

# The Pastoral Purpose

Orval C. Butcher \*

“Pastor, am I no longer a man since I’ve been saved?” These were words from the lips of a man sitting across my desk who had been a Christian for just three months. Tears filled his eyes as he continued his conversation: “I’ve been so happy in the Lord; this has been a new life, but I can’t understand myself. Yesterday afternoon I was at work and, as usual, since finding Jesus as my Saviour, I was humming Gospel songs like ‘Love Lifted Me,’ ‘He Lives,’ and ‘Amazing Grace.’ As you know, I had never heard these songs before I came to church. I was standing by my desk and a man who I knew did not like me walked by and without provocation kicked me in the shins and spit in my face. Pastor, do you know what I did? I just stood there and cried. What’s wrong with me? If this had happened six months ago I literally would have killed that man, but all I could do was stand there and cry. I didn’t used to cry. Does being saved take the man out of you?”

In a few words I was able to explain to him how a miracle had taken place in his life and now he truly was a man, a man like Jesus—filled with love rather than hate, compassion rather than revenge. This explanation satisfied him and he went his way rejoicing. The sequel to the incident which brought this man to my study was that he along with his would-be enemy were brought before a Labor Committee which, in reviewing the incident, passed judgment that one of the men, if not both, would have to be removed from their positions. My friend, without hesitation, addressed the Committee saying, “If one of us has to go, let it be me.” This so disarmed the Committee reviewing the case that neither man was removed.

Remarkable! But the way this man came to find Christ is even more unusual. His home was crumbling; he was an avowed agnostic filled with cynicism and hostility. In desperation, he thumbed down

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\* Pastor, Skyline Wesleyan Methodist Church, Lemon Grove, California.

through the yellow pages of the phone book to find a church, any church, for one last try. In God's good providence his index finger stopped at the name of a strongly evangelical church and he and his wife attended. In due time they came to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

### REACHING

Few come to Christ as a result of leafing through the yellow pages of a phone book. Too often we depend on "drop-ins" for the outreach of our evangelistic ministry. The Gospel has *go* in it. The pastor who is reaching people is not satisfied with the security of a pulpit, but is a searcher for souls. We have depended upon our program, publicity and personalities to attract the sinner to church and we are missing the masses because of competition from a modern culture which offers so many substitutes.

Many productive methods are available for reaching men where they are, such as tract distribution, house-to-house visitation, direct witnessing. However, the most effective means of reaching the unchurched sinner rises out of the practice of the New Testament Church in the Book of Acts, ". . . They went from house to house." Bible study for the unsaved, I believe, is God's answer to reaching men where they are today. Experience has shown that one does not create a class for the unsaved by establishing such a group in the homes of mature Christians. The ideal is to find a couple who has recently been saved and is anxious to share newfound joy with unsaved friends who suffer the same bondage and darkness. The new convert has a circle of unconverted friends, while the well-established Christian has pretty well removed himself from contact with the unconverted. These Bible study times in the home place the needy heart at ease. He is not surrounded by Christians who might censor him, but is able to judge the truth of the Word of God and to ask questions without embarrassment. The person teaching such a class must be prepared to present his message from God's Word with simplicity and, also, to be able to adapt himself by language and attitude to the group before him.

### RELATING

Jesus related to people by love and compassion, not by lowering Himself to their practices. He conversed with the harlot, ate with the publican, and died between two thieves, yet was without sin. We relate to lost souls in three ways: (1) by our absolute sincerity in wanting them to know Jesus; (2) by our presentation of the Gospel in simplicity; and (3) by our sociability, or, better stated,

our ability to show them by our warmth and interest the relevancy of Jesus Christ to their need.

Since nearly fifty percent of our American population is under twenty-five years of age, there is an obvious task of reaching to-day's generation. As young people face materialism and double talking, and are wooed by so-called intellectualism, they are finding themselves led into a vacuum which provides no answer for the basic direction of life. We cannot relate to these young people by reducing Jesus and the truth of His redemption to their level. As they plead for soundness and for sense, there is only one source and it is the Gospel. The going church will have youth as its primary objective.

Unfortunately, the church has found itself in a tradition, attempting to appeal to the adult constituency, so in many places the people who attend the church are of middle age or older. This lack of youth is indicative of a dying church, and is a trend which must be reversed if we are to continue to exist. The main focus of attention must be given to children through the young married adults. Members of these ages, of course, are the least able to carry the financial burden of the church, so it is a foregone conclusion that the older adults must foster the younger generation, a task requiring considerable adjustment and determination to remain contemporary. Effective leadership for children, junior high school young people, teen-agers, collegians and young adults is a requisite to success in relating the Gospel to this day. The Gospel does not change, but it must be "packaged" in a new manner—not difficult if mature adults will see the vision. Never in the twentieth century has there been as much material printed for assisting in relating the real Gospel to the soul needs of this young generation: programming, visual aids; idea kits, guides for Christian social life. Youth needs *action* and *answers*, not austerity and clichés. If today's generation is in peril, it is because mature adults are failing to relate the Gospel to this day of sophisticated sin. There is no such thing as a "new morality," but young people will be duped into believing there is unless we get the absolutes of the Word of God to them.

#### RECONCILING

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Church at Corinth, made this statement: "God . . . hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." The *pastoral purpose* is to create a climate in the circle of one's ministry by his life and leadership which will be conducive to bringing all unconverted who come under the influence of one's flock to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Some basic facts must be observed, as follows: putting Christ first, denomination second; working with the individual rather than the corporate body; trusting lay

people and putting them to work; using male leadership; focusing emphasis on the younger generation; realizing that prayer and faith are basically essential; leading by personal love and sacrifice; maintaining a simple, direct and scriptural pulpit ministry; conserving the new converts by Bible training classes (in addition to Sunday school), and ever keeping in mind that success is not measured by statistics but by how well one has covered his potential field.

Today's soul-saving thrust is not simply from the strong pulpit ministry as was true fifty years ago. Success now is realized by the pastor motivating and giving leadership to the laymen who find themselves in the "highways and byways" where souls are in need. Campus Crusade for Christ has established a pattern which every church should copy. They have not found a new idea but have revived the New Testament pattern.

The pastor with purpose reaches men, relates the Gospel to the man's need, and brings him to reconciliation. Such a ministry has appeal to the "called" man who is also resourceful, vigorous, and above all, impelled by the love of Christ.