

HOW YOU MAY BECOME **A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN**

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Notes:

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NECESSARY STEPS TO SALVATION

Acknowledge: You must acknowledge in the light of God's Word that you are a sinner.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

"God, be merciful ^{to} me, sinner that I am! (Luke 18:13b).

Repent: You must see the awfulness of sin and then repent of it.

"But unless you repent, you will all perish as well!" (Luke 13:3).

"Therefore repent and turn back so that your sins may be wiped out," (Acts 3:19).

Confess: Confess not to men but to God.

"But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9).

"For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation." (Romans 10:10).

Forsake: Sorrow for sin is not enough in itself. We must want to be done with it once and for all

"The wicked need to abandon their lifestyle and sinful people their plans. They should return to the LORD, and he will show mercy to them, and to their God, for he will freely forgive them" (Isaiah 55:7).

Believe: Believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

"For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

"because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9).

Receive: Christ must be received personally into the heart by faith, if the experience of the New Birth is to be yours.

"He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. But to all who have received him – those who believe in his name – he has given the right to become God's children" (John 1:11-12).

CHAPTER I

After The Great Decision

You have made the great decision to live for Christ. From this day forward the whole direction and purpose of your life is changed. Heaven is your destination. You are now a person of destiny; as long as the stars of heaven shine, as long as God above lives, so you will live.

When a person accepts Christ, he usually has a deep desire in his heart to be a real Christian. But the question is how can this be done? It is the purpose of this little book to help new converts in this most important step of their lives.

Becoming a Christian is the most wonderful thing that will ever happen in your life. Here are many joys and satisfactions awaiting you as you go along in your Christian experience. Nevertheless, we must be frank; being a Christian will not always be easy. There will be problems, temptations, and trials you never expected to come your way.

But always remember this. Christ has promised that He would never leave nor forsake you. It is a proven fact that if you do not forsake Him, He will never forsake you. Therefore, set your course resolutely ahead. Resolve that you will never turn back and that regardless of what happens, you are going all the way with Christ. With that determination, you will surely reach your goal.

A Christian Never Looks Back

Jesus said,

“Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62).

In other words, a person of indecision never gets very far. In battling between two opinions one loses the power of initiative and sows the seeds of his own defeat. Once having made a decision for Christ, to look back is dangerous.

Keep Your Eyes On Christ

A Christian is one who has put his trust wholly in God. Young converts who tend to be idealistic sometimes fail to do this. Too often they get their eyes on people, and when others do not come up to their expectations, they are disappointed. It is well to understand from the beginning that human beings are subject to mistakes. Peter, who was one of Jesus Christ's closest friends and followers, denied that he was ever acquainted with Christ when He was brought before the judge. If you had witnessed Peter when he denied Christ, would it have caused you to stumble? Some have lost their experience with God by stumbling over the blunders of others. Peter made about the most serious mistake he could ever have made. Yet in time, he became one of the greatest saints. We must not get our eyes on people or their mistakes. Instead we should be thankful that God is so forgiving and long-suffering.

Therefore, put your whole faith in Christ from the very beginning. Although people may fail, Christ will never fail.

In becoming a Christian, you enter a race. As the apostle said,

“Do you not know that all the runners in a stadium compete, but only one receives the prize? So run to win.” (1 Cor. 9:24).

And again,

“the race is not always won by the swiftest, the battle is not always won by the strongest” (Eccl 9:11)

but by the one who is faithful and obeys the rules.

Take A Public Stand For Christ

There is of course the proper time for all things; nevertheless, do not be slow to let others know that you are a Christian. In that way you establish your true relationship with them from the start. The chances are that they will respect you for your stand, and when they feel the need for spiritual help, it is likely that they will turn to you.

Join A Spiritual Church

You may have been told, and rightly, that salvation is more than joining a church. Many people who have never been converted are members of a church. Nevertheless, it is important that after one has made his decision for Christ, he

should begin to attend a spiritual church regularly. Join with other Christians in carrying the load from the beginning. Lend your influence for Christ and what is right. Also, each Christian must do his share in keeping up the church, supporting the pastor, and doing whatever God enables him to do.

There is another important reason for joining a church. People are like sheep – defenceless when alone. Sheep separated from the main flock are subject to attack from the enemy. Wolves are on the prowl for straying sheep. Especially a young convert must stay with the flock. There he has a measure of safety and protection. Remember what the bible says on this subject.

“not abandoning our own meetings, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and even more so because you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:25).

Be Baptized

At first opportunity, you should be baptized in water. This is not the place to discuss the minor differences of opinion over modes of water baptism. God looks at the heart. It is important that you be baptized after your conversion. Water baptism is an act of obedience.

“The one who believes (who adheres to and trusts in and relies on the Gospel and Him Whom it sets forth) and is baptized will be saved, (from the penalty of eternal death) but the one who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16).

Believing comes first. If you were baptized as a baby or before your conversion, that doesn't count. The Bible says,

“Repent, and each one of you be baptized” (Acts 2:38).

Babies cannot repent.

Baptism is an act of public confession, a testimony to the world that you are a Christian, but it is more than that. In going down into the water you are buried, as it were, with Christ. The act signifies the death of the old self and a resurrection unto a new life.

Today there is no special stigma to being baptized. In fact in some quarters it is even fashionable. This was not so in the days of the Early Church. In those times a Roman officer might come and take down the name of each person who was baptized. Often the property of those who became Christians was confiscated and their citizenship taken away. Others were imprisoned and some even gave their lives for their faith. It meant something to be a Christian in those days. It should mean as much today.

CHAPTER II

Some Important Instructions For Living A Christian Life

When a man goes into any business he will, if he wishes to make a success, learn all he can about it. Many Christians never bother to learn the rules of successful Christian life. Jesus took note of this when He said,

“For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their contemporaries than the people of light.” (Luke 16:8).

He meant that in the things of this world, men were apt to be more business-like and to exercise more common sense and discretion than the children of God. Of course, in matters that pertain to the world to come, the poorest Christian is indefinitely wiser than the shrewdest man of the world.

Jesus pointed out that if a man builds a tower, he should first figure out what it will cost to see if he has enough money to finish the job. Christians should use good sense in all their affairs.

“For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn't sit down first and compute the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish the tower, all who see it will begin to make fun of him. They will say, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish!’ (Luke 14: 28-30)

Begin A Regular Prayer Life

If a person is going to be a successful Christian, he must utilize the means that God has provided for that purpose. For example, the first thing that he should do is to begin a regular prayer life. This cannot be emphasized too strongly. It is amazing the things that can be accomplished in a lifetime by a man or woman who prays regularly. Prayer is the means of getting things from and hearing effectively from God. Here for example is a promise that Jesus gave:

““Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matt. 7:7-8)

Note the power of faith as declared by Jesus in Mark 11:22-24

Jesus said to them, “Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, ³⁶ if someone says to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. For this reason I tell you, whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” (Mark 11:22-24)

Perhaps my most important advice to you is that you make prayer a daily habit. Choose a time of day when you can be alone with God. Each day you should bring every important matter of your life before the Lord – your questions, your daily activities, your finances, your problems, your opportunities, your family, your work, your hopes, your career. If you are faithful in doing this every day, you will find your life unfolding to the pattern God intended for you.

Remember this: God has a special blueprint for every life.

For I know what I have planned for you,’ says the LORD. ‘I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

It is the best plan possible for that life. It may be that you are called to the ministry, to be a missionary, or to be a trained worker in the church. Or you may be called to be a businessman, a housewife, a doctor, an engineer or even a clerk. God's perfect will is best for you, but you must get into His will by praying into it.

Certainly you made my mind and heart; you wove me together in my mother's womb. I will give you thanks because your deeds are awesome and amazing. You knew me thoroughly; my bones were not hidden from you, when I was made in secret and sewed together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me when I was inside the womb. All the days ordained for me were recorded in your scroll before one of them came into existence. (Psalm 139:13-16)

Alas, many Christians apparently miss God's best. Too often this is true in marriage. If a person does not pray earnestly, he may marry the wrong partner, and a consequence, his whole life may be adversely affected. There is little place for second guesses in choosing a life companion.

Establish a regular time of prayer as they did in the Early Church (Acts 3:1). In this way you may save yourself from many a mistake.

Also, one of the most important tasks any Christian can do is to pray for others and their problems and needs. This is a ministry of intercession. There is no higher calling than that of an intercessor. And this calling is open to all. It is open to you! If you would learn the power of intercessory prayer;

“I looked for a man from among them who would repair the wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it, but I found no one. So I have poured my anger on them, and destroyed them with the fire of my fury. I hereby repay them for what they have done, declares the sovereign LORD.” (Ezekiel 22:30-31)

In other words, God is saying He looked for a man to pray for the people that they might turn back to God. But because He could find no one to pray, He punished them and destroyed their land because of their wickedness.

Read The Bible Daily

To understand the Bible properly you must study it with the idea that God is speaking to you through His Holy Word. Now that you know the Author of the Book – He is your heavenly Father – you will find great encouragement and instruction from its pages.

It is true that there are books of the Bible which are more difficult to understand than others. The Bible is divided into two sections – The Old Testament and The New Testament. The Old Testament was written before Christ Jesus was born into the earth. It tells of how God dealt with man through the ages, and it also foretells in many places the birth and death of Jesus Christ the Son of God, who would come to redeem man.

The New Testament was written after Christ lived on earth, died and rose from the dead. The first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are called the Gospels and give the story of Christ and His mission on earth. The next book, called Acts of the Apostles (which may more aptly be titled ‘The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles’), tells how that after Christ ascended into heaven His disciples, or followers, in the power of the Holy Spirit, carried on His work and formed the beginning of the church. Acts gives the blueprint for the Christian church today. Most of the remainder of the New Testament was written by the apostle Paul guided by the Holy Spirit to churches in various towns and countries – his instructions are just as valuable to us today as they were to the Christians of the Early Church.

Begin by reading the book of John (this tells us who Jesus is), then read the book of Romans (which tells us who we are in Jesus). Thereafter, read the book of Acts followed by the rest of the New Testament straight through, chapter by chapter; do not skip around. The New Testament is your guide for your Christian life.

After you have read the New Testament, you may start with the Old Testament. In it you will read of men and women who served God and others who did not, and how God dealt with them. Ask God to enlighten the Scriptures to you so that you will learn the important lessons that the Old Testament teaches. However, the New Testament was written especially for us – the true believers of the church age – so you will find great help there. It is good for a Christian to read at least three chapters a day. Ask your pastor to start a study group to explain the Scriptures. It will be a rich experience for all. However, if you still have difficulty in knowing God’s will, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you. (John 14:26)

Be Faithful In Giving To God

The Bible tells about Jacob who was a man who had some very unpleasant traits. His meanness grew worse, until finally God came into his life. One day after he had gotten himself into serious trouble through his cheating, he had to run away from home. But that night God gave him a vision of heaven. The vision changed his life, and on the spot he made a vow to God that he would be faithful in giving a tithe (that is, a tenth) of all that he had earned to Him.“

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God is with me and protects me on this journey I am taking and gives me food to eat and clothing to wear, and I return safely to my father’s home, then the LORD will become my God. Then this stone that I have set up as a sacred stone will be the house of God, and I will surely give you back a tenth of everything you give me.” Genesis 28:20-22 (NET)

It is sadly true that some professing Christians are so greedy that they do not give their tithes. God called them thieves and robbers. They have not robbed man; they have robbed God.

Can a person rob God? You indeed are robbing me, but you say, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In tithes and contributions! You are bound for judgment because you are robbing me – this whole nation is guilty. “Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse so that there may be food in my temple. Test me in this matter,” says the LORD who rules over all, “to see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until there is no room for it all. Malachi 3:8-10 (NET)

On the other hand, God has promised to pour out a special blessing on those who are faithful stewards in their giving to Him. Tithing is the returning to God of one-tenth of all we earn or receive in wages or goods. All that we have has come from God. He asks us to return to Him at least one-tenth for His work.

The support of the Lord's work should come first. Each time you receive money or goods from your work or sales, God asks that you first give Him one-tenth of all.

Do not overlook the responsibility of Christians toward world missions. All of us have debt to those who do not know Christ. Christ said,

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20 (TNIV)

Perhaps God will call you as a minister or missionary. If not, you have a responsibility to help make it possible for someone else to take the message.

CHAPTER III

Problems Of A Christian's Life

Sometimes people suppose that when they become Christians all their problems will be solved. When they have trials, they are surprised and confused. The truth is that faith in Christ does solve certain kinds of problems – those that involve sin and its consequences. The sin question is the greatest problem, and through Christ it is solved once and for all. However, conversion does not automatically remove all problems of life. The new convert will meet trials and temptations. To expect anything else is to face disappointment. There is a devil loose in the world, and as the Scriptures declare,

Be sober and alert. Your enemy the devil, like a roaring lion, is on the prowl looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8 (NET)

We have to resist him. Christianity cost Christ the cross. We should expect to pay the price also. In fact, Jesus told those who would follow Him to count the cost first, before they became His disciples. Nonetheless, with each temptation Christ has promised a way of escape.

*No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful: He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to endure it.
1 Corinthians 10:13 (NET)*

Read the story of Paul, especially the list of things he endured as recorded in 2 Cor 11 of the New Testament. But in the end he could say,

*The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever! Amen.
2 Timothy 4:18 (NET)*

Distinguishing Between Committing A Sin And Living In Sin

This is something that every new convert ought to know: there is a great difference between committing a sin and actually living in sin as a result of falling into temptation. Many people who have just accepted Christ do not understand this, and having committed a sin, they feel all is lost and are even ready to give up. They made earnest resolutions to love for Christ, and were certain they would not fail. Suddenly at an evil moment, temptation came their way, and they did the very thing they did not intend to do. Satan may then whisper in their ears that they were never saved. He may even make them feel like giving up.

This indeed is just what Satan would like for them to do, but it is just what they should not do. A new convert is a babe in Christ, and a baby must learn to walk before he can run. We have mentioned Peter, the follower of Christ who once committed a grievous sin, even to denying his Lord. But Christ forgave him, and afterward he became a leader of the apostles. It is important to remember that if we confess our sins, the Lord will forgive us our sins.

*But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us. (My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.) But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One,
1 John 1:9-2:1 (NET)*

Wilfully living in sin is something else. A person who chooses to give himself over to sin is in a dangerous position. Presumptuous sin causes people to go into darkness and delusion. The apostle John who wrote the above words gave a warning about a man's sinning purposely when he knows better. He spoke of those who were guilty of doing this as being of the evil one, Satan.

*The one who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was revealed: to destroy the works of the devil.
1 John 3:8 (NET)*

The man who loves sin and willingly continues in it is a child of the Devil.

*So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.
1 John 3:10 (NLTSE)*

But this is something very different from committing sin under sudden temptation. If you have sinned, confess your sin to God and accept His forgiveness..

All of us will make mistakes. Some of them are bad ones. But the most important thing is that we never make a mistake of the heart. Our soul must always be turned toward God. Our love must be for Him first.

The Problem Of Feelings

There is something else that should be mentioned at this point. Do not go by your feelings. They have nothing to do with your salvation and may change from day to day. Many a new convert in the joy of his new-found experience supposes that his exhilaration will continue indefinitely. When trials and temptations come and these feelings subside, he may think he has lost his salvation. No greater mistake than this can be made. Our salvation stands not upon our feelings but upon the finished work of Calvary. Christ's death makes eternal life ours, if we accept it.

It would be well that every new convert read carefully again and again the parable of the sower. There were four kinds of hearers, and the effect of the Word upon each class was different.

Jesus spoke the parable in Matthew 13:3-9.

He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one: "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

Matthew 13:3-9 (NLTSE)

He interpreted it in verses 18-23.

"Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds: The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

Matthew 13:18-23 (NLTSE)

Have you read this parable carefully? In which class of hearers are you? The choice lies with you.

The Problem Of Disappointments

One of the most important things that a Christian should learn is that what appears to be a disappointment to him may turn out later to be a blessing in disguise. It is a serious mistake to give way to bitterness because something you had your heart set on failed. And if someone has wronged you, do not attempt to wreak vengeance on him to pay him back. God says that we should leave that to Him.

Do not avenge yourselves, dear friends, but give place to God's wrath, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Romans 12:19 (NET)

You as a Christian must put your problems in His hands and not try to get even by returning evil for evil.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil; consider what is good before all people. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people.

Romans 12:17-18 (NET)

Winning The Unconverted Husband Or Wife

It is not unusual for one member of a family to be converted before the other one is. Quite often the unsaved person does not fully understand what has taken place in the other one's life. Although the unconverted member may speak disparaging of the conversion experience, the Christians must display patience, love, and wisdom. The Scripture tells us,

"In like manner you married women, be submissive to your own husbands – subordinate yourselves as being secondary to and dependent on them, and adapt yourselves to them. So that even if any do not obey the Word (of God), they may be won over not by discussion but by the (godly) lives of

their wives. When they observe the pure and modest way in which you conduct yourselves, together with your reverence" (1 Peter 3:1-2)

*"Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.
1 Peter 3:1-2 (NIV)*

It is often a tendency of new converts to put undue pressure on their companions to become Christians, and this may result in an attitude of hostility or resistance. To win an unsaved mate, the best way is to give a demonstration of what Christ has done in your own life. When the other sees that a definite change has taken place there may come a real desire in his/her heart to have a similar experience.

And of course the Christian should steadfastly pray for the other. Conversion is more than human persuasion. There is a supernatural revelation involved. One of the most quoted verses in the bible is,

"Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest – I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls" (Matt. 11:28).

But the words of Jesus in the preceding verse are rarely noticed:

"All things were entrusted and delivered to Me by My Father; and no one fully knows and accurately understands the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son deliberately wills to make Him known" (Verse 27) .

*"All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son decides to reveal him."
Matthew 11:27 (NET)*

Men and women are converted because Christ reveals the Father to them. This is brought about through prayer and intercession of God's people. Earnest prayer should precede attempts at persuasion.

Memories Of An Evil Past

Many Christians are filled with shame as they remember their evil past. Sometimes it brings them almost to the point of despair. But they should not forget that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.

It is important to repent of our sins. When we have repented, we can face life with a fresh new start. Sometimes it is hard to forgive ourselves, but the apostle Paul in the New Testament tells us to forget the things of the past and press on toward the mark of the high calling of our God (Philippians 3:14).

"with this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

The most wonderful thing about salvation is that God has promised to wipe out the past and remember it against us no more.

*"For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will...remember their sin no more"
(Jer. 31:34).*

One thing a new convert should do is to make restitution whenever possible. Zaccheus, a tax collector who received Christ into his home said,

*"See, Lord, the half of my goods I (now) give...to the poor; and if I have cheated any one out of anything, I (now) restore four times as much"
(Luke 19:8)*

Another point of encouragement to such persons is that some of the worst sinners have become the greatest of saints. St. Augustine, considered one of the leading Early Church fathers, spent many years of his youthful life as a libertine. We see numerous examples in the Scriptures of God's forgiving great sinners who became penitent. Among them was the woman at the well (John 4th Chapter), Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2), the adulteress (John 8:3), and others.

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

John 4:15 (NET)

“and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and disabilities: Mary (called Magdalene), from whom seven demons had gone out, ...”.

Luke 8:2-3 (NET)

The experts in the law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught committing adultery. They made her stand in front of them

She replied, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you either. Go, and from now on do not sin anymore.”

John 8:3,11 (NET)

The Problem of Forgiveness

Some persons have suffered a great wrong from another. When they come to Christ, they may find that bitterness has not entirely left their hearts. This is a very dangerous matter, Jesus, after giving His great promises of answer to prayer said,

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against any one, forgive him and let it drop – leave it, let it go – in order that your Father Who is in heaven may also forgive your (own) failings and shortcomings and let them drop, But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your failings and shortcomings” (Mark 11:25-26)

We must at all times be ready to forgive. Jesus spoke a solemn parable about the man who was forgiven a debt of money. But because he had no means of paying, his lord forgave him all. Unfortunately, the ungrateful servant went out and threw one of his debtors in prison because he could not repay a very small amount of money. In the end, the lord of the evil servant, hearing of his ingratitude, thrust him into prison until he could repay the whole debt. The Lord used this parable to teach the need for forgiveness saying,

“So also My heavenly Father will deal with every one of you, if you do not freely forgive your brother, every one of you, from your heart” (Matt. 18:35)

Now this does not mean there may not be a change in the relationship of one who has sinned against us. If he has betrayed a trust, it would be poor judgment to permit a similar situation to develop, whereby a person would be tempted to repeat his wrong-doing.

Then again there are those who because of ambition, greed, and self-centeredness commit a great wrong against another and then justify themselves in their evil. In the very same chapter we mentioned above, the Lord says concerning such

“If he pays no attention to them – refusing to listen and obey – tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a pagan and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:17)

The important principle that must be maintained in all cases is that no root of bitterness be allowed to grow in the heart (Heb. 12:15). The moment forgiveness is asked, it must be given freely and without reservation even if the person has sinned against him many times. God for Christ's sake has forgiven us to much that the least we can do is to forgive our brother.

CHAPTER IV

Choosing Christian Companions

All of us have to mingle with the world in our daily life, whether with neighbours, at the office, or elsewhere, But when it comes to the point of choosing our companions and the places to which we go for amusement, that is within our power to choose. The kind of people with whom one associates is the kind of people one will eventually be like; the friends you choose will determine to a large extent your destiny. If you seek and enjoy non-Christian or worldly companions, rather than Christian people, you will gradually become like them. This does not mean that you are not to be friendly with all persons with whom daily life brings you in contact. Jesus Himself dined with sinners, but He did that to win them. If you find that you have liberty to testify of Christ to your companions, it is a good sign that you are leading them in your direction rather than them leading you in theirs. Of course you must never give the impression of a superior attitude, but should always remember that you, yourself, are only a sinner saved by the grace and the love of God.

The Problem Of Worldliness

Worldliness is a subject that every new convert should thoroughly understand. The Bible definitely speaks against conformity with the world. James, one of the writers of the New Testament, makes a very strong statement about those who profess Christ and yet live worldly lives.

James 4:4 (NIV)

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

James compares friendship of the world to spiritual adultery. And he who

“chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God.”

No Christian wants to be an adulterer. Yet the apostle states that is what the worldly Christian is. To understand just what this means, we must remember that the bible teaches that the Church is the Bride of Christ. Paul says in 11 Corinthians 11:2 that he has presented his converts as a “chaste virgin to Christ”.

2 Corinthians 11:2 (NIV)

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

Therefore, the Christian's devotion belongs only to Christ. If then he divided his attention between Christ and the world, he is considered an adulterer in the eyes of God.

Jesus in His last words to His disciples before His death showed the difference that was to be between His people and the world. He said that the world would not approve of the separated life of a Christian.

John 15:18-19 (NIV)

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

The apostle John warned the Christian not to set his affections on the things of the world. If he did, the love of the Father was not in him.

1 John 2:15-17 (NIV)

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Does this mean that the Christian should withdraw from the world as much as possible? Quite the contrary. We find that Christ, our example, mingled freely with sinners and the people of the world, One of the chief charges the religious leaders brought against Him is that He ate with sinners (Matt. 9:11).

Matthew 9:11 (NET)

When the Pharisees saw this they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

If we would win the lost, we are going to have to go where the sinner is. Christ was often with sinners, but He did not partake of their ways. Sinners in His presence were convicted of their sins, and they looked to Him to help them turn from their evil life. Simon Peter, the fisherman, became so deeply convicted, that on an impulse he cried,

“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8).

But that was really the last thing that Peter wanted – for the Lord to depart from him. Jesus reassured Peter saying

“Have no fear; from now on you will be catching men” (Luke 5:10)

Peter did become a great winner of souls, but in so doing he never compromised nor went back to his old ways. In his epistle he says

1 Peter 4:3-4 (NET)

For the time that has passed was sufficient for you to do what the non-Christians desire. You lived then in debauchery, evil desires, drunkenness, carousing, drinking bouts, and wanton idolatries. So they are astonished when you do not rush with them into the same flood of wickedness, and they vilify you.

Our refusing to partake of the world's evil does not mean we should withdraw from the world. We should dress in good taste and always within the bounds of decency. The apostle Paul gives good counsel on this subject in 1 Peter 3: 3-4. He explains that real beauty comes from inside a person's heart, and not simply from cloths and accessories.

Let your beauty not be external – the braiding of hair and wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes – but the inner person of the heart, the lasting beauty of a gentle and tranquil spirit, which is precious in God's sight. (1 Peter 3:3-4 (NET)

It should always be remembered that dressing in one fashion or other will not save anyone. Only Christ's death on the cross can do that. The less emphasis on dress, the better. If one is uncertain about what he should do, a talk with the pastor would be in order. 1 Corinthians 8:13 and 10:32-33 give good advice on this subject.

For this reason, if food causes my brother or sister to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I may not cause one of them to sin. (1 Corinthians 8:13 (NET)

Do not give offense to Jews or Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also try to please everyone in all things. I do not seek my own benefit, but the benefit of many, so that they may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:32-33 (NET)

CHAPTER V

The Importance Of The Fruits Of The Spirit

By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them

After you are born-again, you should ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit. The results of the Spirit should be seen in every Christian's life.

Jesus taught that a man's character is to be judged by these fruits of the Holy Spirit in his life. He added that at the day of judgment, many will say that they prophesied, that they possessed gifts of healing, or even the working of miracles, and will offer this as proof that they are true believers. Yet they will be judged as workers of iniquity!

"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven. Many will say unto me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and driven out demons in Your name, and done many mighty works in Your name? And then I will say to them openly I never knew you; depart from Me, you who act wickedly – disregarding My commands" (Matt. 7:21-23)"

What then is the true test of those who are genuine followers of Christ? The Lord does not leave us in doubt. The true test is in the fruits.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you dressed as sheep, but inside they are devouring wolves. You will fully recognize them by their fruits. Do people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so every healthy (sound) tree bears good fruit – worthy of admiration; but the sickly ... tree bears bad and worthless fruit" (Matt. 7:15-17)

The implication is clear. Even though a man may demonstrate unusual gifts, he is not to be followed unless he also manifests the fruits. To this the Apostle Paul fully agrees. In his discussion of the gifts of the Spirit, after urging believers to covet the best or most important gifts, he also adds that they must seek the fruits, or the other will not profit them. "But earnestly desire and zealously cultivate the greatest and best – the higher (gifts) and the choicest (graces). And yet I will show you a still more excellent way – one that is better by far and the highest of them all (love). Then Paul goes on and tells more of this highest gift and its manifestations or fruits.

"If I (can) speak in the tongues of men and even of angels, but have not love (that reasoning, intentional, spiritual devotion such as is inspired by God's love for and in us). I am only a noisy long or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers-that is, the gift of interpreting the divine will and that I can remove mountains but have not love (God's love in me) I am nothing – a useless nobody. Even if I dole out all that I have (to the poor in providing) food, and if I surrender my body to be burned ... but have not love (God's love in me), I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13: 1-3).

The Gift Of Prophecy And Understanding All Mysteries

Not Enough Without Love

The foretelling phase of prophecy, the prediction of events far in the future, is perhaps the greatest proof of the inspiration of the Scriptures, although the prophets themselves understood little of their own prophecies (1 Peter 1:10-12). Paul emphasized this point by saying that if a prophet understood all prophecies and all mysteries, and if he did not have love, it would profit nothing.

1 Peter 1:10-12 (NIV) Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Martyrdom Without Love is Profitless

The apostle Paul next draws the picture of a man who gives all his goods to feed the poor, and is even willing to suffer martyrdom. Certainly, he who gives his life for the gospel, stands high in the list of Christ's disciples. When Stephen was stoned to death by enemies of the gospel, he saw in a vision Christ standing at the right hand of God, as if to welcome him home. Stephen had such love for his enemies that he could pray,

Acts 7:60 (NET) Then he fell to his knees and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" When he had said this, he died

And his prayer evidently was answered. Saul, the ringleader who held the coats of the assassins, was later converted. Paul became the great champion of the Christian faith.

But even martyrdom without love is not enough. A communist also endures great hardships, incurs personal danger, and sometimes gives his life for his cause. Why does he do it? It is not because of love. While there may be mixed motives, it is generally because he has a grievance against humanity. The Communist in his delusion lives for the day when he and his fellow conspirators can seize power and take over as the Bolsheviks did in Russia. He may die for his cause, but the motive that inspires him is not love, but his own sadly warped self-interest.

The Importance Of Love

The apostle Paul, having shown the importance of love in the life of each Christian, no matter how great, proceeds to analyse love to show what love really means. In this analysis of Paul's, we find that as there are nine fruits of the Spirit, so there are nine ingredients in divine love. Let us notice these one by one. They are the graces desperately needed in the church today.

1. PATIENCE – LOVE SUFFERS LONG

“Love endures long and is patient and kind ... Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, it hopes and is fadeless under all circumstances and it endures everything (without weakening)” (1 Cor 13: 4-7)

Love gives a man power to be patient when everything goes wrong. Power to keep calm and collected, when others lose their equilibrium. There are people who have exceptional talents and abilities, but let an unexpected situation arise and they panic. The only way they know to react is to “blow their top”.

Patience is an important quality of love. It takes into account the limitations and weaknesses of humanity. Love hopes for good in every man. Notice how a mother's love reveals this quality. If the child she bore goes wrong, and all others give up faith in him the mother will keep on praying and believing. And often her prayer is answered! Patience is a quality of divine love. How we need it in the church today!

2. KINDNESS – LOVE IS KIND

Kindness is love in action. Kind people will not willingly hurt others. They get no pleasure out of making the lot of someone else harder to bear. Kindness will help point men to the Christ you serve. Thinking of the needs of others first will demonstrate Christian love. Remember that you represent Christ, and you must work always so that people will see Christ in you and will want to be like you.

3. GOOD WILL – LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS

“Love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy” (1 Cor. 13:4)”

In these days men of the world seem concerned only with themselves. It is easy to become envious of what others have and of what they can do. But this is not God's way.

If our neighbours or friends work hard and are able to buy something new for themselves, we should not feel envy in our hearts for what they are able to buy and we are not. Rather we should be glad with them for their good fortune. Love has no jealousy, and the Scriptures say that we should love our neighbours as ourselves. Christ said that a man's life does not consist and is not derived from possessing over-flowing abundance, or that which is over and above his needs.

Perhaps one of the saddest tendencies of today's world is the fight for success. But in the spiritual realm there is even greater danger. Some wish to be the *greatest* preacher, or the *finest* singer, or the *best-known* member of the church. So often Christians find that in their hearts they are not genuinely happy to see God moving in other men's lives, or in other denominations or groups. They think that only their particular church or denomination should make progress in the Lord's work. But the love of Christ is not jealous of others' blessings. Romans, Chapter 12, tells us,

“So we, numerous as we are, are one body in Christ, the Messiah, and individually we are parts one of another – mutually dependent on one another... love one another with brotherly affection – as members of one family – giving precedence and showing honour to one another”.

At times Satan will tempt us to do unethical things to promote ourselves or our group above others, without our even noticing it. We should question our motives constantly. We should remember the words of the Scriptures and keep ourselves humble. If someone wrongs us and pushes us aside, we may be tempted to become discouraged and feel that we have not received just recognition for our labour. But we must remember not to become envious or jealous because others seem to receive recognition and we do not. Psalms 75: 6-7 says,

“For not from the east nor from the west or from the south come promotion and lifting up. But God is the judge! He puts down one and lifts up another.”

It is our duty to remember the law of love and let God take care of recognizing merits. God says that we may receive our rewards here if we demand it, but that we will get nothing in heaven in the day that God gives us our heavenly rewards. He will make the meek great, but He will cause those who think they are the greatest to be the last.

Remember that love is empty of jealousy and envy. Its essence is purity in everything we think, say, and do. If we think, say and do for others, then we will be putting love in action, and we will have no time for envy and jealousy.

4. HUMILITY – LOVE IS NOT CONCEITED OR PROUD

“It is not conceited – arrogant and inflated with pride”

God earnestly desires to give His church more power than it has. For He has said,

“But you shall receive power, efficiency and might – when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends- the very bounds – of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The church needs power if it is to evangelize the world. But the great obstacle to this is that God can find few men that He can trust. Too often a man, once he has gained influence, becomes insufferable. The drive for power can cause him to become contemptuous of the rights of others. He will forget that others helped him to be successful, and most of all, without God he is nothing. Pride can destroy all that is good and decent in a man.

The Scriptures tell us that we should not elevate ourselves,

“For every one who exalts himself will be humbled ... and he who humbles himself (that is, keeps a modest opinion of himself and behaves accordingly) will be exalted – elevated in rank”.

If one possesses a special gift – for instance, the ability to sing, the ability to speak in front of others, the ability to win souls, it is wrong for him to belittle those around him because they do not possess the same talents as he does.

The cure for unholy ambition is divine love. Love is not conceited or proud. When God wanted a man to lead his people out of Egypt, he chose not the ambitious Korah who sought leadership, but Moses the humblest man on earth,

“Now the man Moses was very meek (gentle, kind and humble) above all the men on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3).

Here was a man who turned down an offer from God to raise up a nation entirely from his seed (Exod. 32: 9-10). Because of his humility, God exalted him and made him the deliverer of his people from the land of Egypt. Humility is one of the most beautiful qualities one can find in a Christian.

5. COURTESY – LOVE IS NOT ILL-MANNERED

“Love ... is not rude (unmannerly), and does not act unbecomingly”

Love reveals itself by its pattern of behaviour. We refer to common courtesy – not to what is called modern etiquette. True courtesy goes far beyond the tradition of society and protocol. A woman may carry a book of etiquette under her arm and still violate courtesy with her nagging tongue. A husband may be a good testimony at church, but at home makes the life of his wife miserable by his stinginess in financial matters. True courtesy has to do with all the relationships of life. It will cause an employer to treat his employees as he would be treated. Courtesy will keep Christians from discussing the faults of others in a malicious spirit.

6. UNSELFISHNESS – LOVE IS NOT SELFISH

“Love ... does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking”

Paul, commenting on the ministry in his day wrote,

“For the others all seek (to advance) their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ, the Messiah” (Phil. 2:21).

This is the tendency of the natural man. But love seeks not ever her own. What a revolution there would be in the church today if men would build for Christ instead of for themselves. It was this same love that dominated Paul, who said,

“I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege – the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth and supreme advantage-of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly. For His sake I have lost everything and consider it all to be mere rubbish...in order that I may win ... Christ, the Anointed One” (Phil. 3:8).

That is the love we need in the church today, if we are to see the gifts of the spirit manifest in the power they should be.

7. TEMPER – LOVE IS NOT IRRITABLE

“Love ... is not touchy or fretful or resentful”

Here is a real test as to whether one has true love. Paul does not say that one who has love will never be provoked. Even Christ at times was angry. On one occasion, he took a scourge of small cords and drove out the money changers from the temple (John 2:15). But no one manifested love in a greater degree than He.

One who has divine love will not be easily irritated. Some professing Christians are given to a fearfully quick temper. They are terribly sensitive, and they cannot bear to have the least thing cross them. A man quick to anger will often accuse the other person of losing his temper – the very thing of which he is guilty. Only the man who can keep his own spirit is the master of the situation.

If one ever is tempted to feel that a quick temper is not detrimental to the work of God, he should study James 1:20:

“For man’s anger does not promote the righteousness of God (what he wishes and requires)”

8. LOVE DOES NOT KEEP A RECORD OF WRONGS

“Love ... takes no account of the evil done to it – pays no attention to a suffered wrong”

Love thinks no evil. Sad it is that some people live in a state of constant suspicion. Being crafty themselves, they naturally are suspicious of others, because they expect them to do what they would do.

People as a whole, respond the way you expect them to respond. Show confidence in them; they will usually strive to keep faith with that confidence. This of course is not always true. There are some who will betray a confidence. Yet in the long run, people who have faith in others will come out the best.

However, if someone does wrong to you, you must be ready to forgive that person and *forget* that wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you.

At one time the disciple Peter asked Christ how many times we should forgive a man. As many as seven times? Jesus answered him,

“I tell you, not up to seven times, but seventy times seven!” (Matt. 18:22)

9. LOVE IS NOT HAPPY WITH EVIL, BUT IS HAPPY WITH TRUTH

“Love...does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail”

There are persons who are never so happy as when they hear a bad report about others. In fact, they may even feel elated when someone falls by the wayside, believing that somehow they will profit by that person’s failure. True Christian love, however, rejoices not in evil but in the truth. When David of the Old Testament heard of the death of his enemy Saul, instead of rejoicing, he lamented saying,

“Your glory, O Israel, is slain upon high places. How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, announce it not in the streets of Ashkelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult” (11 Sam. 1:19-20)

If we see someone fail, we should not maliciously point him out nor feel contemptuous or superior toward him. But we should feel a sorrow for that person and pray for him and sincerely try to help him if at all possible. When Christ was on earth, He was never happy over the downfall of any man. He wished that none should perish. We must take the same attitude of our Master.

Summary

With the return of greater power to the church, there must be an emphasis on holiness and the fruits of the Spirit. The improvising of cheap, shoddy schemes to attract attention, the employment of the sensational as a substitute of the working of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is not a good sign. Human ambition, out of control, can result in disaster and bring harm to the cause. Let divine love flow. Let humility be the spirit in which we fulfil our ministry to the people. Then we shall see Christians come forth in their power. Then we shall use the gifts of the Spirit of God manifested in their purity and beauty. Then shall the church fulfil her responsibility of evangelizing the world and be ready for the return of the Bride-groom, Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V1

Witnessing For Christ What Does It Mean To Witness?

“And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends- the very bounds-of the earth” (Acts 1:8)

Witnessing means telling others what you know. It is both the privilege and responsibility of every Christian to tell others about Christ. We should tell our family, relatives, and friends and when the opportunity arises. Here are some suggestions which will help you to witness.

1. Prepare your heart by prayer to God. The Holy Spirit of God needs a yielded God-loving heart. Before you witness to anyone, you must pray that the Holy Spirit will speak through you and give you the right words to say. Then pray also that God will move on the heart and spirit of whoever you talk to, that he may not only hear but understand and open his heart to Christ. God will go before you and move upon the person as you speak to him.

Without prayer you will be powerless! The more you commune with Him and yield yourself to God, the more power to witness you will find in your life. When you have asked God to help you, go in confidence that He will lead you to those who are spiritually hungry.

2. Do not argue. Salvation is in a person – Jesus Christ. To witness means to introduce someone to Jesus Christ. They might know about Him, but not know Him personally. A person becomes a Christian when he accepts Jesus Christ into his spirit and into his life. In brief, the reason for accepting Christ is as follows:

God, the one true God, is the creator of all the universe. He created man to be a companion and friend to God. But long ago Satan, the evil one, who despised God and all His creation came to man and told him that if he would forsake God he could become like a god himself – in knowledge and wisdom.

So man separated himself from God’s presence by his own choice. But once separated, man found that life was void and empty without the close friendship with the Divine, and rather than being like God, he found himself a fallen creature. He could no longer walk and talk with God, and until this day the story of humanity is one of sorrow and disappointment since man went out from the presence of Almighty God.

Most terrible of all, when man’s body dies, his soul (also separated from God), cannot go to live in the Kingdom of God where peace and happiness beyond all imagination reign, but rather to the Kingdom of Satan (called hell) where chaos, hatred, and evil dominate.

But God loved man very much and conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed from the great penalty of eternal separation from God. He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, in the form of man to experience death and separation from God, so that He might take upon himself our punishment. By accepting Christ Jesus’ sacrifices of dying in our stead, and letting His spirit rule in our life, we are accepting God’s plan of redemption for man. Thus, we are restored to the favour and mercy of God.

We can know the presence of the Spirit of God even while we live here on earth, and when our body dies, God will give us a new glorified body. Then we will go to live with Him forever.

Do not let your conversation get into an argument. You are not there to defend your religion but to present Christ. For instance, if someone asks you which church is the right church, you should say that there is only one true church, and it includes all born-again believers. Although everyone should go to church, no denomination can save him – only belief and trust in Jesus Christ. Then return the conversation to the person of Christ.

The Presentation

The Word of God is the ‘sword’ you will use to introduce Christ and the plan of redemption. It would be helpful to read or quote these five Scripture to the person to whom you are witnessing. If possible, carry a small Bible which you can show them.

1. *All have sinned and are falling short of the honour and glory which God bestows and receives” (Romans 3:23)*

The first passage reveals a problem common to all of us. It is because of this problem that we all need Christ. Have your prospect read it as you point to it. Man must know that he is lost before he can be saved. All (both you and I) have sinned. To show your subject what sin is, use Jesus as your example. Ask the prospect, “Are we as righteous and faithful as He is?” We all have come short of the glory of God!

Ask him, "How many sins does it take to make a sinner?" You are trying to show your subject that all are sinners and are guilty before God.

2. *For the wages which sin pays is death; but the ...free gift of God is eternal life through ...Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23)*

Point out this second verse immediately the prospect has seen and admitted that he is a sinner. Point to Romans 6:23 and have him read the passage. Here the Bible says that we will receive a wage - something we have rightfully earned. What is the wage? The prospect reads – death! We have earned it. Tell him that death is spiritual separation from God.

Now have him read the second part, "*but the ...free gift of God is eternal life through ... Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Here God is speaking about a gift, something that we cannot earn. Ask your subject, "Can you earn a gift? Eternal life! This life is through (or in) a person, Jesus Christ. To have God's gift you must have Jesus, His Son".

3. *"So repent-change your mind and purpose; turn around and return (to God) that your sins may be erased ...that times of refreshing - of recovering from the effects of heat, of reviving with fresh air - may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19)*

As you point to this passage, ask your prospect, "What does this text say we must do in order to receive eternal life? Repent means to be sorry for your sins and to turn away from them"

4. *But to as many as did receive and welcome Him, He gave the authority (power, privilege, right) to become the children of God, that is, to those who believe in – adhere to, trust in and rely on - His name" (John 1:12)*

To as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become God's children. Here God says that we have to receive Christ in order to become His children. Point out that it is not *doing anything* that makes the Christian but *receiving* Jesus Christ that makes us the children of God.

5. *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears and listens to and heeds My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him, and he (shall eat) with Me" (Rev. 3:20)*

We have said that God offers to us the free gift of eternal life and that this gift is in the person of Jesus Christ. In order to have God's gift, we must receive Christ. But how can we receive Him? Listen carefully, because in this passage Jesus is talking directly to you!

"Behold I stand at the door and knock' if any one hears and listens to and heeds my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him"

that door is the door of your heart. He stands there gently knocking. Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart.

Tell your prospect that every man has a free will and must make his own choices. This is how you receive Christ. Jesus will never force Himself into anyone's life. He is humbly standing at the door of your life, waiting for you to let Him in. He won't force Himself in. It is up to you. That door must be opened from the inside; you can do that!

For example, if I were a friend of yours, and I stood knocking at the door of your house, what would you say? You'd say, "Come in!" Jesus is waiting for you to open the door and to invite Him in.

This is the crucial moment. While you wait for an answer, silently pray.

If your prospect says, "Yes I'll let Him in" then bow your head and pray with him as he asks Jesus to come into his life. Then have him thank the Lord Jesus for the gift of eternal life.

If he says, "No, I don't want to" or "No, I'm not ready yet" tell him that you are glad that he is honest about it. Make sure, however, that he knows what he is doing. Ask him if he realizes that he is actually refusing God's gift of eternal life by refusing Jesus. If he understands, there is nothing else that you can do. Do not be discouraged, but end your presentation of Jesus like this:

"You don't need me or anyone else with you when you ask Jesus to come into your heart. Alone, anywhere, you can ask Him to come into your life, and in that instant you will be saved". Gently lay your hand on his shoulder. "don't wait too long!" Encourage him to make the decision immediately.

Say, "Bow your head with me, and we'll pray together" and without looking up or waiting, begin to pray and ask God to strengthen his heart and make Jesus real to him.

Most of all, let Christ shine through your life. Let your face radiate the joy of your salvation. The person will be drawn to Christ if he sees Christ in you. No amount of persuasion will convince him if you yourself are not a living proof of the power and mercy of Christ's redeeming love.

We shall not always find the Christian life the easiest, but when we meet our Lord, it will certainly be worth it all. May we fight the good fight of faith here on earth until the day when we all shall join our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

If you wish to accept Jesus Christ into your soul and life, it will help you to pray this prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father

I thank you that you love me

I ask your Son Jesus Christ to come into my life

I know I have sinned and committed deeds unpleasing to you

I ask you now to forgive me of these sins and to cleanse my life

Help me to follow You and Your teachings

Protect me from Satan and evil

Teach me to put You first in all my thoughts and actions

Help me to love my fellow man as you have loved me

And, Father, show me step by step the plan you have for my life

I give you myself and my life

I worship and praise you, my Creator and Lord

I will continually thank You for sacrificing Your Son on the cross that I might have eternal life with You

Help me to win others to Christ

I await the return of Christ to take me to heaven

Come soon, Lord Jesus.

Amen.