



Cast the Net with Confidence!

By Kurt von Schleicher

Conscientious fishers never want to be early or late. They sense the moment and fish with expectancy—with every chance they either get or initiate!

Preface

Go after God and after lost souls! Go after backsliders—those who've taken a stride from their Master's side! Preach the Word and trust Him to see needs met and people healed. Make your life and altar call wherever you may go. Don't let man's opinions sway you to say "No". There is a real need in the Church worldwide today for Spirit-led, biblically based evangelistic appeals to be presented to small and large crowds of people by caring skilled Christians and I don't mean just from the paid professionals doing this. Altar calls have seemed to have become obsolete in many church circles, but drawing the net to catch many people in fishing for souls is still biblical. And there are enough verses in the Bible—God's fishing manual—to corroborate this, to address this, to warrant this straightforward method of fishing for multiples of souls in one location at one time. I commend the efforts of so many great men and women of God who have won children, adults, teenagers and elderly people through out the years. I love how my old pastor Chuck Smith does it every service. He is not an evangelist, but is very evangelistic as he teaches through the entire Bible each week, each year. He gives a strong fairly short direct appeal that's taken from one evangelistic nugget of truth found in the same chapter that he just taught through and from. Earlier he gave a few strong applications to saints that the Spirit highlighted to him, but at the end of his Message he tugs the net in. Again, his altar call always goes right along with the main evangelistic point of that chapter that he is teaching verse by verse through, and he informs the people that prayer counselors will be up front after the conclusion of the service—after it ends—and if they need prayer with one of them for salvation, recommitment or for something else like healing, that they are to come visit with a counselor as people are fellowshiping and exiting (and they start to go forward after Chuck exits to go meet and greet guests at the back door so it's not just to look good as he stands before a crowd of so called crying revival seekers wanting his attention). God uses Chuck's appeals. The faithful love seeing his availability to talk in the back and his church is growing. He oversees some thirty thousand now. Well fed sheep naturally reproduce—the flock is regularly following his example in winning sinners and they are also bringing them to church. Please trust God to help you develop your own method or style that He will regularly bless.

God doesn't want you or me to aim at becoming like some slick con-artist type of psychologists or brash sales personnel who are into pulling the wool over people's eyes and get them to sign on the dotted line so they will be trapped. In fishing for souls we each have a clear responsibility to simply communicate His Gospel His way and then leave the results up to Him. We obey Him and leave their obeying up to them.

Of course we are never to be impolite, demanding, brow-beating or disrespectful as we extend an invitation to respond and apply God's Word in the most important area. Many have used those traditional words "giving an invitation" for years in this type of work but I only use it very loosely here, since I can't find anywhere in the Bible where God had His servants invite sinners to Himself. All of us are God's property, because He bought us. Don't you know, ***"that you are not your own?"*** (1 Cor. 6:19). I see Jesus Christ in the Bible rightfully commanding people to repent and believe. I see His ministers doing the same.

I am by no means a know-it-all in the area of getting people right with their Maker—I am merely a zealous learner in this area. I believe that this extremely vital subject should not be approached with feelings of adequacy or confidence in the flesh by any Christian, but rather with the holy fear of an unchanging God who is into us fishing, who loves a fresh approach and a fresh catch. I don't believe that any church service should go by without the leader giving some sort of opportunity for lost people to be saved and for backsliders to return to Christ, even if it means saying: Please, if you have questions about salvation and are concerned about where you will spend eternity. If you would like to hear what God has to say about the subject, then trained prayer counselors are waiting in the altars here and also out in the foyer at the information booth. Stop and spend a few moments with them.

Personally, I've enjoyed the privilege of witnessing thousands getting saved due to anointed altar calls of great pastors in three different mega-churches over the last couple two decades. With a great sense of indebtedness, I want to thank the Lord for the godly fishermen that He put in my life for a lengthy time, and me in their churches (His churches) like Chuck Smith, Greg Laurie and Chuck Swindoll. God has used these skilled men in the soul-winning arena to win multiplied thousands people to Jesus.

I want to divulge to you that most of the time when God has led me to give an altar call of some sort; it begins to take form in my prayer time and tool work preparation time in the biblical text. When I've spoken about this subject in a handful of local churches where I presented my soul-winning seminar, including the topic of street side harvesting, I have found Christians from all different backgrounds to be extremely interested. I am interested and have a lot to learn. New efficient methods are right around the corner for the church; a new Message is not (or should not be). And though I always want to stress the need for strong dependence on the Holy Spirit's guidance, I am convinced that every minister of the Gospel can learn the basics of how to cast and draw the net in an effective way.

Whether it's witnessing one on one, or before a crowd, every Christian can give a strong invitation and win souls. We can't all be preachers, but we can all be reach-ers. To say you don't evangelize because you aren't called as an evangelist is like saying I don't tithe, because I don't have the gift of giving. We are all called to witness, one-on-one and if we get the opportunity, one-on-more than one.

There are timeless principles that can be learned—there is a Christ honoring passion that can be appropriated—and there is a perverted world lost in sin, but can be rescued from the real hell they make strides to enter. Do you cast the net? Do you care? Then no sweat, just accept this evangelistic D-A-R-E!

“Coming forward is a symbolic outward act representing an inward reality – a decision to repent and believe.”—Billy Graham

Basic Intro

Many years ago, the Apostle Paul commissioned a non-evangelist named Timothy with these words: ***“But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”*** (2 Tim. 4:5). Do you want to fulfill your ministry—to make full proof of it, as well? I tell you that it won’t be fulfilled if you fail to do the work of an evangelist! Let me say it one more time: No minister no matter what their primary calling is can fulfill their personal ministry without doing the work of fishing wholeheartedly for souls! People need Jesus not you—they need to come to Him on His terms! Winning people to Christ—not primarily to your denomination or to your ministry or your church—is the mission’s mandate! That’s the work. Are you doing this? The Bible says, ***“...urge the people there to come so my house will be full”*** (Lk. 14:23). No minister should expect to go without hardship in this work. And you don’t need to pray this stuff in either. No minister should get drunk or act like a fool in the name of being non-religious. People are watching you daily.

Today, many preachers don’t give an invitation, because they don’t want to bore the well-fed, fat sheep. Who would want to do that? God isn’t into boring His sheep, so why should we? Listen; there are thousands of exciting ways to do the work of an evangelist. But other leaders don’t give an invitation, because they don’t want to appear a failure if no one responds. Some noble ones would give the opportunity if they only know how. They feel under-equipped in this area. Like with *missions*, this topic doesn’t sell. Self-improvement literature sells, but when was the last time you saw a book about soul-winning or giving an altar call? Countless ministers don’t example personal evangelism in-between church services or ever, so they know their constituents won’t bring any sinners. Did you know 95% of all Christians never win one person to Christ? Billy Graham says that 50% of the people in churches today have no assurance of their salvation. There **MUST BE** a return to radical Christian living and ardent personal evangelism! Leaders, people will do what we do, more than what we say. It is Pharisaical hypocrisy to have a *do as I say, not as I do* mentality!

Some say this responsibility of reaping is solely for the “Evangelist.” Others have certain convictions saying things like, “A farmer never reaps on the same day he plants” and this is a legitimate argument depending on the genuine leading of the Spirit, but not every time you meet! You know, I think the farmer in his fields would harvest if he knew different segments of his crop were in the ripe stage of fruition. And in Bible teaching churches ripe fruit is present almost every Sunday. Does your church systematically teaching through the Bible—the whole counsel of God? Healthy sheep on a well balanced diet naturally beget healthy sheep (and they also bring lost people to church).

Now, many clergy are hyper-Calvinistic and are afraid that one of the non-elect might make a decision. But I like what D.L. Moody prayed, ***“Lord, save the elect, and then elect some more!”*** Some think altar calls are antiquated, a method that God used in days gone by. They just can’t think of any fresh new ways to give an up-to-date, culturally relevant appeal. Others, who want the “phenomenon” or to “follow the Spirit”, think it’s wrong to prepare for such a sacred moment, and yet to avoid looking like a total moron, they prepare to some degree for their sermon, (even if it’s quietly thinking it through). Many opt for the Charisma photo shoot, knowing they can get a stirred-up-crowd in down in the altar with hands raised in emotion if they make their appeal for some another type of commitment. Many itinerate para-church preachers feel primarily called to fundraising for God, bless their hearts. They like to reserve this time for selling their product from the pulpit. I like what Paul said, ***“For we are not like many, peddling the word of God,”*** (2 Cor. 2:17) insinuating that there are not a few. I believe

that the majority of preachers who pass up the opportunity in their services to reap a harvest, do so simply because they don't care. It true, they don't care enough. They're not concerned for the plight of the irreligious. Some pastors get ticked when I say this, but it's true. With all due respect, they want their organizations running well, their leaders behaving or something else. I know you hate this question Mr. Preacher... but when was the last time you won somebody to Jesus Christ? When was the last time you prayed for a God-given burden—a deep heart-felt supernatural concern?

Maybe You Need:

- 1. To better discover the spiritual condition of the people in the group you are ministering to (how many would be the natural man, the carnal man or the spiritual man?) in order to better customize and match a suitable altar call to them according to the Word of God.*
- 2. To ask God how He would have you deliver a straight forward one-fold, twofold or threefold combination altar call in order that the arrow of your aimed Message will hit the bull's eye among the two or three people groups at your church or venue and see results from the application(s).*
- 3. Biblical reasons to justify delivering altar calls—you know, preaching to multiple people in one setting for permanent decisions, of course coupled with repentance and faith when they are looking for that opportunity to receive from or get right with God.*
- 4. Some fresh ideas on giving different kinds of creative altar calls that are not inordinately softened or Scripturally watered down, but are suitable for different situations (i.e., open-air at the beach, lake, a concert or a sporting event etc).*
- 5. To know how God wants you to prepare your heart, your mind and your spirit ... as well as the actual wording and timing for your altar call Message to give in various venues.*
- 6. To learn how to properly prepare the people for upcoming altar calls—ones that are appropriately fitting—as you prep for your Bible study or church services (even in the middle of a Message the are good comments you can make that will start the unbeliever think about it coming soon and what to do about it)?*
- 7. Practice in how to aim at the conscience without condemning, accusing, or getting too heavy with the people—you know without manipulating, pressuring over emotionalizing things (If someone can be talked into a decision through the use of a wrong technique today, they can be talked out of it tomorrow. You know the old adage: A person convinced against their will is still of the same opinion still. What you use to catch them with is what you'll have to continue using in your church to keep them with so make sure its done right).*
- 8. Practice in stronger clearer exhorting, in instructing, in motivating and in effectively tugging that net aboard Christ's ship so to speak?*
- 9. To know the things that God can and cannot do as you partner with Him in evangelism (He honors their choice and won't make people get saved)?*
- 10. An understanding of what to avoid so you will never botch an altar call only to see sinners exiting lost as a school of mackerel headed in the direction of becoming shark bait?*
- 11. An awareness of how many Christians and ministers witness and preach in such a way so as to convert nobody, so that you will never become like them or make their same mistakes?*
- 12. The “Epi experience” with the Holy Spirit¹ or for God to rekindle a red hot fire in you—a passion for Him and for the lost. Do you lack His kind of determination and*

intensity? Are you really hungry for a breakthrough yoke-annihilating anointing—a fresh refilling of His Spirit’s empowering?

No Pastor please, Not Another Altar Call!

Anything but that! Some church people feel like, yikes ...not another altar call again! With all respect here, some congregants always seem to gripe when something important is happening, but a pastor maybe their church is failing to teach dynamically and well through the entire Bible, maybe they are failing to do altar calls (I use that term loosely because places inside and outdoors do not have an altar) as wisely as they should. When church folk get bombarded week have week with weak altar calls, when the people are hungry to be fed something inside them says ugh! Some ministers in an effort to gain another great photo-opp for their magazine keep giving all-inclusive altar calls for stuff like healing of memories, for comfort for the wounding of their inner child, for self-esteem boosting, for saints to come stand in proxy for their lost friends etc. All the numbers down front crying crocodile tears looks fruitful, but who is getting saved? The people can see though all that Televangelist fluff and fu fu weirdness and it gets real moldy. I challenge you to man-up and present a real altar call.

Maybe you’ve been courageously man-ing-up so to speak each week, always extending some sort of altar call for salvation and for the backsliders to return in repentance and recommitment at the end of your Messages using a proper amount of time, but you feel a bit discouraged because no one seems to be responding lately? If so, maybe you’ve unwittingly landed in an altar call rut of sorts that has diminished its impact on your listening audience. Let’s look at this multi-faceted issue a little.

Many pastors and preachers tend to offer the same altar call from memory without preparing anything new for the same smaller group of people every Sunday. Sure they’ve prepared for everything else and given a lot of time to their message. They just need more time. It’s like the faithful are getting conditioned to their same old altar calls and they could probably repeat what the leader will say next in the same tempo, tone and cadence. This altar call is to the unsaved—come to Jesus to be saved. But the majority of people in most churches are already Christians. And if you are repeatedly giving an altar call that most of them responded to years ago, what are they supposed to do now, pastor? I’ve even heard of pastors getting mad at their people and whipping them with words for not brining more sinners into the church house to get saved. Such an ongoing repetitive altar call can come off as if it is the Christian’s last step instead of their first step.

In addition, most sermons aren’t evangelistic messages or even expository Bible teaching messages and the very purpose of the message sermon is disconnected from the purpose of the altar call. What is an audience to do?

We all must realize that an altar call is always about obediently following Christ. There are three distinct audiences you are talking with in a church: 1.) Those who need to repent and trust Christ for the first time, 2.) Those who need to grow up in Christ to maturity, and 3.) those who need to be further challenged as spiritual Christians because they are already mature. Let’s explore these three areas more.

Altar Call A: To the Natural Man – "Come to Christ Today!"

In the Gospels, most of the altar calls that we see are urging people to respond and find salvation in Christ. No other type of altar call is more important! Check out some examples:

- *As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.*

- "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:18-19). Though Jesus always leaves the choice up to the individual, this sounds like a command rather than an invitation huh?*
- *As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him (Matt. 9:9)*
 - *Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt. 19:14)*
 - *Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Mk. 10:21).*
 - *When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham" (Lk. 19:5, 9).*
 - *I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture (Jn.10:9).*

Altar Call B: To the Carnal or Fallen Away Person – "Return to Christ Today!"

Other altar calls in the Gospels and epistles to people in local churches are more like pleas to the worldly or carnal Christians who have fallen away, out of fellowship with Christ telling them to return to Him. Jesus' question to Peter, "***Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?***"(Jn. 21:15), is basically an altar call for Peter to come back to the Lord.

The entire letter to the Galatians is also an altar call to return to Christ. We also need to call some people to "return to Christ today!" There are also some altar calls to Christians in the book of Revelation. Want some examples of this type of altar call?:

- *Jesus rebuked and then commanded the church at Ephesus to return to Him, saying, "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first" (Eph. 2:4-5).*
- *Jesus also called the Laodicean believers back, "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Eph. 3:19-20).*

These ones were not first time altar calls for a lost people to get saved as they came to Christ. No, there were calls to return to Christ and faithfully reestablish fellowship with him again. I personally like to offer an appeal for the above two groups in each service, but will make them short and to the point if I am mainly dealing with this third group.

Altar Call C: To the Mature Spiritual Christian – "Be like Christ"

Most of the altar calls in the epistles would appear to be ones directed to the growing spiritual Christians challenging them to become closer and more like Christ—not by accepting Him or returning to Him, but by following His example and that of other faithful Christ-followers. Here are some examples:

- *Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me (Paul, 1 Cor. 4:15-16).*
- *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ (Paul, 1 Cor. 11:1).*

- ***Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you*** (Paul, Phil. 3:17).
- ***For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example*** (Paul, 2 Thess. 3:7).
- ***We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow*** (Paul, 2 Thess. 3:9).
- ***We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised*** (Maybe Paul, Heb. 6:12).
- ***Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith*** (Maybe Paul, Heb. 13:7).
- ***Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did*** (John, 1 Jn. 2:6).

Maybe you will want to spend some time praying over your specific altar calls with you staff or with your spouse. Talk them over some with some peer level ministers who also have many of the same responsibilities you have. If they are good at harvesting the lost—fishing for souls, pick their brains a lot. Get some help with your altar call topic each week from the worship leader and power point person. Plan it all out well each week. Give an altar call after your next Message with confidence—confidence coming from expectant faith in God and your good practical and spiritual preparation done unto the glory of the Lord. Customize it to fit one or two of the three kinds of people-groups who will hear you. If you believe what you are saying is true then say it like you really believe it! Who likes to hear a boring monotone drab altar call from someone using valuable truth? No one—that’s sin! Again joyfully say it like you mean it and then expect results in Jesus Name!

We serve a BIG powerful sovereign soul-winning God and He is not willing that any perish. He won’t make people get saved or obey Him, but He does want every Christian to go fish wisely in well stocked and under stocked ponds. We do not serve a sovereign devil who is in control of things. God is in control. Salvation is of the Lord who commands us to go and tell in love, so that He will save to the uttermost and to very gutter-most. With all due respect to my dear Christian friends, who are Hyper-Calvinist-types, Pelagius-types, Arminius-types, and Erasmus-types—let’s remember that we are one in Jesus and it is time for all of us to get back to His Bible. Let’s major on majors, minor on minor things and look at how we can edify one another and improve in this very important area together! Your friends, your family and those in your communities need to hear the Gospel truth—they need you and I to boldly open our mouths in love before it’s too late!

Here Are Some More Reasons to Go For It!

“It is a blessing that God’s Spirit will for a time strive with man, but He will not always. There is a limit.” —Chuck Smith

Maybe you use the word “invitation” more which is a non-theological term, but still it’s one which many church people grasped pretty easily. Everyone knows what it means to invite a friend over for dinner, or ask someone to accompany you to a ball game. In an evangelical sense, the term is about giving an appeal to someone away from God, to come receive Jesus Christ and His forgiveness by faith—you know, to accept the benefits of Christ’s finished work at Calvary. Now, the benefits of enjoying this satisfying relationship with the God of the universe are too numerous for me to count. They include full pardon, a new quality of life, peace, purpose, fulfillment, life everlasting and a whole lot more. And since these benefits come through a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, an evangelistic invitation is an appeal to accept Christ as Savior and Lord (not just march forward in church and sign a card). I know a faithful churchman who sang in the choir and one day he felt the Spirit’s conviction, so he responded to his pastor’s appeal only to get a hand shake. Another time he received a card to fill out. And the third time he got a pat on the back and an “I’ll pray for you.” That wasn’t what

he needed at that time though. He wanted someone to help him find his way through repentance and faith to Christ.

An evangelist would probably define invitation as *a specific action as an external expression of positive response*. To me the word invitation is much more encompassing than this. It includes any kind of an appeal to repent, believe and affirmatively respond to Jesus Christ. John Wesley always put a hook in every opportunity—he gave a strong appeal for response with all his messages. But he never gave any prescription, form or written record about how this response should take place. I believe there are thousands of ways to do this that we still haven't discovered yet. I believe the Message is sacred, but the method isn't, so as long as the culture around us transitions, the method of appeal should. Wesley didn't invite people to come forward who wanted to receive Christ. But he always extended an appeal of some kind, expecting people to respond. He logged in his journal, "While I was earnestly inviting all sinners to enter into the holiest by the new and living Way, many of those that heard began to call upon God with strong cries and tears." "How could they get so emotional?"—you might ask. ***"But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God"*** (Heb. 11:16). Jesus wasn't ashamed of you when He suffered 18 long hours and died on a cross publicly. Think about this; everyone who Jesus called during His ministry, he called openly and publicly. So why would an altar call be wrong? Jesus said, ***"Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven"*** (Matt. 10:32, 33). That's why I think it's ideal for every form of altar call to include some external public form of action in positive response to Christ, whether it be the responder immediately telling a friend or family member that they've trusted Christ, or simply raising a hand to pray. Of course some people are more shy than others, but coming forward in front of others, or testifying openly at their water baptism is not a cruel thing to have people do! After the crowd has come forward though and before I lead the penitent ones up front in a so called "sinners prayer," I do invite those in their seats to join me in the prayer if they also want to get right with God (just incase someone stayed back due to fear of a panic attack in the front). We must win as many as possible for our time is limited!

Paul showed the sinner and the minister how to be, when he said, ***"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes"*** (Rom 1:16). Assuming that the conditions for receiving salvation have been clearly explained, the appeal as here discussed, will simply be an entreaty for people to meet these conditions and to openly demonstrate such willingness with specific biblical action as the minister prescribes. You know, Billy Graham would always have the penitent come forward to the front of the auditorium or stadium to accept Christ.

The Nature of the Message

"You can't repent alone. The Holy Spirit has to help you repent." —Billy Graham

God helps people repent and you help them see this fact. Great witnesses for Jesus have always preached repentance and faith without any compromise, properly instructing the people in what to do. Anointed expositional Bible preaching and evangelism with altar calls for salvation have always been inseparable with great men of God. Because the very nature of the Gospel they have and do present constrains them to make a wholehearted appeal for some response to Jesus Christ! Information that has divine inspiration mixed in, without proper application leads to frustration! It's like this; every time a sinner hears the Gospel and doesn't respond their heart will grow harder and they can literally come to the point of no return spiritually. Am I saying that they will cross a line while living on this planet where God will not forgive them? It's not that our heavenly Father wouldn't forgive them anymore if they were to

somehow bring themselves to turn to Him. But they can become so hardened inside that they would never desire to turn to Him for this. That's why I believe going to a church that makes no prayerful appeal can be the most dangerous place for a sinner.

In all of our noble Church history I can't find any instances of a biblical appeal given without the clear proclamation of the Word and a decisive call for the hearer's response, but I can find instances of proclamation given without an appeal in ignoble and religious church history. The original apostles of Jesus were very bold in mandating people to decide for or against the Lord who has already decided for them. Many preachers and Bible teachers don't expect any response when they minister today because they simply don't care for the sinner in his or her terrible plight, but Christ's original apostles did care and did see many repent and trust Christ as He made them born again. It's only logical to give a response to the Message that we present, because its very nature is imperative and it demands a response in the affirmative. The response is never to be for the preacher, but for God. Preachers are not to be out to win people to follow them personally, but to follow Christ. I thank God He didn't say follow my people. He said: Follow me. Though Bible preaching is normally done in the indicative mood—stating the facts about Jesus—the imperative mood is certainly to be injected there, as well. After his moving message on the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter without any apology, called his hearers to three spiritual experiences: 1.) to repentance unto salvation, 2.) to water baptism as an outward sign of this salvation and 3.) To the Spirit's infilling for new empowering for the purpose of winning others into this salvation. Check it out, ***“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’”*** (Acts 2:38). After his second sermon, Peter's clear imperative was: ***“Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”*** (Acts 3:19). That doesn't sound like an invitation does it. It sounds more like a humble command.

D.L. Moody's definition of “Salvation” begins with:

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| 1. Repentance | – a change of mind, we have a new mind about God. |
| 2. Conversion | – a change of life, we have a new life from God. |
| 3. Regeneration | – a change of nature, we receive a new heart from God. |
| 4. Justification | – a change of state, we have a new standing before God. |
| 5. Adoption | – a change of family, we get a new relationship with God—not a legal relationship, a loving relationship. |
| 6. Sanctification | – a change of service, we have a new condition with God. |

But How and Why?

1.) Here's some quick reminder ideas and reasons to give people an opportunity to repent and trust Him:

- *The testimony of Church history is successful soul-winning.*
- *Requesting a permanent turning and a firm decision for Jesus is biblical.*
- *We are merely obey God and leave the results with Christ, but not in a dowdy dreary way—and some will decide as He saves them.*

2.) Here's how to present the so called "invitation":

- *Give it lots of time in believing prayer before hand. Raise up a group that will pray for your altar call efforts.*
- *Give it a concise preaching of the Word boldly and accurately, finding an evangelistic nugget in the text.*
- *Give the appeal as you continue to pray and bind the works of darkness blinding the minds and eyes of those held bound.*
- *Give it confidently with urgency, enthusiasm and great anticipation.*
- *Give it creatively and dependently.*
- *Give it clearly, sincerely and profoundly.*
- *Give it honestly without any exaggeration or religious show.*
- *Give it courteously with respect for all people—don't slight any group or individual.*
- *Give it thoroughly because you really care about them—never point a message at one person or small group in the group. Who likes to be embarrassed?*
- *Give it authoritatively, because God's Word is authoritative PERIOD!*
- *Give it with urgency, zeal, dynamism and authentic excitement about Him.*
- *Give it smoothly without any confusing hurky-jerkiness like you know what you are doing and saying.*

3.) Prepare for the altar call:

- *There are different types of altar calls according to different settings and people.*
- *Why make it a secret call? Yes, everyone Jesus called, He called openly and publicly.*
- *Come down here to pray with me right now. Don't worry about what your friends will think for you, for they are worried about what you will think of them. Don't allow your pride or fear of man to ever be an issue here.*
- *If you'd like to get right with God at the end of this service, we have a prayer room here where counselors are waiting to pray with you.*
- *For those of you who for some reason did not come down here, you can pray at your seat with us if you like and God will hear you.*
- *There's a Communication Card in the slot before you so you can register your commitment and we can send you a Bible and some practical helps.*
- *Raise your hand if you would like me to pray for you.*

4.) Don't aim to be like some master psychologist with your fishing appeal

- *Utilize the Scriptures instead of psychobabble.*
- *Use good clear simple illustrations to open a window for vision.*
- *Use your testimony and wisdom in net casting.*
- *Don't try to be a trickster of any kind for more numbers' sake. Salesmen sometimes utilize a sound psychology of suggestion and sometimes a strange psychology of pressure or fear. Don't do the latter. You are simply called to be obedient and keep it all straightforward.*

5.) *Exhortation, motivation and tugging that net aboard right:*

- *Appeal for their conscience and self-preservation.*
- *Appeal for the highest quality of life.*
- *Appeal for recognition and acceptance.*
- *Appeal for the inner yearning for liberty.*
- *Appeal for fulfillment.*
- *Appeal for more adventure in life.*
- *Appeal for the sake of influence.*
- *Appeal for the supreme duty.*
- *Appeal for gratitude.*
- *Appeal for meeting your friend's need.*

If I could put this whole message into one concise sentence, what would I tell the people? If I could put it in one concise sentence, what do I want them to do?

Both witnessing one-on-one and preaching to a group of people can be a lot like flying an airplane. They often feel the same in fact. When you fly somewhere, only two brief moments are life-threatening when you think about it—the takeoff and the landing. Taking off and land that thing are definitely the most challenging. In fact most airplane crashes occur during these crucial periods, so that's when I'm listening carefully to the engines, feeling for any unusual tremors, sniffing for the scent of smoke, and watching for fear in the faces of the flight attendants. Yes, it's between the beginning and the end that I can relax and get some work done.

Listening to a sermon elicits similar periods of anxiety. If our introduction is clear, and people sense the preacher knows where he or she is going, everyone can relax and listen. But when the flight time has elapsed, people begin to anticipate the landing is near, and anxiety can rise again. When I've failed to land a sermon effectively, it is often because I have not given it the study time I should have. I end up circling the field two or three times. Folks keep thinking: *Surely he'll land it this time.*

A great sermon not only starts well, it ends well. Here's what I've learned about getting the plane down safely, on time, at its intended destination.

“Every human at one time or another has felt: **EMPTY, LONELY, GUILTY and AFRAID TO DIE.**” —Greg Laurie

Where things go wrong

One reason for a bumpy landing is introducing new material in the conclusion. For example, I may illustrate my conclusion with another passage of Scripture, and then realize halfway into it that people are not making the connection in their minds, so I have to slowly back up and explain it thoroughly.

I must also refrain from the temptation to shoehorn into the conclusion something I recently read or heard at a conference. It's good stuff, I'm itching to preach it, but it's not organic to the body of the sermon.

Finally, there is no such thing as a generic conclusion. I cannot “run to the cross” if I have not spoken of the cross all morning. A great conclusion, like fine gravy, is made up of the same essence as the meat.

Here's the Anatomy of a Good Conclusion:

A great conclusion is pithy, personal, and persuasive.

Pithy. Compared to the length of the body of the sermon, a conclusion is relatively short. Everyone jokes about the preacher who says “in conclusion,” when everyone knows he’s really just warming up. Brevity has immense power. I don’t want the conclusion to sneak up on anyone, but if it drags, people will not stay with me to the end.

Personal. I want the sermon conclusion to feel like a one-on-one conversation, like I’m talking directly to each one present. I’ve had people say, “I came wanting to be lost in the crowd, but I felt you were talking directly to me.” That’s what I’m after.

Persuasive. I believe the whole intent of preaching is to draw people to a decision. To merely lay out information and say, “There it is,” without calling for a decision is unthinkable to me.

I watch the people, pray and listen for the Spirit, even as I’m speaking.

The conclusion represents the highest emotional peak of the message, because I want to motivate people to do what they’ve just been informed about. I want to move them to action, not just agreement. People don’t do what they *know* to do; they do what they’re *motivated* to do. A conclusion must deal in the currency of passion.

Begin in the Reverse So To Speak

I’ve never boarded an airplane without being absolutely sure of its destination. But we’ve all heard, and probably preached, sermons with no destination—they just didn’t go anywhere. Usually that happens because study time invariably runs right up to the time of sermon delivery. If we wait to plan our conclusion last, chances are we’ll run short of time and step into the pulpit without a clear destination in mind. In all my work, and especially my preaching, I tackle the hardest part first. So when I prepare a sermon, I begin by planning where my sermon is going to end. It becomes my target for the rest of the sermon.

Spirit Cues of Sorts

As I approach the end of the sermon, I’m trying my best to listen to the Spirit, watch and read the congregation right and obey God. Hey, I’ve been at this point in the past, but I don’t want to presume that I know how God wants to do things. I must be sensitive for God might just want to do a new thing today among His people. So I watch His people and I listen for the Spirit, even as I’m speaking. I want my altar call and preaching to be a form of worship unto Him.

The Holy Spirit may guide me to develop or expound more on one nugget of truth—I call it a hook in the text—from that passage that I was just teaching from. That’s where the Spirit is already dealing with their hearts and He could press upon me to have the sinners and backsliders go public with their repentance and new commitment. And other times I’ve sensed, *it’s time to start shutting things down with a simpler form of altar call and then I begin to bring it in for a landing making it clear that prayer counselors will be up in the front at the end of the service if someone needs to get right with God.* My job is to give an opportunity and make sure that I get out of God’s way.

A great sermon not only starts well, it ends well. A great Message has a hook in it!

Use righteous bait that they actually like, and put a hook in every witnessing and preaching encounter!

Prayer:

Lord, make my life a fishing prayer to You! I want to do what You want me to, no token clichés, no broken promises, no white lies that you despise, no cavalier excuses, no compromise! O Harvester, working in my sea of life, please do Your work through me. I don't want to fall, so make my life Your passionate alter call ...with me on the altar table first and others coming there too, because our nation pushes for a selfish cue. But no political leader can come close to replacing You. Yes, I surrender my body, my mind, my spirit... help me see You as you really are and then others hooked even from afar. That'd be fine! God, please make my life a fruitful fishing venture in Your time; let it mean a catch that's true—a boat-load of people caught by You too! How sublime to give you ourselves in our prime ...and to cast in another line! Make my life an angler's net even if some get upset, a worship-session with no pretension! Make it a believing prayer; because You want me to be there ...to care and to boldly share! Lord, make my life an altar call that's fair!

God can't do everything! Here are...

Five things God can not do:

- 1) *God can not lie, (this is mentioned eight times in the Bible)*
- 2) *He can not learn, (This should be tremendously encouraging to you! I can learn a lot, but who knew? He knew!)*
- 3) *He can not let you down, (He can't disappoint you. God is light - no darkness is in Him. He is faithful and will never forsake you).*
- 4) *He can not be surprised (or disappointed) in you, (He never says "Ooops." It was such a good thing that god chose me before the foundations of the world, because if He didn't, I think He might have changed His mind.)*
- 5) *He can not make you love Him,*
- 6) *He can not see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ (Yes He designed it that way. Have you applied the blood of Christ to your life by faith yet?).*

Five Things God does not know:

- 1) *He doesn't know a sin He doesn't fiercely hate, (Sinning hurts people He fiercely loves. Do you hate sin the way He does? Until you do, you've got growth ahead, Christian).*
- 2) *He doesn't know a sinner He doesn't thoroughly love, (There's no greater love than this that one would lay down His life for a friend. Do you have any other sinless friends that would do that for you?)*
- 3) *He doesn't know a way to His throne other than through His one and only Son, (Jesus said, I am the way...no man comes to the Father but by Me.)*
- 4) *He doesn't know a prayer He will not or has not answered, (He always answers with a "Yes," a "no," or a "wait" and has reasons for each. Amy Carmichael, asked him to -change her brown eyes to blue, But God wanted them the color they were for He was calling her to become a missionary to dark eyed East Indians Isn't "No" an answer? All the promises in God in Christ are yes and amen!)*

5.) *He doesn't know a better time to commit your life to Him than right now, (Today is the day of salvation. Mr. or Mrs. Altar call deliverer, are you truly saved—born again? Repent and believe in Jesus—this is first base for you! You can't hit a home run in this area without tapping first base as you round the diamond so to speak!)*

“We are to preach the Word, and if we do it properly, there will be a call to a decision that comes in the message, and then we leave it to the Spirit to act upon people.”

—Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones

I feel like I've personally botched some altar calls before and I hate that! You're probably asking how. Well, I've over prepared an altar call beforehand, then I got all excited about all that I read and I just felt like I had to give the people all that I studied in my prep-time, so my altar appeal at church went way too long. I missed the right moment to draw them in. It's so easy to do. Poor people! Other times I've forgotten very important points, or I didn't tie it in with the message well. I winged it too much. It came off way too clumsy I felt and I stammered on top of that. The people have all be so gracious and encouraged me about my enthusiasm. Other times I studied long and hard for the main Message and then went too long with it in the delivery and therefore I had to rush the whole altar call just to end on time to honor the senior pastor's request. God is so great, because sometimes when I didn't have must time to prepare due to unexpected weddings, funerals and hospital visits that came up—though I really tried to—I was really pleased and surprised to see more people come forward to get right with God than in several months prior. Doing my best, I commit the rest! He is faithful, He knows our frailties and He asks us to be faithful. Jesus is the one Who adds to the church and we should expect Him to do this.

When Christ was talking about his upcoming passion on the cross He wanted to let His disciples know more about it, so He said, ***“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This He said, signifying what death he should die”***(Jn. 12:32). But whenever I read this particular cross-verse it always reminds me of a good soul-winning principle regarding our need to exalt, magnify and brag on Jesus the most. Don't you find that when a person is really in love with Jesus and they explain His lovely character and how beautiful a Person He really is, other people are just drawn to get to know Him ...even in an altar call? If a Christian spends time alone with Jesus and all though out there day, others can tell. They don't have to put on any airs or sound like a wild TV preacher at all. What would any salesperson be like if they never talked about the positive aspects of their product or what it could do (trusting that their product does at least one thing cool)? Of course Jesus doesn't even compare to any product, but many of us simply don't brag on Him like we should. We don't seem to explain from the Scriptures what He or the Father are really like. Many Christians—even pastors and preachers—just don't seem to talk about Jesus much any more. Too many preachers talk about self-help stuff, about psychology, about politics, about church growth (transfer growth), about success and leadership principles more than about Jesus, but none of those things can save anybody.

I don't know about you, but I personally want more of Jesus—I want Him to have more of me and live bigger in and through me. Could you even imagine a high school couple smitten hard with puppy love for the first time and neither of them ever talked about who they had a crush on?

I was listening to a well-meaning preacher today talk about how he “evangelized a young couple in their apartment” last week. In reality He only thought he evangelized them (...at least he was out trying which is better than most, so without being too critical because I'm sure I've made the same mistake as he did I'll go on). The only thing he could tell this couple about after seeing

all their empty beer cans lying around was that their house filled with beer cans was very evil and they were on the wrong path. He went on with an angry tone as he related how upset he was at their apparent sinful lifestyle. He told them how they were living wrong, but I noticed that he didn't say anything positive about Christ or the Gospel at all. He merely ended up his visit telling us that Christians don't preach against sin enough in the church or out. And do I agree that there needs to be more preaching against sin today. I believe that preaching against sin as well as talk of repentance, faith, Hell, the cross, certain judgment ahead should all be heard more. That nice young couple that let the man in their home didn't get saved after the man's stern message about all their beer cans and how their life was going nowhere fast.

Hey, there indeed is a time and a place for denouncing sin in love for the people and a lot depends upon the relationship you have with them. Do they claim to be Christians or unbelievers? How close to them are you? Do they know you love them or are you going to offend them and burn a bridge by your effort to control them? Is it your place to control them and clean up their apartment or bad habits? Let's leave as few burned bridges behind us as possible, ok? You remember how obedient John the baptizer publicly preached against sin—even wicked Herod's infidelity—but Herod was the ruling leader that was setting a really bad example for the people. It was a different situation. Herod called for John's head too because of John's words. Are you ready to lose your life and are you sure you're going about it right? The Bible says, ***"For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. Because John had said to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him"*** (Mk. 6:17-19).

I believe it is a waste of time to try and reform sinners—to try and get after them until their behavior gets better—to try and get them to give up all their bad habits. Does this world need moral sinners headed to hell? Why merely have sinners switch to more socially acceptable idols? Sinners sin because they are sinners. Once they have a new nature in them, they want to change and Jesus will change them as well as change us. When Christ told us to proclaim the Good News, He didn't mean that we get hung up on pure negativity—the bad news only? There is a place for sharing the bad news, but no place for enforcing your must-do-list or never-do-list on sinners. Of course we don't want to mainly influence unbelievers to make a decision for Christ using all the life enhancing fringe benefits of salvation—you know the love, joy, peace etc using those as the main draw cards, because there will be trials, temptations, persecution and suffering ahead for them if they get saved. But we certainly do want to sell them so to speak ...on the trustworthiness and beauty of the Person of Jesus.

In an attempt to weakly illustrate my point, could you please imagine seeing a junkyard dog, chowing down on an old dry worthless bone (or let's say on a bone that a cruel butcher gave to the dog with arsenic sprinkled on top of it, just to make his pleasure destructive). And then a man comes along realizing the dog's fate and tries his best to yank and tug and talk that dog out of his bone. He carefully explains how bad a life around a bone with arsenic can be—how death is sure to follow, but it's the only thing the dog knows and has. Do you think that dog will give it up for him? No, not on your life! He'll probably bite the man in the leg. But what if another person came and saw the predicament and pulled a thick juicy porterhouse steak out of her bag and just held it out there for the dog to smell it and see it. That dog will gladly drop the old poisonous bone and go for the nutritious steak dinner instead. And that's how some people will be when they hear of Jesus. Let's face it, people are feeling lonely, guilty (because they are guilty), empty inside, and afraid to die—every unbeliever experiences that some times and that's why I feel for them. People aren't real dogs, but I say (while the person is figuring up their little cost benefits analysis in their head as you speak) offer them eternal abundant unending life in Christ, a true friendship with the One who sticks closer than a brother—the one who fills up all emptiness with torrents of living waters. Yup, if they drink from any other brook they will thirst

again. Lift up Christ in your estimation and communication. Preach Christ and Him crucified because of His love for man—He's so preach-able!

How To Botch An Altar Call

[I want to give you an opportunity to get right with God!](#) Sometimes we need to look at casting the net from a different perspective. Here are a few keys for those who don't want people saved in their services, out on the streets or wherever they give unbelievers some sort of altar call.

1. ***Present an unbalanced message.*** Only let them see the heart-warming part of God's character. Preach God's love but leave out His holiness and justice. That way they'll think He'll let them into heaven no matter what.
2. ***Don't mention repentance until they're repeating a "sinner's prayer".*** Just get them to say, "I repent of all my sins" while they're echoing you. They won't know what they're saying and they won't count the cost.
3. ***Skim over the gospel and push the prayer.*** Pretend the lost naturally understand what Christ has done for them.
4. ***Preach Jesus as a life enhancer not a life rescuer.*** Tell them how Jesus can improve their life but don't show them Jesus as the only One who can save them from Hell. People will think if they reject Him they're only losing out on a spiritual high.
5. ***Try to please the people instead of convert them.*** Tell them what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear.
6. ***Compromise the message to speed of the process.*** The Christians who have heard it a hundred times before will be pleased with that. The quicker they get out the quicker they can get to the restaurant.
7. ***Give them the impression that God is so good He won't send anyone to hell.*** Don't present the whole counsel of God or they might realize He is so good that He'll see to it that justice is served and that all unrepentant sinners will be punished in the fire that is not quenched.
8. ***Speak to sinners as though they were saints.*** They'll think they're God's children instead of the enemies of God they've made themselves into because of their sin. You'll give them false assurance and mislead them.
9. ***Don't mention sin or man's guilt.*** Resist the urge to explain what Christ came to deliver us from. don't show them their need for the Savior. Otherwise it may all make sense.
10. ***Don't look to the Bible for the substance of your altar call.*** Only mimic other preachers with large congregations.
11. ***Tell the lost not to feel bad about their sins.*** That way you will work against the Holy Spirit who's convicting them.
12. ***Whatever you do, never mention Judgment Day.*** Your audience might take spiritual matters seriously.
13. ***Tell them Jesus is the only way to heaven but don't explain why.*** They may think it's nothing more than fear tactics and leave offended instead of enlightened.
14. ***Confuse the call.*** This is a great way to botch up an altar call. Don't let people know you're asking them to commit their life to Christ. Be vague and general in what you're saying. Neglect to mention following Christ in you evangelistic altar calls and say things like, "If you don't feel you're as close to God as possible raise your hand," "If you feel lonely come to the front for prayer," "If you want more of God this is your time," and, "If you have struggles and need the answer come down." Just get them to raise a hand. That way no one will be able to count the cost and you'll even get saints to respond to salvation altar calls, making the results look more successful.
15. ***Only give them half the story.*** Tell them Jesus died to forgive everyone but overlook the fact that God's forgiveness must be applied to them through personal faith and repentance in Jesus Christ.

16. **Present the truth as though it isn't.** Be so funny when you share Christ that you belittle the seriousness of the matter.
17. **Preach forgiveness without repentance.** That way no one will know how to be forgiven.
18. **Let them think next Sunday is the day of salvation.** Don't make them feel it's urgent to respond today.
19. **Never warn of hell.** Dangle heaven in front of their nose but rarely mention hell, certainly not as much as Jesus did.
20. **Only do altar calls inside the church.** Never take the gospel where sinners congregate. The lost might get saved.
21. **Use churchy terms.** Use words like, "saved", "repent", and "born again," without any explanation. That way your hearers won't comprehend what you're saying. If they can't understand it, it's probable they won't be changed by it.
22. **Give false assurance of salvation to unsaved nominal Christians.** Assure church folk that they are saved even if they bear no fruit. So that you don't offend the unsaved pew warmers. Never quote 2 Corinthians 13:5 **"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith"**. You could lose some financial supporters and have to depend on God.
23. **Never mention the wrath of God.** If you mention it, people might be awakened to flee to Jesus who **"saves us from the wrath to come"** (1 Thess. 1:10).
24. **Study how the apostles preached and witnessed and do the opposite.** Don't explain Jesus' suffering death on the cross. Otherwise they may think of running to Him for forgiveness. Don't speak of His burial or resurrection or they might realize He is God. Refrain from commenting about the hundreds of eyewitnesses who saw Jesus after He rose from the dead. That way they can go on thinking He's a fairy tale. Overlook talk of the messianic prophecies Jesus fulfilled or they might realize that the Bible is true. If they see it's the truth they may see that following Christ is the logical decision. And whatever you do, avoid what the apostles did when it came time to call people to obey the gospel. Don't tell them to trust Christ and live for Him. That is too accurate. If they know how to get saved your altar call will be a success.
25. **Put more emphasis on the "sinner's Prayer" than on repentance and faith.** Satan will smile over your departure from Biblical instruction. We are never taught to use a 'sinner's prayer' throughout the entire Bible. If you decide to use it and put more emphasis on the technique than on what we're commanded to preach: faith and repentance you'll certainly botch things up. A 'sinner's prayer' doesn't equal salvation, only faith in Christ and repentance toward God do.
26. **(Pastors) Let Christians think you're the only one who can do it right.** Always leave the impression that they should only invite friends to church and never actually witness themselves. It will keep you in business and the lost unsaved.
27. **Rely upon psychological techniques to manipulate people into responding to the altar call.** Don't rely upon the Holy Spirit or they may actually get saved.
28. **Make sure you're the main attraction.** Remember the goal in botching up an altar call is for people to leave and say, "What a wonderful preacher," instead of, "What a wonderful Savior." Draw all possible attention to how great a speaker and person you are. Otherwise people might see Christ in your preaching and get saved.
29. **Don't focus upon Jesus.** Finally, the best way to botch up an altar call is not to preach the gospel. Just get people to lift up a hand and pray a prayer with you. Resist the urge to speak of the only One who could save them.

Sometimes the best way to get a point across is to put the whole thing in a different light. You now know a few ways to botch up an altar call. Please do not employ them. Do the opposite as the Bible teaches you to. You may already do some of them. Don't let pride keep you from changing and doing things in a Biblical fashion. The bottom line is how true we are to Christ and His word. Effectively reaching the lost is our purpose. Let nothing hold you back from that agenda. May God bless you as you seek to win people to Christ in Bible clubs, churches,

conferences, on the street witnessing encounters, at your school, and at your workplace.²

Preaching So As To Convert Nobody

It is generally conceded at the present day that the Holy Spirit converts souls to Christ by means of truth adapted to that end. It follows that a selfish preacher will not skillfully adapt means to convert souls to Christ, for this is not his end.

1st Rule. Let your supreme motive be to secure your own popularity; then, of course, your preaching will be adapted to that end, and not to convert souls to Christ.

2nd. Aim at pleasing, rather than at converting your hearers.

3rd. Aim at securing for yourself the reputation of a beautiful writer.

4th. Let your sermons be written with a high degree of literary finish.

5th. Let them be short, occupying in the reading not to exceed from twenty to twenty-five minutes.

6th. Let your style be flowery, ornate, and quite above the comprehension of the common people.

7th. Be sparing of thought, lest your sermon contain truth enough to convert a soul.

8th. Lest your sermon should make a saving impression, announce no distinct propositions or heads, that will be remembered, to disturb the consciences of your hearers.

9th. Make no distinct points, and take no disturbing issues with the consciences of your hearers, lest they remember these issues, and become alarmed about their souls.

10th. Avoid a logical division and sub-division of your subject, lest you should too thoroughly instruct your people.

11th. Give your sermon the form and substance of a flowing, beautifully written, but never-to-be-remembered essay; so that your hearers will say "it was a beautiful sermon," but can give no further account of it.

12th. Avoid preaching doctrines that are offensive to the carnal mind, lest they should say of you, as they did of Christ, "This is a hard saying. Who can hear it?" and that you are injuring your influence.

13th. Denounce sin in the abstract, but make no allusion to the sins of your present audience.

14th. Keep the spirituality of God's holy law, by which is the knowledge of sin, out of sight, lest the sinner should see his lost condition, and flee from the wrath to come.

15th. Preach the Gospel as a remedy, but conceal, or ignore the fatal disease of the sinner.

16th. Preach salvation by grace; but ignore the condemned and lost condition of the sinner, lest he should understand what you mean by grace, and feel his need of it.

17th. Preach Christ as an infinitely amiable and good-natured being; but ignore those scathing rebukes of sinners and hypocrites which so often made his hearers tremble.

18th. Avoid especially preaching to those who are present. Preach about sinners, and not to them. Say they, and not you, lest any one should make a personal and saving application of your subject.

19th. Aim to make your hearers pleased with themselves and pleased with you, and be careful not to wound the feelings of any one.

20th. Preach no searching sermons, lest you convict and convert the worldly members of your church.

21st. Avoid awakening uncomfortable memories by reminding your hearers of their past sins.

22nd. Do not make the impression that God commands your hearers now and here to obey the truth.

23rd. Do not make the impression that you expect your hearers to commit themselves upon the spot and give their hearts to God.

24th. Leave the impression that they are expected to go away in their sins, and to consider the matter at their convenience.

25th. Dwell much upon their inability to obey, and leave the impression that they must wait for God to change their natures.

26th. Make no appeals to the fears of sinners; but leave the impression that they have no reason to fear.

27th. Say so little of Hell that your people will infer that you do not believe in its existence.

28th. Make the impression that, if God is as good as you are, He will send no one to Hell.

29th. Preach the love of God, but ignore the holiness of His love, that will by no means clear the impenitent sinner.

30th. Often present God in His parental love and relations; but ignore His governmental and legal relations to His subjects, lest the sinner should find himself condemned already, and the wrath of God abiding on him.

31st. Preach God as all mercy, lest a fuller representation of His character should alarm the consciences of your hearers.

32nd. Try to convert sinners to Christ without producing any uncomfortable convictions of sin.

33rd. Flatter the rich, so as to repel the poor, and you will convert none of either class.

34th. Make no disagreeable allusions to the doctrines of self-denial, cross-bearing, and crucifixion to the world, lest you should convict and convert some of your church members.

35th. Admit, either expressly or impliedly, that all men have some moral goodness in them; lest sinners should understand that they need a radical change of heart, from sin to holiness.

36th. Avoid pressing the doctrine of total moral depravity; lest you should offend, or even convict and convert, the moralist.

37th. Do not rebuke the worldly tendencies of the church, lest you should hurt their feelings, and finally convert some of them.

38th. Should any express anxiety about their souls, do not probe them by any uncomfortable allusion to their sin and ill-desert; but encourage them to join the church at once, and exhort them to assume their perfect safety within the fold.

39th. Preach the love of Christ not as enlightened benevolence, that is holy, just, and sin-hating; but as a sentiment, an involuntary and indiscriminating fondness.

40th. Be sure not to represent religion as a state of loving self-sacrifice for God and soul; but rather as a free and easy state of self-indulgence. By thus doing, you will prevent sound conversions to Christ, and convert your hearers to yourself.

41st. So select your themes, and so present them, as to attract and flatter the wealthy, aristocratic, self-indulgent, extravagant, pleasure-seeking classes, and you will not convert any of them to the cross-bearing religion of Christ.

42nd. Be time-serving, or you will endanger your salary and, besides, if you speak out and are faithful, you may convert somebody.

43rd. Do not preach with a divine unction, lest your preaching make a saving impression.

44th. To avoid this, do not maintain a close walk with God, but rely upon your learning and study.

45th. Lest you should pray too much, engage in light reading and worldly amusements.

46th. That your people may not think you in earnest to save their souls, and, as a consequence, heed your preaching, encourage church-fairs, lotteries and other gambling and worldly expedients to raise money for church purposes.

47th. If you do not approve of such things, make no public mention of your disapprobation, lest your church should give them up, and turn their attention to saving souls and be saved themselves.

48th. Do not rebuke extravagance in dress, lest you should uncomfortably impress your vain and worldly church-members.

49th. Lest you should be troubled with revival scenes and labors, encourage parties, picnics, excursions, and worldly amusements, so as to divert attention from the serious work of saving souls.

50th. Ridicule solemn earnestness in pulling sinners out of the fire, and recommend, by precept and example, it jovial, fun-loving religion, and sinners will have little respect for your serious preaching.

51st. Cultivate a fastidious taste in your people, by avoiding all disagreeable allusions to the last judgment and final retribution.

52nd. Treat such uncomfortable doctrines as obsolete and out of place in these days of Christian refinement.

53rd. Do not commit yourself to much-needed reforms, lest you should compromise your popularity and injure your influence. Or you may make some branch of outward reform a hobby, and dwell so much upon it as to divert attention from the great work of converting souls to Christ.

54th. So exhibit religion as to encourage the selfish pursuit of it. Make the impression upon sinners that their own safety and happiness is the supreme motive for being religious.

55th. Do not lay much stress upon the efficacy and necessity of prayer, lest the Holy Spirit should be poured out upon you and the congregation, and sinners should be converted.

56th. Make little or no impression upon your hearers, so that you can repeat your old sermons often without its being noticed.

57th. If your text suggest any alarming thought, pass lightly over it, and by no means dwell upon and enforce it.

58th. Avoid all illustrations, repetitions, and emphatic sentences, that may compel your people to remember what you say.

59th. Avoid all heat and earnestness in your delivery, lest you make the impression that you really believe what you say.

60th. Address the imagination, and not the conscience, of your hearers.

61st. Make it your great aim to be personally popular with all classes of your hearers.

62nd. Be tame and timid in presenting the claims of God, as would become you in presenting your own claims.

63rd. Be careful not to testify from your own personal experience of the power of the Gospel, lest you should produce the conviction upon your hearers that you have something which they need.

64th. See that you say nothing that will appear to any of your hearers to mean him or her, unless it be something flattering.

65th. Encourage church sociables, and attend them yourself, because they tend so strongly to levity as to compromise Christian dignity and sobriety, and thus paralyze the power of your preaching.

66th. Encourage the cultivation of the social in so many ways as to divert the attention of yourself and your church-members from the infinite guilt and danger of the unconverted among you.

67th. In those sociables talk a little about religion, but avoid any serious appeal to the heart and conscience of those who attend, lest you should discourage their attendance, always remembering that they do not go to socials to be earnestly dealt with in regard to their relations to God. In this way you will effectually so employ yourself and church-members as that your preaching will not convert anybody.

The experience of ministers who have steadily adhered to any of the above rules, will attest the soul-destroying efficacy of such a course, and churches whose ministers have steadily conformed to any of these rules can testify that such preaching does not convert souls to Christ.³

¹ In the Bible we see three different relationships that we people can have with the Holy Spirit: 1.) para, 2.) en and 3.) epi. (See http://fish4souls.org/booklets/6Lesson_SBap_bk.pdf).

² This "**How To Botch Up An Alter Call**" was Adapted from *Becoming an Emissary for God* by Allen Atzbi.

³ This "**Preaching So As To Convert Nobody**" was written by the great soul-winner named Charles G. Finney.

