

# INITIATIVE WITNESSING IS BIBLICAL

Initiative witnessing is taking the initiative to share Christ with people you have not met. Like all evangelism, it is motivated by a deep love for Christ and the sinners He came to save. It is a way to share Christ that takes intentional effort to meet people and share Christ with them, whether in large group settings or in one-on-one conversa-

tions, in order that they may know God's forgiveness and not perish without Him.

Believers throughout the ages have taken the initiative to share Christ with people they had never met. Listen to **three incredible men** describe what drove them to go outside of their comfort zone to reach people for Christ.

## C.T. STUDD

**C.T. Studd** was a Cambridge-educated athlete who left fame and wealth in England to give his life in missions to China, India and Africa. He famously said,

*"Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell."*<sup>1</sup>

## WILLIAM BOOTH

**William Booth**, founder of the Salvation Army, frequently preached outdoors to reach as many people as possible with the gospel of Christ. Many people criticized him for his methods of preaching. His reply was,

*"No sort of defense is needed for preaching outdoors, but it would take a very strong argument to prove that a man who has never preached beyond the walls of his meeting-house has done his duty. A defense is required for services within buildings rather than for worship outside of them."*<sup>2</sup>

## JOHN WESLEY

**John Wesley** shared that his love for men's souls caused him to preach in ways that were out of his comfort zone. He said,

*"It is no marvel that the devil does not love field preaching! Neither do I; I love a [comfortable] room, a soft cushion, a handsome pulpit. But where is my zeal if I do not trample all these underfoot in order to save one more soul?"*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>C.T. Studd - Christian Quotations - Echoes from Glory." Wholesome Words Christian Website. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Aug. 2013. <<http://www.wholesomewords.org/echoes/s>>.

<sup>2</sup>Quotes About William Booth, Sermon Illustration Quotes on William Booth, SermonCentral.com. "SermonCentral.com - Free Sermons, Illustrations, Videos, and PowerPoints for Preaching. Outreach Inc., n.d. Web. 30 Aug. 2013. <<http://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/quotes-about-william-booth.asp>>.

<sup>3</sup>Preaching Christian Quotes, Page 3."Christian Quotes. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Aug. 2013. <<http://christian-quotes.ochristian.com/Preaching-Quotes/page-3.shtml>>.

Believers throughout the ages have taken the initiative to share Christ with people they did not know because this is a method of evangelism that is rooted in examples and principles from Scripture.

Many examples of initiative witnessing can be found in the Old Testament. Jonah is just one example of someone who took the

initiative to share the Word of God with people outside his normal sphere of influence.

Examples of initiative witnessing are also all throughout the New Testament. We see this in **The Ministry of Jesus Christ**, **The Disciples' Training**, and **The Apostles' Ministry**.

# THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

We want Jesus to be our example in everything, especially in our evangelism. Jesus not only came to earth to live a perfect life and die for our sins, He also had a God-given mission to preach while He was here on earth. Notice **two aspects** of Jesus' ministry.

- 1 **Jesus was a travelling preacher** (Mark 1:14-15).  
Jesus went throughout the cities and villages of Israel preaching the gospel. He preached to thousands of people he had never met. Because Jesus was faithful to preach to them, these were able to hear the good news of salvation.
  
- 2 **Jesus was a personal evangelist** (John 4).  
Jesus took the initiative to personally reach people He had never met. A great example of this was His conversation with a Samaritan woman. Because this individual was both a woman and a Samaritan, Jesus never would have had a relationship with her. In fact, Jesus never saw this woman again in His life. Yet He was able to minister in a personal way even though He did not know her personally. And because of His faithfulness to do the will of God, this woman's life was changed and everyone in her village came to Christ as well!

# THE DISCIPLES' TRAINING

Sharing Christ is one of the most overlooked aspects of discipleship today. Too often we think of discipleship only as growing in our relationship with Christ. That is one aspect of our discipleship. But Jesus' discipleship program had two goals – growth in a relationship with Him and telling others about Him. Notice **three aspects** of Jesus' discipleship program.

- 1 Initiative witnessing was part of their discipleship** (Mark 6:7- 12; Luke 9:1-10, 10:1-17; Matt. 10:1-16). Part of Jesus' plan of discipleship was to systematically send His disciples out to preach in the cities and villages of Israel. On at least two occasions, Jesus sent His disciples out on extended journeys to preach about Him. Their orders were to enter a town and immediately begin telling people they had never met the good news about the kingdom of God found in Jesus Christ. If you believe in biblical discipleship, you have to believe in initiative witnessing.
- 2 Initiative witnessing was part of their call** (Mark 1:17; Matt. 4:19). "Come follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). The disciples were called to be fishers of men. This means they would have to take the initiative to go where people are, just like they did to fish. Fish don't just hop in your bucket while you sit on shore. To get them, you have to take the initiative to go out where they are and pursue them. This is what we see the disciples doing as they were sent out to preach (see point above) and what we will see them do in the book of Acts (see next page).
- 3 Initiative witnessing was part of their name.** "And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach" (Mark 3:14). The disciples were called "apostles," which means "ones who are sent." Part of their name, part of their identity, part of their DNA was the mission Jesus gave them to preach the gospel. Being sent implies going beyond the area you live and the people you know. Being sent requires taking the initiative to preach the gospel to people you've never met.

# THE APOSTLES' MINISTRY

There is nothing more convicting or inspiring than studying the way the Holy Spirit worked through the apostles. Ordinary men like Peter became bold, faithful and fruitful workers for Christ. God honored their obedience and miraculously brought thousands to faith in Christ through their preaching of God's word and through the power of the Holy Spirit. The training they received from Jesus in evangelism paid off. Notice the following **three examples** of initiative witnessing in the Apostles' ministry.

- 1 The Apostles preached in public places to enormous crowds** (Acts 2:1-5:40; 17:16-34). When the Apostles got busy obeying Jesus' commands in the Great Commission, the first thing they did was publicly proclaim the name of Jesus. They preached to crowds big enough to hold Jews from "every nation under heaven" and for three thousand people to convert in one day (Acts 2:5, 41). This was not a method of evangelism that they made up, but was in direct obedience to a command from the Lord (5:20). They were so committed to sharing Christ through this method that they continued preaching daily in spite of rulers telling them not to (Acts 2:46, 5:40-42).
- 2 The Apostles preached immediately after they entered a new city** (Acts 13:5-14; 14:1; 17:1-10). The Apostle Paul took the initiative to travel city to city to tell people about Jesus. He did not wait until he had established personal relationships. When he arrived in a new city, he immediately got busy preaching about Jesus. Paul's methodology in a new city was to first go into the synagogue to preach to the Jews. Then, he began preaching publicly to as many people as possible. Throughout his time in a city, he also personally shared Christ with individuals he encountered along the way.
- 3 The Apostles preached to people they had never met and whom they would never see again** (Acts 8:26-40). One day, the Holy Spirit took Philip to a divinely appointed witnessing encounter. A eunuch from Ethiopia, who likely served in the royal courts of his country, was sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah 53. Though Philip would never see him again, or even be able to follow up with him, the Holy Spirit sent him to explain to this man who Jesus was and how to be saved. Philip baptized him and was immediately taken away. On his way back home, he preached in every village along the way.

# BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

The people we just encountered in the Bible shared Christ the way they did because they were driven by biblical principles. Consider the following **statements** which helped to establish the authority of believers.

- 1 The Apostles knew that Jesus Christ had given them the right to be heard.**  
 Jesus had been given all authority and the Apostles carried His authority with them when they obeyed His commission. They were Jesus' ambassadors. They knew that they had the right to be heard by the tens of thousands of people in the temple courtyard, by pagans in their worship places and marketplaces, by fellow Jews in synagogues throughout the world, and even by the ruler of the Roman Empire. This was not a right they earned but a right that was given by the one who earned it for them. Regardless of the opinion or response of the authorities and citizens, the Apostles ministered as people who knew the One who gave His life for the sins of the world, He who entrusted them with the right to be heard by people throughout the whole world.
- 2 The Apostles knew that their mandate was to tell people the Word of God.**  
 The Apostles were like the prophets of old who constantly proclaimed, "Thus says the LORD." Because God wanted to speak through them, they got busy speaking. They spoke God's Word in new towns and cities from day one. They told people that "God...commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). God was giving that command to people through the Apostles' ministry, initiative witnessing.
- 3 The Apostles knew that they could fruitfully share Christ with people everywhere because God was already working in people's hearts.**  
 As they preached and witnessed for Christ, the Apostles expected people to turn to Christ. They were prepared for people to turn their hearts to the Lord because the Holy Spirit was at work. Even if they were meeting people for the first time, they knew that God had met these people long before. Look at the following passages for examples of the Apostles seeing people turn to Jesus on their first interactions: Acts 10:47; 16:13, 15, 31-34.

*God was doing an amazing work in the world. He is still doing this work today. When we take the initiative to share Christ, we enter that work and we too can see people we are meeting for the first time place their faith and trust in Christ.*

### Ask Yourself...

What is stopping you from answering the call and witnessing just as believers have for thousands of years?



### Remember?

Look back to page 74 at "Who Should We Talk to About The Lord" to review what you've already learned about witnessing.