

SERVING IN ONE ACCORD

Pulling together in Church

By
Evangelist
Keith Fordham

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Dedication

Dr. J. Dennis Watson, my pastor and dear friend. Every Sunday morning leads our congregation in prayer for his evangelist. He breaks the Bread of Life and re-energizes my soul when I am home to hear him preach. He allowed me to baptize my children. He takes offerings for our ministry, gives advice for all kinds of situations we run into on the road, and his positive attitude for Jesus is contagious and I do my best to emulate his good attitude while I am preaching and drawing the net.

Dennis and I collaborate in studying the Bible and he is always sharing new resources that bring us both deeper into the understanding of God's word. The Old Testament discoveries as it relates to the New Testament have been eye popping as we dig into the Word of God together. He blesses me by telephone and by fellowshiping as we share meals when I am home.

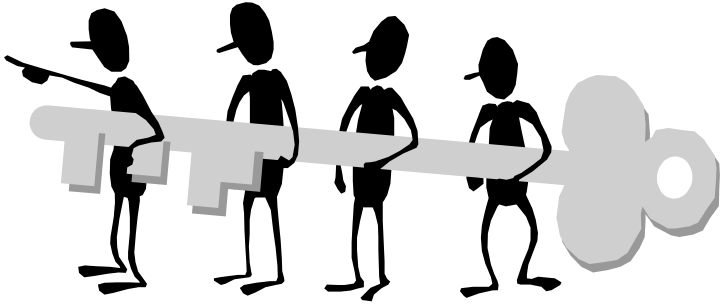
I am connected to Harp's Crossing Baptist Church because of Dennis's emphasis on working together at home, across America, and around the world. J. Dennis Watson has a vision to bring the message of Christ around the world. Our entire Church plays its part in pulling together to get the gospel around the world.

Steve Wright is my Sunday school teacher and he follows the pastor's example in ministering to Shirley and me. Our **Sunday School Class** is a source of support in every way. Indeed, the Keith Fordham Evangelistic Association, Inc. could not continue to call men, women, boys, and girls to Christ without the Wonderful pastor, **Church**, Sunday school teacher, and class that God has given us.

Dennis's continual leadership in calling us to be connected and serve together in one accord has kept this idea ever before me. Among the great joys we have shared was in ordaining our sons to the Gospel ministry in one accord! Rev. **Chris Watson** and Rev. **Sam Fordham** are a joy to our hearts as they lead their churches to be in one accord.

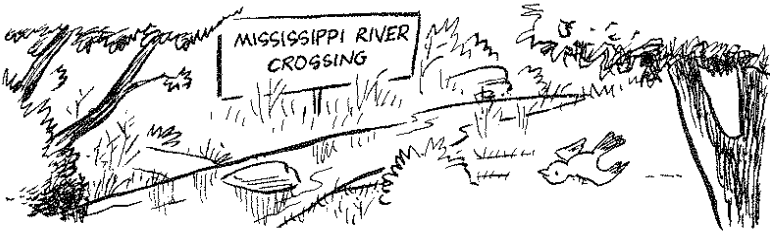
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“ONE ACCORD” is a key for God to save souls!

Introduction



MANY STREAMS MAKE A MISSISSIPPI

The Mississippi River is only a few feet wide at the place where it begins. But only 30 miles further downstream, it swells to a width the 50 feet. Numerous streams flow into the Mississippi along its entire length until it becomes the largest river in North America. The mighty Mississippi would not exist without the contribution of the smaller streams.

This says a great deal about what it takes to make a great church. A few people can't do it in their own strength. It takes all of us working together in one accord, using our gifts and talents in the kingdom cause, to keep our church growing healthy and strong.

The ONE ACCORD SERVICE is designed to show how every Christian working together, can most effectively impact a church service for Christ in reaching the lost. This special service clearly incorporates the part played by the

Congregation, Evangelist, Pastor, Church Staff, Choir, Instrumentalists, Sunday school Teachers, Sunday school Classes, Ushers, Nursery Workers, Parents, Students, Children, and Counselors. It is a most effective outreach service.

It is important for every part of the body of Christ to know the overall purpose of the church, which is to seek and to save the lost. The Church is a witnessing community.

Elton Trueblood said, “As we study carefully the strategy employed by Christ, we are forced to conclude that the crucial step was that by which disciples were turned into apostles. It was necessary, of course, to have disciples first, because there had to be some reservoir of human resources on which to draw before the actual penetration of the world could begin. Christ started by the individual enlistment of modest men in His little company, devoting Himself largely to their training and discipline... A disciple is a student or a follower and, if Christ had had merely disciples, His position in this regard would not have been radically different from that of John the Baptist. What is different is that all of the disciples in Christ’s company were potential apostles or ambassadors. They were enlisted... that they might become the fellowship of penetration of the ordinary world.

If this analysis is correct it bears closely on the question of What a Christian is meant to be in the twenty-first century, as well as what Christians were in the first century. It means that no person is really a Christian at all unless he is an evangelist or is getting ready to be one. The person, who supposes that he can be a Christian by observing a performance, whether of the Mass or anything else, has missed the whole idea.” (Company of the Committed –page 70).

Every true Christian desires to do the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we can see what HE wants us to do at church from the perspective of the *“whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”* Ephesians 4:16 NKJV

The ONE ACCORD SERVICE allows you to see that every joint and part of the body of Christ can work together in a

united effort to fulfill the purpose of Christ in His body, namely seeking and saving the lost. There is satisfaction in working together for the Lord Jesus to fulfill the Great Commission: *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make (win) disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Amen. Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV

In the pages of this book you will find your part in the One Accord service. In so doing you will find encouragement to do your part in every church service and a new purpose in your daily life.

The most important part of any church service is our response to the Lord Jesus and His Word. This time in the **ONE ACCORD SERVICE** is called the Invitation.

On the day of Pentecost Simon Peter preached the first ONE ACCORD SERVICE. *For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."* And with many other words he testified and kept on calling them to stand alongside him, saying, *"Be saved from this perverse generation."* Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. Acts 2:39-42

The phrase *"kept on calling them to stand alongside him"* is translated exhort in the King James Version. "Parekálei" is the Greek word in the original and it means to call near or alongside. www.Scripture4all.org translates it as beside-called in its literal translation. "Parekálei" is the imperfect active indicative of "Parakaleo." This means, Peter kept inviting them to stand alongside him and be saved. It must have been one of the longest public invitations in history. Three thousand came near him, were counseled and even followed through in baptism that very day. We need the same thing to happen in the 21st Century in every church and through every Christian.



“with many other words he testified and kept on calling them to stand alongside him, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”

When the Church is in One Accord Service Flows into the Invitation

*The **ONE ACCORD SERVICE**
is a wonderful way to open Revival
on Sunday morning!*

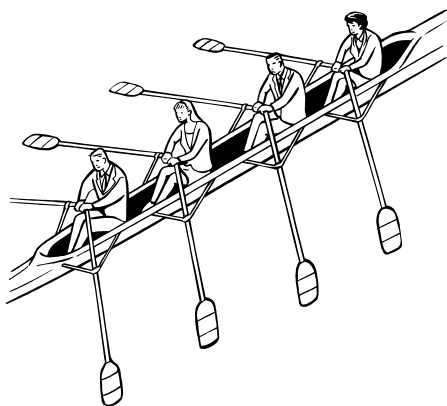
*“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with **one accord in one place.**” Acts 2:1&46* the words *One Accord*-Greek word “homothumadon” is an adverb that means unified in purpose and mind. (One accord carries the idea of “to feel alike, think alike, and act in unified, coordinated manner at the same time and place.) This is exactly what the **ONE ACCORD** service will help you do in one service. Once you have experienced the **ONE ACCORD SERVICE**, going to church will never be the same again.



*Since the North American
Mission Board has launched, God's
Plan for Sharing (GPS): the plan by
which every person in North
America is to receive a Gospel*

witness by 2020. One activity Of God's Plan for Sharing includes using Door Hangers with the theme, "FIND IT HERE." The Door Hangers are to be placed on every door in a church's community. Included in the door hangers are tracts, church information, and a personal invitation to attend church the following Sunday. If people are found at home, a witness of Christ and a personal invitation to church are given along with the door hangers. This should be done a week or two before a Revival meeting, Harvest Day or Crusade.

An alternate plan many churches use is to promote a special Sunday to follow up on this type of Community blitz.



The **ONE ACCORD** service is ideal for harvesting the "***FIND IT HERE***" door hanger blitz. The **One Accord Service** is a **Book of Acts modeled service** in the 21st Century Church; it is the combination of the Sunday school and the worship service into one distinct service. The

Sunday school, with both saved and lost, is gathered in one place and at one time. Revival in the Old Testament generally came during one of the festivals when the nation was together in one place. The Holy Spirit came in mighty power on Pentecost when the people were gathered in one place and in one accord. The **ONE ACCORD SERVICE** brings together in a single church service a large number of unchurched people.

This is the kind of service that the devil hates. For this reason alone, it is obvious that some people will object to it. That this service, if properly prepared and wisely conducted, pleases God is justly proved by the way he has blessed it in the book of Acts and throughout our nation time and time again until it can truly be called the "**GREAT ONE ACCORD SERVICE.**"

1. Some Advantages of the One Accord Service

(1) It affords an opportunity for the lost and unattached of the Sunday school, who do not usually stay for the preaching service, to **hear a sermon and to make a decision for Christ**. *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17).

(2) It presents an opportunity for personal work on the part of teachers who have been teaching the Bible to the unsaved. Because of the intensified visitation that has preceded this service and because of the long hours spent in prayer for the unsaved and backslidden who are present, almost without exception this service is visited with the power of God to a greater extent than is any other service of the revival. The Holy Spirit's presence seems to make it easy for sinners to break with sin and trust Christ for salvation. Scores and scores of times in similar services in city, town, and rural churches, the Lord has added more than 100 persons to his church. In one church 206 people joined with one church during a ONE ACCORD SERVICE, 168 of these came on profession of faith.

(3) Such a service makes possible **ample time for giving an extended invitation** (as discussed in this book).

2. How to Plan for the One Accord Service

Any undertaking of importance must be carefully planned if it is to succeed. The unified service calls for more careful and prayerful planning than any other revival service we know about.



The pastor's leadership is essential!

(1) Plans for the pre-school classes.

—The *Preschool* classes are to be kept in their rooms until the close of the service in the auditorium. This will necessitate extra workers, handwork, and possibly light refreshments such as milk and cookies. It is not an easy task to take care of a group of children for two hours or more. By so doing,

however, these workers are having a part in the winning of those who make decisions in the service in the auditorium. It may be that in smaller churches you would request help to care for these children from another church or hire someone from outside the body to take care of the children so that no member or prospective member has to miss this service.

(2) Plans for those above pre-school departments.

—*Announce* to the people and publicize the type of service which you are planning so that no one will have reason for criticism. Invite parents of the elementary and middle school **who are not church members or regularly attending a class** to sit with their children in their children's respective classes. Make a chart of the auditorium showing the section where each department will sit, their approaches to those seats, and the time they will leave their classes or departments. Place copies of this chart in the hands of the Sunday school teachers on the Sunday before the revival. It is best to seat the first-fifth grades in the front seats starting with the fifth grade on the front row. Yes the fifth graders on the front row! Next seat the middle school, the High school, College and career, and Adults in the rear. Leave the last seats for late comers. The pastor, the minister of Education or Sunday School Director, and ushers meet to plan to seat the people for the service Sunday morning, using the chart of the auditorium showing entrances and seating plan.

(3) Plans for seating late comers.—Use rear seats, balcony, adjacent room, or added chairs for seating late comers.

(4) Plans for parents who come after children.—An Usher goes with them to proper class and gets their children. If children are in the auditorium, explain that the invitation will be over soon, and ask them to wait or to return.

(5) The order of service.—This schedule seems best:

9:30 A.M. All classes of the Sunday school assemble in their usual places. Smaller churches may have a brief assembly program with emphasis on the way of salvation. If you do not have assembly have the teachers give the plan of salvation in their classes.

9:50 A.M. Go to classes, and register everyone. Be careful to obtain correct information (such as address, phone number, and church affiliation) from all visitors.

10:05 A.M. Reassemble by classes from elementary grades up, and be ready to march into auditorium. Follow the chart showing what time an usher will appear in each class to direct the group to the auditorium. By all means, have an usher to lead the way. Classes are to sit in sections reserved for them. Teachers are to sit with classes and are to pray without ceasing for those who are unsaved. Be patient and **guard against disturbances.**

The accompanists at the instruments (and orchestra) should be at their places, playing a hymn when the first group marches in. The choir should be made up of regular members who do not teach in Sunday school. Use a class of young adults or older students to fill the seats left vacant in the choir loft.

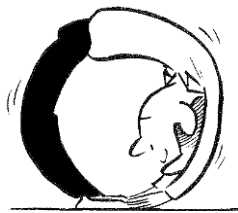
10:15 A.M. Pastor takes charge. Have only two appropriate songs, such as **“Change My Heart Oh God”, “Jesus Oh Jesus Come and Fill Your Lambs,” Or “Revive Us Again” and “Near the Cross.”**

The Pastor leads in prayer after the first song. No announcements are to be made except an explanation that this is a combined service and that children in elementary grades will be cared for by trained leaders until the close of the service. The offering is to be taken at the close of the service.

The message by the evangelist should not be longer thirty-five minutes, followed by the invitation. The service should end only when the preacher is convinced that the Holy Spirit is ready for the invitation to close. At the close of the service receive the offering, make the announcements, and present those who made decisions. (See #8 under the section below **“Pastor, Staff and Counselor’s part in the invitation.”**) Be sure to have the congregation extend the hand of fellowship to new members.

Adding Up to Zero

The only sure way to avoid criticism is to think nothing, say nothing, and do nothing.



3. Some Objections to the One Accord Service

There are some who sincerely object to this type of service on the following grounds:

(1) The eleven o'clock church attendants will not hear the sermon and doubtless will not be able to get a seat.

This may be true. But remember that everyone has been urged to be in Sunday school. The program has been announced and publicized. This is distinctly a service planned to reach lost people for Christ, and particularly those who are enrolled in Sunday school. The eleven o'clock attendants can be seated in other assembly rooms of the building, where the services can be heard over the public address system if such is provided. If not, then they can assemble in classrooms and pray.

(2) Parents of children who are enrolled in Sunday school and do not stay for the preaching service will object to such a long service.

Again the answer is that all have been notified as to the type of service it will be and its length; therefore, no one is in the dark as to what is planned.

(3) The morning preaching service is broadcast and does not fit into the type of service for a broadcast.

This is true. Congregational music and the sermon in the ONE ACCORD SERVICE will be concluded by 11:00 A.M., and only the invitation can be heard over the broadcast. This should not be a problem for most broadcasts are now on CD's or DVD's or tapes and can be played the following week at the appropriate time. But our experience has been that the type of invitation given during an evangelistic service, if broadcast occasionally, will mean more to the radio/TV audience than will the sermon. If the broadcast is live and the invitation closes before twelve, the pastor should give advance notice to the radio station and suggest that the station give the rest of the church's hour to the playing of recorded hymns, gospel songs, or sacred duets and quartets. The station has such recordings and can be

prepared. At twelve, the announcer would sign off for the church as usual, thanking the radio audience for listening to a diversified service from the church.

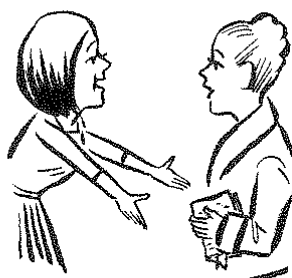


*“whole body, joined
and knit together by
what every joint
supplies, according to
the effective working
by which every part
does its share, causes
growth of the body
for the edifying of itself in love.”* Ephesians 4:16

Six Little Ways to Mean More to Your Church



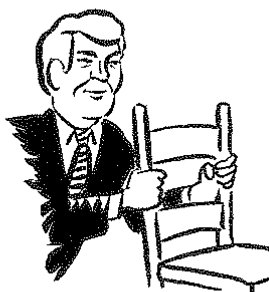
Be an On-Timer



Be a Friendly Greeter



Be a Cheerful Giver



Be a Willing Helper



Be a Hymn Singer



Be an Earnest Pray-er

THE INVITATION

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men"
(2 Corinthians 5:11).

The supreme essential in witnessing for Christ is the ability of a believer to get the unsaved to **accept** Christ as Savior. This is true whether it be preaching in a special revival service, giving your testimony in regular services from Sunday to Sunday, or doing personal work anywhere at any time. Regardless of the nature of the service, all that is done in the name of Christ is only a means to an end; namely, the winning of lost souls to the Savior.

Jesus summed up all the things done in His Name in His revelation to Saul of Tarsus at the time of the latter's conversion in saying: *"Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me"* (Acts 26:16-18).

Jesus sent Paul to the Gentiles for the following purpose: *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."* This fits in perfectly with Christ's own statement of his one objective in his first advent: *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). For a believer to have as his objective merely informing people about Christ can be a detriment rather than a help. *"Then began he to upbraid the*

cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11:20-24). "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12:41-42).

Here our Lord also taught clearly that the unsaved are to be judged not only for the sins they have committed, but on the basis of the light they have received and of their rejection of that light. Until believers thoroughly understand this fact, it is impossible for them to be effective soul-winners.

It is easy to tell people about Jesus. It is not difficult for one to preach Christ. What Christian is there who could not say something good about such a person as the Son of God? But it is extremely difficult to get the unsaved to accept Christ as Savior. For that reason alone, every preacher of the gospel and every child of God should understand the full meaning of an invitation to the lost to make that decision which will settle his eternal destiny.

1. *The Invitation, the Consummation of All Effort*



We are all familiar with raising corn. The farmer prepares the soil for planting. Then he plants the seed. After that comes the prolonged task of cultivating the crop by plowing and hoeing. It constitutes a spring and a summer task. What is the purpose in all of this toil and expense? The purpose is revealed only when the corn is gathered and placed in the crib. Farmers do not plow, plant, and cultivate and then let the grain waste in the field. The success of a farmer's effort is not measured by the amount of acreage, the hard work, or the beauty of his corn field. His success is based wholly on the amount of corn garnered in the granary.

The same principle applies in the work and the objective in a revival and other preaching services. The souls of men are ready for Harvest, now. *Jesus said, "Don't you say, There are still four more months, then comes the harvest? Listen to what I'm telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready for harvest."* John 4:35-36

When the service is concluded and the congregation stands for the invitation, the moment has struck for the consummation of everything that has been done in the name of the Lord up to that hour for that one thing. All the work in **preparation—the census, the contacts in visitation, the publicity, the prayer meetings, and the money contributed, everything—was for that invitation.** All that has transpired in that particular service—the sermon, the praying, the music, the time spent by the congregation in worship— everything has been done to make ready for that invitation.

How many people realize these facts? It might be said that the majority in the congregation and many of our ministers have little or no concept of the seriousness or the

inexpressible importance of the invitation. This fact is revealed in the thing witnessed again and again at the conclusion of the preaching service: a good sermon, but no appeal. The audience stands; the people in the congregation begin fixing garments to make ready to leave; women reach in their purses for a mirror and the powder puff. Others grab cell phones and begin texting. The preacher, as usual, in a cool and collected manner announces the number of the closing hymn with the stock statement: "We shall sing the first and last stanzas of the hymn. Should there be those present who wish to unite with the church in the manner in which we receive members, you may come forward as we sing." Could there be a greater tragedy than such a closing of a preaching service? It is not inferred that there is any intended wrong in such an invitation, but one is almost persuaded that *the devil himself could say amen* to such an effort.

2. The Choir's or Praise Team's Part in the Invitation

In evangelistic services the Choir or Praise Team is the evangelist's greatest helper. Singing the gospel is next in importance to preaching the gospel. Though the choir leads the congregation in



singing gospel hymns and renders special numbers in preparing the hearts of the people for the sermon, the greatest contribution that the choir makes in a revival service is the singing of the invitation hymns. Someone has said, "The preacher makes the appeal. The choir sings the invitation." There is no telling how many millions of lost souls throughout the centuries have been influenced to accept Christ by consecrated choirs singing the invitation songs. The appeal of well-selected songs rightly sung by a good choir is probably more effective in winning the unsaved and bringing the backslidden back to God than the

persuasion of the evangelist. Always, without exception, the song leader and the evangelist should agree on what the invitation hymns are to be and when and how changes in songs are to be made. The Evangelist should explain when he reads his Scripture passage that he wants all who are present to pray throughout the service and that only the minister of music or the guest music evangelist will start the singing for the invitation; after a few verses the choir or praise team will join in. The congregation will not sing. (If there is no music minister or music evangelist to solo the invitation, choose someone who can.)

3. Responsibility of the Congregation in the Invitation



The congregation shares with the choir, praise team, soloist, and the pastor the responsibility of giving the invitation. **This is an unknown task as far as the average church member is concerned.** He is not aware of such a responsibility. For that reason alone, the pastor should thoroughly inform his people from time to time as to the seriousness of their responsibilities. Genuine cooperation is not possible with people who are uninformed. Some things that church members in the congregation can do to assist others present to make decisions for Christ are as follows:

1. Participate in singing. A singing congregation creates the proper atmosphere for the unsaved and the backslidden to make decisions for Christ. Participation in the song service warms the hearts of the people and creates an urge in them



to witness to the unsaved.

2. *Pray without ceasing* during the service, and especially during the invitation. This is as vital in bringing the power of God into the service as is preaching and singing. It is the **congregation's responsibility to pray**. Pray for the preacher, that he may have wisdom and power. Pray that the Holy Spirit will come in mighty power into the hearts of the church members. Pray that sinners will be convicted and come to Christ. Pray for those whom you know to be present that should make a decision. Pray and keep praying until the service is closed. Do not sing the invitation hymn. The choir, praise team or soloist sings that.



3. *Any church member who does the things mentioned above will find it easy to do personal soul winning.* We believe that the absence of personal work on the part of church members during the invitation is due largely to failure to pray that God will make such a thing possible.

It is a **tragic fact** that many regular church attendants feel little or no responsibility in the tremendously important moment of the invitation when sinners are determining where they will spend eternity. Human agency at this time is just as essential as divine agency. The cry of the Ethiopian when confronted by Philip, "*How can I, except some man should guide me?*" (Acts 8:31), should never be forgotten when we are in the presence of lost people who are face to face with a decision concerning the destiny of their souls.



C.E. Matthews spoke on the subject of "**Drawing the Net**" at a breakfast fellowship-clinic during a simultaneous crusade. When the service was concluded, a fine Christian lady who had helped in preparing and serving the meal came to her pastor. She said,

"Pastor, I never before realized how I had failed in my

responsibility when an invitation was given in the service. I have just been awakened to a thing that I have never known before, and that is the tremendous burden that must be on the heart of a preacher when he is making his appeal and trying to persuade people to accept Christ as Savior. I am ashamed of myself. When you begin the invitation, I have been guilty of powdering my face and applying lipstick without any thought of what I was doing. I have asked God to forgive me, and I am asking you to forgive me and to pray for me that I will share with you and others in the responsibility of helping people to decide for Christ during the invitation."

Can you imagine the number of Christians who are as uninformed as she was? Many are not guilty of just failing to share in the responsibility with the preacher at decision time, but they are in a hurry for the invitation to close. Some see no need of it; others actually leave the service, for no emergency reason, while the invitation is being given. Christians, who understand the purpose and goal of a church service, can see everyone else's function. They will know how to pray for everyone in the service from the evangelist in the pulpit to the lost man in the pew. As part of God's team, they will take part in a church service as they never have before.

4. *The Ushers' Part in the Invitation*

One week before the ushers should have been instructed about their duties for Sunday morning. They should realize the gravity of this hour. By doing the right things, they will help people to be *saved* and to go to heaven.



Mahatma Gandhi, the renowned leader of the people of India, in seeking to overthrow British colonial rule of his native land, was an avid reader. Although a Hindu, in his quest for freedom, he read the four Christian Gospels. He wanted to know more about Jesus of Nazareth. In his reading of the Gospels, Gandhi was impressed with this man whom Christians

worship and follow. Where could he find out more about this Jesus whom Christians refer to as "the Christ - the Messiah?"

One Sunday morning Gandhi decided that he would visit one of the Christian churches in South Africa. Upon seeking entrance to the church sanctuary, he was stopped at the door by an usher. The usher told him that he was not welcome, nor would he be permitted to attend this particular church as it was 'whites' only. Because of the rejection by this church, 'the Mahatma' turned his back on Christianity. With this act, Gandhi rejected the uniqueness of Christ. He was 'turned-off' by the sin of segregation that was practiced by the church. Gandhi later declared, "I'd be a Christian if it were not for the Christians!"

"I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ" -Mahatma Gandhi

The “**Gatekeepers** at the Lord’s House” are modern day ushers. By bungling your part, you may hinder people and be responsible for someone's going to hell. On the other hand it may get them on the road to heaven. This sense of responsibility ought to be enough to cause you to do at least the things listed below:

1. Be on time for Sunday school, and be sure to know when and where to seat the Sunday school, as charted.
2. Bring in the Sunday school classes on time, and seat them together as instructed.
3. Check the auditorium for temperature and ventilation. These features must be exactly right for the crowd for the entire hour and forty five minutes.
4. Seat the late comers as instructed: in rear seats, in the balcony, or in a separate room, if you have live video feed; or ask the late comers to sit in added chairs. Seat them in the balcony during the singing of the invitation. You could have them stand prayerfully if there is no seating.
5. **Graciously assist** those who come after little children to find their classes and their children. Get the child, and present him along with a hearty invitation to be back next Sunday. If the child is old enough to



be in the One Accord service, explain that this is an outstanding occasion in the whole year and that you dare not interrupt. Tell them the service might stop any minute, and politely ask your caller to wait prayerfully, or to return later. Regardless of what the emergency is, it can wait a little longer. Do not go into the auditorium (exception: to call out an emergency first responder, and then make sure you know where he is sitting).

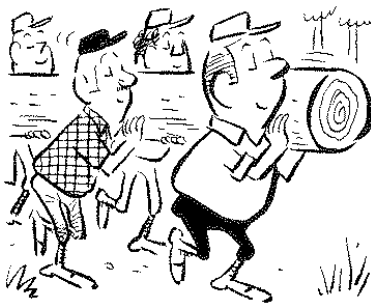
6. Remain at your stations, and be alert for any further service you may be able to render.

7. If you see that someone is under conviction at the close of the service ask them if they need to speak with the pastor. It may be that they wished they had gone forward at the invitation and you can lead them to Christ in the vestibule of the church.

5. The Pastor, Staff, and Counselors' Part in the Invitation

Read and be knowledgeable about all the details in planning and carrying out the ONE ACCORD SERVICE. These hints may be useful to the pastor in the SERVICE and the INVITATION.

1. Co-operate gladly and follow fully the evangelist's plans for this great occasion. If you are not able to trust him here, do not invite him to preach. You probably will see more people responding in this hour than in all other services of the revival combined.



Getting the Job Done

*It's amazing how much work is accomplished when no one worries about **who gets the credit!***

2. See that every last detail of preparatory work is done well.

3. See that all Sunday school workers and the ushers are prepared to act as a unit with you and your evangelistic helper.

4. Steep your soul in prayer before this service and during the sermon.

5. Pastor and staff step to the front quickly, when asked by the evangelist. The Evangelist will have the people stand for prayer. **Counselors** are to be ready to come as soon as you see the pastor or staff member receive a penitent, after the prayer when the invitation begins. Stand reverently, prayerfully, expectantly as the evangelist



closes his appeal and as the music begins to play during the prayer. Pastors appear at ease and at attention. Stand in the aisle smiling, hand extended by the time the penitent reaches you. **PASTOR**, ask what decision is being made and like a **FIELD GENERAL** get the penitent to the proper **counselor**. Greet the next penitent; get him to a counselor and the next, as long as they come. (People who have stepped into the aisle will often go back to their seats when the line gets too long). The counselor can take all the time that is needed.

6. Never:

- Gesture as if you were giving the invitation. That will attract attention from the evangelist making the appeal.
- Say anything to the congregation during the invitation, unless and until the evangelist calls upon you. Do what he asks and turn the service back to him.

7. Do:

(1) Keep on praying

(2) Have enough counselors to deal with each soul as

if no one else were present. Have them pray with those who have not yet made a definite decision. If **anyone kneels** at the altar to pray, **be sure a personal worker prays with them and finds out their**



spiritual condition. Sin confuses and the job of the counselor is to bring the person out of the fog of sin into the light of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) When the evangelist asks you, tell him when you

are certain the last prospect has responded. Then he will want to close the appeal.

(4) Take the service when the evangelist turns it over to you.

8. Receive each person's testimony before the whole church.

Add personal words of joy, commendation, and congratulations. Be unhurried. It is a great occasion for each person and for the church. If twelve o'clock comes during this high hour, rejoice, and do all things in decency and in order. Counselors should be sure to have the name clearly spelled and tell the pastor or introducer of those joining the church how to pronounce their name and specifically what decision was made. Often it is good to pass a microphone to the counselor and have them share the decision about what God has done in the person's life. The Church needs to know who God is adding to their body. People have been praying for God to do a work in the lives of the people in the community. They need to know that God is answering their prayers. It is encouraging to see people; you have witnessed to, accept Christ as Savior, join the church and/or rededicate their lives to the Lord.



6. The Song Leader's Part in the Invitation



In the ONE ACCORD SERVICE the minister of music or guest musician will be the person who is in charge of the music. In either instance, his part is *identical*: the leader in a great once-in-a-year evangelistic service. Therefore, his part or his responsibility in that service is along the line presented below.

1. Some preparation must be made in advance:

(1) In counsel with the pastor and the evangelist, come to a meeting of minds on what they want the leader to do. The evangelist should help choose invitation songs. **Appropriate "Invitation" or "Come to Jesus" songs**



should be used during the invitation. The evangelist will let the musician know when it is time to change the song, and if so, by announcement or by signal. *Let everything be done decently and in order.*

(2) See that plenty of songbooks are in place for the choir's use or have the words on screen in the back or on a Television for the choir to see.

(3) Have the accompanist(s) and orchestra ready to begin playing a medley of hymns the instant the first department enters the auditorium. Keep playing until all are ready for the first song.

(4) Have all choir members who are not teaching in the Sunday school to meet in the regular assembly place as the departments enter the auditorium. Have the Sunday school group that has been selected to finish filling the choir seats to come to the choir assembly place. By the time the last department is entering the auditorium; the choir enters and is seated.

(5) Pre-arrange with the choir and the accompanists a signal which will tell them which hymn will be used as an invitation.

2. When the evangelist prays, have the head accompanist begin to quietly play the invitation song. When the evangelist concludes his prayer, he will say, **"Who will be first to come as our music evangelist and/or choir sings."** Let the choir begin singing immediately. Continue the singing until the evangelist signals for a pause.

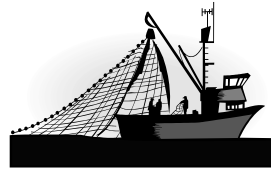
3. Lead the invitation songs desired by the evangelist until he makes his last appeal and closes the invitation. Should he turn the service to the pastor and he desires to continue the invitation, follow the pastor's signals and requests till the service is closed.

7. The Evangelist's Part in the Invitation

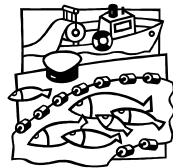
Explain that the Music evangelist and/or choir will sing the invitation.

The term "**drawing the net**" is applied to the invitation of the minister to the unchurched, the backslidden Christians, and the unsaved at the close of his sermon. No preacher can estimate

the tremendous importance of “**net-drawing**” until he recognizes his own responsibility on such an occasion. He must be fully aware of the fact that he is standing in the breach between a lost soul and an endless hell. He must know that human agency is the instrument upon which God depends to make the appeal to a spiritually blind and helpless sinner. He must realize that, if he fails to do this, the failure may be the cause of a soul's spending eternity in a burning hell.



The apostle Paul wrote these words, "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.*" Paul was one of the greatest persuaders of men that this world has ever known. He said, "*I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh*" (Rom. 9:3). "*Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears*" (Acts 20:31). Who is there among us that has pleaded with sinners like that?



The chief difference between a preacher who is successful as an evangelist and one who is unsuccessful as an evangelist has to do with “drawing the net”. We need to spend time in earnest thought and study about the invitation. Every preacher of the Word of God should be an avid student and practitioner of drawing the net.

1. Drawing the net involves power.—

Drawing the net involves every power and every gift known to the Christian. **Every faculty of our being should be at the disposal of the Holy Spirit.**

(1).—***In*** an invitation we are **persuading people to do right**, not to do wrong. We are persuading them to break with the devil and come to God. **We are persuading them to spend life on earth on the side of Christ instead of on the side of the devil.** We are persuading them to spend eternity in heaven instead of in hell. Our convictions and our hearts' concern will

determine the earnestness with which we persuade.

(2).—**We** must remember that we are **dealing with human nature**. Therefore, every gift that God has given to us should be used in dealing with the sinner in the congregation. Always **make your appeal crystal clear**. Ask the unaffiliated to come by letter, on the promise of a letter, or by statement. Invite the sinner to come forward and confess Christ as Savior. Know what song your singer is going to use, and do not have an instant's delay between your words of appeal and the beginning of the singing by the choir. No others will sing. Call the congregation to prayer and response to the invitation. It is well to fit the closing words of the appeal into the opening words of the song. As the audience rises to stand, have the music going. If the response is good, stay with the same appeal. Do not vary the appeal unless the Lord leads you to.

By all means, do not *let* your invitation drag. At every indication of lagging, change your appeal. When you have reaped all that are obvious to you, you must realize that, as men, we cannot see people's hearts. The Holy Spirit continues to work in hearts when people hear the Word of God, even though we cannot see it.

To make sure you have not missed a soul that God is dealing with, you may ask the congregation to bow their heads. "All of you who are within the sound of my voice, who know Christ as your Savior and are so grateful for God's having saved you that you are a member of the church where you live and are serving him, I want you to testify for him. We do not have time for each of you to speak words; so we shall ask you by raising your hand to testify that you are saved and are an active member of your church." When this is done, make a brief appeal to those who could not conscientiously raise their hands, to put their trust in Christ.

In a service at a church in Alabama we had a 45 minute invitation using all the staff and counselors in the

building to deal with those making decisions. After the pastor had introduced all the people who were saved and joining the church, he asked, "Is there anyone else who would like to stand and give their life to Christ?" I thought everyone in the building had already made a decision. Boy was I wrong. A Czechoslovakian exchange student stood up and said, "I want Jesus Christ to be the Lord of my life. I am accepting Him as my Savior."

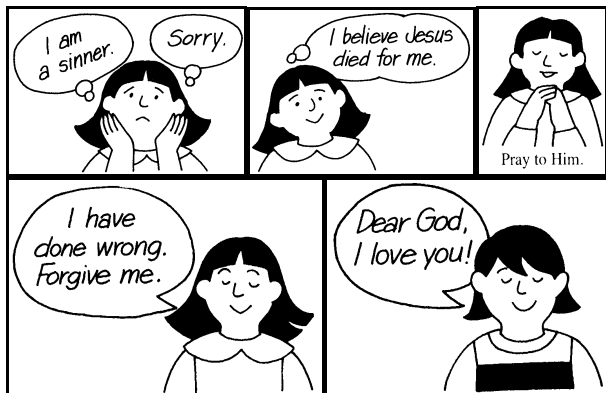
(3) **Remember** the preacher is only one person. **Use your personal workers.** Out in the congregation may be scores of people whose hearts are on fire for the lost. Many of them are friends and relatives of the unchurched. Because of these relationships, maybe they have



more influence than the preacher has with some who have not responded. Have them in mind in every move you make. Train the **soul winners** in your congregation to notice those who raise their hands for salvation or those who do not raise their hands saying that they are a Christian. What the Lord will do through these saints is absolutely amazing. Over the years I have seen people saved after service in their homes and in the parking lot of the church. I did not lead them to Christ. A Christian family member, friend or even Sunday school teacher spoke to them under the leading of the Holy Spirit and led them to Christ.

(4) **We** have heard that one example is worth a thousand arguments. You must bring to the attention of the Christians that they are to win others. For instance, here comes a teacher leading a pupil to the front to accept Christ. Stop the music long enough to say: "Isn't it a glorious thing to see a Sunday school teacher, who loves God and who loves the souls of lost people, lead his pupil to Christ?" That example makes other teachers want to start fulfilling the Great Commission. Maybe a boy will come forward leading his classmate to Christ. Call that to

the attention of the congregation, and other students will become soul winners.

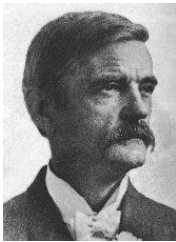


Then, suppose a little girl has come forward. She was under conviction of sin. She understood that only Jesus is her substitute for the punishment of her sin. She has asked God to forgive her and clearly placed her faith in the Lord Jesus. Stand her up before the congregation and say something like this: "Here is a little girl. Her little heart was touched by the love of Jesus. She has come forward. I asked, 'How old are you?' 'Nine,' she answered. 'What is it, darling, that you want to do?' 'I am trusting Jesus as my Savior,' was her answer. That is what Jesus wanted her to do, for He said, '*Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*' If God's way of salvation is so simple that a little child can understand, surely you who are grown and mature would not offer excuses. '*A little child shall lead them.*'" Then start the music again.

(5).—**Remember** the forces of hell are against you when you are **rescuing souls**. If there is anything Satan can do effectively in the hour of decision on life or death, it is to confuse people and keep them from thinking. Stop the music and say, "Isn't it wonderful to see a mother bring her daughter to Christ or a



father bring his son to Christ? That is a parent's highest privilege on earth. Isn't it great to see a deacon walk the aisle with his friend, or a brother with a brother, a sister with a sister, a friend with a neighbor? That, my friends, is your privilege now as we shall sing again." You will be surprised at the number of people who will wake up to the fact that they should do something and will start trying to win others simply because you have made a suggestion under the influence of the Holy Spirit.



Evangelist Sam Jones pleaded with sinners to remember the home that had nurtured them, the Bible they once revered, and the mothers who waited, wasted with worry and worn out with praying, for their prodigals to return.

"Boys, boys, boys, boys, never let it be said you added a pang to a mother's heart," Jones would say. "There are burdens here on a mother's heart, she can't carry much longer. I tell you, human hearts will carry just so much and then they'll break. There are mothers in this town who, if God don't take 'em to Heaven, will be raving maniacs in twelve months. My mother! My mother!"

This combination of accusation and entreaty were too much for "Steamboatin'" Tom Ryman, a figure of mythic proportions in Nashville. Ryman owned thirty-five steamboats that brought millions of dollars' worth of produce and cotton into Nashville from the small towns and farms along the Cumberland River. Brought up by devout Methodists, he never charged churches for transporting materials, but ships carrying sacred cargo were stocked with old wine and young whiskey, and dancing girls entertained in ornate gambling casinos. As one account has it, Thomas J. Ryman was "a swinging soul who ran floating dens of iniquity" until the night he and some boys roared into the tent meeting of an evangelist named Sam Jones.

Ryman and "the boys" had come not to acquire eternal life but out of a more earthly concern: to protect

their business interests. Informed that some riverboat men had expressed an interest in assaulting him, Jones announced that he welcomed the exercise after the service. He then preached a sermon replete with unkind allusions to the Devil's brew and the rascals who served it.

After an unrelenting hour and a half, the evangelist ended by extending the right hand of fellowship to any who might care to grasp it. A hard muscled man with a firm jaw and a determined look stumped forward, leaning heavily on his cane. "I came here for the purpose stated by Mr. Jones," Tom Ryman admitted, "and you have whipped me with the Gospel of Christ."

No wonder Paul said, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.*" Romans 1:16

2. Seasoning the "Green Wood"

Now, suppose that you have reached all who will respond. The seasoned wood has responded to the revival fires. You will have numbers of lost and unchurched present who have not attended the revival before; and if they *are* not saved now, they may never attend another religious service. Have your congregation seated. Now is the time to season the green wood for the **fire**. Have everyone bow in prayer. Pray that God would touch each heart and that every man, woman, boy, and girl would come to know the forgiveness, grace, mercy and fellowship of God in Christ Jesus. Pray that the Holy Spirit would convict of sin, warn of Judgment, and show the heart that righteousness is found in the Lord Jesus alone. Cast yourself wholly on the mercy of God. **Remember men only persuade; God must do the rest.** After the prayer, make another brief appeal. Use Scripture promises that will break down excuses, such as, "*Behold, now is the accepted time;*



behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Sound the warnings of God like, Proverbs 27:1 "Don't boast about tomorrow, for you don't know what a day might bring."
HCSB

The devil is the father of excuses, and **no excuse is acceptable with God.**

To help your personal workers identify the unchurched, once more ask that all who are saved and members of the church where they live stand, while the rest remain seated. Then, once more make the appeal of your life. Call on God to help you. Call to the attention of all the fact that no man serves two masters that we are either for Christ or against Him. Remember you are matching wits with the one who deceives the whole world. Have all to stand, and start the music again. Give illustrations of how you have seen Jesus save others. Remind them that what the Lord has done for others, HE can also do for them. Keep singing and appealing until you have gleaned all you can.



Charles Haddon Spurgeon's testimony shows what a layman can do. Spurgeon was on his way to church on a Sunday as a snow storm hit. He said, "I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Church. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved...."

The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now it is well that preachers be instructed, but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was Isa 45:22 *"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."*

He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimmer of hope for me in that text.

The preacher began thus: "This is a very simple text indeed. It says 'Look.' Now lookin' don't take a deal of pain. It aint liftin' your foot or your finger; it is just 'LOOK.' Well, a man needn't go to College to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn't be worth a thousand a year to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look.

"But then the text says, 'Look unto Me.' Ay!" he said in broad Essex, "many on ye are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some say look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, 'Look unto Me.' Some of ye say 'We must wait for the Spirit's workin.' You have no business with that just now. **Look to Christ!** The text says, 'Look unto Me.' "

Then the good man followed up his text in this way: "Look unto Me; I am sweatin' great drops of blood. Look unto me; I am hangin' on the cross. Look unto Me, I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sitting at the Father's right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me!"

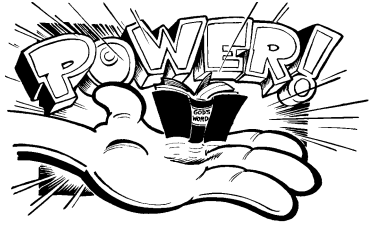
When he had . . . managed to spin out about ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger.”¹

That layman changed the sermon into a “one on one” experience in a crowd for Spurgeon. Friends and fellow classmates can whisper a word into a lost friend’s ear and do the same thing when they see the conviction of God on that friend’s face during an invitation.

¹ The following is taken from the biography of Spurgeon by Arnold Dallimore (Moody Press, 1984), pages 18-20.

Spurgeon continued, "Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, "Young man, you look very miserable." Well, I did, but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, "And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved." Then lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, "Young man, look to Jesus Christ. **Look! Look! Look!** You have nothing to do but look and live!"²

Never forget that the simple Gospel message is where the power of God is unleashed. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to say what that layman said that day. God uses the simple to show Himself mighty to save.



Spurgeon said, "I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought . . . I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, "Look!" what a charming word it seemed to me. Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away.

There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, 'Trust Christ and you shall be saved.' Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered, and now I can say—
"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,

² Ibid

Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die. . ."

That happy day when I found the Savior, and learned to cling to His dear feet, was a day never to be forgotten by me . . . I listened to the Word of God and that precious text led me to the cross of Christ.³

Every text whether in the Old or New Testament points to Jesus! *Sirs*, "*We would see Jesus*" our heart's cry and certainly is the need of every person we speak to. Whatever text you take, always end up pointing to Jesus.

Spurgeon concluded his testimony with these words; "I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced; there was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of that hour. Many days of Christian experience have passed since then, but there has never been one which has had the full exhilaration, the sparkling delight which that first day had.

I thought I could have sprung from the seat in which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren . . . "I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood!

My spirit saw its chains broken to pieces; I felt that I was an emancipated soul, an heir of heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Jesus Christ, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a rock and my goings established . . .



Between half-past ten o'clock, when I entered that chapel, and half-past twelve o'clock, when I was back again at home, what a change had taken place in me! Simply by looking to Jesus I had been delivered from despair, and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, "Something wonderful has happened to you," and I was eager to tell them all about it. Oh! There was joy in the

³ Ibid

household that day, when all heard that the eldest son had found the Savior and knew himself to be forgiven.”⁴

May God grant the same experience to many souls each time you preach a ONE ACCORD SERVICE!

3. The closing appeal.—Say, "You are not saying no to the preacher or personal worker, but to God." Remind them that Jesus said, "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day*" (John 6:44). Tell them that you are leaving the matter entirely with them and God. Assure them that if they have had an impression or an impulse to do God's will, then God has spoken to them. Such an impression is the voice of the Spirit of God. Tell them that you will have one more stanza sung and that if no one responds, you will take it for granted that God wants the service to close. If one comes, sing another stanza, and make the same proposition again. Sometimes the revival will break anew and numbers will respond.

Turn the service to the pastor saying, "You might want to continue the invitation, if God so moves, carry on." Do not get weary during the invitation. **This is the Holy Spirit's work and time. Be as sensitive** to the Spirit's leadership as possible. Then allow as much time as necessary to share what the Lord Jesus has done in the lives of repentant sinners and those who join the church. This allows rejoicing and growth to occur in the body of Christ. Especially when we are serving in One Accord!

Acts 2:46-47

*And they, continuing daily **with one accord** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having*



⁴ The following is taken from the biography of Spurgeon by Arnold Dallimore (Moody Press, 1984), pages 18-20

favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.



Acts 2:1-12

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with **one accord in one place**. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together: and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs — **we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.**" NKJV

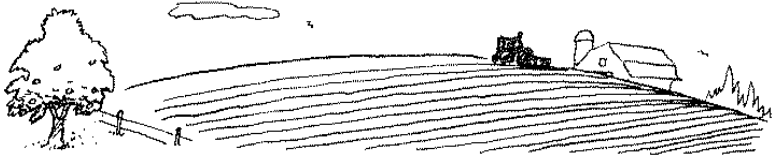
The Purpose of Revival

- To saturate our hearts with the gospel.
- To strengthen our faith in God.
- To sustain our love for God.
- To stimulate more activity in the church.
- To unite our spiritual forces.
- To stir the hearts of the unsaved.
- To seek the unsaved and the unchurched for Christ.
- To submit our wills to the purpose of God.

IMPORTANCE OF THE INVITATION

It is easy to tell people about Jesus. It is not difficult for one to preach Christ. What Christian is there who could not say something good about such a person as the Son of God?

But it is extremely difficult to get the unsaved to accept Christ as Savior. For that reason alone, every preacher of the gospel and every child of God should understand the full meaning of an invitation to the lost to make that decision which will settle his eternal destiny.



GOING THE SECOND MILE

A farmer left his son to plow a large field, instructing him to plow out to the peach trees and to try to finish the job by the end of the day.

When the farmer returned that evening, he discovered that his son had plowed all the way out to the road, far beyond the peach trees. It was almost twice the amount of work he had expected his son to do.

When he asked his son about it, the boy replied, "Dad, I plowed out to the peach trees, because you told me to. But I plowed on out to the road because ***I wanted to.***"

The ***wanted to*** in the boy's response is the language of genuine love. Only the love of Christ within us can compel us to go beyond the requirements and give more than expected. Christians should pray daily for the love of Christ to direct us in all our dealings with other people. Especially concerning their salvation and our witness for Jesus!

*"And whoever compels you to go one mile,"
Jesus taught, "go with him two," Matthew 5:41*

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Revelation 22:17

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Isaiah 55:1

*“They that were scattered abroad went everywhere **evangelizing the word.**” Acts 8:4- literal translation*

*Yet when I **evangelize**, I cannot boast, for I am compelled **to evangelize**. Woe to me if I do not **evangelize!** 1 Corinthians 9:16-17
literal translation*

*And with many other words he testified and kept on calling them to stand alongside him, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.
Acts 2:40-42*

Intentional Invitation

By Keith Fordham, President

Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists 2004

Some time ago a woman asked me what gave me the right to give an invitation. We give an intentional come forward invitation because we are commanded to do so. Peter did it at Pentecost. The first century Christians stood and said publicly that Jesus Christ is Lord. Anybody Jesus ever called He called publicly. Even Nicodemus had to make his commitment to Christ public.

The Greek word, “parakaleo (beside call)”, is used at least five times in scripture in the verb form in conjunction with preaching. It is translated “exhort” and “beseech” and always means to give a come forward, stand by the preacher, invitation. Every preacher is commanded to give a come forward invitation in 2 Timothy 4:2 (exhort).

Never allow exhaustion or too much music or any circumstance stop you from giving the invitation. Evangelist Len Turner did not lead the congregation in the sinner’s prayer one night in a church revival in South Carolina. The service had gone long and he hurried the invitation. Shaking hands on the front porch of the church he heard a bang of metal striking metal 3 blocks away. Sirens began to go off as an ambulance and police cars rushed to the scene. A man came running and called for the pastor. The mom, dad and two teenagers had been in the service. The pastor said all four had been in the revival service that night and they were without Christ. Len fell to his knees and asked God to forgive him for not extending a complete, clear, Gospel invitation that night. From that day to

this Len always leads in the sinner's prayer in every service and calls for a public invitation.

Acts 2:40 tells us that Peter kept on giving that come forward, public invitation until 3000 men were counseled, prayed with and baptized. This may be the longest public invitation in history. It is certainly one of the most encouraging.

Last year I preached on the blood atonement on Monday night in Warrior, Alabama because many there had just seen the *Passion of the Christ*. A 73-year-old man came to see the pastor the following day and said; "I need the cleansing blood of Christ applied to my heart." He made that decision public on that very night and the church rejoiced in his decision. When people make public decisions the church is blessed and encouraged.

Last August in Alapaha, Georgia a 77-year-old man came forward on "Family night" and publicly committed His life to Christ and His church. He had been on the prayer list of that church since 1960. The tears of joy and the impact on that church and community were incredible. That is why the invitation needs to be public and visible. It builds up the body of Christ. Every week when men and women are standing at the front of the church, accepting Christ and joining the church. The congregation is shown that praying, witnessing, teaching and preaching the Word is still effective and powerful.

Jesus gave to the church servants who specialize in giving the invitation. They are called evangelists. They had rather give an invitation than eat. As an evangelist, I understand that preaching is central to every service. I understand that music should melt the heart and call men, women, boys and girls to repentance and salvation. However the focal point of every service is the invitation.

In a revival service the music should not be performed, but designed to minister. Music softens the ground of the heart, prepares the people to hear the Word of God and to respond to Christ. Music evangelists like Joe and Kim Stanley of Georgia, Jeff and Becky Carver of Mississippi, Price Harris of Louisiana and Jeff and Diane Anders of Florida craft the style and length of the music in the worship service to set the mood for God to

work. If the congregation is sleepy they wake them up. If the people seem to be hyperactive they calm them down with the tempo of the songs. They are sensitive to the Spirit and fully cooperative with the worship leader (the evangelist). They know real worship occurs at the altar. God's time (the invitation) is the most important time in the service.

Beverly Shea was asked why he always sang before Billy Graham preached. He said, "You probably think I minister to the multitudes. I minister to one man and then God ministers to the multitude." Music evangelists have a unique insight and point of view that every church needs. They are part of a team that focuses on the invitation. Music evangelists are time conscious.

The sermon should start off with the invitation. Rev. Hull of Lynchburg, Virginia described what I do when I preach. He said, "When you preach you first tell the people what you are going to do and what you are asking them to do. Secondly, you remind them during the sermon of what you are asking them to do. Thirdly, you warn them of the consequences of putting off the decision or refusing to get right with God. Finally, you call for a decision."

Dr. Hull said, "Every person in the room asks, 'Do I need to take action? What action have I taken in the past? Is it time for a new commitment? What is most beneficial?' You make it clear that the most beneficial action you can take is to repent and be sold out to Jesus Christ. You make it clear that the least benefit comes from disobeying God."

Urgency comes over my heart at invitation time. I believe Jesus can save anybody. No life can be too depraved for Jesus to redeem.

Dr. Lane Fordham, Mount Juliet, Tennessee (my brother) said, "The greatest advice you ever gave to me as a pastor was to train and use counselors." When the pastor is the only counselor talking to an inquirer about Christ, other people who are under conviction for salvation, rededication and church membership will not come. It gives the devil time to throw ice water on the heart and employ his tool of procrastination. Often people will dodge the church for weeks.

Lane got counselors and has seen between 25 and 30 extra commitments to Christ and church membership every year.

A minister shows a complete lack of faith in God's power to change men when he gives an invitation and does not have people ready to receive those making decisions for Christ. (A by product of having trained counselors is that people will do more sowing of the Gospel seed, praying and soul winning if they help gather the harvest of souls.) Intentionally make the invitation the focal point of your service. Praying, singing, preaching and counselor training all lead to God's invitation. Many pastors have said that most of what they have learned about the invitation is in watching vocational evangelists. Contact one today at www.sbcevangelist.org.