



Global College of Ministry

EQUIP

The Christian & Evangelism Methods

Take It To The Streets

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”
(Acts 1:8).

The whole key to the Book of Acts is taking the Gospel to where the people really are. The Book of Acts is a vivid portrayal of taking the gospel to the streets. The Gospels show the Life of Christ but Acts shows us how the early Christians lived out the teachings of Jesus Christ and what they did with the Great Commission and with the baptism of the Holy Spirit that they received.

Acts shows us how to:

- ❑ Evangelize people.
- ❑ Establish them into churches.
- ❑ Extend the church to the unreached.

The principles apply in any generation of time. We see the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus Christ given in Matthew 16:18, “...I will build my church...”

Go! Go! Go!

Acts is *also a fulfillment of the Great Commission* found in Matthew 28:19-20; “GO ye therefore, and teach all nations...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”

The Great Commission is the mission of the church. It is not the “Great Suggestion.” It is not a wish but a command of the Lord to the Church. Failure to obey results in our Great Omission. The first word of this great task is “Go!” The first two letters in the word “Gospel” is also “Go!”

We must “Go” if we expect to evangelize the lost world. We must “Go!” if we will ever establish churches.

T. F. Tenney once said, “Which part of the word ‘GO!’ don’t you understand?”

We must “Go!” if we are to extend the “whole gospel to the whole world.” This is the task of the entire church.

The two major activities of the Great Commission are “Going” and “Making Disciples.”

The principle of the Harvest is made clear in Psalm 126:6, “He that GOETH forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

Focus of the Gospel

The focus of the Gospel is outward towards a lost world. We come to church to fellowship and worship our God. However, we cannot become inwardly focused by placing all of our attention on the inside of the church. We come to church to WORSHIP but we leave the church to WITNESS. Once we walk out of the doors of the local assembly we are in a mission field. It is here that we meet unbelievers where they feel comfortable and on their own grounds. We cannot expect the sinners to come to the Gospel. We must take the Gospel to the sinners. The Word of God and its many truths cannot be hid under a bushel, but we must be like a light set on a hill (Matthew 5:15).

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:” (2 Corinthians 4:3).

After Pentecost, What?

In Acts 2 we see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Immediately we see Peter standing with the eleven and preaching a powerful, Pentecostal sermon.

Hungry people were convicted and converted. The church was born. What did they do with the Holy Spirit that they had received? In Acts 3 we see two men on their way to prayer meeting at their church. As they passed by a gate, a lame beggar started to cry out for money. The men immediately recognized his need for healing. Money would only last for a day but healing would be a greater blessing to the man, lasting for a lifetime. These men did not carry the lame man to the church so that the pastor and saints could pray for him.

Right there on the street they prayed for him and Jesus healed him. What a tremendous witness! Then, the man joined them by going to church. At church people worshipped God for the result of His goodness and healing power. The man also came to church to worship and praise God.

The two men got into trouble for being used of God in the healing of the man. They were arrested, abused, and threatened. When they were released they prayed that the Lord would give them great boldness and that He would stretch forth His hands to heal, and that signs and wonders would be done. (Acts 4:29-30). Where would these great things be accomplished? Right on the streets!

“And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people... Insomuch that they brought forth the sick INTO THE STREETS, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them” (Acts 5:12,15).

As you read through the Book of Acts you will find that the Gospel was preached more in houses than it was in churches.

The work of the Deacons was not only confined to the local assembly but they also were used in evangelism. Philip was used by God as an evangelist and his story follows the words, “...they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).

More evangelism would get done, and more churches established, if we would do more of taking the Gospel everywhere. Philip was commanded by an angel to “...Arise, and GO” (Acts 8:26). As he obeyed he found a man of Ethiopia; in a chariot (taxi, bus) reading the Bible.

Philip got into the chariot (taxi) and as it moved along the street he preached Jesus to the man. They stopped the chariot (taxi, bus) to baptize him in Jesus name. Today, we have an outstanding revival in the country of Ethiopia; perhaps because Philip planted the seed.

In Acts 9 we see the conversion of Saul (Paul). He was struck down on the road to Damascus by a great light; confronted by the “Light of the World” and left in blindness. Jesus did not preach the Gospel to Saul. The angels did not come and preach the Gospel to Saul. This is a duty given to those who have experienced salvation themselves. Thus, the Lord spoke to Ananias (a certain disciple) and told him, “Arise, and GO into the street which is called Straight...” (Acts 9:11). He did just that. He found Saul, prayed for his healing; prayed him through to the baptism of the Holy Spirit; and he arose and was baptized (Acts 9:17-18).

In Acts 16 we see that Paul preached at a Ladies Prayer Meeting. This meeting was not held inside the church but out of the city, by the riverside. As a result of Paul’s ministry Lydia and her household were baptized.

In some churches “Street Meetings” are used as a form of evangelism. Some churches in Chile require their new converts to go out into the streets and give their testimonies the following Sunday after their conversion. People can argue with words; but no one can argue with the testimony of a converted and changed life. Once people are converted on the streets they are brought to the church to feed on the Word of God. A man prepared a great banquet and invited many to attend.

Several of those invited began to make excuses. When the servant reported this to the man, he angrily told them, “...Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” When the servant returned there was still

room for more. He was then requested to, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14: 21, 23).

There is a hungry world out there waiting for you to take it to the streets and compel them to come in that God's house may be filled.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11).

Study Questions

1. What is the whole key to the Book of Acts? _____

2. What is the difference between the Gospel and the Book of Acts? _____

3. What does Acts show us concerning the church? _____

4. What is the Great Commission? Where is it found? _____

5. Failure to obey the Great Commission results in what? _____

6. What is the first word of the Great Commission and also the first two letters in the word "Gospel"? _____

7. Where is the focus of the Gospel? _____

8. We come to church to _____ but we leave the church to _____.

9. What are the two major activities of the Great Commission? _____

10. Provide Scriptural references where the Gospel was taken to the streets in the Book of Acts.

Additional Notes

The Human Touch For the Human Race

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”

(Acts 1:1-2; 8).

The God With the Plan

An imaginary story without biblical basis speaks of Jesus ascending back to Heaven and meeting with the Angel Gabriel. Jesus explained how He had died on the cross to save mankind from their sins; and had been raised up again. He had now returned to Heaven to intercede for those that He had gone to save. Jesus concluded by saying that it was His desire that all men everywhere would hear the Gospel message of what he had done for them.

Gabriel asked, “What is your plan for getting this done?”

Jesus responded, “I have left the message in the hands of a dozen men.”

Visibly surprised, Gabriel questioned, “Twelve men! And what if they fail?”

Jesus responded, “I have no other plan.”

It was with the Great Commission that Jesus Christ revealed His plan that men would carry the Gospel to the world. It is through the fulfillment of the Great Commission that we get involved in world evangelism. Evangelism is making known the Good News. This “Good News” is “God’s News,” the Gospel.

Samuel Gordon once said, “The way from God to a human heart is through a human heart.”

In the Book of Luke (companion book to Acts, also written by Luke) we read of all that Jesus began to do and to teach. In the Book of Acts we see Jesus working in the hearts of men to reach men and women with the truth. He reproduced His life and ministry in the church.

A primary reason for the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to receive the power to be a witness for Jesus Christ.

The Great Commission

In all five instances of the **Great Commission** (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:47-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8) there is a promise of divine power. God is working through our heart to touch the hearts of men. That is the reason for the power. God is using the human touch to reach the human race.

“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none” (Ezekiel 22:30).

God is depending on us to preach the Gospel. He has not commissioned the angels to do this because they have not been partakers of God’s salvation themselves. However, in Acts the angels did direct men to where they could go to receive the truth (Acts 10:3-5).

In Matthew 22:37-40 you find the **Great Commandment**. We must love God and love people. These are the two greatest commandments. We show our love and loyalty to God by loving others and trying to reach them.

FORMULA FOR A GREAT CHURCH

The Great Commandment
(Matthew 22:37-40)
+ The Great Commission
(Mark 16:15)
= A Great Church
(Acts 2:42-47)

The Boston Marathon is a race that is run each year. It is named after Marathon, a plain close to Athens, Greece. Following the victory of the Greeks over the Persians in 490 B.C.; tradition states that a runner raced to Athens to carry the good news. As he reached the city completing the mission, he collapsed and died. Jesus also calls us to be a runner for Him carrying the Good News to everyone. We can become **Redemption’s Runners**.

“...Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). Also look at Mt. 24:13-14; Eccl. 9:11.

“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost” (2 Corinthians 4:1,3).

God has chosen you because He needs “the human touch for the human race.”

Study Questions

1. What did Samuel Gordon say was the way from God to a human heart? _____

2. Where do we find the Great Commandment? _____

3. What are the two greatest commandments? _____

4. What is the formula for a great church? _____

5. What do we find in all five instances of the Great Commission? _____

6. How does God intend for the world to be reached? _____

7. What is one of the primary reasons for the baptism of the Holy Ghost? _____

8. What is the difference between what Jesus does in the books of Luke and Acts? _____

9. Where do we find the Great Commission? _____

10. Can angels preach the Gospel? If not, why not? _____

Paper Preachers

“And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region”
(Acts 13:49).

“The former treatise (book) have I made...”
(Acts 1:1).

“And they wrote letters by them after this manner...”
(Acts 15:23).

Oswald J. Smith was a pastor greatly concerned with the task of world evangelism. He wrote, “For more than 30 years I have prayerfully considered the problem: How can we evangelize the world in the space of one generation? Long ago I was convinced that we could never send out enough missionaries. For a while I gave up hope. After travel and study in nearly one hundred countries, I have come to this conclusion – the only way we are going to carry out the Great Commission, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” will be the means of the printed page. By the systematic use of the printed page we shall be able to enter into every home and reach every individual with the gospel message.”

“It can be done. It must be done!”
(D. L. Moody)

All Around the World

They are moving throughout the world by the billions and they are realizing millions of converts. How sad that most of them are working for the Communists and various cults. They are able to get access into countries without even a visa. They speak hundreds of different languages. They are able to go further than most missionaries, and able to stay much longer. They are able to take up residence in nations around the world without the high cost of living and housing. They do not require a passport and travel very economically. They bypass language barriers and racial prejudices. They have no problem entering into mansions, palaces, or mud huts in villages. They preach the same message to both the rich and poor. They can preach in large cities or small villages. They can give their message in public or in private. They never lose their temper or get into an argument. They do not react when people mock or ridicule them. They speak without a foreign accent and get a person’s attention right when the person is interested in hearing the message. They speak to one, or can speak to a multitude. They work at any hour of day or night. They never compromise nor do they ever change their message. They can work for hours without getting tired. They never get sick and do not have to worry about taking care of their families. Who are they? They are the paper preachers; tracts, literature, books, bumper stickers, letters; publishing the Word of Life.

Of course, there is the Bible, the bestselling book of all times that has been around for centuries. Over half of the New Testament is comprised of letters and books written to individuals.

**It has been said,
“The pen is mightier than the sword.”**

God’s Word is sharper than any sword (Hebrews 4:12). Thank God for faithful men who wrote as the Holy Ghost moved them. (Hebrews 1:1; 2 Peter 1:21) The Bible was written by both the learned (Moses, Solomon) and unlearned (Peter, Amos); by men from many different walks of life. The writers did not have fancy computers and publishing programs (software). They didn’t even have typewriters or printing presses.

They wrote in the wilderness, in captivity in Babylon, on the Island of Patmos, and even from a prison cell.

It is true that God has not called us to continue writing the Bible. It is complete. However, we can write tracts and gospel messages in various languages for the people to understand. Even though God may not have called all of us to be pastors, evangelists, or missionaries; each of us can distribute the paper preachers.

The Psalmist David wrote, “The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.” (Psalm 68:11)

The following story demonstrates the power of the written word:

“Just before China was taken over by the communists, one communist officer, talking to a missionary named John Meadows, made this revealing statement. ‘You missionaries have been in China for more than a hundred years, but you have not won China to your cause.

You lament the fact that there are uncounted millions who have never heard the name of your God. Nor do they know anything of your Christianity. But we communists have been in China less than ten years, and there is not a Chinese who does not know...has not heard the name of Stalin...or something about communism.

A grandson of M. Gandhi told an American audience,
“Missionaries taught us to read but the communists
gave us the books!”

What missionaries have failed to do in a hundred years, we communists have done in ten. We have filled China with our doctrine. Now let me tell you why you have failed and we have succeeded.’ The officer

continued, ‘You have tried to win the attention of masses by building churches, missions,

mission hospitals, schools and what not. But we communists have printed our message and spread our literature all over China. Someday we will drive you missionaries out of the country, and we will do it by means of the printed page.” And that is just what happened.

“I am a missionary and a very good one too! They say that missionary means ‘sent one’ and I am really that in every sense of the word...I travel the world and need no visa. A stamp will take me anywhere I wish to go, even into the so-called closed lands. I turn up in the most unexpected places. Once I found myself in the wastepaper basket in a Brazilian prison and was used in the conversion of many of the prisoners. I reach both high and low with the good news of the gospel. My readers may be anything from peasants to presidents, students to seminary professors. Do I get results? Certainly. Thousands have been brought to Christ through the testimonies I contain...”

(Taken from a book entitled, *Access Without Visa*)

Many times we worry about whether or not people will receive what we have to say; or what we write; or what we pass out to them in written form. I read of a great definition of evangelism in the New Man magazine some time ago: Successful evangelism is “sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results up to God.”

Channels of Communication

R. A. Brott in his booklet, “Principles of Personal Evangelism” suggests three channels of communication.

- ❑ The Public Word
(Church Services, crusades, seminars, and radio programs.)
- ❑ The Personal Word
(One on one evangelism; sharing testimonies, private conversations)
- ❑ The Printed Word
“It is my opinion that in this channel lies the greatest potential of world evangelism.”

Taking the Printed Word

To the World . . .

A Scriptural Mandate

- ❑ Publish the Word in Your Region
“And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region: (Acts 13:49).
- ❑ Publish the Word Around the World
“And the gospel must first be published among all nations” (Mark 13:10).
- ❑ Everyone Needs to Get Involved
“The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it” (Psalms 68:11).

- There is a Famine in the Land

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:” (Amos 8:11).

Study Questions

1. Who are the “Paper Preachers?” _____

2. What are the three channels of communication? _____

3. Which method of communication has the greatest potential for evangelism? _____

4. What is successful evangelism? _____

5. What method did the communists use to take over China? _____

6. Why did the missionaries to China fail? _____

7. The _____ is mightier than the _____.
8. How did Oswald J. Smith say that we could reach into every home with the Gospel message?

9. What type(s) of people were involved in writing the Bible? _____

Evangelism the Powerful Way

“And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed”
(Acts 8:6-7).

When the crowds of Samaria heard what Deacon Philip was preaching and saw the miracles that he did, they paid close attention to him and believed the preaching that he gave. Men, women and even a sorcerer named Simon were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:12-16). Philip was able to conduct evangelism the powerful way; through the operation of the power gifts.

Miracles cause unbelievers to believe when they see the amazing works of God. When Jesus performed his first miracle at the wedding of Cana of Galilee. He not only turned the “water into wine” but the hearts of men toward God. “...And manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him” (John 2:11).

When Jesus raised the Widow’s son from the dead the people “...glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, that God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about” (Luke 7:16, 17).

In Acts 13:11-12, Paul performs a miracle on Elymas, the sorcerer. He is struck blind. When that happened “...the deputy...believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”

In the healing of the lame man in Acts 3, we see that all of Jerusalem was in an uproar. The Jewish leaders took measures to stop the Christian Church.

“And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it” (Acts 4:14).

“...They conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it” (Acts 4:15-16).

These leaders were concerned about the preaching of the name of Jesus, but more than that, they were concerned about the “miracle.” It was likely the miracle and not the message that upset these leaders. They knew that they could deny the message, but they could not deny the miracle. The miracle proved that a powerful God was at work.

Nicodemus said to Jesus one night, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2).

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:” (Acts 2:22).

The imprisoned John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus with a question: “...Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?” (Luke 7:19). Jesus did not answer them but continued to heal the sick and cast out devils.

Finally he said, “...Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached” (Luke 7:22).

Jesus did not send a message of rebuke back to John the Baptist. He did not give a theological or logical explanation of his presence on the earth. Instead, He gave them a power demonstration through healing and deliverance.

Paul said, “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4).

It is not uncommon today to see believers rushing about following signs, miracles and wonders. However, the Bible specifically tells us that “these signs shall follow them that believe...” (Mark 16:17). A quick review of the list of things that believers will do in Mark 16:16-18 allows us to know that the working of miracles was not for the Apostles alone. These signs will confirm that the gospel message we preach is real, powerful, and that the Lord Jesus is in our midst. You will notice that every one of these signs was operating in the church in the Book of Acts.

“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20).

The world is still waiting for us to take our place as believers and perform the acts that God has ordained for us to do. “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19).

When we think of miracles we often think of the “supernatural” and the “natural” realm. “Natural” means “normal” and “supernatural” means “super-natural.” It goes beyond the normal. A “Miracle” is when God does something that goes beyond the natural realm. It is a supernatural act. In the days of Jesus and then in the early church, miracles were a way of life.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that salvation came to many through signs, wonders, and the operation of the gifts of the Spirit.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will” (Hebrews 2: 3-4).

God backs up those who preach the Gospel with His power and authority. He confirms the message preached through signs, miracles, and wonders. He proves that He is the mighty God!

Rahab confessed to the spies, “For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; ...And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Joshua 2:10-11).

In Acts 4, after Peter and John were harassed by the Jewish leaders for the miracle done to the lame man, and the preaching of the name of Jesus, they went to pray. Their prayer went something like this: “God give us boldness to preach your Word. Stretch out your hand to do more signs, wonders, healings, and miracles in the name of Jesus.”

As a result of their prayer meeting, the place was shaken, and “...with great power gave the apostles witness...” (Acts 4:33). All preaching should be accompanied with “great power!”

Have you ever wondered how an instantaneous revival can take place? If we could get a miracle happening in the church, people from all around would rush to see it, and receive their own miracle.

Since Jesus is the “same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), we should not be surprised to see miracles today. In fact, we should expect miracles to happen! Even Saul of Tarsus was converted as a result of a supernatural experience on the Road to Damascus.

The “Working of Miracles” is the power gift that “works miracles.” The working of the miracle is used to show God’s power. Miracles involving healing are usually a result of the “Gifts of Healing.” “Working of Miracles” allow us to exercise miracle power. “Miracle” comes from the Greek word “dunamis.” This means “dynamite.”

“...But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” (Daniel 11:32).

Study Questions

1. What do miracles cause the unbeliever to see? _____

2. What were the leaders in Acts 3 concerned about? _____

3. How did Nicodemus know that Jesus was sent from God? _____

4. How did Jesus confirm to John the Baptist that He was the Messiah? _____

5. What did Paul say about his preaching in 1 Corinthians 2:4? _____

6. We are not to follow “signs” but “signs” should follow _____.

7. What do “signs” confirm? _____

8. What is the world waiting for us to do? _____

9. What is the difference between “natural” and “supernatural”? _____

10. What is a “miracle”? _____

11. According to Hebrews, how does salvation come to many? _____

12. How does God back up His Gospel? _____

13. What did the disciples pray in Acts 4? _____

14. What was the result of that prayer? _____

15. How can instantaneous revival take place? _____

16. What is the “Working of Miracles”? _____

17. What does the Greek word for “miracle” mean? _____

18. All preaching should be accompanied by what? _____

19. Why were the Jewish leaders so concerned about the miracle performed in Acts 3, and not the message that the Apostles preached? _____

20. How do we conduct evangelism the powerful way? _____

Additional Notes

Keep the Lights On, The Prodigals are Coming Home!

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears”
(Acts 20:29-31).

This lesson focuses on those that have heard the gospel before and have, at one time or another, walked in truth. But, for some reason, have walked or strayed away from it. Some slip, slide, or skid to the fringes of the Apostolic movement and don't even recognize their risky state. They are commonly referred to as 'prodigals' or 'backsliders.' Neither word seems to be explicitly found in the King James Version of the Bible. However, both are unmistakably referenced there.

Not much on the subject of 'prodigals' is found in the Book of Acts. The Church was off to an unsullied, exciting launch. Focus was on world evangelism. People put their all on the line. I'm sure there were backsliders during the thirty or so years that this book covers. However, it is not a subject that is headlined or highlighted. Certainly, Paul alluded to impending danger. He solemnly, with tears warns us to guard ourselves and the Church which God has purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). Read his warning indicators, "Take heed" (vs. 28); "watch, and remember" (vs. 31). Those are fundamental in our continued walk with the Lord. Pay attention. Look out. Remember what the Lord has done and where He has brought you from. "So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it" (Hebrews 2:1, NLT).

To better facilitate our discussion on 'prodigals' we journey back to Luke 15; the 'Lost Chapter;' a trilogy of three things lost, sought, and found: sheep, coin, and son.

"So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20, NIV).

I want to make a declarative statement. It is a statement of hope. One that is backed by God's Word: 'The Prodigals are Coming Home!'

Rod Parsons in *Bringing Home the Prodigals* said, "There is nothing as frustrating as seeing people come to Christ through the front door of the church and losing others in almost the same proportion out the back door."

Most commentaries will highlight that the father watched and waited. That is the typical story. It sounds so passive. I envision, knowing our heavenly Father, that he was more active than that. Before the boy saw him, he saw the boy. The father was:

1. Praying
2. Preparing
3. Persevering
4. Plundering heaven
5. Plowing through hell interceding for his son's return.
6. Picture him as weeping, an unquenchable obsession with the return of his son, or children.

Stretch your thinking and imagine:

1. Anticipation
2. Expectation
3. Hope
4. Urgency
5. Eagerness

All of those words relate very closely with "faith."

Here's a sampling of "faith" translations and verses:

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1, *NIV*).

"Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see" (Hebrews 11:1, *NLT*).

"NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]" (Hebrews 11:1, *AMP*).

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).

"(For we walk by faith, not by sight)" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

"For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

"Thus says the Lord: Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord; and [your children] shall return from the enemy's land. And

there is hope for your future, says the Lord; your children shall come back to their own country” (Jeremiah 31:16-17,AMP).

The word ‘prodigal’ dates back to the 1500’s and refers to a reckless squanderer, someone that is wasteful, or a person that spends all his substance or money wastefully.

A prodigal may be a son or daughter, a brother or sister, a husband or wife, a father or mother, a friend or an acquaintance.

Advantages of the Prodigals

You may wonder, “How is it possible that there are advantages to being a prodigal?” Or, “How is it possible that there are advantages of the prodigal?” The situation seems bleak. Worse still, it is the prodigal’s choice to step away from the Father’s house. That is the point. It’s not that they have never heard the gospel. It is that they have heard it, and either chosen to neglect or reject it. But, they know a lot about the Father’s house, His people, the Gospel, and the way back home. That is certainly an advantage over those that have never once heard, seen, or felt any of that.

1. They already know the Father and what is in store at the Father’s House. They won’t be able to escape it. A line from a song, a memory of a sermon, an instruction from a parent, a prayer heard, etc. will one day come back to remind him. My guess is that it bombards their life more than once. They are constant reminders. The Father never gives up easily.
2. They know where they should go to church. The lost sheep was lost, knew that it was lost, but didn’t know its way home. The lost coin was lost, didn’t know it was lost, and didn’t know how to get home. The prodigal was lost, knew he was lost, and knew his way back home.

Pastor Kent Rhoads, in Oil City, Louisiana mentioned there was a backslider he knew that went to bed each night with a full glass of water. She would take a drink and knew, should death take her in the night, it would be the last drink of water she would ever taste.

3. They have tasted of the Holy Ghost, known the power of the name of Jesus, and experienced God’s inescapable and indescribable presence.
4. They know (some of) God’s people; hopefully with hearts like the loving relentless father, rather than the criticizing, bitter senior brother. One man backslid for seven years, returned to church, and searched for a familiar face. He noticed an elderly lady he recognized. He walked up to her and said, “Sister Grub, do you remember me?” She quickly answered, “Yes, you backslid seven years ago and there has not been a day that has passed that I have not called out your name in prayer!”

5. They have a heightened measure of faith. Everyone is given a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). But, when you hear and read God's Word, faith is increased. It grows!

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Romans 10:17-18).

Helping Hands in the Prodigals Coming Home

1. Pray they will come to themselves.
2. Keep the home lights burning. Always make the pathway clear for them to return one day. (Don't change the doctrine!) Get the house ready for their return. Be a prodigal-friendly church. This message is a call to the church to be ready when the prodigals come home.

Rod Parsons relays a story told to him, "In a village near here, is a large old house. An elderly lady lives there alone and every night, as darkness falls, she puts a light on in the attic. Her son left home twenty-five years ago, rather like the prodigal in the parable, but she has never given up the hope that one day he will come home. We all know the house well, and although the bulb must occasionally need replacing, none of us have ever seen that house with a light on. It is for her son."

3. Ask God to create circumstances that will cause them to look to the only One who can help. It was at the lowest point possible, in a pig-pen that the son came to his senses, causing him to find hope, and a way back home.
4. Be sensitive to times of vulnerability when one's heart will be open to the Lord. This includes sickness, sorrow, birth of a child, difficulties in the family, divorce, death, or a loss of a job.
5. Forgive, even when there isn't evidence of change. Many use rejection, isolation, and bitterness. Be like the heavenly Father: love unconditionally.

Here is an account taken from *Bringing Home the Prodigals*, by Rod Parsons: "Ernest Hemmingway wrote a short story set in Spain in which a father and son fell out to such an extent that the son ran away to Madrid. The father said he wanting nothing more to do with him. Years later, the father realized he had been too harsh and wanted to put things right. He put an ad in the Madrid newspaper: 'Paco, meet me at the Hotel Montana at noon on Tuesday, All is forgiven, Papa!' But Paco is a common name in Spain, and when the father turned up at the hotel he had to force his way through a crowd: all young men, all called Paco—and all longing to be reconciled with their father."

6. Wisely and sensitively seek ways to highlight what God is doing. Create a hunger in their heart for the things of God.
7. Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Otherwise, it is like giving someone a kiss with bad breath. The bad breath remains, long after the kiss is gone.
8. Don't condemn. Look beyond what the 'prodigal is' to what he can become.
9. Anticipate. Expect. Believe! Maintain a sense of hope and encouragement. Some of our prodigals are not as far away as we think.
10. Understand that God is ready to bring the prodigals home.
11. Rob Parsons says, "When our prodigals do come home, pray that they meet the father first, and not the elder brother."

Rod Parsons goes on to tell a touching story: A daughter left home when she was eighteen, turning her back on her Mom and Dad, and God. She didn't get in touch with them. They didn't know whether she was dead or alive. Every night as her Dad would turn off the lights before going to bed, her mother would always request, "Leave the porch light on." Six long years passed and their daughter suddenly came home.

She said, "I so often wanted to come home, but I was too ashamed. Sometimes, in the early hours of the morning, I would drive my car onto your street and just sit there. I used to gaze at the houses and every one of them was dark apart from our house. You always left the light on...I knew it was for me."

"When you're in over your head,
 I'll be there with you.
 When you're in rough waters, you will not go down.
 When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end—
 Because I am God, your personal God,
 The Holy of Israel, your Savior.
 I paid a huge price for you...
That's how much you mean to me!
That's how much I love you!
 I'd sell off the whole world to get you back, trade the creation just for you.
 'So don't be afraid: I'm with you.
 I'll round up all your scattered children, pull them in from east and west.
 I'll send orders north and south:
 'Send them back. Return my sons from distant lands, my daughters from faraway places.
 I want them back, every last one who bears my name, every man, woman, and child
 Whom I created for my glory, yes, personally formed and made each one'"

(Isaiah 43:2-7, *MSG*).

Study Questions

1. Where is the "Lost Chapter" in the Bible? _____

2. List the three (3) lost things found in the "Lost Chapter." _____

3. Read through the sampling of "faith" translations and verses provided in this lesson. Choose one passage (from those given) that best fits your experience/need, and write it out on the lines below. _____

4. Identify (define) the word "prodigal." _____

5. Identify and briefly explain, five (5) advantages of the prodigals.
1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6. List at least ten (10) ways we can help the prodigals as they find their way back home.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

Additional Notes
