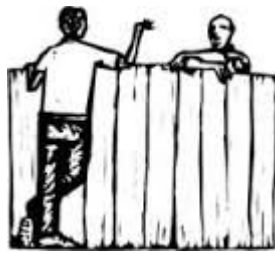


Please TAKE and KEEP this book. It is intended for ongoing personal reference and reading. Also, if you have someone in mind, take a copy to GIVE away!

How to Share Christ



By Joshua Stucki

“⁴Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” – Acts 8:4

Restoration Movement Literature

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INTRODUCTION

Most likely, you picked up this book because you have somebody already in mind that you have been trying to or wanting to reach for Christ.

Although I hope this booklet helps with your sincere effort to reach your loved one, it is important to realize that often God calls us to reach someone *else*: Paul could not reach the Jews effectively (Acts 9:23, 14:19, 17:5, 18:5+6, 21:11), though he longed greatly for his people's acceptance of their Messiah (Romans 10:1).

In the same way, when we are determined to begin sharing Christ with our neighbors, family, and friends, we must realize that God will likely put someone in our path we do not expect, and we have to be willing to answer that call when it comes.

With that in mind, your preacher has found that when he honors God's call to share Christ with an individual placed in my path, he usually takes care of the original mission I had in mind.

What is very important to realize about God is that He has been in the business of saving men since the beginning of time, and *He is still in this business – in fact – it is His primary business!* By us reaching out, we join Him in His primary work!

God wants every person to repent (2 Peter 3:9) – therefore – it makes sense that He has sent us to make disciples of all nations, giving us His immutable terms of pardon right along with His commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15+16). So, let us go, and do HIS work!

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES

Perhaps the hardest thing to accept about evangelism is that Scripture itself gives us many examples; there is no “one size fits all” approach here. However, there are some universal principles:

1) We are to “go”, not wait for people to gravitate towards us (Matthew 28:19).

2) Some will reject the invitation, no matter what (Luke 14:15-24). Your preacher has experienced this a couple of times – where death took someone – and to the end, the rejected Christ. These are some of the most difficult times in an evangelist’s life; nonetheless, we are called to continue on, as the harvest field are ALWAYS ripe (Matthew 9:38 + Luke 10:2).

3) Some are more eager than others to hear what an evangelist has to say (Acts 17:11+12). Some are mixed crowds, with some wanting to hear more, while others just slough it off (Acts 17:32)

4) We are not to try to reach somebody endlessly; there comes a time when all that can be done has been done, all that can be said has been said, and all the time that can be spent is spent (Matthew 10:14; Luke 9:5).

4a) How do we know when we have done all we can? Matthew 10:14 and Luke 9:5 says, “If they will not listen to you or welcome you.” Basically, if you have a relationship with somebody where the other person actually sets rules on what can be discussed – and they expect you to abide by them – that is simply a dead-end.

This preacher had a circumstance like that; the man would never let me get a word in edge-wise about the Lord, although we spent

hours and hours together. I went back time after time, but he would cut me off the moment I tried to bring anything about the Lord up. He let me – total – over several month, read to him one Bible verse. To anyone’s knowledge who knew him, he died without the Lord. I should have, after just a few visits, recognized the pattern, and moved on, as painful as it would have been.

4b) How do we know we have spent enough time? Jesus words in Matthew 10:14 and Luke 9:5 that says, “when you are not welcome.” A common phrase in our culture is similar – “Wearing out your welcome.” The two concepts are similar; when a “friend” no longer welcomes you because, as part of the friendship, share the Lord with them, then it is time to move on.

4c) How do we know we have said all that we can say? Acts 13:46 and Acts 18:6 are circumstances where the Jews continued to reject Jesus – despite first-hand witness and accounts, genealogies readily available for review, prophecies fulfilled, miracles, signs, and wonders displayed, and lives changed. So, Paul went to the Gentiles.

It is important to realize that Paul desired so sincerely that his fellow Jew would accept Christ (Romans 10:1ff). However, Christ sent him to the Apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Therefore, it is once again important to realize that who we want to witness to may be different than who the Lord is leading us to witness to.

5) Some people are won in private (Acts 18:26); others, in public (Acts 2:41). Therefore, some people are won because you presented the Gospel yourself; others are won because you invited them to church and they heard the Gospel presented there.

6) Although every Christian is certainly called to win the lost (Matthew 28:19+20), so too the churches are to send out paid (1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Timothy 5:8) Evangelists (Romans 10:14+15). In this and many other ways, the Mormons err – for example – as they do not have paid missionaries or preachers solely dedicated to evangelism.

7) Evangelism does not end at the waters of baptism; Jesus instructs us that after baptism, we are to teach new converts everything He has commanded us (Matthew 28:20). Discipleship – follow-up – is key to successful evangelism!

STEP BY STEP PERSONAL EVANGELISM EXAMPLES FROM THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF ACTS

1) Peter “and the eleven” stood up and preached the first Gospel sermon in Acts 2:14ff. Three thousand responded, out of many more times than that present (Acts 2:41).

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: Inviting people to church to hear the Gospel is a Scriptural and useful evangelism tool.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: The new members of Christ’s church immediately began practicing the Lord’s Supper, giving, praying together, and learning the Word of God (Acts 2:42). We must learn to share the same with new Christians.

2) Peter and John were persecuted for healing and preaching in Acts 3, and another four thousand came to Christ in Acts 4:4.

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: Persecution breeds evangelism; it always has. What the devil means for bad, God uses to raise up great evangelists to carry the banner of the Gospel.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: New believers who did not repent of their sin were still guilty of it – like Ananias and Sapphira from Acts 5:1 ff.

3) Stephen witnessed under oath in court in Acts 7; his execution (at the feet of Saul – Acts 7:58) resulted in Christians being scattered, who then preached everywhere they went! (Acts 8:4)

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: We are not to stop being Christians in public, in court, or anywhere else; the modern idea that people should just be religious “in their homes” and in the “four walls of their church building” is simply not possible for those who love the Lord and will obey His commandments regardless of the cost.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: The scattering of the Christians at the beginning of Acts 8 also resulted in the Gospel spreading to Samaria and Africa later on in that same chapter. Evangelism breeds more evangelism, as new Christians who actively evangelize grow much quicker than those who hold back.

4) Philip witnessed to Samaria, a nation of half-breeds from the previous Jewish captivities who mixed their pagan religion and culture with the Law of Moses and their homeland’s traditions. They were an undesirable people, shunned by Jew and well-to-do pagan alike. Nonetheless, Jesus sent the example for reaching out to “undesirables” in John 4, and Philip continues his example by reaching out to the Samaritans in their homeland.

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: We are to evangelize to people our world – maybe our family and friends – have rejected. God wants absolutely EVERYONE to repent (2 Peter 3:9); we are to make disciples of ALL nations (Matthew 28:19).

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: Philip's witness to Simon the Sorcerer resulted in Simon's belief in the Gospel and being baptized like everyone else (Acts 8:12+13). Nonetheless, Simon's primary focus was still on his own fame and potential fortune, showing he was not penitent (Acts 8:20-23). It is unknown if Simon's response in verse 24 of that same chapter was repentant or merely fear. Tradition holds that Simon was a founding member of Gnosticism, later condemned throughout Scripture, although that cannot be known for sure.

5) Philip witnessed to an Ethiopian eunuch on his way home. God Himself sent Philip to witness to the eunuch (Acts 8:26). The Eunuch listened to what Philip had to say and requested baptism as a result (Acts 8:36). He left rejoicing! (Acts 8:39)

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: Sometimes God leads us to evangelistic opportunities like Philip with the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip was part of fulfilling God's plan set way back in Genesis 12:3, that "all the earth would be blessed" through the Messiah that would come through Abraham (the eunuch was from Ethiopia, Africa, descended from the sons of Ham, whom God said would be blessed along with the sons of Shem and Japheth in Genesis 12:3). We do not know if Philip knew this single witness encounter was fulfilling a thousands-of-years-old prophecy, but he was faithful to his calling, nonetheless.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: Philip's mission was not done; God transported (literally) him to a nearby town to continue spreading the Gospel (Acts 8:40). Philip is mentioned again later (named "Philip the Evangelist"), and his four daughters had joined in the

evangelistic work with him (Acts 21:8+9). So, like Philip, our mission to spread the Gospel also never ends until our death or the Lord's return!

6) Jesus Himself reached out to begin the conversion of Saul (Acts 9:1-6), yet Jesus still sent a preacher to actually present the Gospel and baptize Paul (Acts 9:10-16). This is consistent with Paul saying later in this letter to the church at Rome that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: God always has sent preachers, even in the Old Testament times (Hebrews 1:1). Nonetheless, sometimes he gets the process started, like the above. You know the old phrase, "Do not the miss the forest for the trees"? All the same here – sometimes evangelistic opportunities are thrust right in front of us – especially if we have been actively seeking and obeying God's will in His Word.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: Paul was saved by grace through faith, repentance, and baptism like everybody else in Acts. There is also a foreboding verse describing Paul's future – "I will show him how much must suffer for My name" (Acts 10:16). Grace is free; discipleship is costly. Also see Matthew 16:24.

7) As well, Jesus got the conversion of Cornelius (the first Gentile convert) started by telling Cornelius to be prepared to receive a preacher (Acts 10:3-8) and also by sending Peter that direction (Acts 10:17-24), instructing him before he left (Acts 10:9-16).

When Peter arrived at Cornelius' house and heard Cornelius' testimony (Acts 10:30-33). Peter understood what the Lord was showing him before and realized that God had invited the Gentiles to be part of the Gospel all the same (Acts 10:34-43). Then the Holy Spirit came

“upon” (it is VERY important to notice “upon” versus “within” when discussing the Holy Spirit in Scripture) Cornelius and his household in order to give final proof to Peter that the Gospel was truly for them as well (Acts 10:44). Therefore, Peter “commanded” (notice, it was not a suggestion!) for them to be baptized (Acts 10:47+48).

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: Peter had absolutely zero intention of witnessing to Gentiles until Jesus directed and instructed him to do so. The lesson for us is the same – when we say, “Here I am Lord, send me” (Isaiah 6:8), we do not always know just exactly what that might mean but we can be sure that ANYBODY we encounter is who God wants the Gospel presented to.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: Cornelius, who was already a sincere, generous, devout believer in God, still needed to respond to the Gospel according to Christ’s terms (Acts 10:1+2). Naturally, his response meant he would continue being all of those things, but now something much more – forgiven, saved – and motivated all the more himself to share the Good News of Jesus Christ!

EVANGELISM EXAMPLES FROM THE LATER CHAPTERS IN ACTS THAT DID NOT ALWAYS GO WELL

This is not a commonly discussed subject, but the book of Acts in Scripture tells us of some evangelical encounters that frankly did not go well. This was not because the preachers did not do their jobs; this was not because the right words were not said. No, the stories are there – recorded in inspired Scripture – to remind us of the truths Jesus taught us in the Gospels that although everybody is invited, not all come to the banquet God has prepared for them (Luke 14:15-24).

1) In Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas preached and had many people inquire further (some even “believed”, like verse 12), but no one followed through in repentance and baptism, as is recorded in the various conversion stories throughout the book of Acts. In fact, their preaching ultimately led to further persecution (Acts 13:45).

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: Some people will listen to the Gospel message, ask questions, and seem sincerely interested, but are ultimately just that – curious. Some people are amateur studies of religion, or just find such talk fascinating (like many of the Athenians in Acts 17:21). It is ultimately a fruitless venture.

Some question this conclusion by pointing to Acts 13:48 – “When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of^[ac] the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

Ultimately, this is a poor translation. The word “appointed” is the same word used in Romans 13:1 where it is said that “no authority exists except that which is established by God.” If we interpret these verses according to our 21st-century, western eyes, we are going to think that if God “predestined” people to salvation, then God also “predestined” Hitler to become the ruler of Germany, or the many emperors of Rome who persecuted the church. No, the much better translation is “allowed”; God allows things to happen in this sinful world, even though he has no hand in it, as that is logically-necessary price of free will exercised in the world. So, God sometimes allows evil governments to take place, just as God allows for any man to come to Christ. Otherwise, free will works both ways, just as whether or not we each ultimately choose to receive God’s salvation on His terms or not.

So with this understanding, many Gentiles rejoiced and believed; this is like the proconsul in the same chapter, verse 12. God allowed them all to believe; whether or not they followed that belief with repentance, baptism, and faithfulness to the Apostle's doctrine, is simply unknown, so we do not count them among the examples of conversion throughout the book of Acts.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: These are especially disappointing times, when after the Gospel has been preached and inquired about, and it seems progress is being made, it was all for naught. Nonetheless, Paul and Barnabas just went right on by and continued on (Acts 13:49), although more persecution immediately followed (Acts 13:50-52).

2) Again, in Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas attempted to witness to the Jews themselves, but they rejected the Gospel. So they told the Jews that if they would not accept the Gospel, they go on to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). A similar event happened in Acts 18:6.

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: If Paul and Barnabas could not reach the Jews, who could? Although certainly many Jews did come to Christ (Acts 2:41), the nation as a whole rejected their Messiah, so God sent final destruction to Jerusalem in 70AD. The Old Testament system of worship regarding sacrifice has never resumed to this day as a result.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: Some evangelical opportunities will become rejection and persecution seminars. In that case, we are to do what Paul and Barnabas did (Acts 13:51+52) – “shake the dust off” our feet – and move on to more open ears.

3) Almost all of Acts 14 is filled with foiled evangelism attempts – the Jews at every turn turned the people against the Apostles (Acts 14:2+19), although some took the Apostles’ side and became faithful Christians (Acts 14:4, 21-23). In this chapter alone, this similar circumstance re-occurred in Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 14:6+19).

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: Some converts are won in the trenches of spiritual warfare – one person will respond favorably, and another actually attempts to come after you. Just as the Apostles did, stick with it, and fruit will be born.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: There are berries to be found among the thorns; churches were started, elders appointed, and good things happened, even amongst all the hostility (Acts 13:21-23). Sometimes the best churches are in the most persecuted areas; there are simply no half-baked Christians in those circumstances.

4) Jews in Acts 17:1-9 caused Paul and Silas further grief while he was attempting to witness. Although many sided with Paul and Silas in his evangelical efforts (Acts 17:4), the Jews overwhelmed public opinion against Paul and Silas (Acts 17:5), using false accusations or any other ploy to get them in trouble with the authorities (Acts 17:7+8).

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: Public opinion may be against Gospel preaching, but we preach, nonetheless. The world’s opinions of Christians will always ebb back and forth (James 1:6), but the Gospel message has been delivered “once for all the saints” (Jude 1:3).

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: In these situations, sometimes it is best to leave (Acts 17:9). Paul and Silas took off for Berea quietly overnight (Acts 17:10), where they received a very warm reception (Acts 17:10-12), although there was still some persecution

(Acts 17:13). Why stay where you are not wanted or welcomed? (Matthew 10:14 and Luke 9:5). So again, Paul and Silas left for another evangelical opportunity (Acts 17:14+15).

MORE EVANGELICAL SUCCESS STORIES IN THE LATER CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

1) In Acts 16, Lydia had fled Thyatira (see Revelation 2:18-28 as to details why) because of the persecution there. She had arrived in Philippi, and was a seller of purple. She was a sincere “worshiper of God” (Acts 16:14a) and yet she still needed to hear the Gospel (Acts 16:14b).

Paul was preaching, and she and her household responded to the message (Acts 16:15a) in faith, repentance, baptism, and faithfulness (Acts 16:15b) like the other conversion accounts throughout the book of Acts.

EVANGELISM LESSON LEARNED: Paul arrived to preach, but was not necessarily aware or specifically targeting Lydia. We may be speaking to one, but yet another is hearing and considering – likewise – Lydia heard the Gospel, and responded accordingly. Obviously, baptism was part of Paul’s message, because that is what she did in response (Acts 16:15).

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON LEARNED: Lydia followed up her belief, repentance, and baptism with “good works prepared by God” (as described in Ephesians 2:10). Jesus said we would know His disciples by their fruit and love (Matthew 7:20; John 13:35). Obviously then, Lydia demonstrated her grateful receipt of salvation by her actions here.

2) In Acts 18, many Corinthians believed, repented, and were baptized (verse 8). Although the Jews would not be convinced Jesus was

the Messiah as Paul preached to them again (Acts 18:6), they did not persecute openly, at least as recorded here. As a result, Paul enjoyed a time of peaceful and fruitful ministry there (Acts 18:8-11).

There are more examples of witnessing in the book of Acts – but interestingly – no more conversions were recorded: Paul would witness in front of magistrates, judges, and Kings, and the church would continue to spread across the world (Colossians 1:6+23; Romans 10:18), but we are not told any specifics about individuals fulfilling Christ’s terms of pardons. Just because it is not recorded does not mean it did not happen; instead, these stories are recorded for our example – that we are to take the Gospel everywhere – even to the highest echelons of government like Paul did (and was instructed to by Jesus to do so – Acts 9:15). Our job as evangelists never ends.

ADDITIONAL HELPS IN EVANGELISM

The reader will notice in our study so far that some witnessing was done in private and some in public. Some were sent by God, others simply preached as opportunity came up. Some presented the Gospel themselves, while others led people to those who could present it to them. All of the above works, and you will find your role in the above because everybody has a role – and an obligation – to spread the Gospel (Matthew 28:19+20).

So how does your preacher reach out? Below is my weekly “routine”, so to speak:

- 1) First, I consider the various people available to hear the Gospel.
- 2) Second, I target first and primarily those who I believe are going to be most open to the message.

3) Third, I make a point to visit with them, get to know them, LISTENING to them. They already know why I am there; instead, at first, they want to know if I care about them.

4) Fourth, I ask questions about what they have said (I do not start with questions leading to evangelism; I simply get to know them better). I listen, and respond again in kind.

5) Fifth, I take what they have said and give them some Bible verses that apply to that situation. I usually say something along the lines of, “This may surprise you, but I know some Bible verses that speak directly on what we have been talking about. Do you mind if I show them to you?”

6) From there, it is a natural jump to discussing salvation and how that changes everything – from the inner man, to how we deal with situations outside of ourselves. The goal is total conversion – total transformation! (Romans 6:3+4)

7) This may or may not lead to the person accepting salvation immediately; sometimes it is that easy, sometimes not, and sometimes never. Nonetheless, I have done what Christ has asked (Matthew 28:19+20), planting the seed (1 Corinthians 3:6a). Then, I and/or another will water it again further over time (1 Corinthians 3:6b), while God grows it (1 Corinthians 3:6c).

8) I will then make a point to visit again in a week or two, depending on their schedule and a degree of simply feeling out a person needs to process that information. As a general rule, more often than not is better than less often; there is a degree of momentum that goes into evangelism, and it is important “to keep the ball rolling.”

9) If a person does come to Christ, I still follow up as before, engaging in the latter part of the Great Commission – “teaching them everything I have commanded them” (Matthew 28:20). This means befriending (genuinely, not just because they became a Christian), spending time with, encouraging, and supporting your new brother or sister in Christ in their spiritual growth and in any other way you can.

10) Just as the Great Commission dictates, successful disciples who are baptized and then learn all that Jesus has commanded will themselves become disciple-makers. Each of us who are Christians are products of those who came before us who went through the same process. Let us continue the mission forward, onto the next generation who will carry the banner of salvation!

Naturally, there are variations on the above, but I do tend to follow the above pattern repeatedly, even if roughly. No two people are the same, just like no two circumstances are the same. The many examples studied above in the book of Acts show us the great variety of people, locales, personalities, and circumstances that can exist at any point in time in our witness. However, the message never changes – the Gospel is still “once delivered for all the saints”! (Jude 1:3)

WHO ARE PEOPLE I CAN REACH OUT TO?

This evangelist feels it is Scriptural, based on the examples above, and sensible to target people who are most likely to receive the Gospel message enthusiastically.

Therefore, just like Jesus said, those who are well to do and are otherwise secure in their earthly lives will see little use for the Gospel (Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25).

Instead, this evangelist recommends targeting who Jesus did:

- 1) The poor, the sick, and the disabled (Luke 14:13; 21+23)
- 2) The hungry, the foreigner, the homeless, and the imprisoned (Matthew 25:34-46)
- 3) The recluse, the forgotten, and the undesirables (John 4:7-26)

We should also target who the Apostles did:

- 1) First, hometown people (Acts 2-7)
- 2) Second, people from the outside (Acts 8)
- 3) Third, people on the outside (Acts 10-28)

Keep in mind – using the above plan – the Gospel spread to the whole world in a matter of thirty years (Colossians 1:6+23; Romans 10:18). It is hard to argue with that kind of success, personally put in motion by God himself!

Of course, this does not mean whatsoever to ignore anyone – God clearly says He wants to go to in ALL the world making disciples (Matthew 28:19), and He wants EVERY person to repent (2 Peter 3:9). Nonetheless, when we take into account Jesus' and his Apostles' examples, we see that although they certainly did preach to everyone, they did not waste their times with those who did not welcome or listen to them (Matthew 10:14 + Luke 9:5). Instead, after you have been spreading the Gospel around, zero in on those – regardless of who they are – who are receiving the message gladly. They may just not be who you expect!

CONCLUSION

If you are reading this, you are obviously interested in sharing Christ, which is absolutely awesome. This preacher hopes you have learned from Scripture the many examples we have, and the commands Christ and His Apostles have given us. As well, I have attempted to share some personal anecdotes and tips that have helped me in reaching others. However you approach someone, and whoever you do, my sincerest prayers are with you in reaching others with the Greatest Message of Hope in the Entire World for All Time!