

Introduction:

1. Reports say that it began with a minor traffic accident early one Saturday morning in August of 1995. It ended with the body of Deletha Word, age 33, floating lifelessly in the Detroit River.
 - a. Witnesses say three men stopped her car on a bridge, pulled her out, and then pursued her until she was forced off the bridge into the river below.
 - b. It was a horrible crime; as the story unfolded, another grim reality came to light. All of this took place while more than forty by-standers stood by and did nothing to save this poor woman.
 - c. Yes, it is a story about barbarism. But it is also a story about apathy. Nobody helped her.
 - d. If we had been there, would we have acted? Or, would we have just stood by and watched? But we were not there; we had no chance—no opportunity—to help her.
2. This raises a question about the opportunities we do have. Here are two indisputable facts:
 - a. Fact #1: Countless people around us are in grave danger. The danger isn't to their physical safety; it's worse than that. They are in danger of being separated from God forever.
 - b. Facts #2: God wants us to do something about this.
3. But what can we do? Maybe there were some on that bridge the day Deletha Word died who asked that same question. Perhaps they wanted to help, but weren't sure what to do.
 - a. This problem hinders the soul-winning efforts of many Christians. They want to reach the lost, but they're not sure how to do it. "What do I do, what do I say to reach my friends?"
 - b. Let us see four specific things, simple things that everyone can do right now to reach the lost.
 - c. These things are simple, yet powerful. If every Christian did these things, it would make a huge difference. They require hardly any effort; they don't demand a big commitment of time or energy. You don't have to have a lot of Bible knowledge or communication skills.
 - d. These are simple things that every Christian can do, things we should do every day, and if we will, it will make a big difference in our efforts to reach the lost. What is required of us is that we love God enough to obey Him, and love the lost enough to take action to rescue them.

The Lesson:

I. Shine.

- A. What does that mean? Let's allow the scriptures to answer that question, Matthew 5:13-16.
 1. When we live God's way, we will be different from the world. Our speech and moral values will be different because we follow God. Our priorities will be different. We will react differently to problems. We will have better relationships with our spouses and kids. In all kinds of noticeable ways, people will be able to see that we're just not like everyone else.
 2. But note in this passage that Jesus wants us to stick out. He wants the world to notice us. We are to be like a city on a hill. He wants others not just to see that we are different, but to see that His way is best. He wants our lives to draw lost people to Him.
 3. Bottom line: He wants our lives to shine in a dark world, reflecting the glory of Jesus.
 4. This is something we can do; this is the starting point if we want to reach others: shine!
- B. Here are some questions we need to ask: Does my life reflect Jesus? Is my light shining, or have I been so contaminated by sin that I've become like salt without flavor? Just being the people God calls us to be helps shine the light that brings others to Him.
- C. While it is important to let our lights shine, that is not the end of our responsibility to the lost.
 1. "I'll just be a good person and lost people will come to me wanting to know about Christ."
 2. But that won't work. Someone may see your good works, and may even give God some of the credit—but never speak to you. Someone has to speak first. That is you!

II. Speak.

- A. One of the best ways to speak (and easiest) is to salt our speech with references to God, our relationship with Him, and about Him as the source of the good things in our lives.
 1. Don't we naturally talk about things that are most important to us: football, cars, etc.?
 2. For the disciple, the most important thing in his life is his relationship with God. It makes sense that God should be in our conversation: His book, His church, my brethren, etc.
 3. In fact, the only way to avoid that would be to intentionally avoid mentioning those things, to hide who we are and deny the Lord, Matthew 10:32-33.

- B. Here are some things a disciple speaks:
 1. We speak about God's word. You may find an interesting passage with a relevant application in life (marriage, anger, kids); share it with a friend at work; maybe they can use it.
 2. Give God the glory for good things in our lives. Try to find ways to honor God when someone compliments you on your marriage or kids or for some kindness shown.
 3. Let unbelievers know you are praying for them. We do that all the time in our spiritual family, why not for those outside--maybe a friend at work who is going through a crisis?
 4. Point hurting people to the comfort found in God's word. If someone is grieving, let them know God cares about our grief. If a friend is worried about the future, point them to a passage that teaches trust in God. Watch for people who are hurting; point them to God.
 5. Speak positively about things that are going on in your congregation, i.e. sermons you have heard, classes you attend, gospel meetings, devotions, etc.
 6. Don't hesitate to say simple things that show your commitment to God: "Lord willing, I'll see you tomorrow" or "I can't go that night, I have Bible study," etc.
- C. If spiritual things are important to us, it is only natural that we would speak of them. But as we do, it will open doors of opportunity. As we speak, let us invite others in these things with us.

III. Invite.

- A. See Philip's example as he speaks to Nathaniel, John 1:45-46. Philip speaks positively about Jesus. Nathaniel is skeptical at first, so Philip says, "Come and see." Let's be like Philip.
 1. As we talk positively about spiritual things, we need to invite others to come and see.
 2. Invite them to spiritual activities which will give them an opportunity to hear God's word and to be with other Christians and see the impact of God's word in their lives.
- B. Here are some specifics:
 1. Talk positively about a Bible class you're attending; invite them to come to class with you.
 2. Talk enthusiastically about worship services; invite them to come and see for themselves.
 3. Be excited about a special series of lessons; invite them to come and be part of the study.
 4. Talk up a teen devotional; invite friends to come. Studies show that 25% of those who do not attend church say they would come if someone invited them. You are someone!
 5. You can create events to bring friends. Maybe a neighbor has a son fighting in Iraq. Why not invite your neighbor, a few Christians and other neighbors in your home for prayer?
- C. We make special efforts to invite our neighbors to a gospel meeting. Why make that same effort all the time? What would happen if each member would invite just one person each week?

IV. Welcome.

- A. Imagine this scenario: Edwin invites you to his house for a meal. You arrive before he gets home. He comes in and doesn't speak to you, but spends ten minutes talking with my wife. He plays with his kids until the meal is ready. When he comes into the room, he stands with a frown that says, "That's my chair." During dinner he talks only to his family. After the meal, he goes off and watches a movie with his kids, leaving you alone. After a while, you go home.
- B. Tell me how you feel: "Edwin is rude. He doesn't care about me; I'll never go back there."
- C. No one would treat a dinner guest that way. We treat dinner guests with honor. Let's be sure we treat our guests with honor. We don't want them to think we don't care, or worse, that their visit was an intrusion. We want them to feel welcome. That takes effort from each of us. You may be the first person they meet in the parking lot; the first person they see coming in the door; the person sitting by them in class; or the person whose seat they take in the auditorium.
- D. Let's treat them with the same respect with which we would treat a guest in our homes.
 1. Let us introduce ourselves and tell them we're glad they came.
 2. Take a minute to see if you can discover what needs may have brought them.
 3. Show them every courtesy; help them find a seat; in class, give them materials.
 4. Follow the ten-minute rule. For the first 10 minutes after service, visit with visitors.

Conclusion:

1. I don't know what I would have done if I'd been on that bridge in Detroit. But that's not the question today. The question for me: What will I do with the opportunities I do have to help the lost?
2. If you are here this morning and are not a Christian, let me tell you why we're talking about this: Your soul has value! If your life is not right with God, we want to help you do something about it.