

4 Years in Seminary or 4 Minutes in Hell?

General William Booth's advice on how to activate Christians to share the gospel passionately and consistently still stands. He believed people plunged into the fires of hell would profit more than even from years in seminary.

That may be a bit of hyperbole, but his point is well taken.

Today, as we watch America deteriorate and masses being deceived in the post-Christian "progressive" cultural rot, our only hope is another Great Awakening predicated on repentance and renewed fervor for evangelism.

Survey these sobering stats:

- With 400,000 churches in America, 80% are either stagnant or declining.
- Among the remaining 20%, most church growth (about 95%) is biological or transfer.
- Conversion growth is minimal.
- Stats are now more sobering with many youths departing, falling prey to "deconstructionism" (2 Tim. 4:1).

Need for Religious Revival

The late Tim Keller wrote an article, "American Christianity is Due for a Revival" ("The Atlantic," 2/5/23). I agree!

America is a religious country, with Pew Research estimating 64% as "Christian." But are they authentic or counterfeit? Some are ignorant (like I was), but others are hypocrites needing a "Jesus jolt" to convict them.

"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?"

(Luke 6:46). "But then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice evil'" (Matt. 7:23).

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. 10:14). When my wife's parents (devout Catholics) and the seven children who were living at home heard this Good News, they all responded, and many entered full-time Christian ministry!

When I shared the true gospel with my parents, sister, girlfriend and a coach (who were all religious but uninformed like me) they were all born again!

When I wrote my conversion story "Clap Your Hands!" a quarter-million quickly sold all over America and abroad as scores identified with my journey from religion to relationship.

3 Essentials

1. Recommit to gospel sharing. The Great Commission is not the Great Suggestion. Evangelism is not an elective, but a directive from Almighty God.

All four Gospels end with the central theme of evangelism (Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, John 20:21), and the book of Acts begins with Jesus directing the disciples to "receive power" to "be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

God "has given to us the ministry of reconciliation ... entrusted to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us. We implore you in Christ's stead: be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

Seeing people come to Christ doesn't happen mystically. God's calling us to repent of disobedience to the mandate of evangelism, renounce fear of man as well as bad theology, and

recalibrate our lives to intentionally and regularly reach out to unbelievers. There's no impact without contact!

"Prince of Preachers" Charles Spurgeon said, "Soul-winning is the chief business of the Christian minister; indeed, it should be the main pursuit of every true believer."

Pastors, take heed: are your sermons regularly sprinkled with examples of your evangelism to inspire the flock?

2. Recognize the Process. Jesus took time for individuals. He was not Type A, looking for the shortest line to avoid conversations and get in and out of Costco settings! Talking to the woman at the well led to her conversion and that of her entire town. Then adjusting his disciples for missing the potential harvest, He told them that evangelism was a process that "leads to eternal life" as "he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together" (John 4:34–39).

The Bible teaches "one plants, one waters but God gives the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6–9). The hidden hand of God is at work in people's lives!

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Evangelism is a process, just like cultivating soil, removing weeds, planting seeds, then watering to reap a harvest. Church growth studies point out that most people have about six to seven contacts with the gospel before conversion. In planting seeds in hearts, you might be No. 1, No. 4 and finally No. 7 as they yield their life to Christ.

In the Parable of the Sower and the Seed Jesus said that "the seed is the Word" (Luke 8:11). I've planted hundreds of thousands of gospel seeds in my evangelistic efforts through conversations, testimony tracts, speaking, literature and invitations to events. "Make friends for yourself by means of

unrighteous mammon (money) so when it fails, they will welcome you into the eternal habitation" (Luke 16:9).

3. Recover lifestyle evangelism and enjoy the adventure!

Lifestyle evangelism: the process of living in such a way that non-Christians move one step closer to Jesus Christ as a result of our love and initiative in their lives. Let's pray, prepare, believe and expect "divine appointments": providential, not coincidental, supernaturally orchestrated opportunities with non-Christians to help them discover new life in Jesus Christ.

We'll enjoy the adventure of sharing the good news with needy, confused, often religious and sometimes hopeless people outside of Christ. "We are His workmanship (Greek—"masterpiece") created in Christ Jesus unto good works that God prepared in advance that we walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). No more "chance encounters"; these are supernaturally orchestrated and sovereignly arranged by Jesus who "wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

On my journey, I've given out about two or three of my personal testimony tracts daily for almost 50 years. Most are to average folks but God has also had me "plant seeds" with famous folks like Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban, Charlton Heston, Jay Leno, Tony Bennet, Martin Sheen, Jim Valvano, Elizabeth Taylor, Jane Seymour, Bob Dole, Janet Reno, Donald Rumsfeld, Geraldo Rivera and many more whom He loves.

10 Ways to Connect

1. Pray for non-Christians and for opportunities to meet them.
2. Extend a friendly greeting.
3. Take initiative in establishing conversations.
4. Learn people's names.

5. Take a genuine interest in people's lives.
- ❌ 6. Bless people with tangible expressions of God's love.
7. Be a servant by doing helpful good deeds for others.
8. Open your home to adults and children.
9. Look for creative and natural ways to interact with them (holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, welcome new neighbors, birth of babies).
10. Get reconciled if any conflict or offense still lingers.

Here's the Deal: Jesus said, "Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19b). If you're not fishing, are you really following? Begin today to do something about it!

*An unpreached gospel is no gospel at all, Reinhard Bonnke says in his book *Evangelism by Fire*. {eo}*

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