

Prestonwood Connection 2005

#5 everyday EVANGELISM

How Do You Make The "Final Approach?"

Mark 8:34-38

Wednesday, March 2, 2005 • Dr. David McKinley

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Amen! Thank you Chris, what a wonderful, wonderful song tonight to sing to our hearts and to encourage us and thank you for coming and being with us here at the Connection Service tonight, we're so thankful that you're here and a..., pray very much that tonight would be a...a source of encouragement, of strength, blessing in your life and I wanna thank so many of you who of course have been with us as we've a..., been making our way through this series that we're calling *everyday EVANGELISM* and I hope that a..., you are not a..., losing heart or a..., falling off pace, but that every day you're in the process of a..., keeping up with the *everyday EVANGELISM* e-mails that are coming your way and reading those and letting them strengthen and encourage you and a..., equip you to be able to share your faith. I really believe that this is just one of those areas of the Christian life a..., where we need to just keep the heart fires warm and burning a..., we really need to give attention to the stirring of this fire because it's easy to grow cold and to grow callus spiritually and then I think it's something that we just need to challenge ourselves to be a..., faithful and dutiful in doing as followers of Christ, that it is a Christian duty and that we want to give ourselves to a..., following a..., Christ by so doing. So I hope that you're doing that every day and I'm thankful that you're here with us tonight. If you have your Bible I wanna invite you to open it to the gospel of Mark chapter 8, gospel of Mark chapter 8, just a few minutes we will read a..., a portion of Scripture a..., here from the 8th chapter of the gospel of Mark.

But a..., one of my favorite stories that a..., I've heard is a story about a photographer, a photographer who worked for a significant a..., periodical a..., who was called and dispatched a..., to try to get out to the local airport and to a..., have an opportunity a..., to get in flight and to be able to make a pass over a large fire that was burning out of control and of course trying to a..., be a..., first on the scene, first responder a..., he did exactly what he was told to do. He hurriedly gathered his things and his equipment and he ran out to the airport and he was told that a plane would be waiting there and so he ran through that little a..., private airport there, went out and surly enough there on the runway there was a bright red airplane, the engine was running. He ran, jumped in and simply said, "Let's go!" They started taxiing out to...there on to the runway, they made a nice a..., slow progression off of the runway and as they began to climb,

surely enough off on the horizon he could see all of the residue and the remnant of the smoke from this fire and a..., he looked over at the pilot and he said, "Okay, there it is!" He said, "Just make a pass and when you get there," he said, "I want you to turn a..., to a pretty good angle so that I can get a good shot." And the guy said a..., "Why would we do that?" He said, "Well, I'm the photographer who's here to get this picture and to try to cover the story." And the pilot sitting behind the control said, "You mean you're not my flight instructor?" Heh! [pause for congregation laughter] Well, if you've ever flown, you know that the most serious and the most strategic of all things that you can do in flight is the matter of taking off and landing. Those are really the two issues when you fly, it's the matter of getting off of the ground and then being able to make a landing back down on the ground and a..., these are the challenges of flying.

I have a very dear friend who's a pilot and from time to time I'll talk to him about some of my flights and talk to him about some of the landings that I make and I don't mind tellin you there are sometimes when we're comin down, comin in hot and you know the winds blowin and those wings are weaving and...and we're comin down and we kinda hit the ground and every now and then I'll say you know well I just think they could do a better job and I've often asked him, I said, you know, what do you qualify, this guys actually a flight instructor, I said what do you qualify as a good landing? And he said to me, "Let me just tell you, a good landing is anyone that you walk away from." Heh, heh! [slight congregation laughter] Well, in much the same way the two things that are issues in flying are the two things that are issues in witnessing. The toughest part of witnessing is taking off and landing, just as it is when you fly. It's getting off the ground and beginning some sort of a flight pattern that had a goal and a destination in mind and it's knowing how to land the plane on the other side and so it is that just as that's true in flight it's true in witness that you and I need to know how to be effective in making good takeoffs and good landings and frankly there are risks on both sides. You know when you fly they talk to you about the risks before you ever get off the ground. I've been in several elevators today and I didn't have anybody in that elevator come and say now before you punch your button I wanna tell you that a..., if we should have an issue oxygen masks are gonna fall and you need to use the bottom cushion for flotation and here's how you need to do your seatbelt and notice your exits. Nobody does that on an elevator. But I'm gonna tell you whenever you get ready to get on an airplane they go through a whole series of safety precautions to try to give you in...information and basically if you'll just stop and think about it, you know what they're really telling you? You could die! I mean they're just telling you the truth, you could die. To choose to fly is the possibility that you could die and we want you to know what you can do to possibly save your life. Now the interesting thing is that while they give us those flight precautions and help us to go through the safety procedures to try to understand what we need to do in order to a..., survive in the event of some sort of a catastrophe, look at what most people are doing. They're readin their newspaper, they're flippin through magazines, they're yawning, they're already going to sleep, they're not payin any

attention at all and that lady or that man, that flight attendant may be giving you the most important news you've ever heard in your life and yet some people just completely ignore it and that's exactly what happens when you witness. You're sharing with people the most important news that they could ever hear about how they can miss hell and make heaven and yet many people are simply ignoring the news. But there are some who will listen and there are some who will respond and you and I need to know that in the course of the journey of life we are God's flight attendants to help people to know how to go to heaven and how to make a safe journey and yet the hardest part is being able to help them with takeoffs, that is for us to do a good takeoff and ultimately to do a good landing. There is a risk involved and Jesus makes the risk clear. Look at Mark chapter 8, beginning in verse 34:

³⁴When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and...

What? The gospel's sake.

...whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Now, it's pretty evident to me that one of the things that Jesus is implying in this passage of Scripture has to do with the subject of witness. Whoever is ashamed of Me, He says I don't want you to live being ashamed. What was it that Paul said concerning the gospel? Paul said in Romans chapter 1 in verse 16:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes,...

And so the issue of the gospel is an issue of overcoming shame in order that we might embrace the obedience to which we've been called as followers of Jesus Christ and if you're to be an obedient witness for Christ then the challenge in your obedience is gonna be the challenge that comes at the moment of takeoff when all that resistance, all that way to say, don't say anything, don't do anything, don't go there, hit the brakes and yet your heart is saying Lord, Lord I wanna believe that You might use me. Lord I wanna believe that this might be a moment, a moment where this person could connect and could soar spiritually in their life and so there's that moment of tension and of resistance that takes place as you begin in a conversation to start talking about the gospel and sometimes we get through that moment. We get into the air and suddenly we realize I'm witnessing, I'm flying and oh, my goodness, then comes that thought I gotta land somewhere. The easiest thing to do is say hey it's on auto

pilot, it was nice talkin to you, see you later I'm out of here. But you see one of the other issues is to be able to bring the plane down, it's to be able to come in for a good landing and so what I wanna do is I want us to take a little extra time tonight to talk about takeoffs and landings because it all has to do with not being ashamed of the gospel. Now, how many of you were here last week? I just wanna see a show of hands, a lot of your were here. We talked about the gospel last week. What is the gospel? Do you remember? What is the gospel? The gospel is the message of the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If anyone is ever gonna be saved they have to see and know and understand the message of the gospel. The message of the gospel is that which Christ and Christ alone has done for us and it is the message of His death on the cross, His burial where He tasted death for every one of us and His resurrection where He broke through the power of the grave and has defeated the ultimate enemy and the bondage of sin and offers to you and me the gift of eternal life. Last week I taught you 5 simple words to help you share the gospel. Now, do you remember those 5 words? If you weren't here last week you can catch up with us and I've actually given you a diagram there in your worship guide that you can use tonight, but what are the 5 words that help us to share the gospel? They're simply these:

GRACE...MAN...GOD...CHRIST...FAITH

Let's say that one more time.

GRACE...MAN...GOD...CHRIST...FAITH.

What is GRACE? Grace is that heaven is a free gift, it cannot be earned or deserved. We said that grace is like the thumb from the hand it's that which is extended out waiting to be received and the only way that you can ever be saved is to receive, to respond to the grace of God. So heaven is a free gift, it cannot be earned or deserved.

Then we said there is...how bout a few of you help me, let's try again. There is MAN and what do we know about man? Man's always pointing his finger, shaking his fist, telling what he's gonna do, I'm number 1, but the Bible says about man, that man is a sinner and man cannot save himself, that we are hopelessly and helplessly lost apart from the grace of God.

Then we learned about GOD, God is the middle finger, the center part of the hand, the One that stands above and beyond all others and what do we know about God? God is loving and merciful, He does not wanna punish us, but He is just and therefore He must punish sin. If God were to simply let sin go, let sin slide He would be, as though it were, impugning the very character of God and so here we have a dilemma; on the one hand God loves us and God cares for us. God made us He created us and He loves us, but there's a record book of all of our sins that stand between you and me and God and while God loves me, God hates my sin and so God resolved the problem by sending His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us.

And that's the 4th part of the gospel, it is the message of CHRIST. I use the ring finger to remind us of Christ because He created a new covenant for us and Christ is the infinite God Man, that's who He is and what did He do? He died on the cross for our sins to purchase a place for us in heaven that he now offers to us as a free gift. The Old Testament prophet says: (Isaiah 53:6)

All we like sheep have gone astray; he turned everyone to his own way; but the LORD laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

And what happened on the cross 2000 years ago is that the record of my sin was transferred to Jesus Christ and I'm now set free from the power and the penalty of sin that I might have a relationships with the God who made me for Himself.

And all of that becomes real in life by FAITH. What is faith? Faith is like the little finger, it's the smallest, the weakest of all. It doesn't take, as though it were, a lot of faith, but it simply takes faith in a great God to save a man. What faith is not is just intellectual agreement or belief. It's not just saying yes I believe in Jesus and just having mental acknowledgement, nor is it just something that we exercise in a crisis, a moment of need and say, oh God help me, bail me out! No, faith is more than that, faith is trusting in Jesus Christ and Him...alone. I wanna be sure you remember that. It is trusting in Jesus Christ and Him ALONE, for my salvation. I told you remember Billy Graham, ALONE, okay, ALONE, and so we're trusting in Christ alone for our salvation, because it is what Christ and Christ alone has done for us. So that is a review of what is the gospel and Jesus said here in the book of Mark, chapter 8, he said you must be willing to lose your life for My sake and for the gospel. **SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LOSE MY LIFE FOR THE GOSPEL.**

Well, #1 tonight, it simple means that **YOU MUST TAKE UP YOUR CROSS** if you're ever going to take off as a witness for Christ. You must take up your cross if you're ever gonna to take off as a witness for Christ. I guess what I'm trying to say to you that witnessing will always be an experience of cross bearing. It will always take you to a time, to a place, to a moment, where you will be uncomfortable, where you will have to choose to die to yourself, that you might be obedient and live for Jesus Christ and I don't care how many years I have been trained, equipped and known of the need to be a witness to Christ, in my life, just as in your life, every time there's an opportunity to be a witness I have to either choose to die to myself and live to Christ or I have to try to preserve myself and in so doing I choose not to be obedient to Christ. You see witnessing requires me to take up the cross, it requires that I be identified with Christ. It's not enough just to be known as a nice person or a good person or a kind person, I've gotta be known as the person who has a message and that message is about a crucified Savior and so therefore when I begin to become a witness for Christ, the first step in witnessing is a step of faith whereby I die to myself that I might be willing to live for Jesus Christ and most of us fail to witness because we never get the conversation off the ground and the reason that we never get

the conversation off the ground is that in order to do so we have to overcome the resistance of self that would try to preserve itself, to protect itself, to save it's face in order to bring us to a moment where we're willing to say God I'm Yours and I'm willing to be used by You. The issue in witnessing, ladies and gentlemen, is not knowledge or skill it is obedience and I really believe that's something that I have to push to my heart and to your heart tonight that the reason that I'm not a more effective witness is that many times I'm simply not willing to die to myself to live for Jesus Christ. You see God can do anything with someone who's willing to take up the cross, but for anyone who's unwilling to take up the cross, they simply remove themselves from the realm of being usable in the hand of God and the grace of God and so I have to be willing to take up the cross and witnessing is a faith test for every believer. Am I willing to trust God, that is I'll take my hands off my life, He'll do something with me that I can't do myself? That's kinda what flying is isn't it? Flying is an experience where suddenly, if I really stop to think about it, think about the size and the weight of an airplane when you sittin on an airplane. You're screamin down a runway at a hundred and something miles an hour and you've got all this weight and all these people and you've got these engines on the side of this thing, these jet propulsion engines, they're fabulous, but I gotta tell you when you really stop to think about what am I doin here? And just, there's a drop off at the end, but you see why do I do it? Because I believe, I believe that the power and the law of aerodynamics is greater than the law of gravity. I've seen it, it's been proven and I believe that at the right speed, at the right lift, at the right pitch, at the right moment there will suddenly be the ability to fly and that's what I have to believe about the gospel, is that when I am following Christ and I am willing to say Lord, here is my life, though there is a point of resistance, with that moment of faith I begin to just say okay God, here I am use me! You see I die to myself and I begin to live for Christ. I can sore in the power of the Holy Spirit and it starts with takeoff that involves taking up a..., my cross.

Now, you know before you ever fly there're always the checkpoints, they always go through a series of checklists. I wanna ask you about some of the checklists, the items that you need to think about in your life in making a good takeoff and the reason that I'm talking about takeoffs and landings is that this is where we have all the stress, this is where the difficulty is. It wasn't hard to teach you to share the gospel, GRACE...MAN...GOD...CHRIST...FAITH. Most of you memorized that immediately last week and with a little bit of effort you'd be able to actually share heavens a free gift, it's not earned or deserved, man's a sinner he can't save himself, God is merciful and just He doesn't wanna punish us, but God is just and therefore He must punish us, but Christ is the infinite God Man, that He died on the cross to purchase a place for us in heaven that He offers as a free gift. We even believe that faith is trusting in Christ and Him alone for salvation. But the hard thing is ever making it happen in a conversation with another person and so for that reason that's why I'm tryin to focus on this takeoff and landing concept. But if you're gonna **TAKE OFF** there're several little things that you might check in your life.

#1 Are you a person who connects with people. If you're ever gonna share the gospel and do a takeoff, you have to **CONNECT WITH PEOPLE** and a lot of us spend our time avoiding people instead of connecting with people. Connecting with people simply means that you take time to get to know something about the people you come in contact with every day, that you're observant, that you take notice of what's going on with them and around them and that you are willing to not just think about yourself but to think about them and one of the great ways to begin to become an effective witness for Christ is just to be a person who connects well with other people. Learn to talk about other subjects and points of interest. You can talk about interest, you can talk about a..., all kinds of things just connecting with people and many times some of the greatest witnesses I know are people who just learned the ability to be good connectors with others, to talk to them about common everyday things. I'm afraid sometimes we, as Christians, become so religiously a..., focused in life that we just can't talk about common every day things with people. Now I know we can get worldly and we can get connected to the world, but we just need to know how to just talk and to connect and express a sense of interest with other people.

Many years ago when I a..., learned about *Evangelism Explosion*, the little outline I shared with you last week, they always talked about how that when you start a...an opportunity to talk with someone you talk to them about their **SECULAR LIFE**, you talk to them about their **CHURCH BACKGROUND** and then maybe you talk about **YOUR CHURCH**. So secular life, church background, our church; I'll never forget I was on an EE visit one night, we were in a home, I was with somebody and I was training somebody to share their faith and we were tryin to learn about just making good connections with people, go in a house, look at what...you know look at something that will help you to, you know, maybe know something about them, their hobbies, their interests, but I'll never forget my trainee who was sittin there with me looked and...and just sat on the couch, looked at the guy and said, "Well, tell me about you secular life." [congregation laughter] The guy said, "Excuse me?" [more laughter] Sometimes we just don't know how to talk about just life, common every day things. Don't go out and just say tell me about your secular, go out and talk to somebody and say let me find out something about your life. Connecting with people is the first step in the checklist of beginning to have a good takeoff. The more people connect with you, the more they're gonna be interested in what you have to say that connects with them.

Secondly, **CARE FOR PEOPLE**. Care for people, show concern for people, a..., showing love and concern is one of the most contagious things in all the world. There is nothing more contagious than a Christian who goes through life day after day showering people with love, care, compassion and concern and it's so important that as a part of the checklist of...of a takeoff in my life that I genuinely give up of myself that I might give in to others. Invest in others, add value to others, through kindness, through words of expression, through sensitivity, through soft thoughtfulness and it's amazing what your attitude can do to speak volumes

to people. So connect with people, care for people and then...

CONVERSE WITH PEOPLE. But it is in the conversation process that you begin to shift from just talking about common things and trivial things to things that matter for eternity. Now let me ask you tonight, let's say you're on your way home tonight, or let's say you're in your office tomorrow, or let's say you're having a conversation with a neighbor and maybe you're connecting with that person, maybe you've been able to show some sense of care or concern for them, maybe you've had a series of conversations, but the question is how do I ever really move toward starting to share a message like the gospel? GRACE...MAN...GOD...CHRIST and FAITH! Well, let me give you some questions that you can use to help you to turn a conversation from simple...simple things and trivial things to things that really begin to open the door to share the gospel. One of the things you can say is simply this; **DO YOU THINK MUCH ABOUT SPIRITUAL THINGS?** Do you think much about spiritual things? A..., maybe ask somebody, what is your spiritual background or your church background? That's just a simple question, but from time to time when you're talking to people you can begin to ask these questions and it will give you understanding about where they are and will open the door to share the gospel. Do you think about spiritual things? We talk about physical things and we talk about relational things and we talk about financial things, but do you ever think much about spiritual things? Maybe somebody...day at the office somebody a...a..., you know kinda stops you and says, you know, how's it goin in your life these days. You say, well let me...let me ask you what part do you mean, do you mean my work life, do you mean my family life, do you mean my spiritual life? They say, what do you mean your spiritual life? Well, you know one of the most important areas of my life is my spiritual life. Do you think much about spiritual things? You see you can just begin to use those as opportunities. Do you think much about spiritual things? A..., what is your spiritual, your church background? A..., certainly, if you ever are near the issue of sickness or death, I don't mean just look at somebody and say do you ever think about dying? [congregation laughter] I'm not talkin bout that, especially at work these days, boy most people'd be thinkin somethins wrong with you, they'll be callin security on you, especially if you work at the Post Office. [more laughter] But anyway, what I'm saying is one of the questions, and it is an issue, I don't care who people are, people wonder about death and death crosses out pathway and from time to time you can let that be an open door. A..., you can ask somebody a..., **WHAT DO YOU THINK IT TAKES TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN?** Maybe they know you're a Christian, maybe they know you go to church and a..., you can maybe say to them what do you think it takes to become a Christian or what...what is it makes...**WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES A PERSON A CHRISTIAN?** Or **WHERE ARE YOU IN YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY?** Or certainly you can ask them the questions that we've used in *Evangelism Explosion*, I've shared the outline with you but a..., two very important questions that are called the dianostic questions.

Question #1: **HAVE YOU COME TO THE PLACE IN YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE WHERE YOU KNOW FOR CERTAIN IF YOU WERE TO DIE TODAY THAT YOU'D GO TO HEAVEN?** Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know for certain if

you died today that you'd go to heaven?

Or maybe the question: **IF YOU WERE TO STAND BEFORE GOD AND HE WERE TO ASK YOU WHY...WHY SHOULD I LET INTO MY HEAVEN, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?** You know most people answer that first question with a yes. Yeah, I think I'd probably go to heaven. You say well why do you think you'd go there, most people are quick to say, well you know I've lived a good life, I go to church, I don't hurt anybody, I'm as good as the next person. Almost everyone I've ever ask that question has given me an answer that says this is what I'm doing to work my way to heaven and one of the greatest joys in all the world is to be able to tell them that heaven is not something that is earned, it's not a reward for a righteous life, it's a gift that is to be received. And so we talk to them about GRACE...MAN...GOD...CHRIST and FAITH. So I'm simply saying all of these help us to realize that there is a way to be able to open the door for witness and the point that I've tried to make to you, impress to your heart tonight is simply this point, that you must take up your cross if you're ever gonna take off as a witness for Christ. What I've been talking about these last few week is not easy. It's easy to talk about, it's easy to think about, it's easy to learn about, it's not easy to practice because the first time you get ready to speak something in the name of Jesus I might as well say to you why don't you walk up to this pulpit, stand behind this microphone with a full auditorium and share the gospel, preach a sermon. Most of you'd be scared to death to do this. I have to tell you it's never easy whether you're speaking to hundreds of people or speaking to one because I have to be willing to die and that's what is involved denying myself, talking up my cross.

The second thing that I want us to focus on tonight and that is a..., **LANDING**...landing, because once I've been willing to talk and to engage someone in the message and not just to ask the question but ultimately to share the gospel, the 5 things we've been talking, those 5 words or some form of gospel. It may be through your testimony. It may... **< turn tape >** ...and then there comes the moment where having shared the gospel, something you've prayed for, you've waited for, you've been able to tell them what it takes to go to heaven, the question is now, how do you land? And I gotta tell you most of us just start circling, we just start going round and round and round. So how do you land?

Well, let me just say what I want to...to communicate and that is that you must **RISK THE SHAME OF REJECTION** to land your witness for Christ. Just as you have to take up the cross to ever take off, you have to risk the shame of rejection to land your witness. This is the hard part in witnessing, it's knowing that you're gonna come down and your gonna ask somebody about a commitment. You know that's the hard part in flying, because there come a point where the pilot so positions the plane, so changes the speed, so gets in a position over a runway and he's gotta make a commitment to sit that thing down, cause it ain't gonna fly anymore. It's time to sit down, and sitting it down is what's hard to do and in your witness it's not gonna always feel right. Now, sometimes you'll do a good job and you'll come in and you'll just flare out and you'll be able to land, but there'll be a lot of times you'll feel like man, I'm falling, I'm falling, I'm

falling, I'm gonna hit the ground, but you know what you have to do? You have to trust God. You have to be willing to risk the shame of rejection. Jesus said:

"He's whose ashamed of Me and My words before this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will also be ashamed when He comes in His glory..."

I don't want to worry about my shame and the fear of rejection, I simply want to complete what God has called me to do and so therefore what I'm going to do in that moment is that whether I feel a..., comfortable or uncomfortable, whether the landing is smooth or whether it's a little bit rough I'm gonna come in for the landing. And there's a simple way to transition from sharing the gospel to coming in for a landing and that is that whenever you've shared, to the best of your ability, the gospel and you've talked to them about, GRACE...MAN...GOD...CHRIST and FAITH, or you've talked to them about your testimony or whatever it may be that you've tried to do to share the message of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and the power of Christ to change lives one of the simplest things you can do is just simply say, "**DOES THIS MAKE SENSE TO YOU?**" Now I gotta tell you I've shared the gospel with many people and I asked them that question, does this make sense to you and underneath it all I'm thinking boy this doesn't even make sense to me the way I said it, you know? I wanna answer the question for em, I know this would never make sense to you cause it didn't half make sense to me. You know it's one of those times where you're...you're so concerned about that, but a simple question to say is does this make sense to you? Because really there're just 3 answers to that question: Yes! No! Or Sorta! And so what you wanna do is to simply determine where is this person? And if the person says to you yes, then you've got a big old green light, and the big green light says to you, it's time to precede and at that point the greatest thing that you can do is to simply say, **WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOR AND LORD?** If somebody says yes it makes sense then you just say would you like to receive Christ? Don't go back and try to figure out what did I say or what did I not say, just say, would you like to receive Christ? In others words invite them to receive Christ. Extend an invitation. You know every time we have a service here we give an invitation. Sometimes many people come, sometimes a few people come, sometimes nobody comes. But do you know why we give an invitation? Because the Bible is full of invitations. Over and over the Bible says oh let everyone who is thirsty come and drink. Jesus said: (Matthew 11:28)

"Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Did you know even down in the book of Revelation, in the final verses of the Bible, the Bible says:

Whosoever will, let them come.

Come! And so one of the things that we wanna do is to **INVITE PEOPLE TO**

COME TO CHRIST, to invite them to respond and so if you share the gospel and you get to the place where you've said everything you know how to say, ask the simple question, does this make sense to you, would you like to receive Christ? If they say no, then you may give them a moment to try to understand what doesn't make sense. Now don't look at em and say, what don't you understand! Well, you know, how can I help you? And then at that point they may throw up some smoke screen or go off on some tangent. Does this make sense to you? And so you try to respond to that. Or if they say well, maybe it does, some of it does. Say, well let me just walk through again, heaven's a free gift, you know, GRACE...MAN...GOD... just...just walk them through the simplicity of it, walk them through the simple message of the gospel and then offer them an opportunity to respond again. Would you like to invite Christ into your life? A..., maybe if you've talked a lot about religion you might wanna say, would you like to move from a religion, having a religion to having a relationship with Christ? But there's no way around it folks, there comes a point where to be an effective witness everyone of us at sometime and someplace, I'm not saying everybody you talk to you get to do this with. Sometimes a witness is just saying a good word in the name of Jesus as go by somebody in the course of the day. But there are those times in life, sovereignly arranged by God where you have an opportunity to share and when that moment comes the greatest thing that you can do is to simply ask them to receive Christ, invite them and encourage them to receive Him. But be sure that before you do that that you make clear to them that the only way that they can be saved is by faith, faith.

What is faith? Well, one of the greatest illustrations of faith that I've ever seen, heard or know is simply the illustration of a chair...a chair. In fact I think I've got a chair here on the screen tonight, if I can get it up there. There it is, just a simple chair. A chair has 4 legs, a seat and a back, a chair is made and built to hold you up. Right? Now, I wouldn't go over here on this part of the stage and say you know I have faith I'm gonna just trust and fall back and believe. Cause what's gonna happen if I trust and fall back and believe where I am right now? What's gonna happen if I go? I'm goin all the way down right? Cause there isn't anything to believe in here. But if I'm standing by that chair I can trust in that chair. I can see that that chair has 4 legs. I can see that that chair has that seat and that back. I can know that because of reason the chair is made and constructed to hold me up. When I'm inviting somebody to trust Christ I'm not just saying believe because I say something, believe in some mystery, I've given them the evidence, the message of God's grace, the message of our sin, the message of what Christ has done. You give them the facts of the gospel, but faith is committing and just as you have to make a commitment to sit in a chair and you made that commitment when you sat in those pews tonight, some point you got there and you made a commitment. You didn't just go sit in the aisle you made a commitment and you trusted, you sat down and real faith is trusting in Christ, committing your life to Him. And so that's what you're asking people to do. Just as a pilot makes a commitment on an approach to land a plane, you're asking them to make a commitment to Jesus Christ. So invite them to receive Christ. Here's the second thing that you do, you **TRUST HIM TO CHANGE THEIR**

LIVES. You can't change anybody's life. Nothing you do will ever change someone's life for eternity. That is, nothing that you do in and of yourself, but if you do what God has called you to do then you can trust Him to do what you can't do for anyone and I've never ceased to be amazed at how God will change people when they hear and when they are called to respond to the message of the gospel. You see I see someone, I'm so wrapped up in me and myself and my fears and whether I'm gonna say something right or do something right, I'm so afraid I'm gonna mess up, it's just easier for me to say, you know what? I'm just not gonna live in the stress of witnessing. I'm gonna learn the Bible, I'm gonna be a good Christian, I just don't wanna be in that stress thing called witnessing. But you see when I begin to, by faith, take up my cross and by faith follow after Christ then what I begin to see is that God moves my life into encounters with people, that He has prepared to respond to Him. It His hand, it's His power, it's His grace.

Back in Mark chapter 5 there's an incredible story of a day when Jesus was walking through a crowded street and people all around Him were pressing and pushing and trying to get near to Him. But the Bible says that there was one woman who had had an issue of blood for 12 years, she was a social outcast. She has all sorts of needs in her life, but because she believed upon Jesus, she was so hungry, so yearning, she knew that if she could just get to Jesus she'd get changed and the Bible says she came out and she touched the hem of His garment and in the midst of all this throng of people Mark 5, Jesus stopped and said: (verse 31)

"Who touched Me?"

Heh! And the disciples said Lord all these people are touching You and you know, He said, No! Power has gone out from Me! You see there was not a moment in time when God did not know what He was doing in that crowd. And God knows what He's doing when He puts you in touch with somebody and sometime in a moment that you can't even imagine you're thinkin I did a terrible job, they're so hungry they in faith touch the garment of Jesus and He changes their lives.

I can remember so well a Wednesday night several years ago in my life I went into a home with a young couple, late in the evening, they'd had a long day, they'd been working and they'd gotten their children down that night and I came in and started talking. This young man, was a great young man, he had something of a...a Greek Orthodox and Mormon background, he'd had a little bit of everything in his life and I remember talking to her and I shared with them the message that we're talking about and I have to be honest I was tired that night and I got to the end and I kinda thought, oh Lord I've done the best I know how to do and I thought boy I don't think this makes any sense to them, cause it doesn't make much sense to me, but I remember askin the question, does this make sense to you and both of em said yes! I remember saying would you like to receive Christ and both of em said yes! And I mean it was just real straight up, real straight forward. I led them, we prayed together, right there they prayed a sinner's prayer, something like this prayer. Let me see if we're got

this prayer, we'll put it on the screen. But I simply said to them, you know, pray after me:

Dear Jesus, thank You for loving me. I believe You're the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Lord I'm a sinner, I need forgiveness, I want you to come into my heart Lord Jesus. Forgive me my sins, take control of my life, make me the person You want me to be. I wanna follow You and help me never to be ashamed of You. I'm Yours now and forever. Amen.

We finished prayin, they looked up. There weren't any tears. They certainly smiled and were kind. I left that home and I thought did those people do that just to get me out of that house? You know it was late and I'm sure they were ready for me to go, but you know what? That next Sunday they came to my church and when I gave the invitation that Sunday, they walked down that aisle. And I can remember a year later standing on the platform one morning and turnin around and seein them both in the choir and thinking what the Lord has done in the life of this couple. The last time I've heard from them they had moved to another area, another region of Florida and they immediately wrote me and sent me a note to tell me about the church they joined and how they were serving the Lord and what God was doing in their lives. I gotta tell you I didn't have anything to do with that, God was just all over it, but I gotta tell you I got to be a part of it and it was a thrill. And just as it's a thrill to get in an airplane and to take off and land, it is a thrill to take up the cross, to follow Christ and even to risk potential shame of people that you may be able to be used of God, to be a witness, to make a difference in the life of someone around you who needs to know Christ.

Orville and Wilbur Wright built 7 flying machines in their quest to build a practical aircraft. Each one of them was tested, even struggling to try to put together theories and physics that would work in order to fly and when they guessed wrong, believe it or not they crashed. In fact, I don't know if you know this, but they built 7 aircraft and they crashed all 7 of them. But in the process of the crashes they learned how to fly. And Orville and Wilbur Wright changed the world because they didn't let the failures and the faults and the fears keep them from embracing their dream that one day they could fly and that we could fly too. Well, I just wanna encourage you tonight never loose sight of that dream of what God can do and what God will do in your life if you'll simply be willing to take the risk, take up your cross and follow Christ and let Him use you in life.