

Who is more sensitive and compassionate than any human parent has to witness all the cruelty and despair of this dying planet.

If you followed Jesus out the door, I believe you'd find yourself following Him into the wards of a hospital, into the bedroom of an abused child, or simply to the side of a someone bewildered by his personal emptiness.

This doesn't mean that following Jesus always takes us to strangers, but the fact is that most of the unfinished task of world evangelism lies among cultures and peoples unfamiliar to us. Having taken the initial step of contacting a stranger, you'll be amazed at the ability of the indwelling Christ to arouse within you compassion and empathy for the people you talk to. Don't sit around asking God for love, He IS love and He dwells within you. If you will just obey Him in making the initial contacts, His love, wisdom, power, and knowledge will be poured out through you.

The Apostle Paul testified to the supernatural enabling power of God in his ministry. *"And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."* (1 Cor. 2:4-5 NASB)

After 13 years as an evangelizing Christian, I still grapple with fear and inadequacy in sharing the Lord with others, but this human weakness only serves to remind me that soul-winning can only be accomplished in total dependence on Jesus, the Savior.

"So everywhere we go we talk about Christ to all who will listen, warning them and teaching them as well as we know how. We want to be able to present each one to God, perfect because of what Christ has done for each of them. This is my work, and I can do it only because Christ's mighty energy is at work within me." (Col. 1:28-29, LB)

3. Obedience: We Were Born To Reproduce.

Jesus said, *"If you love Me, ... keep My commandments."* (John 14:15) We've been clearly commanded to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with every person on earth. (Matt. 28:19-20) It's not an option or a special ministry for a few, but a normal activity in the life of every believer. Just as any marriage naturally brings forth children, we were born to reproduce when we were born again through vital union with Jesus.

Some Practical Steps

It is important to clearly know the Gospel message and develop skill in communicating it, but let's not be intimidated by our lack of training. By all means, get trained where possible, but don't miss the many obvious things you could be doing. Let me ask you about a few:

1. Do you have a supply of favorite tracts that you carry with you in your handbag or briefcase?
2. Have you ever rented one of the many excellent Christian films and shown it to a non-Christian audience? Every American high school student should at least have the opportunity to see the film *The Cross and the Switchblade*.
3. Do you invite people to Christian concerts or services?
4. Have you ever purchased gripping testimony books like *The Hiding Place* or *God's Smuggler* to give away to non-Christian acquaintances?
5. Do you join with the programs of your church that reach out to the poor or the institutionalized?
6. When you use public transportation, do you share Christ with those around you?

These are all simple things, but even using these obvious methods can turn each day into a supernatural adventure. God will take the little loaves and fishes that we offer Him and multiply them in the feeding of a surprisingly great multitude.

Remember, the only hope millions of people have is that some obedient Christian will cross a language, cultural, or even psychological barrier to bring them the "Good News" of God's love.

My wife went through all her school years here in America without anyone explaining the details of God's plan of salvation. When she first heard a clear presentation of who Jesus was and what He had done, she eagerly accepted Him as her Savior and within a year was engaged in missionary service. There are people all around you who need the knowledge of God that you have. You're sure some of them would never listen so you don't

even try. Don't try to decide how they will respond, let them decide by giving them the opportunity.

We never know what work the Spirit of God has been doing in drawing a person to Jesus. When I talked to that executive on that airplane, I was part of a divinely orchestrated chain of contact. It was only a small contribution, but part of God's loving pursuit of His child.

Look For Divine Appointments

I'm reminded of another place and time when the Spirit of God strongly moved upon me to reach a soul. I was walking through the International Airport at San Juan, Puerto Rico, when God impressed me to share Jesus with a man standing alone on the observation deck. I went upstairs and walked around the observation deck praying until I became convinced that it was God's appointment. We struck up a conversation and I began to share my testimony. Within minutes we were praying together. He was very vulnerable at that moment, having just experienced divorce. His heart was crying out in loneliness, pain, and confusion, when a stranger appeared at his side and brought a message from heaven itself. "God loves you, He knows all about your pain. He has lovingly pursued you all your life, and even now wants to forgive you, heal you, and reveal Himself to you."

I'll never forget the gratitude of that lonely man when we finally parted. It had dawned on him like a thunder clap that he had a heavenly Father. "God was alive and could be known!" The thing that touched him most deeply was my story of divine direction to him out of all the people there that day.

People without Christ are empty vessels living in emotional turmoil and spiritual poverty. Don't be afraid of them. The exterior may be intimidating, but all people struggle with guilt, hurt, and a need for real love. Look past that veneer of self-sufficiency and the hollow mask of human pride. Underneath is a child who needs a father. A sinner needing grace. Tell them what Jesus has become to you, and invite them home to the Father's house. Give them the GOOD NEWS.

"DO Talk To Strangers" was reprinted from an article in *The Last Days Magazine*, a colorfully illustrated publication filled with challenging articles, ministry opportunities, and more!

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DO Don't Talk To Strangers

By John Dawson



Sharing Jesus With A Hurting Generation

Clipped on my seat belt and stared out the window. Today would be a difficult day. The Los Angeles Times lay folded on my lap. I spread out the front page and stared again at the tragic headlines, "TWELVE DIE IN PLANE CRASH."



As the Texas-bound jet took off, my mind tried to grasp the implications of that crash—death is so final, so absolute in its separation of earthly friends. Just a few days ago I sat with Keith by a river in Colorado as he excitedly shared his dreams for the future. Now, he had suddenly graduated—gone to be with Jesus.

I looked at my hands. “Our bodies are so fragile,” I thought. “How much longer do I have to live?” My soul stared into eternity and earthly anxieties seemed to fade away. “My life must count. It must fulfill its purpose, I can’t waste the brief opportunity of life.”

The man next to me looked confident, wealthy, and secure. The image of a successful executive. But this time I wasn’t going to be intimidated. “Have you seen the front page?” I said. “See this article about a crash? The musician mentioned was one of my best friends.” During the next thirty minutes, I told him the story of Keith Green. I told him about a young Jewish singer who was transformed by the life of Jesus and propelled into a life of Christian ministry. The man seemed to show only a polite interest. He asked about the funeral and what I would say at the memorial service, but revealed no weakness in his armor of studied indifference.

The truth was that he knew far more about Jesus than he would at first admit. After nearly two hours of conversation, he admitted to a conscious knowledge of the mercy of God in his own life. He recounted to me two stories of God’s protection from accident and disease. Finally, he told me that his sister is a Christian who prays for him regularly.

A Time For Boldness

People like this man are far more vulnerable to the Gospel than we would at first imagine. If there’s ever a time when it’s easy to talk to people about spiritual things, it’s now in the 1980s. It’s time to begin boldly speaking about the wonderful relationship all men can have with their heavenly Father.

So many times we’ve been reminded of our duty and obligation to evangelize the lost. Flashing into our mind comes a picture of a dying race stumbling on in hurt and depravity. We must tell people about God’s broken heart and His plan to save them.

Most Christians contemplate evangelism with a heavy heart and a fear of rejection, but a twinge of guilt reminds them that their obligation is plain.

Why should we share Jesus? Because people need Him? Because

we look at strangers and just love them so much? Because of duty and obligation? There should be three main reasons why we share the Gospel with others.

Three Reasons For Sharing

1. Healing The Heart Of God.

If you love someone, you’ll seek to comfort them and help them at the point of their greatest hurt. We have a brokenhearted Father Who has entrusted us with an awesome responsibility and privilege: the expression of His love to a hurting generation.

Jesus said, “As My Father hath sent Me, ... even so send I you.” (John 20:21 KJV) Our very name is the “Body of Christ.” This means that our hands must become His hands, our eyes shine with His love, and our voices speak His words. As His people we represent Jesus to the world. Where else will they see Him?

I have three children. I love to hold them, comfort them, and teach them. I can’t imagine what it would be like to have no arms to hold them and no voice to comfort them when they experience pain, but God has entrusted us with the tremendous privilege of expressing His heart of love to His own wayward children. How vulnerable God has made Himself to us. We cannot fail His trust. We cannot ignore His broken heart over millions who still walk in ignorance of His plan of reconciliation.

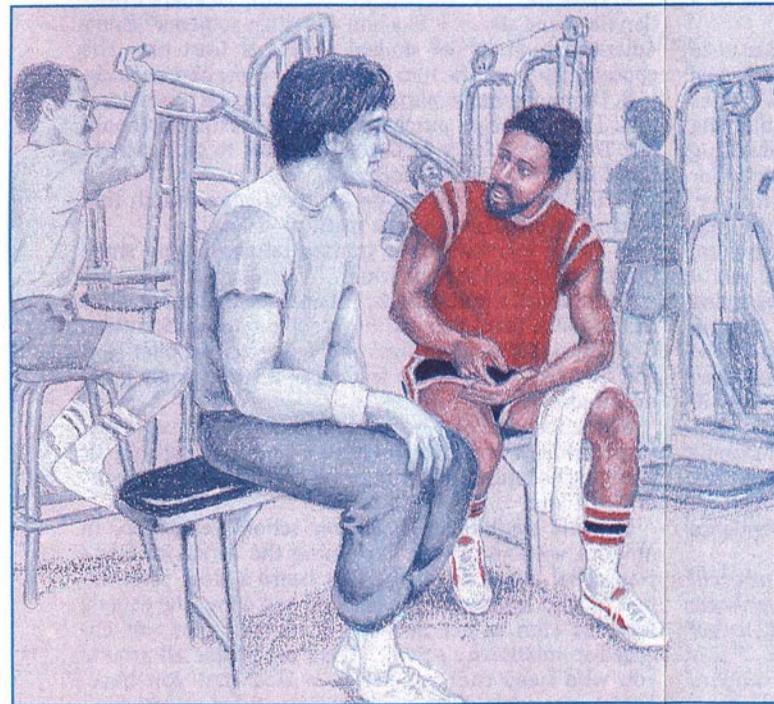
Can you love “the lost”?

We often hear preachers talk about a “ministry of reconciliation,” and evangelism is literally that. When you see strangers walking down the street, you don’t immediately love them—

actually, you can’t love them. Have you ever wondered what it feels like to have a “love for the lost”? This is an expression we use as part of our Christian jargon. Many believers search their heart in condemnation, looking for the arrival of some feeling of benevolence that will propel them into bold evangelism. It will never happen. It’s impossible to love “the lost.” You can’t feel deeply for an abstraction or a concept. You’d find it impossible to deeply love an unfamiliar person in a photograph, let alone a nation or a race or something as vague as “all lost people.”

You may have read the testimonies of praying missionaries who wept with loving compassion for the people of their calling, but don’t forget that this experience is a result of God’s emotions being shared with a human heart in the intimate place of intercession. God doesn’t relate to commodities and abstractions. In His omnipresence, He knows and relates to *individuals*. He does not see a conglomerate such as the nation of China, as much as He sees every Chinese person, whom He has known intimately since conception.

Don’t wait for a feeling of love in order to share Christ with a stranger. You already love your heavenly Father, and you know that this stranger is a child of His, separated from Him, so take those first steps in evangelism *because you love God*. It’s not primarily out of a compassion for man that we share our faith—it’s first of all **love for God**. The Bible says in Ephesians 6:7-8, “*With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back*



from the Lord, whether slave or free.” The fact is: mankind doesn’t deserve the love of God any more than you or I did. We should never be Christian humanists, taking Jesus to poor sinful man and reducing Him to some kind of product that will better the lot of mankind. Men deserve to be damned, but Jesus, the suffering Lamb of God, deserves the reward of His suffering: which would be that none perish, but that all are reconciled to the Father.

When you do open your mouth to testify to others as a love response to God, you’ll be amazed at the change that comes in your feelings and emotions. This brings us to the second point.

2. The Love Of Christ Controls Us.

Evangelism involves a strategy of both saturation and penetration. **Saturation** in that every person needs to hear the good news (as in literature distribution to every home), and **penetration** in that we must intensely disciple as many as we can through personal relationship. We need to do both: to make disciples and evangelize masses.

A great many opportunities to share the Lord are a result of contact with our acquaintances in our work, school, or neighborhood. Unsaved family members are also an important opportunity and responsibility, but we must press beyond the frontiers of routine contact. There are millions who will never be reached unless we take our courage in

hand and share with a stranger. Some of the most dramatic and rewarding experiences that I’ve had in ministry have been a result of approaching a stranger with the Gospel. There’s even a time when we should organize in a militant way and set aside time for a planned outreach. The reason this type of ministry is less popular is because we have to deal with our own insecurity and fear of rejection.

This leads us again to the question of motivation. The strongest motivation in the world is the indwelling love of Christ. (II Cor. 5:14)

“Follow Me”

What if Jesus suddenly appeared in the flesh in front of you, calling you away from your friends and beckoning you to follow Him? Where would He take you? Jesus is not attracted to pleasant places and popular people, as much as He is drawn by His great compassion to the dark and lonely places where people are shut away from the eyes of the crowd.

In a way, we have the advantage, the emotional protection, that comes with the limitation of our five senses. We are boxed in. There’s always a horizon to our vision and a limit to our hearing. We don’t see our fellow man in all his pains unless tragedy intrudes into our personal world. But God sees it all. He