III. The third word that brings success in leading people to Jesus Christ is the word “BRING”. We find this word in the Gospel of John chapter 1 verses 41 and 42. Speaking of Andrew, it says, “He first findeth his own brother Simon.” That is, Andrew found Simon, his brother, and he said 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. How did he do it? It was done by the personal method. There is no substitute for personal work. Every businessman understands the importance of personal work. Oh, that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ would understand that the personal method will win. Many times I hear people saying, "What's wrong with the church?" Friend, there is nothing wrong with the church. Many times there is something wrong with the members of the church who have to be petted by the preacher, and cuddled by the preacher, and fed lumps of sugar by the preacher. I will tell you that whenever there is anything wrong with the church members, I know that they are not out doing personal work. Whenever I find a member of the church of Jesus Christ who is out trying to win souls to the Savior then I know that member is not going to have to be pampered by the preacher.

Jesus himself set the example in personal soul winning. He preached the great sermon on the New Birth to one man at night time. Jesus preached His great sermon on the water of life to one woman at the well. So Andrew, following the steps of Jesus, became a soul winner and rushed up to his own brother Simon and said, "We have found the Messiah." And he brought him to Jesus.

During the dark days of World War II it looked like Great Britain was going to lose in the fight. Night after night they were bombed by the Germans, but a brave handful of men took to the sky and began to fight back. These men were called the R.A.F. of Great Britain; R.A.F. standing for Royal Air Force. There wasn't much royal about this air force because they only had a few, old, broken down planes. But the men were great men, heroic men. Night after night they bravely fought back and because of the heroic efforts of the men of the R.A.F. of Great Britain, the tide of the war turned. As the tide turned, Sir Winston Churchill made one of his famous speeches. It was August 24, 1940, when Churchill paid tribute to the gallant men

of the R.A.F. and he said, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." If you who are reading this message right now will make up your mind that your heart's desire will be to win somebody to Jesus, then there may be such a great host who will be redeemed in Heaven because of your efforts that someday the saved will be shouting, "Never have so many of us owed so much to so few." Dr. Andrew Murray has reminded us of this fact, "If there were only one Christian in the whole world and if 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 if all who were won to Christ would continue in personal evangelism taking a whole year to win just one other each to Christ, it would only take 31 years to win the vast population of this earth to the Lord Jesus Christ."

Many years ago a missionary was leaving the shores of our country to go to China. An 80 year old man, the father of the missionary, had come to tell his son goodbye. There were troops getting on board this same ship to go out and fight in some distant place. Some of the people who were standing there on the docks began to shout at the troops, "Give them hell!", "Give them hell!". The 80 year old man put his arms around his missionary son and whispered these words, "Son, you give them Jesus Christ!" This is my heart's desire, to give the world the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have wept for my child when he was fevered and ill, I've pleaded, blessed Lord, make him whole, but I am humble and sad as I call on His name, how long since I've wept for a soul? I wept for my loved ones now gone from this world, though they are with the Savior I'm told. Then from somewhere above, Jesus questions in love, how long since you've wept for a soul? I weep for the moments of pleasure I've missed, for the lack of life's gain and its gold, but before you condemn let me ask you my friend, how long since you've wept for a soul?