

APPLIED CHRISTIANITY

A Handbook of 500
Good Works

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1 ~ LOOK AROUND, ACT, & REACT

Have you ever wondered why so many churches are relatively inactive out in the world? Perhaps we have overlooked something: Inactivity is what we in our classrooms were taught years ago and what we in turn teach when we become the teachers ourselves in the next generation. How?

We teach by our actions that Christianity is (1) going to worship services, (2) listening, (3) discussing, (4) going home. For all the world knows, they see us entering a building and coming out again; and that's the end of that! We are not any different and they are not any different. No wonder people of the world think Christianity is boring. If that is all we do, then it is. But it doesn't have to be.

Studying alone is not Christianity ~ never was and never will be. Faith alone is not Christianity either. They are both dead by themselves (James 2:17). Christian worship services are spiritual feasts where we eat of the bread of life. But if all we do is eat with no exercise, we get spiritually fat and lazy. Now who wants that? No one, really, of course.

The purpose of the worship assemblies is specifically spelled out in Hebrews 10. It is ironic how we use the first half of verse 25 by itself to reprimand those who do not attend all our worship gatherings when they could if they wanted to. By putting this with the rest of verse 25 we condemn many so-called "active" Christians also who are missing the whole purpose of the assemblies. Notice:

[WHO?] Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. [WHAT?] Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. [WHEN/HOW?] Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another ~ and all the more as you see the Day approaching. [WHY?] If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

Let us show each other how to love and be filled with good works,

and then encourage each other to do them. Otherwise we sin willfully; there no longer remains a sacrifice for our sins but rather a terrifying judgment. Remember, the devils know all about God and believe and tremble (James 2:19), and it does not benefit them anything. Let us put behind us always being a learner by just "being there every time the doors are open;" for that only makes us *a hearer of the word and not a doer...like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was* (James 1:23,24).

Do not misunderstand. Being at the worship services and Bible classes is extremely important and should not be minimized for one moment. In fact, Hebrews 10 states that we should assemble ourselves together "all the more" as we see the day of judgment approaching. Actually, the early Christians met daily (Acts 2:46). But as the old popular song asks, "Is that all there is?" No, of course not.

As important as these times of study and worship are, as important as eating is, this is only the beginning, not the end in itself. This provides the spiritual bread of life so we can go out with spiritual energy and be able to do our Christian daily works. In fact, it creates a cycle. The more Christian works we do, the more spiritual food we need, the more we want to attend Christian assemblies so we can get more spiritual food to go out and do more work.

Actually, once you become vitally involved with daily Christian works, the worship hours will develop a new meaning to you. Suddenly you will realize that it does not matter that much if the song leader drags the songs, the Bible reader stumbles over a word or two, the preacher preaches the same sermon again. For while you are doing all your Christian works during the week, you are loving in action, you are showing people God (who is Love), you are Love's ambassador. Thus you learn to love your Christian brothers and sisters so much that you do not even realize they are not perfect. 1 Corinthians 13:5 states that love is not provoked by the weaknesses of others, or by anything else. Love does not notice, but prevails.

Out in the world day by day you will be loving others so much that you will be overwhelmed by the tremendous capacity of love you feel from God through those around you. And you will want to adore and sing praises to him and thank him, and learn more and more about him all the time ~ *all the more as you see the day approaching*. It will no longer be a matter of HAVING to go to worship, but LOOKING

FORWARD to going because your very heart would burst if you could not.

In the Old Testament, sacrifice was the center of worship. In the New Testament era sacrifice is still the center of worship. Hebrews 13:15,16 states, *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.* Not only do we sacrifice the fruit of our lips in worship, but also the incense of prayer (Revelation 8:4) and the incense of giving (Philippians 4:15,18).

Perhaps you do not need any encouraging to do or keep up your good works; but maybe those others who do need it will be there at the assembly waiting for you to come and encourage them. On the other hand, there will be times when you will be needing encouragement; this happens to everyone. According to Hebrews 10:25, we encourage one another when we assemble together. We must never let the other person down. That is God's plan, God's way.

The worship period is only the beginning of our worship, the beginning of our service. In the worship assembly, we offer the sacrifice of our lips, our ears and our minds. Notice carefully Romans 12:1. *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God ~ which is your spiritual worship.* The King James Version states that it is *your reasonable service*. It is only reasonable to expect a Christian to be full of good works and to encourage others to be. That is the fulfillment of worship to God.

Matthew 7:16,20 both quote Jesus as saying, *By their fruits you will recognize them.* John 15:16 recalls Jesus explaining to his disciples, *I chose you to go and bear fruit ~ fruit that will last.* Romans 7:4 tells us what our purpose in life is once we are born anew as Christians. *So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.*

Are you bearing fruit? Are you a Christian in every way? Do you claim to be Christ-like? Jesus said in John 15:5, *I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.* Are you apart from Jesus? Have you been doing nothing? Jesus went on to warn in verse 6, *If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* Jesus said we must bring forth fruit.

He commanded it.

Let us not be one of those to whom he said, And why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not what I say? Matthew 7:21 gives this warning: Not every one who says to me, "Lord!" "Lord!" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

We often use the above verses to illustrate that, if some religious groups do not organize themselves according to the instructions in the Bible, do not become Christians according to the Bible, and do not hold worship services according to the examples of the Bible, they should question their salvation.

This may be true. But we must not forget that it applies just as strongly to those who call out, "Lord!" yet do not go into the world around them and bring forth some fruit. 1 John 3:18 gives this gentle warning, *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth*

Today, dare to put your Christianity in to practice. Today, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, and every day until it has spanned the rest of your life. Make the decision for today, and for tomorrow's today, one day at a time. You will soon find that such practice becomes a driving force in your life which you cannot stop. You will become addicted to it! 1 Corinthians 16:15 speaks of a family who had *Addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints* (KJV). Yes, this can happen to you, and It isn't that hard to do.

How can you get started if you have not been used to doing daily good works and bringing forth these fruits? Again, go back to Hebrews 10:22-27. Assemble yourself more and more with other Christians so you may give and receive encouragement. This is the first vital step. Your Bible classes and worship services are two forms of assembling.

Other forms of assembling include setting aside one or two days a week to get with someone you can work with and spend time visiting people. Have class projects, and take some of the work home with you to do before the next class time. Have a quiet time set aside each day at home for private works if not employed outside your home.

Try to do as much as possible by twos or more. We need each other. This will help you not put things off you know you should be

doing and deep down really do want to do. *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins* James 4:17). Jesus recommended it. The disciples practiced it. This is God's wisdom. Do not depend on yourself alone. The early Christians were always together doing some sort of good work. *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved* (Acts 2:46,47).

You can't miss it! If you are daily teaching and doing good works with each other, there will be many conversions to Christ, for people will notice the church (kingdom of Christians) think favorably of it, and want to be a part of it so they may have the happiness and peace you have. That's how it works. It did in the first century; it does now.

Even the contribution at your congregation will go up automatically, spontaneously. Not because someone told you and the other Christians to, but because you will be so involved in good works, you will see more and more needs even in a monetary form. You will want to give so you through your money, as well as time, will be able to accomplish those good works.

We too often think of giving as something we have to do or the preacher will harass us. (Sometimes, though, if a preacher preaches on it twice a year, we think of it as harassing. Guilty consciences?) After you get to work, you no longer think of giving as putting some money in a cold impersonal plate, and it going to pay for just the building, the utilities, salaries, and class books. Your money will be doing many good works and you will be glad.

Giving of our money is just one part of the giving and seed planting involved in your Christian life.

Remember, you are to offer your body as a living sacrifice. Everything you give is just a part of that sacrifice. And the more of one thing a person gives - such as time - the more of other things that person wants to give. Our whole way of thinking changes.

Every time you buy something, you will catch yourself thinking, "How can I use this for God?" After all, everything we have is God's anyway (James 1:17). You will find you can use your new house to entertain in. You can use your new stove to new refrigerator for cold

drinks, storing fruits, vegetables, etc. to share with those you enjoy being with and enjoy helping. You can use your new car to pick up people to go to Bible class, to take to the doctor, to take shopping, etc. When you get new clothes, you can give your outgrown ones to someone who needs them. When your children buy new toys, they can share them with their friends. And, of course, everything we have been blessed with through the years -not necessarily recently ~ we can share with others. After all, God is sharing them with us!

In another sense, Jesus said in Matthew 25:34-40: *Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of these brethren of mine, you did for me."*

In the midst of beginning your new life of service, you must be aware of subtle and not-so-subtle forces to stop you. There will always be those weak Christians who may criticize you for all your good works. Or shall we call it persecution? They may claim all kinds of things about your motives for doing the good works. They might even make up a few things about you that are false. As hard as it is to say - it is harder even to do - you must never let this discourage you and stop you. Instead, turn it around and use it as a spiritual thermometer to see how well you are doing as a Christian. Remember, the more good David did to Saul, the more Saul hated him and tried to kill him. And the more good Jesus did, the more the "faith-only" religious people hated him and tried to kill him.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:10-13a). See there? It's your thermometer. Worldly Christians or weak Christians (same thing) certainly criticize you. The more you work, the more Satan will try to get you to stop - even through your own friends and family.

Perhaps it is that those who shout the loudest are those who deep down envy you the most. so take note of those people. Get better acquainted with them, and invite them to do some of these Christian works with you. After awhile, they will probably say that you have changed and aren't so overbearing and all those other things they perhaps used to call you. Actually, what it really will be is that they will have changed and will see you now through the eyes of love and brotherliness, a fellow worker. This has happened over and over through the history of the world, and is probably the best way to get rid of a critic ~ make them a participant.

Lastly, be careful of your motives. At first your motives to do good works will be good, but as more and more people begin to condemn or praise you for doing them (they will do both), your motives may change you into being a people pleaser rather than a God pleaser. Always keep in mind 1 Corinthians 13:3: If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Whenever you go out to do a good work, refer to yourself as so-and-so from the church or the body of Christ. Your motives will not be as easily misunderstood, and you will always be reminding even yourself of your purpose in doing these things. Christ is your purpose. You are a fellow worker with him (2 Corinthians 6:1). By glorifying his church, you will be glorifying Christ, the Head. And this is what you want above all else on earth.

Now take the challenge! Of course you can do it! God bless you!

2 ~ LETTER WRITING

If you only have ten minutes on your lunch hour at work, you are too young or too old to drive a car or just don't have access to one; if you are confined to your home due to illness or children; or if for any other reason you may not be able to leave your work or home to do your Christian works, you can still write

Whole nations have been influenced by what is written. The whole world has been influenced by what was written by the hand of God in his holy writings, the Bible. Not one word ever written by one and read by another has ever missed Influencing the thinking of the reader. The reader may agree or disagree or be unimpressed, but it still influences their thinking. You can and will influence others for Christ by what you write.

Begin, first, by writing to a Christian supply store at a Christian college if you do not know of any nearby. If you do not know the address of the college, most post offices know where public institutions are anyway and will see that your letter is delivered. Ask them to mail you a supply of get-well cards, sympathy cards, thinking-of-you cards, birthday cards, wedding cards, and baby cards. Try to get cards that have a scripture quotation in them. You can still get a box of 20 cards for about 25c per card. So buying by the box is always more economical. Get-well, birthday, and thinking-of-you cards you will probably use the most. A box of assorted cards will give you a few each of the others.

Now, while you're waiting for your cards, read your newspaper. There are articles in it about mostly bad things - crimes and death. Instead of dreading to read your newspaper because it depresses you, turn it around and view it as a plea for help from a multitude of people.

Were there any people involved in robberies, or drugs, or murders? Makes you shudder to think of it close to home, doesn't it? How do you think the families of these people feel when it hits their homes? You've got a telephone book and a telephone. Use them to get their home address if you need to. Then write the family a note. Tell them how sorry you are. Tell them that you are praying for them. (Be sure it is the truth before you say it though.) Copy some scriptures of encouragement for them (most people don't look up scriptures on their own). Find some way to mention the church in your letter. Say something

like, "Our minister or elders will be happy to come to your home and pray with you; they are _____. Or I could come." Or you may just sign your name, and under it write the congregation of which you are a member.

You may also want to write a note to those who are in jail because of what they are accused of, perhaps awaiting trial. They may not act interested in your note, and just say you are some kind of weird religious fanatic. But so what? That's just what they may say. What they really think deep down is often something much different -fear, questionings, resentment, confusion, irrelevance of religion, feelings of hate and lack of love.

If you copy a few scriptures on the love and encouragement they need, always remember God said his word would not return to him void. Isaiah 55:11 tells us this. *So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

Do not expect a reply to most of these letters you write. Just remember, God's word will not return to him void, and your sending them his word will not return to God void either. If they do reply, write them again and ask them if there is anything they need. Again, they are likely not to tell you even if there is, but they will probably indeed be in need, especially families whose bread winner is in trouble. Contact one of your elders or minister or benevolent committee, show them their reply, and perhaps they will want to visit these people to see if they need anything. (More on this in the chapter on benevolence.) This is the time they will most need true friends, and probably find themselves without them, for such families often find themselves bitter during such a time.

Read on in the newspaper. There is the obituary column. When your cards arrive, send a sympathy card to the family and write a little message on it or enclose a letter. Have you been through similar deaths in your family? Tell them so. Tell them you understand. Copy word for word some scriptures to help comfort them.

You may think they would not be interested in a card from a stranger. Sometimes a card from a stranger who cares, even though they do not know you personally, is one of the most touching things a person can receive. "They don't even know me," they will tell someone. "But they wrote anyway. They actually care, and don't know me from Adam! I

wonder what makes them like that?" You have introduced the real Christ to them. You care because Jesus cares. They will want what you have, and when you begin showing them the scriptures on Christianity (if your correspondence continues) they will want those too. Jesus did it the same way. He demonstrated his love, and then he explained it and showed them how they could be the same way.

Next you come to the wedding page. What a surprise to receive a wedding greeting from someone they don't even know. You may be able to enclose a new dollar bill in it as a token gift. If you desire, write a little message on the back of your card. Copy some scriptures about marriage, such as 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:2-33. Say something to them about having a Christian home, and their love for God as their most precious gift they can give each other. Enclose a printed invitation to worship services with times listed if your congregation has this, or just write the times of worship and classes yourself. If enough newlyweds become interested, perhaps your congregation will want to have a special class for newlyweds and how to apply the Bible to their new lives together.

Then there are the baby announcements. They are usually in a little column in a corner of your newspaper somewhere, often the bottom of the page. Send a card to baby and proud parents. They may even put your card in their baby book as the first letter ever received by their child. Tell them how happy you are for them, and what your hopes are for their little one. Tell them that now is the time for them to become a Christian family if they are not yet, so they can be good examples and raise good godly children. If there is a class for new parents on child rearing the Bible way in your congregation, tell them about it. If there is a class for babies, tell them about this too. Their prospective teacher may wish to follow up your letter with a visit and a little gift such as a bib, a rattle, a picture for baby's room, etc.

You can write to newcomers to your community. This is discussed fully in a separate chapter. But you could have a vital part in this good work. It is so neglected. You could provide the groundwork for this, even while staying home. See how important you are to God's work?

Try to get the birthdays of everyone in your congregation (or divide them up with some other ladies) and send them birthday cards. Your card will in some cases be the only card some people receive on their birthday. This may be a little more expensive if you have a fairly

large congregation, and you may wish to ask the church or a career woman in the church to help you with postage.

How far away is the nearest boarding home for the elderly? How many are in your area? How many lonely people does that add up to? You could stay busy just with this one Christian work. It has been years since many people in these homes have received a letter. You know how exciting it is to receive a letter, how you can hardly wait to open the envelope and see what is inside. You feel just a little more loved and wanted after you have received a letter, don't you? Kind of makes you feel warm inside. You can give this same feeling of love to people in senior housing and nursing homes. Use your thinking-of-you cards to begin with, and perhaps you'll want to continue later with some stationery with a scripture verse printed at the top.

What types of things could you write them? You could tell them a little bit about yourself. Perhaps you could select one thing about yourself each time you write, such as the place where you were raised, your occupation or previous occupation, your children, etc. Always try to include God in these letters, such as "That is when I learned from the Bible itself what I must do to be saved," or "I found it very hard/easy to be a Christian when I was in that line of work," or "I have a child who teaches the Bible now," etc. Then ask them about themselves, with specific questions about where they were born, how many in their family, etc.

Talk about the weather, talk about a book you read, talk about your feelings toward God. You could even make one whole letter entirely a prayer for that person. Copy scriptures in your letter that will encourage them. Encourage them in turn to pass on little acts of kindness to those around them. This is especially possible if a person is in senior housing and can get around.

Enclose some stationery and a stamped self-addressed envelope. It is doubtful they have much money. If they cannot answer your letter, perhaps some in the church will visit there and help them with their letter writing, not only to you but also to members of their own family.

On their birthday, perhaps you could send them a Bible game. Everyone loves games. Really. There are quite a few inexpensive ones available. Or you could send them a large-print Bible, or a subscription to a devotional magazine. (More on this in another chapter.)

Do you know of an orphan home or children's home that interests you? Write the administrator and ask for the names of any children who never receive mail, and have no family to take an interest in them. You'll have to change your mood with them, naturally, to a bubbly, happy type letter. They may not answer you as they may not be "letter writers," but you can be guaranteed they will look forward to your cheery letters. Tell them about different children and teenagers in the Bible. They probably don't realize how many teenagers there are in the Bible.

Some of the teenagers listed there were Shem, Ham, and Japheth (born after Noah their father began building the ark); Ishmael (14 when Isaac was born, 17 when sent away from home); Ussiah (16 when became king of Judah); Josiah (19 when led a religious reformation in Judah); Mary, Jesus' mother (most Jewish women married while teenagers); Jesus (12 when went to temple and taught). With further study, you could probably find other teenagers in the Bible.

Very important it is for you to keep yourself available as a listening ear in case the one you are writing to ever needs anyone to confide in. Do not be overly critical of them; there are counselors and personnel there to take care of discipline. Help them from the positive side, with suggestions for good things and good ways to do things.

Do you have any friends with a service man or woman stationed away from home? They are lonely - most of them - beyond our understanding. Most have a few fair-weather friends. The principles of Christianity are often absent. These service personnel need a haven of escape, someone to be really interested in them and to understand their daily temptations which are usually many. How hard it is to be a Christian in the military! Write them monthly at least, weekly if possible. Send them some cookies or a good book if you like. Find out when their birthday is for sure. Send them a card, and get all your friends to send them cards too. They may be the only ones they receive.

People who have experienced the death of a parent, child, or mate in the past year, or people who have lost a mate through divorce are in need of friendship and encouragement. The death of a mate is like losing an arm or a leg by amputation because of a terrible accident. It was once a beloved part of that person, and will forever be painfully missed. The loss of a mate through divorce is like losing an arm or leg by amputation because of a cancer that is threatening the rest of the body. Although the

amputation of that diseased part may have been necessary, the person was once a beloved active part of them; and the double loss of a mate and that mate's love can be just as devastating.

Those who lose a parent because of death or divorce experience similar pain as the mate left behind, whether they are five or fifty years old. The younger ones especially no longer have someone to ask advice of, to whom they can go to learn how to mature and handle life's difficulties. There seems to be no one out there willing to fill in for these needs, even though the Bible urges at numerous times to take care of the fatherless.

Those who have lost children feel a sense of confused justice: Why did the child have to die before the parent? Thoughts center around "I'd give anything to have died in their place ~ it was my turn and somehow it seems they took my place," and "They were so young and had so much living yet to do." Such painful perplexity leaves feelings of helplessness and possibly guilt over something that cannot be changed.

Write to these people with such terrible losses. Talk to them about God's providence and care; however, do not tell them it was God's will, for God does not desire bad things to happen to anyone, Satan (not God) is the cause of death. Romans 8:28 usually is helpful in that it explains that God can take all things, whether good or bad, and make them work out for good (not necessarily the best, but good) if a person loves God and depends on him in faith for strength.

Mostly offer consolation, knowing that no matter what anyone says, even God, they are going to hurt. Offer love to them. Quote some psalms to them. Tell them about people in the Bible who experienced similar things. Tell them about your having experienced similar things if this is the case. You cannot erase the pain, but you can apply soothing ointment of gentle words.

Do you know someone with a long-term illness, perhaps accompanied with terrible pain, and/or with eminent death? How is this person's faith? During such times, people sometimes begin to question how God could allow bad to happen to them if he loves them. Reassure them that sometimes just the presence of physical pain makes people depressed and think in ways they ordinarily would not. Tell them (if their faith indeed has become weak) that you know their faith will return some day as strong or stronger than ever, and that until then you hope they

will cling to your faith to see them through.

Don't forget, in the midst of all this letter writing, to write to your own family members ~ children, parents, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents. Are any of the young ones in college? If you went to college or even away to camp, share with them your experiences ~ the laughter, the tears, the excitement.

If you are now living alone, write others who are also. Share with them how you have learned to handle it. It takes a special kind of person to live alone and be happy and remain a part of society. Tell them how you do it.

Do you know anyone who became a Christian lately? Write to that person and tell them how you rejoice with God and the angels for them. Copy scriptures on how to stay a Christian. You know, becoming a Christian is one thing, and is probably the easy part. Remaining a Christian from that moment on for years and years is quite another thing, and is full of temptations. Give them ideas on how to be full of Christian works, so they will begin their works immediately. There is no use waiting for them to be older Christians before they start to work. They mature as Christians BY THEIR WORKS. Hebrews 5:13,14 explains this. *For every one who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who BECAUSE OF PRACTICE have their senses trained to discern good and evil.* Help them train their spiritual senses by giving them ideas of ways they can put their Christianity to work.

When people become Christians, they expect their lives to become different. If they don't become different, they often lose interest and fall away. Older Christians must teach them. As the Ethiopian eunuch said when Philip asked him if he understood what he read, "How can I, unless someone explains it to me?" (Acts 8:31). Help these new Christians grow - show them and teach them -and you too will grow. Write them weekly if you like, showing them scriptures about different phases of the Christian life, just like a weekly lesson at home; and you will be surprised how much you learn yourself in the process.

How many backsliding or backslidden Christians do you know of? When was the last time they attended a Christian assembly? They need you, even though they may not know it yet. Write to them and talk to them about Jesus' sacrifice for them. Talk to them about Hebrews

10:23-27 and our need for each other. Talk to them about eternity. Enclose a tract about *The Day a Church Member Died*, by Thomas Warren, or some similar tract, which your congregation could probably provide for you if needed. Ask why they left. Perhaps no one has done that yet.

Maybe there was some point of doctrine they did not understand. Maybe they were never used in Christian service and did not know what to do on their own. Maybe they got too interested in their favorite sport. Maybe there was someone who said something they took wrong. Be a peacemaker. One of the beatitudes states, *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God* (Matthew 5:9). Help them make peace between God and themselves. Help them make peace between themselves and their Christian brothers and sisters. Tell them you miss them.

Encourage them to tell you why they left. It very often will be just an excuse, but at least it is a beginning point. And if, by some chance (most will not respond this way) they say they are not interested in the church any more and wish you'd leave them alone, reassure them that you will continue praying for them and if they ever need anyone, to please contact you. Then try to keep some kind of communication going so you know how their life is going in general. If you ever heard that they are ill, or have come upon bad times, or anything negative occurs in their life, re-establish your correspondence with them; perhaps this time their hearts will be softer. Remember, Romans 8:28 says that God can take anything, whether good or bad, and make it turn into something good for a person who loves him. Perhaps you could help them look to God in their time of adversity, possibly the only time they would even consider thinking about God, and help them return to him. But never give up on them.

There is one other group of people who discontinue attending worship services for a reason most would never think about. People going through a great deal of trauma in their lives have their emotions right next to the surface all the time. They can keep their emotions under control at work and other such gatherings. But they cannot keep them under control during a worship service, especially during the singing. So, remember, just because someone has quit attending, it does not necessarily mean they do not wish to attend. They may be at a breaking point and believe they would reach it if they attended and bared their souls in worship. Write these people gentle letters, and tell them you would like to sit with them in church if they'll come back.

Have you ever thought of encouraging your own elders, deacons, teachers, and ministers? The elders, especially, are holding a great burden, for they are ever watching over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

It is not easy being an elder. It is not easy being in a position to have to give account of all the souls he is put over, as an elder is. He is responsible for you and the others within your congregation. Sometimes he tries to talk to someone to help them learn to stay away from unwise company or unwise deeds, and that person may turn on him instead of realizing he is trying to help and guide him as a father. Then there are the decisions about personal work programs, missionary work, benevolent work. Trying to keep any kind of organization functioning properly (remember, the church is an organization too - a spiritual one) takes time and stamina.

Elders have feelings, and they get discouraged sometimes. They may never show it in front of you, but it happens. Write to them occasionally and tell them how much you appreciate them. This may be exactly what your elders need right now. Don't overlook them by thinking they are superhuman. They are not. They need encouragement the same way that you do at times, and we all do. All of the leaders of the church can be given a boost by a special "thank you" letter or note from you.

You could even do personal work from your home to bring people to Christ. Often a local congregation advertises Bible correspondence courses in the newspaper along with its listing of services. Help with this work.

Many foreign missionaries advertise Bible correspondence courses in their local newspapers. Many hundreds of thousands of people have written in for such courses. Do you know the language of the people where such courses are being offered? Write the missionary there and offer to assist in grading them.

But you do not have to know foreign languages to help with foreign missionary work. Some American congregations have run correspondence courses in English-language newspapers overseas very successfully. Help with this. Write a letter. Save a soul.

What about the destiny of these nations and of our own nation? 1 Timothy 2:1-4 exhorts us specifically in this regard: *I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayer, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

Send a brief message to our president, our senators, our government officials ~ even those of other nations. They have the destiny of our nation, indeed our whole world, in their hands. They need God's guidance. Write them a note and tell them you are praying for them. They will appreciate this. You may or may not agree with all they stand for, but *the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective* (James 5:16b).

You can even write a letter to the world. You can write a book. If you feel you have found the "secret" to applying a certain part of Christianity to your life, write about it. Write it in the form of a story or documentary or lesson. If you haven't enough material for a book, write an article and send it to a Christian magazine. They may be interested in what you have to say. Write a poem, if that is your gift. Put it to music if you like; we need more Christian songs.

There is so much you can do for your Lord with pen and paper. You do not ever have to say, "There is nothing for me to do, because I can't get out and go anywhere." There is something for you - a great deal more than you alone could ever handle. Your possibilities of Christian service are limitless with just this one tool ~ a pen. When you finish this chapter, sit down and write a letter to someone right then. If you do not have money for postage and envelopes, tell the church. They may help you. Or an individual class may, or a career woman in your congregation. Write as many letters as you can, and feel the warmth of having served swell up within you. You will be so blessed for it. And most of all, Christ and his church will be glorified.

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