

7 Reasons To Be a Soul winner

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"Do the work of an evangelist" was Paul's command to Timothy in 1 Tim. 4:5. Every Christian who is interested in fulfilling the Word should be truly endeavoring to reach out to the lost, as this is the most obvious "work" of an evangelist (See Acts 8:4-8, 2638). Not everyone has the extrovert personality to walk up to a complete stranger and begin preaching the gospel to him. But, everyone should be expecting the Lord to use him or her as the opportunity arises to share their faith and especially when they sense the Lord leading them to do so.

This month I'm sharing 7 reasons we should be seeking to win souls. I trust it will inspire you to be more aggressive and creative in your approach to personal evangelism. Following are 7 good reasons to evangelize the lost:

1. Because of the reality of Hell . . .

While on earth, Jesus talked more about Hell than He did Heaven and described it in the most horrible terms: "*outer darkness*" (Matt. 8:12); "*the fire that never shall be quenched*" (Mark 9:45); "*there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth*" (a frightful description He used no less than 5 times)" (Matt. 13:50). If sinners are headed toward this place, there's no greater favor we could ever grant them than to do everything humanly possible to help them escape it!

I was visiting my parents. A man was there who was drunk. He was cussing and cursing and carrying on. Yet, in between his foul words, he told a gentle story about a little black boy who was sitting in front of a church, downcast and sad. Jesus walked by and asked, "Son, what's wrong?" The boy said, "They won't let me in that church!" To which Jesus replied, "Don't worry son, they won't let me in there either!" Like a flash it came to me to say to that drunken story teller, "And that same Jesus wants to come into your heart!" But, the man was so disgusting, drunk, and probably wouldn't have listened to me anyway. So, I decided to say nothing. Imagine my shock to hear that the very next day, he was in a car accident and died! He is probably screaming in the flames of Hell now. And, I was likely the last person on earth who had good opportunity to witness to him, yet didn't. How many of those we meet this very year have an unexpected appointment with eternity? Can God use us to steer them off the "broad path of destruction?" May God enable us to do so!

A better time, I was witnessing to old folks in a rest home. One old 92 year old man had previously been either a bartender or liquor store worker (I forget which). I shared the faith with him and he accepted Christ. Imagine my relief when I came back the next week to "follow up" on my new convert and discovered his bed empty. Enquiring, I discovered he had died just a couple of days after I led him to Christ. What dollar amount can you put on the worth of that experience – "*a soul saved from death.*" (James 5:20). The gospel when heard and received is the promised escape from hell – "*Whosoever believeth ... shall not perish*" (John 3:16). No wonder Romans 10:15 says, "*How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*" Are your feet beautiful? They are if you have prepared yourself and are ready to share the good news! What can you do to more aggressively to depopulate Hell?

2. Because of the Holy Spirit's help . . .

"The Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." (Acts 8:29). Philip, the prototype evangelist, had the Spirit's assistance in his evangelistic efforts. If we are listening, and ready to obey, the Holy Spirit will speak to our hearts too and direct us in God ordained encounters with lost souls. Expect it!

I was pastoring in Sheridan, Wyoming. We were having a guest speaker for a series in our church. During a prayer meeting at the church the night before the revival began, while we were in prayer, I suddenly had a burden to hit the streets and evangelize. (I'm quite sure our speaker thought I was just trying to get out of the prayer meeting, but I went anyway, taking a young man with me). While walking downtown looking for "choice morsels" to win to Christ, I noticed a group of about 5 teenagers walking out of a pizza parlor.

I approached them and said, "Hey kids, where are you headed?" They nervously and suspiciously pointed up the street. I said, "No, I mean when you die?" and began to preaching the gospel. Right there in the street, most of them prayed the sinner's prayer with me. One of them was named "Becky". She started attending our church, eventually becoming a youth leader there and even attending Bible College for a season. I'm so glad I obeyed the Spirit's promptings!

Sometimes the Lord will prompt us without us even realizing it. I was still single and in Bible college and had broken up with my girlfriend of 8 months. I moaped about it for a few weeks. Then, I was suddenly reminded of a childhood sweetheart, Cheryl. She lived on the opposite side of the southern California metroplex from where I was raised. During summers, she would come to spend time at her grandmother's house, next door to where I lived. Oh, I enjoyed those times! Now, grown up, I was a college student with a car. I could go visit her and maybe we could start dating!

I thought my motives were romantic, but by the time I was sitting in her living room with her and her mom and brother, I realized what an opportunity I had to witness. So, I began sharing the gospel, using a step by step approach to explaining salvation that Jack Hayford had taught us in our "Personal Evangelism" class at college. I was only about half way through when Cheryl, under great conviction cried out, "But what do I do to be saved!?" I told her, "just wait till I'm finished". (Brother Hayford hadn't explained what to do if someone wanted to get saved before you had given them the whole "official" plan of salvation. Ha, ha!). I led her and her brother to Christ! (We did date once or twice, but it wasn't God's will).

I Phoned her sometime later, and she was real discouraged spiritually. I asked her if she had read the booklet I had left with her (called "The Know So Christian"). She admitted she hadn't. I said, "Cheryl, you've GOT to read that booklet!". She did and the power of God's word and the Truth began to set her free. She became alive in Christ! She joined a Foursquare church in town, gave away all her miniskirts (yes, this was the 60's) and even became President of the Youth group. I ran into her and her brother a few years back. They are both serving the Lord. In fact, Cheryl is one of my faithful supporters now. (One of my favorite proofs of true salvation! Ha, ha!). Impressions, faces, names, places, dreams, ideas: the Spirit will birth these in us and we must learn to act upon them. *"As many as are led of the Spirit, these are the sons of God."* (Rom. 8:14). Believe He is leading you day by day and trust His impressions in you!

3. Because of the power of the Word . . .

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for IT IS THE POWER OF GOD unto salvation." (Romans 1:16). The gospel is the POWER that brings salvation. We must be convinced of this. If we mistakenly think it is our logic, our persuasiveness or our persistence that convinces one to be saved, we will be attempting evangelism in the energy of the flesh. No, it is the gospel itself that does the work of evangelism for us.

I was holding meetings in Clarkston, WA. I went door to door to invite people to the crusade and to witness and came to a house where two high school girls (I think they were both cheerleaders) stood at the door, politely, as I shared the gospel. I remember thinking to myself, "This isn't working. These girls aren't interested in what I have to say." But, as I continued to speak the Word, tears began to come to their eyes as they were beautifully convinced by the power of the gospel and the work of the Spirit of God. As I led them to Christ, what a clear example it was to me again of this glorious truth.

I'm reminded also of the time when I was a youth minister. I went to an outdoors party where I started witnessing to a young man. He had a can of beer in one hand and a cigarillo in the other. After preaching the gospel to him for a few minutes, and without any suggestion from me, he suddenly fell to his knees and began crying out to God for salvation. He arose stone sober and powerfully gripped by his new truth. He then threw away his beer can and cigarillo and began running around trying to warn others that this partying life was wrong. I stood in awe while watching the power of the gospel again transform a life. Not Dea, the gospel!

"We walk by faith" (II Cor. 5:7) is never proven more true than when, absent of any feelings of great ability, wisdom or inner "authority", we nevertheless simply on the basis of Rom. 1:16, share the gospel, trusting that the gospel alone is plenty enough to rescue the lost!

4. Because you really care for people . . .

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13). I was holding a crusade in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Each morning, I would walk to the nearby 7-11 to get a cup of coffee and began witnessing to a woman working behind the counter. When another customer would walk in, I'd walk over to the potato chip rack and study it. When they'd leave, I'd go back to witnessing to her and invite her out to the meetings. This became my pattern for several days. The last day of the revival, I all but "begged" her to come to the church, telling her this was the last night I'd be there. Imagine my joy, when she came that last night and was one of several who responded to the altar call and came forward to receive Christ!

While pastoring in Lakeview, Oregon, one night I was going for a walk and passed by the Laundromat. I noticed a woman and her son washing their clothes and felt I should witness to her, but my flesh didn't want to. I stood outside watching them for some time, struggling with my emotions. Finally, I crucified the flesh and went inside. After sharing Christ with her, she accepted Him. She came to church, bringing her family and her husband too got saved. Years later, while holding a crusade in northern California, I ran into him. Though he had spent time in prison and was now divorced, he was serving Christ! I'm so glad I cared enough to not yield to the natural tendency to avoid unpleasanties. Souls will be in heaven because of it. Do we love our neighbors, our friends, our workmates? If we do, this love is not just a fuzzy feeling. It acts. It works: *"Faith ... worketh (is*

energized) by love." (Gal. 5:6). And, there is no greater act of love than to "lay down our life", our pride, our fear, our business or "busy-ness" to take time to witness!

5. Because of the cross . . .

"The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Therefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh (instead, we think of them as eternal spirits!). . .and (He) hath committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us ... Be ye reconciled to God." (II Cor. 5:14-20).

Christ carried a cross that the lost might be saved. Now, our cross is to share that gospel with them, as His ambassadors, that they might live as we live. And, as we do this, we are truly no longer "living unto ourselves".

Don't we all hate hospitals? Hospitals are scary places. Surgical procedures are scary experiences. But, I have found people are usually very open to spiritual counsel at such times. Thus taking the gospel to those in hospitals is a good example of carrying the cross of evangelism and one of the best ways to do so. My aunt Bobbie had never shown any interest in the gospel until she was having surgery!

I visited her, boldly sharing what she must do to be saved. And, facing the possibility of death, she accepted Christ. (Was she ever glad to awaken in the recovery room to the face of a nurse instead of St. Peter!) As with many others, her decision didn't last. But, many years later, when she was in her 80's, I visited her, and shared the gospel again. She wasn't the slightest bit resistant and prayed the sinners prayer again. I could tell by her smile that my labor in the Lord had not been in vain. She died not long thereafter.

After sharing my faith with her in that hospital, as I prepared to leave the room, the lady in the next bed said to me, "That was beautiful!" Well, that was like saying "sick em" to Lassie to me! So, I led her to Christ too! I then visited her home after she was released from the hospital. With her children and in-laws seated with her in the living room, I shared the gospel again with them. Most of them accepted the Lord then and there!

As you bear the cross of evangelism, the Lord will arrange golden opportunities for you. Hospitals, Rest homes, parks, streets, even door to door! Some Christians think door to door evangelism doesn't work. Tell that to the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses! I've led people to Christ and added people to the church through door to door evangelism.

When I pastored in Walla Walla, Washington, I went door to door for awhile, deciding I would "cut to the chase" and not "beat around the bush". So, when they came to the door, after introducing myself, I'd ask them, "Do you have a satisfying relationship with Jesus Christ?" They'd either quickly close the door or we'd get down to business. One girl, named Sherry, quickly admitted she didn't have a good relationship with the Lord. She got right with God and began attending our church. Imagine if every church would have a team of people who met every Saturday (like the Jehovah

Witnesses) and went door to door. Our churches would grow bigger and our young people would grow up thinking evangelism was normative for Christians.

6. Because it is your job . . .

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15). **All** and **every** – it's pretty plain, isn't it? Every Christian has a full time job and a part time job. We support ourselves with our jobs and careers: that's our part time job. But, we have a FULL-TIME job too and that is to GO! And, every sinner on earth is a candidate for our going. Evangelism is not an activity where you STAY put until someone walks up to you and asks how they might be saved (It's never happened to me in 58 years on this planet!).

Oh, I forgot! Yesterday at Starbucks, a stranger walked up to me and said, "There is something so peaceful and wonderful about you. How can I have what you have?" (Or did I dream that? Ha, ha!). Also, Evangelism is not an elite activity exclusively reserved for the highly gifted and powerfully anointed Christians. All who are struggling through life dealing daily with sins, faults and failings, should still be trying to impact others as best they can.

If we wait until we completely have our act together, we'll never take our act on the road! Even a man filled with demons living in the cemetery, immediately after being delivered was instructed by Jesus to go share his new-found freedom with his friends (Mark 5:19). Witnessing has been likened to one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. And, this "full time" job is one you do at work, school or at play.

I was working for a RV manufacturer while pastoring in Fruitland Idaho (this was my "part time" job). My lead man was picking me up and taking me back and forth to work. I led him to Christ, and then went to his home and led his wife to Christ and they started attending my church. After a big layoff there, I began selling radio advertising. Our last day of work before the Christmas holidays, employees were sitting around talking when I (purposely) injected spiritual things into the conversation.

One of the ladies raised her hands in frustration explaining, "I just can't understand it all!" I said, "Come on, let's go downstairs to the restaurant and have a cup of coffee." We did. I shared the gospel with her and with tears in her eyes, she accepted Christ. That night at the staff party, she introduced me to her husband who said, "So, you're the guy she's been talking about!" I invited the two of them for coffee after the party. I gave him the gospel and he too accepted Christ.

Also, while selling advertising, I came to a shoe store where a young lady was working all by herself. I suspended my sales pitch and gave her a gospel pitch and she accepted Christ. I told her she would need to explain to her "live in" boyfriend that she couldn't sleep with him anymore until they were married. He called me up that same night and said, "I want to talk to you!" To be honest, I was scared he was going to beat me up!! He was just curious and I led him to Christ. I can still hear him now, immediately afterward crying, "Praise God!" (he'd been so deeply moved by the experience). I discovered that ministering to the lost was the REAL job in my life! It's yours too!

7. Because you can . . .

"*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*" (Phil. 4:13). Don't "all things" include winning souls? I've been training people in soul-winning since I was a teenager. At my first youth leader job, I taught the young people that they could lead souls to the Lord right at school. My future sister-in-law, Charlotte, retorted, "No, Dea, you can't witness at school because the teachers ... and the students ... and, blah, blah, blah". I insisted, "Yes, you can win souls to Christ right on the campus!" The next service, she brought a boy from school with her to church, excitedly reporting, "Dea, you were right. You can lead people to Christ at school. This boy accepted Christ at school this week!" Hallelujah! I taught a church in Portland how to win the lost. During the revival, a girl in the 4th grade came up to me to report she had won a friend to Christ that same day. At Lakeview, Oregon, I taught the people how to evangelize.

A reserved, quiet lady in the church led two of her renters to the Lord who became a part of our church. He went to be with Jesus a year or so ago. Stop allowing the Anti-evangelist (satan) tell you what you can't do, and start pressing in to what you can do through Christ. (see Romans 6: 12-14).

Pray now and compile a list of people whom you want to make it you personal project to one day lead them to Christ. Start interceding for them and watch and pray for your opportunity. "*Do the work of an evangelist*".

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