

“GIVE ME ONE SOUL TODAY”

by Tom Wacaster

I pulled out my file on personal work recently and thumbed through the mountain of material I have on the subject so as to stir my thinking along this line. I noticed as I flipped through, that not only have I filed away numerous articles on personal work and evangelism, but that through the years I have preached some two dozen sermons on the subject (and some of those more than once). The bulletins that come through the mail and cross my desk quite frequently touch on the great need to reach the lost. Workshops, gospel meetings, cottage classes, new books, tracts, etc. are all geared toward saving souls. And so it seems to me that our realization of the need for evangelism is very acute. We know people are lost without Christ. We know that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. We know that if men are to be won to Christ it will take our efforts and united talents. There seems to be the deep longing within every congregation I have worked with to "do something." People are just not satisfied with "keeping house."

It also seems to me that our problem is not methodology. The open Bible studies, film strips, video tapes, correspondence courses, etc. have been proven to be very effective tools for teaching the lost. Each individual must adapt whatever method might best suit his teaching abilities. Obviously, I have one particular tool which I consider most effective, but I am not shackled to that one method of teaching. Whatever tool you might use, just make sure that it meets the need in the most effective way. Now the question: Why are we not baptizing more souls into Christ? Those who have done research tell us that the last couple of decades has seen a decline in effective personal evangelism on the local level. According to statistics, it takes 100 members of the Lord's church to reach one soul for Christ in one year. This does not include our own children. Thus, on the average, a congregation of 200 can only expect to baptize 2 people in one year's time. I don't know how that strikes you, but it makes me gag. We have the tools, the awareness of the lostness of humanity, and the desire to see the body grow. Where, then, lies the deficiency? To excuse the lack of growth on the disinterest of those around us is not an adequate answer. I think the problem lies in our conviction.

The early church, though driven from their homes, their cities, and even their families, still "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:1-4). Perhaps our greatest problem is to be found in the "things" that surround us. It might be that we have developed a "come-and-get-it" mentality, and think that if we preach the truth, hold to the pattern of sound doctrine, and keep our own house in order that folks will flock to the building for teaching. Or it could be that we are comfortable in a "non-confrontational" setting. "Don't make waves!" Maybe what we need is another great persecution to scatter us abroad! One thing I know for sure. The words of that popular song ought to be on our lips and in our hearts: "Lead me to some soul today, oh teach me Lord just what to say! Friends of mine are lost in sin, and cannot find their way. Few there are who seem to care; few there are who pray. Melt my heart and fill my life. Give me one soul today!"