

# The Layman, A Witness for Christ (Lay Evangelism)

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## Introduction

Synod's 1957 Resolution Stressing Lay Evangelism

Is Lay Evangelism an Innovation in the Church? Is It Copied from the Sects? Is It Scriptural? What Are Its Implications?

## I. What is Evangelism?

### A. Definition of the Word "Evangel"

Luke 1:19 - "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these *glad tidings*."

Luke 2:10 - "Behold, I bring you *good tidings* of great joy which shall be to all people."

Luke 8:1 - "He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the *glad tidings* of the kingdom of God."

Romans 10:15 - "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring *glad tidings* of good things!"

Simply defined, evangelism is the spreading of the Good News of what our merciful God has done for lost sinners through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the sharing of the Good News of salvation with others.

### B. Evangelism Nothing New

#### 1. Scripture References

Old Testament:

Exodus 19:5,6 - "If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people...And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."

Psalms 96:3 - "Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people."

Isaiah 49:6 - "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth."

New Testament:

Mark 16:15 - "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Matthew 28:19 - "Go ye therefore, and teach (make disciples) of all nations."

Acts 1:8 - "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me...unto the uttermost part of the earth."

#### 2. For This Purpose Christ Came into the World

1 Timothy 1:15 - "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Luke 19:10 - "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

John 3:16 - "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

#### 3. Distinction Sometimes Made between Evangelism in the Narrow and the Broad Sense

##### 1. Evangelism in the Narrow Sense

“The simple act of telling others the Good News of salvation”

## 2. Evangelism in the Broad Sense

“Everything a child of God is, says, and does which gives added weight to his testimony.”

Scriptures Adduced:

Matthew 5:16 - “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

2 Corinthians 3:2,3 (RSV) - “You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

Nota Bene: “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). Conversion is the work of the Holy Ghost through the Gospel.

## II. Why Stress Lay Evangelism?

### A. It Is Biblical

Acts 1:8 - “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.” (A statement of *fact*, of something that *will* happen)

Mark 5:19 - “Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”

Scriptural Examples of Lay Evangelism

Old Testament:

Noah - A “preacher (herald) of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5).

David - “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me... Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee” (Psalm 51:10,13)

“Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul” (Psalm 66:16)

“They (the saints of God) shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom (Psalm 145:11,12).

New Testament:

The Shepherds - “They made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child” (Luke 2:17).

Anna - “She spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38).

The Demoniac - “He went his way and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him” (Luke 8:39).

Andrew - “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41).

Philip - “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write” (John 1:45).

The Woman of Samaria - "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29)

The Early Christians - "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4).

Jesus Trained the Seventy - "And sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself would come" (Luke 10:1).

B. It Utilizes the Church's Greatest Power for Her Greatest Task

1. The Incredible Failure of the Church to Keep Pace with Population Growth

a. Not God's Fault

b. The Clergy Not to be Blamed Exclusively

2. The Laity - the "Greatest Untapped Force in the Christian Church"

C. It Takes Advantage of the Layman's Unique Ability to Gain a Hearing

1. The Mysterious Resistance to a "Professional" Clergyman

2. The Layman's Advantage in Witnessing to the Unchurched

D. It Has God's Promise of Success

Isaiah 55:11 - "So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it."

Romans 1:16 - "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Examples from Scripture:

The Seventy - "They returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us" (Luke 10:17).

The Woman of Samaria - "Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman" (John 4:39).

The Early Christians - "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly" (Acts 6:7).

### III. Motives for Lay Evangelism

A. Love for Christ

1. Love Begets Love

1 John 4:19 - "We love Him because He first loved us."

2. Love for Christ Expresses Itself in Obedience to His Commands

John 14:15 - "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

John 21:15-17 - "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep."

3. Love for Christ Leaves Us No Choice But to Do That Which Pleases Him

2 Corinthians 5:14 - "The love of Christ constraineth us."

B. Love for Our Fellowmen

Galatians 6:10 - "As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men."

1 Thessalonians 4:9 - "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another and toward all men."

1 John 3:18 - "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

The Urgency of Time - "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

#### IV. Qualifications for Lay Evangelism

##### A. A Deep Personal Faith in the Savior

1. Jesus' Command to Witness Addressed to Believers
2. Unbelievers, by Their Unbelief, Label the Gospel a Lie

##### B. A Clear Understanding of the Fundamental Doctrines of the Bible, the Law and the Gospel

###### 1. The Law

###### a. The Prime Purpose of the Law

Galatians 3:11 - "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God."

Romans 3:20 - "By the law is the knowledge of sin."

Galatians 3:24 - "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ."

###### b. The Fearful Consequences of Sin

Galatians 3:10 - "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Ezekiel 18:20 - "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

Romans 6:23 - "The wages of sin is death."

###### 2. The Gospel - the Good News of Salvation in Christ

The Inestimable Blessings Bestowed upon Those Who Believe the Gospel:

###### a. Forgiveness of Sins and Peace with God

1 John 1:7 - "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Romans 5:1 - "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

###### b. Deliverance from Death and from the Devil

2 Timothy 1:10 - "Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

1 John 3:8 - "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil."

###### c. Strength in the Hour of Trial

Hebrews 13:5 - "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

1 Peter 5:7 - "Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

Hebrews 2:6 - "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

###### d. Grace in the Time of Temptation

1 Corinthians 10:13 - "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

2 Peter 2:9 - "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Hebrews 2:18 - "For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

###### e. Access to the Throne of God through Prayer

Romans 8:14,15 - "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

John 16:23 - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you."

Matthew 7:7 - "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

f. Grace to Serve Him and to Remain True to Him until Death

Ephesians 2:10 - "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

John 15:5 - "He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing."

1 Corinthians 1:8 - "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Philippians 1:6 - "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

g. Assurance of Life Eternal in the Mansions of Heaven

John 5:24 - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life."

John 10:27,28 - "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life."

John 14:2,3 - "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Revelations 21 1-4 - "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and be their God."

C. A Loving Concern for Souls

1. The Value of the Soul Incalculable

Matthew 16:26 - "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

2. The Tragedy of the Soul without Christ

a. The Soul without Christ Is Lost

Mark 16:16 - "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

James 5:20 - "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

b. The Soul without Christ Has No Peace

Isaiah 57:21 - "There is no peace, saith my God; to the wicked."

John 3:36 - "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

c. The Soul without Christ Has No Hope

Ephesians 2:12 - "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world"

3. The Example of Paul

Romans 9:1-3 - "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart."

D. A Firm Reliance on the Power of the Holy Ghost

1. The Holy Ghost Equips the Witness for His Task

Moses - "And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exodus 4:10,12).

Isaiah - "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (Isaiah 6:5-7).

Jeremiah - "Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jeremiah 1:6,8,9).

Jonah - "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5).

Acts 1:8 - "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost 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."

Matthew 10:20 - "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

Luke 12:12 - "For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."

2. The Holy Ghost Blesses the Message of the Witness

1 Corinthians 12:3 - "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

Zechariah 4:6 - "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

1 Corinthians 3:6 - "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

Isaiah 55:11 - "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

3. The Holy Ghost's Blessing Sought through Prayer

John 15:7 - "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

James 5:16 - "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Luke 11:13 - "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

## **V. The Field for Lay Witnessing**

Acts 1:8 - "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

A. At home - "In Jerusalem"

Mark 5:19 - "Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

John 1:4; - "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and with unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."

B. Among Our Countrymen - "In all Judea, and in Samaria"

C. Throughout the world - "Unto the Uttermost Part of the Earth"

## **Conclusion**

"Evangelism Never the Line of Least Resistance"

1. Preoccupation with Other Things
2. The Probability that in Some Minds the Distinction between Pagan and Christian is Not as Sharp as It Really is
3. Spectators Rather than Participants
4. The Divine "Must"
5. Sow the Seed - Let the Results to God

## **Introduction**

There is a familiar legend that when Jesus returned to heaven, His mission on earth accomplished, the angel Gabriel inquired of Him what plans He had made to insure the spread of His Gospel in the world of men.

Jesus replied, "I have entrusted the message to Peter and John, to Mary and Martha. They will tell others, and thus the message will spread."

"But suppose," the angel said, "that the fisherman are too busy with their fishing and the women too engrossed in their housework, so that the sharing of the Good News with their friends and neighbors will be neglected or even forgotten. What other plans hast Thou made, Lord?"

Jesus answered, "I have no other plans. I am counting on them. They shall be My witnesses."

Legend certainly has no place in the language and work of the church. It has neither the authority nor the slightest power to edify or motivate. But the story does point up, in a simple, homely way, something of the significance of the topic which is to engage our attention in this presentation.

## **Synod's 1957 Resolution Stressing Lay Evangelism**

That the work of "lay witnessing" or "lay evangelism" is of vital importance in the life of the church as well as in the life of the individual Christian was given special emphasis by our Synod when in 1957 it directed attention to the laity as a "vast reservoir for personal mission work" and took steps, for the first time in its history, to stimulate a wider use of this vast potential through the establishment of a Commission on Evangelism, the purpose of which shall be to offer encouragement to, and provide practical guidance for, the active and continuing

participation in the work of gaining and reclaiming souls for Christ on the part of the entire membership of our churches.

### **Is Lay Evangelism an Innovation? Is It Scriptural?**

That questions such as these should be raised—some of them not unmixed with serious misgivings—is only natural: Is Synod embarking on something new? Is lay evangelism an innovation in the church? Is it copied from the sects? Is it Scriptural? What are its implications?

### **The Goal of This Presentation**

The goal of this presentation shall be to try to answer these and related questions, to attempt to allay whatever misgivings there might be with regard to lay evangelism, and to seek to arouse in the hearts of those engaged in the preaching and teaching, ministry as well as in the hearts of those whom they are called to serve, a burning, unquenchable zeal for the cause and urgency of personal witnessing for Christ.

We shall lay no claim to complete originality in this essay, nor do we submit it as an exhaustive treatment of the subject. Our understanding of the assignment was to present as simply as possible, in the language of the layman, what God has to say on the subject of personal evangelism and what implications this has for the Christian layman in his every-day life.

In order that all we say here may redound to the glory of our merciful Savior God and the salvation of many precious, blood-bought souls in these last days of sore distress, we have humbly implored the gracious guidance of the Holy Ghost.

### **I. What is Evangelism?**

Indispensable to our study of the subject before us is a clear understanding of what is meant by evangelism.

#### **A. Definition of the Word “Evangel”**

Words are fragile things. Sometimes a word which to one person is quite meaningful and expressive to another bears a connotation which makes it quite distasteful. Thus the word “evangelism” for many devout Christian people, especially those of a conservative background, bears a somewhat tainted, unsavory flavor. They associate it with the shouter who makes a career of cheapening religion, or with the zealot who demands, “Brother, are you saved?” They identify it with mass revivalistic crusades, the “saw dust trail” of a generation ago, or high pressure, emotional appeals for commitments not engendered by the Spirit through the Word. They sense in it the dangers of more promotionism, or activism (the striving to make a person active in church work by giving him something to do), the novelty of following a fad, or even the indiscriminate solicitation of the members of another man’s flock (sheep stealing).

The word “evangelism” is really one of the most beautiful in the vocabulary of religion. It has the rich heritage of Bible association and a precious tradition which the church ought jealously to guard. As art experts restore an old masterpiece, so we must brush away the accumulations which have obscured this word so that glory can be seen and loved.

Before Christian times a joyful proclamation from the Roman emperor in Greek-speaking provinces was called an “evangel”—a good message. The New Testament took this word and made it sublime. The angel Gabriel told the awed Zacharias that he had come to show him the evangel—the “glad tidings” (Luke 1:19). The glory-filled skies over Bethlehem rang with the evangel—the “good tidings”—of great joy which shall be to all people (Luke 2:10). Jesus went



among men showing the evangel—the “glad tidings”—of the kingdom of God (Luke 8:1). Paul is reminded of how beautiful are the feet of them that bring the evangel—the “glad tidings”—of good things (Romans 10:15).

Simply defined, therefore, evangelism is the spreading of the Good News of what our merciful God has done for lost sinners through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the sharing of the Good News of salvation with others.

## **B. Evangelism Nothing New**

Evangelism is nothing new. It is not an innovation in the church. It lies at the very heart of the Old Testament Scriptures as well as those of the New Testament.

### **1. Scripture References**

#### **Old Testament**

When God chose Israel as His people, it was not only for the purpose of making them His peculiar treasure. They were also to be to Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, to minister unto Him and to show forth His praises (Exodus 19:5, 6). Again and again they were called upon to “declare His glory among the heathen, and His wonders among all people” (Psalm 96:3). The promised Messiah was intended not only for the glory of God’s people Israel but also for a light to lighten the Gentiles, that He might be God’s salvation unto the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6).

#### **New Testament**

The New Testament Scriptures abound with even more references which call upon God’s people to share the wonderful message of salvation with their fellowmen.

The writer to the Hebrews states that “God, who at sundry times and divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things” (Hebrews 1:1, 2). And what has His Son spoken to us in this matter? “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). “Make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 23:19). Be witnesses unto Me unto the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). Preach repentance and remission of sins in My name among all nations (Luke 24:47).

### **2. For This Purpose Christ Came into the World**

The supreme purpose of Christ’s coming into the world was, as the apostle Paul declared, “to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15), or, as Christ Himself declared, “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). These are the good tidings of great joy which the herald angel proclaimed at the time of His birth and which are meant for all people (Luke 2:10, 11). This is the message which He Himself made known in the beautiful words, “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). This is the message which He wants His people to share with all men.

### **3. Distinction Sometimes Made between Evangelism in the Narrow and the Broad Sense In the Narrow Sense**

Some writers speak of the simple activity of telling others the Good News of salvation as evangelism in the narrow sense.

## **In the Broad Sense**

There is a broad concept of evangelism, they say, which involves “everything a child of God is, says, and does which gives added weight to his testimony.” Reference is made to the words of Jesus, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16), and the words of the apostle Paul to the Christians at Corinth, “You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Corinthians 3:2, 3 - RSV).

It is of course unquestionably and tragically true that inconsistency in the life of a witnessing Christian—inconsistency between what he professes to be and believe and the manner in which he lives—will almost inevitably be construed by the non-believer as an obvious refutation, as proof sufficient for the worthlessness and unacceptability of what he says. For example, the Christian who is addicted to cursing, excessive drinking, shady transactions in his business deals, loose and immoral speech and conduct, and the like, by his open and manifest sins will give to the unbeliever what to his unregenerate mind is a completely justifiable excuse for turning a deaf ear to the Gospel. The true Christian is constantly aware of the possibility such inconsistency in his life and, therefore, daily implores the Holy Spirit for the grace to conform his life to the rule of the divine Word, to walk as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, lest he become a stumbling-block to those who do not know the Savior’s love.

It must be remembered, however, that the example of a Christian life, no matter how dedicated and devout, does not in itself have the power to convert. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Conversion is, and shall always remain, the work of the Holy Ghost operating through the Gospel.

## **II. Why Stress Lay Evangelism?**

### **A. It is Biblical**

That the Great Commission, “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations,” strikes the pulpit and the pew at the same angle, that the Savior is here speaking to all believers, is quite generally understood. That the carrying out of this divine directive, however, involves much more than the mere giving of an offering for the Synodical mission budget; that it imposes not only upon the called servants of Christ, but upon every individual believer as well, young and old, male and female, the privilege and responsibility of personal, face-to-face witnessing among those whom the Lord places within the range of their individual voices, is perhaps not so generally understood, or, if it is, stands in grave danger of being sadly neglected.

God’s will with regard to lay evangelism is clear and unmistakable. “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me” (Acts 1:3). A witness is one who speaks or testifies of what he himself has seen and heard and experienced. An investigation of the original text will disclose that this statement of our Lord is neither a command nor an admonition, but rather a statement of fact, of something that will happen. Every Christian will be a witness unto Him. Personal evangelism is an integral part of the sanctified Christian life, a natural fruit of Christian faith, the Spirit-born response to the love and compassion of Jesus. The neglect of it is, therefore, a symptom of spiritual weakness and debility. The Savior directed the attention of the demoniac whom He had healed at Decapolis to this all-important truth when He said to him, “Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:19).

## Scriptural Examples of Lay Evangelism

### Old Testament

Scriptures abound with examples of lay evangelism. Time will permit us to cite but a select number of them.

In the Old Testament there is the example of Noah, a “preacher (herald) of righteousness”, according to the words of Peter (2 Peter 2:5). These words certainly imply that Noah must have made personal appeals to the people of his godless generation to turn from their wicked ways to the living Savior-God. The tragedy was that they refused to listen to his message, lost their lives, and went to hell (1 Peter 3:19, 20).

David refers to his activity of personal evangelism when he pleads in Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, God, and renew a right spirit within me” and immediately adds, “Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.” In Psalm 66:16 he invites, “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.” In Psalm 145 he asserts that all the saints of God do likewise. “They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power; to make know to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom” (Psalm 145:11, 12).

### New Testament

In the New Testament the Holy Spirit has recorded for our benefit such outstanding examples as these:

The shepherds from the fields of Bethlehem who, when they had seen the new-born Savior, “made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child” (Luke 2:17).

Anna, the prophetess, who “spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38).

The demoniac of Decapolis who, having been healed by Christ, “went his way and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him” (Luke 8:39).

Andrew who hurried quickly to Simon, his brother, to share with him the Good News, “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41).

Philip who went to Nathanael to inform him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write” (John 1:45).

The woman of Samaria who left her waterpot at Jacob’s well to tell the men of the city, “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (John 4:29)

The early Christians in Jerusalem who talked about their Savior wherever they went, even under persecution. “They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word” (Acts 8:4). They did this with an ardor and zeal that caused others to say, “These...have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

In considering the many examples of lay evangelism recorded in the Bible, it is significant, too, to note that our Lord Himself trained and used lay people for evangelism work—70 of them, in one instance—whom He sent “two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself would come” (Luke 10:1).

Can there be any doubt that lay evangelism is Scriptural?

## **B. It Utilizes the Church’s Greatest Power for Her Greatest Task**

### **1. The Incredible Failure of the Church to Keep Pace with Population Growth**

It will soon be twenty centuries since our Lord charged those who love Him to go into all the world with the amazing story of the grace of God. Someone has remarked, “One would think that long before this every last man, woman, and child on the earth would have heard the message of life.” But here lies the tragedy! Today, there are far more heathen in the world than when this message was first given. Even after almost two thousand years of preaching, there are more who have not heard than those who have.

World population figures are startling. Due to better methods of communication the heathen world has awakened to modern medical miracles. The warfare of today’s drugs against entrenched disease has been pushed to wider fronts. In countries where only one out of three babies used to live now only one out of three dies. Many of the decimating plagues of past centuries are now under control. Older folks live longer. The production of wholesome food is increasing. Literacy is on the rise. Education is better. More and more of the world’s millions have come to know and practice the simple laws of sanitation.

The net result is that our world’s population increase has become a gallop. This year there are fifty million more living souls than at this same time last year—that is, births over deaths. Next year will be the same. In another century, if the Lord allows, the increase will be fantastic. In our country alone, about four million babies are born every year. Approximately forty percent of these are born into families which have no church connection. Only God knows how many of these unchurched families live within the shadow of our church steeples.

The tragedy lies not in the exploding world population. That is God’s affair—the Author and Creator of life. The tragedy lies in the incredible failure of the Christian church to keep pace with the increase.

Here is the most important thing in life. Here is the goal of all living...the meeting of a sinful, condemned soul with the Savior of men who can pardon that sin, remove the condemnation, and bestow the incomparable gift of everlasting life. This is what life is all about. This is the reason men are born. And yet, here is where the failure occurs.

#### **a. Not God’s Fault**

Certainly, it is not God’s fault. Let us say this ever so emphatically. God’s heart is full of love for the sinner. God’s will is that no one should perish. God’s provision is sufficient for everyone. Christ died for the whole world of lost men, women, and children.

#### **b. The Clergy not to be Blamed Exclusively**

It seems rather easy to lay the blame at the feet of the clergy. But when we consider the fact that there is only one pastor for approximately every five hundred members in the major denominations of America, our Synod included, how can that one pastor possibly do what God wants all those five hundred members to be doing?

### **c. The Laity—the “Greatest Untapped Force in the Christian Church**

The power of the laity has been called the “greatest untapped force in the Christian church”. The country’s “worst unemployment problem is its spiritual unemployment”. It is a sad thing that many a church has found no better use for the abilities of its spiritually-minded members than to ask them to hand out bulletins at the church door or to wield a paint brush in the church basement.

There is grim point to the story of the minister who preached so movingly on “Christian Service” that one of his members came to him and said, “You have made me ashamed of myself. What is there that I can do for the kingdom?” “Well, off-hand I wouldn’t know,” replied the embarrassed preacher, “We already have sixty ushers.”

If pastors today could only say what Henry Ward Beecher was supposed to have said of his members, “I preach at least four hundred times a week. Though I preach only on Sundays, my four hundred members go out into the byways of life, into the shops and offices, and multiply my message four hundred times!” The world will never, be converted by the ministers; there are not enough of them. The only hope of bringing the Gospel down into the currents of everyday life is through the witness of God’s priests, the lay people, as they labor in shop and home, in field and factory. Thus will the church’s greatest power for her greatest task be utilized.

### **C. It Takes Advantage of the Layman’s Unique Ability to Gain a Hearing**

#### **1. The Mysterious Resistance to a “Professional” Clergyman**

Whether we are always aware of it or not, experience shows that when the man at the door identifies himself as a minister, very often a mysterious, invisible barrier is raised between him and the person to whom he desires to witness. “He’s out to build up his church,” thinks the unchurched one, “After all, that’s what he’s being paid for.” And perhaps there is more than a slight analogy here in the words of a lawyer who said to a group of visitors, “The jury discounts a paid witness”.

#### **2. The Layman’s Advantage in Witnessing to the Unchurched**

On the other hand, when the grocer or mail carrier or neighbor next door come to speak of the blessings of the Gospel in their lives, having no special “angle” in the eyes of the unchurched, they are much more likely to get a hearing. Most people are interested to know how Christianity looks from the pew. Then, too, they usually feel much more free to express themselves in the presence of laymen than in the presence of professionally trained clergymen.

The layman in his activity of witnessing for Christ does enjoy a distinct advantage over the pastor in this respect.

### **D. It has God’s Promise of Success**

God’s Word does not return unto Him void; it accomplishes that which He pleases; it prospers in the thing whereunto He has sent it. We have God’s own promise for this (Isaiah 55:11). The Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). This holds true also when the layman proclaims it. The power rests in Gospel itself.

#### **Examples from Scripture**

When the seventy had completed the mission on which Jesus had sent them, we are told that “they returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us” (Luke 10:17).

After the woman of Samaria had urged the people of her city, “Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” John reports that “many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman” (John 4:29, 39).

One of the most amazing examples of the effectiveness of lay evangelism is found in the Book of Acts. When Jesus returned to the Father, the church at Jerusalem numbered only one hundred twenty members. Following days of earnest supplication, they went out into the homes of Jerusalem witnessing from house to house. Ugly persecutions followed, but they only served to spread the glorious Gospel message as the followers and witnesses of Jesus Christ were scattered.

The results were spectacular. The visitation campaign, if we may say that, stirred the multitudes and brought an enormous crowd to hear Peter preach the Gospel of the crucified and risen Lord. Three thousand souls were added to the church (Acts 2:41). Following Peter’s second sermon, the record informs us that by this time there were five thousand men added to the church (Acts 4:4). The church became a “multitude” according to Acts 4:32 and “multitudes both of men and women” according to chapter 5:14. But the final results are not yet tabulated for we read in chapter 6:7, “And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.”

Several church historians agree that the membership of the Jerusalem church at this time increased rapidly to probably twenty-five thousand. Who knows but God? However, one thing seems certain: the phenomenal growth was achieved, under God, not only through the public proclamation of the Gospel by the chosen apostles, but also through the consecrated activity of personal witnessing on the part of the lay people.

Lay evangelism, even as any other work for Christ which we as Christian congregations or as a Synod are carrying on, is deserving of prayerful emphasis. It is a matter not of secondary but of prime, not of sporadic but of continuing, importance.

### **III. Motives for Lay Evangelism**

In evangelism, as in every area of church life, motivation makes for action. Motivation, however, must be Scriptural if it is to be God-pleasing and effective. Appeals such as “The church needs your help” or “You owe it to your church” or “Everyone should do his share” are appeals which are not only misunderstood, but under certain circumstances may not at all be pleasing to God.

The Bible places many noble incentives before us for lay evangelism. They may be briefly summed up under two headings: Love for Christ, Love for our Fellowmen.

#### **A. Love for Christ**

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” (1 John 3:1). “God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

##### **1. Love Begets Love**

“We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

##### **2. Love for Christ Expresses Itself in Obedience to His Commands**

“If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep” (John 21:15-17).

### **3. Love for Christ Leaves Us No Choice but to do that which Pleases Him**

“The love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Corinthians 5:14), “leaves us no choice” (NEB).

#### **B. Love for our Fellowmen**

Out of love for Christ flows love toward our fellowmen. Christian love is a two-way love, vertical and horizontal—vertical in that it reaches heavenward to Christ, horizontal in that it reaches out to fellow sinners in their need.

“As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men” (Galatians 6:10). “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another and toward all men” (1 Thessalonians 4:9). “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

Love for Christ, love for our fellowmen—these are the prime motives, indispensable and inseparable, which will not let the true believer rest as long as there is one single soul in his family or relationship, in his community or village or city, in the nation or in the world, which has not been exposed to the Gospel.

A few years ago a little girl fell into a hole left by an abandoned septic tank. It was some time before she was discovered. The opening was small, and workmen had great difficulty trying to recover her body. They worked feverishly day and night. Through newspaper publicity the whole nation was aroused and become deeply concerned. When the child’s body was finally brought to the surface, she was dead. If we are so concerned about the physical well-being of a single child, what about all those souls in our communities who will be eternally lost without faith? Should not the love of Christ engender in us an attitude of concern and compassion toward them which will not let us wait until it is too late to reach them with the saving Word of life?

The swift passage of time and the uncertainty of the hour of death, both for the one who witnesses as well as for the one who is in need of his witness, only give added emphasis to the extreme urgency of acting in the spirit of the Savior who said, “I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4)

## **IV. Qualifications For Lay Evangelism**

Every true Christian has the qualifications to be a witness for Christ. Specialized training, a college or seminary diploma, are not required, neither fluency of speech or adeptness in argumentation. And while conversance with the Scriptures and familiarity with proof texts is desirable, even these are not indispensable requisites for lay witnessing.

The most evident qualifications for lay evangelism are simply these:

### **A. A Deep Personal Faith in the Savior**

#### **1. Jesus’ Command to Witness Addressed to all Believers**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the “power of God unto salvation” regardless of the fitness or unfitness of the tool that wields it. But surely it is God’s intention that every one who proclaims His Word in public or in private should himself be a believer. Jesus did not say of those who rejected Him, “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.” He did not say to those who refused to

believe in Him, “Go ye and make disciples of all nations”, “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you”.

## **2. Unbelievers, by their Unbelief, Label the Gospel a Lie**

He who does not believe the Gospel by his own unbelief labels the Gospel a lie. How can such a person bear witness to the truth with his lips when in his heart he has not embraced it? How can he speak glowingly of the things which, by God’s grace, he has seen and heard and experienced? How can he testify of a hope that is not in him?

## **B. A Clear Understanding of the Fundamental Doctrines of the Bible, the Law and the Gospel**

The second of the most evident qualifications for lay witnessing is a clear understanding of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, the Law and the Gospel.

### **1. The Law**

#### **a. The Prime Purpose of the Law**

The witness must know that “no man is justified by the law in the sight of God” (Galatians 3:11); that “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20); that the Law is “our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” (Galatians 3:24). He must know that this is the doctrine which must be applied to the hardened sinner or to the man who feels he is “good enough” to stand in the sight of God as he is.

#### **b. The Fearful Consequences of Sin**

The fearful and inevitable consequences of his sins must be pointed out to him in unmistakable terms to awaken in him the consciousness of his guilt before God and his need for the Savior. “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them” (Galatians 3:10). “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20). “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), temporal death and eternal damnation.

### **2. The Gospel—the Good News of Salvation in Christ**

On the other hand, the witness must also have a clear understanding and be able to present, in the simplest of terms, the precious truths of the Gospel, the Good News of our salvation in Christ; that God so loved the world, every last sinner without exception, that He sent His only-begotten Son to fulfill the demands of the divine law perfectly in our stead and, by His holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death on the cross, to pay the full penalty of our guilt, that “whosoever believeth in Him; should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

### **The Inestimable Blessings Bestowed upon Those who Believe the Gospel**

He should be able to speak fervently of the inestimable blessings which the merciful God bestows upon those who believe the Gospel:

#### **a. Forgiveness of Sins and Peace with God**

“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

#### **b. Deliverance from Death and from the Devil.**



- “Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).
- “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).
- c. Strength in the Hour of Trial
- “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).
- “Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7).
- “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth” (Hebrews 12:6).
- d. Grace in the Time of Temptation
- “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Peter 2:9).
- “For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).
- e. Access to the Throne of God through Prayer
- “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:14, 15).
- “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you” (John 16:23).
- “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7).
- f. Grace to Serve Him and to Remain True to Him until Death
- “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).
- “He that abideth in Me and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).
- “Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:8).
- “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).
- g. Assurance of Life Eternal in the Mansions of Heaven
- “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life” (John 5:24).
- “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I gave unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand” (John 10:27, 28).
- “In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2, 3).
- “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new

Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelations 21:1-4).

### **C. A Loving Concern for Souls**

A third of the most evident qualifications for lay witnessing is a loving concern for souls.

#### **1. The Value of the Soul Incalculable**

What is a soul worth? No human evaluation can make that clear. Jesus compared the gaining of the whole world as of no worth in comparison with the value of a single soul. “What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). To Him the Soul was of such transcendent value that He gladly exchanged the shining courts of heaven for a life of poverty, suffering, shame, and death rather than that it be damned. Consider also His loving concern for the soul as depicted in the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son (Luke 15).

#### **2. The Tragedy of the Soul without Christ**

The Christian witness will ponder frequently the fearful tragedy of the soul that is without Christ. From the Scriptures he knows that

- a. The soul without Christ is lost. “He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). St. James speaks of the death of the soul (James 5:20). Death means separation, eternal separation from God, “in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Revelations 21:8).
- b. The soul without Christ has no peace. No peace of conscience, no peace with God! “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57:21). “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).
- c. The soul without Christ has no hope. No hope in this life with its many ills and hardships and distresses, no hope in the hour of death! “Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in this world” (Ephesians 2:12).

#### **3. The Example of Paul**

A noted infidel once said, “Were I a religionist, did I truly, firmly, consistently believe, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, religion should be to me everything. I would cast aside earthly enjoyments as dross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as less than vanity. I would not labor for the meat which perisheth nor for treasures of earth, but only for a crown beyond the reach of time and chance. I would esteem one soul gained for heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences should never stay my hand nor seal my lips. I would strive to look but on eternity and on immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly miserable or everlastingly happy. And

I would go forth to the world and preach to it, in season and out of season; and my text should be, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

Does such a statement bring us to shame? Paul, the apostle, said more. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have a great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:1-3).

O for such "heaviness and continued sorrow" in our hearts for souls on the way of death!  
O for such loving, Spirit-implanted, self-sacrificing concern for the spiritual needs of others!

#### **D. A Firm Reliance on the Power of the Holy Ghost**

The fourth of the most evident qualifications for lay witnessing is a firm reliance on the power of the Holy Ghost.

##### **1. The Holy Ghost Equips the Witness for His Task**

From his knowledge of the Scriptures the Christian witness knows that the Lord never imposes upon His children a task for the performance of which He does not provide the necessary ability.

When Moses was called at the burning bush, he objected, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." God reminded him, "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exodus 4:10, 12).

When Isaiah was called, he said, "Woe is me!...I am a man of unclean lips." God sent an angel to touch his lips with a live coal taken from the altar. "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged," the seraph said (Isaiah 6:5-7).

Jeremiah was afraid that he was not equal to his task. "I cannot speak, for I am a child." The Lord said, "I am with thee to deliver thee." Then the Lord put forth His hand, touched Jeremiah's mouth, assuring him, "Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth" (Jeremiah 1:6, 8, 9).

When Jonah was called to preach repentance to Nineveh, he fled from the presence of the Lord. Only after being swallowed by a great fish, spewed up on dry land, and encouraged by God's second call, did he witness to the city. God blessed his testimony and put faith in the people's hearts "from the greatest of them even to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5).

Experiences such as these on the part of great soul-winners in the Bible, reluctant at first and all but overwhelmed by their feeling of inadequacy, strengthen the Christian's confidence that the Lord will also be with him and help him in his task of witnessing for Christ. Jesus has said, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:20). His promise is, "The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12:12). This promise, the Christian knows, did not fail the apostles and the countless witnesses of the early church. It will not fail him.

I am trusting Thee for power,  
Thine can never fail,  
Words which Thou Thyself shalt give me  
Must prevail.

##### **2. The Holy Ghost Blesses the Message of the Witness**

The Christian witness is also fully aware of the fact that the effectiveness of his witness lies not in himself, in the winsomeness of his personality or the persuasiveness of his eloquence, or even in his knowledge of the Word, but in the power of the Holy Ghost operating in and through the Word. “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the holy Ghost” (1 Corinthians 12:3). It is the Holy Ghost who “calls men by the Gospel, enlightens them with His gifts, sanctifies, and keeps them in the true faith.” The thought that a man can, even in the slightest degree, assist or cooperate with the Holy Ghost in his own conversion or that of others is not only presumptuous, but preposterous. It is an utter impossibility. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6). “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47).

This blessed truth of the power of the Holy Spirit operating in and through the Word is a source of greatest comfort and inspiration to the witnessing Christian. It compensates for his weaknesses and it fires his zeal for the cause of witnessing. Like Paul, he realizes that he needs only to plant the seed; God will give the increase, as He has promised. (1 Corinthians 3:6) (Isaiah 55:11)

### **3. The Holy Ghost’s Blessing Sought through Prayer**

Because of the tremendous importance of the Spirit’s power in his own life as well as in the lives of those to whom he desires to witness, the Christian witness will turn frequently to the privilege of prayer. Jesus has promised to hear the pleading of His children. “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). He has especially promised to hear the plea for the greatest gift of all, the gift of the Holy Spirit. “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” (Luke 11:13).

From all that has been said with regard to the qualifications for lay evangelism, it should be evident not only that these qualifications are already the God-given possession of every believer in Christ, but also that the salvation of an immortal soul is actually a completely uncomplicated matter. The miracle of salvation, with all its inclusions, is simply and altogether the mighty operation of God by means of the simplest possible process. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

While all this is extremely elemental, it is by no means even slightly inconsequential. This is importance of the first order. This is truth involving the issues of life and death. This is the goal of life and the concern of heaven. Therefore, over the entire matter the Christian will write these words...handle with care, be zealous to share, bathe in prayer.

## **V. The Field for Lay Witnessing**

Jesus described the field in which the Christians of apostolic times were to witness the words, “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Note the expanding scope of His directive—first “in Jerusalem”; then, “in all Judaea, and in Samaria”; then, “unto the uttermost part of the earth”.

### **A. At Home—“In Jerusalem”**

They were to begin “in Jerusalem”—there where the Lord Himself had placed them, in their own community and city, in the circle of their own relatives and friends. We are reminded

again of the Savior's instructions to the demoniac at Decapolis, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee" (Mark 5:19).

Through the intervening centuries the voice of the Savior still sounds strong and clear in the ears and hearts of His believers in these latter days: Witness where you are, where I have placed you! And though this should hardly need to be mentioned, what is more natural than that the Christian should begin witnessing among those who are nearest and dearest to him in his own home, in his own relationship, as Andrew did with Simon, his brother? (John 1:41).

### **B. Among Our Countrymen—"In all Judaea, and in Samaria"**

With the words "in all Judaea, and in Samaria" the Savior obviously broadens the field of the Christian witness to include all of his countrymen with whom he may come in contact—by travel, by business trips, or in some other way.

### **C. Throughout the World—"Unto the uttermost part of the earth"**

The words "unto the uttermost part of the earth" extend the field to include the whole world—the people of every nation, kindred, tribe, and tongue.

Because of the performance of other God-given duties, the lack of time, resources, and ability, the Christian witness will find it impossible to extend himself that far. So he sends others in his place. Supporting the home and foreign mission program of his church body is, in the final analysis, nothing more and nothing less than meeting his personal obligation of witnessing unto Christ among those who lie beyond the reach of his own voice.

## **Conclusion**

In the book "Effective Evangelism" by George E. Sweazey, the author makes this pertinent observation, "Evangelism is never the line of least resistance. A church always tends to drift away from evangelism never toward it."

We ask, Why should this be the case? Aside from the fact that the Old Evil Foe will certainly call upon his finest strategy to prevent souls from being snatched out of his eager clutches, aside from the fact that the Old Adam in us is only too willing to remain at ease in this matter, there are other reasons advanced which cry out for investigation and appraisal. Are they too perhaps a part of the subtle strategy of the Evil One? Let each one judge for himself.

### **1. Preoccupation with Other Things**

First of all, there is the perennial plea of preoccupation with other things, the cry "too busy". The coal bill has to be paid; the bulletin must be mimeographed; the church school must be staffed. If the present church members are neglected, it can bring embarrassments; but those whom a church has not yet reached are in no position to complain of being slighted. A pastor never finds time to do all he should be doing for the members he already has. Church people never catch up with a church's domestic tasks. Therefore the tendency is to put evangelism in a file marked, "Important...for the first free moment"—a moment which in church life all too frequently never comes.

### **2 The Probability that in some Minds the Distinction between Pagan and Christian is not as Sharp as it should be**

Then, there is the possibility that the distinction between pagan and Christian in the minds of church members is not always as sharp as it should be, as theology says it is.

This indistinctiveness, in part, comes from the fact that also in the hearts of the unregenerate rests a remnant of the divine law which manifests itself in external decent living. Then, too, we are living in a culture which for generations has been influenced by the church. A good deal of spilled-over Christianity gets to people who never come near the fountain source. Americans cannot help getting scraps of the Gospel at Christmas and Easter time. Christian thought has colored the worldly man's ideas of decency and sportsmanship and right living. This tends to blur the contrast between Christian and non-Christian. The church must make clear, and the individual Christian must keep clear, the vital distinction which Jeremiah shows between "the fountain of living waters" and "cisterns" (Jeremiah 2:13).

### **3 Spectators Rather than Participants**

Another of the reasons which causes the tendency to neglect personal witnessing is the inclination to watch while others do the work or to pay others to do the work for us.

It is often said that we Americans are fast becoming a race of observers, attenders, rather than participants. We are breaking all records for attendance at sporting events. Psychologists say that we pay someone to entertain us because we are losing our ability to amuse ourselves. We take the easiest way—let the other fellow work for us. There is grave danger that this attitude may be carried over into the work of the Lord, including that of witnessing. Let Mary or Bill do it; they are better qualified than I am. Anyway, they have more time for it than I have.

Most disheartening of all is the attitude, "Let the pastor do it. That's what he's being paid for." Of course it is the responsibility and privilege of every pastor to bear witness to Christ, but this by no means releases the individual Christian from his God-given responsibility to do likewise. Here is one instance in which the church member cannot shift responsibility to another through the payment of a dollar. The true Christian does not, and cannot, hold to such un-biblical ideas.

### **4. The Divine "Must"**

There is in the soul of the Christian a divine "must"—a deep inner compulsion, determination, and urgency like that of his Savior who said, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49); I must fulfill the Scriptures (Matthew 26:54); I must go to Jerusalem; I must suffer; I must die and rise again.

What was it that moved the Savior to say "I must"? Was it because He was caught in a trap from which He could not escape? Certainly not. "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again," (John 10:18). "Must" He because the Father had sent Him? Yes, His Father wanted Him to do this (John 6:40). But there was more. He was not a slave. He deliberately decided to do this for us. This was what drove Him to the cross. He did His Father's will, but that will was a highway on which He walked for the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2) God's Son was God's missionary. So Jesus must tell the Good News, must go through Samaria, must go to the house of Zacchaeus, must bring other sheep into the fold.

Are we Christians going to fold our hands, lean back in our pews, and watch all this like a ball game? There is no place for the Christian in the bleachers. God's Son had a purpose. God's sons and daughters have a purpose. He had a mission; we have a mission.

We, too, are no slaves driven to work. We, too, walk on the highway of God's will for the joy that is set before us. To win souls was His meat and drink. It is our meat and drink.

### 3. Sow the Seed—Let the results to God

Jesus did not succeed in saving every soul to whom He communicated the Word of life. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11). Neither did the apostles save every soul. The parable of the sower does not promise one hundred percent return, because some seed falls on hard ground, some falls on stony ground, some grows up among weeds which choke it (Matthew 13:2-9, 19-23). But we have the promise that some will fall on good ground and will bear fruit abundantly, some and hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. The seed will spring up and grow, “he knoweth not how” (Mark 4:26). It is for us, therefore, to sow the seed wherever possible—and to let the results to God. The harvest shall not finally be fully evaluated until the great day of accounting.

God has entrusted to us the Gospel of His free and unmerited grace in Christ. In His mercy, He has caused this Gospel to be passed down to us in its pristine purity and truth. He has given us the unfailing promise of the power of the Holy Ghost. He Himself has provided every needed equipment for effective personal witnessing.

Now if a Spirit-wrought anguish over a lost world will seize, and faith in the Pentecostal promise will rise up within us, and a spirit of dedication to Christ will stir us, we shall witness within our church, under God, such a harvest of souls as we have never seen before. May this prayer rise from the depths of every heart:

Oh, give me, Lord, Thy love for souls,  
For lost and wandering sheep,  
That I may see the multitudes  
And weep as Thou didst keep.

Help me to see the tragic plight  
Of souls far off in sin;  
Help me to love, to pray, and go  
To bring the wandering in.

From off the altar of Thy heart  
Take Thou some flaming coals,  
Then touch my life, and give me, Lord,  
A heart that burns for souls.

O Fire of Life, O Flame Divine,  
Make Thine abode in me;  
Burn in my heart, burn evermore,  
Till I burn out for Thee.