

vices would grow rapidly. I think prayer meeting would increase

I wonder if personal evangelism is not the best method after all for mobilizing the total membership of the church.

What about friendliness? I think a church that cares and goes after people will develop a warm, friendly atmosphere that will be attractive to people.

Another thing that would result would be that it would revitalize church members. When people have a deep concern for the souls it is not likely they will create any trouble in their individual groups or in the church that will be active, participating and growing in grace.

Here is an illustration. There is a Lewer Grove Baptist Church in St. Louis that baptized 391 people. Now there must have been a lot of excitement and constant emphasis. And that church must have used every means of training their people in the matter of witnessing. They set aside every Thursday as a soul winning visitation time.

Or take Midwest Church in New Orleans. They baptized around 350 people every year. They give personal attention to each member regarding their responsibilities to witness for Christ.

Now if a church is to carry on personal witnessing in what must take place, what must be taken into consideration, what

THE SEEKING ELEMENT IN EVANGELISM - Luke 15

Publicans and sinners drew near while the scribes and Pharisees drew away. Jesus is always an attraction to the repenting sinner but not to the self-righteous.

Jesus was not attracted to the sinners by the fact that he condoned or overlooked their sins for he condemned sin everywhere. He came to them and gave them what they needed. He eats with sinners and he emphasizes the seeking element here in these three brief stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost boy.

Our world is growing more pagan at the rate of 38 million souls a year. In 1850, it took an average of 5 Christians a year to lead one person to Christ. Today it takes an average of 100 Christians in this day of tragic need we must do more than invite people to church. We must bring them face to face with Christ.

"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem and ye are witnesses of these things." (Luke 24:46-48).

Now the great need for personal witnessing goes back into the loving nature of God. The personal witnessing is related first of all to God.

✓ Just when did God seek man? Do you remember any account in the Bible as to when God first sought man?

God took the initiative, for example, when he was seeking Adam. And he asked the question, "Where art thou?" Just as the prodigal son was out seeking his father was seeking him. And as the shepherd sought the sheep.

And God, through Jesus, says, "Come ye after me and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus was in the (seeking business) Jesus not only practiced personal witnessing but he trained his (disciples) in this matter. And he sent them out two by two. (Luke 10:1)

Now this would be a fine discussion sometime but briefly can you tell me why Jesus sent the disciples out in twos? Why did he not send them out in (larger numbers) or why did he not send them out one by one?

Now the Bible sounds a note of warning. That is if we do not warn the wicked and he dies in his sins, his blood will be upon our hands. (Eze. 3:18). Paul announced that he declared the council of God publicly and from house to house. (Acts 20: 20).

Now God sent them out two and two. Why did God decide to use human instrumentality? Was there (any other way) of getting the message out? Do you suppose he might have sent (angels)?

✓ Now those that he sent out, what did he promise them? He promised them his (presence) he promised them (power) as they go and tell of the (love) and forgiveness; he promised them the (Holy Spirit) that will enable them to win a soul to Christ. "But ye shall have power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The Holy Spirit reveals Christ.

✓ Now why is it that most of our failures that we have failues in witnessing? Maybe I should put the question this way. Why is it that people refuse to do personal witnessing? Do you think its because of a (lack of education)?

In all probablity the best answer would be (lack of dedi- cation). When (we are usable), God can and will use us.

✓ Now, what will personal witnessing do for the church? That is to say, if our members began to personally witness for Jesus Christ, what do you think will be (some of the results?)

(First) it will (revive the church). It'll quicken the church in spiritual life. There will be new life in it. Now it's difficult to determine just what would happen. But a spirit of revival surely would be one of the results. I think the (offerings) would increase amazingly. I think (Sunday school) rooms would have to be added. I think attendance at the ser-

exactly what's wrong and then we leap in with a solution without obtaining all the facts.

Richard Baxter, in the 17th century, once wrote a guide-book for Christian workers in which he stressed, "Deal with people as individuals, inquire as to their religious state, deal with people according to their particular characteristics, include the whole with practical exhortation".

Now why does visitation pay off and witnessing even though it does not skyrocket the church membership roll? Why do you think this patient or evangelism would pay off?

First, here is the lost sheep. And this silly wandering sheep represents a sinner in error rather than willful sin.

In fact, this sheep just wandered off and the chief shepherd went off to hunt for it. He went searching for it. He was lost to seek him out.

Now when we go out to win the lost sheep we are in our conversation not early to be blunt and ask a fellow are you saved brother. To startle him that he put up all of his defenses. It is better to have the Holy Spirit to lead us in the conversation. For a while. And to begin with the spiritual things at the place where we really need to begin. And this lesson that Ezekiel gives to us in Ezekiel 3:15. He says

I sat where they sat and remain there astonished among them

are some of the mechanical things that must be used to promote the matter of personal witnessing every week?

Well a project such as that would naturally be worked through the Sunday School.

As we find in all of our materials, first of all, there would be definite plans for leading the church member into witnessing. There would be the cooperation of all the members in this. And there would be second, planning for continued us through the Sunday school. As a most effective witnessing organization or unit in the church.

Third, it would mean that we should maintain an accurate file of prospects for witnessing efforts. Now if we are going to seek the lost, we must have the records, the up-to-date files.

If we are going to lead out in this there must be a spirit of compassion. Or else it will not work.

There must be the assignment of prospects, the securing of reports. This can be worked through assembly programs. There must be motivation on the part of teaching. And it must be done by personal goals. To witness. Could be set up by individual departments to do this.

Now what would this witnessing do, this seeking do for the Christian? How long has it been since you won a soul to

Christ? How long has it been since you tried?

If it not a real privilege or is it a burden that this responsibility that every believer has in regard to witnessing?

Now it is estimated that less than 1% of our people ever make any serious effort to win anyone to Christ. Jesus prayed "as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world". (John 17:18)

In this regard of seeking, I wonder if we couldn't consider this a natural, normal thing for a healthy Christian who identifies himself with Christ. What kind of fruit are we to bear? He is the vine, we are the branches. A tree will bear fruit of its own kind and the fruit of a Christian is another Christians.

I think another thing that would result in the Christian's life is a growing victorious Christian life. It would cause him to study the Bible, cause him to stay close to God in prayer. Guidance in prayer, bring joy, inspire, consecrated living.

Now many Christians know that the key to visitation is the key to the church outreach. The pastor preaches on the subject, and now we ask people to visit every pupil in Sunday school. And we have visitation crusades. But they do not

appear to result into great victories for our Lord. That is a

visit is very much worthwhile even if it does not result into immediate conversion or a new member. In the local church. The person you may visit may not be a prospect in terms of your own church but may be struggling with some heavy burden, frustration, or just plain disappointment and you can be a very messenger of the Lord to speak the word of church here and revive dull hopes.

Now, what does a doctor do? Now here is something. Let me ask you a question. I believe we can learn something from the medical profession here. What does a doctor do when a patient comes to him? What does he do? Somebody suggest. Does the first thing he do get up and jump at a diagnosis first? Or does he listen? Or does he take into account all the facts, for instance. The story of events leading up to the sickness. For example, here is a little child that has the measles you think and you might describe it to the doctor over the telephone and he'll say, you know, I've got to come and see for myself. Now most people don't realize this. He will tell you but to make a correct diagnosis, if one of the hardest things that a doctor must face. And if he is wrong then all of the medication that he prescribes will not bring about a cure.

This ought to be a lesson to every Christian worker that we must learn that when we enter a home, we are not a judge,

pain a little easier, the trouble you listen to may have no easy solution. Your new found friend has to bear the pain and inner anguish. Physical presence and your spiritual insight.

You can talk about the weather, the church services last Sunday, the ball scores. And underneath, the sick person is saying, (will I ever get better.) Is there something about my sickness that I've not been told. If God punishing me for this sin. Don't be afraid to face these deep things of the spirit if the patient gives a hint and talks about them.

There are lots of things in seeking the lost that we might do. We must listen with a sympathetic manner. Not argue. Some people argue religion but you may win the argument but you lose a friend. Refrain from being critical.

Resist the temptation of telling them your life story and monopolizing the conversation. Leave the door open for further visits, prayer before and during the visit that the Lord will help you to share. Can you suggest some reasons why we should return to this evangelism? That we should come back to this? Too often these opportunities that we think of, we wait for a prospect card to be placed in our hands. Too many of us are like salesmen. We are interested in people only if they will just join our church.

I think one reason is that we can return to the major

learned many things. Thus he was better able to present the message of the Lord when the time came for him to deliver it.

While you are aware that here is a lost sheep, a person who needs salvation, that's important. This person may recognize the need himself. But he must do the repenting and do the believing and he must feel the need himself concerning his condition.

Now here is a lost coin. And we see something of the recovery by the Holy Spirit. Here the coin, say this coin is worth about 17 cents. A day's labor. The sinner is like this coin. In that it bears the image of the king and so the sinner has the image of God stamped upon him. But here he is lost. And he is still lost. And the woman searches and seeks. For this lost coin. Well, it's a terrible thing to be lost. But we find that here's another secret.

Visitation can be considered a work of reclamation. Many people once were active and taking part in the church. But because of disappointment, frustration, because of some harsh word spoken by a thoughtless member, any number of things, they have now grown delinquent. Well, it's hard to counsel with these. There is deep emotion. There are reasons. Why they don't want to talk about Christ and about his church. And about his demands.

At this point we must think about prepare ye the way of

the Lord, of the people. Cast up the highway, gather up the stones. (Isa. 62:10) We must get rid of these rocks and these boulders that block the path. It is easy to win a new convert many times than it is to reclaim an old one especially if something has gone wrong.

Those who did run well, (Gal. 5:7) are well stocked with excuses, grievances, grudges. For their non-attendance. If you will come back to church, with God's grace, we will strive to do better to fight point by point is really futile. We must face the past wrongs honestly in the light of God's word.

The lost boy. Here is boy and he was lost. And here is a terrible picture of sin.

V.12 Why do you suppose this boy was discontent?

Selfishness, ingratitude, self-will, narrow vision.

Maybe he was the kind of fellow who refused to think further than the end of his nose.

Now was it not his right, his freedom of choice given to him. So it is to the sinner as a free choice.

V.13 Where did he go when he departed home? Well, one thing sin does not care for home ties. It just breaks a person's heart, tramples on it. This man or boy went off into a far country That is sinners go away from God.

V.13 What did this departure from God result in? First of all, righteous living. I wonder if we have any of that today? Second

his substance wasted, he spend all that he had. What did he spend? List some of the items Money, time, influence, health, and at last a famine arrives on the scene. We would say in modern language (when it rains it pours) This boy began to be in want.

He was sold to serve hogs. In other words he was cemented glued himself to a citizen. And he began. They had no sympathy for him.

What brought about his return? First, it comes to himself, his sense. But he's kinda late. But it's better late than never. Second, he resolves when he realizes what he had done, that home is the best place and he's going back. Now he had good intentions. Hell is paved with good intentions.

He repents. He was welcomed back home. Now what did the old father say about him? He was dead, he is alive; he was lost, he was found; and you know we can make a lot of folks happy. By seeking the lost ones.

Had you ever thought about this visitation, personal witnessing. It may be done as a supportive effort. You visit the sick, or the elderly, or the shut-ins. Those who are in pain, those who have fear, those who have guilt, those who are lonely. Now some of these you cannot do anything about these problems. It's up to the medical science. But your sympathetic presence, your nearness to a person, can make the

method of the first Christian churches. Our most successful plans or methods can only be successful as we turn back to the early church. They turn the world upside down. Our modern church cannot be said to be doing that. The forces of evil seem to dominate. But the New Testament church certainly had something that was vital. And they had something that we do not seem to major on. This kind of led them into fellowship and Bible study. And evangelism. They were to go out in pair and he told them what to expect, how to make the approach and what to say to people to win them.

This was the program of the early church. Now everybody prayed. Everybody bore witness. This method cannot be improved upon.

How can we expect it when we have violated this program? Everybody is not praying. Everybody is not witnessing. In fact very few are. We have only about one-third of the program left. One man stands up and preaches. Now until we recover the full program of the praying and of the witnessing, we are going to be handicapped. And hampered. We may organize a lot of things.

Second, visitation seeking evangelism is necessary to save evangelism itself. Dr. George W. Truitt once said more than once when the church ceases to be evangelistic, she will soon cease to be evangelical. The plain fact is that in many parts

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of our world, we are out of touch with this main truth.

A third thing, I would like to list here along this line as a reason for returning to seeking evangelism is that it is necessary to call our laymen into kingdom service. Now we have had only nominal interest in the past. We are busy with a lot of activities and there is service clubs in the city.

Intelligent things, social things. But it is time now for us to get into the game and to enlist they laymen into this program. This visitation evangelism seeking evangelism will enable our laymen to discover themselves and their power. For

example a man went to visit a lost person. And he said it must have cost you something to come here; but I'm glad you came. I've wanted to be a Christian for sometime. But I did not know just how to go about it. And when they bowed in prayer this man doing the witnessing said for the first time in 20 years since I've been a church member, I felt like I was saved all over again. Visitation evangelism will cause a church and her people never to be deceived.

Now what will this do for the lost? The lost sheep was won, the lost coin found, the lost son was brought back to life. This demands our interest. In a recent questionnaire revealed that most people do not attempt to win souls to Christ because they are not concerned about the lost.

How many lost people do you think attend our churches?

They do not attend our churches in great number. Out of 180 million people in the U.S. say 112 million are classified as church members. 3% of the lost people attend church. At some time or other. That means that today even in the evangelistic crusades, where great bodies of people are gathered together, 90 to 96% of the people attending are already Christian.

What is the most effective method of reaching the lost? Couldn't we say personal witnessing? And personal witnessing can be done by any sincere person who loves Christ and loves souls. Few people accept Christ without being witnessed to.

Many people are waiting for your visit. Some feel and wait and hope. There is a hunger for God in their hearts. As a man witnessed to an old fellow, a man who was foreign birth, and after brining him to Christ, the man said, I live here for 23 years. People come and go in my house all the time. But no one told me this before.

There are people up and down our streets. There are those who wait for your visit.