

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

WHAT CAN I DO TO SHARE CHRIST?

There is a power that even the devil recognizes as being an effective tool in converting others. He has used it through the years to bring people into slavery to sin. It is possibly the most powerful weapon he has in his arsenal today. What is it?

It is the printed page! In the Second World War six million Jews and several other people were killed without mercy. Before this happened the German people had been reading their political "Bible" for about fifteen to twenty years. It was the book *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) written by Adolf Hitler. Five million copies had been sold or distributed to the people by the outbreak of World War II. Norm Cousins stated that "for every word in *Mein Kampf* 125 lives were to be lost, for every page, 4,700 lives; for every chapter, more than 1,200,000 lives." Is there not power in writing?

Playboy and other magazines number in the millions each month. People are not just looking at the photographs. They are reading the doctrines of humanism and bowing down to the god of pleasure. Things are changing. Things that were once acknowledged as immoral are now considered acceptable. Things that were once hidden are now made open. A blush today is a rare incident. How did it happen? Through constant exposure to ideas that are contrary to God and His plan for man's happiness.

False teachers testify that the written message is powerful. One publishing house claims that in one year, 1,110 people wrote telling them that they had confessed Christ after reading their literature. A radio preacher says that one hundred times more people are "converted by reading his literature than by listening to his radio program." Is there not power in the printed word?

The Written Word of God is Powerful

In the days of Josiah, the king of Judah, there was a great revival which was begun, because the book of God was found in the temple of God when it was being repaired. It was read in the presence of the king, and he began great reformation (2 Kings 22).

Jesus appealed to the mind and eyes of men when he said time and time again, "Have you not read...?" and "It is written..."

One record of his great works concluded with these words, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31).

Confidence in the salvation of God is found in the reading of words like these: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13).

The last book in the Bible begins with this promise: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3).

Are we putting too much emphasis on the gospel in print and written sermons? We think not when the Holy Spirit guided Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and others to write 27 tracts, the books of the Bible.

Great Need for Preachers Today

Yes, there is! But we have thousands of them that are not being used. How? Batsell Baxter (he, being dead, yet speaks), Joe Barnett, and many others can be heard through the hands of brethren with the printed page. This is teaching that, men, women, children, and even shut-ins can do. Before me are letters from a nine year old and a ninety year old who are requesting tracts. Age is no barrier.

Twelve Ways to Share the Printed Word

1. Send them in personal letters and notes of get-well and sympathy.
2. Send or give to newcomers in town.
3. Give them to people who are helpful to you and whom you help. I am convinced that the best use of tracts is to give them to people whose needs you know and provide them with one that best fits their needs. There are two ways to prepare for

WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Text: _____

I. The _____ of His Purpose

Notes:

II. The _____ of His Purpose

Notes:

III. The _____ of His Purpose

Notes:

THE FULLNESS OF A CHRIST FILLED LIFE

Text: _____

I. _____

Notes:

II. _____

Notes:

III. _____

Notes:

this; get better acquainted with people and read a wide variety of tracts.

4. Give them to people who are sick and in hospitals.
5. Hand them out in your Bible classes. Suggest that your preacher preach on a particular subject and then hand out tracts on the same subject. You might even have a class studying different tracts.
6. Hand them out when conducting home Bible studies. Ask them to tell you how they liked them when you meet together the next time.
7. Offer them on radio, TV, newspaper, and mail evangelism.
8. Leave them in doctor's offices, laundromats, and nursing homes. Ask permission and leave materials that will encourage and uplift.
9. Hand them out on trips and vacations to waitresses and other travelers.
10. Use them in correspondence course work to answer questions and to provide guidance.
11. Hand them out in jails and prisons. They are hungry for reading materials.
12. Use them in door-to-door work.

Advantages of the Printed Booklet

There are many ways in which the printed tract is more powerful than a personal presentation. It is...

A tireless worker	I am not.
A continuous worker	I am not.
A worker that is easily available	I am not.
A worker that may touch 1,000s	I may not.
A worker that stays on the job	I do not.
A worker that can go anywhere	I can not.
A worker that never gets angry	I do.
A worker that needs no vacation	I do.
A worker that needs no salary	I do.
A worker that never gets sick	I do.
A worker that never talks back	I do.
A worker that travels in pockets	I do not.
A worker that will talk when you are ready to listen.	

(Adapted from Willie Cato: *African Christian Schools*).

Some Helpful Suggestions

Always offer tracts with a smile. It is amazing how seldom a tract will be rejected if it is offered with a genuine smile.

Don't force tracts on people. If you do they will discard them.

Ask your friend to agree to read it first. If he will not agree to this give it to something else. If you get to know people you can ask them if they want a tract on a particular subject. It is even better when they ask a question and want more information.

Set a goal of at least one tract a day, especially if you work outside the home. It could be at lunch, on the bus, in your car pool, at the office, factory, or restaurant. Set your mind to distribute literature each day. Don't wait until you hand out thousands. Start with one today!

-Gynnath Ford

HIS SPIRIT WAS STIRRED

What gets you worked up? I imagine that the number of answers I might receive would be about as varied as the number of individuals I were to ask. But everybody has certain things that can easily make them uncomfortable, worried, and enraged all at the same time. Perhaps it is seeing how some people treat their spouse. It might be the way some people interact with their children. With others it might be certain aspects of society that are becoming “the norm.” But one thing that should concern and anger us all is the seeming frivolity with which many people approach matters that are spiritual. There seems to be little care shown for not only the souls of others, but for one’s own soul. To such apathy, how closely does our response resemble that of the apostle Paul whose spirit was stirred (Acts 17:16)? In the midst of his second missionary journey, Paul left Silas and Timothy in Berea and journeyed on into Athens, Greece. Keep in mind the setting into which Paul would be walking.

“One historian noted that there were more idols in Athens than in the rest of Greece combined.

Pliny stated that during the days of Nero, Athens was adorned with some 30,000 public idols, not counting those in private homes (Robertson, 1930-33, III.278). When one considers the fact that the city’s population in Paul’s day was probably only about 10,000 (Longenecker, 473), that means there were three times as many idols as people” (Jackson, 208).

It was for this reason that Juvenal, a Roman satirist, said that in Athens it was easier to find a god than a man, and Xenophon would say that the city was one great altar, one great offering to the gods. As Paul, then, entered the city and neared the Acropolis, anger was immediately provoked within him because of what he saw—a mass rejection of belief in the true Jehovah God. In other words, the religious perversion of these people is what got him worked up and caused him to immediately begin in trying to instruct them toward righteousness. But what was it that Paul saw in this widespread idolatry that caused his spirit to be stirred?

Paul saw ignorance. After he was ushered by the philosophers of the city to Mar’s hill, his first words were “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye **ignorantly** worship, him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:2-23). Paul’s use of the adjective “ignorance” to describe their convictions might have triggered a memory of his forefathers. Hosea had written several hundred years earlier concerning those Israelites, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hosea 4:6). Paul knew the road his brethren had traveled led to destruction because of ignorance and he did not want the same result for these people. Bible ignorance is perhaps the single most dangerous state into which one could enter because it is the absence of knowledge of that saving gospel (Romans 1:16), and it is prevalent today. Are our spirits stirred as was Paul’s?

Paul saw an indictment. Idolatry is sin, a crime against God. It is included among the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20) and among the sins of the lost (Revelation 21:8). Thus he saw the clear guilt of those to whom he was speaking and it sincerely bothered him. He was not among those whose mindset is “as long as somebody’s actions do not affect me then I do not care” crowd. His innermost desire for all people was their salvation, therefore the Athenians’ guilt did affect him personally. Guilt is just as alive, if not more so, today as it ever has been. Does our heart ache for the indictment of men’s souls as did Paul’s?

Paul saw indifference. Idolatry on such a mass level can be described as nothing more than spiritual indifference. There was an indifference for the various gods, holding all in high esteem. There was an indifference toward knowledgeable work and worship, evidenced by their acceptance of such a concept as an “unknown god.” These peoples’ beliefs seemed to be more of an attempt at pacifism than pure and undefiled religion. Generations had likely grown up accepting custom without ever arriving at conviction. Such is indifference at the very core, and such is a picture of the religious lives of literally billions of people around the world today. How great is our concern in view of Paul’s?

The four few words that describe the countenance and emotions of Paul in Acts 17:16 speak so much of who he was. But even more it gives us something immensely important to consider regarding our reaction to similar sins. His spirit was stirred, but what about ours’?