

Personal Evangelism #1

by: Ronald L. Dart

I feel that we have come along with a very common misconception. When we think of evangelism, we automatically think in terms of mass communication. Now, by mass communication, I don't mean, necessarily, electronic media, or advertising. But we think in terms of group, coordinated activity. We do not think, necessarily, in terms of *personal* evangelism, one on one, nose to nose, or, to use a salesman's term, belly to belly. We just don't think in those terms. The truth of the matter is that there are at least two major kinds of evangelism. Mass evangelism, and personal evangelism. That's the one thing I think we need to stop and think about.

There was a day when Jesus was walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Some men were standing there throwing big nets out into the sea, and gathering them back in, and taking out dozens or even hundreds of fish by the time they finished their day's catch. He walked up to these men and said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Now, I think that when we think in those terms, what probably comes to our minds is more the image of the commercial fisherman. Of large boats, with a crew, with large sweep nets, whereby, like these shrimp boats out here, great numbers of shrimp can be caught by one boat and the crew as they work. But, you know, that can be hard work. It's a way of earning a living. But the people who fish for pleasure do not do it that way.

They take a small boat, maybe a good friend. But a lot of them like to do it all by themselves. They paddle their way out on some dark, cold morning into the shadows, and work their way around stumps of old trees in the morning mist. They take a big ol' bass plug, something like a carrot top, hook it on, and throw it out there and allow it to splash into the water and sit, until all the ripples are gone. Then they reach up and jerk that rod tip a couple of times. There is nothing more exciting than to see what happens sometimes on those cold mornings when that bass comes clean out of the water and comes down on the top of that plug and jerks that line stiff, sometimes so stiff that it breaks.

This one on one angling fishing is a lot more exciting and a lot more satisfying, sometimes a little more frustrating, than commercial fishing, when you're going out

for all kinds of fish, a hundred or a thousand of them, with a boat, and a crew, and with all the expensive items that people take. It can be an awful lot of fun to cut yourself a cane pole and put a little line, and a sinker and bobber, you know, one you made yourself, maybe from a couple of corks from a wine bottle from last year's Feast of Tabernacles. Make your way down along a creek somewhere and find a deep spot by the roots of some trees and put a worm on the end of that and put it over there and wind up filling a whole bucket full of blue gill before an afternoon is over. It can be a lot of fun.

What I am trying to say is that I am afraid we have given too much attention in the past, and maybe have thought that was all there was to it—is getting behind some kind of organized effort. I find that an awful lot of us are still thinking in those terms. When we think in terms of how we can get involved at the local level, we are thinking in terms of advertising, local radio stations. All of these things are local, but they are still mass media, they are not *personal* evangelism.

Now you all know the Great Commission. Let's turn back there just for a moment, and let's read what it says, very carefully. I think it is very important for all of us as Christians. In Matthew 28:29, we read the following words, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." Now, these words were spoken to the disciples. Eleven of them, because Judas was gone at this time. He speaks to these men, and tells them, go ye, therefore, and teach all nations. The word teach in the Greek, *makekes*, means, make disciples. It doesn't mean that you go up here and broadcast, and allow whatever is going to happen to happen. It is actually talking about being concerned about the results. In other words, you are supposed to make disciples out of people. You don't really feel that you have succeeded until somebody is actually made a disciple. He goes on to say, "baptizing them"—which means they have made a decision, a response—"in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Then he goes on to say, "teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you."

In other words, if I had been one of those 11 people that were there, I would have preached the Gospel to you, and as you believed it, I would have baptized you. And after your baptism, I would have proceeded to teach you to go and make disciples of all nations, and to baptize people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, because that's what I was taught to do, and I was told to teach you to do all things that I was told to do.

What I am saying is that the Great Commission is for all of us, not for some of us. And it is for all of us, individually, not merely collectively. Here, we are talking about personal involvement in the promulgation of the Gospel.

In the 8th chapter of Acts, persecution arose against the early Church. Saul, we are told, was involved in this persecution. Acts 8:1, “. . . there was great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.” The only ones who didn’t get run out of Jerusalem were the apostles, and I marvel at that. It is really a puzzle as to why these men did not get run out of Jerusalem at that time. With the intensity of the persecution—they were the most obvious, the most evident, of all those people—they were known by face to the Pharisees and the religious leaders at that time. Why didn’t they go? It is almost as though God tied the leadership up in one place, and shoved the membership out and said, “Y’all go swim!”

Maybe you learned to swim that way. Where somebody grabbed you by the seat of the pants. My dad told the story that when he was just a boy, my grandfather grabbed him by the seat of his britches and the scruff of his neck and threw him out into water about 8 feet deep, and said, “Swim!” My dad learned to swim, immediately. He did not have to go in and get him out. Or I wouldn’t be here today.

It is almost as though the same thing is happening here. The membership are scattered abroad. The apostles? No, they are still right there in Jerusalem. It says, “And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.” Individually, alone.

One of these men, who was ordained—all of them, of course, were not—but Philip just happened to have been. In Acts chapter 6, he was called, set apart, and ordained by the church, in order to take care of the work of the local ministry of the local church. The decision was made because some widows were being neglected in the daily administration of some of their needs. There doesn’t seem to be any indication that anybody intended to make an evangelist out of Philip. Yet, a little later, we find him an evangelist.

When he had to leave Jerusalem, he wound up in Samaria, and began to preach up there. Whenever he could find a group of people together, he would talk to them. Finally, he began to see some people be baptized, and when some of the men came up and laid their hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit. And the church begins to develop in this area. You are probably familiar with the story of Simon Magus, who attempted to buy the power to lay on hands so that others could receive the Holy Spirit, and Peter’s response to him.

There's another interesting occasion after this, when an angel catches Philip away, and transports him by means that are not described, to the southern part of Judah. And he finds himself alongside a road. Here comes a chariot, with a man of some note—an Ethiopian, a eunuch of Queen Candace. As the man is going along, he had a scroll open, and he was reading from the prophet, Isaiah. Philip drew near, and uttered just one, simple expression. "Do you understand what you are reading?" The eunuch turned to him and said, "Well, how can I, except some man would help me to understand or explain it to me?" And they stopped, and Philip joined him, and began to expound and to preach Christ to him, one on one, person to person, right out of the Book of Isaiah. And the man asked, "What hinders me to be baptized? There's water." And Philip said, "Absolutely nothing. If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch said, "I believe." And he took him out there, and he baptized him, right there in that spot, and the man went on his way.

You know, that is an awful lot of effort to reach just one person. This man was picked up miraculously and transported a long distance to reach just one man. Unless we consider the fact that this one man is going to have an influence on a lot of other people, and he in turn, may be able to reach out into the lives of a lot of people.

Not long ago, I came across an interesting thing in my reading, a thing called Gerard's Law of 250. We tend to think in terms of personal evangelism not being very efficient. In other words, what can I do by myself? I can't reach very many people. I can't accomplish very much by myself. It's far better if I just pray and pay. I'll support this organization and let them go out and preach it, and I'll pray for them, and I'll encourage them and I'll let them go on and do it, and I don't have to get involved.

This thing of Gerard's Law of 250 is rather striking. He's an automobile salesman, a very successful one, making in the neighborhood of \$200,000 a year selling automobiles. Think about that one for a minute. I think he may know a thing or two about selling. He noticed, while working for a funeral home, that the numbers of people who were signing the registry for the family was about 250. He asked one of the other fellows who had been there a lot longer, who confirmed that about 250 people, on average, would come through the funeral home to pay their respects, or at least send flowers.

On another occasion, he was talking to the caterer at a wedding. It occurred to him to ask whether this pattern showed up there. He asked how many people they would usually prepare for at a wedding. And the caterer replied that the number was about 500—250 for the groom's side and 250 for the bride's side. The average is around 250.

What this meant to him as a salesman, was simply this. He explained that there are many times when working with someone who is a pain in the neck, the temptation is there to tell them to get lost, I don't need your business. The problem is, every time I do that, I am also alienating 250 other people, not just that one person. If I tell him to get lost, he'll tell all his friends that he talked to me and I was a jerk and I wouldn't trust him to sell me a car. There it goes—250 people get turned off because you told off one person.

What does that mean for us? I cast my eye over this crowd of people here. If we have 900 people here, and we multiply that 900 by 250, we come out with 225,000 people who are the primary contacts of this group. If we wind up with 2000 people at the Feast of Tabernacles across the country, that represents a cool half million primary contacts of people. You start to wonder, if you think in these terms, are we really talking about personal evangelism or another form of mass evangelism? The numbers of people involved in that situation can be absolutely phenomenal.

Some studies have been done on this subject of contacts—how many people do you know, and who knows who in America. We all have our contacts, don't we? They did a study to try to determine, if they selected a few people randomly, and gave you the name of some person up in North Dakota, and told you to get a message to him, using only your personal contacts. You can't contact him directly, but get the message to him through people you know.

They worked this experiment out, and found, on average, there are 7 to 8 contacts between any randomly selected person and any other randomly selected person in this country. Now, if that person you are trying to get in touch with is prominent, the odds become even tighter because of the number of people who have contact with them. If you wonder how to get a personal message to the President, you just tell somebody you know to tell somebody they know, and sooner or later, it is very likely to get there.

When you think about that, the speed with which information can travel along the proverbial grapevine begins to make sense. I know there have been times I've been astonished at the speed with which bad news can get around. The reason bad news works that way is because it is interesting, and has more currency in human relations. So you will tell more people about it. And every one of them tells at least as many people as you did.

Let me give you this analogy. How many people will you tell a good joke? I don't know about you, but if I hear a good one, I'll get it to at least 30 people within seven

days. I mean in personal contact. I look for occasions to share a good story with others.

Well, let's suppose you don't average 30, but only eight. Take one person tells eight people, and each one of those tells eight, and they all tell eight others. Multiply it to 64 immediately, then 512, then 4,096, at the next telling there are nearly 33,000, and after that 262,000, and at the telling after that, two million people hear the story. Seven sets of people, and we are already at two million. You begin to realize why someone you start to tell a story to tells you they've already heard it.

You'd almost think there was a miracle involved in the spreading of information. No miracle; it's just the people you know telling the people they know. Imagine if you will, 2000 dedicated people, with an organization behind them, with backing of radio, printing press, and so forth, with recorded sermons you can actually give to people. Imagine what 2000 dedicated people can do with a message. What excites me about it is that I see a lot of people who want to spread a message! You put that kind of power together, it's remarkable what can be accomplished.

How many of you are involved in sales for part or all of your living? Quite a few, no doubt. You know that in sales, the name of the game is contacts, contacts, and more contacts. There is a fascinating comparison between what we do and what salespeople do. In mass evangelism, what we are concerned about is contacts. We haven't really studied it, but say one million people are touched by one piece of mass evangelism. Out of that one million people, 1000 may write to us, and out of that 1000, 100 may make a contribution, and out of that 100, 10 might, some day, be baptized.

So you think about that, and say to yourself, then if I can touch two million people one time, then I can expect that 20 people may be baptized. That is a probability that will exist. If I can touch that same two million people three times, I will probably see more people coming along to be baptized as a result of the repeated contact than I did from the single contact. That all makes sense. That if you can multiply your contacts, even if you're a salesman who is not very good at closing, you can make more money as a salesman by increasing your contacts. It's the name of the game.

Quite honestly, when you look in the Bible, and you see what God gave his people to do, and you see the way it worked in the lives of people as far as the Gospel was concerned, the name of the game is contacts. It really is. The parallel between what we are doing and the sales efforts of the world just to make a buck is rather interesting when you think about what it means. People who earn their living solely on commission, know that they have to work hard to build contacts. People going into

real estate are told that in order to succeed, you must work 60 hours per week to make contact after contact.

There was a health and accident insurance salesman who was tops in his business and who would sell more insurance in a month than a good salesman would sell in a year. He was making 12 times as much money as a good insurance salesman. What was his secret? He would tell you that he has been thrown out of more offices by 10:00 o'clock in the morning than you will visit all week. There it is. The man went out and made contacts. It wasn't his presentation, or how good a salesman he was.

A lot of people will tell you that direct mail doesn't work. But good salesmen will tell you that it does. It just can't look like junk mail. It has got to be personal. Joe Gerard's approach was to contact his people once a month. A Christmas card, birthday card, some excuse to send people a personal communication with his hand written signature on it in a plain white envelope. It had a clever message and something humorous. The whole message behind his card was to let people know that "I'm Joe Gerard, and I like you, and I hope you like me." He didn't say it that way, but the continual context was that. It got to be a joke in some families as to whether they'd heard from Joe. And if they didn't hear from him, they missed it. Who do you think they thought of when they wanted to buy a car? Joe Gerard.

When I look at this and start wondering whether we can do something like this. But suppose somebody you know gets a personal letter from you, asking whether they've heard about something, and you cut out an article and send it along. About a month later, they hear from you again asking how things are going, and send another article with a comment that they might enjoy reading this. Direct mail, personal contact, simple, doesn't cost but a few cents and some of your time, and it doesn't create any embarrassment for you. Many people might be made nervous by certain kinds of personal evangelism, and have a hard time doing it. But this sort of thing shouldn't be any problem.

When you go into real estate, the first thing they tell you is to let everyone you know that you are in business. Just write a letter to everyone you know to tell them what you're doing and where they can find you. There's no sales technique to it. There's no persuasion, or pushing. It's just letting people know who you are, where you are, and what you stand for. So that when the time comes, you might be able to help.

Something else salespeople can do—if you've eaten at a good restaurant and enjoyed the meal and are leaving a good tip, leave your card right there under the tip. When you go down to get your hair cut, leave your barber a stack of your cards. He's

making money off of you. Why shouldn't he send some people to you? There is one guy with an interesting approach. He'd go to see the Detroit Lions play football. When they make a touchdown, everyone is standing up, and soft drink cups, popcorn, all kinds of things go up in the air. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a stack of business cards and gives them a big swing and lets them go in the stadium. Contacts.

You never know what some of those things will bring back. It may sound a bit strange, but I will come to a Scripture a bit later that has some reference to something just about like this.

Salespeople tend to become involved in community activity. In those community contacts are found many contacts. Some salesmen may join a church somewhere to make contacts. Many become members of service clubs. Or join the homeowners association to make the contacts. Every one of the people they meet knows 250 other people.

If you make enough contacts, and you have a product that's worth anything, some of those contacts are eventually going to buy. It's just a simple law of sales. Even a poor salesman can increase his sales by the simple technique of increasing his contacts. One salesman likened it to putting more people on the Ferris wheel. What they do is bring it down, put someone on it, bring it around, and put more people on it. Keep it going around. Think of it in terms of keeping your contacts up, stay in touch with them.

In real estate, if you're trying to persuade people to list their property with your company, on average, it is at the fifth visit that the people will finally decide to list with your company. You won't get it the first, second, or third time. The smart agent will not even try to make the pitch on the first visit. You may just offer to help. Then cut something out of the paper that provides information about selling, or taxes, that might be helpful. They don't try to sell it right off the bat.

I mention this, because as I've been talking through this, you may be picturing in your head that personal evangelism means that if you're on an airplane going somewhere sitting by a stranger, that I should strike a conversation and try to bring it around to religion. Maybe you've been in a situation where some stranger has leaned over to you and asked, "Do you know the Lord, brother?" You are a bit nonplused at that time, because whether you say you do or you don't, either way, you're stuck in a conversation you don't want to be involved in. I am not suggesting that is what you should get involved in. That may not be your style. Others enjoy talking to people they may meet on a plane, train, or bus. For them, it is an absolute joy, and pleasure. I say, go get 'em tiger! If it is not your style, don't worry.

What I am talking about is not a sales technique, a pitch, it is not persuasion. It is contact. Just contact. Because God in heaven is the one who is going to make the sales pitch to this person, not you. God is the one who is going to convert them, not you. But he may use you if you just happen to keep yourself in the way, and happen to be there at the right time. You may find that you really don't need any technique. That your style, who you are, how you respond to people, is all you need. I don't need to train you about how to approach someone or reach out to them. That's God's technique. Your product, if you want to call it that, is going to sell itself, or it's not going to sell at all. If you touch enough lives with your life, somebody is going to be converted because of it. It is as automatic as sunrise and sunset.

I want you to turn back with me to a Scripture that I don't know if we've really given adequate consideration to, in Matthew the 13th chapter, to a parable that Christ gave that tells us something about the nature of calling that I don't know if we've really quite thought about. "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:1-9).

And the disciples asked him why he was speaking to the people in parables, then he came back and explained this parable to them. You know the explanation. But the difference between what we might see in the Bible or say is one thing. What we feel, internally, is another thing. I think that we have had a feeling that would go more like this. That God in heaven is the husbandman, and he takes this small packet of seeds, and holds it in his hand very carefully. That he goes out and finds select little plots of ground, that he then cultivates it, makes them just right, puts one seed in there, covers it up, waters it, protects it, and makes sure that it comes up. In other words, that the calling of God is a very specific, isolated, pinpoint thing that happens. Whereas in the parable, Christ said, no, it is random contact. And it has to do with the response or the circumstance or the environment of where that random contact happens to hit.

I don't think it's quite as strange at all when you think of a man standing up in a football stadium and scattering his cards to wind, if you realize that the analogy in the

Bible is of the sower with his seeds going out into the field and scattering them to the wind. And seeing them drift across the field and fall in random spots without selection.

You know that one day in a person's life might make all the difference in the world. If you met him today, and you lapsed into conversation, it would go along certain lines. But if before he went home tonight, he learned that he had lost his job, and you met him tomorrow, the line of your conversation might be quite different. The things you would discuss, and his responsiveness, sensitivity, and willingness to listen to ideas that he might not have thought about yesterday. Sometimes people who are comfortable and at ease, don't give a hang about religion. It takes a death, a serious illness, or a great loss or a great pain. And all of a sudden, people begin to wonder whether they are missing something along the way.

You have no way to know what is going on inside a person. You cannot evaluate the quality of the soil. You don't know whether it is rich, you don't know whether it is hard and stony—you just don't know. You are just like a person going out with random seeds, putting them out there and saying, "I wonder which ones of these God will bring to fruition." To me, the idea of random reaching out to people is a striking concept. We've been doing it for years, haven't we? With radio, other publications. But unfortunately for those same years, we have kind of kept all of you locked up, in a cage. Kind of let you get a little bit hungry. Maybe there is a comparison between keeping a bunch of lions locked up in a cage and get hungry before you turn them loose on the Christians.

I suppose God knows what he's doing. He's kept a lot of you locked up for a long time. Frankly, what I see is a lot of hungry tigers that want to get out there and get after it and begin to hit some of those people out there who think they are Christians with some ideas they hadn't thought about before about the truth. A very commendable thing, and I am glad to see it happen.

Isn't it up to God, though, to call people? Yes, it is. But I have a question to ask you. You've heard of Paul, haven't you? A man who wandered all over the Middle East. There was a day when he got to preaching along in this city. They were so inspired by a healing that he performed, that they wanted to do sacrifice to him as a god, and he was barely able to stop them.

A little later that same day the Jews came along and persuaded these same people, and they drug Paul out of the city and stoned him and left him for dead. The same day. Now, this is not exactly a healthy occupation. He drug himself out from under that pile of stones, and walked down the road to the next city, bruised and hurting. He got

up in the synagogue, of all places, and began to preach again, the same Gospel, that got him stoned down the road.

Why did he do this? Why did he go through the dangers that he did, the sacrifices that he did, if it made no difference? True, God will call. True, God will convert. Certainly God has to change. But if the sower does not throw out the seed, there is nothing there to grow, nothing there to come along. If Paul did not reach some of these people, people would die who otherwise might live. Sure, God calls. Sure, God converts. Surely it is his work. Paul said, I have planted, Apollos has watered, but God gave the increase. When you begin to understand that, you begin to realize that every Christian is given the Great Commission. You have a responsibility, a responsibility you mustn't ignore and mustn't let fall. I am not suggesting that you do it the way somebody else does it. It may not be a good thing to do or the best thing to do. You may have a better idea.

Your style of communication with people, your way of working it out, is going to be better for you than trying to adopt someone else's way that makes you uncomfortable. You may be a shy person. There is nothing wrong with that at all. In fact, shyness in a person has often been the impetus that has developed a person into a great performer. I was listening to Donohue one morning when he had Danny Kaye on the program, one of the most effervescent, outgoing performers you're ever going to see. He said he'd always been shy as a boy, and it was this very shyness that led him to the outlet that he found in performing.

Would you believe that I am a shy person. It was because of my shyness that I sought an outlet in public speaking and dramatics when I was in high school. I began right there, and I continued to pursue that outlet down through the years. Somehow, I don't communicate real well with strangers, one on one. I'm fine with people I know. But I tend to get a little shy with people I don't know in private conversation. I can talk to people I don't know all day standing up and giving a speech, and communicating quite well. That's my style. What's yours? What's your method of operation? How do you communicate best? That's what God expects you to do, not something else.

It's very important for us to realize that our efforts, the things that we do, will make a difference in the lives of people who will be in the Kingdom of God, who would not have been in the Kingdom of God, if you and I had not just passed through their life, throwing seed out as we went by. We were there, we just happened to go by, and we touched them in passing. And they will, someday, be in the Kingdom of God. I am here, not because I happened to dial across and heard the radio broadcast, but because a member of the church, a member of my wife's family, came to visit us and

spend time with us, and was willing to answer my questions. He never pushed, he never pleaded, he never twisted my arm. He never tried to close the sale by getting me to sign on the dotted line. He just was there. His presence was a challenge to me, because I was a Baptist at the time. He used to be one, and it was disturbing to me that he wasn't one any more. His very presence was like a grain of sand inside an oyster. You've got to keep coating that thing with mother of pearl because it's irritating. The results can be pretty beautiful when all is said and done.

I wonder how many of you are here because of the contact that some other human being made with somebody else. Ultimately, of course, all of you are, if we understand how far back we go. Question: how do you become involved? It is one of the most common questions I am asked. "How can I be more involved?"

First and foremost, be sure that you prepare yourself continually. I refer to Paul's admonition to Timothy where he said to study to show yourself a workman that needs not be ashamed. Cutting straight, right through the Word of Truth. So that when the time comes to explain something, you've put something back in your mind. You've fed this subconscious computer you have in your mind a lot of information, so the Spirit of God can program it to bring it out when the time comes, and it's needed.

One of the most thrilling things that can happen to you, as a Christian, is to find yourself giving answers to people that you didn't even know you knew. As a minister, that's happened to me a number of times over the years, because I've been forced into situations of answering. I've been on visits, and people will say, now here is this Scripture over here, or here is this problem, and I'd like for you to tell me what the Bible says about it. And for reasons that I could not explain beyond the inspiration of Almighty God, snap, the answer is there. That can happen to you. It is not limited to the ministry. I'll bet it has happened to some of you, already. Where somebody asks you, and suddenly, in a flash of insight, it was there. That's what God does.

But in order for it to be there, you've got to be putting something in, day in and day out. That's why Peter wrote and said, be prepared always—be ready—to give an answer of the hope that lies within you to anybody that asks. You don't have to sit down and ask, "Do you know the Lord, brother?" You just have to be able to give a reason for why you're here. Why you keep the Sabbath. Why it is you're willing to lose that job that you lost because of obedience to God. Why it is that you do some of the things you do. You can do that, you are a long way along the line.

The next thing you can do, and it's probably the most important after preparation, and that's start making contacts, now. Not when you're prepared, not when you think you're ready, not when you have some idea about how to distribute literature, or not

when you have some other idea. Now. Start making contacts. Meeting people, reaching out to them.

If, when you get home, the United Way is still doing their fundraising campaign in your city, if they are looking around for volunteers, what's the matter with you? Why can't you volunteer? Why can't you be one of those people who shows up and says, sure, I'll be glad to get out and go visit these businesses and talk to people about this? Sure, I'll be glad to try to raise some money.

You know, somewhere in your community, there is a hospital. I don't know how it works in your community, but you will see doctors and orderlies and nurses, and ever so often, you'll run across some lady or some fellow wearing a red and white, candy striped tunic. I wondered about those people, and when my wife was in the hospital, I found out that these were the hospital's volunteers. These were an organization of people who regularly and systematically volunteer their time to work in the local hospital, to do things for the patients in the hospital. They wander around, they come in and say is there anything you need? Can I do anything for you? They bring around books and magazines for people to read, or they'll sit and read to someone who can't read for themselves because of an injury, or something of that nature. They are just there. Sometimes they sit and talk.

If you ever found yourself in a Catholic hospital, you found them there, but they wore a different uniform. It was probably black and white. But they were there. And they were just there to talk to you. And chances are, they didn't try to talk their religion, even though they may have been a nun or a priest. They weren't selling. They were just making the contact, and letting you know they were there, and being interested in you as a human being. I've often said, if I ever had to go to the hospital for any reason, I'd just as soon be in a Catholic hospital as anywhere I can think of. Any one I've ever visited, there were always people there who were going around trying to be uplifting and encouraging to the people who were sick, without trying to sell some religious gimmick of some kind or other.

I'm not suggesting that you try to sell your religion if you're the Scout Master for the Boy Scouts of America. That would be a terrible thing to do. If you're involved in United Way, you should be trying to help United Way. But at the same time, you're touching lives, you're making contacts, and you're getting to know people. And you should try to maintain those contacts just as if you are a salesman whose living depends on it. Hang on to them, don't lose them. You never know, that you might see one of those people's names in the paper. That they were in trouble, or were suddenly blessed. That's a time to send a congratulatory card. Just keep the contact. Who knows

what God will do with that. I don't know. There is no way of knowing where that kind of thing can go.

Some of our members have had the opportunity to do it, where there has been a disaster, and they have immediately gotten involved in disaster relief operations. And they let it be known who they were, what they were, and who they stood for in what they did. I don't think too many of us in the past have gone to the trouble to join service clubs or homeowners associations in our communities. We should. For one thing, we should be involved in the community. We should know our neighbors, and we should be good neighbors. That is one of the ways that Christ is able to reach out and touch the lives of still more people. Following the law of 250, which Gerard didn't invent, but simply discovered, but which says this: all of us know a lot of people. The people we know, we should touch, contact, and keep in touch with. If God could use us, well, who knows where it will come.

One of the things you have to be able to do if you go into sales, you must be able to handle disappointment. Even when you're making a living, there is a feeling of rejection that comes when someone says, no. In what we are doing, you may have to contact 1000 people with the truth before one of them ever comes along to be baptized. Is it worth it? How much effort would you be willing to put out to see one person go under the waters of baptism because you hung in there and maintained contact with that person.

Well, chances are, right now, you don't have many more than 250 people on your list, so it shouldn't be surprising that you only have one quarter of a baptism to your credit. I speak facetiously, but the point is, you may have to work, talk, and not see any results for a very long time. Remember what Solomon said, though? Cast your bread upon the waters, and you shall find it after many days.

When you are trying to list a house, on average, it takes five visits to get the listing, if you get it at all. Most of them, you don't get. When you're trying to sell pots and pans door to door, by a simple law of averages, you're going to have to hit X number of houses before you make a sale. You just have to realize that you have to collect a certain amount of "no"s before you're ever going to get a "yes". And so it is with us, and we continue to work with people. You have got to be willing to help people, even though there is no return whatsoever.

I would say, if you were going to think of getting involved in sales as a career, I would say you had better be sure that you can find a great deal of satisfaction in being able to help another human being, even though they said no. I want you to turn back with me to a very important Scripture in Matthew, the 25th chapter. The latter part of

the Olivet Prophecy. We usually give so much attention to the 24th chapter, that we sometimes forget that chapter 25 carries on the same prophecy.

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:31-40).

I don't think that Jesus is all that eternally concerned with whether people have enough to eat and drink. Or with what kind of clothes they wear. And he probably thinks there are times when it is good for people to spend a little time in jail. No, I don't think that is the primary point. When you understand the symbolism of this chapter and the meaning of meat and drink and the significance behind clothing, you suddenly realize that he's talking about salvation. But it is no coincidence that he reached out to Christians and said, you really ought to be involved in helping the hungry and the thirsty, in clothing the naked, and in visiting those in prison. Jesus is going to look at those people and say, you know, you did that to me.

For so many years, we have all backed off, gotten out of our community, we get to where we don't even know our neighbors. And people look at us and say, what strange people. And they don't think we're strange because we keep the holy days. We are strange because we cut ourselves off. A lot of us have been finding an interesting thing taking place, as we are very open and involved and spending time in our community, when we tell people what we believe, they don't say, oh, that's weird. They say, oh really, tell me more. They are tolerant and accepting. And you suddenly realize that it isn't the weird doctrines that turn people off. It's weird people. It's about time we shaped up, and got involved in our communities, and in the things that the people around us are doing. Make those contacts.

Paul said, now, I wrote unto you people an epistle not to company with fornicators. But hold on a minute. I didn't mean not to company with the people who sin in this world. Because then we'd have to say, let's stop this thing. I've got to get off the world. I have to get out of the world; I have to become a hermit. That's not the point; it's not what's desired. You've got to be in the world in order to be an example to the world, in order to reach the world. And the commission is to reach the world, isn't it? The only way you do that is by getting in it, getting in it right up to your elbows.

Whatever happens, though, you mustn't get frustrated. You must remember, that your brethren have been making these contacts for 2000 years, or you wouldn't be here, would you? Somebody has been telling somebody about Jesus Christ of Nazareth for 2000 years, or you wouldn't know. Contacts, contacts, and more contacts.

It reminds me of an old hymn. You may remember it. "Will There Be Any Stars In My Crown?" I think that it was probably inspired by Paul's statement to the Thessalonians. He wrote in the second chapter, the last two verses, and he said, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). His consideration, his image of this crown that he had with jewels on it, was the people that he had reached, who would be in the presence of Jesus Christ at his coming. Beautiful old hymn, and a wonderful thought. When the time comes, and I am granted a crown by Jesus Christ, will there be any stars in it? Any jewels in it? Will I have borne fruit? The example is all this seed being scattered around and bearing fruit. What is a fruit? More seed. More people like those who were scattered. More people like those who touch the lives of other people. When we start thinking in terms of bearing fruit, we are talking very specifically about reproducing yourself as a Christian and preserving the tradition of Christ upon the earth until he comes back.

Turn back to Matthew 5:13: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:13). It's a beautiful concept.

Tell you what, why don't you take your little candle, and light it, and just put it up where people can see it. I think you may be amazed with what Jesus Christ can do with such a little light.

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Ronald L. Dart titled: "Personal Evangelism #1" (7947) 10/09/79

Ronald L. Dart is an evangelist and is heard daily and weekly
on his Born to Win radio program.

You can contact Ronald L. Dart at Christian Educational Ministries
P.O. Box 560 Whitehouse, Texas 75791
Phone: (903) 839-9300 — 1-888-BIBLE-44

www.borntowin.net