

# **The Bible Speaks To Me About My Witness**

Session 11: Part 1 – Finally: A Decision

By Charles “Chic” Shaver

**DiscipleshipPlace.org**





## Session 11

# Finally: A Decision

## Session Overview

The Comparison of Marriage and Salvation  
Helping Seekers Commit to Christ  
Application  
Exam  
Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

## Learner Objectives

At the end of this session, you should:

- learn the importance of leading a person to make a decision.
- understand the difference between manipulation and persuasion.
- be able to discuss the difference a commitment should make in a person's life..

## Introduction

In the consumer world, they call it “closing the sale.” A customer is interested in a product—perhaps walking by it repeatedly, standing and looking at it, and perhaps even trying it on if it's clothing or checking the wallet. But it doesn't matter how close the customer is to purchasing the item if he or she doesn't make that final step and say “Yes” or carry it to the register. The same is true in making a decision for Christ. In this session we'll learn how to help a person say that final “yes” to the Holy Spirit.



## Finally: A Decision

## Notes

It will be the most frightening question some of you will ever ask: “Joe, would you like to receive Christ and His gift of eternal life?” Yet you will do it. And Joe will say, “Yes, I would.” The joy you experience as you pray with Joe to accept the Savior will be so great that you will remember it more readily than your fear. Deep inside you know that for Joe and you—finally—it will be a decision.

### The Influence of a Life

Mickey Cohen, infamous American gangster of the 1950s, professed that he had accepted Christ. His Christian friend Bill Jones later confronted him about his lack of a changed life. Mickey responded, “So what’s the matter with being a Christian gangster?”

We all smile. We *know* that professing to belong to Jesus and living like Jesus have to go together.

My friend Jim says lots of professing Christians are supplying unbelievers with pain pills. The so-called Christian’s inconsistent life is immediately noticed by unsaved friends. The Spirit of God has been convicting them about their need for Christ and His salvation. But when they remember the inconsistency of the “Christian’s” walk, the unsaved reason, “Look at him. He’s supposed to be a Christian. I live that good. I guess I’m OK as I am.”

What relief from the pain of conviction! The troubled sinner has just been given a pain pill by a professing Christian. Certainly we do not want profession without demonstration.

What attracted the ordinary person to Christianity in its early days? The appeal included the lives of Christians, the warmth of their fellowship, the moral qualities of their lives, the enthusiasm they manifested, the freedom from the fear of judgment, the deliverance from evil powers, and the enjoyment of knowing Christ now.

I’ve heard it said, “A saint is someone whose life makes it easier to believe in God.” When Susan prayed to receive Christ in her home after hearing the



gospel, I asked her what had convinced her. She said it was the change she saw in her recently converted husband.

If words without works are hypocrisy, then we must say that works without words are inadequate. Sometimes we will do kind and loving deeds and say, "My life is my witness." This does not excuse us from verbal witness.

I do not mean that every good work has to be followed immediately by verbal witness. No, there are times when the witness is appropriate only after many good works. But eventually and ultimately, the next loving gesture after good works will be to tell the Good News.

A while back, I heard a remarkable report on a television newscast. The news anchor was interviewing the adult children of an elderly California couple whose automobile had become stranded in the mountains in deep snow. The couple and the car were not found for weeks. But before her death, the aged mother had written letters. She told how they had run out of food. When gasoline was gone, they had no heat for the car. Nothing about the letters indicated panic. As a matter of fact, the mother described with what peace the father died.

But something about the story was incomplete until we heard two quotes from the mother's letter: "Dad went to be with the Lord today . . . His last words were, 'Thank the Lord.'"

The elderly man's peaceful death only had meaning when there was verbal explanation. Everyone's question would be, "What was the secret of their peace?" Only the effort by the children to get the story told gave meaning to the death for others beyond the immediate family. Our godly living must be followed by an explanation: Jesus is the reason!

A man named Munoz had been arrested for drunkenness in Santiago, Chile. While he was being escorted to jail, two Christian men requested permission to take Munoz and care for him. The police agreed. The two Christians fed him, cared for him, found him a job, and told him about Jesus. Here was the result, as told by Floyd Shaddock in *Man of Two Revolutions*:

The gospel meant a new life for Munoz. He began to repair shoes and was able to make a simple living for his family. He began to talk to his neighbors about the love of God that was changing his life. Step by step, he found himself sober, employed and industrious; soon



he was leading a group of neighbors in worship.

It was not easy to be their leader, for he could not read. He had to memorize the Bible verses that his wife read to him. He explained the verses to his friends in terms of their daily lives and hungers. Before long, he became the pastor of a new congregation of 70 members and had 150 children in a Sunday school. He still made his living as a shoemaker.

What would have been the result for Munoz if his two friends fed him, cared for him, found him a job, but *never told him about Jesus*?

Jesus told His followers and us, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). The purpose of the deeds is to bring praise to our Heavenly Father. If we do deeds of kindness but do not give witness to Christ, the recipients will give glory to us for being so good. If we proclaim Jesus, they will give glory to Christ who has changed us. Christians are the one group in society charged with the task of bringing people into a transforming relationship with God through Christ. We will need verbal witness to do it.

### **Will You Marry Me?**

Here is Paul’s description of ministry in 2 Corinthians. 5:11–21:

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 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.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ



and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In this passage, Paul told us some of the greatest truths about the meaning of Christ's death (vv. 15, 19, 21) and our response to that death (vv. 15, 17). He gave the motive for his ministry and ours—"Christ's love compels us" (v. 14). He gave Christian witness a different description—they were Christ's ambassadors.

Good ambassadors faithfully deliver the message of their king or president. They do not have the right to develop their own message. Further, ambassadors don't just deliver the message to the hearers and feel their job is done. They are out to get a favorable response to the message for the sake of their king.

Thus, ambassadors for Christ deliver Christ's message and then urge their hearers to accept it and be changed by it. Notice Paul's choice of words—"we try to persuade men" (v. 11), "as though God were making his appeal through us" (v. 20), "we implore you on Christ's behalf" (v. 20). Paul's plan includes both proclamation and persuasion. It includes both witnessing and winning. Paul's gospel plan has witness in its introduction, the facts of the gospel, and persuasion in the commitment (see Lesson 10).

The element of persuasion, emphasized by Paul, was implied in definitions of evangelism that may not use the term *persuasion*. William Abraham defined evangelism as "that set of *intentional* activities which is governed by the goal of *initiating people* into the kingdom of God for the first time" (italics mine). Michael Green wrote in *Evangelism in the Early Church*, "The gospel is God's summons, through the act of preaching, to the listener to make the decision which will usher him into a new dimension of existence." We would add that "witness" could be substituted for the word "preaching."

Let me talk to you married gentlemen a minute. Remember when you courted your wife? You were so taken by her that you sent her flowers, you took her to dinner, and you brought her gifts. The love you felt could only be



expressed by kind deeds. Yet, you did not expect her to marry you just because of your kind and loving deeds. There was more. You proclaimed your love. You told her, “I love you.” Yet few of you were married because of the verbal expression. There was more. There was a specific call to commitment: “Will you marry me?”

All of these issues are equally true in the spiritual realm. There is living a life of loving deeds (presence), there is the witness of words (proclamation), there is the call to commitment (persuasion), and this is followed by preservation. (This is a good time to look again at the Spiritual Decision Process Model in Lesson 5). For the prospect to respond positively to Jesus Christ, a verbal call to decision is expected. Our primary concern in this book has been witness. Yet we all sense that witness naturally belongs with soul winning and persuasion.

Your persuasion is no violation of the prospect’s rights. The prospect has the freedom to accept or reject Christ even as your marriage proposal may receive a yes or no. I am especially sensitive to this, since my earliest overtures to my wife were rejected. She had the power to say no and she did. But later, with further demonstration of love and persuasion, she said yes.

Some Christians have been reluctant to try to persuade their friends and loved ones to accept Christ, because they assume that all persuasion is manipulation. They know manipulation is wrong. Such understanding must be wrong because Paul said, “Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11). Further he said, “As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain” (6:1). The good and godly Paul believed in persuasion.

James McGraw’s distinction between manipulation and persuasion as written in *Preacher’s Magazine* is helpful:

Manipulation is that type of persuasion which is deceptively intended for the advantage of the persuader. It is the attempt to get someone to do something he probably would not do if he had all the facts, so only those facts the persuader believes will influence the person are given to him.

Persuasion, on the other hand, can be used for a person’s good and for the glory of God. To persuade a sinner to put his trust in Christ, to persuade a husband to stop cheating on his wife, or to persuade a distraught man not to take his own life are good ways to use words. But



to persuade a teenager to try a shot of heroin, of course, is another matter.

If I really believe the gospel message, I will sense the need to persuade. Finding Christ is the greatest good. If I really care, I will urge others to do so. It is tragic to stand at the crossroads of life and discover that the signposts have fallen down. The “harassed and helpless” of Jesus’ day (Matthew 9:36) and of ours need Christians to lead them in the way of life. The most compassionate and loving thing you can do is to lead a person to Christ.

### A Commitment Question

Since “the bent of the *homo sapiens* is to evade,” according to Grant Swank, this is all the more reason why Jesus and His witnesses should call for a decisive response. Matthew’s Gospel is written to bring readers to the place where, Matthew Green wrote in *Evangelism in the Early Church*, “decision is imperative. Neutrality is impossible.”

Even the stories of people in Matthew are geared to cause us to face this issue. The wise men sought Jesus wholeheartedly. Herod’s response was hatred and fear.

What will the reader’s response be? When Jesus taught about the wide and narrow gates (7:13–14), there was the implicit challenge to the reader to make a choice, too. Even the trial of Jesus puts the reader in the place of choice (27:11–26).

In Peter’s powerful Pentecost sermon, the hearers actually asked Peter what they should do (Acts 2:37). Then Peter spelled out a clarification of commitment (vv. 38–39) or what the hearers needed to do to be saved. The acceptance of baptism was the public witness that the hearer had accepted Christ (v. 41).

The church growth movement has added many benefits to the life of the church. Its sociological understandings help us recognize issues that influence people toward or away from the church and Christ. But in the final analysis, church growth needs another element: how to lead that responding person into a relationship with Christ. There still needs to be a commitment question.





Friendship evangelism is tremendously important for the cause of Christ. Because it is less threatening than personal evangelism, many more Christians will be able to do it.

Somewhere along the way, that unsaved person will need someone to challenge him or her to accept Jesus. And there will be times when all of us will have to do some personal evangelism. Elgin was a dedicated Christian but not a flashy or extroverted person. He came into our personal evangelism training and in his loving way began sharing the gospel regularly. The last eight years of Elgin's life were some of the most exciting as he began to see people he talked to commit to Christ right in their homes.

My usual practice in asking for commitment is guided by the commitment section in the outline found in Lesson 9. The scope of this book does not allow for extensive discussion of this important issue, but I will make a few comments. Typically, I only ask a commitment question after a person indicates that he or she has an understanding of the gospel. Then I would ask, "Joe, would you like to receive Christ and His gift of eternal life?" If he says yes, I show him Revelation 3:20 and clarify what accepting Christ means:

Joe, do you understand that accepting Christ means you are inviting Christ into your heart? To open the door of your heart, you must repent, that is, with God's help, turn from your sins. Do you know things in your life that are displeasing to God? Are you willing to turn from them?

To invite Christ into your heart means He comes in not only as Savior to forgive the past but also as Lord. It means from this moment on you are willing for Him to call the shots in your life. Are you willing for Him to do that?

If he is willing, I suggest we pray together. I give rather careful instructions about how we will pray in order to avoid embarrassment.

If I think my prospect is not ready to receive Christ and there may be a rejection, I change my commitment question. It becomes, "Joe, would you like to receive Christ and His gift of eternal life tonight, or is this something you need more time to think about?" Do not give this option too easily, because even spiritually hungry people may tend to delay. If it is strongly apparent



the regular call to commitment will bring rejection, the alternate choice of time to think prevents the hardening of a rejection position.

### **Application**

In a mock situation, share Christ and call your mentor to receive Christ as Savior and Lord.



## EXAM – Session 11

1. A changed life and verbal testimony must go together. So this truth is reinforced \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) in the life of Munoz, Christians cared for him, found him a job, and told him about Jesus. The result: he became a new man, got a job, and began to tell others about Jesus, and pastored 70 members.
  - b) in the life of Mickey Cohen, who believed in being "a Christian gangster."
  - c) by the concept, "My life is my witness."
  - d) by "words without works are hypocrisy" and "works alone are adequate."
  
2. Persuasion as part of witness and preaching and evangelism \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) was rejected by Paul in his understanding of healthy evangelism (II Corinthians 5:11-21).
  - b) can be illustrated by healthy marriage which includes presence, proclamation, persuasion, and preservation.
  - c) is simply manipulation.
  - d) cannot be used for a person's good and the glory of God.
  
3. Ultimately, a call to a decision for Christ is imperative since \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) "the bent of homo sapiens is to evade."
  - b) Peter's powerful Pentecost sermon spelled out a clarification of commitment.
  - c) friendship evangelism, though tremendously important, will still eventually need to challenge that person to accept Jesus.
  - d) All of the above



### **Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant**

1. If your mentor feels he or she can do so, arrange to go on a witnessing/soul-winning call with your mentor. You will go as learner.
2. If your mentor cannot do this, discuss who you might know who would be willing to do so.
3. Share with each other a story of someone you know who was able to lead another person to Christ.