

9 Bring to a Decision

One day, as Jesus walked along the shore of Lake Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, catching fish. Jesus had met the men before. He called to them: “‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men’” (Matthew 4:19). They responded at once. As Jesus went on farther He came to two other brothers with their father, Zebedee, a well-known veteran fisherman in the area. The men were getting their nets ready to go out for a catch of fish. When Jesus called to them, they left their father, the hired men, and the boat. They, too, went with Jesus (Mark 1:19–20).

After His resurrection, Jesus again walked along the seashore. As the sun was coming up, He called to weary fishermen who had toiled all night without getting a thing. He told them what to do. “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some,” He said (John 21:6).

Following the directions given in His Word and being guided by the Holy Spirit, we can also “catch some.” This lesson deals with the subject of bringing people to a decision, which is likened to “landing the fish.”

lesson outline

Expect a Response

Give the Right Kind of Persuasion

Ask for a Commitment

Pray Together

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson, you should be able to:

1. State the basis for expecting to win souls.
2. Put into use the five stages of persuasion.
3. Apply the principles of signing a contract to making a commitment to the Lord.
4. Pray with prospective converts for salvation and help them pray.

learning activities

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.

key words

ardent

furtively

intimately

astute

gesture

provisions

familiarize

indications

lesson development

EXPECT A RESPONSE

Objective 1. *State the basis for expecting to win souls.*

In evangelizing, one should not jump directly from the first contact with a person to an immediate appeal for a decision except, perhaps, in unusual circumstances. As we have seen, it is important first to get acquainted with the prospect and give a clear picture of salvation. Then, you can take further steps such as those presented in this lesson. Make sure your attitude is one of faith.

A young man, aware that he should be witnessing for the Lord, was doing his best but with no success. He kept praying, “Lord, please help me!” Yet the people he tried to talk to would either laugh or pay no attention. The few who did stop to hear would listen politely, thank him, and then just go their way. He was becoming very discouraged, wondering why the Lord did not answer his earnest prayer. One day, he confided to his pastor that he was just not the right type to be a soul-winner.

“Son,” said the kindly pastor, “Did you really think that people would accept the Lord when you witnessed to them?”

“No,” admitted the young man.

“Well, that’s exactly why they didn’t,” said the pastor. “You must believe for it, *expect* it, to make it happen!”

Our basis for expecting it to happen is one of faith that comes as a result of obedience to Christ’s commands.

It had been a long hard night for the seasoned fishermen. Their best techniques and know-how had been unsuccessful. While washing their nets, they saw a great crowd pressing to get close to Jesus, forcing Him toward the water’s edge. Jesus stepped into Peter’s boat and asked him to push out a little from the shore. From there, all the people could hear Him as He taught.

When He had finished speaking to the people, He said to Peter, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch” (Luke 5:4).

Why should they do that? If the experienced fishermen had caught nothing all night when the conditions were right, there certainly would be no hope of catching any fish now! But because it is Jesus who gives the word, Peter obeys. The result is a truly miraculous catch of fish! Peter is astonished! Becoming aware of his own unworthiness, he falls on his knees before Jesus, confessing his sinfulness and acknowledging Jesus as Lord.

Jesus reassures Peter, “Don’t be afraid.” Then He gives a promise that is appropriate for all who seek to win souls, “From now on you will fish for people” (Luke 5:10). As Peter followed Jesus, he truly became a “fisher of men.” On the Day of Pentecost, 3000 were “caught” by Peter’s message and turned to the Lord. Another truly miraculous catch!

The task of winning souls is like fishing. We not only go where the fish are, but we act in faith and in obedience to Christ’s commands. A principle of faith is that when we expect results, we will have them. You can expect the Lord to bring you in contact with needy hearts, and then as you obey His Word to evangelize you can expect conversions. God is faithful and always keeps His promises. He can make you a fisher of men!

Application

1 We can expect souls to be saved when we have faith as a result of to Christ’s commands.

2 Jesus said to Peter that He will teach him to catch
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3 When we expect results, we will have them. This is a principle of

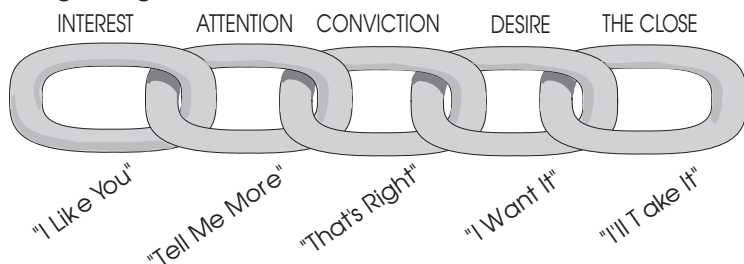


GIVE THE RIGHT KIND OF PERSUASION

Objective 2. *Put into use the five stages of persuasion.*

A friend of ours who is both an astute businessman and an ardent soul-winner suggested that helpful points on soul-winning can be learned from the world of business. The following chart illustrates what he calls “The Five Stages of Persuading People.” Each stage is like a link in a chain. Each link is important and equally strong.

These basic guidelines that salesmen follow in selling their products or services can be applied very well to the task of evangelizing.



1. *Interest.* You must capture the interest of prospects in such a way that they feel favorable toward you. You have to “earn your right to be heard.” A pleasant smile; natural, warm friendliness; and a genuine interest in the people themselves go a long way. If they like and respect you, they will be more willing to listen to you.

A Papua tribesboy was converted to Christ. Burdened for his own people, he returned to his home village on the island of New Guinea. Instead of beginning at once to witness to his people, he quietly worked at any kind of manual work he could find to improve conditions in the village. After a while, he gained the respect and appreciation of the village elders. Only then, when they were ready to hear what he had to say, did he start to evangelize. It wasn't long until the village was won to the Lord!

2. *Attention.* Soul-winner must familiarize themselves with the truths of the gospel, just as salespeople must know their products thoroughly. Effective soul-winners are able to draw from their resources of knowledge, Scriptures, and their personal experience.

One of the truths of the gospel is that Jesus gives joy and peace. Another truth is that Christ did not promise His followers an easy road. He told them, “Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple,” (Luke 14:27).

Do your prospective converts have serious problems? Have they recently faced financial losses or a death in the family? Don’t promise that they will have no more losses or disappointments. You can’t even promise that their worldly friends will understand their decision to follow Christ. But you can assure them, both from Scripture and from your own experience, that the Lord will be with them. They’ll never walk alone, for the Savior walks beside them; and the joy He gives outweighs anything else. That’s a strong “selling point”!

Be alert to indications of interest and attention. When a prospective convert indicates a “tell-me-more” attitude, the Holy Spirit is right there too. He will give you the wisdom to come out with the right words at the right time.

3. *Conviction.* When the sales talk of a salesperson or the testimony of a believer “rings true” to prospects, they will be willing to admit that what you say is right. In the case of the soul-winner, you can then lead prospective converts on to realize that they are in need of what you are offering them—the Savior.

Here, the Holy Spirit adds His witness to the truthfulness of what you are saying. He, as your ally and helper, works in prospects’ hearts causes them to recognize the truth of the gospel. The Spirit will also convict people of sin. They will become conscious of their guilt. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, “he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8).

4. *Desire.* When curiosity is aroused in people, it may lead to a desire for what they are being offered. Keen salespeople are alert for indications that the customer might want to have the product. For example, a salesman shows a lady a set of dishes. The color is white. She asks him if he has the set in yellow. This indicates that she would like a set of dishes. It is what salespeople call a “buying signal.” Good salespeople will be aware of this and suggest everything they can to make a sale.

As a soul-winner talks in glowing terms of Jesus Christ and how He fulfills spiritual needs, desire for Him is created in the prospect’s heart. We who evangelize should alert ourselves for clues that might indicate such an inward desire. Prospective converts may be *saying* they are not interested, yet you notice a slight hesitation or the expression in their eyes—some little gesture that may be a clue that they will yield if you encourage them the right way. One must be careful, however, not to overpersuade or try to force prospects to a decision before they are ready.

5. *The close.* This is the fifth and last stage of persuading people to a definite decision. Salespeople must “close the deal” with customers, otherwise there is no sale. Until they say, “I’ll take it,” the foregoing efforts of persuading people haven’t reached the goal or completion.

This also has its application for the soul-winner. Until people makes a positive decision to place their trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, they are not yet saved. Your work is not yet complete. “Closing the deal” is then an essential part of evangelizing.

Application

4 If a person tells you he or she is not interested in the message of salvation, how should you interpret his or her remark?

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5 Who is responsible to convict people of sin?

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- 6 List the five stages of persuading people.
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ASK FOR A COMMITMENT

Objective 3. *Apply the principles of signing a contract to making a commitment to the Lord.*

Making a commitment is like signing a contract. A business contract containing provisions and terms involves two parties, and both must sign it. It's called "closing the deal." In the "salvation contract," God offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Jesus Christ His Son. The unconverted must understand these wonderful provisions of the contract. They must also know its terms, or conditions.

God has already performed His part and "signed" the contract. Now it remains for the second party—prospective converts—to "sign" it, or *make a commitment*. The soul-winner must ask them to do this at the appropriate time.

Application

- 7 Most of us would not sign a contract that did not offer us equal or more than what we give. How would you evaluate the salvation contract?
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In Joshua, chapter 24, we read that Joshua, one of the Old Testament judges, asked the people of Israel for a commitment. In those days it was called a covenant. God had provided His side of the "contract" or covenant with the following terms already carried out:

1. He called Abraham as the ancestor of a new people.
2. He delivered these people from slavery.

3. He brought them through a terrible wilderness to a rich and fertile land, a land of milk and honey.
4. He raised up Moses and then Joshua to lead His people.

Now Joshua appealed to the people to decide whether they would keep their side of the covenant: “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

Application

- 8** Read Joshua 24:14. What are three of the terms or conditions the Israelites were to agree to?

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Then, as an example, Joshua said, “As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15). The people agreed to these terms, promising to serve the Lord as their only God. Knowing their weakness, however, Joshua emphasized again the importance of their decision and warned them what would happen if they failed to keep the covenant.

Application

- 9** What does Joshua’s example say to soul-winners?

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The people reaffirmed their decision to serve the Lord. Joshua then erected a stone monument as a witness to the covenant made that day by the people. Their great decision to serve the Lord is similar to that which a prospective convert must make. Soul-winners, like Joshua, must clearly explain the provisions and terms of the covenant. They must challenge prospects to trust the Lord and serve Him forever.

Application

10 In your notebook, write from memory the items on the salvation contract.

PRAY TOGETHER

Objective 4. *Pray with prospective converts for salvation and help them pray.*

When is the appropriate time for a commitment? It varies. First, you present the gospel message adequately and simply. Though there is much more that you could tell prospects, and they seem interested, don't get carried away with explaining too much for too long. Be alert to their reaction and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading to know the right moment. Prospective converts may express a desire to have what you are talking about, but more likely they will wait until you *ask* them.

You will not have to be in soul-winning work very long before you realize that it is at this point (bringing someone to a decision) that the enemy (Satan) will try to bring some kind of distraction or interruption. Recognize this for what it is. Silently take authority over it in the Spirit's power and in the name of Jesus. Do not be distracted by it yourself, but wait patiently and then bring the person back gently to the point.

For example: You are talking to a mother in her home. Just at the point when she is about to accept Christ as Savior, her child comes running in crying because a playmate has knocked him down! You have to wait while she comforts him and settles the dispute. If you allow her time to do this without losing your purpose, you can help her return to the subject quickly and easily.

Or perhaps you are with a student in his room or in a corner of the campus. A friend of his comes along, slams down his books, and makes some remark about a teacher or about school life. You can introduce yourself to the friend and then say

something like, “We were just talking about how to receive forgiveness for sins and how to know we can go to heaven.” That may cause him to excuse himself and leave, but if he is interested he may linger and join in. You can include him, explaining to him what you have been talking about. Then, you can quickly come back to the matter of praying a prayer of salvation.

How do you know the right time? You will sense it through the Holy Spirit within you. You may also notice the person furtively brush away a tear. Do not embarrass him or her. Ask questions such as these: *Do you understand what I have been saying? Have I explained it clearly enough? Wouldn't you like to receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior right now? You may say, He is present here with us and invites you to come.*

When prospects indicate a willingness to trust in Christ, then say, “Let's just close our eyes and bow our heads together. We'll talk to God the Father.”

Then you pray a short prayer for them, talking to the Lord naturally and intimately. This will help them believe the Lord is present, even though they cannot see Him. Then say, “Now I will lead you in a prayer. Please repeat these words after me.” As they follow you phrase by phrase, pray a simple prayer for salvation, such as the following:

Dear Father in heaven, thank you for loving me. Thank you for sending Your Son, Jesus, to die for my sins. I accept Him now as my Savior. Please cleanse my heart and take away all my sins. May your Holy Spirit come into my life. Give me assurance that I have eternal life in you. I thank you that I have received it now. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

When you have finished, wait quietly a moment and watch for their reactions. They may feel elated, or they may still be in doubt. Let them express themselves. Rejoice with them.

People don't need to understand all about God and the Bible before they can be saved. All people, whether educated or not, must come to the Lord in this simple way!

This is the miracle of conversion. You and I didn't do it. The Holy Spirit did! We merely act on God's Word by faith. Now, you can explain to them that, through the merits of Jesus' shed blood, their hearts are washed clean and the burden of sin lifted from them. They will probably begin to understand truths they did not understand before because the things of the Spirit are understood in the Spirit.

You must encourage new converts that now, since they are "newborn babies" in God's family—and your brothers and sisters—they need milk or food to stay alive and grow. They must be fed by the Word of God. They must associate with other believers to become strong.

They also must tell about what has happened to them as soon as possible because as they give witness to it with their mouths, it is confirmed in their hearts and lives. They must be cautioned that even though they may feel something strongly at the moment, they must not depend on their feelings to know they are saved. They must depend upon *what God's Word says*. This is equally important for people who does not have immediate feelings of joy or peace. They must believe that what God's Word says is true. If new converts have kept their part of the contract, they can rest assured that God, *who does not lie*, has kept His part.

New converts are due for many happy surprises when they begin to realize the change that has taken place in their lives. Even some of their old habits will fall off immediately, for they have become new persons.


Application

11 Fingertip Text

<i>Title:</i> The New Life	<i>Reference:</i> 2 Corinthians 5:17
<i>Text:</i> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!	

12 In your notebook, write a short, clearly understandable prayer for salvation.

13 You have no doubt already begun to realize that the five stages of persuading people do not follow the same time pattern, especially in soul-winning. After the names you wrote in your notebook (Lesson 2), write what stage you feel each one is now in. We hope that, for at least one person, you have already reached “the close”—leading him or her to accept Christ. Your instructor would be happy to hear about it.



self-test

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

-**1** One cannot obtain salvation on God’s provisions alone; each person has commitments to make as well.
-**2** A soul winner must speak very plainly to people in sin and do what he can to convict them of that sin.
-**3** The enemy (Satan) will try to interrupt or distract when it is time for a person to make a decision for Christ.
-**4** A person doesn’t need to understand all about God and the Bible before he can be saved.

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Circle the letter in front of each correct completion to the sentence.

- 5** We can expect to win souls
 - a)** because we can trust the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - b)** if we learn all the rules and how to use them.
 - c)** when we obey the Lord and act in faith.
 - d)** because it is so easy.
- 6** If new converts say they doesn’t “feel saved,” you should
 - a)** tell them that maybe they has lost out with the Lord.
 - b)** try to joke with them and get them to feel happy again.
 - c)** tell them to depend on what God’s Word says.

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

- 7** Before we can talk to people about the Lord, we sometimes have to earn their
- 8** Joshua made a covenant with the Lord and said, “As for my family and me,”
- 9** Using fishermen’s language, bringing someone to a decision for Christ is like

SHORT ANSWER. Write the answer to the question on the lines provided.

10 List the five stages of persuading people.

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FINGERTIP TEXT.

11 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

- 1** obedience.
- 8** You might have said to honor the Lord, serve Him, get rid of their idols, or to serve no other gods.
- 2** people.
- 9** Soul-winners must be fully committed to serving God before they can ask others to serve Him.
- 3** faith.
- 10** Compare your answer with the items given in the lesson.
- 4** He or she may be interested but chooses not to admit it.
- 11** Without looking at your card, you should be able to quote all three parts of the *Fingertip Text*, 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- 5** The Holy Spirit.
- 12** Your answer.
- 6** Interest, attention, conviction, desire, the close.
- 13** Your answer.
- 7** God gives much more than we do!