

UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENTATION AND THE PROSPECT

An interesting sentence of instruction is found in a paragraph on page 59 of Christian Service. "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. It's members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath School classes, how best to help the poor and care for the sick, and **how to work for the unconverted.** 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."**

Really this paragraph encompasses inspired instruction for the whole plan presented in this manual. 1) Classwork instruction, 2) in-service training right in the homes with the teachers showing the way, 3) **Specific instruction to work for the unconverted.**

It is significant that this matter of working for the unconverted is a special work that is separate from giving Bible readings and teaching Sabbath School classes, etc.,—other types of work that are mentioned in the same sentence. **But until the present time this is a work we have never undertaken as an entity by itself.** Obviously, it

Working for the unconverted is a specialty CS 59
Refer also to CS 61

"Work as Christ worked for the conversion of sinners." 7 T 19

was important even when this statement was written, but today it is many times more important because so few today know what it is to be a Christian. The purpose of this present chapter is to analyze why we present the gospel as we do, beginning with the introduction and carrying right on through.

The Introduction

Creating cheerful, relaxed atmosphere

The introduction sets the tone of the whole visit. It gives us an opportunity to know the individual and to feel a friendly relationship with him. If we cannot establish an informal, relaxed atmosphere during the introduction, we will likely have little rapport during the presentation. While our work is very serious, involving eternal life or eternal death, at the same time, human relationships demand that we begin our acquaintance in a lighter vein. We need to display a genuine interest in the less serious things of life, and even a sense of humor is a great blessing during the introduction. Inspired counsel quoted in *These Times*, October 1966, "If you do not feel light-hearted and joyous, do not talk of your feelings. Cast no shadow upon the lives of others. A cold, sunless religion never draws souls to Christ. It drives them away from Him into the nets that Satan has spread for the feet of the straying."

We will never be able to reach a heart unless they are convinced of our genuine friendliness and love for them. They will never acknowledge to us the deep needs of their souls unless we have established such a confidence with them. The introduction of our presentation provides the opportunity to establish this personal relationship. After some experience in working with people one comes to sense the establishment of this rapport. The intelligent, experienced worker does not move into the presentation until he knows that he has gained the confidence and friendship of the prospect.

We must learn to ask soul-searching questions

Asking an individual about his deepest feelings regarding his eternal life is a very personal matter. **It is inappropriate and even rude to thus intrude into the most personal concerns of the soul until or unless we have earned the right to**

do this by our genuine interest in them as individuals.

If we stay alert and aware when we enter a home, it takes only a few moments to **discern some of the personal interests of our prospect.** If these interests are not obvious in the setting of the home itself, (which might be revealed through pictures or trophies, or other obvious physical signs of his interests), a few tactful questions can draw out these ... This may be in the area of hobbies or sports, or his work, or the members of his family . . . his children, any or all of these are avenues to the real person. As we get acquainted with his interests and accomplishments in life we **look for opportunities to pay a sincere compliment to him, to show genuine appreciation for what he is.** This requires some listening. The intelligent worker will not do all of the talking. He will get the prospect to talk and do a lot of listening.

Express sincere appreciation

Surely we can see from the above that trivial, small talk during the introduction that simply passes the time of day, the weather, etc., does not accomplish what needs to be done at this time. We really need to get acquainted with the person and learn to love him. If we cannot actually develop a love for this person whom we hope to lead to Christ, we may as well never begin the gospel presentation. They will know whether we love them or not. The introduction not only enables us to get acquainted with them, but more than anything else to know them well enough to learn to love them.

Must have genuine love for the project

Very often the nature of our introduction will be dictated by just where and how we find the prospect. There is nothing quite as tactful as beginning with the setting in which we find an individual. For instance, if we meet the lady in her backyard weeding her flowers, this is an ideal opportunity to begin with her interest in gardening. This may very well mean more to her than any other outside interest.

The prospect knows that the burden of your visit is spiritual. You are a group from the church.

Church background

They will become nervous and apprehensive if you take too long with secular matters. **Find an early opportunity to move into spiritual things**, beginning with their church interest and their former spiritual experience. A discussion of these matters in a sympathetic way can reveal your love and concern for the individual. We must be careful not to criticize his former denominational background or his mistaken gropings in error. If he is a sincere person, he has probably done the best he could do with the knowledge that he had. And certainly we would want to always assume sincerity on his part.

Our church

Next the introduction moves to our church. In many cases the prospect has had some contact with our church, with its public evangelistic presentation or with our teachings through literature, books or correspondence courses. Again we must give time for the prospect to talk. If we monopolize the conversation, we are not going to learn anything, and unless we learn where he is, we cannot help him. If you are not feeling well and go to the doctor, how would you feel if he should constantly talk and not listen to your efforts to explain the symptoms of your illness. You would certainly have very little confidence in his diagnosis if he didn't take the pains to hear you out. By listening to the prospect we can discover what it is that has generated his interest in our message or our people. It is in this way we find the opening to enlarge on our church either through a personal testimony or a church testimony.

Testimony

The purpose and power of testimony is so important that we are devoting an entire chapter to it later in the book. If we present a poor testimony, our presentation of the gospel will most likely seem a waste of time to the prospect. On the other hand, if our testimony creates a real desire in the heart of the individual for what we have found in Christ, he will listen as eagerly as he would to a description of the secret path to a treasure. "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." *Desire of Ages*, page 826.

Learning to present an effective testimony will be one of the most significant keys to our success in leading souls to Christ. Sharing our testimony prepares the way for asking the two questions.

The two questions: The genius and importance of these two questions can scarcely be over-stated. Unless we know whether the person has a saving relationship with Christ, we cannot possibly know how to share our experience or our truth with him. So the first reason for the question is that we might know where the prospect is in his spiritual life. The way he answers this question will guide us in our presentation of the gospel to him.

Then, perhaps of equal importance, is the necessity of **his recognition of his spiritual condition**. This question brings the prospect to the point of acknowledging that he does not have the assurance of eternal life and therefore creates in him a willingness to learn how he may receive it. Most individuals, of course, will answer that they are not at all sure they have eternal life, or that they didn't think it was possible to know. What a wonderful opportunity to quote I John 5:13, which immediately gives the presentation the psychological setting of "good news". It says something about God that is wonderfully encouraging to the sinner,—that God wants us to know that when we receive Jesus we have eternal life. He doesn't ask us to surrender our lives to Him and then live in doubt or uncertainty. We ourselves need to be certain of our foundation on this point.

"It is your privilege to trust in the love of Jesus for salvation, in the fullest, surest, noblest manner; to say, He loves me, He receives me; I will trust Him, for He gave His life for me. . . . Take Christ at His word, and let your lips declare that you have gained the victory." E. G. White, *Review*

**Necessary for our
diagnosis**

**Necessary for his
awakening**

**Inspired basis of
assurance of eternal
life**

and Herald, February 1971. "I am a sinner, and He died upon Calvary's cross to save me. I need not remain a moment longer unsaved. He died and rose again for my justification, and He will save me now. I accept the forgiveness He has promised." Selected Messages Book 1, page 392. "It is essential to have faith in Jesus, and to believe you are saved through Him." Selected Messages Book 1, page 373. Both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy affirm the believers right to assurance. Sharing this kind of confidence and assurance causes hope to spring up in the heart of the prospect. It is a thrilling thing to see what this good news of the gospel does to the one who hears it for the first time.

Prospect needs to have hope

It is essential to establish this hope as a solid foundation at the very beginning. The prospect is going to have to face his sin and his lost condition during the presentation; and to realize that your goal is a certain knowledge of eternal life will give him hope during the time you are presenting these points, when he needs it most.

Claim to assurance can be presumption

There are some, of course, who will affirm their assurance of eternal life. Just affirming assurance does not make it a reality. Many are trusting in their own works of righteousness to save them and this is a presumption which we must help them correct. To such we must make clear the truth Paul states in Ephesians 2 . . . we are saved by grace through faith, not of works lest any man should boast. Steps to Christ, page 44 speaks of those who "seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing."

Is he trusting in Christ

So we see the need for the second question. Whether the person believes he has eternal life or not, the second question will help us to know whether his understanding of Christianity leads him to believe that salvation is based on Christ alone or upon man's works. **If the prospect believes that eternal life is based upon what we are, or what we do, he will never be able to have any assurance of salvation.** Most people who suffer doubt or anxiety about their eternal

Is he trusting self and works—such religion worth nothing
SC 44

life, do so because they are looking to self and their own works for salvation, and since they sense the imperfection of their works they cannot have any confidence that they have eternal life.

On the other hand, one who trusts Jesus alone sees that His sacrifice was perfect. There was no fault in it. His life was without sin and therefore since He gives us eternal life solely on the basis of what He did for us, there can be no uncertainty, no doubt whatsoever. It is of paramount importance to get a clear definite answer to this second question.

The wording of this question is very vital. The question might be phrased so as to bring forth automatic Bible-text answers that have been conditioned into church-going people. Such answers are not very helpful. If you should ask a person, "What should we do to be saved?" They would automatically parrot, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Yet a little further probing would indicate that they believe one is saved if he does good works and keeps God's commandments. That is why the question is put in a way that causes the person to actually think about the basis of eternal life as they understand it. Since many people have never thought this through, you will find that most will not attempt to answer the question after the first asking. But since it is so important to clearly understand what their belief is on this matter we must get an answer no matter how long it takes to do so. It is also very essential for the answer that he finally gives to be repeated and established solidly. When he finally gives his answer, it is very helpful to say, "Now if I understand you correctly, you believe. . . ." and then repeat his concept and see that he acknowledges your understanding of his position. If this is not done, often near the end of the presentation when you are describing that we have eternal life only through Jesus, the prospect will say, "You know, that is what I have always believed." It is necessary for us to be able to go back to the answer that he gave at the beginning and say, "Well, I understood you to say that you thought if we should have eternal

Avoiding conditional answers by fresh wording of questions

Absolute necessity of getting a definite answer to second question

life it would be because. . . ." You see, we must help the individual to understand why his mistaken concepts have led to his uncertainty and to his doubt. Unless we can clear up for him the basis for eternal life we will not be able to bring him to any kind of assurance or peace.

Four ways to ask second question

Now what shall we do if the prospect says, "I don't know what I would say to God." There are four ways to probe for an answer to the second question, one of which should finally bring a response from our prospect.

"What do you think you would say?"

1) Re-emphasize the importance of the question and it's answer. This is the most important question in life. Our eternal salvation hinges on it. If we don't understand the basis of salvation clearly, how can we find eternal life. After dwelling on the importance of the question, we might say, "I realize that this is probably something you hadn't prepared a formal answer to, but if God were to ask you 'Why should you have eternal life in heaven?' **What do you think you would say?**" You have given your prospect a little time to think about the question. You have emphasized the importance of it and finally you have changed the question from "What **would** you say? To what do you **think** you would say?"

"What are the basic requirements?"

2) But suppose he still says, "I don't know". Then we can change the question to a general one, removing him from the picture as an individual, we can say something like this: "From the Christian teachings that you have absorbed through your life, from what you have studied about Christianity, **what do you think the basic requirements are for eternal life?**" Usually at this point a person will express their understanding of what God requires of any person who would enter heaven. Most frequently it will be based upon what we do, or what we are. In other words . . . a legalistic, righteousness-by-works answer. We should be careful at this point to restate his opinion and ascertain that this is indeed what he understands to be the way to find eternal life.

Share the common concepts

3) If there is still no response, about the only thing we can do is **share with him the misconcep-**

tion that we had, or that most people hold and ask him if that is also his understanding. We can say, "Christian teachings generally led me to conclude that if we kept God's commandments and tried to love our neighbor as ourselves and tried to help people in need that God would give us eternal life in heaven. Is this somewhat the same thing that you have felt or understood?"

Admittedly, this tends to put words in the mouth of the prospect, and he may never have thought through the question before, so it tends to be leading; but it is the best thing we can do at this point. It helps him to verbalize the most common concept of salvation with it's error or righteousness by works. Further it gives you a platform from which to teach him a correct understanding of the gospel.

4) If there is still no answer, or again he says, "I just don't know if that is what I think or not"; we would want to help him in a tactful, yet very clear and firm way to **admit that he simply does not know at all the way to find salvation**. Having acknowledged that he doesn't know, we are certainly in a valid position to explain to him the way.

Agree that he doesn't know

So we must make this point clear or we are in danger of coming to the end of our presentation and having him claim that he understood it all along. If he really had understood the correct answer, all would be well and good. But usually such a claim represents a rationalization and an effort to escape his need to give his heart to the Lord and accept Christ as his Saviour, and he uses it to avoid the claims of Christ. We must see to it before we ever begin the gospel presentation that he needs an understanding of what Christ came to give him and **that he knows he needs it**. When he has acknowledged that he doesn't know the answer we can ask, "Would you like me to share with you what the Bible answer to this important question really is?"

In the few minutes of our visit that brings us to this place in our presentation, we have accomplished a great deal. We are no longer strangers

with our prospect. We know something about his life and what he is like. We have learned to love him and we have a burden for his eternal salvation. We know what his understanding of Christianity is. We know what his misconceptions are and we are in a position to lead him from where he is to a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

It is important for us to realize that we have pointed up the prospect's error and misunderstanding. Unless we are very tactful and kind we will be in danger of making him feel that we are criticizing him and putting him down. There can even be a tendency and temptation for us to take the attitude that we are "correct and smart and wise and we are going to straighten out this ignorant prospect!" Even the slightest hint of this kind of attitude can nullify all of our efforts. To avoid this we must always pray that the Lord will give us true humility, and we need repeatedly to identify ourselves with him, with such remarks as "That is the way I always understood it, too!" or "You know, I struggled with the same misunderstanding and this is what created so many uncertainties and anxieties in my heart". It will be necessary throughout the presentation again and again to bring home the fact of his mistaken views. If we don't make this abundantly clear, we have no hope of changing his thinking so that it will bring assurance and eternal life, but we must be sure that we do this with the utmost kindness and tact.

**What to say when you
meet the assured
Christian**

What do we do when we find a prospect who answers both questions with genuine assurance, trusting Christ as his Saviour? When this happens, we have someone who is prepared for our traditional doctrinal studies. We can say something like this:

"It is so very encouraging to find others who are already part of the family of God! So few today have really trusted Jesus for eternal life. I am glad I found you!

"I find some who are true believers, but who feel a bit uncertain about what Jesus taught

on the great themes of the faith. I groped in that foggy condition myself far too long. But, Ray, I can't adequately express to you how much added peace, and happiness and fulfillment it has brought to me as a Christian, since I systematically studied a Bible Course on the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, and the prophecies. It really gave me the fulfillment I had been looking for.

"Would you like to spend a few minutes a week finding this satisfying experience?"

"That does sound interesting, but I am so busy."

"But really, it doesn't take but a few minutes each week and the satisfaction it has brought to me can only be compared with the experience of accepting Christ as my Saviour. It would really be a pleasure to share with you the Bible course I took . . ."

Remember that in presenting the gospel our prospect will place a value on it in direct proportion to the enthusiasm that we show for its wonderful provisions. We must present it in the most precious light. The book *Desire of Ages*, page 826 says some very important things about the way we present the gospel. "God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power . . . He would have His servants bear testimony to the fact that through His grace men may possess Christlikeness of character, and may rejoice in the assurance of His great love. He would have us bear testimony to the fact that He cannot be satisfied until the human race is reclaimed and reinstated in their holy privileges as His sons and daughters . . . 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. The wonderful love of Christ will melt and subdue hearts, when the mere reiteration of doctrine would accomplish nothing."

**"Put into your work
all the enthusiasm
you can."
Evang. 177
Also SM Vol I, 139**

**"The most alluring
terms"**

"Excite a desire"

As we go through the points of the gospel presentation we must be sure to make each one clear. As we gain proficiency in presenting the gospel it will be possible for us to watch the face of the prospect and to know whether or not what we are saying is getting through. It is certainly best to be sure that each point is clear before we go on to the next.

Grace

Grace: It is very important to establish the fact that eternal life is a gift, that we cannot earn it by anything we do and if indeed we earned any part of eternal life it would no longer be free. The Bible texts on this point are very clear.

Man

Man: It is usually not too difficult to establish the fact that man is a sinner by nature and that we do not deserve eternal life by anything which we are or which we can do.

God

God: There was a time in Christian history when God's justice in punishing sin was the overwhelming concept people held of God. Today's concept is just the reverse, therefore, it is best to mention first God's love and mercy and His desire to save us, and then to spend most of the time on this section in showing from the Bible that **God must also be just**,—that part of love is justice and that God must punish sin. It is not a popular concept of God in our time, but this must be realized by the prospect or he will not sense his lost condition.

Christ

Christ: It is very important for people to realize that Jesus Christ is truly God as well as man. Many people today, perhaps we could say the majority, do not understand that Jesus existed with the Father, before He was born as the Messiah. Helping them to understand this from such passages as the first chapter of John's gospel will make a great impression upon their hearts regarding the sacrifice that was made for them.

It is equally important, of course, to help them to realize that Jesus truly became guilty for our sins. The concept that is generally entertained on this subject is very shallow. Most Christians believe that Jesus merely accepted our punishment. Many illustrations that have been used in

preaching on this subject have really impoverished the truth. The idea of a friend stepping in to take a whipping for someone else, etc. . . . We must realize that what Jesus accepted for us was far more than punishment. He actually became guilty of our sin and it was that guilt that crushed His life. To realize that miracle power was exercised in making Christ to be sin for us, is a real revelation to most people. They can be helped to understand this by realizing that the same miracle power is used in bringing us pardon. That, just as surely as we can feel forgiven, Christ felt our guilt. It would be difficult to spend too much effort on this part of the presentation. It is at the foot of the cross that men's hearts are changed.

Faith: The significant thing to get across here is that our faith must be in Christ and not in self. Also we need to help them see that the faith must be for salvation and not simply a faith in God as our loving Father in heaven. It is for this reason that we clarify the difference between intellectual faith and temporal faith, as distinguished from a saving faith. Some might reason that the difference here is artificial. Surely there could be a simple trusting faith that includes all these concepts. We need to realize that in helping people to discover where they have failed in finding assurance with Christ, we can often help them best by making such distinctions.

Acceptance: Acceptance is a part of faith, but it is a part that is very often unfulfilled. It is like an inheritance unclaimed. It is like engagement without marriage. Many who are Christians and who have joined the church do not know whether they have received Christ or not. They believe in Him, they believe about Him, but they have never made their acceptance as an identifiable transaction in their life, a point that they can look back to and say with all confidence, "I received Christ as my Saviour at that time. I was sincere then, and I am sincere now in my purpose to live for Him, therefore I know that I am His child and I know that He has given me eternal life." A Christian without this kind of certainty

Faith

Acceptance

and confidence and assurance is a Christian without a clear witness. He is without testimony, and a Christian without a testimony attempting to do missionary work and lead people to the truth is an incongruity. We cannot share what we do not have. The people we visit can sense intuitively whether or not we have assurance in our hearts and whether we are thrilled with what Christ means to us. We must not only be sure that our experience is genuine, but we must learn how to transfer this kind of certainty to other hearts. They must be led to see how a definite step of acceptance, the praying of a covenant prayer can bring confidence to their experience with Christ.

New Life

The new life: Many presentations of the gospel that are being used today are so brief that they leave out certain essential elements that can be a help to an individual in taking the step of surrender. A few words about the new life in Christ is one such area that is neglected. The fear that prevents many an individual from making a profession of Christ is the fear of failure. They hesitate to begin a profession that they know they can never fulfill in their own strength. They equate this with hypocrisy and it causes them to hold back from the acceptance of Christ. A few words of caution here however,—if **too much** is said about the new life we can make the requirements seem so difficult as to discourage the prospect. We can make him feel that it will never be possible for him to live up to such a high calling, that there is no hope for him. So we must say enough about the promise of a new experience in Christ so as to generate confidence that the Lord will give him strength and power and change his heart and that there will be strength that he has never known before and a power that is miraculous, working in him to will and to do of God's pleasure. This will give him confidence to accept Christ. Without it there is fear that he would be left on his own. But we must at the same time not make the step too high. Remember, it is his first step and he needs to be able to take that step by faith. The Lord will give him other steps to take as he grows and strengthens in his Christian life.

Two cautions

Gives encouragement

The commitment: We have finished presenting the essentials of the good news of salvation. At this point we need to have the courage to see if we have presented it well enough so that the prospect understands and has a desire to receive Christ as his Saviour. The **qualifying question** accomplishes this: "Do you see what Christ wants to do for you?" The answer to this question dictates what we say next. If it has been made clear and if there is a positive response, we can go on with the commitment. If the individual is uncertain or argumentative, it may indicate his unwillingness to receive Christ and to accept a new life. On the other hand, it may indicate that we have not done our work as well as we had hoped to. We should ask what point is unclear and then perhaps review briefly through the steps of the gospel presentation, asking with each one, . . . "Is that part clear to you?" Finally after making each point clear we can move to the commitment question; if there is a positive attitude on the part of the prospect.

The commitment question should be learned backward and forward. We should have it so well in our minds that we can ask it without hesitation. It is only natural for us to fear putting this question to our prospect. We are human enough that we never want to be turned down. There is always a possibility that our prospect will reject Christ even after the clearest and most winning presentation. Even Jesus Himself did not win all for whom He labored.

So we must remember, we will never get anyone to accept Christ unless we are willing to be refused by some. We must ask the question and expose ourselves to the hurt of rejection if we are ever to have the joy of hearing the positive response from those who will accept. Again there is a parallel in courtship and marriage. The young man who is so fearful of a "No" that he will never ask his beloved to marry him, will be doomed to a lonely life. The man who has the courage to ask may get refused once or twice, or several times, but he will finally have the thrill of hearing those happy words, "Yes, I will." In the experience of love there are risks,

The commitment

Qualifying question

Possible need to review some points

Commitment question

Well memorized

We must love enough to risk rejection

whether we are working in the framework of human love or of God's love. The person whose love is so frail that it shrinks from the possibility of denial will always be unfulfilled. God's love was so great that He took the greatest risk of all in creating humanity, knowing that eventually His love would be rejected by some. What a lesson for us!

**Clarify the
commitment**

If the response to the commitment question is positive, if the individual says he wants to receive the gift of eternal life that Christ left heaven and died on the cross to give, then we take the time **to clarify what this commitment means**. It means trusting Christ alone for salvation and forever turning from the temptation to trust in self. We should make it clear once more that whenever we begin to equate eternal life with what we are or what we do, we will lose the assurance of having it, because of the imperfection that we know is in our own life. Only when we trust Christ alone can we have confidence that salvation is ours.

**Transfer trust from
self to Christ**

**Willingness to
repent and obey**

Then we spend some time making it clear that **Christ becomes Lord of our life when He becomes Saviour of our soul**. This means that we will put Him first, that we will seek to learn to do His will and be willing to leave those things out of our lives that are not pleasing to Him. Actually this explains what repentance is, and constitutes a step of repentance in receiving Christ, whether we call it by that name or not. This is an essential part of any valid relationship with God. When we have clarified what the commitment means we can ask the commitment question again by the use of Revelation 3:20,—Christ knocking at the door of the heart. Their response to the question based on this text is really a reiteration of their desire to receive Christ.

**The prayer
of acceptance**

**Entering the covenant
with God**

If we have properly laid the groundwork for the prayer of commitment, it will seem the natural step to take at this moment. If we have helped them to see the necessity of making an agreement with God for eternal life, of establishing their covenant relationship with Him, then we can easily lead them in prayer to make that

covenant. Here again is a sentence in our presentation that should be learned by heart and repeated to ourselves over and over again. Notice the pronouns in this statement. "If this is really what **you** want, **we** can go to the Lord in prayer. **I** can lead **us** in prayer and **we** will tell Him that you have told me just now." You see, if the individual thinks that we are going to ask him to formulate a prayer and to pray a prayer of commitment all on his own he will be frightened. The pronouns in that statement indicate that we will lead in prayer, but that he will also make his own commitment to the Lord. Then first we pray for him that the Lord will help him to be sincere and to make this a memorable experience in his life. Then we repeat the prayer that he is to pray after us. We need to take this slowly and deliberately and possibly say after the first phrase, "Repeat after me each phrase". Then he will follow along and express the desire of his heart. After he has finished the prayer of acceptance, we pray for him again, praying that God will make this experience real in his life, that he will have the assurance that he is a child of God, that his sins are forgiven, claiming the promises of the word of God.

Assurance: It is so easy after the prayer is over to be filled with rejoicing and to forget the step of assurance, but this is so vital to the new believer. If it is at all possible the prospect should be asked to read John 6:47 himself. Then he should be asked if he just now received Jesus in his prayer of acceptance. He will say, "Yes". Then he should be asked "Do you have eternal life just now?" And of course he will say, "That is what the Bible says", or "Yes, I do". Sometimes just to drive the point home we can restate the original question that we asked at the very beginning and listen to his reply, which never fails to bring a thrill to our hearts. Then if he can read John 1:12 about becoming a son of God when he received Christ, and establish this in the same way, then at the close of this brief exercise in assurance we can put our hand in his and say, "Welcome to the family of God." This is always a moment that brings tears to the eyes of anyone who loves souls for whom Christ died.

Notice the pronouns

Take your time in leading the prospect in prayer

Assurance

Welcome to the family

**Does assurance nullify
warning against
deliberate sin?**

Because of the religious training and background of many sincere people, there are questions raised by these teachings of assurance of eternal life, and righteousness by faith: "What bearing then does obedience or disobedience have on my relationship with Jesus Christ?" "If we may have assurance while our obedience is still imperfect and we are still stumbling in human weakness, even perhaps overwhelmed with temptation; does this leave the door open for presumptuous transgression?" The Bible gives the answer in Hebrews 10:26, "For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment and a fury of fire which will consume the adversary." Deliberate disobedience cannot be entertained in a heart that is surrendered to Christ. This kind of sin quickly becomes an idol, the choosing of another master, and thus a rejection of the pardon and grace which is the basis of assurance.

**Faithfulness does not
make a marriage,
but unfaithfulness
can break marriage**

The difficulty in many minds arises from statements in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy which seem to indicate that **any** sin disqualifies one for eternal life. But we must always remember that such statements must be qualified by the plain teachings of the Bible as well as the Spirit of Prophecy; i.e. That when disobedience is the result of human weakness, it does not constitute a presumptuous sin and is therefore covered by the blood of the atonement. If we use the illustration of marriage once again:—We might make a long list of conditions for a happy marriage . . . kindness, love, trust, loyalty, faithfulness, compatibility, thoughtfulness, etc. and we would not be incorrect in saying that "such things make a happy marriage". However we would all agree that none of these things actually **makes** a marriage at all. The marriage is brought into existence by a solemn covenant relationship in a marriage ceremony. When we state that the foregoing list of things make a happy marriage, we are assuming the obvious prerequisite that two people have come to love each other and have married one another in a proper service. Similarly, the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy are replete with statements about that which

makes an acceptable Christian life, that which constitutes acceptable Christian conduct. But these statements are not meant to be understood apart from the basic fact of what it is which establishes our saving relationship with Christ, namely the acceptance of Christ as our Saviour, by faith. When talking of marriage, what we really intend to convey is that the flagrant disregard of these essentials of a happy relationship will inevitably result in estrangement and finally divorce. Similarly the Bible teaches us that sin hardens the heart and estranges us from Christ. Eventually it so changes our attitudes toward Christ that we no longer desire His salvation and we are fallen from His grace.

It is in view of these principles that Steps to Christ says, "It is not an occasional good deed or an occasional misdeed that determines our eternal destiny, but the trend of the life." As long as our determined purpose is in keeping with our covenant relationship with the Lord, His mercy covers the rags of our human imperfection and we can claim his salvation.

A great deal more consideration of this concept will be covered in later chapters.