

# Principles of Beginning a Work

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## *Five Christian ministry principles observed in Acts 17*

**I. Approach:** There are four basic types of ministry we can engage in to initiate a new ministry.

A. In Thessalonica: Paul's approach here was through synagogue or the church. And Paul, if there was an opportunity, always began with a church. He did not bypass the church. It is always logical to start with people who are interested or stirred up in going to the chapel or church service. If we can lead this kind of people to Christ through our witness it would be much easier to lead some other people to Christ.

B. In Berea: v11 of the chapter says, "now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

C. In Athens: Paul's approach in this city was of a city wide crusade. Here Paul stood up and preached the message of the cross and resurrection to the whole city where the skeptics and philosophers and all the people of the city gathered. God is using city wide crusades and mass evangelism in a wonderful way these days through Dr. Billy Graham and others, that which has not been recorded any time since the early days of the Bible and the days of apostles.

D. In Corinth: Here Paul settled in the home of Aquila and Priscilla. These people opened up their home for Paul and he stayed with them working with them in tent making. The book of Acts 18:4 says that on every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

**II. Message:** The message was the gospel, the fact that Christ died, was buried and rose again. The people listened to Paul accepting the fact of Christ's death on the cross but when he preached the resurrection there was always a division among the group concerning the resurrection. In Athens the people walked out not interested to hear about the resurrection. When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject"- Acts 17:30-32.

When Paul shared his testimony before King Agrippa, the king was impressed with all what Paul said until the message of resurrection was conveyed. Paul always emphasized the resurrection as he preached the gospel.

A. Preaching from the scriptures: Paul opened up the scriptures and spoke with conviction and power concerning the authority of God on death and life - Acts 17:2, 3. The key to effective evangelism is to preach from the Word of God. The characteristic of the evangelists who are able to speak with power and bring souls to Christ almost commanding people to repent and get saved by accepting Jesus Christ is, they preach with authority. Evangelistic preaching enters into warfare and commanding because they directly speak from the message of God. Dr. Billy Graham and Dr. David Mark are of this kind who speaks with authority.

B. Persuasion: In Acts 28:23 we see Paul explaining a large number of people from morning till evening and declaring to them the kingdom of God, and trying to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. He used all the persuasive force to get them make the decision concerning Jesus Christ he knew they ought to do. The people needed persuasion in order to take a leap from complete darkness into light; from life of sin into life with Jesus Christ.

Are we afraid to give an invitation to the public and to witness in private; presenting the gospel and leaving it there? How long has it been since we wept for the soul of an individual? Paul persuaded with tears for the souls day and night.

Dr. Hudson Taylor wanted to reach a man who was suffering with gangrene with the message of Christ. The man every time had refused to hear about the topic and did not want Taylor to come to him. Every day Dr. Taylor went to him in silence and started to clean the wound and dress him. Days went by and the man did not resist the doctor. One day Dr. Taylor started dressing him and weeping for him and the man saw the tears in the doctor's eyes and asked him the cause and then the doctor shared that the man needed to receive Christ. After three days the patient accepted Christ as his personal savior. Tears, persuasion and compassion until we see the fruit are the elements of our witness.

**III. Fruit:** There was fruit in every case and opportunity Paul encountered. Vs.4, 12& 34 show that many Jews, Greek men and women accepted Christ through the message of Paul and joined Paul and Silas.

Do we have right to demand fruit? Can we expect fruit from God? Yes, we can when we minister faithfully and if we are true to the Lord in giving out the word. In John 15:16 Jesus said, "I have chosen you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." God expects fruit until the extent we would pray and expect God to answer his promises and we will have the joy of fruit flowing from our own lives and ministry.

**IV. Opposition and Departure:** In Thessalonica, as we see from v5, some Jews stirred up people, formed a mob and started a riot in the city; rushed into Jason's house to find Paul and Silas and as they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: "these men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." As soon as it was night the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. In Berea, we see in v16 that the Jews of Thessalonica came to learn Paul preaching in Berea, stirred up the crowds and the brothers sent Paul to the coast immediately. In Athens Paul experienced the worst form of opposition which was a cold opposition where the people walked out when they heard about the concept of resurrection from Paul.

Whether the opposition is cold or of indifference, if it takes a violent form or persecution, in every case after a time of fruit there was always an opposition and this happened in cycles. When God's servant attacks and wins the ground, Satan always tries to counter attack when we are in a condition unable to afford the least pressure in our lives. In Japan when it was to conduct a crusade for 800 people, the hurdles and hurricanes did not make it possible and after a period when the crusade was conducted, all the people accepted Christ as their savior. And after the fruit, there were major blows in the lives of God's servants where they lost their beloved members of the family.

Is it worth giving a life for few people and few souls? A tragedy is not when a life is laid down in a mission field. That is victory. It is a tragedy when a life is not extended to Jesus Christ and the worst tragedy is life of complacency and life which does not give it self to some one else." For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again", 2 Corinthians 5:14&15. This is the heart of Christian message: 'I want to give my life for the one who died for me on the cross to give me life and that I want to live for Him.'