ADDRESSING A CHURCH OR SMALL GROUP NEED

How do you get Jesus and the Bible to lead you into spiritual healing for a group of people that He has called you to lead?

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Bring spiritual change to those Jesus wants you to help.

Example Series: Born To Win
Example Sermon: Winning Through Commitment

INTRODUCTION

Developing a series of sermons to address a special need in a group or church congregation must be relevant. The group has a spiritual problem that the Holy Spirit wants dealt with. He will help you see the problem and then help you start to get Biblical guidance on how to bring God's supernatural solution to that problem. This pamphlet is laying out the procedures for the development of a series and then each sermon or study in that series. An example of a possible problem is given, so as to lay out the procedures for their development.

Problem Example

One of the hardest things for a church is to get "the right" people to volunteer to work in the ministry. Those who have self-confidence are actually in pride; and, God resists the proud. That means He isn't going to bless their ministry because their confidence is in themselves. Once a person is "finally" delivered from the pride that comes through self-confidence, often they have no confidence at all. God wants to help them have God-confidence; but, God hasn't developed that yet. Last week we looked at how to get God-confidence, so people would start being willing to be used for the work of God.

This week we are looking at the second thing that keeps people from volunteering for working in the ministry. People's opinions can have a devastating affect on our life and ministry. We are going to be spending some time looking at that problem. Matthew 13:3-9 draws out the problem. Then Jesus explains the meaning of that problem in Matthew 13:18-23.

DEVELOPING A SERMON

Text: Mat 13:3-9

Then He told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. <u>He who has ears, let him hear</u>."

Step One: Getting God's Direction

The church is always in some kind of spiritual dilemma. It is like driving down the road. The car has a tendency to wander around on the road; the road doesn't always go straight; there can be obstructions that get in our way; the weather can interfere with us trying to stay on the road; and we can get distracted from the responsibility of driving. This happens to our congregation. People's spiritual condition can have a tendency to wander away from God's will; God's will can change; temptations and life's challenges can get in our way; and we can get distracted away from listening and obeying God. It is the responsibility of the minister to preach and teach correctional sermons on how to get back on course and stay there.

We have been having some real problems getting people to volunteer for service to God.

- Some people, who had self-confidence, were doing things *for* God.
- Some people were afraid that God wouldn't love them, if they didn't serve in the ministry and were doing it out of obligation and fear.
- Other people were working with a pure heart of love for God and for people but were starting to burn out, because they weren't doing what it took for their spiritual needs to be met. They needed, sermons, prayer, books, worship, and devotions that addressed their level of spiritual food.

As we started to put a strong emphasis on spiritual growth over this last year, people started giving up their self-confidence. Those who were serving God out of fear started being set free. Those serving with a pure heart started realizing that they needed to do some spiritual growing before they did any further service.

- Those losing their self-confidence didn't feel qualified anymore.
- Those losing their fear didn't feel motivated anymore.
- Those needing a spiritual refreshing didn't want to continue until they got that refreshing.

Those three situations left the church and community without many volunteers. God started dealing with my heart concerning some issues that needed to be addressed. Those who lacked confidence needed instruction and prayer, so they could start getting God-confidence. Those set free from serving through fear and legalism would start being motivated by love. Those burned out by serving with a pure heart and not getting refilled through devotions, good Christian books, good Christian music, faithful church attendance, etc. would start getting refilled.

There are four things dealt with in the parable of the sower and the seed. Lack of understanding the truth and being set free by truth, the pressure of people's opinions, the cares and riches of this world, and varying degrees of these problems being mixed together. Finding a passage of Scripture that takes us step-by-step through a full series of sermons on a particular problem doesn't always happen. If we really open up our heart, though, we can usually find something similar to this to guide us. In other words, we want to look for something in God's Word that not only gives us our text for each sermon in the series but gives us the map for the series. The more we turn to God's Word for everything we do, the more we will stay on track in our preaching and teaching.

Step Two: Get The Main Theme For The Series.

After the problem is diagnosed through the direction of the Holy Spirit, He will start drawing out the solution. The question we have to ask Him is, what truth or truths are going to be used throughout the series that are going to be the dominate theme? In this case the dominate theme is the fact that we were born into God's family for winning. However, there are things coming at us that are teaching us how to lose. Matthew 13:18-23 is going to help everyone see what caused them to learn to lose.

We will be taking those four problems found in this passage and using biblical principles to show *how* to get delivered from these difficulties. The question is then posed to the Holy Spirit concerning the four major answers to these four major problems. Jesus said that the seeds falling along the path represented people who lacked understanding. So, the Holy Spirit started bringing Scriptures to mind through research, prayer, and meditation that gave answers to that lack of understanding.

Step Three: Get The Main Theme For Each Sermon.

There are four major solutions to these four major problems. Understanding solves a lack of understanding. Commitment to God solves a tendency to be swayed by people's opinion. An eternal perspective solves a tendency to be distracted by the temptations and enticements of the world. A deep, godly love for others solves our tendency to let the previous three problems infiltrate our ministry for God. That one word or main concept then becomes a part of the title of each sermon in the series. Winning Through Understanding, Winning Through Commitment, etc. then sets the stage for where we will be going in each sermon or lesson.

Step Four: Get The Main Points For Each Sermon.

Let's use the sermon outline for "Winning Through Commitment" for an example. I have found that eleven slides counting the title slide will take me through the main points that the Holy Spirit gives me. The first slide is the title slide and then the text slide sets up the road to the nine points that will follow. Slide three gives Jesus' introduction to the problem for this sermon. Slide four presents His interpretation as to what the physical illustration for the spiritual counterpart means.

Jesus says that a person's susceptibility to trouble or persecution causes the person to give up. I then prayed and asked the Holy Spirit what He wanted me to address out of all that. He took me back to the main theme of the series and helped me analyze this problem with people's opinions. He showed me how this problem keeps people from volunteering. I then asked for a Scripture that addressed the issue, so as to direct me. He reminded me that Matthew 5:22 deals with people's opinions and how they affect others. I got on the internet and found the graphic that I felt expressed the problem best and designed the slide to fit the graphic and the Scripture.

Slide five shows the devastating affect that people's opinions can have on others. I show God's attitude toward such opinions. God considers these expressed opinions to be a serious breach against the wellbeing of the person they are talking to. Matthew 5:22 isn't dealing with gossip or backbiting; it is dealing with words spoken directly to a person's face. God then helped me to put this concept into an everyday application. Slide six moves it closer into the everyday life of the people in the congregation.

Step Five: Establish The Purpose Of The Main Points For Each Sermon.

Slides 2-4 set the biblical stage for what Jesus has to say about the affect people's opinions have on the spiritual condition of others. I will be commenting on how this condition is keeping people from being willing to volunteer because of the damage others' opinions have done to them. God doesn't usually have me take it from a negative perspective. Rather than talking about the damage the people in the congregation have done with *their* opinions. God usually has me talk about the damage others have done to them. The Holy Spirit will send out the negative message to those who need it. Our job is the good news. The Holy Spirit takes care of the bad news.

I will be praying that God will help me get the people involved in the message from the very beginning of the sermon. The quicker they can identify with the message, the quicker they will be able to devote their attention to it. What does this have to do with me? Is the typical question all listeners have.

Slide 5 starts to intensify the fact of how much damage people's opinions can have on a person who is wanting to work in the ministry (this Scripture deals with a lot of other things; but, this is the area the Holy Spirit wanted me to stick with for this message). I had to do a word study on "raca" so as to help us all understand its meaning. I will spend a little time explaining the Sanhedrin. I try not to use words that lack meaning to the listener. If I do use them, I try to explain them with other words or definitions.

Slide 6 is helping the congregation to start thinking about the credibility of other's opinions. Should we take such opinions to heart? Are these opinions coming from people who are trying to help us be better ministers; or are they coming from people who are trying to tear us down? People who are helping us will cause us to leave their presence with a feeling of benefit and blessing. However, many times the words are meant to tear us down. This slide puts that into proper perspective.

Slide 7 could have been step one of four steps. I prayed about it and it seemed like the Holy Spirit was wanting me to keep it separate from the other three. It looks like Galatians 6:9 is calling for a commitment to be willing to take the three following steps. If we give up, we will not be willing to take the three steps. If we stay committed, we will take the three steps with an attitude of faith. We will see how the Holy Spirit takes me during the sermon.

Slides 8-10 were obviously missing in my earlier ministry. I preached and taught hard and fast on *what* Christians were supposed to be doing. I would pound on the congregation with multiple Scriptures on *what* the Bible required of their life (since I was the one preaching, I felt exempt – Rom. 2:1-3). It wasn't until I took Romans 2:1-3 to heart that I stopped preaching things God hadn't given me the victory over in my own life. The first reason we don't have the victory in our own life is because we don't know that truth (John 8:32). It isn't until we know *how* that we start getting the victory in our own lives. Ministers that eat the food they serve will always be able to put the "how-to" Scriptures in their sermons and lessons.

Slide 11 then brings us to the moment of victory and is the goal of the whole sermon. The people's opinion issue has been addressed; the how-to be delivered Scriptures have been studied; and, now we are ready to pray and get Jesus' power to be able to volunteer for His service. The alter call to both Christians and sinners alike is vital to the message. If people walk away with a mental determination, they will fail. If we keep calling them forward, so they can be led in prayer and be prayed for, they will learn that it isn't by human determination. It is by prayer; and, through that prayer there is an empowerment to live that life.