

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

Evangelism

1 Thessalonians 2:1-1

What do you fear?

(POSB: Note 2)

Are you bold in your witness or do you tend to water-down the message of the gospel so as to not offend anyone? Listen to this powerful testimony from one of the early church fathers:

“When the great Chrysostom was arrested by the Roman Emperor, the latter sought to make the Greek Christian recant, but without success. So the emperor discussed with his advisers what could be done to the prisoner. ‘Shall I put him in a dungeon?’ the Emperor asked.

“‘No,’ one of his counselors replied, ‘for he will be glad to go. He longs for the quietness wherein he can delight in the mercies of his God.’

“‘Then he shall be executed!’ said the Emperor.

“‘No,’ was the answer, ‘for he will also be glad to die. He declares that in the event of death he will be in the presence of his Lord.’

“‘What shall we do then?’ the ruler asked.

“‘There is only one thing that will give Chrysostom pain,’ the counselor said. ‘To cause Chrysostom to suffer, make him sin. He is afraid of nothing except sin.’”⁵

If you were in the same situation, what would the opposition say about your life, your witness? Would you, too, be bold in spreading the gospel? What gives you the greatest fear in your Christian witness?

10-112

Love

1 Thessalonians 2:1-1

Hands that give “TLC” (tender-loving care)

(POSB: Note 7, point 2)

Are you noted for the amount of “TLC” (tender-loving-care) that you shower on those around you? Listen to this touching story from the foreign mission field:

“Rev. Ira Gillett, missionary to Portuguese East Africa, tells the story of a group of natives who made a long journey and walked past a government hospital to come to the mission hospital for treatment. When asked why they had walked the extra distance to reach the mission hospital when the same medicines were available at the government institution, they replied, “The medicines may be the same, but the hands are different.”⁶

⁵ Baptist Standard. Paul Lee Tan. *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1985), p.282.

⁶ *Upper Room*. Walter B. Knight. *3,000 Illustrations for Christian Service* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p.402.

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The servants of our Lord must be gentle, caring, sincere—can the same be said about you?

10-113

Encouragement

1 Thessalonians 2:1-1

A church where everyone is “honking” evangelism

(POSB: Note 11)

Believers are to be about the business of edification. For sure, this will not come from the world. It must come through the church.

Bruce Larson, in his book Wind and Fire, points out some interesting facts about sand hill cranes:

“These large birds, who fly great distances across continents, have three remarkable qualities. First, they rotate leadership. No one bird stays out in front all the time. Second, they choose leaders who can handle turbulence. And then, all during the time one bird is leading, the rest are honking their affirmation. That’s not a bad model for the church. Certainly we need leaders who can handle turbulence and who are aware that leadership ought to be shared. But most of all, we need a church where we are all honking encouragement.”⁷

What a glorious sound it would be if we were all ‘honking’ our encouragement!

10-114

Victorious Christian Life

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

The desire to “kick sand” in the bully’s face

(POSB: Introduction)

Has a bully ever picked you on? Years ago, a popular advertisement was featured in a variety of magazines. Pictured was a 98-pound weakling lying on a beach who was brushing sand out of his face. How did the sand get there? A bully kicked it in his face. The intent of the advertisement was to touch the emotions of people who were fed up with getting picked on or stepped on by some bully in their lives. All a person had to do was fill out the coupon, enclose his personal check, and wait for his “anti-bully” kit. He could hardly wait for the mail to come because he had a vision of being able to kick sand back in the face of the bully. With his newfound strength, he would never fear the bully again.

In many ways, believers can relate to that 98-pound weakling. When it comes to confronting the threatening problems of life, we often find ourselves flat on our backs, sand in our faces, waving the white flag of surrender. Instead of living like

⁷ Craig B. Larson, Editor. *Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), p.129.

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victorious Christians who are triumphant, we forfeit the battle without a fight. If we want to be a part of a strong church, we must draw on God's strength not our own.

A strong church is a church of strong people, a people who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and who are continuing steadfast in Him.

10-115

Bible

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

A strong passion for Bible distribution

(POSB: Note 1, point 3)

How important is it to get God's Word into the hands of people? Think about it! So many of us are rich—we have several translations of Scripture on our bookshelves. Unfortunately, there are millions who do not have a copy of the precious Word of God. Listen to this stirring story of one man's attempt to reach the nations with God's Word. Let's call him Joe.

Joe was a member of an organization called The Gideons. The burden of the Gideons is to distribute God's Word so that people might read the Scriptures and make a decision to follow Christ. On one particular trip to a Far Eastern nation, a story began to unfold, a story that would be retold time and again.

On his trip, Joe had a suitcase of Testaments that he was eager to share. Never in his wildest dreams did he think he would run out before his trip was over. But there he was looking at a large group of young people. His heart sank as he quickly realized that there were more people than there were Bibles.

"God, what shall I do? There are not enough Testaments for all of these precious people." As Joe gazed into the faces of these young people, it was their eyes that really struck his heart. He could feel the deep spiritual hunger that was starving for God—if only they could have God's Word.

"All right, Father. Which ones do you want to have a Bible?" Expecting God to mark His choices with some kind of visible sign, deep within his heart, Joe heard this instead, "Joe, you select the ones. This is your responsibility, not Mine." And so, in obedience, Joe did the hardest thing he has ever had to do in his life—decide who would and who would not receive God's Word.

Needless to say, this experience made a lasting impression on Joe's life. By the grace of God, never again would he be caught short of Testaments. Despite his broken heart, God used Joe to distribute thousands of Testaments to people who found Christ as Lord and Savior.

10-116

Fellowship

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

The magnetic drawing power of Christian fellowship

(POSB: Note 4)

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How much does meeting with other believers mean to you? Do you take your fellowship for granted or do you have a vibrant passion to meet with God's people?

There is a story about a man who would walk for miles to get to his church. Waymon was the kind of guy who had a hard time fitting into the "right" social circles. The truth be known, you might even have had a hard time accepting him into your group if you were the type of person who judged a book by its cover.

Fortunately, Waymon's church was flexible enough to look beyond his rough edges and accept him as a part of the flock. The church that Waymon chose to be his family was considered to be a pretty affluent group. But their affluence did not blind them with pride.

Waymon was a whole lot more reliable than many members. The weather did not keep him away. He was always there to help set up the chairs and do anything that would make the worship service a meaningful experience.

Why did Waymon love to come to church? He loved to come to church because in that place he found the love and acceptance which was not his out in the world.

Would you walk a mile or more for love?

10-117

Evangelism

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

Equipped to be a soul-winner

(POSB: Note 5)

Would you consider yourself to be a soul-winner? There are many Christians who are intimidated with that term for a variety of reasons. We need to take comfort in the fact that God has promised to equip His people for His work.

One night a man was driving his car when suddenly the headlights went out. Knowing that he was close to a service station, he turned on his emergency flashers and limped to the service station. After the mechanic made a quick inspection, he simply went to the fuse box and replaced a bad fuse with a good one. After paying his bill, the man drove home with plenty of light to show the way.

Many of us as believers are driving in darkness, failing to light the way for the lost. God has given us the right equipment, but somewhere along the way we got off course; we failed to follow the light. Being a soul-winner is simply lighting the way....

- for a person knowing Jesus Christ personally.
- for a person to conquer the sin and shame of this life.
- for a person to conquer the trials, tribulations, and temptations in this life.
- for a person to pass from death to life, to live eternally with God.
- for a person to get out of darkness into the light.
- for a person to live a life of righteousness and goodness.

Do you want to be a soul-winner? Allow God to put the light back into your life and then you can show others the way.