

The Greatest Need

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from a Lesson by Brent Hunter)

Introduction:

A. Illustration: Fishing: Theory Vs. Practice... Jesus said: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). Now it came to pass that a group existed that called themselves fishermen and there were many fish in the waters about them. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes and the fish were hungry. Week after week and month after month and year after year the group that called themselves 'fishermen' met in meetings and talked about those called to fish, the abundance of fish, and how we might go about fishing. Year after year they carefully defined what fishing meant, defended fishing as an occupation, and declared that fishing be the primary talk of fishermen. These fishermen built large beautiful buildings for local fishing headquarters and their plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and that everyone should fish. However, the one thing they did not do: they did not fish!

In addition to meeting regularly, they determined to send out fishermen to places where there were many fish. They had great vision and courage to speak about fishing and to promote the idea of fishing in distant streams and lakes, and held meetings to define fishing, to defend fishing, and to decide what new streams should be fished. But the one thing the members did not do, they did not fish!

Training centers were organized whose original and primary purpose was to teach fishermen how to fish. Over the years courses were offered on the needs of the fish, the nature of the fish, how to find fish, and the psychological effects of fishing. Those who taught did not fish! They only taught about fishing.

Further, the fishermen built large printing houses to publish fishing guides. Presses were kept busy producing magazines devoted to fishing methods. Meetings were held with special speakers on fishing. After one stirring meeting entitled 'The Necessity Of Fishing,' one young man left the meeting, went fishing and actually caught two fish! He was honored for his great catch and was scheduled to appear at all the big meetings to tell how he did it. So he quit fishing in order to have time to tell his experiences to the other fishermen!

After all, were they not following the Master who said, "Come and I will make you fishers of men"? Imagine their chagrin when someone finally tells they are not really 'fishermen.' Can one rightfully call himself a fisherman if year after year he never goes to the water, casts in a line, and catches fish?

I. WHAT IS THE GREATEST NEED FOR THE CHURCH TODAY?

A. For the church to return to its original, Divinely ordained mission of seeking and saving the lost - Luke 19:10

1. God could have done anything He wanted with His Son, but He made Him a soul-winner.
2. Eleven of the first twelve men Christ chose were made soul winners.
3. The church has many capable workers in the assembly, but it is in desperate need of personal workers out among the lost - Luke 10:1-2
4. Jesus Christ is the head of the body, but you are His hands and feet - Eph. 1:22-23.

5. His work is not complete in this world until you have done your part - Eph. 4:11-12, 15-16
 6. We are the salt of the earth - Matt. 5:13
 - a. Salt has no effect on food until it comes in contact with it.
 - b. How can we influence the lost huddled together in the building?
 7. We are a light in the midst of darkness - Matt. 5:14-16
 - a. Like being with a frightened child in a dark room and refusing to turn on the light to comfort and reassure him
- B. What we all need is more genuine concern for the lost.
1. Paul's heart had great and unending sorrow over the lost - Rom. 9:1-3
 2. Illustration: Your wife or child or mother has a terminal illness; your neighbor has the cure, but keeps it to himself. What do you think of him? Not merely "meeting house soundness" but soundness in works
 3. Walk down the street in your neighborhood and look at the houses. How many are lost? - Jude 22; Matt. 7:12
- C. The need is fulfilled through the Lord's plan of evangelism.
1. The early church carried out the great commission in 29 years
 - a. Jesus sent them out in Mark 16:16 in A.D. 33
 - b. Paul wrote Colossians 1:23 in A.D. 62
 2. Clearly, the Lord adds people to His church as they are saved (Acts 2:41, 47), but He does not do the teaching; we do.
 3. If every member of this church converted just one a year, and they in turn converted just one each year, in 22 years the whole world could be converted, seven years sooner than in Paul's day.
 4. This is only a theoretical example; Matthew 5:13-14 shows that most will reject the gospel. However, if more had an opportunity to hear, more would respond.
 5. Teaching is the second half of the plan of salvation; evangelism is not complete until the evangelized become the evangelists - 2Tim. 2:2

Just Planning A Play In The Huddle

By Bob Buchanan

In an editorial during football season several years ago, Reuel Lemmons wrote one of his more agreeable articles entitled "Let's Get Out of the Huddle." Part of what was said follows:

"A few days ago we were watching a great game on television. There was fierce competition: The score was close. Time was running out. The team that was ahead was in the huddle. They stayed there--in the huddle. They stayed and they stayed. The referee blew his whistle and penalized the team for delaying the game. They had stayed too long in the huddle.

"Huddles are necessary, but games aren't won in the huddle; they are won on the line. Strategy sessions are important, but we can stay in the huddle too long. Many an important piece of work is discussed in elders' meetings and postponed until next meeting, only to be discussed again and postponed. Elders should realize that the Great Referee may severely penalize them for staying too long in the huddle.

"And congregations do the same. They huddle every Sunday. They leave the huddle to re-huddle next Sunday. They never manage to get to the line of scrimmage. In fact, the whole church is gaining a worldwide reputation for huddling. We flock to ourselves; we talk to ourselves; we huddle with our heads down around the Lord's Table. And some in the team are even careless about making the huddle. Worship is essential and important, but only if it inspires us to get out and do something.

"The enemy is rolled back, not from the huddle but from the line of scrimmage. It takes all the effort every individual is capable of putting forth to win..."

"Are we concerned about trying to be what our Master was? His goal and purpose was to 'seek and save the lost'. If we are imitators of Christ, why is this not our goal also? If we want to be like our Master (Paul commanded that we do so), why don't we get out of the huddle and teach a lost and rapidly expiring world?"

"Instead, we had rather huddle back of the line of scrimmage and just talk about the battle rather than sit down and open The Book on someone's kitchen table and quote a 'thus saith the Lord'.

"The early church is our pattern, and on close examination we find that they gathered for worship, but then scattered everywhere preaching the Word. So it should be with us -- we have got to take the message into the market place and homes of our fellow man if we are going to teach.

"One or two gospel meetings a year will not do the job. Why don't we baptize more people now? Could it be that the other 11 1/2 months of the year when there are no meetings, nobody is teaching?"

D. The scope of the need: the field is the world - Matt. 13:38

1. We are to teach every creature - Mark 16:15
2. Opportunities are unlimited - John 4:35-38
3. The Great Commission did not limit who we were to teach.
4. When Jesus said "the fields are white unto the harvest," He was not referring exclusively to the white middle class

II. EIGHT REASONS WHY YOU NEED TO BE A PERSONAL WORKER

A. It is a direct command - Matt. 28:18-20 - "Go ye" means "go me"

1. We'd never dream of changing the Lord's Supper or building a fellowship hall, yet we think very little of disregarding our Savior's last words to go teach. It is not optional - Heb. 5:12
2. Christ said "go" not "invite." Instead of an outreach, we have an in-drag

B. It is necessary for self-preservation - John 15:16

1. Like the barren fig tree, we must produce or be cut down - Luke 13:6-9
2. Teaching another is one of the best means of personal growth.
3. If we don't teach, their blood is on our heads - Acts 18:6; Ez. 3:18
4. We are called to faithfulness, not results - 1Cor. 3:6, 9:16
5. Noah preached 120 years with no results, yet he never quit. If he had, would he have had a right to enter the ark?

C. It should be a natural result of our love for others.

1. What greater gift could you give to someone you love than to help him save his soul?

2. If we really loved our fellow man, we wouldn't keep the gospel to ourselves. We love to share our favorite health remedy with all who have the same issue.
3. James 5:20; Rom. 1:16
- D. Because every soul is precious
 1. In this age, men know the price of everything and the value of nothing.
 2. Our souls are our most treasured possession
 - a. Matt. 16:26; 1Peter 1:18-20
 3. The salvation of one soul on earth has an eternal impact in heaven
- E. Because we want to be sound like the early church
 1. The church has a two-fold purpose: scatter seed and gather the saved
 2. The early church went everywhere preaching - Acts 8:4, 26:20
- F. Because of the terror of the Lord - 2Cor. 5:11
 1. Do we really believe in Hell and that our unsaved friends are going there? - Mark 16:16
 2. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God - Heb. 10:31
- G. Because we are debtors - Rom. 1:14-15
 1. For all that Christ has done for us, this is the least we can do in return, share the gospel with others - 2Cor. 5:14-15
- H. Because of the joy of being a personal worker
 1. We increase the number of children of our heavenly Father.
 2. We cause the angels to rejoice - Luke 15:7
 3. The personal joy we experience - Phil. 4:1; 3John 4
 4. There isn't a more satisfying feeling than to see someone you've taught obey the truth and continue with a transformed life
 5. In a sense, we become immortal and live on through others - Dan. 12:3
 6. "It doesn't take much vision to see how many seeds are in each apple -- but it does take vision to see how many apples are in each seed."
- I. This need must be fulfilled or the local church will suffer decline and discouragement; internal problems always arise when we look inward instead of outward.

III. OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

- A. Not enough talent? - Matt. 25:14-30
 1. It is not about talent and knowledge; the most effective are those who go to work
- B. Afraid? So was the one talent man and He was called into judgment.
 1. The gospel is the power - Rom. 1:16
- C. Don't know much - Share what you do know.
 1. Best way to learn truth is to practice and preach it while we learn it.

A Parable Of A Lighthouse (The Need for Personal Evangelism)

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the

few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves, they went out day or night tirelessly searching for the lost.

Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station, so that it became famous. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding areas, wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought and new crews were trained. The little life-saving station grew.

Some of the new members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and so poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea.

They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in an enlarged building. Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they re-decorated it beautifully and furnished it as a sort of club.

Less of the members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired life boat crews to do this work.

The mission of life-saving was still given lip-service but most were too busy or lacked the necessary commitment to take part in the life-saving activities personally.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boat loads of cold, wet and half-drowned people.

They were dirty and sick, and some of them had black skin, and spoke a strange language, and the beautiful new club was considerably messed up. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal pattern of the club.

But some members insisted that life-saving was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the life of all various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast. They did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. They evolved into a club and yet another life-saving station was founded.

If you visit the seacoast today you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, but now most of the people drown!