

Giving an Appeal.

An invitation; a call for salvation; an altar call; calling for a response; an appeal. The invitation to profess faith in Christ Jesus is called many things. The aim of every Gospel preacher should be to bring their hearers to a profession of faith in Christ. Indeed the classic definition of a Christian in Romans 10:9-10 makes it clear that a Christian is someone who professes faith in Jesus as Lord.

Author and pastor, John MacArthur says this is 'Not a simple acknowledgement that He is God and Lord of the universe, since even demons acknowledge this to be true' (James 2:19).

John Wesley is very clear, 'There is no such thing as a private Christian.' Sooner or later, new Christians will have to go "public".

However hard it seems it will come best if they do it at the moment of trusting Christ. Indeed the Parable of the Great Feast in Luke 14 seems to show the overarching rule in soul winning is to invite many v.16; to get them to come v.17, to entreat all kinds of people v.21, to compel v.23.

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

"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" 2 Corinthians 5:20

"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."
Matthew 10:32-33

What an appeal should do?

1. An appeal should present the facts of the Gospel in a clear and orderly manner. Charles Finney has said, 'It was my task as a lawyer to convince the judge and the jury that I was right and to obtain a verdict in favour of my case. So the preacher by the grace and power of God is to convince the people of the Gospel message, then obtain a verdict from them, a decision to receive Christ.' When this is done it causes the hearer to think in a logical sequence and confronts them with the issues involved.
2. An appeal should sufficiently explain the practical application of the Gospel so that the hearer has no doubt about what God requires of him.
3. An appeal should make hearers feel the urgency of the moment by calling them to make an immediate decision.
4. Lastly, an appeal should warn hearers of the inevitability and justness of God's judgement on rejection of the Gospel and His Son-John 3:36

When should an appeal be made?

1. The preacher must be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. However, unless the Holy Spirit says otherwise, the general rule must be that an appeal should be made whenever the Gospel is preached. In his masterpiece "The cross of Christ," John Stott says, 'there should be 'no appeal without a proclamation and no proclamation without an appeal'. When we consider what the Good News is we understand that by its very nature it demands a decision.



A capable and responsible preacher will always give his hearers an opportunity to respond, if he does not then he fails them.

2. An appeal should be given when the preacher feels the facts of the Gospel have been explained clearly and adequately enough to allow his hearer's to make a valued decision.

How should an appeal be made?

Because each man thinks and feels differently his delivery will be different. The sword of Saul was useless and just a weight in the hand of David. However in giving an appeal there are some things that are non-negotiable and still others that make good sense- below I have included both.

1. **Always preach the cross.** This will be obvious to most evangelists but I have witnessed many well-known evangelists and preachers neglect to preach the cross. Paul says, *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"*. (1 Corinthians 1:18). In 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 Pauls presents the Gospel in a "nutshell". These Gospel basics are facts to do with Jesus death on the cross. The writer of Hebrews shows he agrees when he says, *"Without shedding of blood there is no remission."* Hebrews 9:22. Directly after preaching the cross is the right time to give an appeal. Make the appeal short and snappy if you trust God to draw people to Him then you will not feel the need to prolong or labour the appeal.
 2. **Use key words to show your hearers what they must do.**
 - a. Admit, Believe, Commit
 - b. Repent- Acts 3:19, Believe- John 3:36, Receive- John 1:12, Revelation 3:20
 - c. Three Turns:
 - i. 1.Turn from your sin
 - ii. Turn to Jesus
 - iii. Turn your life over to His control
 3. **Explain how one responds to Christ as Saviour and Lord.** Say something like, *"If you know that God is calling you to give your life to Him, then this is what I want you to do!"* After saying that, give directions. The directions can be as simple as *"Bow your head and follow me in prayer"*. I have been doing it this way for many years and have found, my hearers immediately listen and pay attention. The bolder you are (without being arrogant) the more confidence you instil in your hearers.
 4. **Allow your hearers to respond to the Gospel in stages.** For example, after sharing the Gospel and inviting your hearers to pray a prayer of committal, have them indicate having done so by also raising their hands. Next ask all those that raised their hands to come and stand just in front of you so you can pray for them. When they come to the front you can pray a blessing on them and their families. From there (if you want to) you can give further instruction e.g. a short teaching and encouragement on baptism. If you are church planting you can invite the planting pastor to address the people or you can have your helpers take their details.
 5. **Make the appeal hot and make it strong and only do it once!!!** The only pressure to respond must be from the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6). Always remember that if you can talk a person into a decision for Christ then someone else can talk them out of it.
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