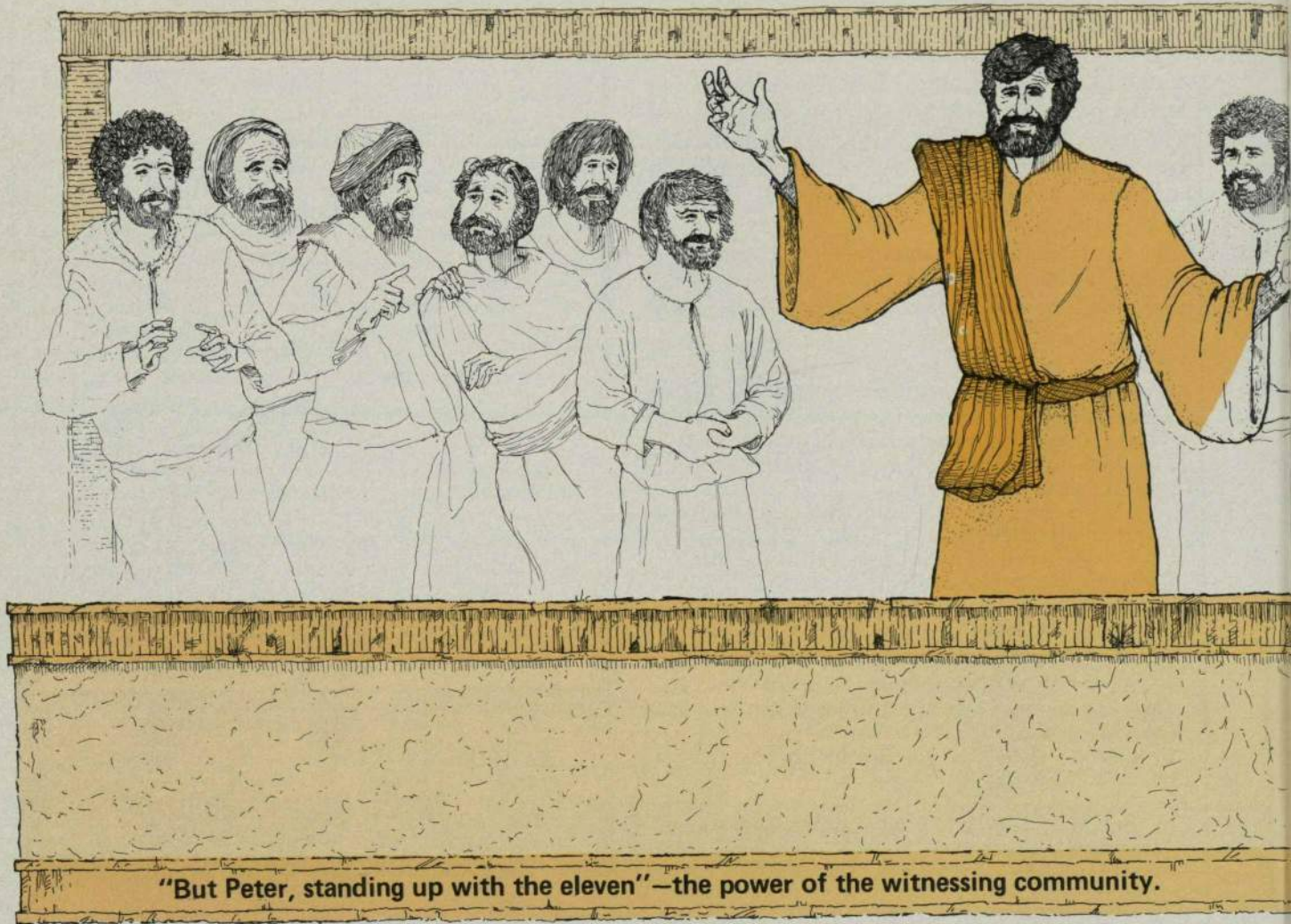


Evangelism by Ex



"But Peter, standing up with the eleven"—the power of the witnessing community.

Recently while ministering overseas and preaching in one nation in particular, under the pressure of the crisis it is facing, I found that I was driven again and again back to the basics of Christianity laid out for us in the Scriptures. I found that all of our sophisticated and advanced and humanly embellished methods of conducting Christianity have failed miserably. That failure has caused me to go back and look at how the whole thing got started and to try to con-

jecture how it could have gotten into the kind of mess it has gotten into. I think I've found some answers. I don't profess to have all the answers in this message, but I want to share some new dimensions that God has opened in my spirit.

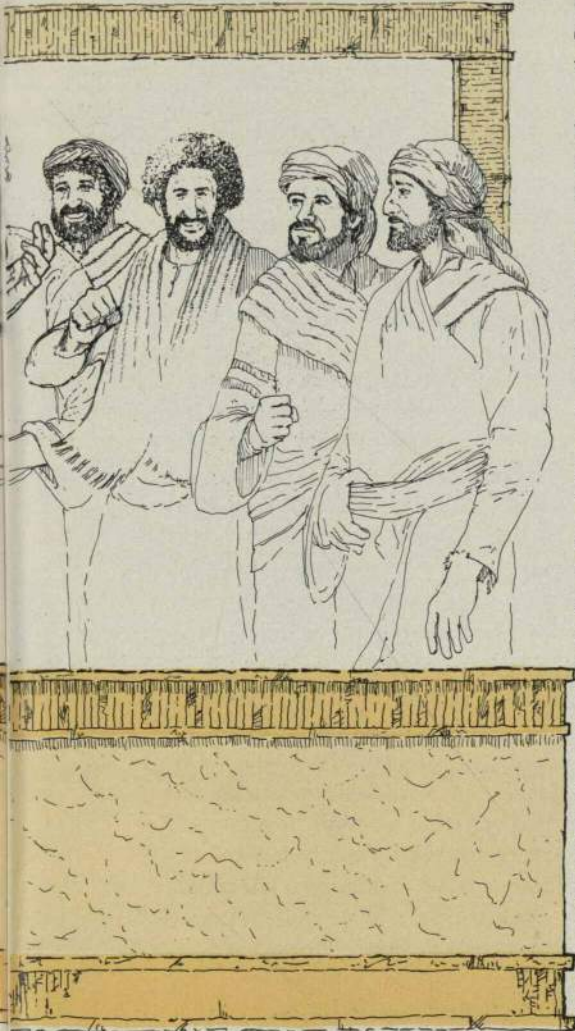
I don't believe that God, when He laid out the foundation for His Kingdom and His purpose, was unaware of all that was going to happen in history. I don't think that He who sees the end from the beginning has been caught short by the population explosion,

or by pollution, or by technological advances. I don't believe that any of the strategies of Satan were unknown to Him. He had the total picture totally in His grasp when He laid out the simple foundation and dynamic by which His Kingdom would inevitably be brought to pass, so that His glory would be made to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

So with that kind of confidence in God and God's omnipotence and God's omniscience, I found myself repeatedly going back to the begin-

ample

by Ern Baxter



nings of Christianity to find out what were the fundamental, basic intentions of God. And as I did that, I came up with some rather simple findings.

SOUL-WINNING

First of all, I seemed to see in the New Testament two kinds of soul-winning. First was the winning of souls by ministry gifts—apostles, prophets, and evangelists who are referred to as Paul's "company." I'm sure Peter had his company, and a number of other apostles had their

companies. But the New Testament seems to zero in on two men: Peter, who is representative of the ministry to the Jews, and Paul, representative of the ministry to the Gentiles. Taking Paul as an example, without ignoring Peter, we find him going out from Antioch and by divine direction going into areas, settling into a strategic spot, evangelizing and planting churches in that entire area, and then moving on.

Ephesus, where he stayed something less than three years, is a case in point. It is said that in Ephesus Paul's work was to speak five hours every day in the school of Tyrannus there. It is also said that during Paul's three years in Ephesus, "all they that were in Asia heard the Word." Now they certainly didn't hear it through Paul's preaching, for he was teaching five hours daily in Ephesus. But he had with him a company of ministry gifts—prophets and evangelists and assistants (like Timothy, Titus, Aristarchus, Epaphroditus and other young, developing ministries)—who spread out from this apostolic center of authority and planted such churches as we find still flourishing in A.D. 96 when our Lord wrote to them in the Book of Revelation.

However, the apostle never came back into the same area to do the same job. Once an apostolic company had planted a church, the second phase of soul-winning came into focus: "growing." You can call the first phase "planting"; the second phase of soul-winning is "growing." What the apostolic company planted had in it the seeds of its own increase. The Body made increase of itself.

Once the Body was planted in the locality, the planter never had to come back again to plant. Now, that they came back is true, but they came back to encourage and confirm and exhort the believers to continue in what they were doing. Once they had planted, then the seeds of growth were no longer in the planter; they were in the plant, and thus the Body made increase of itself.

The ongoing ministry in the Body was from the shepherd/teachers. These were the men whom God raised up to

become the permanent overseers of the planted church. And to me, those are the most important of all the ministries described in Ephesians 4. I believe apostles are very important, as are prophets and evangelists, but I don't think there is any ministry as important in the overall establishment of God's community as the shepherds whom God raises up.

Let me just say a word about them. A valid shepherd in a redeemed community is as supernaturally and charismatically gifted and enabled and raised up by the risen Christ as is an apostle, a prophet or an evangelist. A pastor/shepherd is not some second-class ministry, for the function of a shepherd is to bring the redeemed community into its reigning authority in the earth. And when we say "the earth," we're speaking of the particular piece of earth in which that redeemed community is. The redeemed community in Fort Lauderdale cannot exercise an immediate influence in Paris, France, but it certainly can in Fort Lauderdale. The world of your influence is this world right here where you're living.

If each redeemed community in every place exercises its God-given authority, that part of the earth will be brought under subjugation to King Jesus. As redeemed communities across the earth function in their God-given authority, that is how the glory of the Lord is going to "cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

UNITY, THE BASIS OF EVANGELISM

Now, going back again to the original design of God—Jesus tells us on several occasions why He came into the world. But I want us to look at John 17 for a sort of capsulation. These are well-known scriptures, but the danger of well-known scriptures is that we know them so well we ignore them.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world and I come to thee, Holy Father, keep through thine own name those

whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are (Jn. 17:11).

Now in that verse He tells us where we are—we are in the world. He tells us what we are to be in the world—we are to be one in the redeemed community in the world. I don't want to inject a defeatist note here, but I do want to point out a note of reality. If anything has come close to discouraging me right out of my spirit during recent years, it's the fragmented, ruptured, torn condition of God's people throughout all the earth. Now I report that because, while we're praying for conditions in various parts of the earth, one of our basic prayers ought to be that God will somehow drive us into the providential crisis that will force us into one another's arms so that we become a community of power.

A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Now, I didn't say that, Jesus did, and it is a maxim that is irreversible. A kingdom divided cannot stand. It not only cannot stand against invasion, it cannot muster forces to launch any kind of successful offensive.

Jesus' passionate prayer to His Father contains a tremendous deposit of truth: that we who are in the world are the object of Christ's prayer—and His prayer for us is that we may be one. Then, in verse 21, Jesus continues His prayer for us:



That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me [or "so the world may be convinced"].

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one (Jn. 17:20–22).

The glory becomes the element of our unity and the glory is walking in fidelity to the character of God. God's glory manifest is the visible manifestation of His invisible attributes. We cannot be in unity until we are unified in glory, which is walking in the principles of God's Kingdom as they are revealed in Christ.

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one [completely one or mature, grown up in one, in unity]; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou has loved me (vs. 23).

Jesus' purpose in coming, then, was to manifest the Father to at least the twelve men that the Father gave Him. They, in turn, would publish His Word, and multiplied thousands of men and women across the earth and down through time would believe that Word. And this was Jesus' prayer for those believers: "One thing I pray, Father, is that those who will believe the apostolic Word in all time *will be one*; because it is only as they are one that the world will know and believe that Thou hast sent Me."

This is why I'm talking about evangelism by example through the witnessing community. The world has heard our sermons, read our books, read our tracts, seen our television programs. But the world is still waiting for a demonstration of what our Lord prayed for.

The world can be startled by a miracle. The world can be brought to its feet by some prodigy of power. If someone were raised from the dead, it would make a temporary impact wherever it happened. But in the long run it would be soon forgotten and everything would be back to the status

quo. What the world could not ignore in any area is a body of men and women functioning in an alternate Kingdom society and showing the world a body of men and women who have it together and who are able to reproduce life in its highest form. And when the world sees that, they cannot ignore it. A miracle they may forget, but a community of Kingdom people they cannot ignore.

THE EARLY CHURCH

Now the interesting thing is that we don't have to wait for some "happy tomorrow." We have an example of exactly what our Lord prayed for in Acts, chapter 2. I want you to look first at verse 14. The Holy Spirit has been poured out; the devout Jews have responded to what they've seen. Although some of them dismissed it as drunkenness, others stayed to hear Peter preach. So verse 14 says, "But Peter, standing up with the eleven . . ." That's all I want to say at this point. Unity does not start at the point of community; it starts at the point of leadership.

My main thrust these days everywhere I go is to talk to leaders. Lately, I have insisted anywhere I go, I will gladly speak in public meetings—but I will not speak in public meetings if I'm not permitted to talk to leadership. I find everywhere I go that the problem is not people. The problem is preachers, pastors, leaders. Now, that's probably not something to share in depth with a bunch of sheep, but at least you sheep can pray for your shepherds.

You see, Satan knows the "domino theory." He knew it long before militarists discovered it. If you can hit a leader, you get everybody that's following. All you have to do is hit a king, and the entire kingdom is involved. That's why in the Old Testament when a king or a prince or a leader sinned, he had to bring a more expensive sacrifice to God to atone for his sins—because his sin was more serious than that of a commoner. When he sinned in example, it affected the entire community.

Leadership is primarily at fault, and in Acts 20:28 Paul puts the priority on leaders. He points to the shepherds or the elders of Ephesus and he says, "Guard yourselves." Priority number one, then, is in leadership.

In Acts, chapter 2, leadership was in unity. "Peter stood up with the eleven." The ministry stood together. I wonder if that may be the key. If we ever stood up together, we too might see three thousand souls won in one day.

Then in verse 38 the sermon was over, and the time came for the altar call. People were pricked in their hearts and they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter took that opportunity to dynamite them into the Kingdom of God. He said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

BAPTISM INTO THE BODY

Now I just want to say something about baptism. The word baptism, without becoming pedantic, has as its best illustration, the work of a dyer, where a piece of cloth is taken and dipped into a bowl of dye so that the entire piece of cloth is submerged and takes on the character of the color of the dye. There is one baptism, but that baptism has three aspects. First is baptism into water in which we are surrounded with water. Then baptism in the Spirit where we are surrounded with Spirit.

But the Bible also says that in that act we are baptized into the Body. Baptism into the Body is baptism into people. In water, we're surrounded with water. In Spirit, we're surrounded with Spirit; in Body, we're surrounded with people. I believe it's the last aspect of baptism that we have missed. We ought to emphasize the significance of the fact that when a person is being baptized, he is not only being baptized into water, baptized into Spirit, but he is being baptized into a community of people with whom he will spend the rest of his life, working out every life

situation in community and in relationship. This aspect, I think, is the one that we have failed in.

I might just say parenthetically that we have failed in it because we have theologized it. We've said baptism into the Body is some kind of mysterious thing that happens out there somewhere when God sovereignly puts us into a Body of some kind. I don't think it's spooky at all. I think it's very, very practical. If somebody is won to Jesus Christ, when he is



baptized and receives the gift of the Holy Ghost, he is baptized into the bosom of a body of people. And as he comes up out of the water, he looks around and says, "Hallelujah! This is my family. This is the community into which I have been born. These are my people."

I was deeply moved a few months ago when my wife, Ruth, and I were in Portland, Oregon, for some meetings. A young woman whom I had known since she was a baby asked permission to stand up on the Sunday morning I was there, and she gave a very moving word. She's a brilliant girl, leader of their music department.

She had had a child shortly before, and there had been some physical problems involved in birthing the child that were of such a serious nature that the entire church went to fasting and praying. As a result, God wrought a miracle and brought the child into the world against all medical prognostication, because the doctors had said it

was impossible for the child to live.

But on that Sunday morning, this young woman said so beautifully, "I've brought my son this morning for you all to see." That in itself was touching, but it was the next part that really moved me. She said, "And I've brought my son to see you all. I said to him, 'I want you to meet all of these people because these are the people you're going to grow up among.'" As I sat there unashamedly, with tears running down my cheeks, I said, "God, I'm hearing this morning the affirmation of the meaning of community—that I bring myself, and my wife, and my kids, and my money, and my herds and my flocks into the community of the Israelitish nation—the holy nation spoken of in First Peter 2. And I say to my wife and my kids and my flocks, 'This is where you belong. These are your people. This is where you're going to spend your life. You better get to know them because you are part of this. You are circumcised; you bear the mark of belonging to the people of God.'"

Now after Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you," we see the response in Acts 2:41. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Now here is no euphoric, spooky talk about some invisible body. This is very practical, down-to-earth realism. Baptized in water, filled with the Holy Ghost, and joined to you. Now if you want to talk about all the mystical Body, that's fine. But I can't see a mystical Body, and if I can't see it, neither can *the world* see it. But Jesus said, "I pray that they may be one in such a way that *the world can see.*" What in the world is the world seeing today? Well, it's certainly not seeing the answer to Jesus' prayer. But in Jerusalem with the early church, the world did see it.

HANGING IN THERE

Acts 2:42 says, "And they continued stedfastly . . ." Now we get down to the nitty-gritty of what it's all

about, and that's "hanging in there." You come up out of the water talking in tongues, and you say, "Hallelujah. Heaven is my goal!" No, heaven isn't your goal. Heaven's part of the package deal, but that's not where you're going right now. Right now you're going out and you're going to find Sister Sandpaper and Brother Chopper, and that little group that just bothers you to no end, and God's going to work your character over. And you'll protest, "Lord, it was so beautiful coming up out of the water . . . but this is awful. What's going on?" Well, God had to give you that mighty entrance into this community so that you'd hang in there when things get tough. I don't see how people can make it who are not born into the Kingdom dynamically and supernaturally. Many don't, and usually they break down at the point of verse 42: they do not continue steadfastly!

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of men and women who have had some kind of an encounter with Christ but who could not hang in there. I remember that when I came to God so supernaturally and miraculously by a physical healing and a dynamic baptism of the Spirit, I thought all Christians were angelic—until I found out otherwise. I have found from over forty years experience that my big problem is not talking in tongues, singing in the Spirit, singing choruses. That's not my problem; my problem is putting up with Jim. Jim's problem is putting up with me. Our problem is people. Baptism into water is simple. Baptism into the Holy Spirit is tremendous. But baptism into the Body is where the problem is. It requires hanging in there.

Usually, if we can't "hang in" we "opt out." When the going gets rough, it's, "See you in the fall, if I see you at all," or "Maybe we'll get it together in heaven." Now, we can laugh about this as though it were humorous. But I find it very hard to be unemotional as I think of standing in front of Christians in nations where I have recently spoken who are running out of time. They haven't got a long-range situation

where they can spend forty years trying to get it together to win a few random souls here and there because they are about to be swallowed up or overthrown by other nations.

In one country that is facing this kind of crisis I spoke to a conference where I had 63% representation of the missionary forces of that country. When I had finished speaking to those missionaries some of them were resentful; but others came up and simply said, "We're in trouble." I don't know as I helped them very much, but I told the missionaries they had better try to find one another, and secure some prayerful solution to the problems they faced. But when the missionaries are divided up denominationally more viciously and vigorously on the mission field than they are at home, I can't say that I see an awful lot of hope there.

I left that meeting with some heaviness of heart, as I moved on to teach in another meeting in the same country. As I stood up for the first service there, I looked out and saw in front of me several hundred people, and God said to me, "In this congregation lies the salvation of this nation, for I have here apostles and prophets and evangelists and shepherds who must save their own nation." So I said, "I cannot save your nation. I can come to you and minister to you, but it is your nation and it is God's purpose to raise up in every nation

men who are indigenous to that nation." And as I ministered to them, I was strongly aware that I was ministering to the ones who would touch their nation, which is truly facing a crisis of survival.

BINDING THE STRONG MAN

The next day God told me what to speak on that night. He doesn't often do that, but He told me that even if these men were apostles, prophets and evangelists and shepherds, their first priority was to first bind the strong man. Now in talking about spiritual warfare, I want to warn you of one thing—when you start to come into spiritual warfare and take on the kind of princes and powers I'm talking about now, you're not casting out some little old demon. Every believer, if he's operating on normal Christian ground, can cast out a demon. But I don't know of any one of us who would be senseless enough to undertake to *personally* confront the prince of Florida. Furthermore, I don't think we're intended to. We are only to take on that kind of spiritual authority out of *plurality* and *community*.

Jesus said, "If you want to take a strong man's palace and his goods, you must first bind the strong man," assuming you are stronger. Now the stronger man that Jesus is referring to primarily was and is Himself. But the ongoing strong man who is going to unseat Satan and then take over his palace is the corporate man, the mature man of Ephesians 4. I believe any individual Christian can cast out a demon, but only a corporate Body has the authority to do warfare with the princes and the deputies and the rulers of the dark places.

I knew as soon as He had given me the word I was to bring that I was going to have some kind of satanic confrontation. We'd experienced such an attack before, when in a meeting high in praise and worship, I had dared to come against the prince of Hawaii—one of the most powerful and diabolical princes in the whole Pacific. The next day we almost had a death in our



family, which I trace (rightly or wrongly) to the reaction against what I had done.

This is no place for presumption: it's no place for lightness and for frivolity. I don't think it's any place for calling the devil strange names and making up silly songs. When Jude says the archangel dared not bring a railing accusation against Satan but called on the Lord to rebuke him, we're given some sense of the solemnity of our task. Calling the devil funny names and making light of the kingdom of Satan will not get the job done. It's going to take a solemn realization that we're not going to touch the hearts of men and women until we first break the satanic power that holds them in its grip.

The greatest force in evangelism is not the gimmicks and all that goes with it in modern-day evangelism; the greatest force is to realize that men's souls are hell-bound by a satanic power that cannot be broken by evangelistic gimmicks and evangelistic meetings, but can only be broken by the intercessory prayer and the authoritative attack and assault of God's people who break Satan's power over unbelieving men. Once that power is broken, you can go in and spoil his palace.

That night as I walked into the teaching theatre, I was suddenly smitten with a migraine. Now I've had migraines since I was a boy, and thank God, they're not as frequent now. But when I get a migraine, my vision becomes completely distorted. I looked at Ruth's face and I couldn't even make out her features. I sat down beside her and said, "Ruth, I have a migraine," and she knew what that meant.

As I was sitting there, knowing that I might be this way for at least three or four hours, I said to a brother with me, "Have these people come against the powers of darkness and let me see what happens as they do." As the people were led in a prayer of assault on the powers of darkness, Ruth and I, without knowing what was happening to each other, simultaneously became angry. In that moment of



anger, I spoke in a manner that I knew was effective to the satanic power that dared to attack me. In about fifteen seconds my vision cleared. My head was sore, but my vision was clear.

As I got up to speak, I suddenly recognized one missing link in my preaching: *first* bind the strong man! I realized that for years I had missed the first thing that should be done when you're trying to take any territory over which Satan has authority. You first bind the strong man. I believe this is why men ought to travel in company. This is why I don't ever want to go anywhere alone and don't intend to, and I don't mean just taking Ruth. I believe the time has come when we're going to have to move in association with ministries that complement and supplement each other because it's not just a matter of preaching and teaching. It's a matter of an accumulation of power that can *first* bind the strong man.

So with deliberation I laid out that night the word that God had given me since noon. At the end of the service I said, "I want seven of the top leaders of this area in Christian matters to stand and make a covenant that you will faithfully meet one morning a week to pray for nothing other than your country and to come against the prince over this nation." By this time the presence of God was so heavy that as the seven men stood, and looked at one another, you could almost feel them making a covenant

of survival. After these seven men stood and covenanted to meet, I asked if there were others that would make the same kind of covenant apart from these men to meet one morning a week. Forty young men stood to their feet, and I believe my work was done.

I believe God's plan for the salvation of the nations not only involves the bringing of men and women into the Kingdom of God, but the stemming of ungodliness and the bringing of Kingdom principles into the nation. I believe His plan is to go into a country with a kind of spiritual contingent that will unitedly bind the strong man and blast that nation for God, leaving behind evangelism by example—a witnessing community.

THE WITNESSING COMMUNITY

I came away from that time of ministry completely exhausted physically, but excited in my spirit because I believe God is giving us the key to doing what we should have been doing for years, and that is *thinking largely*. J.B. Phillips wrote a book called *Your God Is Too Small*. My God's been too small. My vision has been too limited. My horizons have been too scanty. But I believe with all my heart that we're coming to a crisis in history that's called in the Bible "the time of the harvest" or "the time of the end." I believe the proliferation of nations across the earth is not a political development; I believe it's a providential thing. With the proliferation of nations and the breakdown of great national combines, nations are going to become manageable. They'll become of such a size that you can go in with a proper kind of attack, and before you're through, you can literally have established the authority of Jesus Christ in that nation.

God is opening doors for ministry to leaders and men who are in government across the earth. I don't believe that God is going to let Jesus Christ and a paltry, inconsequential little group of people slip out of this time-

(continued on page 31)

continued from p. 27

period called world history in defeat. I believe instead that, as surely as God lives, the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of God.

Let's look back now at the rest of Acts chapter 2.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

Praising God, and having favor with all the people [or as one translation says, "Winning respect from all the people"], and the Lord added to their number those whom he was saving [or as another translation says, "And the Lord in-

creased their community daily by new converts"] (Acts 2:42-47).

That's the witnessing community—evangelism by example.

I believe that we are in a moment of destiny. In my heart I have faith to believe that Jesus meant what He said: "Make disciples of all nations." But I don't only believe in apostles and prophets and evangelists and outstanding significant ministries, I also believe that *the ongoing mode of evangelism is the redeemed community*. We're only going to successfully win men to Jesus Christ when we hang in there together, when we effectively join together in a corporate prayer life to bind the spiritual powers that hold men captive, and when we bear our corporate witness with our gifts of miracles and faith, discerning of spirits and all the gifts that have been given to us for Body outreach. Then and only then are we going to fulfill our Lord's prayer, "Father, I pray that they may be one as you and I are one. That they may be one in us. That the world may know that Thou has sent me." 🙏

Bible Study Answers

(From page 16)

1. It sanctified them; 2. The truth; 3. believe, word; 4. That they may be one; 5. The world would believe that the Father had sent the Son; 6. a. The Word; b. Name of the Father; c. His disciples; 7. That they may be one; 8. predestinated, foreknowledge, conformed, image, Son, Father; 9. suffering, Captain, salvation; 10. a. One body, b. one Spirit, c. one hope, d. one Lord, e. one faith, f. one baptism, g. one Father; 11. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers; 12. all, unity, faith; 13. endeavor, Spirit, peace; 14. In love; 15. Paul and Barnabas; 16. Mark, c; 17. Timothy, profitable, ministry; 18. Peter; 19. a; 20. No; 21. circumcised, Law of Moses; 22. good, Holy Ghost, a. Abstain from meats offered to idols, b. Abstain from blood, c. Abstain from things strangled, d. Abstain from fornication; 23. Mind of Christ.

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