***FOUR SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REACH THE LOST April 21, 2014***

***Gospel Meeting: Real Life For Everyone Northwest Church, New Hope, MN—Max Dawson***

*Introduction:*

1. Reports say that it began with a minor traffic accident early one Saturday morning in August of 1995. It ended with the body of Deletha Word, age 33, floating lifelessly in the Detroit River.

a. Three men stopped her car on a bridge, pulled her out, and pursued her until she was forced off the bridge into the river below. More than 40 bystanders stood and watched it happen.

b. This is a story about barbarism and apathy. If we had been there, would we have acted? Or, would we have just watched? But we weren’t there; we had no opportunity to help her.

2. What about opportunities we do have? Here are two indisputable facts: Fact #1: Countless people around us are in danger of being separated from God forever. Fact #2: God wants us to act.

3. But what can we do? Maybe some on that bridge that day wanted to help but didn’t know how.

a. This same problem hinders the evangelistic efforts of many Christians. They want to reach the lost, but they’re not sure how to do it. “What do I do? What do I say to reach my friends?”

b. Let us examine four simple things you can do right now to reach the lost. These things are simple, powerful and require little effort. What is required of us is that we love God enough to obey Him, and love the lost enough to take action to rescue them.

*The Lesson:*

1. **SHINE.**
   1. What does that mean? Let Jesus answer, Matthew 5:13-16.
      1. When we live God’s way, we will be different from the world. Our speech and morals will be different. Our priorities will be different. We will react differently to problems. We will have better family relationships. People can see that we’re not like everyone else.
      2. In this passage Jesus says He wants the world to notice us. We are like a city on a hill. He wants others to see that His way is best. He wants our lives to draw lost people to Him.
      3. Bottom line: He wants our lives to shine in a dark world, reflecting His glory.
      4. This is something we can do; this is the starting point if we want to reach others: shine!
   2. So, does my life reflect Jesus? Does my light shine, or have I let the world extinguish it? God just wants us to live right. When we do that, we are lighting the way for others.
   3. While it is important to let our lights shine, that is not the end of our responsibility to the lost.
      1. “I’ll just be a good person and lost people will come to me wanting to know about Christ.”
      2. But that won’t work. Someone may see your good works, and may even give God some of the credit—but never speak to you. Someone has to speak first. That is you!
2. **SPEAK.**
   1. It makes sense that God should be in our conversations, Ephesians 4:15. We need to salt our speech with references to God, our relationship with Him, and Him as the source of good in our lives. We naturally talk about things that are most important to us: football, cars, etc.?
   2. Here are some things a disciple speaks:
      1. We speak God’s word. Share passages about family, hope, or eternity with friends.
      2. Give God the glory for good things in our lives. Find ways to honor God in your speech.
      3. Let unbelievers know you are praying for them—maybe someone going through a crisis.
      4. Point hurting people to the comfort found in God’s word.
      5. Speak positively about things that are going on in your congregation.
      6. Say simple things that show commitment to God: “Lord willing, I’ll see you tomorrow,” etc.
   3. It is natural for us to speak of spiritual things. But as we do, it will open doors of opportunity.
3. **INVITE.**
   1. See Philip’s example as he speaks to Nathaniel, John 1:45-46. Philip speaks positively about Jesus. Nathaniel is skeptical at first, so Philip says, “Come and see.” Let’s be like Philip.
      1. As we talk positively about spiritual things, we need to invite others to come and see.
      2. Invite them to spiritual activities that will give them an opportunity to hear God’s word.
   2. Here are some specifics:
      1. Talk positively about a Bible class you’re attending; invite them to come to class with you.
      2. Talk enthusiastically about worship services; invite them to come and see for themselves.
      3. Be excited about a special series of lessons; invite them to come and be part of the study.
      4. You can create events. Invite your neighbor into your home for prayer or Bible study.
      5. 25% ofthose who don’t attend church say they would come if invited. You can invite!
   3. We make special efforts to invite our neighbors to a gospel meeting. Why make that same effort all the time? What would happen if each member would invite just one person each week?
4. **WELCOME.**
   1. Scripture talks about how we treat those who come into our assembly, James 2:1-4.
   2. Someone invites you to his house for a meal. You arrive early. He comes in and says nothing to you. He plays with his kids till the meal is ready. When he comes to the table, he has a look that says, “That’s my chair.” During dinner he talks only to his family. After the meal, he leaves you alone and watches a movie with his kids. After a while, you go home. How do you feel?
   3. We treat guests with honor. We want them to know we care. We want them to feel welcome. By your actions, you may be the person who really shows them what this church is about.
   4. Let’s treat them with the same respect with which we would treat a guest in our homes.
      1. Let us introduce ourselves and tell them we’re glad they came.
      2. Take a minute to see if you can discover what needs may have brought them.
      3. Show them every courtesy; help them find a seat; in class, give them materials.
      4. Follow the ten-minute rule. For the first 10 minutes after service, visit with visitors.

*Conclusion:*

1. I don’t know what I would have done if I’d been on that bridge in Detroit. But that’s not the question.

2. The question for me: What will I do with the opportunities I do have to help the lost?