

COMPELLING REASONS FOR A NEW EMPHASIS

A. HOW TRADITIONAL METHODS EVOLVED

Trying to understand the traditional approach to evangelism, I suppose one would need to recognize that since the days of the reformation, the existence of various denominational persuasions has necessitated an evangelistic approach built on doctrinal argument. Only in this fashion could they convert others to their faith. It seemed necessary to justify denominational entities.

**Doctrine the essence
of denominationalism**

The rise of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the mid-nineteenth century made such a doctrinal approach more necessary because of its unique beliefs. Evangelism became largely a process of explaining to others doctrinal truth, the assumption being that when one understood what church was teaching the "faith once delivered to the saints" in terms of doctrinal truth he would be compelled to embrace the message. This assumption was valid because most people were already persuaded of the basic claims of Christianity. This approach worked and it bore fruit. Those who were already evangelical Christians in their experience, regarded it as a forward step in their Christian life. Those who were backslidden from their Christian up-bringing and principles, upon being revived in regard to the great truths of the Bible were often brought to conviction and re-dedicated their hearts to the Lord simultaneously with their acceptance of the truth.

**Early Adventists
united by doctrinal
agreement**

It should also be recognized that Adventists came out of an awakening generated by the exposition of prophecies, which created a body of what we might call prophetic doctrine. Since they came from a wide spectrum of denominational persuasions, they could only experience unity through the catalyst of doctrinal agreement. This union was hammered out in early Bible conferences held by the pioneers. These historical facts resulted in looking to the doctrinal pillars held in common as the essence of the message, leaving the fundamental good news of salvation to be taken for granted.

**Doctrinal approach
effective in Christian
community**

The present problems arise from the fact that several generations ago, this ceased to be a valid staging from which to launch the thrust of the three angel's messages.

**Beliefs of population
have changed**

In the first place, such a concept of our work limits the target group with whom we propose to work, to those who are already truly Christians or have latent Christian convictions. That target group probably constituted a majority of the population here in the United States until well into the twentieth century, but several generations ago, this kind of target group dwindled until today it probably constitutes a very small minority. Consequently the methods we have used have become less and less productive. Our approach is nearly irrelevant to an ever-growing majority of the population. What difference can it make which day you keep to one who doesn't even believe the Bible? What significance is the 2300 days or the Millennium to one who doesn't believe in prophecy? Of what concern the judgment or standards of Christian conduct to one who isn't sure there is a God? The appropriate question now is "Where is the best place to begin with the majority today?"

**Soul-winning methods
must change**

**B. WHAT IS THE FIRST MESSAGE OF THE
THREE ANGELS?**

In our day most people are crying out for the assurances found in the very first elements of the eternal good news of salvation through Jesus

Christ. That saving relationship without which all doctrine is irrelevant and which we have failed to present because we took it for granted is, after all, the very first message of the first angel of Revelation 14. He had "the everlasting gospel to present to those who dwell on the earth". As incredible as it may seem, I think we still have to confess, that we have taken the simple assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ so much for granted for so long that the majority of those who profess the three angel's messages do not know whether they possess it or not, much less know how to testify to it in an enthusiastic way to those who realize all too keenly their lost condition. Congregations who have come to realize the outcry of the masses for this fundamental hope of eternal life, and who have learned to share this elementary witness with the lost are growing by leaps and bounds. They are finding thousands so grateful to learn of a Saviour, that they are eager to know and do His will—whatever they discover that to be.

No sooner does the mind grasp the fore-going realities than amazement follows wonder at our slowness to understand this crying need as expressed around the turn of the century in the inspired counsel—the continual urging "to make Christ and His salvation the center of every discourse", etc. The entire concept was put by her into book form in **Steps to Christ**. How slow we have been to realize that a saving relationship with God is best arrived at through: **first** understanding God's love and His mercy and grace, **then** man's lost condition and the sinner's need, **followed** by what Jesus did to meet that need and the salvation He purchased for us on Calvary and **then** the pardon and assurance of eternal life and the sonship with Christ, which comes with consecration and faith and acceptance. If the book **Steps to Christ**, says anything at all, it says that this is the most winning approach to lost men and women. Only after these steps do we find presented it's chapters on the duties of the Christian life and the tests of discipleship. Should we be surprised that the results of our evangelistic endeavors are so meager, when we have first persuaded men and women of doctrinal truth, and

**Everlasting gospel
must come first**

**Assurance of
salvation basic**

**Masses are responsive
to provisions of
gospel**

**Spirit of Prophecy
urged this new
emphasis**

**Must "crawl
before walking"**

then urged upon them every idealistic duty of Christian living; and after building the platform so high, inviting them to step on it in one giant step, surrendering to Christ as their Saviour? Without first having Christ's power in our lives and the assurance of salvation through Jesus, one could scarcely entertain the courage to accept the high calling which we espouse. Without the hope that a saving relationship with Christ brings to the heart, the requirements of church membership can lead often to despair.

Even ministers have found these traditional methods only marginally productive at best, and to think we have tried to teach laymen to win souls this way! If we study the way Jesus reached Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the adulterous woman, Zacchaeus and the disciples themselves, we learn that He tenderly led them step by step giving them the assurance of eternal life, and then a patient teaching of the way to do the will of God. And even near the end of His ministry, to the disciples He said, "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

**Where is motivation
for growth and
obedience**

Some may ask: "If an unbeliever merely receives Christ as His Saviour and claims pardon and eternal life in such a brief presentation of the gospel, would this not stifle motivation for further growth and reformation of life?" The answer is most emphatically "no". I know that my wife and family love me and that they forgive me for my imperfections, but rather than influencing me to presume on their patience and love, I am even more desirous of living up to their best regard of me. More importantly, if we were accustomed to witnessing the transformations and miracles of victory that follow a simple trust in Jesus as Saviour, we would not even ask the question. The only way to gain confidence in this kind of work is to see it actually happening in all of its mystifying power. Think it through,—even after we become stabilized members of the church, we are still so far from the ideal or from Christ-likeness, and if the Lord were to reveal all of our weaknesses to us even now it would overwhelm us with discouragement. Christ does not deal with

Seeing is believing

us this way. (Refer to **Steps to Christ**, pages 124 and 125.) If an individual is ever to have a right to the assurance of God's love and acceptance, if he is ever to possess the assurance of eternal life, he has that right from the moment he receives Christ as His Saviour, as well as at any other moment of growth along the way. The assurance of eternal life is based upon a relationship with Christ and not on a stage of growth, as witness Bible examples: the thief on the cross, the delivered demoniac of Gadara, the adulterous woman . . . , etc. Both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy teach that we may rejoice in the assurance of salvation all along this growing way.

**Christ gave
assurance first**

So the first secret of a new and more successful approach to witnessing will be presenting first the first message of the first angel—the eternal gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, until the believer has the assurance of Eternal life.

(Although public evangelism is not the subject of this manual it will never-the-less be asked: "Can we successfully approach a public presentation of the message in this way?" Some may work out a successful approach, however it is my belief that we would have more success in recognizing that public evangelism makes certain demands in the matter of holding an audience night after night, which is not true when one is winning souls on a one to one basis. Therefore subjects of current interest, and prophecy, which do not neglect to present Christ as the answer, will probably be used largely in the early stages of public presentations. Furthermore the ideal in public evangelism is to have, as a large proportion of the non-member attendance, individuals who have been led to Christ through the individual efforts of laymen. This is what will bring about a new day in public evangelism.)

**Why public evangelism
must be different in
some respects**

C. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THIS NEW APPROACH WHICH DISTINGUISH IT FROM THE TRADITIONAL METHOD.

1. **A brief, simple, organized presentation of the gospel.** The simple facts of salvation through Jesus Christ, which may be present-

**A standard, basic
presentation
memorized**

**Training in the
homes absolutely
essential
CS 59**

**The great
credibility gap**

**Failure of classes
in soulwinning**

**Minister to give
individual instruction.
CS 70**

ed in a simple visit, leading to an acceptance of Christ as Saviour and a profession of faith in Him, and a claiming of the assurance of eternal life.

2. **A regular, in-service training program for lay witnessing**, actually taking the laymen into the homes and letting them see how it is done, and supervising their first presentations. Probably it could be said that our disappointments in lay evangelism can be charged as much as anything to failure on this point. If a questionnaire is presented to a typical group of pastors with the following questions, the typical answers would be:

- a. How many believe that the Bible teaches Lay Witnessing and Soulwinning as the responsibility of believers? 95% will answer, Yes.
- b. How many have preached sermons urging this Bible doctrine and responsibility? Again the results will be 90 or 95%.
- c. How many have held classes in Lay Witnessing and Soulwinning. And again the results will be around 90%.
- d. But the next question changes the picture dramatically: How many have a significant percentage of your church membership, actively, regularly, and successfully bringing souls to Christ and the church? Only about 5% or less will affirm this!
- e. But the last question is the most significant, because it explains the difference and the reason: How many have actually taken your laymen out in the homes of people on a regular basis to train them thoroughly in the art of leading souls to Jesus Christ? And the same 5% will raise their hands to this! This should really say something to us loud and clear. You can't learn to win souls in training classes alone, anymore than you can learn to fly an airplane or to swim, in a classroom. **As obvious as this may sound, it is almost never put into practise.**

If we were really of a mind to confess our failures, we would have to admit that not only have we as pastors failed to train our laymen, on-the-job style, but we don't have a denominational program that is doing very much training of ministers themselves in this kind of work, let alone teaching them how to train laymen. There has been a great deal of theorizing and pulpit promoting of lay evangelism. But what we need is someone showing the way in the homes of the people. We cannot rest satisfied until we are successful in training lay people who themselves enjoy enough success in souls won to keep them motivated in this work. We must do more than show them that **we** know how to do it. We must show them a way that **they** can do it successfully. And there is a difference!

**Many good plans
don't work in field**

"That which is needed now for the upbuilding of our churches is the nice work of **wise laborers to discern and develop talent in the church**,—talent that can be educated for the Master's use. There should be a **well organized plan for the employment of workers to go into all our churches, large and small, to instruct the members how to labor** for the upbuilding of the church, and also for unbelievers. It is training, education, that is needed. Those who labor in visiting the churches should give the brethren and sisters instruction in practical methods of doing missionary work." Christian Service, page 58.

**Minister to be
a talent scout**

"Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin. They need to be instructed and **encouraged**. Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath School classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, **HOW TO WORK FOR THE UNCONVERTED**. There should be schools of health, cooking schools, and classes in various lines of Christian help work. **There should not only be teaching, but ACTUAL WORK under experienced instructors. Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people, and others, uniting with them, will learn from their example. One example is worth more than many precepts.**" Ibid., page 59.

**Working for unsaved
a special work**

**On-the-job training
essential**

**Regular weekly
schedule for soul-
winning a must**

**Best to begin
with few**

**"Wise laborers
discern and develop
talent"
CS 58**

**"Present testimony
that will excite desire
to find Christ"
DA 826**

3. **A regular weekly time for soul-winning visitation.** It works best to have: 1) a regular morning group on one morning each week (who are unable to go in the evenings), and 2) an evening group each week who are unable to go out in the mornings. There should be thirty or forty-five minutes of class work and then a going out into the homes of the people. If the pastor and his staff are not involved in this activity without fail, if it is not top priority in their weekly schedule, it will probably come to naught.
4. Realizing that success in teaching people to fly or to swim requires personal on-the-job training we must accept the fact that a **small beginning is essential** in this work as well. If a pastor can train in the first six months eight or ten people, he will be doing well. The next six months should triple that number,—if the first have been trained properly, so that they can train others. Working this way it can mushroom.
5. Forever abandon the idea of preaching a sermon on the subject and then calling for volunteers. Instead do like Jesus did and **choose the people you want to call into this work. Hand pick them after much prayer and thorough consideration.** Choose the very best people you have, those who will be most capable of training others when they have become successful themselves. Choose those with warmth, personality, and enthusiasm, those who love people.
6. **The use of personal testimony of trust and the assurance of eternal life** enthusiastically presented so as to excite in others a desire for personal salvation through Jesus Christ. One whole chapter of this book will deal with the proper use of personal testimony. "God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power. . . . His blessings He presents in the most alluring terms. He is not content merely to announce these blessings; He presents them in the most attractive way, to excite a desire to possess

them. So His servants are to present the riches of the glory of the unspeakable gift." DA page 826.

7. **We need to imagine the psychological difference between our traditional approach and this new approach.** Our traditional, doctrinal approach gives one the feeling that he is going forth to **straighten out the people on their doctrine**, to tell them they are wrong about the day that they keep, wrong about the food that they eat, wrong about their understanding of death, etc., and if they will just get straightened out on their beliefs, they would be Seventh-day Adventists. We have conceived of our message as a **warning message**, and it does have a warning in it, but it ought to be first and foremost and above all "Good News". Bearing a negative message of warning is dreary work at best. There is little doubt that **ministers and laymen alike, would be far more enthusiastic about "bearing of good news to lost people"**. The psychology is dramatically different as we have witnessed in our pilot programs.

Change soul-winning psychology from "Warning" to "Good News"

8. Other church groups have discovered that even when **working with_ gifted, talented, hand-picked laymen the process of teaching them how to graciously and successfully make a thirty minute presentation of the simple truths of the gospel involves a four and a half month training period.** We have been trying to teach laymen in a few weeks time how to present a whole series of deep theological doctrines. Our almost total lack of success should tell us something. If we are ever going to see the majority of our church become successful workers together with God, we will need to change our methods to something that is practical and realistic. If we can succeed in training a significant percentage of our laymen to lead people to the first step of salvation, then no doubt, a good number can go on to present doctrinal truths as well. What we have been doing, is rather like trying to teach people to conduct a course in advanced life-saving

Thorough training required

**Self-image of many
ministers needs change**

and water-safety when they have not yet learned to swim, or taught their first student to dog-paddle.

9. We have almost universally failed to **put into practice the principle taught in the Spirit of Prophecy that the minister is to be primarily the director of a working group,** general of an army. We have consistently yielded to the temptation to act as the star performer before an audience, rather than the coach of a well-trained team.

**Blundering members
who are working
are to be preferred
over perfect preachers
who are not putting
members to work**

Educate lay workers.—"We can educate workers in every church. (The illustration of the foreman who did the work rather than setting twelve men to work follows.) Now, God has made us teachers of the flock, and He wants us to educate them in every branch of the work, that we may bring in all the talents. **Our ministers do the labor instead of educating others** to take the responsibility of the cause. The minister's work should be the work of a teacher. One laborer might set twenty to work in less time than it would take him to do the work himself. **Let them blunder and make mistakes, and then kindly show them how they can do it better, and then you can be educating, educating, educating, until you have men and women who have experience in the things of God** and can carry responsibility, and this is what we have been suffering for." Minneapolis sermon, Oct. 23, 1888; Olson, "Through Crisis to Victory, pages 289-290.

As wise generals, plan for each one. "Those who have the spiritual oversight of the church should devise ways and means by which an opportunity may be given to every member of the church to act some part in God's work. **The leaders in God's cause, as wise generals,** are to lay plans for advance moves all along the line. . . . The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers." Gospel Workers, pages 351, 352.

Don't hover; teach. "The ministers are hovering over churches, which know the truth, while thou-

sands are perishing out of Christ. If the proper instruction were given, **if the proper methods were followed, every church member would do his work as a member of the body.** He would do Christian missionary work. But the churches are dying, and they want a minister to preach to them. They should be taught to bring a faithful tithe to God, that He may strengthen and bless them. **They should be brought into working order, that the breath of God may come to them.** They should be taught that unless they can stand alone, without a minister, they need to be converted anew, and baptized anew." 1901 GC Bulletin, page 204.

Failure to teach lay evangelism results in failure.

"It has been proved in the missionary field, that, whatever may be the preaching talent, if the laboring part is neglected, **if the people are not taught how to work,** how to conduct meetings, how to act their part in missionary labor, how to reach people successfully, **the work will be nearly a failure.**" 5T 256 (1889).

Less preaching, more teaching—how to work.

"**The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers.** . . . There are times when it is fitting for our ministers to give on the Sabbath, in our churches, short discourses, full of the life and love of Christ. But the church-members are not to expect a sermon every Sabbath. . . . **Let church-members, during the week, act their part faithfully, and on the Sabbath relate their experience.** The meeting will then be as meat in due season, bringing to all present new life and fresh vigor. **When God's people see the great need of working as Christ worked for the CONVERSION OF SINNERS,** the testimonies borne by them in the Sabbath service will be filled with power.

This explains a lot of failures in the ministry

Working for unsaved is the work of Christ

"We have a message from the Lord to bear to the world,—a message that is to be borne in the rich fulness of the Spirit's power. . . . God has not given His ministers the work of setting the churches right. . . . **It weakens those who know the truth for our ministers to expend on them**

The cause of coldness,
and formalism

the time and talent that should be given to the unconverted. In many of our churches in the cities the minister preaches Sabbath after Sabbath, and Sabbath after Sabbath the church-members come to the house of God with no words to tell of blessings received because of blessings imparted." 7T, 18.

"Our ministers are not to spend their time laboring for those who have already accepted the truth. . . . Just as soon as a church is organized, **let the minister set the members at work. They will need to be taught how to labor successfully. Let the minister devote more of his time to educating than to preaching. Let him teach the people how to give to others the knowledge they have received.** While the new converts should be taught to ask counsel from those more experienced in the work, they should also be taught not to put ministers in the place of God." 7T, 18-20 (1902).

"Those who have the spiritual oversight of the church should devise ways and means by which an opportunity may be given to every member of the church to act some part in God's work. Too often in the past this has not been done. Plans have not been clearly laid and fully carried out, whereby the talents of all might be employed in active service. There are but few who realize how much has been lost because of this. **"In every church the members should be trained that they will devote time TO THE WINNING OF SOULS TO CHRIST.** How can it be said of the church, 'Ye are the light of the world,' unless the members of the church are actually imparting light? Let those who have charge of the flock of Christ awake to their duty, and set many souls to work." Christian Service, page 61.

Going out three by
three essential
to multiplication

10. An item that might seem only a detail, but which makes the difference between a growing program and one that goes static, is **using teams of three in the visitation.** If women are going to be trained (and they make some of the best soulwinners), it is inappropriate to send a man and a lady out together unless they be husband and wife,

and if that is the case the training stops right there, because they constitute a full team without any trainees. But when groups of three are sent out together, and at least one is always a lady, you have a workable arrangement that keeps training people continuously. If three men go together, it can lead to difficulty getting into homes, (even two men for that matter), but if there is at least one lady in a team this actually is a help.

11. Any program will slowly die away, from people dropping out or moving away, etc. The solution to this problem is to **keep it growing by constant recruitment and training of new groups twice a year.** Unless there is continued and zealous growth, there will surely be a decline. If we don't plan to keep it growing this way, we will end up saying, "It didn't last." But the truth will really be,—**You** didn't last. This is no program for lazy people who want an easy, one-shot answer.

**Program successful
only if continuous**

12. **It has been found far better to ask the trainees to commit themselves to the four and one half month training program rather than to have it an on-going, never-ending commitment.** People are willing to tackle a task for a certain length of time. Call it a "Tour of Duty", then when they have completed one program, they can feel free to sign up or not to sign up for the next one a few weeks later that begins in the second half of the year. **Trainees should be asked to commit themselves to the full four and one half month tour of duty, or else not start.**

**Commitment to
"tour of duty"**

**Commitment or
not start**

13. **Prospect names for visitation** can be former interest and attendees at evangelistic services, Voice of Prophecy, Faith For Today, These Times, Signs, Liberty, literature evangelist contacts, and those who visit our church. A good strong program will eventually run out of names of this kind, and then work can be done door to door, starting with an Opinionnaire, asking survey-type

Prospect list

**Memorize Outline of
Gospel Presentation**

**"Especially should
those who are newly
come to the faith be
educated to work
for Him"
CS 69**

questions which lead to the soul searching questions of the regular gospel presentation. It should be said that this cold-contact door to door work has proved very successful and the percentage of professions received from this type of labor are almost on a par with visiting-list names that the pastor already has. (More information on the Opinionnaire appears in a later chapter.)

14. The importance of a simple, brief, yet complete presentation of the gospel committed to memory cannot be over-emphasized. **Very little good will be accomplished unless the trainee will commit to memory the outline of the gospel presentation which follows this first chapter.** Once this is memorized, and it is only one page long, the rest follows naturally in place. (We have prepared a small presentation booklet to be used in the home, to assist beginners.)
15. **When the trainee has become a successful soulwinner and is graduated from the four and one-half month training program, he should be urged to prayerfully choose two more trainees whom he will now train** in the next program and thus multiply the ranks of soulwinners. Very often he will choose people whom he has won to the Lord and who have come to the faith through his efforts. As they learn to win souls, he is begetting spiritual grand-children which in turn produce great-grandchildren and so it goes!

For years we have conducted a candle-lighting service on one of the nights of our evangelistic crusade. The most dramatic lesson to be learned from this little service is that thousands of candles can be lighted in just a few minutes, if everyone shares the light he has with another. If the minister were to attempt lighting all of the candles in the auditorium from only a single flame, it would take a whole hour, but three or four minutes is sufficient if each one imparts to another the light that has been entrusted to him. This is the dynamic of New Testament witnessing which we are presenting in this manual.