

CHAPTER 9

LET'S SHARE CHRIST

When the apostle Paul accepted Jesus of Nazareth as his Messiah, he immediately wanted to share his new-found faith with others. In fact, he was so excited about it that he went right into the synagogue at Damascus to declare what had happened to him. This caused no small stir among the Jewish people of that city, and they plotted against Paul to put him to death. The disciples came to his rescue and helped him to escape over the wall of the city by night. He went up to Jerusalem and, though he was suspected as being a spy, he boldly spoke in the name of the Lord Jesus to the believers there.

When my own father accepted Christ as Savior, he was fifty-nine years of age, and the first thing he said after his prayer of repentance and acceptance was "I wish I would have done this in time for the older boys," There was a two-pronged desire that immediately came to my father's heart. One desire was that he wished he would have committed his life to Christ earlier in life. The other desire was that he wished that my two brothers who were already grown and gone from home would have been under the influence of a Christian father.

When I committed my life to Christ at eighteen years of age, I immediately wished that I would have committed my life to Christ earlier. I also wished that my buddies would come to know Him, too. The very next day after my conversion, I had the opportunity to share how Christ saved me. I did not plan on sharing my new faith that day but, because of the change that had come into my life, I could not contain myself.

I was a senior and one of my courses of study was physics. Each day the class had a twenty-minute lecture and then the class was permitted to either take the weekly quiz or to work on experiments. A friend of mine and I began to work on our experiment, and he asked me if I had gotten any spirits over the weekend. Of course, he was talking about the "canned" spirits of either wine or beer. Without fully understanding what I was saying or without carefully thinking through what might be the response to my statement, I quickly replied "Yes, I got the Holy Spirit this weekend." I will never forget the look on my friend's face. He was completely taken by surprise. Frankly, what I said surprised me but I went ahead and explained to my friend that I had been thinking about accepting Christ for a long time. Now that I had committed my life to Him, I had found this was what I had really needed.

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Over the years, I have seen my experience multiplied scores of times by new believers. Immediately after their conversion, they want to share with others what has happened. This is normal and healthy for the new believer.

There are some, however, who are just as sincere in their faith, who find it difficult to share with others what has happened. There may be many reasons for this. However, the longer they wait, the more difficult it becomes for them to make their stand.

The purpose of this study is to help those who have boldly stated their faith to do so in a more effective way and to encourage those who have not declared their faith to do so.

First of all, let's look at the Biblical basis for sharing Christ.

When our Lord was about to leave this earth in his bodily form, He gathered His disciples to the top of Mount Olivet and gave them this charge, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." This verse states that they were to be "witnesses" unto Him. This is what they became.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon that frightened group of 120 disciples, and they became flaming evangelists declaring that Jesus was the Christ. Throughout Peter's message he declared that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God no matter what the people had done to Him. The message was so convincing that three thousand people accepted Christ that day as their Messiah.

Look up Reference Group Number 1 at this time and note the boldness of the early disciples and also note the increase that paralleled their witness.

Reference Group Number 1

1. Note their boldness.

Acts 4:13, 29 and 31.

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Acts 9:27 and 29
Acts 14:3
Acts 19:8-10

2. Note their increase.

Acts 1:14, 2:41 and 47
Acts 4:4
Acts 5:14 and 28 and 42
Acts 6:7
Acts 8:1-4

Jesus prophesied before His death, burial and resurrection that He would found His church. That church was founded on the day of Pentecost with the descent and infilling of the Holy Spirit. The first reference to the historical church is made in Acts 2:47. Thereafter, the body of believers is most often referred to as the church.

We have noted before in our study "Chapter 6 Let's Go To Church" that the church is a "called-out" group of people. The literal meaning of the Greek term most often translated church simply means "called-out." We are called out of the world by God's love and justified by His grace. The church is not to be a monastery. It is not to be a place where we simply withdraw to escape the world around us. Rather, it is to be a mission station where the believers are built up in the Word of God and trained to go out into a hostile world to present the truth of the wonder grace of God.

In Ephesians 4:11 and 12, it states that God gave some specially trained men to the church "For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ." In the New American Standard Version of the Bible, this verse is translated "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." This would be a better translation. Special men have been given to the church to train the saints to do the work of the ministry until the entire body of Christ is built up. The building up of the body of Christ has to do with both the increase in the quality of the members and the quantity of the members.

It is estimated that about one percent of the church would fall into the category of the specially-trained men who are to equip the church now.

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If these men alone are to do all of the outreach to the world around them, they will be greatly overloaded. But if they could give themselves to training the ninety-nine per cent of the church and they then would do the work of outreach, the church would grow much faster.

How foolish it would be for us to expect the young men who are sent off to the Naval, Army, and Air Force Academies to fight our wars. These men are trained leaders who train the enlisted men and plan the strategy to fight the wars. The graduates of the academies are to train the masses. So, the ministers who have been to seminaries and Bible colleges are not to do all the work of the ministry. They must train others who will penetrate the world around them.

In the New Testament, the church is seen as a body, bride, flock, branches of a vine, a building and priesthood. The church is the earthly organism in which God dwells; and as to her vocation, she is a royal priesthood. The priest of the Old Testament stood before God to serve Him. They were the mediatorial agency upon the earth. This mediatorial function of the Old Testament is now found in the church of which every member is of the "royal priesthood."

Certainly, we cannot offer a sacrifice to atone for our sin. Christ took care of this when He offered Himself as sacrifice to put away sin once for all. But there were other sacrifices which were offered by the priests of the Old Testament times. The functions of the priest were broadly divided into the service of the altar (which had to do with the sacrifices offered), the service of witness (which is the proclamation of the law), and the service of intercession on behalf of the people. The "royal priesthood" of the church fulfills the same functions.

In 1 Peter 2:5, it states that we are "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." The word used here and translated "offer up" is that which is regularly used to denote an offering made to God and placed upon the altar. There are at least four sacrifices the believer-priest can offer the Lord. First, he is to offer himself as a "living sacrifice." Second, there is the sacrifice of praise to God which is to be offered continually to the Lord for His gracious acts to us. Third, there follows the sacrifice of "doing good and sharing." Fourth, Paul speaks of the "offering up of the Gentiles." Although this last offering was uniquely the privilege of the apostle Paul, every believer has the privilege of making this sacrifice by

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The spiritual experience we have when we accept Christ as our Savior is called the new birth; the conversion is a result of the combined efforts of God with those of man. Man's salvation originates with God. God willed the salvation of man and acted in relation to that will by sending His Son to redeem us. Those He loved and foreknew, He called to be His very own.

The calling of God is usually a two-pronged thrust. On the one hand, there is the declaration or truth of the Word of God that is in some way pressed upon the heart of the person. This may come in many forms. It may be childhood training or the ministry of a church, or the written page; but in some, the truth of the Scripture is translated from the printed page to the heart of the subject. Usually, God uses a faithful believer to challenge the heart of another.

On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is the agent God uses to apply His truth to the heart. This He does often slowly and gently; yet there are times when He does so dramatically. God knows best how each will respond, and it is best to let Him do His work. This work of the Holy Spirit may take weeks, months, or even years; but we must allow Him time to work.

The "quickie" methods do not allow this time. Often there are decisions made on the spur of the moment that leave the person wondering what really happened in his life. This is unfortunate because, rather than drawing the person closer to Christ, it often repels him and he wants nothing more to do with Christianity.

Our desire should be to bring the individual to a place of personal commitment to Christ that will last forever. We need to take the initiative in getting acquainted with our neighbors and fellow workers. All too often, Christians have fallen prey to the isolationism that is in our society. People have become less and less dependent upon one another in our neighborhoods. We no longer build a house with a four-foot fence around our yard over which we may visit, but we build a six or eight foot fence which will give us privacy in our suburban cell. We need to take the initiative in friendship with our neighbors and acquaintances. We need to show a genuine Christian concern with their needs to find an opening to share our faith.

It has been demonstrated the world over that where the new convert has become actively involved in sharing his faith with his friends and relatives, the church Jesus Christ has grown the fastest. I have listed this

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chart in your Outline and study guide, to show how this spreads through a family and friends. Study the chart and prayerfully ask yourself about your relatives and friends of similar relationships.

The apostle Paul declared to the elders of Ephesus, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house." The zealous outreach of the early Christians had caused them to be accused of filling Jerusalem with their teaching. They had not ceased to teach and preach Jesus Christ whether they were in the temple or in the home. This caused the church to fill the city with their doctrine. They were able to do this without the aid of television, radio, telephone, printing press, automobile, or airplane. The early Christians simply believed in the sovereignty of God and the fact that they were His ambassadors with the responsibility to reach everyone they could reach.

REFERENCE GROUP NUMBER 3

2. The Method to share Christ.
 - A. Results we desire determine method used.
 1. "Quickie" decisions. Usually: a short duration.
 2. We desire spiritual birth. John 3:3-8
 - B. How salvation is obtained.
 1. Originates with God.
 - a. He wills. John 1:12-13
 - b. He calls Romans 8:29-30
 - (1) Through His Word. 1 Peter 1:22-23
 - (2) Through the Holy Spirit Titus 3:5
 2. God uses faithful believers.
 - a. Isolation from neighbors and relatives will not do.
 - (1) We need to take initiative in friendship
 - (2) We need to show genuine concern.
 - b. Chart of family reached.

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Our church has prepared a small booklet entitled "This We Believe" which outlines the basic truths that are necessary for a person to be saved. I would encourage you to get one of these from the church office that you might carry it with you at all times. Carry it either in your purse or in your shirt pocket. If you do not wear a dress shirt to work, put one in your wallet so you have one with you at all times. When you get into a discussion you have something to share with them. Simply show them the booklet and ask if you might share with them something you have found to be very meaningful to you. If they consent, simply read the booklet to them holding it in a way that they can read along with you.

The emphasis of the booklet is to assure people they can know for sure that they have eternal life. The assertion is made that there are only two types of people. There are those who have eternal life and those who do not. This is followed by 1 John 5:12 and 13 (NASV) which says:

"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life."

Then two very important questions are asked. One, "Do you know for sure you have eternal life?" Of course, if the person knows for sure they have eternal life and you are confident they have committed their life to Him, you need go no further. But if there is a doubt or they do not know they have eternal life, then ask them the second question: "Would you like to know for sure you have eternal life?" Most people do want to know. However, they may answer "Yes," "No," "I don't know" or just be silent. You can simply turn the page and read what "We believe" because this is what you are sharing with them.

You do not need to argue. If they stop you anywhere in the booklet to argue with you, simply stop reading and hand them the booklet. There is no need to prove your point or to win an argument. You want to win a person to Jesus Christ which is far better.

Often a individual will bring up a question which does not have anything to do with the basics you desire them to know. One question I am often asked has to do with hell. People ask me if I believe in hell. This is my opportunity to assure them that it does not matter what I believe or what I

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would like to believe. What God says is all that really matters. Of course, we find the answer to these questions in the Bible. Then I tell them about the Bible studies and how these studies will answer many questions they may have about the Bible.

Be careful here not to simply avoid their question. Be careful to direct them to the Scriptures for it is in them they will find the answers to many of their questions. If the person persists in wanting to know what I believe about hell, I tell them, "Yes, I believe in the doctrine of hell simply because the doctrine is taught in the Scriptures." If the person does not want to believe in the doctrine, you don't have to convince him right there. Direct him to the Scriptures for they are the truths of God. When the person is convinced of its truth, you don't have to argue about the things which are clearly taught.

At one time, I challenged a biology teacher to study the Scriptures with me. He was fully convinced in the theory of evolution. He had been trained in the schools to accept the evolutionary hypothesis. Every time we came together, he wanted to challenge me about science and the Bible. I confessed to him that I was not an expert on science, but I believe the Bible to be true. For several months, he would not agree to a study. However, he invited me one rainy day to go arrowhead hunting with him in a muddy field. I didn't want to go, but felt that this might be a way to show an interest in him and his interests. It paid off. He agreed to a study and shortly thereafter he accepted Christ as His Savior. Before the studies were completed, he acknowledged that if God was God, He could create things out of nothing!

If you want to share your faith in Christ, you must be ready to go out of your way to show a concern for the person you desire to reach. If you are interested in them, they will be more open to you. This may mean you'll help a neighbor build a fence or split wood. It may mean the wife will fix a meal when the neighbor's wife has been sick or out of town. You will need to be sensitive to the needs of the person. Look for an opportunity to help them without pressuring them about their relationship to Christ.

Observe those around you. See if there are neighbors or relatives you could help. These may be the very people to whom God is leading you. Don't get caught up with the excuse that they belong to some church or that their life-style rules them out as people with whom God might be dealing. The family "A" that I used as an illustration was a Mormon family. One of

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our Sunday School teachers was a drunk at one time. One of our families formerly had belly-dancer parties. The wife of one of our deacons used to be bar-maid. The apostle Paul persecuted the church before he was converted. Don't let the life-style of the people around you stop you from reaching out to them in love.

Once you are convinced that God is leading you to a person, write their name in the front of your Bible and begin to pray for them daily. Pray about your contacts with them for you should want to cultivate a genuine friendship that will last. People's receptivity waxes and wanes. No person is equally ready at all time to listen to the Word of God and the truths that are revealed through it. If there is a genuine friendship, prayerfully developed with the relative or neighbor, he will not be offended even if you share your faith with him when he is not willing to follow what you believe.

Several years ago, a man attended our church. I immediately called on him and thanked him for his presence in our church. We chatted about some of his interests of which one was golf. To my surprise, he called me one Sunday afternoon to play a game of golf with him. I had never played golf on Sunday afternoon before. I usually had a sermon to prepare and also have had some questions in my own mind about participating in sporting events on the Lord's day; but I went. We talked about the Lord some, however, he was not willing to have a Bible study nor was he willing to make any commitment to Christ. Through the years, I dropped by the home periodically to chat with him and invariably the conversation ended up in relation to the Lord. Many times I left the home feeling I had wasted my time. Then to my surprise, the man stopped by my house one Sunday before Thanksgiving to tell me of the exciting things he was finding as he read the Word of God. I agreed to stop by his home for a Bible study at a designated time. Shortly thereafter, the man committed his life to Christ and was baptized.

It had taken seven years. He later developed cancer and died.

Don't give up a friendship when it has once been established. We are to be faithful to share the message of Christ's redemption. We are not responsible for the new birth in the life. That is God's part.

God is calling men to Himself. He wants to justify these men, and He will use the human instruments that are available. Be available!

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The greatest impact upon your relatives or neighbors will be your own personal testimony. You need to carefully write out what has happened in your life in a brief but positive way that demonstrates the power of God working in your life. Peter admonishes us to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." That certainly means we should have thought through what the Lord has done for us and how we have been changed by His power.

At the conclusion of this study, you will be given the opportunity to write out your testimony. It should cover your attitudes and values before you came to Christ, how you came to Christ, and how your attitudes and values have changed since you came to Christ. The testimony should be two to three minutes long. Do not allow it to be any longer than three minutes. After you have written it out, read it back and time it. If it is longer than three minutes, cut it down. Memorize the outline of your testimony so that you might give it at any time. Share this with your facilitator.

Listen to what the other person is saying and try to find a common point of interest in their conversation before you give your testimony. Do not press them for a commitment when you give the testimony. You might say something like "The Lord has become very precious to me because..." or "Let me share with you what has happened in my life," or "My life has taken on new meaning since I committed my life to Christ." Make it your testimony.

If the person is interested in what has happened in your life, and most people will be if you have become their friend, then you need to offer the home Bible Studies offered by our church. You should simply open up the booklet "This we believe" to the last page and show them some of the questions these Bible studies answer. Assure them that there is no obligation nor will there be any pressure exerted upon them. Assure them that our church is in this community to help people to come to a better relationship to Christ, but we have no desire to force people into a decision that they do not want to make.

You must become the person who is available to make the study a success. Simply offer to show them how to get on the website, and find the beginning studies in these lessons. Most people will not want to meet the pastor right away even if they agree to a Bible study. Encourage them to

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complete the first study before a given date. Usually it takes at least one week for a person to complete each study.

On your next visit ask them if they had any question about the first study. Most people do not for it is very simple and to the point. If they have questions answer them if you can. But if you cannot, then offer the services of the pastor. Do not push this. If they are afraid, remember you will be there as their friend time and again. Always keep the door of that friendship open. Don't push. Let the Holy Spirit do His work with each study. After all, He is the One who brings the person to new life in Christ.

Last of all, be a faithful believer. Support your church and its pastors and leaders. If you criticize your church and its leadership, you hurt the credibility of the Bible studies. You must be faithful in your attendance as well. If you run off every other week-end to the mountains or coast, your friend may have reason to question just how real your faith is. If you enter into any agreement in business or as a neighbor, be sure to fulfill your obligation to your own hurt, if necessary, so that your testimony as a Christian might be true before him.

Look up the verses in the outline and read the testimony of the apostle Paul before you write our own testimony. After you have written your testimony, give it to the person who suggested this study.