



**G**o not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. <sup>9</sup> Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: <sup>10</sup> Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away. <sup>11</sup> A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. <sup>12</sup> As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovener upon an obedient ear. <sup>13</sup> As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters. (Proverbs 25:8-13)

There are three cardinal rules of the battlefield – MOVE, SHOOT, & COMMUNICATE. If only one of these is missing in the plan of the field commander failure is almost assured. Just as important as keeping the force in maneuvering movement and sustaining a barrage of fire on the enemy line is the facility of communication. It is vitally important for the right flank needs to know what the left is doing, and the center needs to be aware of the reserve elements and the logistics train. Communication is what facilitates that resource on the battlefield.

In a sense, each of these three principles apply to our Gospel duty as well. They epitomize the great Commission:

1. MOVE – *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.*
2. SHOOT: *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*
3. COMMUNICATE: *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

There are no examples in history of a more perfect Communicator than the Lord Jesus Christ. His opening remarks to every sinner were perfectly suited to the present conditions of the mind and heart of the sinner. He read the emptiness in the heart of the inquirer and answered directly to the need and the understanding.

A prestigious member of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee, was Nicodemus. Nicodemus was no fool. He was well educated and he had a fundamental desire to serve God according to the dictates of Holy Writ. But wisdom advised against any decision made on impulse. He had to be sure. He had heard the preaching of the Lord in the Temple, he had witnessed the miraculous healings and the clearly divine Gospel preached by our Lord. He was drawn to know more, so he at first came to Jesus by night. He asked, <sup>2</sup> *Rabbi,*

*we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. (John 3:2) Nicodemus had a sliver of faith, but that faith needed bolstering to answer the curiosities of Nicodemus.*

Jesus beheld Nicodemus and loved him for his seeking the truth. How did our Lord answer Nicodemus? Not with the same simplicity that characterized most of his dialogue with the more common sinner. This man needed something to jolt his mind. *3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* (John 3:3-8) What a feast for thought did the Lord deal out to Nicodemus. It worked, for Nicodemus went out that night and never again came at night but in broad daylight and under the observation of dangerous enemies of our Lord.

Now consider the contrary approach our Lord took with the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well. Two people had a midday appointment to meet at the Well at the noonday period. One (Our Lord) was aware of the appointment, the other party (the woman) was oblivious to the occasion until it came to pass. Our Lord sat alone by the well and waited for the woman whom He was certain would appear. We all must face the Lord alone sooner or later.

*There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water.*

The woman did not greet Christ. Why not? First of all, she came for only ONE thing, and that was for the water at the bottom of the well. Secondly, the man who sat at the Well was obviously a Jew based upon his dress. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. They looked down upon them as heathen and unclean. Knowing this, the woman felt no obligation to greet just one more Jew at the Well. How did our Lord handle this seeming disrespect? He knew the woman's need. He had watched her from the day of her birth through many trials and tribulations. He knew the shame she faced on a daily basis owing to her promiscuity. He had heard the slanderous remarks of the more respectable ladies of the city. None of that brooked our Lord's love for this unfortunate lady.

*Give me to drink.* What a profound manner was this in breaking the ice to converse with this lady. It was a kindly remark since it implied that the petitioner did not consider either the woman, or her water, to be unclean. With a slight suspicion, and a measure of insolence, the woman makes response: *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* (John 4:9)

How we initiate our teaching of the Gospel with the lost is extremely important. Each person is an individual with individual needs and desires. We must be wise in our approach. Simply bursting out with some such remark as, 'You are going to Hell if you do not believe!' will not avail. That does not establish a very strong rapport. First of all, it may be true that the one to whom we speak does not even know who the Lord is, or that Hell is any different from the life they are currently leading. If we look at the subject of our sharing with the same love that our Lord harbored for every sinner to whom He addressed His remarks, we are on the right foot to proceed.

The Lord always answered the questions of every inquirer. He knew the deep wounds in this woman's heart. He knew of the daily drudge she experienced in coming to the Well at the hottest noonday hour. The bitter ridicule she faced daily. He knew of her emptiness and misery. He never once condemned her, but lovingly led her to a deeper understanding. *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* This comment hit the intended target in the woman's heart. Water that would forever eliminate thirst! Though the woman's mind was still centered on that kind of water at the bottom of a hole, the Lord spoke of the Water of Life which came down from Heaven. Her curiosity was mightily provoked. To be honest, I feel it essential for me to love this woman, too, since she was so well-beloved of the Lord. Now she wanted this water even if she did not know its source. *The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.* (John 4:15)

The Lord presses to the next great need of the woman's heart. The woman had sought human love from her childhood and probably had never experienced that love. *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.* Of course, our Lord knew the woman had no husband. She 'slept around' in the modern vernacular. He knew her sins, but He wanted her to know them and confess them. *The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.* (John 4:17-18)

Please note the effect of our Lord's loving and gentle rebukes changed the woman's attitude. Our Lord to her was no longer a 'Jew' but a 'Sir!' *The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.* (John 4:19)

We all know the rest of the story. The woman went into the village, leaving her treasured water jug at the well, and told all she met that she had met the Savior – and because of the spiritually acquired authority in her voice of faith, all believed her.

I hope we can all see the different and individualized approach our Lord takes in reaching the unbeliever.<sup>1</sup> Nicodemus required a higher order of instruction, but the simple heart of the woman (the kind of heart the Lord especially covets) required a direct and simple approach. In both cases, the motivation behind the Lord's approach was a love and foreknowledge of his subjects.

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<sup>1</sup> You will note Jesus always tailors his delivery to his audience, never His message.