

# **THE CHURCH THAT LOVES TO FISH**

*the threefold purpose of the church*

ONE

**Seedtime and harvest are tied together in a sure knot.**

**- Charles Spurgeon**

**Our openness and availability to the Holy Spirit's direction, enabling, anointing, and power are the catalyst for fulfilling the Great Commission.**

**- Anonymous**

With our busy lives today, it is easy for us westerners to become so preoccupied with our own personal fulfillment, our own dreams, our careers, our belongings and our pursuits that we lose sight of our eternal perspective. We can become so addicted to such trivial matters, trivial conversations, and trivial temporal goals that we are oblivious to even recognize what really counts. Both the tremendous joys of heaven and the acute needs of a lost world can seem very surreal and extremely distant from us. The harsh but barefaced reality is that 2.7 billion people of our generation are still unreached with the Gospel and are facing Christ-less graves.<sup>1</sup>

It's time to ask ourselves the hard questions. Have we really pondered the answers that we are prepared to give to the living God when He asks us about the blood of these multitudes on our hands? It was the prophet Ezekiel who spoke of our responsibility saying, ***"When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul"*** (Ezek. 3:18-19).

- *Merely trusting the paid professionals on the large Christian television networks to get the job done in spreading the Gospel among the unreached is not what God expects.*
  - *Merely trusting well-trained groups to form capable missions agencies and evangelistic associations with attractive premiums, where workers raise their own support to get the job done is not what God expects.*
    - *Merely trusting foreign Christian leaders to do it as they mobilize and support overseas-based nationals at a lower monthly cost, to reach their own people and enter lands where westerners are not allowed to preach is not even what God expects.*
      - *Merely trusting high profile, experienced teams of western pastors turned "missions experts" to go and stay in four star hotels on third world soil to teach national pastors for a week is not what God expects.*

- *Every member prayerfully living the life and boldly going to the lost around them and far from them, opening their mouths to tell people the truth about Jesus and the Gospel is what God expects!*

Today, we each (as Christians) are privileged to have an important part to play in fulfilling the Great Commission as we help unbelievers come to know Jesus in a personal way—as we find our place and fit in with God's Church and His evangelistic plan. If we will commit to live one hundred percent for Christ and for what's eternal, this generation can be reached with the Gospel!

God wants us to see the perishing multitudes through the compassionate eyes of Jesus and reach out to them. May you prayerfully live, go and tell the Good News ...allowing God to use your life in a passionate way to change the destiny of many, one life at a time! Seventy years from now, you will be glad you did!

Every member filled and led by the Spirit and the Word, out fishing the way Jesus did where the fish are at if you will, is what it's going to take! If you are a Christian paid by a secular company, then you are to be a good representative for Christ at that company and in your off hours. You are called to be a fulltime minister of the Gospel. It's wonderful that others are spreading the Good news, but it is not enough and I want to motivate you to seek that Lord daily and do your part!

According to Bob Granholm, Executive Director of Frontiers in Canada, it costs between \$25,000 to \$30,000 per year to support a missionary on the mission field. While this may be true for ministries like Frontiers, OM, YWAM and a few other organizations, with more traditional agencies, the cost could be much higher. According to an executive of one of North America's largest mission boards, it costs today between \$50,000 and \$80,000 per year to keep an average American missionary family on the field. With even a modest inflation rate of 7%, this cost will be as much as \$100,000 in just a few years. Western missionary leaders concerned about world evangelism today have called for 200,000 new missionaries in order to keep pace with their estimates of population growth. The cost of even that modest missionary force would take gobs of money at some \$20 billion a year and we simply do not have the fund raising time anymore. Every member of Christ's Church must start fishing for souls today! Observe the signs of the times or birth pains, so to speak. The frequency of occurrence is speeding up. We are now obviously living in the last of the last days. Greg Laurie says, *"We are seeing things happen on a yearly basis—and even on a monthly basis—that remind us that Jesus Christ is coming back."*<sup>2</sup>

You remember how Jesus' disciples asked Him about the last days signs, ***"Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*** ***And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. 'For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 'And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 'For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 'All these are the beginning of sorrows'"*** (Matt. 24:3-8 nkjv). There will be an even greater emergence of false teachers (even within the church) more than ever before—fake prophets, bogus messiahs and gurus springing up in these last days, and we're already seeing them appear. Religious persecution, famines, pestilence, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and acts of

terrorism will only get worse in the last days. Do you remember Katrina? How can we forget? According to the U.S. Geological Society, the occurrence of earthquakes is on the rise. For the past 50 years the number of recorded earthquakes has increased every decade—even the “killer-quakes” have. The one that caused the tsunami of Southeast Asia that killed 286,000 people was one of the strongest in history. It physically relocated the entire island of Sumatra 100 feet southwest of its original position. Doctor Luke warned us about all this saying, **“And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony”** (Lk. 21:11-13 nkjv). Yes, in spite of all these horrible things happening today, Jesus tells us it will be a good time to fish using our own story of how He saved us.

Do we have the time to wait for those who are called to do fulltime reaping in the harvest fields to get to it or should we get involved? May the Lord change us for the sake of His Kingdom and for the sake of others? May He help the full timers, but we're all full timers too. When you realize that in 1996 North American Christians contributed just over \$2.5 billion for missions, we are facing an astronomical fund raising effort. There has to be something more added to their noble endeavor! I believe it is the whole Church with the whole Gospel going to the whole world wholeheartedly. We can choose to add that into the mix. It's every righteous person going to their knees and then across the street, across the land, across the borders to wisely tell as we fish for souls as the Lord leads each one of us respectively!

### ***Do It His Way***

What about you and me? What are we doing? Are we fulfilling our calling God's way? Do you ever wonder about this or about how the early church got involved? Do we even care? Is the Church of our day, in this century, really making an eternal difference in the world? We know the first century Church did not leave their world in the same condition as it was when they found it. These Spirit-impassioned committed people, were empowered as followers of Jesus and they didn't just sit on their blessed assurance. Proactively, following the Lord, they made a difference for the Kingdom! As Luke described it they, **“turned the world upside down”** for the sake and the Cause of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:6).

How different the early Church was from the Church today. Here we are in a new century; our numbers have never been greater; our opportunities are unparalleled; we have the greatest technology available to reach more people than ever before, yet we have become increasingly distracted from involvement with the Great Commission. Sadly the Great Commission has become the Great Omission for way too many modern saints. While those in our cities are going to hell in a hand basket, we are discounting Scripture, barking, howling, giving to get “the hundred fold blessing” and rolling on the floor with “holy laughter.” While the perplexed irreligious people around us are desperately hungry and in need for Christians to come tell them how to get right with God through Christ, we are preoccupied with all the foolish aspects of psychology. We are whining and lamenting trying to get in touch with our inner child. We are overly focused on how “dysfunctional” we are and how much we

suffer from "low self-esteem." We are attending classes weekly that teach us how to interpret every dream... dreams that God didn't even intend for us to interpret.

Christians are attending classes weekly in order to learn how to interpret every dream... many dreams that God never intend for anyone to interpret (especially if He didn't give them the gift for doing that type of thing). Also, many Christians have hailed as "revival" that which involves receiving a "blessing" that is characterized by leaping over onto the floor, laughing, and making animal noises. I've seen it. Yet, if this is truly a "revival," where is it leading to? Is this leading towards a real harvest? Is it leading towards true repentance (see James 4:8-10)? Then where is the personal evangelism connected with it?

Are you sick of all the political correctness and moral relativism within the church when compromise enters in. Are you tired of the Let's-trim-down-the-Bible attitudes prevalent within the emergent church and within the seeker sensitive movements? Cults like the Church of Jesus Christ of later Day Saints (which is not a church nor is a place for saints) and non-Christian Oneness groups are trying to hide their infidelity with the Essentials of our faith. They are even changing their signage and websites using Christian terms they haven't used before (pouring wrong meanings into these words) to appear like they are sound mainstream churches. It makes me feel like I need to puke.

Hyper Calvinism is even making a real come-back in our day. Instead of spending our valuable time preaching the Gospel, we Christians are sitting around and quibbling about whether or not we should ever witness or if a person has been predestined to eternal life. I have personally seen several

*"I wish I could sit down with each one of you, that I could kind of grab you by the collar, look into your eyes, and say, 'You've got to get this! This is so huge!' Authentic Christianity is not just about redemption, rules, and relationship.*

*That's vitally important. But authentic Christianity is about taking all of that into the streets, taking it into your world. You know, God help us for a Christianity that is just imploded on itself, that is all about me and my redemption and the rules that I keep and my relationship with Jesus, while we forget that He has called on us to engage our world as a result of the deepening realities of all of those things. How important that is."—*

Joseph Stowell

Calvinists outside of stadiums picketing Billy Graham and other good crusades. Can you imagine getting in the way of the greatest miracle that God performs—the saving of a soul? One day these people will have a lot to answer for before an evangelistic God with a passionate missionary heart. But in every generation, the devil has always had his counterfeit-Christians and blatant distractions for Christians desiring to get involved with the Great Commission. Satan is such a jerk. He's a "master-counterfeiter." Today on TV and elsewhere we still see ***"false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works"*** (2 Cor. 11:13-15). And the devil with his minions are real entities and they are flooding the market with so many distracting false movements claiming to be Christian, with issues and media-hype, but Satan is only "clouding the water" with cheap imitations of "the real thing." Think about it. If there was not real American currency, there would be not counterfeiter at work on his computer today. If there wasn't something extremely valuable to be gained by sinners from God, the enemy of our souls wouldn't ever feel any need to try to confuse everybody with so many counterfeits today.

Still, other fellowships seem so intensely "fired-up" for social action. There's nothing wrong with social action. I like social action. These precious people are zealous to participate in the latest boycott or protest, but sometimes they seem far less eager to preach or witness of the Gospel message. While these social action events may have their place for taking a stand against the spread of evil, they will only have a limited effect, at best -- especially if there is no verbal witnessing connected with it.

We must remember that Christ never calls us to try to reform sinners, or to condemn sinners for sinning or even to make these social actions a priority ahead of preaching the Gospel. Today we have opportunities for spreading the Gospel that are unprecedented and we need to take advantage of these opportunities every day! Read the book of Revelation again. It gives us a short description of Christ's Church in the final days. Look closely at the second and third chapters where the Apostle John describes seven different churches, portraying both their strengths and their weaknesses. Look at Revelation 3:7-8 (I like what it says in the NCV version), here's what we read about the Church of Philadelphia:

***"Write this to the angel of the church in Philadelphia: 'This is what the One who is holy and true, who holds the key of David, says. When he opens a door, no one can close it. And when he closes it, no one can open it. I know what you do. I have put an open door before you, which no one can close. I know you have a little strength, but you have obeyed my teaching and were not afraid to speak my name.'"***

It says, ***"When he opens a door, no one can close it"*** and that word ***"opens"*** literally signifies that God is opening a door of opportunity for us Christians, with the key to this door being His own regal authority. The Apostle Paul also speaks of opportunity in his second letter to the Corinthian church (v. 2:12), where he writes, ***"When I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel... a door was opened to me by the Lord..."***

Jesus is essentially telling the Christians of the last days that He is going to open doors for us that are great and unparalleled. Yes, that is certainly the case today. Just look at the opening of doors for missionaries to formerly ***"closed"*** countries. Look at the increased use of computers and video technology to reach people around the globe, and in other unique business sectors where Christians seldom venture to go.

John said they had ***"A little strength..."*** but they obeyed Christ's teachings and were bold to speak about the Name of Jesus. Not many are speaking Christ's name out in public these days. It's almost like we are getting used to all the changes and advances and as the dust settles, we want to make sure that it is safe to be audio visual Christian witnesses.

***"You are called  
and commissioned  
to engage your  
world for Jesus!"  
—Joseph Stowell***

This ***"little strength"*** here alludes to a very sick person coming back to health or reviving back to life from the edge of death's door. In other words, this specific local church was getting back to the strength it once possessed in its early days. They were getting back to their roots and regaining full

health. Witnessing of the Lord's great Name has a way of helping in the area of health and reviving. This was not some "super church" that was out to take dominion over the entire population of the world. They didn't believe in some jacked-up Kingdom Now Theology. But there was hope for them in the Lord and there is hope for us. There is opportunity for the Church today if we will regain our spiritual health and vitality by returning to the basic essentials of spiritual health that are needed for a dynamic soul-winning church.

What are these essentials for health for a church? What is the Three-Fold Purpose of Christ's Church? Here they are, Scripture lays these three primary purposes out for us:

### ***1. Exaltation of God***

God has called us to live "*for the praise of His glory*" (Eph. 1:12). We are here on this earth to glorify and know the one true God. Ministering to Lord is our first priority ministry corporately and individually!

*"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..."* (1 Pet. 2:9).

### ***2. Edification of the Saints***

Paul explains that his own goal was not merely to evangelize, but to "*present every man mature in Christ*" (Col. 1:28).

*"And Christ gave gifts to people--He made some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to go and tell the Good News, and some to have the work of caring for and teaching God's people. Christ gave those gifts to prepare God's holy people for the work of serving, to make the body of Christ stronger. This work must continue until we are all joined together in the same faith and in the same knowledge of the Son of God. We must become like a mature person, growing until we become like Christ and have his perfection. Then we will no longer be babies. We will not be tossed about like a ship that the waves carry one way and then another. We will not be influenced by every new teaching we hear from people who are trying to fool us. They make plans and try any kind of trick to fool people into following the wrong path. No! Speaking the truth with love, we will grow up in every way into Christ, who is the head"* (Eph. 4:11-15 NCV).

### ***3. Evangelization of the World***

This one here is basically the natural outgrowth of being involved with the first two purposes, and Jesus specifically addresses this in what has traditionally been called "*the Great Commission*." Jesus commanded, "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover*" (Mk. 16:15-18).

Jesus said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt. 28-19-20).

The United States of America is in such need today for a spiritual awakening that will alter everything foundational. We must humble ourselves, repent, turn from our wicked ways to God in order to see this change morally, ecclesiastical, sociologically, politically etc. I love this great nation and am grateful to live here again, but I want it to become greater and greater -- greater according to God's estimation. We are in horrendous spiritual shape right now! America's only hope today is the Person of Jesus Christ! He is the Answer no matter what the question is. But there will be no moral or spiritual awakening in our country apart from us turning back to God away from our idols – apart from pray and a work of the Holy Spirit. And it's for this purpose that we must preach Christ crucified. We must prioritize getting the Gospel Message out to unbelievers ahead of protesting and pivoting. We must prioritize intercession ahead of Direct TV and video games for authentic revival to come. We must major on these disciplines ahead of all self-help therapy.

The Lord intends for fishing for souls to start with you where you are at. When the subject of witnessing of our faith in Jesus arises, we could come up with a huge plethora of lame excuses why we are not called to this or must wait to start, but that won't wash at the cleaners. A recent survey among Christians revealed that 95% of those surveyed had never ever led another person to Jesus Christ.

Why is it that many of us are so reluctant to open our mouths and fish after this manner? Why is it that getting started is like the hardest part? The reason many of us rarely open our mouths for Christ to proclaim his goodness is because we just don't want to. We don't feel like it and the reason we do not want to or feel like it is because (if we are completely honest with ourselves) we simply do not care for the sinner in his helpless plight. We hear so much about the need for evangelism, but lots of people put on a pretty facade to hide things. They don't always know what the root problem is and it's really not always easy to encounter and American sharing their main need. We all smile and say, "Hey, I'm Ok. Everything is going great!" But it isn't always so great. We preachers have all our pet-sermons on five steps to success and how to make it happen. We have our polished programs designed to mobilize the church in this fishing area. Yet, all this is of no consequence if we are lacking one simple basic thing: a deep heart-felt burden – a supernatural concern for lost people.

You need a compelling burden and Christ's compassion until it motivates you to go! I love what Charles Spurgeon said, *"The Holy Spirit will move them by first moving you. If you can rest without their being saved, they will rest, too. But if you are filled with an agony for them, if you cannot bear that they should be lost, you will soon find that they are uneasy, too. I hope you will get into such a state that you will dream about your child or your hearer perishing for lack of Christ, and start up at once and begin to cry, 'O God, give me converts, or I die.' Then you will have converts."*

This burden, this compelling selfless compassion, it super-motivated Jesus Christ all the way through His entire earthly ministry! The Bible says, *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Lk. 19:10). In Matthew 9:36-38, we read, *"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no*

*shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'*"

Jesus didn't seem to go anywhere where there wasn't a crowd that was trying to mob him or intrusively interrupt his prayer time. The people were desperate, hungry, needy, hurting and He did something about it without view their actions as intrusive. He loved people and understood where they were coming from. Many people wanted something physical from Him like food, like a physical healing, like a physical resurrection after a death. Some simply wanted down-to-earth teaching or counsel. Yes, some wanted to hear about how their life could actually become better in some way. Some wanted a loving touch or a deliverance from something wicked that was non-stop tormenting them. But Jesus saw their deepest need. He saw them as "*sheep without a shepherd*" going astray and He felt compassion for them wanting to save their soul.

- When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, He could have lectured her on the evils of immorality. Instead, He looked beyond her sin and saw her spiritual emptiness, and appealed to her longing for God.
- When Jesus saw Zacchaeus, He could have rebuked him for his greed and theft. But Jesus said, "And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost" (Luke 19:10 NLT). He loved all sinners. And we must have the same attitude as we separate sin from the sinner. He spent time with sinners, just like this despised tax collector and He led Zacchaeus to a saving knowledge of Himself.
- Our Lord was ardently moved when He saw Mary and her friends weeping over the death of her brother, Lazarus. The Bible says, "When Jesus saw Mary crying and the Jews who came with her also crying, he was upset and was deeply troubled" (John 11:33 NCV). While He knew that He would raise Lazarus back to life, He was still seized with grief when He saw the pain that death had caused this righteous family.
- When the soldiers arrested Jesus in Gethsemane, His concern was not for Himself, but for His disciples. "I told you that I am he," Jesus said. "So if you are looking for me, let the others go" (John 18:8).
- Even while hanging on that bloody cross, Jesus showed concern for the welfare of His mother, telling John to take care of her (John 19:26-27), and He prayed for the forgiveness of His persecutors (Luke 23:34).

Jesus still cares about people. Most preachers don't care about the lost, but if we are going to be used of God in any capacity to win others to Him, we, too, must care.

We should not share our faith with others from feelings of obligation, duty, or guilt, but from a God-given burden for their lives.

The Apostle Paul had this burden (strong heart felt concern) for lost people, as well. He also showed them this Christ-like compassion. In Romans he writes, "*I have great sorrow and continual grief in*

*my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh"* (Rom. 9:2,3). Paul truly cared for his kinsmen, and so much so that he was willing to go to Hell (if necessary) so that others could go to heaven. No wonder his evangelistic ministry was so powerfully effective!

Evangelism, however, is not just for preachers and evangelists. It is our number one horizontal task and the responsibility of every Christian. In the Old Testament, we read about Nehemiah. He was not a priest or prophet, but he was genuinely touched with the needs of the lost around him. While in Babylonian captivity and serving as the king's cup-bearer, he learns that the walls of Jerusalem lay in ruins. Realizing that the walls were but a symbol of a people who once stood with God separated from the pagan nations around them, Nehemiah wept. Then, he realized that as a layman, he could make a difference by working to rebuild the walls. Then he prayed for God to guide and help him in this endeavor. And God did, providing him with fellow laborers for the project.

Author Bob Behl talks a lot about the statistics involved with churches being in one of three categories and to put it all in a nutshell:

- *Seventy percent of American churches today are in the **Survival mode**. And who in their right mind would want to throw a drowning entity or person a missions or evangelism proposal? I think Jesus would. The best thing for a famished or sick church is to put in on a soul-winning diet.*
- *Twenty five percent of American churches are in the **Success mode**. And they are focused on and excited about building a new building.*
- *Five percent of American churches are in the **Significance mode**. These churches are not following fads and non-scriptural trends. They're not reactive as much as they are proactively evangelizing and laboring with the Word—they're changing the world by prayerful soul-winning and compassionate missions efforts.*

Today God wants you to be a laborer in the harvest—a committed fisher casting your net!

The spectators are many...

The self-helpers are many...

The victims are many...

The complainers are many...

The compromisers are many...

The "flaky fair weather followers" are many...

**But the laborers are few!**

Warren Wiersbe says, *"True fishermen don't quit. They're patient! Peter kept on working while Jesus used His ship as a platform from which to address the huge crowd on the shore. Every pulpit is a fishing boat, a place to give out the Word of God and attempt to catch fish."*

Fisher, you can expect lost people—lukewarm and nominal Christians even—to get in your face to oppose you when you spread the Gospel. They will fuss, protest, argue, debate and criticize you because you are refusing to be like them. You want to make a difference and go to work. You see,

Christians want others to be just like them and most won't even cast a line, or drop a net anywhere. Most are living as reactive ineffective saints and Jesus weeps, but the proactive laborer will make the devil mad and the enemy will not take it lightly. Remember we don't war against flesh and blood, so steer clear of people trying to distract you and get in your way. You are on the attack mode against the kingdom of darkness without being devil-focused. And don't allow the enemy to draw you into the flesh or some emotionally heated time-wasting fray. Walk in the Spirit! Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world. Keep your eyes on the Lord and your hand to the work that is before you as a faithful laborer.

***Listen to the words of the great Fisher—Jesus: “The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest” (Lk. 10:2 kjv).***

***“Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest” (Jn. 4:35 nasb).***

***“Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:38).*** Say something like: *Lord, here am I, send me across the street and across the seas to tell that one who is perishing!*

I also love what Rebecca Manley Pippert<sup>3</sup> said *“I reread the Gospels a year ago out of a desire to rediscover Jesus... As I read again, Jesus struck me with fresh force. My impression was that Jesus was utterly delightful. He enjoyed people. He liked to go to parties and to weddings. He was the kind of man people invited for dinner. And He came. He went to where they were. When two men first approached Him wondering where His apartment was, Jesus knew that how He decorated His apartment wasn't the burning issue in their hearts and instead of delivering a sermon, He took them home with Him, and they became His disciples. Later some of their relatives were among the first people He healed. But Jesus was more than merely charming; He cared about building a sense of family. Jesus established intimacy with people quickly. Partly it was because He was open, but also because He understood people and wanted to establish rapport. He let people know that He had a sense of who they really were and that He appreciated them. The first thing He did upon meeting Simon was to give him a nickname. The first thing He told Nathaniel was that He recognized the basic honesty of His character. Jesus drew people. Some came because Jesus recognized who they were, others because they had glimpsed something of who He really was. He attracted some and repelled others. He was approachable, He wanted people to know it, and they did. Children loved him. Adults were affected so much by him that some just wanted to touch His clothes. Why? They knew that Jesus loved them. His love was extravagant, almost reckless—never cautious or timid. And He talked to His Father and all about His Father's endless love. The people of Jesus' day thought holy men were unapproachable. But Jesus' work was in the market place. He made people feel welcome, and that they had a place. His life was a constant demonstration that there were only two things that really mattered in His life—God and people. They were the only things if you will, that lasted forever. Jesus was a compassionate man. He loved each one deeply and was not afraid to show it. He was profoundly committed to setting people free and making them whole. He touched people at the deepest level. He wanted to heal not only blindness and leprosy, but the things that prevented joy and beauty, and freedom and justice. The Stoics may have been proud of concealing their tears but He never concealed*

*His. He showed them plainly on His open face, whether He was weeping for a city or for a friend's loss. He healed people because He cared about them, not merely so they would follow him. He saw a woman weeping over the loss of her only son (Lk. 7:11-17). No one asked him to do anything, probably feeling it was hopeless anyway. Moved with compassion He took the initiative and brought the boy back to life. In fact, He even touched the bier on which the boy lay. As it was the Jewish practice to use the open bier, Jesus' touching it meant pollution according to ceremonial religious laws. But Jesus responded to His Father and then to human need before all prefatory matters. Once when Jesus was on His way to heal Jairus's daughter who was on the point of death, a woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years and had "suffered much under many physicians" suddenly touched His garment and was healed. Jesus had so much concern for her that He stopped long enough to find out who He had healed and to learn her story. Can you imagine Jairus's anxiety as the long story unfolded? But Jesus listened lovingly and patiently. On another occasion a leper came to Jesus, no doubt full of shame and wounds (Mk. 1:40-45). Timid but desperate he said, "Well, if you want to, I think you could heal me." Jesus was so moved with compassion and as He looking at him steadily said, "Oh, I want to," and healed him.' (did you ever see him turn away a person coming to him for healing?) "I was also struck by the practical dimension of Jesus' compassion." His feelings were no deeper than His practical concern. He healed Jairus's daughter, and at the moment of a stupendous miracle, He simply told them to get her something to eat. His care was consistent. Never flashy, never showy, sometimes almost quiet. Even after His death He demonstrated the very same care. If it was me who had resurrected, I would have rented the Coliseum and staged the huge Tabernacle Choir to sing the "Hallelujah Chorus." But in one post-resurrection account we find Jesus making the disciples a*

***"It's challenging to think that many of us live so comfortably—so far away from the poor—that we see evangelism as something that can wait... There is nothing more urgent than telling the world about the incomparable love of Jesus Christ and the saving grace of God. There is no greater way to demonstrate Christ-like compassion than to help out practically."***

***—Franklin Graham***

*little breakfast! Jesus was so perceptive. He had an extraordinary ability to see beneath the myriad of layers of people and know what they longed for, or really believed, but were afraid of revealing. That is why His answers so frequently did not correspond to the questions He was asked. He sensed their unspoken need or question and responded to that instead. Jesus could have healed lepers in countless ways. To the leper in Mark 1:40-45 He could have shouted "Be healed... but don't get too close. I just hate the sight of lepers." He did not. Jesus reached over and*

*touched him. Jesus' touch was not necessary for His physical healing. It was critical for His emotional healing. Can you imagine what it meant to that man to be touched? A leper was an outcast, quite accustomed to walking down a street and seeing people scatter, shrieking at him, "Unclean—unclean!" Jesus knew that tHis man not only had a diseased body but an equally diseased self-concept" (REJECTED, WORTHLESS, UGLY). "He needed to be touched to be' fully cured. And so Jesus responded as He always did, with total healing for the whole person." Instead of a limp-wristed, anemic, mild or effeminate Jesus I found a man's man of profound passion. An extraordinary Being, flinging furniture" casting out demons and asking people how they expected to escape the damnation of hell. He said such bland, innocuous things as, "I came to cast fire on the earth" (Lk*

12:49). *Wherever He went He produced a crisis. He compelled individuals to decide, to make a choice. In fact He struck me as the most crisis-producing individual I had ever encountered. Eventually nearly everyone clashed with Jesus, whether they loved him or hated him. We typically discover a lot about a person when we know who likes the person and who does not. In Jesus' case, we have the story of the holiest man who ever lived, and yet it was the prostitutes, scum-bags, tax collectors, lepers and thieves who adored him, and the religious who hated His guts. Everywhere He went He seemed to unintentionally stir up controversy and strong emotions, seeking to win people over to the Father's love—a full-blown non-conformist with a warm heart for you.*"

If you ask Jesus to stir your heart and give you a real burden for those who are like "sheep without a shepherd," you will not be disappointed. That's the kind of prayer He is waiting for. He may call you to cross the sea as a missionary—or perhaps just cross the street! He may lead you to open your mouth, or to carry someone's groceries or both.

The angels have never experienced the grace of God, so they can't bear witness as we can. Telling others about the Savior is a solemn obligation as well as a great privilege, and we who are believers must be faithful in this. So the next time you pray for God to send out "laborers in the harvest," don't forget to include yourself in that prayer. *"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.' And He said, 'Go, and tell this people...'"* (Isa. 6:8, 9).

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<sup>1</sup> I heard Carrollton, Texas based missions strategist named K.P. Yohannan give this fact in October 2007.

<sup>2</sup> See *Are these the Last Days* by Greg Laurie Published by Regal Books from Gospel Light in Ventura California. Copyright 2005 ISBN 0-8307-3831-2

<sup>3</sup> This quote is from *Rebecca Manley Pippert's great book titled: Out of the Saltshaker and into the World.*