

FAMILIES REACHING FAMILIES

DAN R. CRAWFORD

DEDICATION

TO the members of my family who served as manuscript readers, suggestion makers, approval givers

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5453-9 1 *suggestion makers*,

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MEET DAN CRAWFORD

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Preface: Reaching

It's a wonderful day in the neighborhood," is the familiar beginning line to the introductory song for *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, a popular television program for children. The "neighborhood" is always one characterized by joy, peace, and happiness. The contrasts between this idealistic neighborhood and the one in which you and I live are many. In fact if we took some current television programs as indicators of American family life, we might well assume that there is nothing to worry about. While the programs are in full color, the issues are always black and white with no in-between grays. The solution always comes within the allotted 30 minutes and at the end of the program the family is always together, always smiling. This happy, "average family" scene is duplicated in movies and even in some Sunday sermon illustrations.

Real family life however is filled with issues that do not fade away in 30 minutes. In real life—even in the Christian home— father and mother do not always have the answers, and some of the answers they have do not work. The children are not always loveable youngsters, who obey and respect their parents. At the end of the episode the family may not be together, but rather torn apart by turbulent emotions. The frustrations of our complex American society, the great emphasis on materialism, a weakening of moral standards, and a departure from biblical views of sex, marriage, and family relationships have all had their effect on the American family. Thus, the family cries out; "My spouse has grown cold and non- supportive"; "My spouse seems detached, never touches me"; "My son/daughter has developed questionable friends"; "My son/daughter is creating disharmony in the home"; "My parent(s) does not/do not understand."

Sometimes the Christian family cannot even find solutions within its church. Oftentimes the church programs are filled with an emphasis on the study of and/or the ministry to “others.” When the church seems disinterested in the problems of *my* family, I am less interested in responding to its challenge to reach out to *other* families. While we often experience the emotions of joy, peace, and happiness, our neighborhoods are also characterized by stress, crisis, tragedy, divorce, delinquency, desertion, and lostness. It is this final characteristic of lostness that serves as the motivation for this book. Indeed if our neighbors were not lost there would be no need for a book such as this.

Because they are our neighbors, we often lose sight of the contrast between believer and non-believer. The Bible tells us that the believer is saved (Eph. 2:8-9), while the non-believer is condemned (John 3:18). The believer is dead unto sin (Rom. 6:11), while the non-believer is dead in sin (Eph. 2:1). While the believer is a child of God (John 1:12-13), the non-believer is a child of the devil (John 8:44). While the believer may be brought near to God (Eph. 2:13), the non-believer is distantly separated from God (Eph. 2:12). While the believer is certain of heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-5), the non-believer is certain of hell (Rev. 21:8). While the believer has access to God (Rom. 5:2), the non-believer is under God’s wrath (John 3:36). Because there are people in our neighborhoods who are lost, there is a need to consider Christian families reaching out to non-Christian families. This is the biblical pattern as will be seen throughout this book.

This book will attempt to identify some of the people in our neighborhoods, propose a biblical base for reaching these persons, answer some questions related to principles of outreach to various neighbors, share some illustrations that reflect effective methods, and offer discussion guides for small group and family discussions in the home (or elsewhere). The names of persons in my own former neighborhood have been changed to protect their identity. All other names, except where indicated, are real. The small group/family discussion guides in the appendix were originally published by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and are used with permission. I appreciate the following members of the writing teams who granted permission for the use of the materials in this book: Joyce Ashcraft, Charlie Baker, Gary Chapman, Bob Crawford, Don Guthrie, Barbara McNeir, Debbie Capell Miller, Ken Morris, Woody Northcutt, and Rick Spencer.

I would like to thank my family for allowing me to tell their stories. Much of this book relates directly to them and the remainder relates indirectly to them. I would also like to thank Laurie Riordan for typing the manuscript. I would like to express my appreciation to the following friends who shared stories with me related to families reaching families. These stories have found their way into this book: Paul Basden, Jim Bricker, Dub Bryant, Guy Greenfield, Hugh Harrell, Clark Hensley, Tommy Lea, Bill Mackey, Harrison McCoy, and John Vaughan. Finally I would like to thank my neighbors, past and present, for making ours a “wonderful neighborhood” and for unknowingly making their contributions to this book.

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CHAPTER 1: REACHING IN

While not being as peaceful or perfect, our former neighborhood was just as “wonderful” as is the neighborhood of Mr. Rogers. Our family of four seemed to fit the neighborhood well. We are a “traditional” American family, with the father being the primary wage earner and the mother being a housewife with little outside income. There are two children, an older daughter and a younger son separated by two and a half years. It is our only marriage and the children are our natural born children. The rest of the neighborhood was less traditional. Our next-door neighbors to the north were Rich and Sally and their two children, one boy and one girl. They had recently moved to this neighborhood from another part of the country. Their accent was different and their life-style to some extent was different. Their initial welcome to us was warm and cordial, but as the months went by the friendship developed slowly. Eventually, Rich and Sally divorced leaving him in the home with one of the children. We now had as a neighbor a single- parent family.

To the south of us lived Johnny. Upon the death of his parents, Johnny moved back into the home, much to the opposition, legal and otherwise, of his brothers and sisters. The entire time we lived in the neighborhood, Johnny lived next door under legal proceedings to have him evicted from the house. Johnny lived in the house with various other persons, all of whom seemed to come and go at their pleasure. There was for a period of time a live-in girlfriend and it appeared that various illegal and immoral activities were taking place in the house. Johnny’s attitude toward us ranged from friendly to hostile depending on the day and his physical and psychological condition. Johnny was a single adult with a commune style of living. Across the Street from us and to our south lived Mr. Thompson. Having seen all of his children grow up and leave home, Mr. Thompson had now experienced the death of his wife.

This characterized him as a single, senior adult living alone. Although children and friends visited him on occasion, he appeared to be very lonely and somewhat withdrawn. Always eager to wave and speak briefly, seldom did Mr. Thompson take any initiative at developing a friendship with us. His strongest interest seemed to be in relating to our children. Directly across the street from us lived Nancy and Ralph and their three children. The two girls were born to Nancy and her previous husband. The son, Ralph, Jr., was born to Nancy after her marriage to Ralph. Ralph’s previous marriage had produced no children. This family was not only ethnic, but would be characterized as a blended family; that is, children from separate marriages coexisting in the same home. This family was by far the most cordial to us upon our arrival in the neighborhood with Ralph, Jr. being only slightly older than our children. Across the street and to the north of us was a vacant lot, providing a recreation space for the children in the neighborhood.

The primary characteristic of this neighborhood did not lie in its diversity, but in the fact it represents a typical American neighborhood in the late twentieth century. Whether you live in a small town or an urban area, whether you live in a single- family housing unit or multi-family housing units, whether you live on a street or a road or a cul-de-sac, whether you live in brick structures or wood structures or structures of some other type building material, your neighborhood would to some extent resemble our neighborhood.

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR REACHING IN

Just as our neighborhood was a field for evangelistic outreach, so are all neighborhoods. God knew this from the beginning and so established a biblical base for families reaching their neighbors. Even as God sent Abraham from Haran, “to the land which I will show you” He promised through the witness of Abraham and his family, “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3, NASB). While there is here a broader picture than that of a family unit, there is the foundational idea that through the family of Abraham and ultimately through “the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1), Jesus Christ, all would be blessed. The divine blessing was to flow through Abraham’s family. They were to be “channels of blessing,” not reservoirs, storing up God’s blessing. The prophecy, which initiated in Abraham’s family, reaches toward the ultimate goal of God’s plan for, “all the families of the earth,” even those in your neighborhood.

The present day reader of Deuteronomy might be tempted to read past chapters 12-26 with its long sections of laws, yet as chapter 12 describes the proper place of worship Moses alludes to reaching those within and around the family. When the people of God came to, “the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling” (Deut. 12:11), Moses instructed them to, “rejoice before the Lord your God, you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your towns, who have no allotment or inheritance of their own” (Deut. 12:12). The Psalmist warns against inconsistency of life-style in the presence of our neighbors asking God to repay those who, “speak cordially with their neighbors, but harbor malice in their hearts” (Ps. 28:3). Many neighbors of Christian families would be Christian except for the inconsistent life-styles of their Christian neighbors. Jeremiah foresees a glorious day when a new covenant would be established with God’s people and in his mind the situation is so perfect that, “no longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me” (Jer. 31:34). The implication is until that day we should be faithful to the task of teaching our neighbors to “know the Lord.”

After Jesus brought physical and spiritual healing to a demon-possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes, He challenged him to, “return home and tell how much God has done for you” (Luke 8:39). We who have had much done for us by God should find a role-model in this man who promptly, “went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him” (Luke 8:39). Following each parable in Luke 15, the lost-and-found chapter of the New Testament, Jesus tells of rejoicing with, “friends and neighbors” (Luke 15:6,9) and a need to “celebrate” (Luke 15:24) over that which He had lost and which was now found. How much more would we celebrate if those “found” were among our “friends and neighbors.” The apostle Paul instructed the Christians at Ephesus to “speak truthfully to his neighbor” (Eph. 4:25). The principle is one of integrity in relationship to neighbors (and beyond). This positive imperative is in the present tense, which implies continuous action, thus a life-style of speaking truth to neighbors. Certainly as we speak truth to our neighbors we would not want to leave out of the relationship He who is the source of all truth. The biblical principle and pattern is consistent, we are to bear witness in the neighborhood.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON REACHING IN

Having introduced a biblical base for reaching in, we must now pose some questions. Perhaps the first question ever posed to our Lord about the family was, “*Who is my neighbor?*” (Luke 10:29). In the first Christian century, the Christian family had to relate itself to a society and neighborhood which might aptly be termed pagan. Family life as known to the new Christian community was the product of three cultures—Hebrew, Greek, and Roman. The Hebrew family was basically a religious institution with the father in a leadership role. Religious ceremonies occupied an important place in the life of the family. Many ceremonies impressed upon younger family members God’s leadership and care through their history. The Greek family presented a striking contrast. Unlike the status of the Hebrew woman, who was moving towards equality with the man, the place of the woman in the Greek family had deteriorated to the point she even lost her husband’s respect and comradeship. The more the Greek culture advanced intellectually, the more the family was relegated to a place of lesser priority.

The Roman family life also had experienced decline, but of a somewhat different nature. With Roman power embracing the entire known world, family relationships had moved toward equality but with an accompanying degeneracy bringing an instability to the family. The Roman family while earlier having believed in the sanctity of the marriage was now confronted with the practice of men having concubines, with prostitution and with wide spread divorce. New Christians found themselves in this kind of world, but not of that world. They faced a challenge of finding a way to demonstrate the Christian family without alienating themselves from those to whom they would witness. At a time when sexual indulgence was running rampant, the Christian family faced the problem of practicing and teaching the biblical principle of sex and marriage. Another problem faced was that of marriage to a pagan. Many converted Christians found themselves the mates of unbelieving companions. Faced with the encouragement of the apostle Paul to remain single, early Christians faced the question as to whether or not to enter into marriage at all. Faced with these and other questions, the Christian family demonstrated the high standards of Christians living in a complex society. For them one of the most important methods of spreading the gospel was by the use of the home. The earliest Christian meetings took place in homes. Therefore, it is to be expected that Christians were to bear witness to their faith through the activity of their home.

But what about our neighborhood? Many of those who are trying to lead Christian families today grew up in an age when the family was portrayed on television and in other places as a unit where the man of the house went to work everyday, the woman remained at home, always immaculately dressed and groomed, caring for the children, and calmly handling all crises. Occasionally, she was even seen vacuuming the carpet in high heels. The children were always attractive, extremely talented, and charming. Today only 15 percent of American households are single-earner, married couples with children under the age of 18. The former model of the family was seen as perfect, if the offsprings were one of each sex. Yet that kind of family one working father, one housekeeping mother, one son and one daughter made up approximately 7 percent of today’s families. Today in 61 percent of the families with married couples with children under the age of 18, both partners work outside the home.¹

¹ Gary Smalley and John Trent, “Honor My Parents?” *Discipleship Journal* 47 (1988):38.

Your neighborhood may be like mine, made up of not only traditional families but single-parent families, single adults— either young or older—living alone, blended families—two adults living with children from previous marriages in the home, single adults living together either as roommates or in a commune situation, couples who have experienced the “empty nest”—meaning their children have already moved away from home, and perhaps other combinations of family. One other striking contrast between the biblical family and the modern family is the size. In the Bible we are told that Rehoboam had 28 sons and 60 daughters (2 Chron. 11:21); Gideon had 70 sons (Judg. 8:30); Ahab had 70 sons (2 Kings 10:1); Ibzan had 30 sons and 30 daughters (Judg. 12:8-9); Abijah had 22 Sons and 16 daughters (2 Chron. 13:21). Almost always these children lived in the home with both parents even into their adult years. The attitude towards large families has changed significantly. The high cost of living, the population explosion, the world food shortage, and the dual-income concept have caused many modern couples to limit the size of their family. Even in this limited family, nearly half of today’s children will not live with both of their parents during their teenage years. One in four children will live in a step-family.

Some would say that we have strayed from the biblical and historical pattern of family life. Yet the concept of a traditional family is a relatively new idea. Before the 19th century, most families functioned as productive units, that is everyone worked, usually in the family business or on the family farm. During the Industrial Revolution, as Americans left their farms and moved by the thousands to the cities looking for work, men found jobs in factories and women stayed in the home to raise the children. Thus was created the idea of the “traditional family.” Rather than having been created by God, the idea of the “traditional family” was brought about by change in society. The Bible is a family album of diversity, much like the modern mosaic of family life.

Irregardless of the kind of families or the social influences, we still must cope with the sinful nature that is a root of all family problems. We call our home our castle, but for the most part we have neither a draw bridge or moat to keep the influence of the world out of our homes. Today’s family lives in the midst of a sea of worldly influence. As we live in the world, we are bombarded by less-than-Christian ideas and practices. Our kind of world leaves little time for families to care for each other. The Society of Friends presents a questionnaire to its members annually for the purpose of guiding them in their lives. One question reads, “Are you endeavoring to make your home a place of friendliness, refreshment, and peace, where God becomes more real to all who dwell there and to those who visit?”

Unfortunately, one of the marks of modern families is we are seldom home. In addition to school activities, the children are often involved in other activities ranging from athletic leagues, to music lessons, to ballet lessons, often robbing them of a childhood that allows them to find out who they are in relation to the family. By their teenage years, those same children have become detached, uncommitted, unenthusiastic about family life. They often punctuate their boredom with sexual involvement, drugs, alcohol, and/or speeding automobiles. For many of these children and teenagers, being at home would mean being alone. The mother is often outside the home with her work or her social involvement, attending to everything from garden clubs to school-related organizational meetings to church activities. Likewise, the father is spending his leisure time proving his manhood in deer blinds and on the sidelines, in fast lanes and on putting greens. Ogden Nash’s definition has symbolic relevance, “A family unit is composed not only of

children, but of men, women, an occasional animal, and the common cold.”² For better or for worse this is the make-up of our neighborhood and the family units that surround us.

In light of the above, what are some implications for today’s families? The following is a suggested list:

1. The family is a place where persons may learn to cooperate. The cooperative idea of the family is in stark contrast to our, “Do your own thing” world. Yet families were established by God for the good of the world. We are created to cooperate in a world that is moving towards individual specialization.
2. The family is a place where ultimate values may be taught. Without a doubt the most important lessons in life are learned in the first few years of life. These lessons often set the directions and standards for the rest of a person’s life. Life’s goal, purpose, values, standards of judgment, etc. are primarily influenced by a person’s family background.
3. The family is a place where we learn individual expressions within a social context. Families are places where we can learn that all people are created unique with different talents and gifts. In the family we learn fairness, that not everyone gets to do everything. The family teaches that life has stages (i.e., you can not drive until a certain age). Families become the training ground for expressing our individuality.
4. The family provides a lifetime of experience from which one may draw. Society at large provides a pool of experience from which we may benefit (electricity even though we did not invent it nor understand it). The family in particular provides its members the wisdom that comes with age. Children do not have extensive experience so they draw on the experience of parents and grandparents. Adults on the other hand learn again from their children, lessons perhaps they had forgotten through the years.
5. The family provides an opportunity to observe the cycles of life. Each stage of life has its own unique characteristics and merits. The family, made up of males and females, babies, children, teens, young adults, adults, and senior adults provide a mosaic for understanding the whole of life in one picture.
6. The family provides the context for tradition, belonging, and celebration. The family is the focus of holidays and special occasions. Birthdays, rites of passage, special events, etc., are all times of family gatherings.
7. The family is the primary unit for reaching out. The biblical imperative is that family members will reach other family members. These family members who are the closest to us are our first line of concern.
8. The family provides a base of operations for outreach. Just as mountain climbers maintain a base camp in order to support their assault on a mountain, so Christian families maintain a base camp that provides them a place of retreat in times of difficulty and a source of resupply in times of need. The family becomes our “launching pad” into the neighborhood.
9. The family provides the necessary ingredients for the development of a balanced program of outreach. The functioning Christian family provides guidance in every aspect in outreach from cultivation, to conversion, to follow-up.

² John H. Stevens, “The Traditional Family and Other Myths,” Discipleship Journal 47 (1988):22.

What about my relationship to non-Christian neighbors? Characteristics and descriptions of various non-Christian neighbors will be shared later in this book. The point of consideration here is that there are few places other than the neighborhood where non-Christian families relate on a continuing basis to Christian families. The ultimate goal for Christian families is not just to have enriched family lives for themselves but to reach out to others. Christian families are called to the twin tasks of growing in spiritual and relational maturity and at the same time reaching beyond themselves to witness and minister to other families. The effectiveness for reaching people for Christ is multiplied as individual family members allow the family unit to become the means of witness. Christian families who practice their faith in relationships both within the home and outside the home provide a powerful and positive witness for Christ.

Before Christian families can reach out to non-Christian families, they must have a sense of renewal in their own homes. This can be done as family members discover, affirm, and appreciate the gifts of each other, and as Christ becomes Lord of the home. Though not an exhaustive list, the following are some ways Christ is made Lord of the home:

- When the importance of family relationships are affirmed.
- When individual family members take Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- When Christ is the example and guide for family interaction and decisions.
- When family members love one another and practice this love.
- When the worth of each family member is recognized and affirmed.
- When love for God is expressed in specific ministry actions to others.

The local church cannot only strengthen families but encourage family outreach with the following actions:

1. Teach families to bring renewal into the home by discovering, affirming, and appreciating the gifts of each member.
2. Equip family members to witness and minister.
3. Train families in how to celebrate their heritage of faith.
4. Lead families to open their home as places of witness and ministry.
5. Lead families to reach all of its members for Jesus Christ, including children, adults, grandparents relatives, in-laws, and others.
6. Equip families to grow spiritually so that they may be better prepared to witness and minister to others.

How do I build a witnessing relationship with my non-Christian neighbors? The following points may be of assistance:

1. Envision the Spirit of God indwelling your neighborhood. As you walk, run, or drive through your neighborhood picture what each home and family would be like if it were Christian. Pray for each home and family as you pass by. Remember that witness begins with prayer, proceeds with presence, moves toward proclamation and concludes with persuasion.
2. Understand that some of your neighbors will be more responsive to your friendship than others. Cultivate the friendships with those who are responsive to you, while continuing to pray for those who are not responsive. Often neighborhoods have neighborhood parties, Christmas open houses, joint garage sales, or other neighborhood projects that

offer opportunities for interaction with all the neighbors. Naturally some will be more responsive to your attempts at friendships than others, be sensitive to these.

3. Make attempts to get better acquainted with those non-Christian neighbors that have showed an interest in your friendship. Be to them the kind of neighbor you would want to have. Take the initiative to be of assistance when it is appropriate. If a neighbor is raking his leaves, grab your rake and join him. If he is leaving town for a few days, offer to take care of his mail, his newspaper, or his pets.
4. Invite non-Christian neighbors into your home for social purposes. Often the unspoken witness of a Christian home is extremely effective. This witness may come through a plaque on the wall, a verse of Scripture taped to the refrigerator door, an open Bible on the table, Christian literature on the coffee table, prayer before the meal, or just the positive attitude of the Christians who live in the home.
5. Discover common interests with the non-Christian. As you develop this relationship with a non-Christian friend, he will naturally discover some common points of interest. Among these may be involvement in athletic competition, spectators at athletic events, interest in the same kind of music concerts, hobbies, investments, travel, memberships in service clubs, and common reading materials.
6. Make the most of holidays and special occasions. During the Christmas season, Thanksgiving season or birthdays, invite the non-Christian friend into your home or out for a meal or some other activity. Always express your concern and friendship with the sending of cards and or notes of remembrance on these special occasions.
7. Be available to assist in times of minor and/or major crisis. People, especially non-Christians, are vulnerable in a time of crisis, and are usually open to our assistance. Also remember to be open to the assistance and help of your non-Christian friends when you are in times of major or minor crisis. Your gracious acceptance of their help in time of need is also a witness.
8. Look for ways to introduce your non-Christian friends to other Christians. Many non-Christians will avoid attending church activities with you, unless it is some special occasion and they are certain many other non-church members will be present. A step in between your relationship to the non-Christian and their relationship with the church would be the introduction of other Christian friends to them. Invite these non-Christian friends to Sunday School or a church Wide function.
9. Always look for opportunities to “plant seed.” Remember the purpose of this relationship is ultimately to lead this non-Christian friend to faith in Christ. This may not happen as quickly as you would like for it to happen. Therefore, you must be sensitive to opportunities of planting more seed. Your response to his or her indecision may be as crucial to the overall process as anything else you do.
10. Invite your non-Christian friends to your home for an outreach Bible study or discussion group. Many non-Christians are interested in the Bible. Your home might present for them a non-threatening way for them to study the Bible and ask their questions. You might consider giving the non-Christian’s name to a Sunday School class as a prospect, or even inviting your friend to enroll in Sunday School.

What about my home as a meeting place for an Outreach Bible Study? Crossing the threshold of a church building is a tremendous psychological barrier to non-Christians¹⁵. There are many reasons for this, not the least of which is the fear of the unknown. However, all

nonChristians are familiar with the inside of a home. Therefore, a meeting in your home has built-in advantages over inviting the non-Christian to the church building and may be a bridge to eventually involve the non-Christian in the life of the church. The following are some practical points related to the use of your home for an Outreach Bible Study meeting:

1. Set your direction clearly. There is a difference between an Outreach Bible Study and other types of Bible studies. Select your materials and chart your course with the non-Christian in mind.
2. Select your materials carefully. Purchasing a Bible for your non-Christian friend at the first meeting may be too aggressive. You might want to consider loaning them one of your Bibles until an interest is expressed in owning a Bible for themselves. Many good Outreach Bible Study materials are available through denominational sources. (Contact the Sunday School Division, Baptist Sunday School Board, 127 Ninth Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37234, for more information. Also, see Appendix at the back of this book.) Be sure the material is simple Bible study material or that it is discussion material that only involves biblical quotations at the end of the session, such as those included in this book. Topical discussions are usually of greater interest to non-Christians than verse by verse discussions.
3. Choose carefully the participants in your home Bible study. The best home Bible studies for outreach purposes are those where non-Christians outnumber the Christians. Be sure that any Christians invited to participate understand that the purpose of the study is primarily to reach out to the non-Christians. The Christian is to share his Bible knowledge only as a means to reach out to the non-Christian. The atmosphere must be one conducive to making the non-Christian feel at ease.
4. Determine to eliminate some content before beginning. The use of in-house Christian language is often confusing to non-Christians. Talk in language that they can understand, avoiding religious clichés. The discussions of various churches and denominations and church controversies should be avoided at all cost. Avoid the temptation to correct the doctrinal views of other persons. Remember that the non-Christian is more interested in your care and concern than he is your doctrine.
5. Allow the study of the Bible to bear witness. Avoid temptation to press for a premature decision. Claim the promise that the Word of God will do its work and will not return empty.
6. Encourage the non-Christian to participate fully in the group by asking her questions and sharing her opinions. Do not correct her opinions but gently share with her the truth as you understand it. Always complement the non-Christian for their opinions and observations.
7. Understand that the most important dynamic to the non-Christian is the fact that you are interested in helping him. Far more important in this initial stage than the content of the Bible study is your personal care and concern for the life of the non-believer. It is trite but true that the non-believer does not care what you know until he knows you care.
8. Pray consistently for each member of the Outreach Bible Study. It is imperative that you not talk to a person about God until you have talked to God about that person. This should be an on-going ingredient to your home Bible study.

All of the previous questions cause us to ask, *Does reaching in work?* The following are some examples of those individuals and churches who have reached in effectively.

INDIVIDUAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF REACHING IN

Because they were a part of a new church, Denise and Paul began to host a Bible study in their home. One of the first couples that they met were Patrick and Diane and their two children, P.J. and Erin. Patrick traveled back and forth from California throughout the southwest as part of his job, so he frequently was not in the Bible study meeting. Diane was very lonely, not only because of Patrick's absence but because it was the first time to live away from her home state. As time went by, Diane came to Paul with the request that she would like to have her children baptized. When asked why, her response indicated a total ignorance of what baptism meant. She had not grown up in a church, but desired that her children do so. The discussion continued as to why we do not baptize young children and what baptism really means. This curiosity kept Diane coming to the home Bible study. Denise and Paul continued to reach out to Diane and her family through the home Bible study and continued to attempt answers to her 501 searching questions.

One Sunday morning without any previous announcement, Diane walked down the aisle during the final invitation and with tears running down her face invited Jesus Christ to come into her life. That very night she was baptized and as Denise and Paul drove her home after the service, they shared with her, "You have made our day" to which Denise replied, "Made your day? You two have made my life." A life made new again because a Christian couple reached out in their neighborhood through a home Bible study.

Hank and Judy Lynn moved into a rapidly growing suburb of a northwest city. Desiring to reach out in Christian love to the new neighbors who were also moving into the suburb, Hank and Judy Lynn devised a ministry of their own, which they adequately named, "moving day ministry." Whenever they saw a moving van in front of a house, they quickly went to work. Because both were retired, Hank and Judy Lynn had time to devote to the newcomers in their neighborhood. Judy Lynn would bake cookies, cake, bread, or some other delicious item and the two of them would arrive at the home about the time the moving van left. Their gift of food was accompanied by an offer to assist in the first hours of rearranging boxes and making the home livable. Since they would arrive in their work clothes, their offer was often accepted immediately. In the course of assisting, Hank and Judy Lynn would share their faith in Jesus Christ and an invitation to participate in their church. The newcomers to the neighborhood were also invited to be a part of a home Bible study, meeting in Hank and Judy Lynn's home. Many families responded to the home Bible studies and a few followed through with professions of faith and membership in the church. Hank and Judy Lynn saw a need in their neighborhood and found a creative way of ministering to that need. Through that ministry, they reached out to their new friends and neighbors.

CHURCH ILLUSTRATIONS OF REACHING IN

The Casa Adobes Baptist Church in Tucson, Arizona has an interesting policy for their staff members. Staff members are required to stay home with their families seven nights out of fourteen. In addition to this, they are required to work no more than fifty hours per week including Sunday. These staff members are encouraged to spend time with their families and in so doing they model for the church members the value of family time together. From time to time various programs of the church are set aside and emphasis is made on using that time to be with family. An interesting side light of this ministry style is the positive impact it has had on new members coming into the church by baptism. So as a church staff models family living, they also model family outreach. The family life of the church is not only healthier but growing.

The Calera Baptist Church in Calera, Alabama recently had a Family Life Revival. Some of the subjects covered during the revival services were “Foundation for Marriage,” “How to Lead your Children to Christ,” “Self-Esteem,” “Communication in Marriage.” Several unsaved husbands and/or wives in the community attended the meetings each night. Up until this revival meeting, many of these persons have been closed to a gospel presentation. However, through their attendance and their opportunity to see in a non-threatening way the value of Christian principles as the foundation of happy homes a door of opportunities has been open into their lives. Since the gospel was presented in each session of the revival meeting, the Holy Spirit was able to work in the lives in these non-Christians. Even though they were unsaved, they were open to a church that was concerned about their families. Here is a church that found a way of linking the traditional revival meeting with an opportunity to touch the felt needs of families in their communities. (For more information about Family Life Revivals, write the Family Ministry Department, 127 Ninth Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37234.)

PERSONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Can You Reach In?

Unless you live in an unusual neighborhood you have some non-Christian neighbors. Unless you have carefully screened your friendships you have some friends who are non-Christians. What can you and your family do to be more effective in reaching into your neighborhood and your circle of friends? Review the material in Chapter 1 and develop a plan that will fit your family’s needs for reaching in.

CHAPTER 2: REACHING BUT NOT FAR OUT

Reaching out must begin among those who are not so far out. God blessed our marriage with two fantastic children (that's our family on the previous page). From the very beginning, Danna was personable and outgoing, even if a bit impulsive. She was the first grandchild on both sides of the family and the first Crawford female in over forty years. Needless to say she had every reason to be spoiled. She struggled early with the physical dimension of life, having been diagnosed as an asthmatic. She also struggled with the geographic dimension of life, moving when she was two years of age and again when she was five, once again when she was eleven, and yet again at age fourteen. During her teenage years she struggled with the relational dimension of life, undergoing typical teenage pressures. The spiritual dimension of life did not escape struggle. Having been raised in a Christian family and involved in church activities, she determined at a rather early age to profess her faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. She was baptized on Father's Day, but later came to believe this decision was not real. On her own she quietly confessed her faith in Christ as a teenager and asked to transfer her membership to a church other than that of her parents. With permission granted, she became very much her own person in the spiritual dimension, grew in Christ and after some continued struggle is becoming a radiant Christian witness in her own right.

James Edwin, the firstborn son, was named after his two grandfathers, James Cunningham and Edwin Crawford. Thus, he quickly became a favorite of grandfathers and father. Less outgoing than his sister, James was more methodical. Quiet most of the time, meditative, James excelled early in both academics and athletics. James made a decision early in life in regard to relationship to Christ while attending a children's camp, but he later confessed that the only reason he made the decision was his sister "pushed him into the aisle." However, each attempt to share the gospel with James resulted in the answer "I've already done that." His genuine confession of faith came in keeping with his personality, quiet and private. Because James was not as outgoing as his sister, he was somewhat hesitant to make a public profession of his faith. Following our move to Fort Worth, Texas, James determined that when the family publicly transferred church letters, he would publicly profess his faith in Christ and stand with the family in front of the congregation. This was done and his baptism followed. Currently he is involved in numerous youth activities through his church and consistently invites unchurched friends to accompany him.

It was our privilege as parents to share our faith in various ways with our children. Two dangerous tendencies were always possible. One, to ignore our children in our attempts to fulfill God's calling to ministry in the world. The second, to exert pressure on our children to make religious decisions based on the fact that they were in the family of one who was called to ministry. Hopefully, we yielded to neither pressure, but faithfully and properly passed on the faith to our children, reaching, but not far out.

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR REACHING BUT NOT FAR OUT

Outreach sometimes overlooks those closest to us. Families that reach out often overlook those within their own family. Passing on the faith to those within our own family has biblical precedent.

The Shema, a summary of the Law of Israel, was the creed of Jewish religious education. “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deut. 6:4-7). Parents were first to love and honor God in their own lives. By example they then were to pass this on to their children, not passing on that which they themselves were not also living. The Shema made the home a place of religious training.

In Old Testament times God instructed parents to teach and interpret religious heritage to their children. Speaking of the Passover, Moses said, “when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ Then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians’” (Ex. 12:26-27). In a similar way, Joshua challenged the twelve spies to each take a stone from the Jordan River so that, “In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever” (Josh. 4:6-7).

The Psalmist wrote, “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the Law in Israel, which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget His deeds, but would keep his commands” (Ps. 78:4-7). Family life with its highs and lows is seen in the familiar story of the prodigal in Luke 15. The parent was an adequate provider. When one of the sons demanded his share, the father had something of worth to give. As this son wasted it all, the father’s heart was broken. Yet parents learn just as certainly as you “train a child in the way he should go” (Prov. 22:6) he will go, and the going often takes worldly detours before returning home. Just as parents teach discipline, they must allow freedom. In this family the parent’s forgiving love and the strong ties of the security of the home drew the boy back. And when he returned, there was a celebration. The wayward had come home, the lost had been found, it was as though the dead had come alive again. As is often the case, when reconciliation comes with one, a problem develops with another. Here the father had to divert his attention and energy and love to the bitter, older son and assure him, “everything I have is yours” (Luke 15:3 1). Both sons were trained in love. Both sons lived in the awareness of that love. The parent had done his job. Sometimes family members are increasingly successful in reaching other family members. When Andrew discovered Jesus, “the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘we have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ)” (John 1:41).

The apostle Paul, with sternness, wrote to Timothy, “if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith” (1 Tim. 5:8). Paul knew Timothy would not take this as a personal offense for later Paul wrote of Timothy, “I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois, and in your mother Eunice and I am persuaded, now lives in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5). The writer of Hebrews reminds us that Noah, “when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family” (Heb. 11:7). Like Noah, we are to build a spiritual ark around our families as they encounter, “things not yet seen.” The “holy fear” will remain, but the security of the ark will prevail. The biblical pattern is clear, God intends for His people to practice their personal faith in Him and in the practicing of it, pass it on to their family.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON REACHING...BUT NOT FAR OUT

As we consider families reaching within their own families to pass on the faith, we must first ask the question, *What about the family and evangelism?* First, it must be understood that the family is the basic unit in God’s creation. Thus, the basic unit in reconciliation. Therefore, evangelism must begin with the basic understanding of the nature of the family. The will of God was for the family to be a unit in all dimensions, especially in the spiritual dimension. The basic Christian family is to be composed of a Christian man and woman (2 Cor. 6:14). In the case of a nonbelieving spouse, it is God’s will that the believing spouse reach the nonbeliever. These actions are biblically directed (1 Cor. 7:12-17). It is also God’s intention that children be included in the family unit and that parents should pass along the faith to their children (Deut. 6:6-7). The biblical concept of the family includes the various types of family units. Whatever the type of family unit, God’s plan includes evangelism within the family. Sometimes this results in children bearing witness to their parents or grandparents. Whatever the case, Christian family members are to reach out to their non-Christian family members.

What about the husband and wife relationship related to witness? In the most intimate of all human relationships, that of marriage, the biblical principle is for both wife and husband to be Christians. Realizing that this ideal is not always a reality, the Christian spouse is to provide a positive, loving witness to the non-Christian spouse. In cases where one mate is not a Christian, the immediate outreach goal of the Christian mate is to share the faith with the non-Christian spouse.

God intends for marriages to be rich, but this is not His ultimate goal of the marriage. All Christians have been commissioned to reach out to non-Christians. While one believer sharing the faith with another is the biblical pattern, one Christian couple sharing the faith with a non-Christian couple multiplies the effectiveness of the commission.

What about Christian parents witnessing to non-Christian children? Parenthood may be the most challenging vocation to which a person is called. It requires large amounts of love, devotion, sacrifice, patience, understanding, forgiveness, compassion, time, and energy. Often this is given with little or no immediate return from the child.

The importance of sharing the faith with children is underlined by a recent study that shows that 75 percent of church members committed their lives to Christ before the age of 14.

One of the primary ways a child understands God is through his own heritage—through family habits such as attending worship services and other church activities, saying prayers at home, and mentioning God’s name in thanksgiving and praise. The Christian family’s use of Scripture helps a child not only appreciate the Word of God but understand its meaning. While witnessing to children is a biblical principle for Christian parents, it is undoubtedly one of the most difficult tasks faced by those Christian parents. Because children see both-the good and the bad in their parents, they grow to realize that Christian parents do not live up to the ideas which they profess. Thus, confession and submission are two primary ingredients in witnessing to children.

The family is the basic place for the meeting of emotional and social needs, as well as the learning of primary skills for life. Children need to develop a sense of competence, feeling successful about something. Children also need the feeling of security with an organized environment. Children need a sense of being accepted and loved. This brings about the positive self- esteem that is so crucial in the development of a child. Children need to discover and build on their areas of strength and talent. This calls for experimentation and discovering where they fit into God’s world. Generally, children follow the model they observe. In reality parents cannot avoid modeling life for their children. Therefore, the basic place for the sharing of the Christian life-style model is in the home as parents demonstrate for their children how to live a life of meaning and purpose. In passing on the faith to our children, there are some dangerous extremes that need to be avoided. The setting of a given age at which a child is old enough to be a Christian is dangerous. When I grew up, any child, even one who was raised in the church, who made a profession of faith before the age of ten, was somewhat suspect. Currently, the six to eight year old convert is not at all unusual. The age at which a given child will understand conviction and conversion varies from child to child, but even the setting of a generalized age for conversion is dangerous. Everything is happening earlier today than it did a generation or two ago. The entire developmental Process seems to have been speeded up. If a child understands more in general earlier than she used to, is it not understandable that a child would understand more about God than a child her age of an earlier generation? Saying a child of any age is “too young to become a Christian” is dangerous. Each child and each decision must be weighed on its own evidence.

Another dangerous extreme in passing on the faith to our children is allowing the children to be “herded” into a decision with a group of children. This sometimes happens at the conclusion of Vacation Bible School or similar events where the pressure of the teacher combines with the peer pressure of other children, encouraging some to make public decisions without a personal understanding of its meaning. A third dangerous extreme, especially as it relates to Christian families, is trying to complete “the family circle” too soon. There is a great relief that comes to a Christian parent when the final child makes a profession of faith in Christ. Often that decision is rushed by the parent in order to feel that sense of relief. Children must be allowed to make their own decision in keeping with their understanding in God’s “fullness of time” for them.

Why do some Christian parents miss the joy of leading their children to faith in Christ?
We live in a day of the specialist. When something is wrong with my car, I no longer take it to a general mechanic, but a specialist, who relates to the particular problem in my automobile. When I have a health problem, I may begin by going to the family doctor, but if the problem is severe I

will end up going to a medical specialist who relates to my particular problem. Christian parents sometimes treat the salvation of their children as an item needing a specialist. Their feelings of being unqualified to pass on the faith is encouraged by an age of specialization. So, some Christian parents miss the joy of leading their non-Christian child to faith in Christ by deferring that joy to the pastor or some other church staff worker who works with children or to the child's Sunday School teacher.

Other Christian parents miss the joy of leading their child to faith in Christ because they do not know what to say. There is a fear that children will ask questions that the parents cannot answer. Therefore in not knowing what to say some Christian parents say nothing. There are those Christian parents who miss the joy of leading their children to faith in Christ because of their own inconsistent life-style. They know the child knows of their inconsistencies. The Christian parents fear if they do not live the Christian life consistently, their children will not want to. Rather than have their inconsistencies brought up in the conversation with the child, they forfeit the joy of talking to their child about the Christian faith.

Sometimes Christian parents have the feeling that their children will not listen to them if they were to discuss faith in Jesus Christ. This may be part of a larger problem in communication within the family. Finally, some parents miss the joy of passing on the faith to their children simply because they do not understand the biblical principle of family evangelism. In some churches this teaching is not a high priority. Therefore, the parents see the responsibility of witnessing resting with someone else.

What special points could be considered in witnessing to children? Be sensitive to what children say that indicates conviction and interest. There are some built-in times that traditionally provide opportunities for witnessing to children. Among these times are baptism services (especially if a friend or acquaintance is being baptized), the observance of the Lord's supper ("Why did you slap my hand when I reached for a cracker?"), church business meeting ("Why couldn't I vote?"), and sermons on heaven or hell ("What did the preacher mean? Am I going to hell?"). These questions provide excellent opportunities for the parent to witness. They may also provide indications that the child is developing an interest in salvation and perhaps is under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Another point to consider in witnessing to your child is the realization that religious language can be confusing, especially to children. We often tell children to "invite Jesus into your heart," yet children see news reports of heart transplants and their minds cause them to wonder what happens if you have Jesus in your heart and you receive a heart transplant. As heart transplants become more frequent, these questions will become more relevant. Christian parents know that in reality Jesus is not invited into the heart—the pump organ for blood supply to the body—but into our entire life. Perhaps, we ought to be clear with children that Jesus comes into our life not just into our heart.

Also the concept of conviction is difficult to explain. In the secular sense, conviction can lead to punishment or imprisonment. Perhaps the child will have more difficulty making that transition than will the parent. In witnessing to our children, we should not misuse our parental authority. It is often easy to force a decision on a child, especially if that child is one who endeavors to please in every way. A child should not be forced to make a public profession of faith just because it is a convenient time for the parents (grandparents visiting in town; Father's

Day or Mother's Day). While special occasions can be conducive to evangelism, they can also afford opportunities for a misuse of parental authority. Avoid getting upset when a child does not understand the concept of salvation. "Lostness" is a difficult idea to grasp, even for an adult. Children tend to panic when they feel lost in a crowd. To communicate with a child that she is lost without Jesus Christ is a difficult idea, especially when the child has grown up hearing that Jesus loves her. There are other areas where children can misunderstand the gospel presentation. The important thing to remember is that we not become upset at our child for misunderstanding, but rather employ patience in the sharing of the good news. Perhaps one of the most crucial points in witnessing to our children is the fear that the child might be killed in an accident before they become a Christian. We visualize in our minds all sorts of scenarios that result in a child dying and spending an eternity in hell because we did not encourage him to make a decision for Christ. It is important for us to understand the concept of "safe" and "saved." Children are "safe" in the loving care of God, who is even more concerned about our children than we are as parents. Children are "safe" in God's care until they reach a point in their life where they understand fully the need for inviting Jesus into their life personally. Until that, "age of accountability" is reached, children are "safe"—the God who loves them completely can be trusted to deal with them adequately. While there is much unknown at this point, Christian parents must not become overly anxious and force their children into some decision that is not genuine, simply to get them "saved."

In witnessing to non-Christian children, it is of utmost importance that the parent pray for wisdom and, as a practical matter, make use of a "third party." Godly wisdom may be confused in the life of the Christian party with parental concern. Therefore even as we pray for wisdom, it is advisable to invite a "third party" into the process. This "third party" could be the pastor or some Christian friend who is respected by the child. Allow that person to visit with the child and give an objective opinion as to the child's readiness for the decision. Not all children of Christian parents make professions of faith in Christ while they are children. Therefore, it is an appropriate question to ask, *What about witnessing to non-Christian teenagers within the family?* The urgency of sharing the faith with non-Christian teenagers is underlined by the fact that 85 percent of all people that do not accept Jesus Christ by the age of 18 never will. The possibility of non-Christian teenagers being led to faith by their Christian parents is reduced by teenage questioning and rebellion—either internal or external—against the family. In order to make this parent-to-teenager sharing more effective, we need to identify some commonly recognized needs of teenagers. Among these needs are a sense of identity, peer acceptance and approval, a sense of direction and purpose in life, a healthy self-esteem, parental trust, love and understanding, adequate role models, stable home life, affirmation of gifts and talents, a viable value system, and above all a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The teenager's quest for meaning and purpose in life is sometimes diverted into drugs, alcohol, or sexual activity. Peer pressure is seldom stronger than during the teenage years. The desire to belong and to be accepted combined with the natural quest for meaning and purpose in life often leads teenagers away from the closeness of the family unit. This misdirected search for meaning and purpose occasionally leads teenagers to suicide. Suicide has now become the second largest killer of teenage Americans, second only to alcohol-related accidents. In spite of these facts a recent national magazine reported a survey that showed 76 percent of American teenagers indicated that it's "very important" to have God at the center of their life. So, even

while non-Christian teenagers may rebel against their parents, many of them still realize the need for God in their life. Even though they give no outward indication, they are still listening to and observing their parents. Therefore even when a Christian witness seems to be rejected, it is important for the Christian parent to continue bearing witness to the non-Christian teenager in their family.

What about sharing the faith with members of our extended family? The biblical concept of *oikos*—the household—included family members who did not live inside the home of the immediate family. Thus, when the Bible speaks of passing on the faith within the household, it means to pass on the faith even to extended family members. Often it is easier to be heard by members of the extended family than it is by members of the immediate family. Extended family members do not see us on a day to day basis and therefore do not bring up inconsistencies in our life-style when we attempt to witness. This potential hindrance within the immediate family is less a hindrance within the extended family. It is important for the Christian to understand that the principles of family witness do not end at the property line of the immediate family. Principles of family witness continue along the further lines of family relationships. The final question: *Does reaching . . . but not far out. work?* Let's answer this question with some examples. Consider the following illustrations.

INDIVIDUAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF REACHING ...BUT NOT FAR OUT

According to his own testimony, Jim did not feel he needed Jesus because he needed no other authority in his life. Jim was raised in a denomination that taught about God, but his God had become someone with a giant scale at the end of time waiting to balance the bad and the good in the lives of individuals. Jim was good by his own comparison to other people, and while he thought occasionally about God's judgment, a close look at the sin in the lives of others always made him feel better. Inner peace had nothing to do with God, but was obtained by being the best at whatever a person chose to be. Anyone who claimed dependence on anything other than themselves was a fool in Jim's estimation. His life in the corporate world was good. His successes mounted and his accomplishments grew. He learned the worldly way to success, and the more he succeeded, the better he felt about himself.

After ten years of juggling all the balls that life had thrown his way, Jim began to realize that he couldn't keep them all in the air. Job, marriage, family, house—all demanded more and more to remain in their proper place. The satisfaction of success was quickly dampened by the reality of ongoing and ever-increasing responsibilities.

Jim quickly sensed that the more he did, the more he was required to do to achieve the feeling of satisfaction and success. Overloaded, frustrated, and lonely, he soon began to neglect his family in order to maintain his image at work. Jim knew he was failing, but his fear of failure and stubborn pride would not allow him to admit it to himself. Desiring to keep peace at home, whatever the cost, Jim agreed to attend a Family Life Seminar with his wife, fully realizing he would be preached at again. His negative attitude toward the seminar began to subside as he sat hour after hour listening to the speakers talk about life and why the very things that he sought for peace in life had failed to satisfy him. According to his own words, Jim realized, "the real issue

was not success or failure, it was sin. For the first time in my life, I looked at me instead of others. I heard for the first time the good news of Jesus Christ, that he loved *me* and wanted to be *my* Lord and Savior. I prayed that day and asked Jesus to forgive me and to come into my life and clean up the mess that I had made.” God used what Jim heard in that seminar to work deeply in his life. After three months he came to the place where he could stand before the church and publicly profess that Jesus was his Lord and Savior.

Several years later Jim could testify that success is not found in what you do until it is found in who you are. In his own words, “Until you are at peace with God, inner peace will eternally escape you. I have been given a new love for myself, my family, and for others.” Jim’s is a beautiful story of a wife who reached—but not far out—to her family and shared the peace that passes understanding with a troubled husband. Buck and Arlene (not their real names) were professing Christians and faithful church members. They provided a loving home for their two children, the youngest of which professed faith in Christ at an early age. The oldest child, a daughter named Beth (not her real name), not only rebelled against her parents but against their faith. From her early teenage years, Beth presented a disciplinary problem for her parents and teachers.

During her high school days, Beth was not only involved in drugs but was sexually active. This sexual activity produced a pregnancy during Beth’s senior year in high school. The father of the child, several years older than Beth, offered marriage and provision. It was determined however that Beth would leave home, fulfill her pregnancy, and give the baby up for adoption. This parental decision further alienated Beth from her family. As the months went by, less communication took place between the parents and the daughter. Ultimately communication ceased entirely.

Seasons conducive to family events such as Christmas and Thanksgiving became increasingly painful for Buck and Arlene, yet they continued to pray faithfully for their daughter, not knowing her situation. Often Buck or Arlene would go before the church family and request prayer for Beth. The intercessory prayer of fellow Christians combined with the persistence in prayer by her parents eventually led Beth to return home. As a young adult with a painful background, Beth reached out to her family for help and understanding. Not wanting to alienate her again, Buck and Arlene were deliberately indirect in their Christian witness but direct in their love and concern. With less pressure to conform and a greater desire to be a part of the family, Beth responded one Sunday evening in church to the invitation to invite Jesus Christ into her life and publicly profess Him as Lord and Savior. Needless to say, there was great rejoicing in the church family and in Beth’s immediate family. Sometimes family outreach is rejected. Never should that rejection become rationale for ceasing to reach out. Because Buck and Arlene were persistent in their prayer and their witness, their family became complete in Christ.

CHURCH ILLUSTRATIONS FOR REACHING.. .BUT NOT FAR OUT

The Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia, has an annual fall party for families in the area. Each Sunday School class and organization in the church sponsors a booth for the party. Parents in the area are invited and encouraged to bring their children to the church

for a safe, fun evening. As the children move from booth to booth, they are able to bob for apples, throw wet sponges at church staff members, and participate in many other fun events. Meanwhile, in another part of the church, the parents are offered refreshments, giving an opportunity for church members to visit with non-church members. This ministry provides not only an enjoyable evening, but it also provides a great opportunity for families to be together at the church facility. The evangelistic implications are rather obvious when church members and non-church members are together in a nonthreatening environment, reaching—but not far out.

As a ministry to the many single-parents in the area, Valley Ranch Baptist Church in Irving, Texas, provides a Christmas shopping day for the children of single-parents. The church is able to contract with stores in the area and receive merchandise on a consignment basis. All of this merchandise is displayed in a large facility on a given Saturday in December. Children of single-parents often have the frustration of not being able to surprise their parent on Christmas Day. Especially in the case of younger children it is the single-parent who must take the child Christmas shopping, therefore eliminating the element of surprise. Through this shopping ministry provided by Valley Ranch Baptist Church, the single-parent can bring their child or children to the shopping facility, allow them to shop on their own in a safe and honest environment, while enjoying refreshments with church staff and other members. Church members not only sell the merchandise to the children, but provide gift wrapping so that the gift is a complete surprise to the parent on Christmas Day. Again, the evangelistic implications are numerous as non-Christian single-parents realize that a church is interested in ministering to their needs. This one ministry alone has resulted in numerous single-parents and children visiting and uniting with the Valley Ranch Baptist Church.

PERSONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Can You Reach. . . But Not Far Out?

Is your family Christian? What about your extended family? What can you do to be more effective in reaching. . . but not far out to your family? If your family is Christian, how could you be a better role model for them and others? As you consider these questions, write a brief account in one hundred words or less of how you can reach. . . but not far out into your family.

CHAPTER 3 REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO REACHING OUT

When the moving van finally pulled away and we found ourselves surrounded by boxes, there came a friendly knock on the door. He introduced himself as Rich and announced that he and his wife Sally would like for us to come over the next morning for breakfast. We accepted their invitation. The next morning around the breakfast table in their home, we found ourselves beginning the establishment of a family friendship. We had some things in common. Both families had recently moved to this area from another part of the United States, theirs being a more drastic change than ours. Both families were raising a son and a daughter. Both families had one child with a health problem. With some commonalities we found ourselves with many differences. They were from the north, we were from the southwest. They were not Christians, we were. They both worked outside the home, only one of us worked outside the home. Their leisure time was spent away from home camping, our leisure time, what little we had of it, was spent at home catching up. Most of what appeared to be their life-style differed from ours. Their discovery that I was a minister seemed to have a negative impact on the relationship.

The on-going friendship between the two families grew distant as they began to undergo marital difficulties. Our best efforts to reach out were rejected. In spite of the attempts and advice of concerned friends, Rich and Sally's marriage ended in divorce with Rich continuing to live in the house with one child and Sally taking the other child to her new residence. From this point on most attempts at friendship with Rich and his son were futile attempts. He became more and more withdrawn as the days went by and Sally was seldom seen again. For a time, at least, they were reaching out to those of us who were reaching out.

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO ARE REACHING OUT

As families attempt to reach out to other families they will find some, like Rich and Sally who are themselves reaching out. The Bible speaks often of persons outside the faith reaching out to those inside the faith. Some were under conviction, others were just seeking. The search of Nicodemus led him to Jesus during the darkness of the night. It may be that he came at night so as not to be seen by other Jewish leaders. His busy schedule may have only allowed for a night visit. This may have been the time at which conviction became unbearable. It is worthy to note, at least in this instance, that no one reached out to Nicodemus, but rather Nicodemus himself reached out for the truth.

A student of the Scripture, his religious search took a turn toward the spiritual. His objective study led to the subject of truth. His messianic expectation brought him to the Messiah. Jesus lovingly, yet directly reached out to this one who was reaching out. In this case, Jesus reached out through confrontation. Nicodemus began the encounter with the statement, "We know you are a teacher who has come from God" (John 3:2). Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he can not see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). This is not yet a conversation, rather it is a confrontation. Sometimes when people reach out for the truth the best approach is to confront, or to use a coined word, "Carefront." It is interesting to note that Jesus began this night encounter by saying, "I tell you the truth" and concluded with, "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God" (John 3:21). Jesus reached out to Nicodemus who himself was reaching out.

On one occasion a man continued to reach out, not because he enjoyed the reaching, but because he did not know the way to God. In reaching out, this single-adult described as, “an Ethiopian Eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians” (Acts 8:27), went all the way to Jerusalem to worship. Not finding an answer there, he had stopped his chariot on the return trip just to read the Book of Isaiah. That is what he was doing when Philip found him and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading” (Acts 8:30)? The Eunuch replied, “How can I . . . unless someone explains it to me” (Acts 8:31)? Philip began with the Scripture the Eunuch was reading and led him to faith in Jesus Christ, then baptized him by the side of the road.

Yet another reached out because of a troubling vision. Cornelius is described as, “a centurion in what was known as the Italian regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly” (Acts 10:1-2). In a fearful vision an angel instructed Cornelius to send for Peter in Joppa. Even as we do today, Peter reasoned with God about the advisability of bearing witness to this person. Because of differences in culture and life-style, Peter could have reasoned, “but this is not my neighbor!” God would no doubt have done with Peter what he did with the young lawyer who inquired, “Who is my neighbor” (Luke 10:29)? When Peter arrived in the home of Cornelius he began by asking an appropriate question then proceeded to give him an outline of the good news resulting in the fact that “the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message” (Acts 10:44) and Peter, “ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:48).

Still others reach out due to circumstances around them. The Philippian jailer, following a violent earthquake and the discovery of a couple of prisoners who preferred to remain in jail and witness rather than go free, cried out to Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved” (Acts 16:30)? When confronted with the question, Paul and Silas responded boldly, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household” (Acts 16:31). After washing their wounds, the jailer took the prisoners to his home where, before the night was over, “the whole family was filled with joy, because they had come to believe in God” (Acts 16:34).

The biblical examples are numerous. In modeling after those examples, Christian families will want to be sensitive and reach out to those who are reaching out.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO ARE REACHING OUT

As the Christian family reaches out to their friends and neighbors, they will find some who are reaching back. People are open to spiritual realities today in ways that challenge Christians. Since this is true, the obvious question to begin with is, *Why are some non-Christians reaching out?* While there is a spiritual vacuum in the life of every non-believer, some of those non-believers have realized that there is such a vacuum that has not been filled through their attempts to fill it. Perhaps, they have involved themselves in all kinds of activities and pursuits in an attempt to fill the void. They have begun to realize that nothing external can produce lasting meaning. They are beginning to understand that a person may enjoy certain externals without having to depend on them for life’s meaning. Having come up short on all attempts to fill the vacuum in their life, they are now reaching out to something different. If the Christian message

of the indwelling Christ is available to them at this particular time and presented in a manner that is understandable, they will likely respond positively by inviting Jesus Christ into the vacuum of their life.

A second reason why some non-Christians are reaching out to us is the lack of meaning and purpose in their life. They do not know why they are where they are and they do not know why they are doing what they are doing. To the best of their understanding, a series of circumstances has resulted in the present tense of their lives. In many ways they feel they are victims of the rat race of daily routine. They keep plugging away at life not really knowing why. These people will likely be responsive to the idea of God calling out for Himself a group of people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, a people who will individually grow in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. They will likely respond to the idea that God has a plan and purpose for their life and He is waiting on them to invite Jesus Christ into their life in order to implement that plan and purpose. Christians can help this “seeker” to realize that most man-made purposes for life are short-lived. They do not bring ultimate satisfaction and meaning and they mean nothing related to eternity. To have ultimate meaning in life, one must commit himself to a purpose that counts not only for time but for eternity. Jesus Christ offers such a purpose for life.

Some non-Christians are reaching out because of their fear of death. This is particularly true of those reaching advanced age or those who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness. When we are young and healthy, death tends to be far-off in our minds. We do not anticipate dying soon, so we do not give much thought to the possibility. However, circumstances can bring about a rapid reprioritizing of our thoughts when the possibility of death becomes a reality. Even among the young who are growing up in a nuclear age, there is some thought concerning death. Those “seekers” who fear death will be encouraged to know that through faith in Jesus Christ there is life after death with Him, as opposed to life after death apart from Him. You may assure this “seeker” that their fear of death without Jesus Christ is only a beginning, a foretaste of what fear really is. Eternity without Jesus Christ is an unending series of fearful experiences. On the other hand, God has provided for His people an eternal resting place called heaven. According to what we know from the Bible, heaven will be a dynamic, expanding, creative experience that far exceeds anything our finite minds can now comprehend. It will be the epitome of joy and satisfaction and happiness. The person who is fearful of life beyond death will likely respond to a clear biblical presentation of the purpose which God has for His people through all eternity.

Still other non-Christians are reaching out because of their desire for inner peace. A medical doctor once took a three-year survey among his patients asking, “What is one wish you would make if you were assured that this wish would be granted?” Through various answers, the idea of inner peace was expressed by almost 90 percent of his patients. A pastor friend was reading a book on an airplane flight. The book’s title included the words, “inner peace.” Three different persons including the flight attendant asked him what the book was about. There is a deep desire on the part of many people to find peace that passes understanding. When these persons realize that Jesus Christ is the only source of true and lasting inner peace, they become responsive to the gospel presentation. Because Jesus was not of this world, He offers a peace that goes beyond this world. It is a permanent, eternal peace. The Christian family will demonstrate its inner peace by the way they conduct themselves in the midst of the most chaotic human experiences. While non-Christians tend to panic, Christians, because of this inner peace, can remain calm in the midst of crisis. This too will bear witness, especially to those who are desiring inner peace for themselves.

Some non-Christians are ready to respond to faith in Jesus Christ because of a deep, abiding loneliness in their own life. While this characteristic of loneliness is particularly true of persons who live alone, it is not limited to them. Some say that one is the loneliest number. That is not always true. Occasionally, two is the loneliest number, if those two persons are not communicating effectively with each other. Therefore loneliness may be a characteristic, not only of single adults living alone but of married adults living together; not only in single-family units but in multi-family units.

Those non-Christians who feel loneliness need to be shown that there is no more lonely figure in all of history than Jesus. He was alone as a child in the temple area when His parents left to return home. He was alone among His own family members who did not understand who He really was. He was alone in the midst of religious officials who misunderstood His purpose and were threatened by it. He was alone sometimes within His own disciple group such as when they fell asleep instead of watching and praying. The figure of Jesus hanging upon the cross is one of the loneliest pictures in all of history. Jesus identified with and understood loneliness. For the “seeker” who is lonely, there is a solution. This person needs to be introduced to the one who conquered loneliness and offers companionship to each individual who will respond in faith to Him.

There are many other reasons why people are seeking solutions to life situations. Christian families who are sensitive to these reasons in the lives of their non-Christian friends and neighbors may well find a door through which the gospel can enter that person’s life.

How does the Christian family begin to communicate the gospel to the non-Christian who is reaching out? The first step in communicating the gospel to those who are seeking is to explain to them why they are seeking. Assure them that God is sympathetic with their search. Relate to them that the very fact of their seeking is related to God’s Holy Spirit convicting them about their need for salvation. The seeker may think that his search is a result of a guilty conscience. This needs to be explained in terms of Holy Spirit conviction. While it may involve his conscience, it is the Holy Spirit drawing him toward Jesus Christ. Once the Christian has dealt with why the seeker is reaching out, and once there is an awareness that the Holy Spirit is convicting the seeker, then the Christian should proceed with a presentation of the gospel and an offer for response.

What does a Christian family have to share with those who are reaching out? As the family relates to their friends and neighbors and ministers among them, it must be sensitive to opportunities of sharing the good news. When those opportunities present themselves the following ingredients of the gospel can be presented:

1. The Bible begins with the love of God. In His priestly prayer Jesus, referring to the Father, said, “You loved me before the creation of the world” (John 17:24). When, “God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), he was motivated by love. This love was so strong that it caused God to, “so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
2. Human beings are basically sinful. Having begun with God’s love, we are now free to move to the sinfulness of mankind. To begin with sin is to risk not getting to your second point of emphasis. To omit sin is to have an incomplete presentation. At this point we must emphasize that “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23). Other verses that may be shared are Isaiah 53:6 and 59:2, 2 Chronicles 6:26, and Romans 6:23.

3. As we pass on the faith, we must share with the non-believer the person and work of Jesus Christ that, “God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8) and that “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). We might also share Isaiah 53:5, John 11:25-26, John 14:6, and Ephesians 1:7.
4. The fourth ingredient to a gospel presentation is the idea of human response in repentance, confession, and faith. Inform the non-Christian, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” (Rom. 10:9-10). We might also want to use Mark 1:15, 1 John 1:9, Isaiah 55:6, or John 1:12.
5. The most crucial part of the presentation is the decision by the non-believer to accept Christ. The biblical record is clear when it conveys, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). We might present Jesus as standing at the door of their life and saying, “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in” (Rev. 3:20).
6. The often overlooked part of a gospel presentation is the follow-up. Jesus instructed His disciples to, “obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). After a person becomes a believer in Jesus Christ, it remains the responsibility of Christians to follow-through with that new believer and teach them how to observe all that the Lord commands them.

How will I be able to remember all that I need to do with a person who is reaching out?

In talking about one who is reaching out, a seeker, one under Holy Spirit conviction or close to it, we are talking about a door that is already open. The Christian is not trying to open a door into that non-Christian’s life; he is trying to discern where the open door already is. Once that door is discovered, you do what you are expected to do with an open door, you walk through it.

Since we are to *walk* through open doors, you might remember what you are supposed to do by remembering the letters *W. A. . . L. . . K* The “*W*” stands for *wisdom*. You will need to ask God for divine insight as you deal with this non-Christian. Remember, do not talk to a person about God until you have talked to God about that person. Thus, ask God for wisdom. Perhaps you should have already shared your faith with this non-Christian and you need to be able to explain to that person why you are doing it now instead of earlier.

The “*A*” in walk stands for *apology*. You may say something like, “I am sorry I have not shared this with you before now,” or if no apology is necessary you might say, “I am really sorry no one else has shared this with you.” Apology has a way of defusing a sometimes explosive situation. It relaxes the non-Christian. He realizes you are interested enough in his life to apologize for any passed failures on the part of other Christians in communicating the gospel to him.

The “*L*” stands for *love*. You may need to say, “I share this with you now because of God’s love for you and because of my love and respect and appreciation for you.” I have never met a person in my years of ministry who did not need to be loved. I have met some who tried to

convince others they did not need love; but underneath the mask, there was a deep need to be loved. When you share with a non-Christian that God loves them and you do too, it meets a deep need in their life.

The “*K*” stands for *knowledge*. You are about to share with, this non-Christian something which they need to *know*. It is a truth that you know and they need to know. Having reached this step in the process, you may be ready to begin sharing with this non-believer the plan of salvation and offer him an opportunity to invite Jesus Christ into his life. *What happens when Christian families reach out to those who are reaching out?* The following illustrations provide answers to this question.

INDIVIDUAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO ARE REACHING OUT

Bo, a nickname given by her father, would have been called a religious person. She attended church regularly and even held leadership positions. Ultimately she discovered that religion did not fill the void in her life. Being the daughter of a minister, she had always attended church as a child and young person. Learning about Jesus at an early age, she joined the church and continued to attend regularly. However, the emptiness inside of her was not filled. Several times Bo recommitted her life before the congregation.

As she grew older and moved away from home, Bo began to allow other activities to take priority over church attendance. For her, Sunday became literally a day of rest. Marrying the man of her dreams, the two of them became actively involved in church. Bo taught Sunday School, was involved in the music program, and held leadership positions, yet the searching and longing experienced as a young person returned again. Church responsibilities were not able to fill the emptiness. As time went by, Bo became a mother, settled in a lovely home with nice clothes, a wonderful husband and two beautiful boys, and even this did not fill the emptiness. Relocating in another part of the country caused Bo and her family to join a new church and begin attending regularly. Something in this church was different. It was obvious that the people had something she did not have—a peace, a happiness, a sincere joy. Bo began to read and study her Bible learning more about following Jesus and making a commitment to Him.

As the Word of God spoke to her and the people of God reached out to her, Bo realized that the emptiness inside was because she had never entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In her own words Bo said, “I simply prayed and asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins, to come into my life by faith, and to take control. There was no thunder, but in a very real way I knew that Jesus had changed me. I felt a peace I had never had.” Concerning the time since that decision, Bo stated, “My days since then have not been problem-free and I have not been perfect. But Jesus is always with me and continues to teach and guide me each day as I grow and mature in Him.. I discovered the difference between religion and relationship. I found real meaning and purpose in Jesus Christ.”

As the families of this new church reached out to a new family, they did not have to reach far out. Their life-style was a witness without words that communicated to the emptiness in Bo’s life. The results of this reaching out to one who herself was reaching out was a new life in Christ. Dee and Michael, new residents of the community, attended a Christmas music program at a

nearby Baptist church. Not only did they enjoy the music, but they found themselves under heavy conviction. They had been invited to the Christmas program by Christian neighbors, David and Janice. About a month later during a neighborhood canvas for home Bible studies, the pastor of the church knocked on Dee and Michael's front door. When he recognized them, he eagerly shared with them the possibility of a home Bible study in his home. Dee responded with favor and began to attend the Bible studies along with her less-eager husband. Dee had grown up in New Mexico in a Methodist home, but had never made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Michael was from Cuba and, with his family, had deported to Spain during the mid 60's. While in Spain, he heard the gospel for the first time and responded to the invitation to become a Christian. However, he did not become active in church and until this announcement he had never told his wife about his decision. During the 15 years of their marriage, they had not been in church one time.

As the weeks of Bible study went by, the pastor continually asked Dee what it meant to be a Christian and the answers became more and more biblical each time. Finally she said, "I just don't understand how to make that decision. I know what it means but I have not yet done it. I need some more time." When the home Bible studies ended, Dee and Michael began to attend the Sunday morning services. Dee called the pastor to inform him that her sister had contacted her and had just become a Christian. This intensified Dee's desire to accept Christ and join the church. Early one morning while Dee and Michael were jogging, she was thinking about the Bible studies, the Sunday sermons, and her desire to become a Christian and according to her own testimony said, "Lord, this is the time. Take my life. Here I am, I want to be yours." The next Sunday the decision was made public and was followed by baptism. Dee and Michael have become actively involved in this local church. They had been invited by Christian neighbors to attend a Christmas music program at the church. As a result of the music, the Holy Spirit convicted them. In the midst of their conviction, they reached out and Christian friends reached back. Dee became a Christian and Michael recommitted himself to Christ because a family reached out to these two who were reaching out.

CHURCH ILLUSTRATIONS FOR REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO ARE REACHING OUT

The First Baptist Church of Norcross, Georgia, hired Jim and Becky Bricker as apartment chaplains. Their assignment was to reach people for Jesus Christ through apartment Bible studies, meeting of needs, and eventually the planting of a church. Ryan and Rhonda had moved into the apartment complex from Utah. Because they had been heavily influenced by Mormons, Jim and Becky went slow with their Christian influence on this new couple. As the friendship developed, Ryan assisted Jim in installing two ceiling fans. The couples shared several meals together and then Jim and Becky determined that the time was ripe for the gospel presentation.

On a given night, Jim and Becky went to visit Ryan and Rhonda. Becky was with Rhonda in the dining room; Jim and Ryan were watching baseball on television. As Becky led Rhonda to faith in Jesus Christ, Jim was leading Ryan to the same decision. In a few moments Becky and Rhonda came into the room, arm in arm, to tell Ryan the good news. Ryan responded that he had just done the same thing himself. The two couples have continued to meet for Bible study and discussion, with Ryan and Rhonda going through the *Survival Kit for New Christians*. The new

Christians still have many questions, especially related to Mormonism, but Jim and Becky are proceeding with sensitive care in the discipling of these new believers. As Ryan and Rhonda began to ask questions and reach out to their new neighbors, Jim and Becky were sensitive to the opportunity. This church through the ministry of Jim and Becky Bricker have reached out to those who are reaching out.

While Guy Greenfield was pastor of the White Rock Baptist Church in Los Alamos, New Mexico, the families of the church were led and encouraged to systematically locate and cultivate at least one new unchurched family each year. This was done through invitations to meals in their homes, as well as invitations to various church activities where the gospel could be both seen and heard through the lives of Christian families. Charles and Jean and their children had recently moved to New Mexico from the Northeast. While in the Northeast, they had attended a church of another denomination and even taught in the church school. After moving to Los Alamos, they decided to seek a new church that “knew something about a personal God.” Shortly after their move to Los Alamos, they met Ted and Marsha, members of the White Rock Baptist Church. Ted and Marsha invited Charles and Jean to a meal in their home as a part of the church’s ministry of locating unchurched families. Charles and Jean were impressed at the way their new friends prayed before the meal as though “God was a personal friend.” When Ted and Marsha invited Charles and Jean to attend church, they decided to give it a try and find out what Baptists were like. As Charles and Jean met other couples in the church, they were invited to additional “prayer and share” support groups. Soon they were invited to attend sessions of the pastor’s class, which was, for this church, a class for inquirers. In the context of this new church, they heard for the first time the gospel presentation. After a few months of seeing and hearing the gospel in and through the lives of their new friends they attended a Marriage Enrichment Retreat at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center in New Mexico. It was during this conference that Charles and Jean gave their lives to Jesus Christ. Here is a church that had an organized program of families reaching out to non-Christian families who were also reaching out.

PERSONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Can You Reach Out to Those Who Are Reaching Out? Can you identify any of your friends and/or neighbors who seem to be under conviction? Write their names on a piece of paper. Are any reaching out to you in their search for meaning and purpose in life? Place a check by those names. What do you need to do to be more effective in reaching out to those who are reaching out? Write three ideas, based on the material in this chapter, of specific actions you can take to reach out to those who are reaching out to you. Write down your testimony and a brief presentation of the gospel message based on the material found on pages 57-58. Share this with your friends.

CHAPTER 4 REACHING FARTHER OUT

We were awakened in the middle of the night with what sounded like gunfire. Looking out the window we discovered to our amazement that our next-door neighbor, Johnny, was firing a pistol at the car owned by his live-in girlfriend, Brenda. In the middle of the night she had threatened to leave him. To prevent her from doing so he was trying to shoot out the tires on her car. His condition at the time was certainly not conducive to hitting a target. Therefore, he had missed once by hitting her windshield and several times by hitting the body of the car. Finally, he was able to hit one of the tires. Needless to say she did not leave and in a matter of time all was quiet again. Any quietness that came from the direction of Johnny's house was only temporary. For here, in a commune style of living, activity went on 24 hours a day. We seldom recognized those who came and went even though there was a similarity about them. Johnny's relationship to us was sometimes friendly, but sometimes hostile. He often wanted to borrow various items, never returning them. Frequently, he and his friends parked older model cars in front of our house. Seldom was his yard mowed. One of his healthy interests was baseball, but discussions of attending a game together never materialized. Johnny was resistant to most conversation, especially if it related to areas such as church that were not a part of his on-going life-style. He was obviously not under conviction and did not care about our faith.

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR REACHING FARTHER OUT

A hardened, secular mind, such as Johnny's, while not being open to Christian witness, is a possibility for cultivation. Again, the biblical examples are many. For some reaching farther out is necessary because of the worship of false gods. Elijah carried on a continuing attempt to persuade Ahab to believe in the only true God rather than his belief in Baal. This on-going encounter culminated on Mount Carmel when Elijah took on the 450 prophets of Baal plus the four hundred prophets of Asherah. The real issue was settled before the people by Elijah when he asked, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Confrontation is sometimes necessary when reaching farther out. Often the risk must be run which Elijah ran, that of saying, "If you are right, I will follow your way, but if I am right, follow God." As Elijah confronted, the people cried out, "The Lord, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39) yet Ahab refused to believe. Belshazzar was farther out than most. He was not the king but was acting in that capacity while his father, King Nebuchadnezzar was out of the city. Out of his desire for greatness and his totally secular approach to life, Belshazzar planned a banquet. The evening was described as follows:

King Beishazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Beishazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone. —Daniel 5:1-4

This revelry was interrupted when, "the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall" (Dan. 5:5). As Daniel tried to interpret the meaning of that which was

written on the wall, he bore witness to Belshazzar saying, “But you. O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of Heaven. . . you did not honor the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways. Therefore, he has sent the hand that wrote the inscription” (Dan. 5:22-24). It was God’s last attempt to communicate with Belshazzar for, “that very night, Belshazzar. . . was slain” (Dan. 5:30). As Daniel witnessed, Belshazzar missed his last chance to move from “farther out” to “in.”

On one occasion a rather secular person came to Jesus with a question related to eternal life. While there was a degree of “seeker” in this person, the secular was predominant. He is described as one with many “possessions” and “great wealth” (Matt. 19:21-22). He is further described as a “young man” (Matt. 19:22). The secular life-style had been good to this young man as the world counts goodness. He possessed either inherited, invested or earned wealth, and this at a young age. As is the case with many who possess much, his concept of gaining eternal life was to live by the rules. When Jesus listed the commandments for him, he replied, “all these I have kept” (Matt. 19:20). When challenged to “come follow me” (Matt. 19:21) the young man, “went away sad, because he had great wealth” (Matt. 19:22). Did he ever return? Did his secular mind ponder the thoughts of that encounter? Did his curiosity call him back to the perfect teacher who told him the truth without compromise? Jesus planted seed on rough soil and awaited an unrushed (or perhaps unproductive) harvest.

When Paul went to Athens he found the Greeks willing to believe in all gods except the true God. So secular was their religion that they had even erected an alter, “to an unknown god” (Acts 17:23). Paul attempted to align their worship of this unknown god to his belief in Jehovah God saying to them, “Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23). After a direct presentation of the gospel, only “a few men became followers of Paul and believed” (Acts 17:34). More cultivation was necessary among these “far- out” Greeks. After two years in a Roman prison, Paul was allowed to appear before the new governor, Festus. He was accompanied by Jews who, “stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove” (Acts 25:7). Hardly a favorable situation for witness, it was definitely an occasion for reaching farther out. So, Paul requested an audience before King Agrippa. This was arranged, but in the midst of Paul’s ‘defense of himself and Christianity, Festus interrupted with, “you are out of your mind, Paul. . . your great learning is driving you insane” (Acts 26:24). Agrippa himself responded with, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28)? More time was needed for cultivation and reaching farther out.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON REACHING FARTHER OUT

The farther out you go from the Christian faith, the more worldly influence you find in the lives of non-believers. Ultimately you are dealing with totally secular mankind. The totally secular have no background in the faith and no appreciation of spiritual concerns. He is not at all interested in professing faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps he does not even believe in the existence of God. Obviously then, this person is not recognizing any Holy Spirit conviction that may be at work in his life. The best Christian families can do with these who are farther out is to share a

quick, positive Christian witness, planting a seed, and trusting God for the increase. The farther out person may be a strong family person and a pillar of the community, but is generally preoccupied with something other than religious pursuits. Her god may be money or pleasure or success or education, but it is not Jehovah God. Any spiritual hunger that is felt is fed with stone instead of the bread of life. Generally, she has a ready argument for any spiritual point that is made in her presence.

How do we approach those who are farther out? Begin by realizing that while the one who is farther out is more difficult to reach for Christ, he is not unreachable. The power of the gospel is strong enough to penetrate the hardest situation. Approach this non-Christian with confidence that God *can do* exactly what He desires to do in the life of this person. Because this person is committed to objectives other than spiritual, timing will be most important. There will no doubt be more inopportune times than there will be good times for the giving of a Christian witness to this person. Christians should always be positive and courteous, even when the approach is met with resentment and anger. Christians should not be discouraged but remain faithful to the task of sharing the faith. Remember it is not our responsibility to bring about conviction nor conversion. Those are responsibilities of the Holy Spirit. Our responsibility is to faithfully share our faith in Jesus Christ.

It may be well to share with the persons who are farther out the idea that there are some dimensions of life that even a person of their persuasion and life-style can not be without. The need for eternal security should be presented. By his very lifestyle he has shown a desire to be secure in this world and obviously feels that security and does not feel that he needs a relationship with Jesus Christ. However, this non-Christian cannot secure for himself eternal values. Therefore, a conversation concerning the eternal may be appropriate. Inner peace will be another dimension of life that may be appropriate to share with this one who is farther out. While outwardly he may appear to have it all together, there possibly will be a recognizable inner turmoil and emptiness in his life. By example the Christian should share the peace of God that passes human understanding even in times of crisis.

We should always allow the communication between us and the non-believer who is farther out to be a two-way communication. This person obviously feels that she has a better approach to life than do we. We will be better off if we allow this one every opportunity to share her opinions about her life-style and ours. We should not criticize, but listen patiently. The more we listen to her opinions, the more inclined she is to listen to our opinions. The more the non-believer listens to us and observes our life-style witness, the greater opportunity the Holy Spirit has to communicate through us.

When circumstances no longer allow me the privilege of speaking with this person, what can I do? Prayer evangelism is used too little among Christians. We often under estimate the power of prayer. It has already been stated that we should not talk to a person about God until we have talked to God about the person. Let it be further stated that when you can no longer talk to the person about God, you can and should still talk to God about the person. Many a callous sinner has been brought to faith in Christ by the faithful prayers on his behalf offered by God's people.

Enlist fellow Christians to join you in your prayer for this person who is farther out. The Sunday School class prayer leader and others should be involved. Pray that he might come under the influence of the gospel from other sources. Examples include a new and respected relationship in his life with a committed Christian, a message through the television media, a gospel tract or other literature, a word fitly spoken, or a change in his own life that brings about openness to the gospel.

A Christian must continue to practice a consistent Christian life-style in the presence of one who is farther out. We know that the life-style we live and the commitment of our life is more valuable than hers. We live in the assurance that we are right. We do not look down upon the non-Christian from this lofty spiritual perspective, but we remember through all the conversation and communication that our perspective is correct. If the non-Christian can cause us to waver in our opinion, then Satan has won a great victory. We must be strong and claim the promise of Acts 5:32, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit." We are not in this alone. Other believers will also bear witness through their life-style, communication, and their prayer support. In addition, the Holy Spirit joins us in the attempt to communicate the gospel to this non-believer who is farther out.

What is a good way to remember my responsibilities in communicating the gospel to one who is farther out? In the previous chapter, we gave you an acrostic for what to do with an open door, suggesting that you *walk* through that door. In this chapter, we would like to share with you what to do when the door is not open. In the case of one who is farther out, the door of communication is often shut. The Christian must be concerned that the door *opens*.

Allow the "O" to stand for *oikos*, the biblical word for family or household. In other words, discuss with this non-Christian his family and his close associates. Often a discussion of family will open doors of opportunity to discuss faith.

Allow the "P" to stand for *place*. Another subject of conversation that is common between the Christian and the non-Christian is the home or wherever you happen to be at the time—a convention, on an airplane, in a hospital, etc. Where you are is a common subject of conversation, especially if that conversation revolves around home. Sometimes this conversation will open a door for further witness.

Allow the "E" to stand for *employment*. Most Americans like to talk about what they do. In fact when you ask many people who they are, they will respond by telling you what they do. A conversation about employment may well open the door to other common areas of concern.

Let the "N" stand for *near*. Anything that is near you during a conversation with a non-Christian is a common subject for discussion. Items in this category could include the weather, some athletic event that is current in the news, the flight you are on if you are witnessing to someone on an airplane, the scenery around you, etc.

Finally, allow the "S" to stand for *spare time*. Discuss with the non-believer areas of interest, such as hobbies or pastimes. Often when you show an interest in his spare time activities, it will open a door for further communication.

Who are these persons that are described as being farther out? In their book, *Evangelizing the Hard-to-Reach*, Robert D. Dale and Delos Miles categorize the hard to reach,

i.e. farther out, in four categories.³ The first category is described as “the left-outs.” These persons rarely appear on any prospect list for any church. They are almost invisible, and they hold no special attraction for the church’s visitation program. The left-outs believe, “church people aren’t like me.”

The second category Dale and Miles describe they call “the drop-outs.” While these people have their names on church rolls, they are not actively involved in the life of the congregation. Not all of the drop-outs would be considered as farther out; only those who never professed faith in Christ yet held or presently hold formal membership in a congregation. They have chosen, having experienced the church, not to be a part of it any longer and they are outside the family of faith.

The third category is “the locked-outs.” These persons carry a social stigma and have little interest in being part of an organized church. They are often seen by church persons as those whose life-styles are deviant in some way. Because the church has ignored them through the years, they have placed themselves farther out from the faith.

The fourth category of persons who are hard to reach are, “the opt-outs.” These persons have taken a strong stance in opposition to the church as they perceive it to be and perhaps even a strong stance against the Christian faith. Some in this category have examined religion and chosen to actively oppose it. Others have simply accepted a secular approach of life and to them the church is insignificant and impractical.

Lewis A. Drummond and Paul R. Baxter, in their book, *How to Respond to a Skeptic* categorize those who are skeptical to the Christian faith in the following nine categories: The Psychological Skeptic, The Suffering Skeptic, The Scientific Skeptic, The Self-sufficient Skeptic, The Ridiculing Skeptic, The Political Activist Skeptic, The Christian Skeptic, The Deist Skeptic, and The Humanist Skeptic.⁴ Drummond and Baxter propose that answering skeptics to the Christian faith involves knowing *what* to say as well as *how* to say it.

Can one who is farther out actually come to faith in Jesus Christ through our witness?
The answer is an absolute *yes*. For too long Christians have dismissed certain persons as unreachable simply because they were farther out than others. The illustrations which follow in this chapter will indicate it is possible for persons who are farther out to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. However, in sharing the gospel with those who are farther out we will want to remember the following points.

1. Be gentle and loving in our approach to one who is farther out. He has no doubt faced most of our presentation at least once before. Sensitivity will gain us more of a hearing

³ Robert D. Dale and Delo, Miles, *Evangelizing the Hard-to-Reach* (Nashville: Bcoadman Press, 1986). Used by permission.

⁴ Lewia A. Drummoood and Paul R. Baxter, *How to Respond to a Skeptic* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986). Used by permission.

than will an abrupt approach. We will not want to be lured into a heated argument, but insist on the truth.

2. Be sure we are accurate in our presentation. We do not want to never pretend to know something we do not know. An honest answer of “I don’t know, but I’ll find out” will gain more respect than an attempt to “fake” an answer. Our honesty will often result in his respect.
3. Stay with the main points of the gospel presentation. Do not allow ourselves to be distracted into minor points of argument. We will want to be careful not to major on minors.
4. Respect the opinion of the one who is farther out. We must not criticize. We will want to patiently share the truth and trust the Holy Spirit to guide their reasoning.
5. Press forward gently. We must not run over the one who is farther out in our anxiety to “convert” him. But neither should we surrender early in our attempt to bear witness. He will appreciate our persistence if it is done in the right manner. Gentle persistence will communicate that we are sincerely interested in them coming to faith in Jesus Christ and not just “scalp hunting” or looking for numbers.

Can the persons in your neighborhood who could be described as farther out be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ? The following illustrations will be helpful. May you be the person or the family that reaches out effectively to these neighbors and friends.

INDIVIDUAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF REACHING FARTHER OUT

John and Rebecca reached farther out than most Christian copies when they reached out to a family that was very different from their own. John and Rebecca are in their thirties, they are professionals with graduate degrees, living in a home that cost in excess of a quarter of a million dollars, located in a “yuppie” area. John and Rebecca were surprised when they found a low income Hispanic family living in this same area in a small trailer with wires from their trailer up to the power lines where they had tapped in illegally for electricity. In the small one bedroom trailer lived the father and mother and four children under the age often. They were undocumented workers living in the United States. The trailer, which belonged to their boss, had no heating, air conditioning, or plumbing. While the children were bilingual, the parents spoke only Spanish.

John and Rebecca discovered this family while looking for children to invite to Vacation Bible School. Not only did the children come to Vacation Bible School that summer but began attending Sunday School and worship on Sunday mornings, children’s activities on Sunday nights, and children’s choir on Wednesday nights. On each occasion they were picked up and returned home by either John or Rebecca.

A ministry vision seemed to possess John and Rebecca as they continued to meet the needs of this family in practical ways. When school began, John and Rebecca bought clothes for the children. At Christmas they spent hundreds of dollars to make Christmas meaningful for the children and the parents. When it was discovered that his boss was going to move them to another state where immigration laws were more relaxed, the father had difficulty receiving an immigration card due to his short length of time in this country. John took matters into his own

hands. He helped finance the doctor's appointment, the attorney's fees, and everything else necessary. Eventually, John acquired for the father a green card so he could continue to work in this county without fear. As a result of John and Rebecca's ministry, the church began a Spanish-speaking Bible study that reaches out to families such as this. In order for families to reach families, sometimes Christians have to reach farther out.

At the age of 18, Barbara had what the world was offering— loving family, popularity, many friends, honors, and recognition. She was a good girl who lived a good life and wondered what more was available. Barbara anticipated that marriage and family would fill the emptiness inside. Two weeks after college graduation, Barbara married. For the next 17 years she tried to find happiness by working hard and accumulating all that life had to offer. She found herself with a successful business and a wonderful son, a fine home, two cars, expensive clothes, exciting trips, and an emptiness that remained in her life.

When the emptiness did not go away, Barbara began to panic. Something was wrong; she should be happy. She entered the next phase of her life, which over a three-year period included a divorce, pills, alcohol, and a turbulent relationship. The weight of it all brought her to her knees. At the end of the three years, she cried out to God to show her reality.

The first reality Barbara was shown was to see herself as she really was. It was in this condition that a friend reached out to her, ministering to her needs and inviting her to attend church services. Within three days Barbara accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Lord and Savior.

By Barbara's own words, "Nothing the world had to offer can compare with what I have found in Jesus. As I read the Bible and pray daily, trust Jesus and obey Him, I have a peace, an inner security, a joy, a sense of completeness like nothing I have ever known before." Because a single friend was willing to reach farther out, Barbara found purpose and meaning in life. Mark owns an automotive repair garage. He has an interest in the local stock car racing scene. As he thought about building and racing his own car, he asked God to give him direction. Mark was concerned not only about racing, but about using his racing interest as an outreach to an inactive church member and a lost friend.

When Mark decided he could proceed with the project, he enlisted both of these two men to help him with the car. They spent considerable time together. Using the opportunities that have come as a result of this shared project, Mark has effectively witnessed to his friends. The inactive church member decided he would build and race his own car, but Mark in a gesture of friendship supplied the shop space along with expert advice on how to put the car together. The wives of the three men have spent much time together driving to and from races and eating together following the race. In this case, an active Christian used an interest in his own life that matched an interest in the life of a non-Christian friend to reach farther out with his faith.

Peter did not think he needed Jesus Christ because he was already as good as most of the Christians he knew. He came from a loving family of faithful Roman Catholics. Because his parents were hard workers, his material needs were provided. Following high school he joined the army and was eventually promoted to a good position. He was stationed at Fort Meade,

Maryland. In his quest for happiness, he and his friends often went into Washington, DC where they went to some of the more seedier bars and drank until they were so drunk that they got into fights. Often the use of marijuana accompanied the consumption of alcohol. All this time Peter continued to attend church.

According to Peter's testimony, "My life changed abruptly when my apartment was broken into. I was stabbed in the abdomen, then locked in the trunk of a car. After several hours, I was released only to be shot in the back and left for dead. I managed to crawl to a road and be rescued, but I was left paralyzed from the waist down. By a miracle of God, I am able to walk with the use of a brace and cane, and receive compensation from the Veteran's Administration." Once Peter returned home, he began sliding back in the same life-style of drinking and smoking marijuana with his friends. Now, because of his Veteran's Administration check, he could afford to "hang out" at the nicer lounges with a higher class of people, yet with the same emptiness in their lives.

All of this time, Peter was thinking how well he was doing. He had started college, bought a home, and owned two cars. His friends told him how lucky he was and how they wished they could be like him. He continued to attend church, but also continued to feel the emptiness inside. At the age of 27, he had a college degree, a large house, two cars, and good friends, yet there was still an emptiness in his life.

It was at this point that Peter met another single adult—a young woman who brought him happiness. More importantly, she brought him a knowledge of the Bible. Even though Peter had spent a life time in church, this woman shared scriptures he had never heard. Her faith brought about a curiosity in Peter that led him to read the scriptures himself. While on vacation the next summer, he heard a pastor preach on how individuals must die to themselves and give their lives over completely to Jesus Christ if they want to have real peace in life and eternity in heaven. That day Peter's life was changed as he invited Jesus Christ into his life and began to follow Him. For the first time he had a genuine purpose in life.

Now Peter is the director of the visitation program in his church and has a real burden to tell other people what a difference Jesus Christ has made in his life. This came about largely because one single-adult Christian was willing to reach farther out to a person, who according to some, was beyond reach.

CHURCH ILLUSTRATIONS FOR REACHING FARTHER OUT

When Ron Proctor, now with the Evangelism Section of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, was Minister of Evangelism at the MacArthur Boulevard Baptist Church in Irving, Texas, he began a program encouraging couples in the church to inaugurate home Bible studies inviting their unchurched neighbors. He organized additional resource materials such as video presentations by nationally known ministers and video music presentations that could be shown in each home.

As part of the response, Nelson and Barbara began to lead a Bible study in their home. Their back-door neighbor, a medical doctor named Jim, allowed his wife to attend the Bible study but indicated that he had no interest in the concept of God. After a time, because of the

friendship that developed between the two couples, the medical doctor began to attend the Bible studies. After many months of Bible studies, he consented to come to an adult auditorium class at MacArthur Boulevard Baptist Church on Sunday mornings. As a result of the on-going friendship between the two families, Jim came under conviction of the Holy Spirit yet rejected any public decision. When Jim's young son expressed an interest in knowing Christ, the father brought the son to Nelson, who led the boy to faith in Christ.

After more than two years of cultivation and prayer by many members of the church family, Jim came to know Christ as Lord and Savior, making a public profession of his faith during a church service. Since then he has been through the Continuing Witness Training program as well as MasterLife and now is a fellow deacon with Nelson. Jim and his family were reached as a result of a church that reached farther out into the neighborhoods and through the homes of their members.

An unmarried couple with two children from a Northern state moved to Florence, South Carolina. Their next door neighbors were a Christian family, members of First Baptist Church, Florence. The church family visited and ministered to the couple on a regular basis. This concern and care on the part of the Christian family amazed the non-Christian family, especially when they realized that the Christian family disapproved of their life-style. Through the continued friendship and lifestyle witness of the Christian family, the non-Christian children and their mother began to attend church. Eventually the father attended with them. Other church families joined in the ministry to the children as well as the couple. This non-Christian mother and her children intensified their church attendance by adding Sunday School to the worship service. Not too long after this, the mother professed her faith in Christ and presented herself for baptism and church membership. The pastor was requested to perform the wedding ceremony immediately.

Later during a Continuing Witness Training seminar in the church, the pastor called this new Christian wife and mother to get permission to make an evangelistic visit. With the approval from the husband, the pastor went with a team of two apprentices to the home. One apprentice entertained the children while the pastor shared the presentation. The father and husband received Jesus Christ that night and within two weeks was baptized into the membership of First Baptist Church, Florence. This couple became Christians because First Baptist Church in Florence, South Carolina, had motivated its people to reach out in love and care to their friends and neighbors, and then equipped their people through the Continuing Witness Training seminar to share their faith. When the faith was shared through developed friendships, an unmarried couple, whom some would consider to be "farther out," came to know Christ and the fellowship of His church.

PERSONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Can You Reach Farther Out?

Do you have friends and neighbors that you would describe as being farther out? List their names on a sheet of paper. Do you know of those who are so secular in their thinking and living that they seem totally insensitive to the gospel? List their names also. What can you and your family do to more effectively reach farther out? Based on what you have read in this chapter and your

family's capabilities and potential, develop a plan to reach these whom you consider to be farther out.

CHAPTER 5 REACHING UP

Times of transition afford great opportunities for Christian witness and ministry. The death of a spouse is the greatest time of transition in a person's life, especially if that person has already reached advanced years. The death of Mr. Thompson's wife occurred just prior to our moving into the neighborhood. He was still in the early days of his transition to living alone. Mr. Thompson was seldom seen except when he was leaving or returning in his car. The majority of trips was to church-related activities. It seemed as though his faith was keeping him going. If you could catch him in his yard, he was willing to talk and always cordial, even though he never initiated a conversation.

There is a unique relationship between the elderly and the young. Mr. Thompson was always happy to be around our children. He seemed to be more at ease with them than with us. He had been in the neighborhood longer than any of the current residents and had seen changes both for the good and for the bad. His perspective was rich and valuable, yet reserved. Reaching out was often difficult but always rewarding. When we talked with Mr. Thompson, it was not as though we were reaching out, but more like he was reaching up.

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR REACHING UP

Christian friends and neighbors like Mr. Thompson can often serve a dual purpose: recipient of the ministry of Christian families and a resource for the spiritual encouragement of those same families. As we reach out in ministry to them and receive encouragement from them it is as though we are reaching up.

Paul informs us that God has gifted each believer in Christ, "so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12-13). While these words are written to the whole family of God, the Church, they have application to the families of God. God has not only gifted each member of your family, he has gifted each Christian friend and neighbor. We partially fulfill the purpose of these spiritual gifts as we recognize and use our individual gifts and affirm the presence and use of other's gifts. This will build up the body of Christ internally as we support and encourage each other.

Paul's analogy is to the human body, and the human body must be built up both internally and externally. Thus our spiritual gifts are also to be used in reaching out to those who are outside the body for the purpose of inviting them and including them in the body. This evangelistic use of our gifts will build up the body externally. Perhaps the blending of the spiritual gifts among Christians in a given neighborhood will effectively reach out to non-Christians of that neighborhood.

Barnabas had the spiritual gift of encouragement. In writing to the Christians in Rome, Paul had given a partial list of spiritual gifts and stated, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. . . if it is encouraging, let him encourage" (Rom. 12:6,8). His real name was, "Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement)" (Acts 4:36). His peers had nicknamed him Barnabas because it fit his character

as an encourager. When news reached Jerusalem of a revival in Antioch, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas, who “encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord” (Acts 11:23). As persons related to Barnabas they received encouragement. How desperately we need a Barnabas in every Christian family and community, using the spiritual gift of encouragement.

When a person decides to follow Jesus Christ, his closest friends and associates are, in all probability, non-Christians. With the help of new Christian friends, this new believer can use his own home as a gathering place for old friends to hear his new-found faith. When Jesus called the tax-collector Levi to follow Him, it was only a short period of time before Levi had invited to his home a group of friends and associates (some, no doubt already believers and thus encouragers) to meet with Jesus. As a result of Levi’s reaching out to his friends and, “while Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax-collectors and ‘sinners’ were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him” (Mark 2:15).

Paul instructs children, “Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother. . . that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Eph. 6:1-3) and to fathers, “do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Just as parents have the responsibility to train and encourage their children in the ways of the Lord through family worship, prayer, education, and witness so children are to obey and follow the instruction and encouragement of their Christian parents. No greater honor can come to a Christian parent than that of seeing their children accept Jesus Christ personally and begin to grow in the faith. Surely, where Christian parents are modeling Christian witness, believing children will honor their parents with similar Christian witness.

The writer of Proverbs assures parents that if we, “train up a child in the way he should go. . . when he is old he will not turn from it” (Prov. 22:6). Likewise, he challenges children to, “Listen . . . to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Prov. 1:8). As this develops the Christian family not only reaches up to God, but reaches out to non-believers.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON REACHING UP

In order to effectively reach out, one must be effectively reaching up. When the Christian family attends worship services and activities at the church, it is understood that these activities assist them in reaching up. *How important is reaching up in and through the home?* This is a crucial question for reaching out. For reaching out is made of less value when the person reaching out to friends and neighbors is not reaching up at home. The home and the family may be conducive to a process of reaching out or it may be a deterrent to the process. Therefore it is important that the Christian desiring to reach out live consistently his Christian life in the context of the family. There are certain facts that will influence relationship within the family and thus our relationship with God.

In the first place, when Jesus Christ becomes Lord of the family a new authority is in place. Jesus claimed to have absolute authority over life. This authority guides us in the setting of the ideals of our lives and determines the standard of conduct as we live out these ideals.

Responsibility to the authority of Jesus Christ is a higher responsibility than that of husband to wife or wife to husband, or parent to child or child to parent. If any relationship within the family clashes with the individual's relationship with Jesus Christ, the result is faulty relationships and poor outreach.

When Jesus Christ becomes Lord of the family, He brings a new attitude into our family relationships. His life is a life of love. The secular way of life says we are to love ourselves first and others second. God's way of life is to love Him first with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and then to love others (Matt. 22:37-40). Our attitude within the family is to become the attitude of Jesus toward other persons. Remember that He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. The Christian home may be a beautiful manifestation of the authority of Jesus Christ with each member relating to other members in love. When this happens within the home, it is contagious outside the home as we bear witness.

When Jesus Christ becomes Lord of the family, there is a new affirmation of individual worth. As we come to understand who Jesus is and what He desires for us, we understand the value of the individual. Within the Christian family it is of utmost importance that the individual be affirmed and encouraged to be all God intends for him or her to be. While always a member of a family, children ultimately leave home to begin families of their own. The years spent growing in a Christian family should be years of affirmation, so that children, as well as parents understand their importance in the kingdom of God. When we reach up to understand who we are, we are better able to reach out in expression of who He is.

How important is family worship? Communication with God in worship is at the heart of the Christian experience. Not only must the family worship together within the context of cooperate worship, but the family ought to worship together in the context of the home. This will go far in helping each member of the family remember that the God to whom they yield their life desires an on-going relationship. Worship must never be relegated to something we do only on Sunday and only in church.

Finding a time in our complex society for family worship may be difficult. Priority must be given to the discovery of an unhurried and relaxed time. If daily family worship is not possible, perhaps another systematic way can be discovered. Maybe one or two nights per week could be devoted to family worship. Remember that family worship was made for the family, not the family for worship. If there are conflicts, and there invariably will be conflicts, look for reasonable alternatives. The challenge and goal is to keep the consistency of worship in the home.

Family worship should not be a mini-church service. Rather it should have opportunities for each family member to participate in a variety of ways. Moving the location for family worship might enhance worship rather than always meeting around the family table. Singing songs, sharing Scripture as well as family prayer are significant ingredients to the worship time. Remember that worship is not measured by our wristwatch. Sometimes the most effective family worship will be extremely brief, while other times the worship should be prolonged. Do not set a definite time but allow God to lead you in the length of the family worship. It is a good practice to always stop while family members are still wanting more. To stay with a family worship time

until everyone is tired and bored will decrease motivation for the next experience of family worship. Remember that variety is not only the spice of life, it may also be the key to good family worship. Family worship need not be a chore or a bore, but rather the center piece of family life as the family reaches up to God. A worshipping family will become a reaching family.

Of what value is a family worship time? A family worship time provides a “pep-rally” for family outreach. The depth of the worship time will allow each family member to draw strength and encouragement from the others. It will be a good time for sharing experiences of outreach and receiving critique as well as motivation from other family members to continue reaching out.

Family worship time is a primary place for sharing outreach victories. Everyone in the family has a basic need to tell their story and receive support and encouragement. The sharing of victories should be done in a time of family worship. Family worship provides an environment of acceptance in the midst of possible rejection. Family members who are rejected in their attempts to reach out (and all will be eventually) can find acceptance in the family worship experience. The family provides a channel for God’s love, care, and acceptance. The external rejection leads to a greater need for this ministry.

The family is a place for safe rehearsal of outreach methods. Family members can practice their witnessing skills on other family members. This allows family members to see the non-Christian as a person needing a relationship with Jesus Christ rather than a “lab experience.” First attempts at walking and speaking are not ridiculed within the family but are encouraged. Therefore, early attempts at outreach should be encouraged within the family environment. Family worship is a means for confession and forgiveness. Just as the family is circled together in a physical expression of God’s loving forgiveness, so family members ought to forgive each other as members profess their faults. (For resources that support family worship, see *Home Life* magazine. Also, write the Family Ministry Department, 127 Ninth Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37234, for more information.)

Of what importance is my spiritual gift? Every Christian is given spiritual gifts by God. These gifts are given for the building up of the body of Christ. That body is to be built up both-internally and externally; that is, we are to use our gifts to strengthen and encourage other believers, and we are to use our gifts in reaching out to non-believers. Whether or not a Christian has spiritual gifts is not the issue; every Christian has spiritual gifts. The issue is the discernment and application of these gifts. Children will begin to discover their spiritual gifts during their later teenage years. The discovery of spiritual gifts will happen easiest in the context of Christians who know each other. This allows for affirmation of the gifts.

What better place for the discovery and affirmation of spiritual gifts than within the context of a Christian family that is worshipping and growing together. As the husband and wife get to know each other better, they can affirm each other’s spiritual gifts. As the children grow through the developmental process, the parents will recognize and affirm the spiritual gifts in their children.

In this regard parents bear a heavy responsibility. As they observe and discern spiritual gifts within their children, they should point them in the right directions. This is in contrast to the popular idea of individuality. Granted, parents do not choose and dictate life-styles or life directions for their children. At the same time Christian parents bear the responsibility of encouraging their children to be all that God wants them to be. If Christian parents discern spiritual gifts within their children, they should direct the children in the fulfillment of those gifts even to the point of life's vocation. This must be done while children still live in the parent's home before certain responsibilities are transferred.

How can a Christian family pray together? A retired pastor said that in forty years of performing wedding ceremonies and offering premarital counseling, he had never found a couple who recalled having received any instruction in prayer as a part of their premarital preparation. Where this is the case, it is understandable how a family could be negligent in the responsibility of praying together. Practice of family prayer needs to begin early in the life of the family. Husbands and wives should pray together on a regular basis, praying a prayer of surrender to the Lordship of Christ and support of each other. Early morning prayer times might be best for some couples while late evening prayer time will be best for others. The time is not the important factor, but rather the act of praying together.

Couples should find an appropriate time to pray together. What if one of the partners in the marriage is unwilling to pray in this manner? The willing partner must then pray alone, praying for self and for the other partner, always hoping that the time will come when praying can be done together.

With the arrival of children, family prayer becomes more than just a husband and wife prayer time. We are often reminded that the first few years of a child's life are the most important in establishing attitudes. Therefore, the child should be included in family prayer from the earliest days of his or her life. The prayer time of Christian parents will have a profound influence upon the children. They will soon learn of the parent's love for God and appreciation for the word of God. These facts will become a part of their developmental process. The potential for family prayer flows out of normal, compatible Christian relationships. Every family has certain ground rules and family principles by which they live. As families disobey their own rules, they raise barriers that make prayer difficult if not impossible. Thus, it is important that each family member live in harmony with other members of the family. This will facilitate a more effective time of prayer and worship and reaching up.

For what should we pray in the lives of our non-Christian friends and neighbors? It is easy to say we are praying for non Christians, but what specifically is the content of that prayer? The Bible instructs us concerning specific matters of prayer for non-Christians.

1. Pray that God will draw them to Himself. Jesus said, "No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44).
2. Pray that your non-Christian friend would seek God. The reason for God's creative activity is, "So that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him" (Acts 17:27). The people of God in the Old Testament were told even when they reached

the worst of circumstances, “If from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 4:29).

3. Pray that they believe the Scriptures. Paul wrote, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17).
4. Pray that Satan would not be allowed to blind the eyes of your non-Christian friends. Paul said, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4).
5. Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict of sin and guide to truth. In what some have called His last Will and Testament, Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, “When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement. . . when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:8,13).
6. Pray that God would send additional workers to assist you in the harvest. Jesus told His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the Harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field” (Matt. 9:37-38).
7. Pray that your non-Christian friend would confess Jesus Christ as Lord. The Bible says, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Rom. 10:9).
8. Pray that your non-Christian friend would not only accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior but would take root and grow in Christ. Paul encouraged, “Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and over-flowing with thankfulness” (Col. 2:6-7).

What does reaching up within the family do for friendships outside the family? Self-denial is a strong characteristic a person looks for when she chooses her friends. The Christian who demonstrates self-denial within her own family certainly speaks volumes to her friends and neighbors about how she would relate to them in a friendship. Seemingly then, non-Christians would be drawn to a friendship with a person who denies her in the context of her family. This self-denial demonstrates itself in love, concern, sensitivity, and affirmation of family members. The non-Christian perceives that self-denial will demonstrate itself in the same way in a friendship. Thus, while there may be little common interest between the non-Christian, the example of the Christian within her family makes her a desirable friend to the non-Christian. In this respect, as we reach up within our family, we reach out to our friends and neighbors.

Does reaching up really bear positive witness to non-Christians? The following illustrations both from individuals and churches will provide adequate answers to this questions.

INDIVIDUAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF REACHING UP

Steve is a young man in his mid-twenties, handsome, athletically oriented, single, and a salesman who drives a new car every six months. He grew up attending a church in another denomination but never personally trusted the Lord. His mother and father died within twelve months of each other while he was in college. His sales-supervisor is an active Christian who tells his trainees during the orientation, “You need to be the best salesman you can be, but remember if you want to be successful in life keep this priority: Make God first in your life, family second, then your job.” This impressed Steve because he knew of his supervisor’s success in sales and success with his family life.

The supervisor, Tim, and his wife, Pam, and son, Chris, had a beautiful home, a new car, an active church membership, and a proper set of priorities. Because of this, when they invited Steve to come to church with them one Sunday, he was more than anxious to do so. However, it happened to be the Sunday the pastor preached on tithing and the emphasis was on pledging the budget. On the way out of the service, Steve joked with the pastor saying, “Good sermon, but do I have to leave money before I depart the building?” The pastor admitted that he thought he would never see Steve again in church.

Shortly after that Tim and Pam began an eight-week Bible study class in their home. They invited Steve to be a part of the group. One night during the study, Steve invited Jesus Christ into his life. He shared with the pastor, “It’s the most exciting time of my life. I have never felt like this before. It is what I have been looking for my whole life.” Steve became a Christian because his supervisor and friend had a proper set of Christian priorities, was willing to share them with his employees, opened his home, and shared his witness.

In one of my earlier books, *Evangelife: A Guide to Life-style Evangelism*,⁵ I tell the story of two women, college students who had the spiritual gift of hospitality. At my suggestion of using spiritual gifts to reach out to friends, they held a dessert party in their apartment complex and invited their friends to attend. At the party they had a significant crowd, a confirmation of their gift. When one has the spiritual gift of hospitality and is willing to use it, he or she will often find guests in their home. In this particular case, the guests had such a pleasant time that the two girls continued to have dessert parties and invite their friends.

Within one week of the first party, an international student living in the apartment complex had become a Christian. This was followed by several others who professed faith in Christ because two girls realized they had a spiritual gift and were willing to use it in reaching out. Because they reached up to God and acknowledged their gift, they were more effective in reaching out to their friends.

Several years ago, I heard a home missionary tell the story of becoming deeply burdened for a high security apartment complex in his neighborhood. Because of the security, this missionary was not allowed inside the complex. Therefore, he could not share his witness with these neighbors. The burden was so intense that the missionary began to sit outside the security gate of the complex each day and pray for the non-Christians who lived inside. After several days of praying, residents of the housing complex began to stop and ask him questions as to what he was doing. One by one the missionary was able to share with the residents his concern for their salvation and the fact that he was praying for them daily. Numerous people who lived inside that housing complex came to a personal faith in Jesus Christ because of the prayer and the personal witness of this faithful missionary who would not be denied access to non-Christians in his neighborhood. When initially he was denied the possibility of reaching out, this missionary reached up. Through his reaching up God allowed him to reach out to his neighbors.

⁵ Dan R. Crawford, *Evangelife: A Guide to Life-Style Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984). Used by permission.

CHURCH ILLUSTRATIONS FOR REACHING UP

The Glade Crossing Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, a mission of First Baptist Church, Euless, is located in a rapidly growing area near the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. Pastor Joe Snow designed his Doctor of Ministry project around equipping his people in relational evangelism through small care groups as a part of the outreach strategy of the Sunday School. Once the project was completed and these church members had been equipped to do evangelism, the care groups continued to meet. The natural process of equipping and care resulted in outreach. Joe challenged his care group members to reach out as family units and adopt one unchurched family unit each. The immediate purpose was to begin establishing a relationship with a non-Christian family unit. The long-range purpose was to lead that family to faith in Jesus Christ and membership in the Glade Crossing Baptist Church.

As the care groups continued to meet, the members of the care groups shared their unchurched family names and stories with the group, remaining accountable to the care group for their outreach to the unchurched family unit. Some of the members of the care groups were new Christians themselves, having been led to faith in Christ as a result of the ministry of the Glade Crossing Baptist Church. Now through its equipping ministry, this new church is reaching through its members into the unchurched community around it.

Mark Gonzales is on the staff of the Park Ridge Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Mark set out to involve church families in a systematic approach to reaching their own neighborhoods. Because of their equipping and their involvement in prayer, the Christian families were simply asked to visit the homes or apartments in their neighborhood, to introduce themselves, and ask if there was any prayer request from that person or family. In turn the church families would pray faithfully for the requests that came from their neighborhood. The participating church members were involved in an intensive orientation training and continued to meet together in an on-going training even as they visited in their neighborhood.

The program, designed to be used on your own block or in your own apartment house, created a number of ministries. Backyard Bible Clubs were sometimes created in neighborhoods during the summer months. Home Bible studies were also begun as a result of the needs in a neighborhood. Counseling opportunities were frequently discovered and either dealt with or referred. Opportunities for witness were frequent and several persons responded by accepting Jesus Christ as their own Lord and Savior, some following with membership in the Park Ridge Baptist Church. Here is a church that capitalized on the interest of church members in prayer and their concern for their unchurched neighbors. As the church members reached up in prayer, they reached out in witness.

PERSONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Can You Reach Up?

Develop specific plans to either begin or strengthen family worship in your home. On a sheet of paper, plan two or three family worship experiences based on ideas shared in this chapter. As a part of your plans, develop a prayer list containing names and specific matters of prayer for non-Christians you know.

CHAPTER 6 REACHING THROUGH

Flaying endured a difficult marriage, Nancy now seemed to experience a degree of happiness in her marriage to Ralph. His ethnic background seemed not to be a problem in their family. Basically a quiet man, Ralph spoke little of his previous marriage or of his life prior to meeting Nancy. The daughters seemed well adjusted to their stepfather and perhaps overly protected of their younger, half-brother. Ralph, Jr., the most outgoing of the family, was easily the avenue through which one could reach out to this family. All but Ralph, Jr. appeared at times to be defensive and somewhat apologetic about them self and their family. Shortly after his new involvement in a small Baptist church and with some outside encouragement, Ralph, Jr. was able to motivate his mother to begin attending services with him.

On an occasion, anonymous phone calls became a real problem in our home. At various hours of the evening the phone would ring and upon our answering it, the party would hang up. It became such an annoyance that we arranged with the phone company to determine the source of the calls. When it was discovered that the calls were being made from Ralph, Jr.'s tele phone further attempts to reach out to this family became quite difficult. The family felt as though we were trying to get them in trouble with the phone company. Ralph, Jr. took it as a big joke and continued to reach out to our family. All attempts to reach this family from this point on were done through Ralph, Jr.

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR REACHING THROUGH

Reaching does not end when the object of our reach is reached. In fact, it begins again at that point. New believers such as Ralph, Jr. must be discipled, equipped and challenged to reach out to their own family and friends. Few subjects are dealt with more extensively in the New Testament than personal discipleship of new and young believers. As a part of His great commission, Jesus instructed the disciples to follow through on new converts by, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 18:20). Notice that Jesus did not say we are simply to teach new believers His commandments but teach them, "to obey" these commandments. The Christian life is based on more than the emotion which often accompanies the salvation experience. Discipleship is based on the substance of that which Jesus,

“commanded.” Further, the new disciple must be taught to obey, “everything” Jesus commanded. One of the strategic commands of our Lord was, to make more disciples, to be His witnesses. Follow-through, while crucial to the Christian life, is not through until the new believer is adequately equipped and properly motivated to pass on his new found faith to his family and friends and ultimately to the ends of the earth.

Most of what was written by Paul, Peter, and John was follow-up correspondence to new Christians. Paul wrote, “we proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ” (Col. 2:8). This takes the process of reaching out all the way to reaching through, from “proclaim” to “perfect” realizing a “perfect” believer would be one who among other things also reaches out to others.

The idea of following through in discipleship leading to sharing faith with others was in the mind of Paul even in his last correspondence to Timothy. In that final letter to Timothy Paul wrote, “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2). The idea of “entrusting” something to another indicates the depositing of a sacred trust. We are to invest in others, transmitting what we know and what we are. These “reliable” persons will then be faithful to the task of teaching others, of imparting their lives to others. Thus a multiplication process is set in motion—
_reaching out, reaching through.

Peter likened new believers to babies and wrote, “Like new born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2). The purpose of this nourishment is so one might “grow up” in his “salvation.” Peter was referring to salvation in its completeness. He was not implying that a new Christian would only be saved after maturity in the faith. Peter was saying that as we receive spiritual food from the Word of God, we mature in the faith. Growth is an evidence of progress in the Christian faith. Deprive a believer of the nourishment of the Word of God and that believer will not grow any more than a baby will grow apart from the nourishment of milk. “Grow up in His salvation” ultimately (and often immediately) brings the maturity of passing on the faith to others, thus reaching out because someone reached out to you.

John wrote to Gaius, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth” (3 John 4). Throughout his three letters, the aged John refers to believers as “children.” In this reference, he shares his joy over “my children”; that is, those for whom he feels some relationship in their being a part of the family of God. They are “walking in the truth,” which is a reference to their maturity in the faith. Surely this implies growth to the point of sharing the truth. John desires that his past attempts at reaching out be seen now as attempts to reach through these new believers in Christ as they now reach out themselves.

A verse of Scripture which is often used at the culmination of a gospel presentation implies within it the necessity of follow-through and discipleship. In his letter to the Church in Laodicea, John writes of Jesus, “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20). There is more to the Christian life than just opening the “door” and inviting Jesus Christ into our life. Once Jesus indwells us, He desires that we be nurtured and grow. This is implied by John’s statement that

Jesus would “eat” with us once we have invited Him in. As we grow in Christ and as we are nurtured on His word, the desire should then come natural to pass on to others this new relationship which we have discovered because someone reached out to us. Reaching out should ultimately result in reaching through.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON REACHING THROUGH

Why is reaching through important? In the gospel accounts there are numerous illustrations of persons who met Jesus and went immediately to share this information with someone else. In Acts and the New Testament letters, there are accounts of persons coming to faith in Jesus Christ and immediately attempting to pass on that faith to other persons. It seemed to be the New Testament pattern to pass on the faith as soon as possible. It is all together appropriate to think in terms of new Christians passing on their faith soon after receiving it. Therefore, how to share one’s faith should be taught early in the discipleship process. When this is done, reaching out results in reaching through.

What does it mean to become a disciple of Jesus Christ? The word “disciple” is used almost 270 times in the gospels and Acts. It means “learner” or “one who is taught or trained.” The idea is one of a special relationship with Jesus as teacher. A disciple is one who obtains knowledge, understanding, and skills through study, instruction and application. The New Testament teaches in order to become a disciple of Jesus Christ one must be under authority, not above the teacher (Matt. 10:24) and continue the ministry of his teacher (John 8:31). The disciple of Christ must be willing to sacrifice himself (Luke 14:26- 27) and renounce all that he has to the ownership of Jesus Christ (Luke 14:33). A disciple of Jesus must be a person of love (John 13:35), bearing fruit (John 15:8), and making other disciples (Matt. 28:19-20).

According to *MasterLife: Discipleship Training for Leaders*, there are at least six key ideas involved in discipleship. These ideas are: spending time with the master, living in the word, praying in faith, fellowshiping with believers, witnessing to the world, and ministering to others.⁶ Thus, that which begins with an invitation to Jesus Christ to indwell a life continues as that possibility is shared with others. This process moves a person from “reached” to “reacher” as she grows in her relationship to Jesus Christ.

How does one grow in discipleship? A new believer begins to grow in his relationship to Jesus Christ when he understands the relationship must be maintained. Failure to understand this is one of the subtle dangers to which a new disciple is confronted. It is a false idea to believe once a relationship is begun it will continue of its own power. All relationships including one’s relationship to Jesus Christ must be developed. We grow in discipleship with Jesus Christ. Growth in discipleship continues as the truth learned from Jesus becomes a part of the life of the disciple. It is not enough just to learn facts from the teacher. Those facts must be implemented and applied in life. In a real sense His words must become flesh through us. Thus, growth in

⁶ Avery T. Willis, Jr., *MasterLife: Discipleship Training for Leaders* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1980. 1982). Used by permission.

discipleship is not only dependent upon a developed relationship but upon our obedience in living out all that He teaches us.

Growth in discipleship continues as the new believer understands how to live in the will of God. Knowing the principles from the teacher and even applying those principles properly to life must be done within the context of God's will. The new believer must understand that God is in control of His creation and that He has a will and purpose for every believer. The application of lessons learned must be within the guidelines of God's overall will. Often new believers are filled with more zeal than understanding of God's will. A part of growth in discipleship is understanding our role in the fulfillment of God's overall purpose for His creation.

What is the ultimate goal of discipleship? The ultimate goal of discipleship is a finished product—that is, a person living out the life of the indwelling Lord. The ultimate aim is not simply understanding biblical truth, or storing up a wealth of knowledge, but becoming like Christ in character. As we grow in every way to be like Jesus Christ, we understand not only the privilege of the Christian faith but the responsibility of passing on that faith. Once the church understands this ultimate goal, reaching out becomes reaching through until that “through” becomes reaching out again.

How does the new believer himself become a maker of more disciples? In his book, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, Leroy Eims suggests the following ten characteristics of a person who would make disciples:

1. A heart for people. The disciple must not look upon others as means to an end or as means to simply accomplishing an objective, but must see others as persons in need of a relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. An addiction to the vision of multiplication. The disciple maker must see that through her potential many others can become disciples of Jesus Christ.
3. A servant spirit. The disciple maker will spend the rest of his life giving himself away. He has died to self and must now live in the relationship of servant to Jesus Christ.
4. An intricate part of the disciple-making team. The disciple maker must realize that she is a part of something bigger than herself. She is a ship in a convoy, a plane in formation with others.
5. A volunteer spirit. The volunteer spirit is a Christ-like spirit. Jesus was not taken to the cross kicking and screaming, but went on a volunteer basis. The disciple of Christ must have this kind of volunteer spirit.
6. A pacesetter. A disciple maker must set the pace for those to whom he is ministering. In order to make disciples he must be a practicing disciple himself.
7. A productive witness. It is easy for a new Christian to be excited about fellowship in the family of God and never realize the responsibility of bearing witness to our faith. The new believer must understand that when God saved her, God was on His way to others.

8. A Bible study leader. Not only is the Bible our offensive weapon in spiritual warfare, it is the means by which we will show the non-believer how to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. The disciple maker must be a Bible study leader.
9. A sensitivity to others. The disciple maker communicates to others by what he says as well as how he says it, by what he does as well as how he does it. Sensitivity of speech and action is a necessity.
10. A thinker. When a disciple maker learns to think, she learns to be alert, obedient, and creative. The one who has to have everything spelled out for her will miss many valuable lessons along the way.⁷

How can a Christian family become disciple makers and thus allow God to reach through them? It has already been stated that the importance of a disciple maker is realizing he or she is a part of a disciple-making team. What better team of disciple makers than the Christian family? The Christian family disciple-making team will want to open their home for Bible study. They will be involved in praying for their non-Christian friends and neighbors. The disciple-making family should involve non-Christian friends and neighbors in times of Christian fellowship. Obviously, the disciple-making family must be involved in direct Christian witness to non-Christians. The concept of a disciple-making team is that of oneness, not in sameness of opinion but in identity of purpose. Thus the Christian family, while not always agreeing with each other, is committed to the purpose of making disciples among their friends and neighbors. As they learn more and more about Christ, they pass on that knowledge to their non-Christian friends through ministry and witness. Thus, the God who reached them is able to reach through them to others.

What happens when the process of reaching through is hindered? Perhaps this question can best be answered by an illustration. In one room of a house there is a lamp with three light-bulbs, but only one bulb gives forth light making the overall lamp light very dim. The wires from the power outlet connect only with this one shining light bulb. While the one bulb gives forth as much light as possible, a person has trouble seeing all that needs to be seen because of the overall dimness of the lamp. In another room there is a lamp with three light bulbs, all of which are glowing. They have contacted the power source and they are shining to the best of their ability. A person is able to see all that needs to be seen through the light of this lamp. Each lamp has the same current passing through it. The difference is in the ability of the light bulbs to make contact with the power source.

If only one person in your family is letting his light shine as a Christian disciple, it would be somewhat difficult for non-Christian friends and neighbors to see the way to a life of meaning and purpose. If on the other hand all members of the family are letting their light shine for Jesus Christ, it will give light to the neighborhood and non-Christians will be able to see more clearly the way to purposeful living in Christ. All believers have access to the same power source. The transmission of the gospel message is not determined solely by the power source but by the ability and the willingness of individual Christians to allow that power to flow through

⁷ Leroy Euns, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 109-122. Used by permission.

them. When one believer fails to let the message pass through them, the entire process is hindered.

Why is discipleship important in the church? The importance of discipleship is seen in two reasons. First, disciple makers are developed. No new Christian is a born disciple maker. She must be trained in the art of allowing God to reach through her as she reaches out to her friends and neighbors. The church that is committed to reaching out must do more than give financial resources to sending agencies. The church must enable and equip its members to reach out into the community and neighborhoods.

Second, those who reach out must be inspired and directed by some central appointed agency if they are to be kept sharp at the task of making disciples. God's divinely appointed agency is the church. It will be of little benefit to say that Christian families ought to reach out and share with their friends and neighbors and then have no training, motivating agency directing them in the outreach. God has ordained that His church be in the disciple-making business.

Does reaching through new believers really result in making more disciples? The illustrations which follow not only give an answer to this question but underline the importance in keeping the process going. When a person becomes a Christian, he has responsibility not only to his family but through his family to non-Christians.

INDIVIDUAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF REACHING THROUGH

In their book, *You're Home a Lighthouse: Hosting an Evangelistic Bible Study*, Betty Jacks tells of a Bible study led by her and her husband, Bob, that continued to grow beyond their initial group.⁸ When Betty led her hair dresser, Barbara, to faith in Jesus Christ, Barbara began to inquire about a Bible study that Betty was attending and asked if Betty could start a Bible study for the women in her neighborhood. As the Bible study began in Barbara's home, one of the women who attended was another hair dresser by the name of Arlene. First, Arlene's eight-year-old son, Mike, became a Christian. Then, Arlene professed faith in Christ followed in six months by her husband, Bob, and followed still later by their teenage daughter, Terry. Terry promptly began a home Bible study with some of her high school friends, which resulted in six new Christians. Two home Bible studies, one for couples and one for ladies hosted by Bob and Arlene, resulted over a period of time in 30 new believers.

Meanwhile, Barbara had moved to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, and started a home Bible study for couples. The study resulted in 15 new Christians. Later when Bob and Arlene moved to Connecticut, a couples Bible study resulted in 25 new Christians. Another study hosted by two couples resulted in 20 new Christians. A Bible study begun at the Diet Center by Arlene resulted in four new Christians. As a result of Barbara reaching out to her friends and neighbors by opening her home for Bible study, 104 persons became Christians. It would be somewhat of an understatement to say when Barbara reached out she was actually reaching through.

⁸ Betty Jacks and Bob Jacks. *You're Home a Lighthouse: Hosting an Evangelistic Bible Study* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1987). Used by permission.

Neighbors are not always confined to traditional neighborhoods. When Michael arrived at Louisiana State University as a freshman football player, he felt like he was on top of the world. However, it did not take long for him to figure out that L.S.U. was not going to notice him like he had been noticed in his high school in Houston, Texas. He would later realize how this sudden loss of recognition and power upset his philosophy of living.

One night, Dale, a varsity football player, entered Michael's room when Michael was feeling especially homesick and lonely. Dale asked if he could share about Jesus Christ. Michael could not believe his ears when he invited him in and encouraged the sharing. Michael confessed that he had never really been exposed to the story of Jesus Christ. Lacking any church background, he had developed his own philosophy of life. Michael thought at times he was an agnostic, believing in some central power but feeling religion was simply a man-made crutch. The most important thing in his life was to succeed, to be recognized, to be the best, to win the game of life. Up until this point in time, he had been doing a good job with his own life. But on this particular night, Michael realized that the "game" was just that. Therefore when Dale inquired about sharing the gospel, Michael was ready to hear. After the first hearing, it was several weeks before Michael realized the significance of what had been said. He continued to meet with Dale throughout the fall semester and became increasingly convicted that the Scriptures were authentic. Eventually Michael began to understand what the gospel of John was about. He realized that the key of life now and forever was a personal relationship with God's son, Jesus. Michael made a commitment to that personal relationship with Christ late in the fall semester.

Over the next few days his attitude about life began to change. In Michael's own words he said, "I understood, for the first time, that part of God's plan for my life involved my giving and loving others." Because of that understanding, his relationship with his girlfriend was restored and she eventually became his wife, growing together in their relationship with each other and with Jesus. Following active Christian service during their college days, Michael stated, "more recently God has used our children and our church to reveal His plan for us to be actively involved in helping and teaching others concerning the truth about Jesus Christ." Michael discovered that the beauty of reaching out is seen best when that reaching becomes reaching through. In his own life he understands when Dale reached out to him, it resulted in him reaching out to others. This is the concept of reaching through.

CHURCH ILLUSTRATIONS FOR REACHING THROUGH

The First Baptist Church in Lake Charles, Louisiana, began several years ago hosting a Christmas pageant entitled, "Living Christmas." Elaine, a Roman Catholic by birth, came to one of the performances and was effected dramatically. She felt the need to begin to read the Bible for herself. Soon after that, she came to a Sunday worship service enrolling herself and her children in Sunday School. A follow-up visit by a church staff member resulted in Elaine hearing and responding to the gospel by professing her faith in Jesus Christ. Within a few weeks Jamie, age 16, professed faith in Jesus Christ and after several more weeks Danny, age 11, also professed faith in Jesus Christ. By this time Elaine's husband had begun to attend church services with her. A third child, Jeffrey, age 15, resisted the new faith of his family, but nevertheless attended worship services occasionally.

Elaine began to grow spiritually, attending a Lay Evangelism School a few months after her conversion. After the first night of training, she announced, "I am going to have to drop out. How can I even think of witnessing to others when my own family isn't saved?" That same night one of the deacon families gave Elaine a ride home and had the opportunity to share Christ with her husband, Ken and see him respond positively by inviting Jesus into his life. In the months to follow, both Ken and Elaine grew in Christ to the degree that extended family members in nearby towns noticed what was happening and responded. A few of their family responded in love and came to know Christ personally themselves. In the meantime, Elaine had become coordinator of the Intercessory Prayer ministry of the church and Ken had become an active usher and van driver. To complete the story, Jeffery confessed his faith in Jesus Christ. Because a church reached out to their community, Elaine became a Christian and the ministry of the church reached through her to the remaining members of her immediate family and even to members of her extended family. Reaching out resulted in reaching through.

A church in the Midwest took an idea from a secular agency in another city and developed it into a strong outreach ministry for their church. While most major cities have a welcome service for newcomers, this mid-size, Midwestern city had no such service. The church decided to fill the void. They put together a packet of information about the city made available to them by the Chamber of Commerce. They also listed the names of doctors, dentists, lawyers, and other professionals whose services might be needed by newcomers. The list of churches in the city was also made available. Various places of business included discount coupons and a local bakery was always willing to include some of their items in the packet as advertisements. Obviously, in the packet there was ample information about the church and its ministry. As soon as the church discovered a newcomer in town (receiving names from the utility companies), a couple would show up at the front door with the welcome packet and an offer to explain its contents. This explanation always included an invitation to attend services at the sponsoring church.

As a result of the welcome service, one new family, Mike and Marsha and their two children, visited the church. Because of the warm reception they experienced, they continued to attend and began to make inquiries about membership. When Marsha realized that membership in this church required a personal faith in Jesus Christ, she admitted she had never had that kind of experience. A trained member of the church shared the plan of salvation with Marsha and led her to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Marsha began to share the new-found faith with her husband, Mike, and her children. Soon the oldest child made a public profession of faith, followed in several weeks by the second child. Mike was slower in responding, preferring only to visit the church and not join. However, as a result of a men's golf tournament and Mike's involvement there, one of the golfers in the church was able to lead Mike to accept Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Presently both Mike and Marsha are involved in the Master- Life program of discipleship training and are effectively reaching out to other newcomers in the community through the welcome service. Because this Midwestern church looked for ways of reaching new families in their community, they were able to discover an effective method. Because the church reached out to Mike and Marsha, Marsha was able to reach her children and ultimately her husband with the

gospel message. This creative church, in reaching out, is reaching through the lives of Mike and Marsha.

While I was serving as interim pastor of the First Baptist Church in Belton, Texas, a young man came one Sunday morning requesting baptism, having been witnessed to and led to faith in Jesus Christ by one of our Evangelism Explosion teams. That evening as I talked with him prior to his baptism, I discovered the varied background of his life. During the message later in the evening, I called him forward and asked him to share his testimony which included being a mercenary, a bouncer in a night club, a drug user, and recently divorced. He was searching for meaning and purpose in life when the Evangelism Explosion team found him. Several weeks later, the leader of our Evangelism Explosion program came to me disturbed that there were no other persons in the church willing to be apprentices for the program. I suggested this new convert might be a good possibility. When he was offered the opportunity, he eagerly responded and became an effective witness. As this church reached out to a disturbed and troubled family member having recently gone through a divorce, they found one who not only professed faith in Christ but became an effective witness himself, thus the church reached out and then reached through.

Can You Reach Through?

Are you as an individual and you as a family, growing in Christ- likeness? As you reach out, is Jesus Christ able to reach through you? What can you and your family do to continue the process of reaching out and reaching through? Instead of treating this as a thought question, write down five specific actions, based on ideas presented in this chapter, your family can take to continue the process of reaching out and through.

CHAPTER 7 REACHING BEYOND

Like other neighborhoods there existed in ours a vacant lot. We often wondered who might live there should a family purchase the lot and build a house on it. Would they be “our kind of people” or not? Would they fit the neighborhood or be disruptive? Would they be Christian or non-Christian? If not Christian, would they at least have high moral standards? The answers to these and other questions left open the possibility that the personalities of the new owners of this lot could range from the “ends of the earth.”

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR REACHING BEYOND

When a lawyer asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29), Jesus replied with a parable of a man who was befriended in his time of need by a Samaritan after being rejected by a priest and a Levite. The assistance from the unlikely and hated Samaritan drove home the point Jesus wanted to make that neighbors range from the ones near us and like us to the ones living to ends of the earth. When Jesus returned the question, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” (Luke 10:36), the answer was easy to give, difficult to live. The outreach of Christian families must go beyond their neighborhood even as did the witness of Crispus, a Synagogue ruler. When Crispus, “and his entire household believed in the Lord. . . many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8). Corinth was a center of corruption and immorality as well as serving as the political center of southern Greece. It was a Greek city under Roman rule meaning there was strange mixture of people in Corinth. As a commercial center the city sold products from Arabia, Egypt, Phoenicia, Lybia, Babylon, Cilicia, Lycia, and Phrygia. In Corinth there was also a strange mixture of poverty and wealth with extremes of both. Corinth has been described as “the Vanity Fair of the Roman Empire, at once the London and the Paris of the first century after Christ.”

While in Corinth, Paul wrote to the believers in Rome, describing the worldliness he surely saw in this city:

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. The same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. —Romans 1:22-31

What a city! What a composite picture of our world today! What a vacant lot! Yet, regardless of the nature of the people, God said of Corinth, even as he says of our wicked world today, “I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:10). One of those people was Titus Justus. Titus opened his home to Paul and apparently invited a group of his friends, among them a Synagogue ruler named Crispus. Once converted, Crispus, through his influence and God’s power, influenced “many of the Corinthians.” No doubt in this cosmopolitan city “many” included people from all walks of life and from every segment of the Corinthian society. So are we to reach beyond our neighborhood and our friends to a diverse, complex world.

There is an “aliness” about the gospel that does not allow us to discuss any evangelistic strategy without including the whole world. For what begins in a home, a neighborhood, a friendship should ultimately, like ripples in a pond, reach the ends of the earth. When the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds they said, “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for *all* the people” (Luke 2:10). As Jesus talked with His disciples, predicting His own death, He said, “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw *all* men to myself” (John 12:32). In His high priestly prayer Jesus prayed, “I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that *all* of them may be one” (John 17:20-21). In His Great Commission, our Lord challenged His disciples to, “go and make disciples of *all* nations” (Matt. 28:19). Jesus modeled and taught that we are to keep on reaching out until we have reached the ends of the earth and *all* people.

John envisioned in heaven, “A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne” (Rev. 7:9). Look closely at that crowd. Look at the individuals: some with eyes of oriental slant, some with slender brown faces, some with dark-skinned faces, some with pronounced features. What a diversity in unity! How will this diverse crowd get to heaven? They will get there as families and individuals within families reach out to their friends and neighbors and as that reaching reaches to all nations, tribes, peoples, and language groups. In reaching out we must never lose sight of the possibility of reaching beyond.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON REACHING BEYOND

Outreach by its very nature knows no boundaries. None were included in the commission of our Lord to make disciples to the ends of the earth and no boundaries should be included in our modern application of that commission. Thus, no adequate strategy of outreach can end without including the whole world.

Does family outreach really need to go beyond friends and neighbors? The commission of our Lord instructed His disciples to bear witness both “in” and “unto”—*in* Jerusalem, where they were and *unto* the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). This is a reference to only one witness. This witness is to be shared from the home, from the pulpit, from the work place to the ends of the earth. There is to be no break, no detour anywhere along the way. This means all programs of evangelistic outreach should be both local and worldwide. A program of families reaching families must include families reaching beyond their own friends and neighbors.

Jesus Christ knows no other kind of program than one which reaches to the ends of the earth. He did not give one commission to an individual, another commission to the Christian family, still another commission to the local church, and yet another commission to Christianity as a whole. There is just one commission for all people and groups. It is the same commission in each case. What Jesus said to one, He said to everyone. Therefore, there should be no lines drawn between our neighborhood and the ends of the earth. No Christian family should ever feel that their mission is exclusively their neighborhood. While it begins there, it reaches beyond. Anything contrary to this idea is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament.

Why must my family reach beyond? You and I live in a large world. The Pacific Ocean covers more than sixty-four million square miles; the Atlantic Ocean covers more than thirty-three million square miles. The Continent of Asia fills more than seventeen million square miles; Africa, eleven-and-a-half million square miles; North America, nine million square miles. We often forget in this large world that we who are Christians and who live in North America not only occupy a small portion of the world's space, but we make up a small percentage of the world's population. The degree to which we limit our outreach to our neighborhood is the degree to which the world grows increasingly pagan. David Barrett, speaking on behalf of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, estimated that by the year 2000 there will be 4.3 billion non-Christians in the world, living in countries where Christian missionaries cannot go.⁹ We must reach out far and we must reach out soon if the world is to know Jesus Christ by faith.

What do I need to know about the people beyond? Those people who live beyond us are also people for whom Christ died. Whether these people be among the two hundred ethnic groups living in our own country or whether they be of some language group across the sea, Jesus Christ had them in mind when He offered salvation to the world. They are also people with pressures. Sometimes their pressures relate to the family, just as ours do. Other times pressures are financial, cultural, or relational, but they are people who are like us with pressures. Likewise, they are people with problems. Their problems vary from person to person but like us they are people who face problems daily in their lives. You and I need to know that there is a procedure by which these people can come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is not a hopeless situation, even though some of them live where Christian witness can not legally be shared. Perhaps more than anything else you and I need to know the possibilities of people becoming Christians to the ends of the earth. There are 1.7 billion people in the world (33% of the world's population) who claim to be Christian. There are 2.1 billion people (41% of the world's population) who have been evangelized; they have heard the gospel presentation and faced an opportunity to respond but do not claim to be Christian. There are 1.3 billion people in the world (26% of the world's population) who have yet to hear the gospel in a manner by which they could respond in faith.¹⁰ You and I need to know that our commission is yet to be fulfilled.

But isn't reaching beyond just for missionaries? The Great Commission of our Lord, like every other command He gave, comes directly to the individual. It is given to a corporate group such as a church or a denomination, only because that group is made up of individual believers. Thus the primary source of all action in the Kingdom of God is through the individual believer. The believer is the primary unit of life and every program must involve him. The key to

⁹ Erich Bndgcs, Unreached Peoples: The Last Frontier, *Baptist Standard*, 30 November, 1988, 4.

¹⁰ Ibid.

reaching beyond is the individual believer. While some of these individual believers hear and respond to God's call to a life-time of vocational service beyond, every believer in Christ is commissioned to bear witness both in her Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth. No individual Christian escapes that command. It is as all-inclusive as is the sky over us or the air around us. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ can no sooner avoid the responsibility of witnessing to the ends of the earth than they can avoid the presence of God Himself. No matter what her church may believe or no matter what her denomination may do, the individual believer in Jesus Christ is obligated and commissioned to bear witness in all the world. While some may reach beyond with their physical presence, all believers must reach beyond.

How then can I witness to the world? For Southern Baptists, the answer to this question is easy. In May of 1925 Southern Baptists meeting in their annual convention adopted the Cooperative Program. Through this program the tithe of every Southern Baptist is distributed to ministries across the land and around the world. In one of his first, speeches promoting the Cooperative Program, Dr. L. R. Scarborough encouraged Southern Baptists to, "Give ourselves in the fullest support to the Cooperative Program as the best and most practical way of meeting our obligations and providing for the on-going of all our enterprises." The Baptist Faith and Message, adopted at the Southern Baptist Convention in May of 1963, states in article XIII, "Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a wholly trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as intrusted to them to use for the glory of God and helping others." In Article XIV, the Baptist Faith and Message states, "Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom."

In the late 1970's Southern Baptists adopted Bold Mission Thrust. The purpose was stated, "That Southern Baptists understand, accept, and become involved in the mission to enable every person in the world to have opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel of Christ by the year 2000."¹¹ This program was to be carried out in three ways: Bold Growing—by providing New Testament based churches and missions for all people; Bold Going—by seeking out and equipping the called and cooperatively supporting persons participating in the activities of Bold Mission Thrust; and Bold Giving—by providing adequate financial resources to accomplish Bold Mission Thrust. The financial program of the New Testament church was similar to this. It did not stop with a tithe but insisted that persons give their all to Jesus Christ. The pattern was set that all New Testament giving would be somewhere between all that one had and a tithe of one's income. This is a foundational principle in New Testament times for financing the spread of gospel to the ends of the earth.

You and I, while we may not have the privilege of being present in every place, certainly have the challenge of giving of our resources in support of reaching out beyond ourselves. While it is not the privilege of every believer to be called in vocational missions, it is the privilege of every believer to be involved in missions.

¹¹ Porter Routh, *Witness to the World* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1979) 81-82. Used by permission.

Occasionally, I have opportunity to relate to those whom I would classify as “beyond,” what do I need to know about reaching out to these? Generally speaking there are four things to remember in reaching beyond. First, you must seek to understand the person to whom you are reaching. Their lifestyle and thought pattern may be completely different from yours. If you expect them to understand what you share, you must take the initiative in understanding them. Second, work hard at cultivating a friendly relationship with the person. Because there are barriers, work is necessary for communication. The friendship, perhaps, will take more time than any other friendship you have. Therefore, be patient in cultivating this friendship. Third, engage in dialogue with the person. Even though their speech may be different from yours, Continue to engage in dialogue. Even though their thinking and verbalizing may be strange to you, keep engaging in dialogue. If the gospel is going to be shared verbally, there must be verbal communication. Therefore, it is extremely important that you continue to dialogue with the person.

Finally, do not hesitate to share your faith in Jesus Christ with the person. Do not yield to the temptation that says you may offend her if you share your faith. As she gets to know you and you get to know her, she is as interested in what you think and believe, as you are in her thoughts and beliefs. Therefore, it will seem unnatural to her if you do not share your deepest faith.

When communication is effective, what specifically can I do to reach those who I would classify as “beyond?” Let us approach the answer to this question by discussing some do’s and don’ts. There are several don’ts in witnessing to people of other persuasions. The following is a partial list of these don’ts:

1. Don’t tell your friend that their ideas about religion are all wrong. Beliefs are important to people and even though you may feel that they are wrong you should not express that to them. Have a sincere respect for their beliefs.
2. Don’t criticize or argue. Remember that the most sincere sharing of faith is affected negatively by criticism and argument.
3. Don’t dominate the conversation. Sometimes this is done as we seek opportunities to speak about Jesus Christ. It will be better to rely on the leadership of the Holy Spirit in creating that opportunity.
4. Don’t apologize *for* your faith or present Christianity from a negative viewpoint.
5. Don’t use theological language which your friend may not understand. Be careful to clarify all terminology used.
6. Don’t witness to this person just to be able to share with your Christian friends that you have witnessed to one who is different from you. Remember that this person is also a creature made in the image of God who needs faith in Jesus Christ.
7. Don’t betray the confidence of your friend. Because there will be characteristics about them that are different from what you believe to be the norm, it will be easy to tell these differences to other friends. Do not yield to the temptation and betray their confidences.

8. Do not force a decision on the part of your friend. There may be many barriers to cross with those who are considered “beyond.” Allow them to respond in their own time and at their own level of understanding. Trust the Holy Spirit to be in charge of the witness.

Now some positive suggestions for bearing witness to those who are considered to be “beyond.”

1. Because they are different from you, there will be some interest in your testimony. There is always interest in the personal, but this interest will be intensified by the differences between the two of you.
2. Explain that the relationship with Jesus Christ is different from all other approaches to religious faith. This is a relationship built completely upon love and grace.
3. Respect their feelings and their evaluation of Christianity. Nothing will endanger your witness faster than a feeling on the part of your friend that you are disrespectful of what he believes.
4. Answer all questions as adequately and as honestly as you know how. Do not be afraid to share that you do not have an adequate answer to his question. Assure him that you will find the answer and get back to him with it.
5. Be ready to admit that not all Christians live up to the teachings of Jesus Christ. However, point out that we are not to measure ourselves by other persons, but by Jesus Christ Himself. Their response is to Jesus Christ, not to the faulty lifestyles of some Christians.
6. Remember that conversation even about spiritual matters is always two-way. Learn to listen as well as speak.

How effective is the attempt to reach beyond? The following illustrations will give answers to this question.

INDIVIDUAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF REACHING BEYOND

The lifestyle of David and Susan is one of reaching out to friends and neighbors. Therefore during their involvement in an Australian Partnership Mission, it was not unusual for them to reach out to their new Australian friends. David and Susan were guests of an Australian couple who had taken into their home several nieces and nephews from troubled families. One of the nephews, a 16-year-old young man from Queensland, Australia, had a father in prison. He had no religious background. During the week of the partnership mission, David spent time with him. Initially asking him to, “Tell me the verses of Scriptures you know.” The response of the young man, also named David, was that he didn’t know any. David taught him John 3:16 and was surprised when he was awakened the next morning to hear the young man quoting the passage to the rest of the family. The young man came back to say to David, “Teach me another.” The week was spent in the teaching of verses of Scripture. Before the week was out, this young Australian man had made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. David and Susan’s pattern of reaching out

caused them, in this instance, to reach beyond—beyond their neighborhood, beyond their culture, beyond their country.

From the age of five, Gary was raised by a single-parent as the result of the accidental death of his father. Because he was raised in the church, he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior when he was eight years of age. However, it was not until his college years that he began to grow in an understanding of God's will for his life, and although he graduated with a degree in journalism, Gary felt the call to ministry. After graduating from seminary and serving as pastor of two churches, Gary and his wife were appointed as career missionaries by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Gary is currently serving as a general evangelist on the west side of the city of Tokyo, Japan. Gary is presently implementing his Doctor of Ministry project entitled, "Equipping Japanese Layman to Implement a Program of Personal Evangelism through Evangelistic Bible Studies." The over-arching goal of this project is to equip Japanese Christians to begin distributing evangelistic Bible studies to non-Christians and then encouraging those non-Christians to complete the studies in their home.

Japanese Christians will work along side non-Christians in helping them come to an understanding of the gospel. Because it is often difficult for the Japanese Christian to understand the biblical mandate to "go," especially in their closed society, this project proposes the developing of friendships between Christians and non-Christians. Inviting one's self into a stranger's home is seen in Japan as incredibly rude and bold. It nearly always met with a degree of unbelief that someone would actually do such a thing. Therefore, the relationship necessary for these evangelistic Bible studies must be established from friend to friend outside the home environment. Once the Bible study begins, the gospel message should penetrate the home and the family. Because a Godly mother passed on the faith to her son and because that son received challenge and equipping through the Baptist Student Union of a major university, the son now reaches beyond with the gospel message to the unreached families of Tokyo, Japan.

CHURCH ILLUSTRATIONS FOR REACHING BEYOND

Twenty-one Southern Baptist churches in the Austin Baptist Association sponsor a program of outreach for wives and children from international families in Austin, Texas. This program, called "Friendship" meets in the Hyde Park Baptist Church of Austin. The Christian women who participate in "Friendship" seek to reach out in love to the international family members of their city and area. They seek to give practical help with the adjustment of these internationals to life in Austin. For both American and internationals, "Friendship" offers an opportunity to discover new friends, increase world awareness, develop creative skills, and improve the use of the English language. Since its beginning in 1969, over nine thousand internationals from 85 countries have been involved in the "Friendship" program. Meeting every Thursday morning during the school year, the international family members are given opportunities to take creative classes ranging from cooking to prenatal care. Practical aspects of the American culture are also introduced and explained. The English language is taught either on a one-to-one level or in group classes. Child care is provided and there is no charge to the international family members. While "Friendship" meets the basic human need for trusting companionship in a strange environment, it also shares beyond that to the need for faith and trust in Jesus Christ. The churches of Austin Baptist Association reach out faithfully and effectively to international family

members in the community. As these internationals return to their home countries the reaching out of Austin Baptists becomes reaching beyond.

The First Baptist Church of Norcross, Georgia, began an outreach ministry in an area occupied by many Korean families. Sun-dai and Hae-myung were responsive to the visit from the church, even to the point of asking if someone could teach them and their eight-year-old daughter to read the Bible. Their reason for wanting to learn the Bible was not only to know what was in the Scriptures, but to assist them with their English. As a result of a Bible teaching ministry, all three members of the family professed faith in Jesus Christ. They now meet with members of the church on a weekly basis for Bible study. In a few years, when Sun-dai (a Ph.D. student in International Business at the nearby University) and Hae-myung (a classical pianist) return to their own country, they will return not only with a new found faith in Christ, but in a spirit of sharing.

The couple from the church doing the Bible teaching had only one car, while Sun-dai and Hae-myung had three cars. After one particular Bible study, the Korean couple gave one of their cars to the American couple doing the Bible teaching. As to the reason for this gift, Hae-myung quoted Scripture saying, “The man with two tunics should share with him who has none and the one who has food should do the same” (Luke 3:11). Not only had the Korean couple given many gifts of food but now they said, “We have three cars. You have one. You are going to have baby. We want you to have our car.” With this new-found spirit of giving, there is little doubt when the Korean couple returns to Korea, the reaching out of First Baptist Church of Norcross, Georgia, will become reaching beyond to the people of Korea.

I know of a family who participated in a mission project in their church in another country. During their time in the other country, a young man made a profession of his faith in Christ. The family was so drawn to this young man and so impressed with his potential, they offered to bring him to the United States and pay for his college education. This was done, and during his involvement in college, as a part of the international ministry of a local Baptist Student Union, the young man felt the call to ministry. Completing his college education, he continued studying until he had received a degree from a theological seminary, then went back home to his country where even now he is busy planting new churches for the spread of the gospel and the development of believers. Because a church reached beyond to minister in another country, one Christian family made an impact through a life of a new convert. That impact reached beyond their neighborhood and beyond their local circle of influence into another part of the world.

PERSONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Can You Reach Beyond?

On a piece of paper, make two columns. Label the first column “Financially,” and label the second column “Personally.” Based on ideas you read about in this chapter, list in each column specific actions your family could take to reach beyond.

APPENDIX PRESSURE POINTS

DISCUSSION GUIDES FOR HOME OUTREACH GROUPS

A Note to Facilitators: A Home Outreach Group may be a family, or more than one family meeting in a home. This series is designed to stimulate discussion of “pressure points” for family members. Hopefully, the discussion will create an atmosphere in which Christian witness can be shared. These are not Bible studies, but discussion guides on issues facing family members. The usefulness of these discussion guides will depend partially on open discussion of the questions, with each member entitled to an opinion. The use of good small-group dynamics will be necessary. A family or group may wish to discuss all or just certain subjects, but all should discuss the subject of “Authentic Christianity.”

Success

CASE STUDY: Ernest Hemingway had the components which produce success. His literary achievements won for him acclaim as “the greatest writer of our time” from the New York Times. He was awarded a Nobel Prize and Pulitzer Prize. His works earned millions of dollars and were adapted to movies and television. Few contemporary writers have failed to be influenced by his style, yet Hemingway’s life was a mixture of grandeur and tragedy. In July 1961, he placed the muzzle of his favorite double-barrel shotgun in his mouth and pulled both triggers. His life was full of action and accomplishments; yet, there was a missing dimension and a senseless ending.

APPLICATION:

1. Can a person be a success in public life and a failure in private life?
2. What are the tangible ingredients of success?

DISCUSSION:

1. Where did you get your definition of success?
2. Who is one of the most successful persons you know? Why?
3. Whose approval would give you the greatest sense of success and what would you have to do in order for him/her to consider you a success?
4. If your family was grading your success, what grades would they give you in each of the following areas? (Grading System: A, B, C, D, F with A being “excellent” and F meaning “a failure.”)

----- AttitudeReligion
..... RelationshipCareer
..... Achievements	

5. In your opinion, which of the following ingredients are most important to success (circle your choices): Love, Freedom, Discipline, Purpose, Happiness, Popularity, Faith, Personality, Luck, Career, Power, Relationships, Possessions, Other?
6. What would be the proper balance of the above ingredients in a successful life?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: Jesus Christ is considered by many as one who exemplified the perfect balance. Luke says, “And Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52k). Jesus grew physically (in stature), mentally (in wisdom), spiritually (in favor with God) and socially (in favor with men). If you were to diagram your life using the four categories in Jesus’ development, would your life be balanced? Which of these areas need attention?

FEAR

CASE STUDY: By the world’s standards Mark was a success. He had a nice apartment, a new car and always dressed in style. He was popular and well accepted by his peers. But what the world calls success left Mark with an empty feeling inside. At a turning point in his career, Mark was faced with difficult decisions. Would he continue to climb the ladder of success even at the risk of stepping on others? Was a major change in order for his career, at the risk of friends and status? Would he be content to stay in the security of his present situation? Mark feared the risks involved in these decisions.

APPLICATION:

1. What advice would you give to Mark?
2. Have you faced a situation similar to Mark’s?
3. What other fears do you face?

DISCUSSION:

1. What are the greatest risks in your life?
2. Of the following, whose opinion do you fear the most? (Check one.) The least? (Star one.) Why?

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
|Employer |Former mate |
|Minister |Roommate |
|Parents |Co worker |
|Boy/Girlfriend |Best Friend |
|Other | |

3. Any meaningful relationship requires a degree of vulnerability. Think of a specific relationship you would like to develop. On a scale of one to ten, rate the degree of vulnerability in developing that relationship.
4. In the *The Four Loves*, C. S. Lewis wrote, “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart may be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one.. . . The only place outside

Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of life is Hell.”¹² How do you feel about this statement?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Heb. 11:8). Consider the place of faith when dealing with your fears. How does your faith help you in times of fear.

SELF CONTROL

CASE STUDY: Facing another lonely Saturday, Robert came up with what appeared to him to be a great idea. Sharing the idea with his family, however, brought mixed responses. Mom said, “I’d like to, but I don’t have time.” Dad responded, “I wish we could, but we can’t afford it.” Sis said, “I would like to go, but I don’t have the energy.” All four spent another empty Saturday. Such statements may be psychological rationalizations—socially acceptable excuses for not doing something we don’t want to do. When some people make these statements, however, they indicate that they have lost control of their time, money or health. They have become poor managers of their lives.

APPLICATION:

1. Who do you most closely identify with: Robert, Mom, Dad, or Sis? Why?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the idea that the way we manage our time, money and health will largely determine our quality of life? Why?

DISCUSSION:

1. Some major factors that influence our use of time are vocation, philosophy of life, interests, religion, abilities and relationships. Which do you think is most significant and why? Which has the greatest influence on your time?
2. How do long-term goals influence our daily, weekly and annual goals? Illustrate your answer from your life.
3. Unlike time, money is unevenly distributed. Some have much and some have little, but most believe they need more. Beyond food, clothing and shelter, what are positive functions of money?
4. Basically, there are three things we can do with money: save it, spend it, or give it away. What can you tell about people by the way they use money?
5. Within the past decade, millions of dollars have been spent on programs to improve physical fitness. Yet many persist in a physically destructive life-style. What are some of your physically destructive practices and why do you do these?
6. A few years ago a survey was made of several Americans who lived to be one hundred or more. Among the characteristics of these people were eating good food, sleeping well, not worrying, keeping a cheerful disposition and holding to strong religious convictions.

¹² CS. Lewis. *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960) 169. Used by permission. ‘Grady Null, *Being Me* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971). Used by permission.

How can one obtain freedom from worry, a cheerful disposition and strong religious convictions?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: Select one goal from each of the three areas discussed—time, money, and health. Concentrate on accomplishing this week a part of your goals for each area in your life. You possess time, money and health. But there is more to life than this. Jesus Christ said, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). Consider what else your life consists of and what relationship this has to self- control.

GUILT

CASE STUDY: Brian knows the feeling of being sorry. The problem started when he turned in the monthly financial report to his boss. There were some unusual over-expenditures in Jim’s department and an accounting error of the previous month made it look worse. His boss called, asking if the figures were correct. Brian confirmed the figures, but omitted the part about the accounting error, making Jim’s integrity look questionable. The next morning Jim was terminated. He packed the personal belongings from his desk and left. Brian’s determination to keep his record clean kept him from telling the whole story. The choice had been made. Jim was gone. Brian’s mistake had not been found. Yet he knew he had compromised his integrity.

APPLICATION:

1. Think of the last time you felt guilty. List three words that describe how you felt.
2. When you feel pangs of guilt, what do you do?

DISCUSSION:

1. Brian’s guilt was valid; he did wrong. However, there is invalid guilt. Can you tell the difference in valid guilt feelings and invalid guilt feelings?.
2. Our conscience is not always a valid indicator of true guilt. Outside influences bombard our conscience. What are some of those influences for you?
3. Think of the last time you felt guilty. Answer these questions about that situation. What was I feeling? What actions (mine and others) initiated these feelings? Are the feelings a valid outcome of these actions? Knowing myself and the others involved in the circumstances, were my feelings a logical outcome? What were the wrong actions involved in the situation? What about my motivation? Did I willfully do wrong? Did I intend to hurt another person or myself?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION In the New Testament, Jesus constantly stood alongside the guilty and helped them work through their guilt. Jesus once stood beside a woman caught in the act of adultery as religious leaders were about to throw stones at her. He said, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). None of them did. They all walked away.

Jesus did not support the woman’s actions but neither did he condemn her. He stood with her and helped her deal with her guilt. He gave her freedom to leave her guilt and walk into a new life-style. (John 8:10-11)

Are you facing a situation of guilt? Can you lay the situation and the guilt to rest?

ESTEEM

CASE STUDY: Susan stood at her sink washing one plate, one knife, one fork, one spoon, one glass. She hummed along with the radio: “You’re nobody til somebody loves you. You’re nobody til somebody cares.” Suddenly her eyes blurred as tears of self-pity and anger overflowed. She was alone again with nothing to do but watch TV. She cried out, “Who am I? What am I? Why am I taking up oxygen and space?” Her mind drifted back to the song, “so find yourself somebody to love.” Susan grinned cynically and said, “Easier said than done, my friend.”

APPLICATION:

1. Do you have a low opinion or high opinion of yourself?
2. Have you ever had any thoughts or feelings similar to Susan’s?
3. Are you willing to risk finding somebody to love—even if that somebody is you?

DISCUSSION:

1. Who am I? We are products of our parents, to be sure. But self-identity is also shaped by relationships with other people, things seen or read and the culture in which we live.
2. Humorist Grady Nutt, in his book *Being Me* used different punctuation marks to give different meanings to the same words.¹³ “I am!” is said in confidence, indicating an awareness of self. “I am?” is said in doubt and leads to the probing of self, not just in terms of function, but in terms of the “frontier” between what I am and what I can become. “I am. . . .” reflects uncertainty, grappling, testing my weight on thin ice and preparation for full commitment. How would you complete these sentences:
I am! .
I am? .
I am .
3. Connoisseurs of valuable antiques will pay a premium for something that to the untrained eye looks like junk. Sometimes people look at themselves with an untrained eye—unable to see their potential for worth and fulfillment as a person. Check one of the following statements that best suits your concept of self- worth:
_____ I was born this way.
_____ I’m not much, but I’m all I’ve got.
_____ I’m worth something because God made me.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION The Bible says God created man and woman in His image. And God said it was good (Gen. 1:27, 31). Jesus Christ said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Personalize the statement by substituting your name for “the world.” Each person is special to God, fully known, fully accepted and fully loved. Ask yourself, “What is it that helps me feel good about myself?” “What are my thoughts when I personalize God’s love?” “How do I feel knowing that God loves me just as I am?”

Try to see your worth through the trained eye of the Creator.

¹³ Grady, Nutt, *Being Me* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), Used by permission.

REJECTION

CASE STUDY: Tom is a successful manager of a gourmet food store. Four years ago his wife of eleven years suddenly moved out of their house and filed for a divorce. In his words, “The finality of her decision hurt the most. At first, I didn’t believe it. Things like this happened to other people, but not to me. But there wasn’t anything I could do.” Tom’s feeling of helplessness is a common response to rejection, as are his efforts to conceal embarrassment and hurt: “For three months, I didn’t even tell my friends what was happening, because I didn’t want them to feel sorry for me. Then when I finally did turn to them, they were unable to help because they were afraid to ‘take sides.’ I was angry and sad and bitter. It’s an unbelievable loneliness.”

APPLICATION

1. Have you ever felt this way?
2. Frequently we determine a goal and make an effort toward it, and then someone shows up to disqualify us by saying, “*You can’t,*” “*You’re fired,*” “*You’re wrong.*” We have failed and someone else decided it! That is rejection. Who are the possible disqualifiers in your life?

DISCUSSION:

1. When rejection comes, most of us react along predictable lines. Depending on the intensity of our desire for the goal and the amount of energy or self-disclosure we have invested toward it. How do you respond to rejection?
2. Explore your reactions to rejection by answering these questions. What is my most vivid experience of rejection? Was it interpersonal? vocational? family-related?
3. If rejection involves three ingredients—a goal, an effort and a disqualifier—what did I want? What did I do to gain it? Who rejected my effort or offer? In what experience was I a disqualifier for someone else? What made me say no?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: Even when rejection comes, there is help. The Bible records that one outstanding characteristic of Jesus Christ was His affinity for people who had been rejected—prostitutes, up-and-outers, racial outcasts. Jesus surrounded himself with people who were familiar with loss, failure and rejection. Questioned for the practice of including outcasts, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matt. 9:12-13).

FAILURE

CASE STUDY: Carl decided to lose weight. He would begin dieting in the morning. But, as he awoke to the smell of fresh rolls, bacon, eggs and coffee, he thought, “I’ll begin dieting at noon.” After a hectic morning, he went to the employee cafeteria. Usually it offered nothing appealing but today the offerings were undeniably pleasant. “I’ll start dieting tonight,” Carl decided. But on the way home from work. . . When Carl awoke the next morning he was disappointed with himself. He had failed and dreaded facing the day.

APPLICATION:

1. When did something like this happen to you?
2. How do you define failure?

DISCUSSION:

1. Which one of the following statements is easiest for you to accept? (Check one.) Which is hardest for you to accept? (Star one.) Why?
.....Failure is an integral part of life.
.....Blessed is the person who expects nothing, for he/she shall never be disappointed.
.....Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing.
.....If you learn from a failure, you haven't lost.
.....Failure can be a stepping stone, instead of a stumbling block.
.....The way you react to failure is more important than failure itself.
2. The possibility of failure exists in everything we do. Three common ways of dealing with failure are: (a) Lower your expectations, thus lowering the size of the disappointment and the sense of failure. (b) Blame circumstances on other people. (c) Develop a healthy self-image, and failure or disappointment will not be as difficult to handle. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of these ways of handling failure?
3. What resources do you have to help you face failure?
4. Focus on faith in yourself. Do you believe in yourself? Do you know yourself well enough to use your strengths to overcome failure?
5. Focus on faith in others. Can you trust people? Do you find it difficult to depend on others to help you?
6. Focus on something in addition to yourself and others for added resources. What additional resources do you have to help you deal with failure?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: The Bible anticipates failure by using key words such as forgiveness, restoration, renewal and a new beginning (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

The Christian faith shows you how to win, as well as how to lose. The Apostle Paul tells us how to cope with loss: "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. . . I can do everything through him who gives me strength: (Phil. 4:12-13).

While we may not be able to avoid failure, we can choose what to do with the failures and disappointments in our lives.

ANGER

CASE STUDY: Tony, a financial analyst, struggles in a silent and burdensome battle with anger. Recently, he worked on two urgent projects. His boss interrupted constantly, checking on his progress. Tony soon felt angry, but held it in. "My boss would lose respect for me if I showed my anger," he argued, "And it could really hurt our relationship." We all get angry, and we can show (or hide) our anger in a variety of ways. But, like Tony, many of us are unaware of how anger can be used to build stronger relationships.

APPLICATION:

1. Have you ever felt like Tony?
2. What feeds your anger? Anger may come from within. It is a feeling that shouts, "Something must be changed!" ("I insist that my boss leave me alone so I can finish these projects!") By itself, your anger is neither good nor bad, but a signal for change. How you choose to respond to your anger can be either good or bad, constructive or destructive.

DISCUSSION:

1. Place an "X" beside the answer in either Column A or Column B on the chart on page 148 that best indicates how you act when you are angry. Discuss your answers.
2. Consider Tony's situation once more. Can you think of at least one statement Tony could use to express his anger constructively? Refer to Column B.
3. Try these steps the next time you're angry.
 - (a) Acknowledge your anger. It is easy to be angry and not admit it. Be honest with what you are feeling.
 - (b) State your demands. Complete the sentence: "I feel angry and I want to change. . ."
 - (c) Choose a constructive response to anger. Count to ten and then decide if the anger should be expressed or canceled due to its lack of importance. Which of these steps is most difficult for you? Why?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: Insights into human nature are found throughout the Bible. Both constructive and destructive responses to anger are addressed when the Bible says, "*in your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry. . . get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as in Christ, God forgave you*" (Eph. 4:26,31-32). It is necessary to experience love and forgiveness before you are able to give it. And until you give it, you'll be severely limited in expressing your anger in a positive way.

DEPRESSION

CASE STUDY: Elaine describes herself as an outgoing, happy individual with purpose and direction in life. She is busy with her part-time academic pursuit, her job and other interest³ such as drama, music and sports. However, she frequently becomes frustrated over her emotional "ups and downs." Annoyed at the apparent lack of a cause, she begins to feel inadequate in her work, developing a low self-esteem. She says, "Sometimes I identify my moods of depression with an emotional need such as loneliness or boredom. Often I ignore the real cause of depression and find myself choosing other outlets of release such as eating or drinking."

APPLICATION:

1. Elaine is not alone in feeling depression. A significant percent of the adult population experience chronic depression, often significant enough to warrant medical treatment. Have you ever felt depressed?
2. Can you determine the source of your depression?

3. What advice would you give to Elaine?

DISCUSSION:

1. Most depression not related to a medical problem grows from one of three basic emotions: anger, guilt, or grief. Which of these emotions give you the most trouble? Why?
2. Depression caused by anger is characterized by unrecognized and unexpressed anger which leads to repressed self-anger. What are some healthy and unhealthy kinds of anger?
3. Depression caused by guilt is characterized by a sense of falling short of ideal self with strong self-blame and worthlessness. What are healthy and unhealthy kinds of guilt?
4. Depression caused by grief is characterized by unresolved grief with a shaken identity and meaning in life. What are some healthy and unhealthy kinds of grief?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: The Christian faith offers resources to help deal with depression in the form of forgiveness, courage, and hope. The New Testament speaks of Jesus Christ as the hope: “In His (God’s) great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3). Through a personal relationship with Christ, one can learn positive responses to depression by experiencing forgiveness in anger, confidence and courage in guilt, and hope and purpose in grief. How do you handle your depression? One solution is in the person of Jesus Christ, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13).

WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY, WHAT DO YOU DO?

<i>COLUMN A</i>	<i>COLUMN B</i>
.....Seek to punish a person who does wrong.Seek to help one who does wrong.
.....Do not care about other person’s view.Try to be understanding
.....Become stubborn, immovable, demanding.Stay flexible and willing to seek alternatives.
.....Become condemning and judgmental.Recognize we all have faults.
.....Care about what happens to self,Care about welfare of others.
.....Hold grudges.Know value of forgiving.
.....Do not notice.Recognizing.

FEELINGS

CASE STUDY: Joan grew up feeling unattractive—too heavy, too short. Though she is now slender and attractive, she still sees her former image when she looks in the mirror. She has never outgrown the “ugly” feelings. Recently, a friend, of whom Joan is envious, passed on a compliment about Joan’s attractiveness. Joan was surprised at first, and then angry. She thought her friend was patronizing her and that her remarks were not sincere.

APPLICATION:

1. Feelings are an integral part of our make-up; they are natural and normal. Can Joan help how she feels?
2. How can Joan deal with her feelings? Changing feelings takes time and work, but it can be done.

DISCUSSION:

1. Balanced thinking is important in controlling our feelings. What helps you keep your perspective in thinking?
2. Another positive step in dealing with feelings is realizing we have the right to feel. At times we do not know why we feel a certain way, but keep in mind we are responsible for how we express our feelings. Can you acknowledge your strongest feelings?
3. Which of the following feelings are most alive in your life:
.....love,anger,fear,guilt? Is that feeling a constructive or destructive force in your life? Do you want to change it?
4. Some people enjoy feeling bad about themselves. Do you want to change your negative feelings? What can be done?
5. Others have an influence on our feelings; this is unavoidable. What are the dangers of allowing other people to have undue influence on your feelings? Who has control of your feelings?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: In the Bible, the Apostle Paul recommends that we learn to think about, “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right . . . if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil. 4:8). What do you think about Paul’s advice? Joan is learning to get over negative feelings by wanting to change—to learn to think about herself as God thinks about her. How do you feel about the fact that God loves us just as we are?

LONELINESS

CASE STUDY: From the time she left her apartment in Atlanta until she returned three days later, Roxanne dined in Dallas, spent the night in Kansas City, shopped on Madison Avenue, and helped hundreds of people she would never see again. When she dined it was in a strange restaurant, her hotel room was cold and unfamiliar, and shopping alone was a lonely, but normal routine. In spite of the glamour of her job as a flight attendant on a major airline, Roxanne found herself in the category of one who considered loneliness a disadvantage.

APPLICATION:

1. Why do you think Roxanne claimed to be lonely?
2. At what point does loneliness become apparent in your life?

DISCUSSION:

1. Some common causes of loneliness are:
 -Self-denial
 -lack of friendship
 -fear
 -lack of adequate support system
 -low self-image
 -sense of apartness from God
 -lack of intimacy
 -Which of these, or others, can you identify as attributing to your loneliness?
(Check all that apply.)
2. Often the true characteristics of a generation are revealed in the songs they sing. Can you think of any song lyrics that describe your loneliness?
3. Often loneliness is the result of a lack of purposeful activity. What is one purposeful activity in which you could involve yourself during the next week that would serve as a potential cure for your loneliness?
4. Loneliness not met with positive action has serious consequences. What would be some of these consequences if loneliness is allowed to continue?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: Zaccheus worked as a tax collector. Needless to say, he was not a popular person. He wanted to relate but didn't know how. Jesus offered Zaccheus friendship and then helped him realize that some of his loneliness was of his own making. Zaccheus immediately set about the task of righting some relationships.

Jesus offers friendship to us just as He did Zaacheus. He does not promise we will never be lonely again; however, He does give us some inner resources to handle the lonely times.

AUTHENTIC CHRISTINITY

CASE STUDY: If you were to ask people to define Christianity you would probably hear: "A Christian is someone who tries to do what's right." "It's a person who goes to church and reads the Bible." "It's someone who goes around condemning everyone who is having a good time." "A Christian is a person who goes out and lives it up on Saturday night and asks forgiveness on Sunday morning." One woman, asked if she would be interested in becoming a Christian, responded, "No, I'm sad enough already." For her, Christianity was a responsibility which would strip life of joy and pleasure.

While there may be some truth in the previous statements, none of the above adequately defines authentic Christianity. Christians should be involved in good activities and they should attend church; yet these activities are not the essence of Christianity. Unfortunately, Christians may, at times, manifest hypocrisy and a judgmental attitude, but those attributes are not inherent to Christianity. In fact, Jesus condemned these attitudes more forcefully than any others. And

while sadness is a valid emotion which every Christian and non-Christian experiences, the Bible challenges the Christian to find joy in all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:18).

APPLICATION:

1. What is Christianity? Evaluate your answer after reading Jesus' parable in Luke 15:11-32.
2. Write your definition of a Christian.
3. Why is Christianity attractive to you? Why is it unattractive to you?

DISCUSSION: Notice that Jesus' story in Luke 15:11-32 touches all of the previous issues discussed. –

1. Associate the younger and older Sons with the statements below which best describe them: "His failure made him a success." "His success made him a failure."
2. What was the younger son's biggest mistake?
3. In what way was the younger son a success?
4. In what way was the older brother a failure?
5. Which son are you like most? Explain your answer. What did the father have within his control that allowed his relationship with the younger son to be restored?
6. What did the younger son have within his control that had to be dealt with before relationship could be restored?
7. Contrast the younger son's sense of self-worth between the time he hit bottom (in the pig pen) and the time he was treated as the honored guest.
8. Describe the emotions the younger son experienced in the following situations:
 - When he thought about going into the distant country.
 - When he began to experience the pleasures of the distant country.
 - When he lost his money and friends.
 - When he decided to go back to his father.
 - When his father received him and ordered a celebration.
9. What does Jesus' parable teach about God's nature?
10. What does the parable suggest about God's attitude toward you?
11. What would it take for God to order a celebration in your behalf?

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: Authentic Christianity involves a relationship to God through Jesus Christ. The following steps will help you come to this relationship:

1. Admit need—The only people Jesus could not help were those like the older son who would not admit there was anything wrong. The Bible says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9).

2. Accept Jesus Christ—Ask Him to forgive the sin and heal the brokenness in your life. “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, ‘Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’ For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” (Rom. 10:9-13).
3. Rearrange priorities—Jesus challenged His disciples to put God first. “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33).
4. Get involved—Involvement can include Christian fellowship, personal Bible study and prayer, and Christian service.

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