

Personal EVANGELISM

A very effective way to evangelize in today's religious climate, is to have personal Bibles studies with those whom we have gained their respect, and have developed a good relationship. We have many examples where Jesus taught privately. He often visited the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. We find one such personal visit is recorded as follows:

“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Martha's intentions were good. She wanted everything to be prepared and in place for her honored guest. It wasn't that Mary was lazy, she was so interested and occupied with the teaching of Jesus 'the spiritual eternal food' that she forgot all about helping Martha with supper. 'the temporal, material food.' **Luke 10:38-42. Jesus, our Lord was the greatest and most effective 'personal worker' recorded in the Holy Scriptures.** From this account we learn to be a good listener, then we will be able to properly answer their questions. Jesus always did this. His main interest was to save souls. “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet loses his own soul.”

One of the most interesting accounts we have of **Jesus, teaching one-on-one, is in the case of Nicodemus.** This man was one who sat on the Sanhedrin Council which was made up of 70-72 Jewish rabbis, which were called Pharisees and Sadducees. Part of their doctrinal differences is as follows: “The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all,” Acts 23:8. This Council was to the Jews as our U.S. Supreme Court is to us, the difference being the people feared the authority and power of the Sanhedrin. Anyone who disobeyed one of the multitude of rules and regulations could be stoned to death. **Nicodemus, who sat on this Council, having full knowledge of the consequences, determined to have a private visit with Jesus.**

“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named **Nicodemus,** a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." **John 3:1-2.** Let us not overlook the fact that Jesus answers and discourse to Nicodemus takes us through the first 21 verses. But due to time constraints I wish to stop at verse 17. “In reply Jesus declared, **"I tell you the truth, no one can see**

the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." Jesus continues,

"You should not be surprised at my saying, '**You must be born again.**' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?"

"No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." **Numbers 21:9.** "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." **John 3:3-17**

Jesus continues his discourse to Nicodemus through verse 21. What have we learned from reading the above? We, like Jesus, need to be good listeners, never let a question go unanswered, but keep focusing on their salvation. **Nicodemus, even so educated in his own religion, yet, was a sinner and lost. He needed to be born of water and spirit.**

Another **one-on-one** conversation Jesus had is recorded in **John 4:5**. Jesus always '**planned his work and worked his plan**'. Jesus had an appointment at noon to meet a woman at Jacob's well located in Samaria. Jesus did not honor the discrimination the Jews had against Samaritans. **This adulterous woman was lost.** "**John 4:7-49** "When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. Jesus made sure their meeting would be private). She said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (**For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.**)" Jesus answered her, "**If you knew the gift of God** and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman

said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." 'I have no husband,' she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." 'Sir,' the woman said, '**I can see that you are a prophet.**'Jesus replied, "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." The woman said, 'I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.' "**Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."** Note: She first called Jesus a prophet, now she believes he is Christ.

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' (**Who would have thought that this adulterous woman would turn evangelist?**) **They came out of the town and made their way toward him.** Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." Our food should be the same as his, **that spiritual food that saves the soul.**

"Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? **I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.** Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying '**One sows and another reaps**' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

Is he not talking to us? We need to set aside our excuses for putting off our evangelistic duties. Let's open our eyes. **We must be looking for opportunities to share with others the good news.** Nicodemus had **reached the top** of the political ladder; the Samaritan woman had **reached the lowest** moral condition. It made no difference with Jesus whatever their estate. High or low, rich or poor, young or old. "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you." **Matt 21:31-32**

Many of the Samaritans from that town **believed in him because of the woman's testimony**, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. **And because of his words many more became believers.** They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just

because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." **Many Samaritans now believe** Jesus is the Savior of the world. **It all started with the testimony of one woman.** I have shared **with you only three recorded events of Jesus' one-on-one personal evangelistic efforts.** I have spent much of my life doing home Bible studies. May our studies be successful to His glory. **May we learn from the Master Teacher.**

In the past few days I asked a young brother who had been missing services lately if he wished to have a Bible study. He said 'Yes'. I had the opportunity to ask a brother the same thing, who had been meeting in his home with his family for years, and he said 'Yes'. Make sure you ask for a Bible study, they may say 'yes'. I pray that our studies will bear fruit to His glory. I have been doing personal evangelistic work for more than 60 years, as well as sharing the pulpit with my co-elders and teaching brethren. Both methods are approved by the Bible. The apostle James wrote, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, **because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.** We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect (a mature) man, able to keep his whole body in check." **James 3:1-2**

My first 5 years I was a failure at personal evangelism. Not one convert. I literally shed tears, praying to God to show me his plan. **It was in my Bible all the time.** I read and reread, the instructions the apostle Paul gave to young Timothy, "Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, **able to teach**, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will **come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.**" **2 Tim 2:23-26** I have never won an argument. I have lost every one. My 3 rules: Don't argue! Don't argue! Don't argue!

When I first attempted to get an appointment and do personal Bible studies, I met a man and woman, who were in their seventies, retired with time on their hands. I asked if they would be interested in a Bible study, they said 'Yes'. Twice each week I studied with them in their home. **Soon we came to the subject of baptism. She said, "I am terribly afraid of water."** My answer, **"I understand, many people are."** We continued our studies for a short time. They realized they needed to repent of their sins, and confess with their mouth, "Jesus is Lord". They both agreed to being baptized. The subject of "being afraid of water" was never brought up."I was standing in the baptistery and as I reached up to hold her hand as she came down the steps into the water, she was trembling. I baptized both. Praise God! **The word has the same power today as it did on the day of Pentecost.** Remember, Don't argue! Don't argue!!During one of my visits,

during our studies, they shared with me that when I first started studying with them, they soon canceled their studies with two others.

Through **personal Bible studies**, I want to speak to you about a particular study I had that has a unique point of interest which I wish to share with you. At that time I was managing an old apartment complex I hired a lady, Bea, to help in a management position. She had two sons, one 14 years of age, the other 16, Mike and Carl. In time I asked her if she would be interested in a Bible study. She said, Yes, and I'm sure my boys would be too! I set up an appointment. Excited? Yes! At the opening of our study, I asked Bea what kind of religious background did they have. She said, **"I am half Jewish. We have never attended a synagogue or a Christian service."** Oh, no! You see, In time past, I used to find out what their beliefs were, and then I would prove them wrong. I would un-teach them. I was out of a job. How can you un-teach someone who knows nothing about religion?

I went home and prayed. I cried. I felt confident that I was prepared to deal with most false religion, **but I now realized that I was not prepared to teach these people the simple truth of salvation.** My next visit, not knowing what else to do, we began reading the book of Matthew. We finished that gospel and started reading the book of Acts. They were always anxious for my next visit. About half way through Acts, Mike, the eldest, a bright young man, followed me out the door as I was leaving. **Could I be baptized, he asked?** I was very shocked! Why should I have been surprised? We had covered all that was needed for one to know the plan of salvation. I baptized him. But why was not Bea or Carl asking to be baptized?

Carl and I were working together raking leaves around the apartments. I asked him if he had any questions. He said, **"I am not like my brother, I just can't stand in front of all those people and talk.** (Meaning to confess that Jesus Christ was the Son of God). I was shocked again! I had not considered that many people are shy about speaking in public. I said, "Carl, next Wednesday in the service, I will walk back to your seat and ask you if you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God! When I put that question to him the next Wednesday night, he said, "Yes". Just like Philip and the Eunuch, **we both went down into the water, and I baptized him,** and we both came up out of the water and he went back to his seat a happy young man. The whole church was happy. **We were all singing "Oh, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away."**

We always picked up this family on our way to the assembly. After service that night we all piled into our van to return home. I was driving with Valta and Bea sitting in the front seat with me, the boys in the back. I could hardly keep my mind on driving. **Why has not Bea asked to be baptized?** She was so happy that the boys were baptized. Nothing but silence. Then Bea spoke. **"Are women supposed to be baptized the same as men?"** She might as well have shot me in the head. My head started spinning. I had no quick

answer. How in the world could I have left this woman with such an unanswered question? She made a good student. By now she may have been thinking that I had not heard her question. The Spirit gave me the answer to her question. "Bea, I said, do you remember our study in the **book of Acts where the evangelist Philip went down to Samaria and baptized both men and women?** She said, "Oh, yes. I remember!" If I remember correctly, we arranged a special service for her baptism. **She openly confessed Jesus as her Lord and Savior. I baptized her.** Hallelujah! Praise God! I wish I could stop here, but I can't.

There is one sad thing to report. **Bea's husband, Joe, the father of these boys,** never wanted to join us in these Bible studies. He came in from work and lay on the couch. Within 30 days he died. "He who does not believe shall be condemned." We all know **John 3:16**, but let's look at **verses 17 and 18**, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, **but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.**"

Philip and the Eunuch always make for an interesting study. This story is recorded in **Acts 8:26-39**. I wish to paraphrase for brevity's sake. "**Now an angel of the Lord** said to Philip, "**Go south...**(That's all of the **Angels part**).As he ran, he saw a chariot, **The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it.** (That is all of the **Spirit's part**). Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah 53. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The Eunuch read, "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? **For his life was taken from the earth.**"

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. What did Jesus command the disciples to do? "**Go, teach and baptize, afterward teach them all things I have commanded you.**" Philip obeyed his Lord; He did what he was told to do and that was to "preach Jesus". They came to some water and the eunuch said, "**Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"** And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing." **Acts 8:26-39 Hallelujah! Praise God!**