

# Too Lite to Be Light?

A Lo-Carb brand of personal religion is disastrous to the world.

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## You Can Be a Rescuer

Let's concentrate on what any and every one of us can do to pull others from the flames.

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## Does the Devil Make Mistakes?

Gratitude for God's forgiveness will "send you back" to help others.

Do you know that the devil makes mistakes—and big ones at that? The diabolical efforts of this enemy of our souls to steal, kill and destroy can at times seem overwhelming. But his efforts can at the same time create a phenomenon that works to our advantage.

The name I've given this phenomenon is the "Boomerang Factor." The Australian boomerang, which may be used as a weapon, is designed to soar or curve in flight and return to the thrower.

The Boomerang Factor occurs when God's forgiveness couples in us with a deep gratitude to Jesus for wiping away our spiritual stench and stain. The resulting phenomenon is that people who were once lost in sin rebound with a grateful

zealousness to spread the same gospel that changed them. Our gratitude empowers us, and like a boomerang we come full circle, returning to the kingdom of darkness to do damage to it by spreading the good news of God's love and forgiveness to others still trapped there.

Have you ever listened to young people exuberantly share their personal stories of coming to Christ? So often I've heard young men and women from ministries such as Victory Outreach, Teen Challenge and Master's Commission testify about the positive difference in their lives after receiving Christ.

One evening I was participating in an inner-city pastors conference held at Angelus Temple and the Dream Center in Los Angeles. One by one, teenagers told what Jesus had delivered them from and how they now wanted to reach others with the gospel.

At times they were almost shouting their testimonies (so much for a laid-back, latte-filled, seeker-sensitive service!). They expressed a remarkable passion not only to know Christ, but also to make Him known.

Listening to them, Jesus' statement about the woman who lived in sin came back to me: "Her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little" (Luke 7:47, NIV). In other words, a person who has been forgiven much loves much.

That's why God's forgiveness of our sins is one half of the power that makes the Boomerang Factor weigh in heavily against the kingdom of darkness. The Pharisees recoiled at the thought of interacting with this woman. They never would have considered allowing her to wash and anoint their feet with her tears, hair and expensive oil, as Jesus had. But she had received forgiveness for her sins and was deeply grateful.

Just like her—and those young men and women I listened to in Los Angeles—I too am grateful to God for forgiving and

delivering me. Aren't you ever so grateful to the Lord for taking you out of whatever He has rescued you from and bringing you to where you are today?

Whether we were drug-addicted, tattooed, smelled like a sewer and drove a motorcycle or are sophisticated, squeaky-clean, smell like Chanel No. 5 and drive a luxury car, each of us ought to consider himself or herself the chief of sinners who is in desperate need of God's forgiveness. Sin—regardless of its level of social repugnance—grieves God and was the reason Jesus gave His life for you and me.

That's why our gratitude for being forgiven is the other half of the power that makes the Boomerang Factor weigh in heavily against the kingdom of darkness. Gratitude for God's forgiveness will propel you to greater action—and “send you back” to help others.

Unfortunately, when we take our Christianity for granted, we lose our sense of gratitude to Jesus. When this happens, it's usually accompanied by a diminished desire to reach out to others.

Can you imagine how awesome it would be if this Sunday in your church or fellowship there were a host of young, just-saved believers exuberantly declaring their devotion to Jesus and their burning desire to reach others? Their attitude might just spread.

Pause right now and tell God how thankful you are for the new life He has given you. Live today with an attitude of gratitude, and while you are at it, try to spread it around. People might get saved. It would be the Boomerang Factor at work.

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# Open Your Eyes

Strangely enough, Jesus' associates could not see the potential for ministry right in front of them.

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# Loosen Up and Reach Out

Paul was willing to be stretched ... so that he might win some for Christ.

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# Reaching the Unchurched Is Your Responsibility

Reaching the unchurched ... is the responsibility of every follower of Jesus Christ in this country. Period.

A hazard of being a traveling evangelist is coming home to the sight of a pile of unpaid bills. While I'm gone they stack up on my desk. If I were to let them go unpaid (which I don't) the debt would just accumulate until, sooner or later, I would be forced to pay what I owe.

On an entirely different front, America is not meeting its obligations. It is drowning in an ocean of ignored, unpaid bills. Congress has no power to pay this debt; these bills are

spiritual. Call it the American church's "national debt": the mushrooming unchurched U.S. population that the Spirit-filled church has mostly ignored.

Our church leaders have repeatedly made us aware that we have rapidly become a nation of unchurched people. Even in many Bible Belt communities the influence of Christianity is in marked decline. The "bills" are stacking up.

Sooner or later we must pay this growing debt. Why? Because reaching the unchurched and lost people in America is the responsibility of every single follower of Jesus Christ in this country. Period.

Before discussing how we can address this burgeoning spiritual debt-load, let's look at two factors that are adding to it.

**1. We have turned away from the harvest.** People in our country have become devalued, not only by society but by the church as well. When we talk of receiving a harvest, our thoughts often race to material blessings (yes, hallelujah, God does bless us in this way). But Jesus also speaks of harvest in terms of people exiting darkness and entering the kingdom of God.

**2. Our focus isn't on the main thing.** We often substitute prayer for action. Prayer is incredibly vital, but to pray only and not act is pure spiritual laziness (see Ex. 14:15; Matt. 9:38).

Ever heard of the church's "MapQuest trap"? That's what I call it when we must map out and identify spiritual strongholds as a prerequisite to evangelism. Try telling Philip that was necessary after his preaching experience in Samaria (see Acts 8:5-7).

What about our tendency to "tarry" until all the fivefold ministry gifts are lined up? While preachers try to figure who they are and what they are supposed to do, who is obeying the Great Commission? Are we supposed to procrastinate about that?

Why is it that gatherings of apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers rarely include evangelists?

As believers, we Spirit-filled, charismatic or Pentecostal Christians are the most exuberant at expressing our faith. We are also the most easily distracted and gullible—how often we fall prey to subtle spins on genuine Christian practice!

When it comes to taking the gospel to the unsaved, we're like people who run everywhere on vacation all the time—doing anything to avoid taking care of their obligations. We must understand that America's unchurched are the unpaid spiritual bills we must pay.

Now let's discuss a few ways to address this spiritual debt.

**Take responsibility.** Become accountable to the Great Commission. Have you ever been with a group of people at a restaurant when the check arrives at the table and everyone ignores it? Let's you and I reach out and pick up the tab.

**Cry out to God.** Get down on your face and pray. Repent if you need to, but pray in faith. Believe that God wants you to pray this way and know He is listening. By faith, see both the action and the answer, but also be ready to be an answer to your own prayers to reach the unsaved. Jesus said: "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24, NIV, emphasis added).

**See the harvest.** Wake up to the fact that the possibilities of reaching people abound even more during times of adversity. The time is not coming; it is here.

**Just do it!** Gird up your mind and get the information you need to become one who reaches the lost. Change whatever you have to so you can expedite paying the "bills"! God has provided every heavenly resource we need to pay these unpaid bills. Let's go and do it!

*Scott Hinkle is founder of Scott Hinkle Outreach Ministries in Phoenix. For more information, visit his website at .*

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## **Let's Brighten the Future**

**We are the light of the world. So, Christians of the world ... ignite!**

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## **Are You Ready for War?**

**For Christians, "war" means gaining victories over the kingdom of darkness.**

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## **Feeling 'Left Behind'?**

Though it feels like everything is crumbling around us, we have a choice; we can watch from the sidelines or be used as God's vessel in the midst.

The times you and I now live in could be lumped into categories ranging from "unsure" to "unsettling" to "unnerving" to flat-out "frightening." One great positive during these days, however, is the fact that God is not the least bit nervous about what's happening.

He, in fact, told us there would be periods like this. Living our lives from God's perspective allows us to share one of many distinct advantages with Him—we can have peace while troublesome times are brewing all around.

Some passages in the New Testament provide us with a parallel to current world affairs. Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 24. His disciples asked Him, “‘What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’” (v. 3, NIV). When I think about how Jesus answered His followers, it seems as if He had been watching today's CNN Headline News reports. He said:

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## **Are You Trapped in Your Comfort Zone?**

**God wanted the disciples out of the comfort of Jerusalem so the gospel would spread.**

Growing up on the famed Jersey Shore, I spent all my summers on the beach. Music, friends, hot dogs, french fries, fun and the ocean—I loved it all, especially the ocean. Even today—though I have much less opportunity because I live in Arizona—I could spend all day at the beach.

Consider the Christians of the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit performed signs, wonders and miracles among them. Fellowship and a sense of community arose quickly. People immediately were swept into the kingdom of God.

They had great revelation and teaching; they could worship like they never had before; they could give and receive prophecies; and they could be blessed, blessed, blessed.

That could've gone on forever! Kind of like living by the ocean and soaking up the music, food and fun—why would you want it to stop?

All of what those early believers had sounds great to me. But if that move of God had not eventually changed, it probably would have imploded, become very ingrown and weird—or simply dried up.

Why? Because God knew the human tendency—even of the early believers—would be to hang out in Jerusalem and just soak up the blessings.

But in Acts 7-8, everything seemed to change overnight. “At that time a great persecution arose against the church... and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1, NKJV).

It looked like the party was over. It really wasn't—but the imperative from the King had changed. It would no longer just be about receiving from heaven; it would be about sharing heaven's life with the world.

Fortunately, the early believers did what God intended, even though the way His will came to them—through trouble and persecution—was not the means they would have chosen. But the results were terrific: “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:4,8).

Today we are plagued with violence, terror, an unstable economy and church scandals. Could it be that once more God is using the “stir stick” of adversity to get believers and the gospel beyond our Jerusalems and out where the lost and suffering live?

If you believe this is even remotely possible, then consider a simple three-word strategy drawn from Acts that will work for any Christian who will dare to think along these lines.

**1. Saturate.** Seek to immerse yourself in God's presence—be filled with the Holy Spirit, renewed through God's Word and walk every day in the Spirit. But don't stop there. Instead, saturate your home, school, workplace and neighborhood with prayer.

Try walking through your own neighborhood while praying. Where you live may become an attractive-looking mission field that calls for greater personal action from you.

**2. Infiltrate.** Go beyond your comfort zone. God wanted the disciples out of the comfort of Jerusalem so the gospel would spread throughout the earth. There is nothing wrong with being comfortable unless it keeps you from fully obeying the Lord.

Jesus likened His followers to light and salt. Both infiltrate. Light works best where the darkness is deepest. Salt works best on things that are tasteless (and it's of no use if it merely sits in a salt shaker or cupboard).

**3. Proliferate.** There was a great harvest on the day of Pentecost. More important, however, adding new people or members to Christ's body became an everyday occurrence.

I don't think the early church took the time to go to seminars (although today they do help). They just quickly began to declare the gospel and saw immediate results.

If you feel as if you might have spent a little too much time on "the beach" and have become spiritually waterlogged, then the best thing I can suggest for you is to get into action—now!

After all, who would want all the great things God is doing to end with us? They won't, if we spread the gospel everywhere we go.

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