

Seeking The Lost

Introduction. Reports say it started with a man approaching a woman in an angry way. After seeing what happened, Hugo Alfredo Tale-Yax, who was homeless, approached the two. Right after, Hugo is stabbed multiple times by the man and both the man and woman flee the scene. Hugo gives chase and collapses from his wounds. A minute later a potential Good Samaritan comes up and walks right by. Up to 20 people walked by Hugo as he lay bleeding and dying. One man even pulled out his cell phone and snapped a picture. Another man nudged Hugo, rolled him over twice, appears to see the blood, then walked away. For nearly an hour and a half, Hugo lay there until the fire department arrived. Sadly, he later died from his wounds

This is an outrageous story that shows how barbaric and apathetic people can be. Would we have helped him if we were there, or would we just have watched? We weren't there, though, so we couldn't have helped him. But what about the opportunities we do have? There are two indisputable facts. First, countless people around us are in danger of being separated from God forever. Second, God wants us to act.

But what can we do? Maybe some of the people that left Hugo did not know what to do. This is the same problem that hinders the evangelistic efforts of many Christians. They want to reach the lost but they are not sure how to do it. "What do I do? What do I say to reach my friends and family?" We will look at four simple steps you can take right now to reach the lost. They are simple, powerful, and require little effort or teaching ability. What is required is that we love God enough to obey Him, and that we love the lost enough to save them.

I. *Shine*

- A. What does that mean? Let Jesus answer the question (Matthew 5:13-16).
 1. When we live like a Christian, we will be different than the world (Jon 17:11-15). The way we talk, our morals, our priorities, how we react to problems, our family relationships — they will all be different if we follow Christ.
 2. People are going to see this difference and Jesus wants that. We are a city on a hill. He wants others to see His way is best and reflect His glory. He wants our lives to draw people to Him.
- B. But, does my life reflect Jesus (Romans 8:29)? Is my light shining or have I let the world put my light out? God just wants us to live right, and when we do that we are lighting the way for others (Philippians 2:15; Titus 2:10).
- C. While it is crucial that we let our lights shine, that is not the end of our responsibility to the lost
 1. Some may say "I'll just be a good person and the lost will come to me and ask me to tell them about Jesus."
 2. But that will not work. Someone may see your good works, give God the credit, but still never speak to you!
 3. A good example never saved anyone. The gospel is what saves (Romans 1:16). Being a good example gives us opportunities to teach. Someone has to speak first, and that will be you.

II. Speak

- A. It makes sense that God should be in our conversations (Ephesians 4:15; Hebrews 13:15). We need to salt our speech with references to God, our relationship with Him, and how He is the source of everything good in our lives (Colossians 4:6). We naturally talk about the activities that are most important to us: Football, hunting, kids, etc. God should fit in!
- B. Here is what a disciple should speak:
 - 1. Share passages about family, hope, or eternity with friends (Psalm 119:172). The Proverbs are a great way to share little bits of practical information (cp. Proverbs 29:15).
 - 2. Give God the glory for the good in your life (1 Peter 2:12). Find ways to honor God in your speech.
 - 3. Let unbelievers know you are praying for them — maybe someone who is in a crisis — and then remember to pray.
 - 4. Point hurting people to the comfort found in God's word.
 - 5. Speak positively about your congregation.
 - 6. Make statements that show commitment to God: "Lord willing, I'll see you tomorrow" (cp. James 4:15).
- C. Unfortunately, it is unnatural for us to speak about spiritual matters. But as we do, it will open doors of opportunity.

III. Invite

- A. Learn from Philip's example as he spoke positively to Nathaniel (John 1:45-46).
 - 1. A quarter of those who do not attend a worship assembly say they would go if someone would invite them.
 - 2. As we talk positively about spiritual subjects, we need to invite others to come and see. Invite them to spiritual activities that will give them an opportunity to hear God's word. God wants people to hear the spiritual feast (Matthew 22:1-4, 9-10).
 - a) Make a prospect list. Think of the top 10 people you want to invite, then mark them off as you invite. Set some goals — invite one person a week. Keep a record of your invitations and prospects. We record important events — a soul is far more important!
 - b) Be warm and relaxed, and do not expect rejection. Think of inviting everyone, but think easy and informal. Do not make it a big deal. It encourages the good prospect and does not offend others for possible future invitations.
 - c) Talk enthusiastically and positively about worship services or Bible classes; invite them to come and see for themselves. Invite them to something specific — gospel meeting, special sermon, special classes, or into your home for Bible study or Bible reading.
 - d) Follow up promising invitations. Put something in their hand — a card, a tract, Bible class material. Help them remember us.
 - e) Make sure you are at the service to which you invite them.
- B. We make special efforts for events, why not all the time? What if we all invited just one person a week?

IV. Welcome

- A. The Bible talks about how we treat those who come into our assembly (James 2:1-4).
 - 1. Imagine someone invites you to their house for a meal. You arrive early. He comes in and says nothing to you. He plays with his children until the meal is ready. When he comes to the table, he has a look that says, "That's my chair." During dinner he talks only to his family. After the meal, he leaves you alone and watches a movie with his kids. After a while, you go home. How would you feel?
 - 2. We treat guests with honor. We want them to know we care and that they are always welcome. By your actions, you may be the person who shows them what the Lord's church is all about.
- B. We need to think of visitors like fish jumping into the boat. Our job is out in the world, but these have come to our assembly. How easy can it get?
- C. Treat them with the same respect you would treat a guest in your home.
 - 1. Introduce yourself and tell them you are glad they came.
 - 2. Discover what needs may have brought them to the assembly.
 - 3. Show them every courtesy — help them find a seat and give them materials in class.
 - 4. Follow the ten-minute rule — visit with our guests for the first 10 minutes after services.

Conclusion. It is difficult to say what I would have done on that New York City sidewalk. But that is not really the question for today. The question for me is what will I do with the opportunities I do have to help the lost?

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