

# 7 Approach the Unconverted

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“See how I blow!” the wind boasted. “Tree branches tumble to the ground, clouds race across the sky, and great ships sail across the ocean. As for you, sun, you do nothing but shine. You can’t make things happen.”

“Well,” replied the sun, “let’s put our forces to a test. See that traveler walking along the road? Whoever can make him take off his overcoat will be the winner.”

“Fair enough!” responded the wind confidently. “I’ll just blow that man’s coat off!” The wind started to blow on the man, who promptly buttoned up his overcoat. The harder the wind blew, the tighter the man held on to his coat. Finally, the wind gave up.

“Now it’s my turn,” said the sun shining brightly. Soon the traveler unbuttoned his coat. As the sun continued to send down warm, friendly rays, the man took off his coat and carried it.

Though just a fable, the little story carries a truth. Where force fails, the warmth of love and friendliness wins. Showing the love of Christ becomes a guiding principle in soul-winning.

### ***lesson outline***

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Make Friends with the Prospective Convert

Use Good Common Sense

Show a Warm Attitude

Use the Right Approach

### ***lesson objectives***

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When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

1. Provide reasons for making friends with nonbelievers.
2. State some good common-sense rules in soul-winning.....
3. Name ways to show or reflect a warm attitude.
4. Explain various ways to approach people with the gospel.

### ***learning activities***

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1. Read the lesson in this independent-study textbook, and do the exercises in the lesson development.
2. Take the self-test at the end of the lesson, and check your answers carefully
3. Make practical applications of one or two of the soul-winning approaches given in this lesson.

### ***key words***

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commendation	propriety
hostile	rigid
outcasts	tactfulness

## ***lesson development***

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A man who had been hostile to the gospel message was converted to Christ. Joyful in his newfound faith, he obtained a copy of the Bible and began to read it. Each time he came to a passage that spoke to his heart, he would rush into the road near his home and stop anyone walking by. After reading the verse his finger pointed to, he would then ask the passerby, “Have you ever heard about this?” Though his zeal is to be commended, his approach might not always be the most effective.

In this lesson, you will study several ways of approaching the unconverted. Seek the Lord for guidance, and use the approaches you find most helpful.

## **MAKE FRIENDS WITH THE PROSPECTIVE CONVERT**

**Objective 1.** *Provide reasons for making friends with nonbelievers.*

Though there are no rigid rules about how to approach people with the good news, making friends with the unconverted seems basic. The Lord Jesus did this. He was called “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Luke 7:34). He deliberately associated with those whom religious leaders of His day despised. They grumbled, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2). Jesus made a point of contacting people with spiritual needs. He willingly sat down to eat and fellowship with them. We must follow His example and make friends with the unsaved whenever possible.

The more contact one has with nonbelievers, the more potential there is for people to be converted. This is because the message of the gospel and the love of God flow through contacts or associations made between the saved and the unsaved. Where contacts are few, fewer people are converted.

Sometimes new believers seems to outdo long-standing Christians in bringing people to the Lord. It is true that the

freshness of their enthusiasm is a factor, but another factor is that they still have a circle of unconverted friends and relatives while the Christian's friends, relatives, and associates over the years are mostly other believers.

Long-standing believers, therefore, should not only maintain freshness in their enthusiasm for the Lord, but they should also cultivate friendships among the unconverted for the purpose of bringing them to the Lord.

One way is to invite unsaved people to your home for a meal or for refreshments. Such invitations often open the way to friendships that can result in winning them for Christ. Another way is to seek out someone in need and do something helpful. We will study more about this later in the lesson.

### ***Application***

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**1** Give two reasons why new converts may have more success than longtime Christians in leading people to the Lord.

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**2** If you see yourself as one who has few contacts for Christ, write in your notebook suggestions of what you might do to show yourself more friendly.

**3** Circle the letter in front of each correct completion to the sentence: It is important that we make friends with the unsaved because

- a)** Jesus, our perfect example, was a friend to sinners.
- b)** it opens the way for us to talk to them about Christ.
- c)** we can have closer fellowship with them than with Christians.
- d)** the love of Christ can flow through us to them.



## USE GOOD COMMON SENSE

**Objective 2.** *State some good common-sense rules in soul-winning.*

Approaching a prospective convert requires good common sense. The following suggestions will help you be more effective in soul-winning. Paul’s guiding principle is to “make the teaching about God our Savior attractive” in all that you do (Titus 2:10).

### Consider Your Appearance

What you are on the *inside* is far more important than how you look on the outside, but your *outward appearance* is the first thing that people see. It can make the difference as to whether people will want to listen to you or not. We aren’t talking about the physical features you were born with, nor whether you have expensive clothes. These are of minor importance. There are, however, some basic rules worth your attention.

*Clothing* should be modest and proper, as you want to draw attention to Christ rather than yourself. You can adorn the gospel by looking your best, wearing something fresh and clean. *Personal cleanliness* is also a factor. Body odor not noticeable to yourself can be offensive to others. Bad breath is the biggest culprit, so keep a supply of breath-fresheners with you.

### Application

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**4** Why is a Christian’s outward appearance important?

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### Consider Your Manner

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity” (Colossians 4:5). Here are some guidelines on how to act wisely:

*Be natural.* You can learn to talk naturally about spiritual matters and to build them into your everyday conversation. Evangelizing should become as natural to you as breathing. When your heart is full of joy and love for Christ, you will say like Peter and John, “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). Use everyday language. Don’t try to impress people. Let them know you are just a “sinner saved by grace.”

Be natural in your tone of voice. If you really care about people, they will sense your concern. If you are joyful in your Christian experience, they will be aware of that, too. Jesus said, “A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart...For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Luke 6:45).

*Be courteous.* It’s a basic virtue all over the world! Your conversation with the unbeliever, including your approach, should be courteous and considerate, even if he or she is discourteous to you. Never argue or raise your voice; this accomplishes nothing. Instead, “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Colossians 4:6). Salt flavors and purifies. “A gentle answer turns away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1). Our Lord spoke with gracious words, and this attracted the common people, who heard him gladly (Mark 12:37, KJV).

*Be tactful.* Learn and observe local customs of propriety, avoiding situations that may appear questionable. Whenever possible, women should deal with women and men with men. Otherwise, have a third party present. “Do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil” (Romans 14:16). Don’t force yourself on people. Where they do receive you, be careful about overstaying your welcome or imposing on their time. Be considerate of their schedule.

## Application

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**5** List at least three common-sense guidelines for an effective approach in soul winning.

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**6** Write *Yes* after each of the following statements that you feel is an example of using common sense in approaching the unconverted.

- a** A woman calls her neighbor at supper time and talks for half an hour, then invites her to church.
  - b** A man helps his elderly neighbor weed the garden, then shares Christ as they sit in the shade to rest.
  - c** A student memorizes short “speeches” to use when talking with the unconverted.
  - d** A student memorizes Bible verses and then studies so that he can also give the meaning in his own words.
  - e** Martha bakes a pie for neighbors who are just moving in. She doesn’t stay to visit but says she wants to get acquainted after they are settled.
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## SHOW A WARM ATTITUDE

**Objective 3.** *Name ways to show or reflect a warm attitude.*

One’s attitude toward people also reflects what is in the heart. Let Christ’s love in your heart radiate a warm attitude toward unsaved relatives, friends, and associates.

## Listen to Prospective Converts

Sometimes we are in too much of a hurry when we evangelize; we neglect to stop and listen to people. By taking time to really listen to people who open up their hearts and talk with you, you show them you care, and this helps you gain their confidence. It gives you the opportunity to learn many things about them that will guide you in how to talk to them.

## Application


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**7** What factor often keeps us from gaining another's confidence?

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## Be Sympathetic to Their Problems

As you listen attentively to people, you soon learn about their particular problems and difficulties. Sympathize with them. Show genuine concern and love. By allowing them to share their problems and difficulties with you, you will then be better able to share Jesus with them as the Savior and Helper. Paul wrote that we should “comfort those in any trouble” (2 Corinthians 1:4).

## Application

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**8**  *Fingertip Text*

<i>Title:</i> <b>Jesus Gives Rest</b>	<i>Reference:</i> <b>Matthew 11:28–29</b>
<i>Text:</i> <b>Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.</b>	

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## Let the Fruit of the Spirit Attract!

A fruit stand of beautiful ripe peaches, pears, oranges, apples, and other fruits tastefully arranged makes a person long to have some! So it is with the fruit of the Spirit in a person's life. Look up Galatians 5:22–23. Let the precious Holy Spirit produce fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,



faithfulness, humility, and self-control in your life; this will draw people, making it easier to win them for Christ.

## Application

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- 9 Select the best ways to manifest a warm attitude.
    - a) Insist that people confide in you so you can help them.
    - b) Take time to listen when others speak, even if they aren't sharing confidences.
    - c) Ask the Lord to give you a deeper love for others.
    - d) Listen to people's problems with your heart and not just with your mind; sincerely sympathize with them.
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## USE THE RIGHT APPROACH

**Objective 4.** *Explain various ways to approach people with the gospel.*

From the various accounts of soul-winning recorded in the New Testament we are able to glean helpful points on approaching the unconverted. We soon notice the *variety* of approaches. Types of approaches vary because people vary. Each person is unique and different. We will now consider some common ways to approach the unsaved.

### The Direct Approach

Jesus used the direct approach when Nicodemus came to see Him. Since Nicodemus was a religious leader, Jesus brought up the point of conversion by rebirth, saying that everyone must be born again (John 3:3, 5). Review what you studied in Lesson 4. Do you remember how Jesus used what we called the “shock approach”? Jesus startled the older man by emphasizing that he needed to start all over again, to be born from above, of the Holy Spirit. Though Nicodemus was a man with prestige, learning, and perhaps wealth as well, life at its best was not good enough. He needed to be saved. This direct approach led to his conversion.

A well-known soul-winner, John Vassar, often used the direct approach. In a courteous manner, he would ask a stranger a question such as the following: *Is your soul right with God? Are you saved? Are you ready to meet the Lord? Do you know that your sins are forgiven? Where will you be in eternity?* Because of the kind of man that John Vassar himself was, and because of his manner of asking, no one was known to rebuff him.

## The Indirect Approach

Sometimes the direct approach is not the best and you can reach someone more effectively by an indirect approach. You wait for an opening in your conversation to turn it smoothly to spiritual topics. Jesus used the indirect method in His dealings with Zacchaeus. Review what you studied in Lesson 6 about this account.

## The Question Approach

With this approach, a prospective convert is asked a question. Led by the Holy Spirit to the Ethiopian official just at the right time, Philip's opening words were: "Do you understand what you are reading?" (Acts 8:30). Philip had heard the official reading from his scroll, and he used the question approach. Review what you learned about Philip and his methods of soul-winning in Lesson 5.

There are two kinds of questions. Direct questions bring you and your prospect straight to the subject of salvation. Indirect questions lead a person gradually, or in a roundabout way, to the subject. Some examples of indirect questions are as follows: *Have you given much thought to spiritual things? Are you interested in spiritual matters? Have you thought about becoming a Christian? What do you believe about Jesus Christ?*

Sometimes you will find that a person will respond in a way that seems to shut off further discussion or lead it astray. Responses such as *I'm an atheist, I don't believe the Bible is the Word of God, I think all religions are just as good, How do you*

*know there's a God?*, can lead a soul-winner far from the simple explanation of the gospel. But remember that you don't have to defend the Word but only use it and allow the Holy Spirit to do the convincing. You don't actually have to answer these kinds of questions in order to give a witness. You can often steer the conversation back to the basics through another question such as *Yes, but would you be interested in hearing what Christians believe?* or *Has anyone ever explained to you just what Christians believe about that?* or *Well, perhaps I could tell you what happened to me when I became a believer.*

The important thing is for you to try to get a hearing for the gospel's basic message. The steps in explaining the way of salvation will be given in the next lesson.

## ***Application***

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**10** Think back to the last time you talked with an unsaved person about spiritual things. What approach did you use?

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## The “Ask a Favor” Approach

As He journeyed with His disciples northward to Galilee, Jesus deliberately chose a route through Samaria.

In John 4:5–30, we read about His interview with a Samaritan woman in the town of Sychar. Tired from the long walk over mountainous country, He stopped to rest at Jacob's well while the disciples went into a nearby town to buy food.

Because of the heat at midday, few came at that time to draw water. But in God's timing one Samaritan woman came. Jesus surprised her by asking her a favor. After the long walk, He was thirsty. He asked her, “Will you give me a drink?”

His request for water from the woman was very unusual. At that time, Jews and Samaritans were not on friendly terms. Jews

would not even use the same cups and bowls that Samaritans used; they looked down on the Samaritans because they were a mixed people. Long ago, their ancestors were Jews who had married Assyrians, an enemy people (2 Kings 17:24–41). Therefore, the woman answered the Lord, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”

But the Master overcame racial and religious barriers by answering, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

By arousing her curiosity, Jesus led her from a common topic—water—into the spiritual subject of life-giving water. At first, the woman didn’t understand what He meant. “Sir,” she said respectfully, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?”

The woman asked the Lord a question, but without waiting for His answer, she went on to talk about their common ancestor, Jacob. “Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

Jesus answered her earlier question and kept to his subject of life-giving water. What marvelous words came from his lips!

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life (John 4:13–14).

The Samaritan woman could only give natural well water to the Savior to temporarily quench His thirst. Jesus, instead, would give her life-giving water that would fully satisfy her forever. In addition, the Lord’s gift to her would be a spring, the *source* of life-giving water within her.

“Sir,” the woman cried out with earnest desire, “give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here

to draw water.” She was still confused in her thinking about natural water and this life-giving water that Jesus was offering to her. Whatever it was, she wanted it!

Then the Lord aroused within her a hunger for righteousness by saying, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

“‘I have no husband,’ she replied.

“Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.’”

Jesus knew her wretched life. She probably never had a happy marriage—husbands came and went. She had lost her virtue. Yet in her heart there was a longing for something better. But she still sought to avoid the painful topic of her misery and sin by discussing a religious subject.

“I see that you are a prophet,” she said. “Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” It almost sounded as if she were provoking an argument. The Lord settled this by teaching her that true worship of God is a spiritual matter. The time and place do not matter all that much: “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

Again, the woman turned the conversation in another direction: “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

Jesus surprised her by answering, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

Startled by His answer and seeing the disciples returning, the woman left her water jar and hurried back to town. There she announced to the people openly, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

Many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay

with them, and he stayed two days. Because of his words, many more became believers.

They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).

We have dealt at length with this case study of soul-winning because it contains many helpful points on approaching the unconverted. Jesus recognized the woman of Samaria as a person. A rabbi of that day would sometimes not even speak to a woman, much less a Samaritan woman! Jesus didn’t let social and cultural barriers stand in the way. We, too, must see value in people and find ways to reach them.

**Application**

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**11** Jesus observed the rules of propriety; He talked with Nicodemus by ..... and the woman by .....



Jesus led her from the known to the unknown, from an ancestor’s well to a spiritual spring of life-giving water, from limited worship of God to worship of God the Father in the power of the Spirit, and from her knowledge of Him as a prophet to further knowledge of Him as the Messiah and the Savior of the world.

Through asking a favor, Jesus not only won a convert but also a welcome into a Samaritan town where many came to believe on Him. The right approach can result in many accepting Jesus as Lord.

**Application**

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**12** What did Jesus do when the woman tried to change the subject?

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## The Helping Hand Approach

Some people have seized opportunities to give others a helping hand. This has created openings for spiritual contact. Acts of practical kindness open doors for evangelizing.

A lay Christian leader in the great city of London visited a very distressed family. The father was sick; four children played with broken pieces of furniture; and the mother had lost heart in keeping up the place, which left it dirty and rundown.

The worker tried his best to cheer up the family, but he knew in his heart that mere words were not enough. Then, he made a suggestion to the mother: “If I bring you some wallpaper, will you put it on the walls to brighten the rooms?”

“Oh, yes!” she said, “I’ll gladly do that.”

After he had delivered the wallpaper, the worker visited the family again. What a happy surprise awaited him! Fresh wallpaper adorned the cleaned and tidied rooms. The sick father had even mended the furniture. How thankful they were to this Christian who had helped them. It was easy then for him to lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

### ***Application***

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**13** Read James 2:14–17 and fill in the blanks. Even as faith without actions, or works, is . . . . ., so witnessing without . . . . . can also be . . . . .

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## The Interest Approach

Jesus created interest in the mind of the Samaritan woman when He started to talk about life-giving water. Talking about subjects of mutual interest pave the way for discussing spiritual issues.

We read in Matthew 4:18–20 that one day, as Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee, He saw two brothers

who were fishermen: Simon Peter and Andrew. Both were catching fish in the lake with a net. Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me . . . and I will send you out to fish for people.” He talked their language—the language of fishing, which was of keen interest to them.

“At once they left their nets and followed him.” People today are still leaving their nets, figuratively speaking, because He talks to them in words they can understand and relate to.

## Commendation Approach

Sometimes we can honestly commend a person for some character trait or act. This can be an effective approach. We read that when Peter started to follow Christ, “Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas’ (which, when translated, is Peter)” (John 1:42). Peter responded in turn. The Lord had won his heart!

## *Application*

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**14** For each story in our lesson (left column) write the number that represents the approach used (right column).

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|--|-----------------|
| ... <b>a</b> Jesus and Nicodemus           | 1) Interest     |
| ... <b>b</b> Philip and the Ethiopian      | 2) Helping hand |
| ... <b>c</b> Jesus and the Samaritan woman | 3) Direct       |
| ... <b>d</b> Jesus and Zacchaeus           | 4) Question     |
| ... <b>e</b> Worker and the wallpaper      | 5) Indirect     |
| ... <b>f</b> Calling the fishermen         | 6) Favor        |
| ... <b>g</b> Cephas, the rock              | 7) Commendation |



**15** After each of the following situations, name the approach that would be the most appropriate. (More than one approach might apply to some situations.)

**a** You meet a young man who has left his home and needs to find employment.

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**b** You're in a strange town and need someone to help you find a store where you can buy food.

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**c** Your child's teacher at school has taken extra time to help him or her.

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At the end of Lesson 2 you wrote the names of people you want to win for Christ. You have been praying for the key to reaching them for Him. We trust that over the weeks you have also been looking for opportunities to present the gospel in an appropriate way.

If opportunities have not yet arisen, perhaps you need to take more time to get better acquainted with those individuals or to gain their confidence. This, too, can be a definite matter of prayer and concern as you continue to be alert to their needs.

**self-test**

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TRUE-FALSE. Write **T** in the blank space if the statement is true. Write **F** if it is false.

- ....**1** Our friendliness can make a way for us to talk to the unconverted about Christ.
- ....**2** Jesus was careful not to be seen with sinners.
- ....**3** Our outward appearance is what people usually see first.
- ....**4** A Christian should be courteous even when others seem to be discourteous.

YES-NO. Write **Y** in the blank space for yes if the phrase is a common-sense guideline to an effective approach in soul-winning. Write **N** for no.

- ....**5** Consider your appearance.
- ....**6** Be natural in your voice and actions.
- ....**7** Copy successful soul winners word for word.
- ....**8** Be tactful and courteous.
- ....**9** Be defensive of your own rights.

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Circle the letter(s) of the correct answer(s).

**10** Circle the letter in front of each correct completion of the sentence. You can show or reflect a warm attitude by

- a)** listening to prospective converts when they talk.
- b)** letting people know their problems aren't so great.
- c)** telling people not to talk but to think positively.
- d)** praying and letting the love of God shine through you.

**11** As a master soul winner, Jesus sometimes

- a)** surprised or startled people.
- b)** aroused a person's curiosity.
- c)** tried to embarrass people.
- d)** condemned the one who had sinned.

SENTENCE COMPLETION. Complete the following sentences on the lines provided.

**12** Types of approaches vary because people . . . . .

**13** Sometimes our witnessing without good works is . . . . .

**14** Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a . . . . .

**15** Jesus . . . . . Peter when He called him a rock.

FINGERTIP TEXT.

**16** From memory, write in your notebook or quote to someone else the *Fingertip Text* you learned. Include the title, reference, and text.

## ***answers to study questions***

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- 1** New converts are sometimes more enthusiastic, and they often have a larger circle of unsaved friends.
- 9** **b)** Take time to listen when others speak, even if they aren't sharing confidences.  
**c)** Ask the Lord to give you a deeper love for others.  
**d)** Listen to people's problems with your heart and not just with your mind; sincerely sympathize with them.
- 2** Your answer.
- 10** Your answer.
- 3** **a)** Jesus, our perfect example, was a friend to sinners.  
**b)** it opens the way for us to talk to them about Christ.  
**d)** the love of Christ can flow through us to them.
- 11** night, day.
- 4** Because it affects the way people respond to him or her.
- 12** He stayed with the subject.
- 5** Any three: Choosing modest apparel; being clean in person; being natural, tactful, and courteous.
- 13** dead, actions (or works), dead.
- 6** **b** Yes.  
**d** Yes.  
**e** Yes.
- 14** **a** 3) Direct  
**b** 4) Question  
**c** 6) Favor  
**d** 5) Indirect  
**e** 2) Helping hand  
**f** 1) Interest  
**g** 7) Commendation
- 7** We are in too much of a hurry; we don't take time to listen.

- 15** I would use the following approaches:
- a** Helping hand
  - b** Favor
  - c** Commendation
- 8** Without looking at your card, you should be able to quote all three parts of the *Fingertip Text*, Matthew 11:28–29.

