

Manual for Camp Counselors

Note: *all Scripture references are from the New King James Version (NKJV). Also, this is from an unpublished manuscript that may be published in the future by the author. Willowbrook has revised it and is using it by permission.*

Introduction

Many people have many different ways of preaching the Gospel. Our belief is that the Lord gave us examples and teaching in the New Testament as to how to preach the Gospel. However, in many situations, we have added to those examples and followed practices which are really not Scriptural even though in some cases the Lord has used those practices to His own honor and glory. This manual is designed to help us do things the way the Holy Spirit teaches in the Scripture:

Key to Good Gospel Preaching

Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." We believe that salvation is freely offered to all but that only those who personally believe it or have faith in the Lord Jesus can honestly say that they are saved. We believe that our part in this process is to give the person the Word of God so that they have something to believe in, and it is the Holy Spirit's work to convict them of sin and to bring them to saving faith. John 3:8 makes it clear that being born anew or again is a work of the Holy Spirit. Since the Word of God and the Spirit of God work together in the Bible (see John 6:63), we need to make sure that we preach nothing but the Word of God and that we do not go beyond our commission and try to do the work of the Holy Spirit. When someone asks, "*What must I do to be saved?*" The best answer is still, "*Believe on (trust) the Lord Jesus Christ (by trusting in His promises) and you will be saved (Acts 16:30-31).*"

Suggestions for Dealing with Someone Who Wants to be Saved

1. When doing personal work, pray for wisdom and guidance.
2. You may want to use the three questions discussed below.
3. If a person tells you they have trusted Christ, try to ensure that they have a Scripture verse of assurance. *Make sure they tell you that they are saved. You should not tell them that they are saved.*
4. If they say they are saved, ask them what they would tell the gatekeeper of heaven if they were asked why they belong in heaven.
5. When they are sure they are saved for the right reason, and they are grounded in a Scriptural promise, either pray with them or ask them to pray a prayer of thanksgiving, thanking the Lord for His Son and His salvation.
6. Emphasize that a prayer does not save but that the saved should pray.
7. Then talk about baptism, at least briefly, and encourage a regular systematic reading of the Bible.

Remember, if the Holy Spirit is convicting the person it is hard to do anything wrong. But if the person has only been touched emotionally or just wants to "fit in" or please the counselor, it is hard to do anything right. It takes wisdom to know the difference. The questions below can sometimes help sort this out:

1. **Ask them if they need to be saved.** If you don't get a clear answer, spend some time on this point. If they say "yes", ask them why they need to be saved. If they say, "because the Bible says so," accept that as a good answer but then ask them where it

says that in the Bible. Hopefully, at some point they will say that they need to be saved because they are sinners who sin. Romans 3:23 and Isaiah 53:6 are good verses to use here.

2. **Then ask them if they want to be saved.** Some people know that they need to be saved but they don't really want to be saved. If you don't get a clear answer here, it's probably better not to pursue the faith issues since God has never saved anyone against his will.
3. **Finally, ask them if they want to be saved now.** Since most of our work involves helping people understand that their objections to the Gospel are not well thought out, this question helps determine if there is a hindrance that has not been shared. If they are uneasy about answering this question, there needs to be discussion and perhaps prayer about the problem but, again, there is no use in explaining how to be saved to someone who wants to be saved but not just now.

Can you believe and not be saved?

The next problem that we have with most people who hear the Gospel is that they think they "believe" but they can't say they are saved. Ask those who say that they need to be saved and want to be saved now, how they think a person comes to know that they are saved. This may lead to a discussion that solves all their problems. However, many people will struggle with the issue of believing. They think they have always believed but they know that Scripture says that is not true. Take them to John 3:36 and ask them if they understand that having eternal life is the same as being saved and going to heaven. If that is clear to them, ask them which part of the verse they are in. Most will want to "waffle". Then ask them if they are sure they are going to heaven. If they say "no", ask them if they could possibly say they believe, since according to the verse, if you believe you have, and if you don't have, it would be clear that you don't believe in a Scriptural way. It might be wise to change "believe in" to "trust" or "depends on" at this point. Also, this is a good time to refer to Scriptural promises that don't have the word *believe* in them and ask the person with whom you are working if those promises are true.

Try to explain the simple truth of James 2:19: *You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble.* Here it's obvious that there is a difference in the historical facts of the gospel, and the personal application of its redemptive value. A list of some good verses without the word *believe* in them are given below. Emphasize that it is easy to trust in promises if we are convinced they are true.

When a person accepts the fact that they do not believe since they cannot say they have eternal life, that is often the point at which they are able to accept the fact that Christ did die for them and that they do have eternal life. Try reading John 3:36 with them this way:

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life: and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.

After reading the above normal text, then read it this way:

He that depends on the truth that Christ died for the ungodly as it says in Romans 5:6 has God's salvation right now because God says so. He that rejects what God says about His Son is eternally lost right now and God is presently angry with that person.

What part does prayer play in salvation?

When a person sees their need of salvation and they ask us how to believe or how to be saved, we often make mistakes because we lack a Biblical understanding of how the Gospel should be preached. In Romans 10:17, we have noted that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” We should try to let earnest seekers of salvation see the truth of the Word of God so that they have something in which to believe. Many think that to be saved an individual should pray and invite the Lord into their heart, or give their heart to the Lord, or that they should “ask” the Lord to forgive them or save them. There are several concerns about using this approach:

1. It was never used by the Lord Jesus or by the apostles in the Bible. Why didn't they use this technique?
2. It places the emphasis of the Gospel on what we are doing for God rather than on what Christ has done for us. Peace or assurance of salvation is obtained when we rest or depend on what God has done for us.
3. It misinterprets Romans 10:13 which says, “*For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” The next verse explains this by saying, “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? “ *So believing in the Lord causes us to pray but it is faith in the Lord that saves and not prayer.* Is it necessary to ask God to save us when He is offering salvation as a free gift (Romans 6:23)? Would you ask for a birthday gift that has already been paid for, wrapped and placed in your hands or would you accept it by saying thank you and opening it? Also, is it necessary to ask the Lord to forgive us when He is already offering to do that (Luke 23:34)? *No, salvation is by faith and faith is the hand that receives what has been offered freely by grace.* We do not have to ask for it, we need to receive it by believing in or depending on the Lord Jesus Christ. We are depending on Him when we are depending on what He says. Since the whole Bible is the Word of God, we are depending on what He says when we depend on the promises He makes us in the Bible. It would be quite Scriptural to ask the Lord to help us to believe (see Mark 9:24), but it would not be clear thinking to ask Him to save us or forgive us when He has already said that He will, if we will just accept His promises. The admonition “Ask and it will be given to you (Matthew 7:7, Mark 11:24) would seem to apply where the Lord has not already offered us a solution that He has asked us to accept.
4. It misuses Revelation 3:20 which says, “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.*” This is a message having to do with fellowship in a church. Any believer can have that fellowship by opening the door to the church where the Lord is on the outside. Likely, the door is opened by confession of sin and obedience. The context does not make this the door to a person's heart. Some have said that inviting the Lord into our hearts to be saved is an application of the principle laid out in the verse and therefore it is quite proper to do this. Many people fail to properly understand that believing with the heart (Romans 10:9, Acts 8:37) means trusting the Lord in such a way that the emotions and motives of a person are affected. It is more than just understanding the truth, it is a total dependence on the One who is the truth. Here we must raise the question, (since this was written long after the Acts of the Apostles and after Paul and Peter explained the doctrines of the Gospel), why do we never read an example in the Bible where this was the explanation given to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” The answer is always, “Believe on (trust in)

the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. (Acts 16:30-31, Ephesians 2:8).” We never see the answer, “just invite the Lord into your heart and you will be saved.” Nor do we find the apostles saying, “just ask the Lord to save you and you will be saved.”

What part does confession play in salvation?

Another verse that is sometimes misused is Romans 10:9 which says, “*That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*” There are three things we need to understand about this verse:

1. Confession is not the cause of salvation but the result of it. Many people think that a public prayer or confession such as an altar call is necessary based on this verse. However verse 10 says, “*For with the heart one believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” Again, it is evident that faith precedes the confession. Logically, how can we confess to something that we don’t believe in or have faith in already?
2. Believing is with the head and not with the heart biologically. But this verse says that we need to believe with our hearts. What does that mean? We could give examples in the Bible of people who believed that the Gospel was true and they even believed it had the power to save but they never personally trusted in the Gospel themselves. Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8 seems to be such a case. So it appears Paul was distinguishing between the person who was believing that the historical facts are true from the person who actually received peace from depending on those facts (which means that they have depended on the Lord Jesus). Believing in our hearts is a way of saying we are wholly trusting and believing in the Lord without any reservations. This is the way that Jesus dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17).
3. In this verse, the “truth” that we must believe in order to be saved emphasizes the fact that Christ has been raised from the dead. Normally, we preach that we must believe that Christ died for our sins and while that is true, that is not the whole Gospel. If we believe that Christ rose from the dead, we also have to believe that He died and was buried. **The resurrection is the proof of the truth** and needs to be emphasized when we preach the Gospel.

If a person says that they know they are saved ask them if there is a verse of Scripture that helps them understand that. Try to help them find a Gospel verse that is fairly straight forward that gives them assurance and then suggest that they memorize the verse. This is a good time for the person to pray, thanking the Lord for salvation through the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is always wise for a newly saved person to tell someone that they have trusted Christ. **This kind of confession** seems to give assurance and joy in many cases.

What is the Truth of the Gospel?

Notice the emphasis on resurrection in the following passage and in the preaching in Acts. We need to be clear as to what the Gospel (good news) is, if we are going to present it properly.

In 1 Corinthians 15 verses 3 and 4 we have three elements:

1. Christ died for our sins (to show both our need and the solution).
2. He was buried (to prove He died).
3. He rose again (to give assurance that this is all true and that God is satisfied).

Chapters that are particularly helpful in presenting the Gospel:

1. Isaiah 53 The crucifixion of Christ written 700 years before it happened.
2. John 3 The need for the new birth.
3. Romans 3 The sin problem.
4. Ephesians 2 The testimony of those who are saved (particularly 1-10).

Verses that explain God's Way of Salvation using the word faith or believe:

Emphasize that believing does not make the Gospel true but believing it (depending on it) does give us the blessing of salvation. You may want to ask the individual, who did Christ die for? If they say everyone, they are stating truth but they are indicating that the promises have not been taken personally. **If they can honestly say, "Christ died for ME",** they usually find peace and usually can say that they are saved because they believe in or trust in Christ.

1. *John 3:16-18: For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life .For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned: but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. NOTE: suggest that the searcher substitute their name for "the world" and "whoever" in verse 16.*
2. *John 3:36: He who believes in the Son has everlasting life: and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.*
3. *John 5:24: Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes in Him who sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death into life.*
4. *Acts 13:38-39: Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins: And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*
5. *Acts 16:30-31: Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household. (That is, if you believe on the Lord you will be saved and if those in your house believe, they will be saved).*
6. *Romans 3:28: Therefore we conclude that a man is justified (made right with God) by faith apart from the deeds of the law.*
7. *Romans 10:9: If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*
8. *Ephesians 2:8-10: For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

When the person is struggling with "believing" sometimes it is wise to read verses without the word "believing" in them to the person and ask them "Are these verses true? Are they the very Word of God? Are they true for everyone or are they true for ME?" Asking them if they believe the verses causes the person to focus upon themselves instead of being occupied with the Lord Jesus and His promises. Some good verses are:

1. *Isaiah 53:5: But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.*
2. *Isaiah 53:6: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*
3. *Romans 5:6: For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*
4. *Romans 5:8: But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
5. *Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
6. *1 Timothy 1:15: This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*
7. *1 Peter 2:24: Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed.*
8. *1 Peter 3:18: For Christ also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit:*

Sometimes if the person is having trouble coming to faith, it is wise just to leave them with these Chapters or some of the verses suggested above and ask them to read them as though God Himself were saying these things - because He is. Though salvation is urgent, sometimes it is wise to let the person have some time alone with God and the Scripture before pressing them on the faith issues. Again, remember that if the Holy Spirit is convicting the person it is hard to do anything wrong. But if the person has only been touched emotionally or just wants to "fit in" or please the counselor, it is hard to do anything right. It requires wisdom to know the difference.

We trust these few thoughts will be helpful as you prayerfully respond to the needs of young and tender seeking hearts. What a joy it is to be able to truly point someone to the saving knowledge of their sins forgiven. What a tragedy it is to put words in their mouth or a false conviction in their mind by not waiting upon the Holy Spirits leading. God bless you as you contemplate these things and then apply them for the honor and glory of our blessed Lord and Savior.