

Gaining Decisions for Christ

The Art of Making Appeals

"At the close of every meeting (and Bible study), decisions should be called for." Testimonies Vol. 6, p. 64

Four Levels of Decision Making

Some time ago, an evangelist named Robert L. Boothby was holding a series of meetings on the East Coast. Attending this meeting were a number of young preachers learning the art of effective evangelism. One of the pastors approached Boothby and asked him a question. He asked, "How is it that you are so effective at getting decisions? Why are your appeals so effective?"

Boothby thought for a moment then he asked the young preacher a question. Boothby asked, "Do you expect to get a decision every time you appeal?" The young man replied, "Well not every time, but I sure would like to get decisions at least half of the time."

Boothby responded without any hesitation: "Unless you preach as if you want someone to make a decision that very night, you will never get any decisions."

Whether we are preaching a sermon or giving a Bible study, we should always believe and anticipate a decision for Christ and His truth. If you give a Bible study in such a way that you do not believe your interest will make the right decision, then they never will.

When giving Bible studies, asking someone to make a decision can be the most frightening part of the Bible study. There are two reasons why people do not ask for more decisions.

1. What if they say "no?" No one likes feeling like they have been rejected, especially when it comes to things as important as Bible truth. But that is it, they are not saying no to you and me (even if it feels that way), rather they are saying no to the truth that has been presented. Those are two elements that an effective soul winner must separate in his or her mind.
2. What if they say "yes?" "Oh-no! They said yes and now I am responsible!" You wouldn't think this would be a fear that people would have, but often it is. When someone informs us that they want to accept Jesus as their personal Savior, it means we are responsible to lead them Christ. Often we think the job of leading souls to Jesus is only for the minister and evangelist, but this couldn't be any farther from the truth. Leading souls to Jesus is a job for anyone who professes the name of Christ.

So let's find out how to lead an individual to make the right decision for Christ and His truth.

Every decision that is made, whether to purchase new shoes, accept new truth, or join the Seventh-day Adventist church, requires four basic levels of decision making.

I. THE FIRST LEVEL IS INFORMATION:

All intelligent decisions are based on adequate information. Before an individual can make a decision for truth, they need to be convinced from the pages of scripture that it is truth.

It is at this level that the facts are presented. Before we ask a Bible study contact to make a decision for truth, we must ask ourselves "Have I given them adequate information to make an intelligent decision?"

"One sentence of scripture is of more value than ten thousand of man's ideas or arguments." Testimonies, Volume 7, p. 71

Key points to consider:

- Let the Bible do most of the speaking.
- If you call for a decision before there is adequate information, the individual will make a negative decision.
- Be careful of information overload and present heavy subjects gradually (Sabbath, Death, Standards, Antichrist, etc.).
- Another factor to keep in mind is programmed non-response. This is where you preach for a decision but don't call for one. In this scenario your interest will end up making a negative decision.

"When persons who are under conviction are not brought to make a decision at the earliest period possible, there is danger that the conviction will gradually wear away." Evangelism, p. 298

II. THE SECOND LEVEL IS CONVICTION

The information must be clear before conviction can take place. As you move from information to conviction, it is good to start with the words *"Is it clear to you that...?"*

Example: "John is it clear to you that the seventh day is the Sabbath? Do you see that God asks us to honor Him by remembering His seventh day Sabbath?"

Conviction is that inner desire that God, through the Holy Spirit, lays on the individual's heart. When an individual had received adequate information in

what is right and wrong, they will begin to sense what it is that they ought to be doing. Remember to allow the words of Scripture and the Holy Spirit do the convicting.

III. THE THIRD LEVEL IS DESIRE

It is at this stage that individuals begin to sort out their own feelings. They don't always base their action on what they ought to do, but on what they want to do. By showing the benefits of right doing and the consequences of wrong doing an individual's decision will be influenced.

There is a term called "*minimax*." Students of human behavior have concluded that people will make the right decision when the benefits are maximized and the risk minimized. It is wise to focus on the benefits of right action rather than focusing on the negative consequences.

For example: "John I understand that keeping the Sabbath may mean some changes in your life. However imagine the joy that it will bring to the heart of God that you want to spend time with Him. Think of the benefits of having one day a week to set aside the cares and distractions of this world and to spend that 24-hour period with Jesus and your family. Picture yourself at the park Sabbath afternoon going for a walk with you son, or sitting in your favorite easy chair reading a Bible story to your daughter. What about going to church with your wife? Your wife always has a smile when you're sitting next to her in church."

You have hear that old expression "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink." But if you place a block of salt next to the water, the horse will end up licking the salt and become so thirsty that he has to drink. Didn't Jesus say in Matthew 5:13 that "we are the salt of the earth"? The job of a soul winner is to make people so thirsty that they will drink of the water of life freely and be saved. It works well to paint a mental picture so your interest can see the benefits of right doing.

IV. THE FOURTH LEVEL IS DECISION/ACTION

When an individual has adequate information and their conviction and desire are heightened, they will act. When leading an individual to act on a decision, always appeal on the basis of the Cross of Christ.

"Christ crucified -- talk it pray it, sing it, and it will break and win hearts."
Testimonies, Volume 6, p. 67

For action to take place it takes more than just a Bible text to motivate the heart, it takes the individual verbally agreeing with questions ("Is it clear to you that...") regarding obeying the truth in the Word of God. It takes the

convicting power of the Holy Spirit as well as the individual seeing the benefits of making the right decision.

MAKING APPEALS DURING THE IN HOME BIBLE STUDY

There are four basic categories of appeals that can be used no matter what the topic is being studied. We will briefly look at each one as well as the principles to follow when giving each appeal.

A. THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S LOVE – John 3:16

- In this type of appeal, you will want to show them how much God loves them, how much He gave up for them, and that He wants them to surrender their life to Him in whatever issue is before them. Let His love melt their hearts, and then call them to a decision.
- Sometimes people will put off decision because they think that they are going to miss out on or lose something. It is your job to show them that what God has given up for them is much greater than anything they could ever give up.
- Also show them that the eternal blessings they are gaining are much more than what they might lose here.

B. THE INFLUENCE OF EXAMPLE – Romans 14:7

- Some people will put off making a decision because it makes them feel uncomfortable.
- However, once they see that their decision will have a negative or positive influence on their family or friends, they are many times willing to make it because they care more about their family than themselves.

C. THE POWER OF CHOICE – Matthew 7:13-14; Joshua 24:15

- God has given us all a choice. He sacrificed His life for that choice. We shouldn't take it lightly. He presents to us all the facts concerning the results of both choices and calls us to choose whom we will serve. At the same time, however, His love beckons us to follow Him, and He longs for us to make the right decision.

D. THE DANGER OF DELAY – Matthew 25:10; John 12:35

- This type of appeal shows the danger of putting off one's decision until "tomorrow" or a more convenient time. A better time will

never come. The devil will make sure of it. Your appeal should focus on making the decision today!

CALLING MEN & WOMEN TO DECISION

In dealing with most issues, many people do not need more INFORMATION. Rather, it is many times an issue of the heart. They need to act on their conviction to follow Christ in any situation. Therefore, the issue we must deal with is not so much information but rather DESIRE. Many times, they are faced with conflict when called to make a decision. When convicted, they will bring up other objections to hide the real issue. If these issues are dealt with, they will likely make the decision.

Let's take a look at an example of this. We will look specifically at the Sabbath with principles based on the book Persuasion by Mark Finley.

1. "Is the Sabbath new to you?" OR "Have you ever heard a message on the Sabbath before?"
 - This allows you to discover their background concerning the Sabbath to know if they have any positive or negative experiences that you can build on or avoid in your appeal.
2. "Is it clear to you from the Bible that the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week (Saturday), is God's day of rest and worship?"
 - This question will help you discover if they have any Bible objections to the Sabbath. If so, back up and answer them before asking for a decision. Be careful that relational objections (family, job, etc.) are not being mistaken for doctrinal objections.
3. Once you have cleared up their Bible questions, if you sense conviction, it is time to invite them to make a decision for Christ on the Sabbath. I like to ask the question, "Is there anything hindering you from keeping God's seventh day Bible Sabbath?"
 - This question really opens up a lot of information. If they say that it is clear, yet they are still throwing objections, it is likely that there is another issue such as a work or family problem.
 - I will then ask them, "You work on Sabbath right?" "Do you see that as an issue for you keeping the Sabbath? I can certainly understand that you need to provide for your family."
 - "What is the ultimate means of providing for your family ... is it merely providing for them here on this earth (although we must do

this), or is the most important thing teaching them about God and His ways? Which one should we consider the most important?"

- "Can you see the importance of keeping the Sabbath? It helps us lead our children in the right way ... God's way. They are depending on you. If this work issue were cleared up, would there be anything else that might hinder you from obeying God and making this decision to honor Him?"
- I would then share with them promises from God's word about God's ability and willingness to provide. I would come back to that question, "Recognizing that God can meet all your needs, would you like to trust Him and step out in faith by making that decision today? Let's kneel right now and tell God your decision."

SAMPLE APPEALS

Below you will find 5 sample appeals for various topics that require a major decision. Memorize them and use them often in your Bible studies when calling for decisions.

"Pray with these souls, by faith bringing them to the foot of the cross; carry their minds up with your mind, and fix the eye of faith where you look, upon Jesus the sin bearer. Get them to look away from their poor, sinful selves to the Saviour, and the victory is won." Testimonies, Volume 6, p. 66

1. Personal salvation – "John, the Bible says in **Romans 3:23** that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'. Peter tells us in **Acts 4:12** there is 'no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved'. You see salvation only comes through Jesus Christ. Without Jesus Christ all humanity would be lost. Is it clear to you that salvation only comes through Jesus? Would you like receive Christ into your heart and life today?"
2. Second Coming – "John, the Bible teaches that Jesus' coming is going to be an audible, visual, climatic event. The Bible pictures Jesus coming in the clouds of heavens with all of the holy angels and this day is going to come much sooner then we think. I know that when that day comes I want to be absolutely ready, don't you? Yet in order to be ready we must allow Jesus to rule on the throne of our hearts. Let us read **1 John 3:1-3**. Notice that it points out that those who meet Jesus will have had a change in their hearts and lives. Would you like to ask God to take anything out of your life that may cause you to not be ready for His soon return?"
3. Sabbath – "Since we have studied the subject on the Sabbath we have learned that it is a sacred piece of time that Jesus gave to us before sin had entered this world. John I know that you have a real love and desire

to follow Jesus. Turn to **John 14:15** in the Bible. The Sabbath is a time that Jesus wants to spend with us, a time that we spend with family. John, is it clear to you that the seventh day is the Bible Sabbath? Is there anything preventing you from keeping the Sabbath? Would you like to show your love to Jesus by keeping the Sabbath day?"

4. Healthful living – "John, the Bible gives us a wonderful promise in **3 John 2:2**. Let's read it together. ... Not only is God concerned with our salvation, but He is also concerned with our health. In fact He is so concerned with our health that He tells us in **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** that it is serious business when we don't treat our bodies the way He wants us to. John, do you desire to show your love for Christ by following these biblical health principles?"
5. Baptism – "John, we have learned in **John 3:5** that unless a man is born again he can not see the kingdom of God. Jesus illustrated this point again in **Mark 16:16** when He says 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' Would you like to show Jesus that you have surrendered your life to Him by being baptized by immersion?"

Pointers for Gaining Decisions

1. Know the Four Levels of Decisions.

- Information: Do they have adequate information to make a right decision?
- Conviction: Do they sense the rightness of an appropriate action or the guilt of not taking that action?
- Desire: Do they see the benefit of right doing, the consequence of wrongdoing, and the influence that the action will have upon others?
- Action: Have you asked for a decision?

2. Look for decision signals that tell you a person is convicted and ready to move if their faith can be strengthened enough to overcome their fears.

- I wish my husband were more agreeable to my becoming an Adventist.
- I wonder if I would lose my job if I asked for the Sabbath off.
- I have some tithe to give you.
- Would I have to quit ... (smoking, wearing jewelry, etc.)?
- What would I do all day Saturday?
- What will my friends think of me?
- How can I be sure the Lord will accept me?
- How long does it take to prepare for baptism?
- I am not sure my faith is strong enough.

3. Speak to their heart more than their intellect. Let them feel that you genuinely care about them and want them to make a choice that is for their best interest.

"After the meetings are through, there should be a personal investigation with each one on the ground. Each one should be asked how he is going to take these things, if he is going to make a personal application of them. And then you should watch and see if there is an interest in this one or that. Five words spoken to them privately will do more than the whole discourse has done." Evangelism, p. 285

4. Make every appeal focus on Jesus.

- Jesus invites you to keep His Sabbath day holy to show your love for Him. (John 14:15). Would like to tell Jesus right now, 'I love you and want to demonstrate it by keeping your Sabbath.'?
- Jesus is calling you, to enter into His one true fold (John 10:16). Will you heed His voice and become part of His remnant, last day church?

"Pray with these souls, by faith bringing them to the foot of the cross; carry their minds up with your mind, and fix the eye of faith where you look, upon Jesus the Sin Bearer. Get them to look away from their poor, sinful selves to the Saviour, and the victory is won." Testimonies, Vol. 6, p. 66

5. Know the four different basic appeals.

- The greatness of God's love – John 3:16
- The influence of their example – Romans 14:7
- The power of choice – Matthew 7:13, 14
- The danger of delay – Matthew 25:10; John 12:35

6. Have the decision question you will ask clear in your mind.

"As you present testing truth, ask often, who is now willing, as they have heard the words of God, pointing out their duty, to consecrate their hearts and minds, with all their affections, to Christ Jesus." Evangelism, p. 284

7. Ask diagnostic questions to determine what hinders them.

- What do you think about what we learned in our study today? Was it new to you?
- Do any questions on this topic come to mind?
- Do you understand that Bible baptism is by immersion?
- Have you ever thought about being baptized?
- Would anything hinder you from being baptized?

- Have you always understood what the Bible teaches about (death, hell, etc.)?
- How do you feel about the concept of the Lord's day being Saturday?
- Have you thought about keeping the Bible Sabbath?
- Does your job require you to work on Saturdays?
- Is anything preventing you from keeping the Bible Sabbath?
- How does your family feel about the changes in your life and your decision to follow Christ and become a part of His remnant people?
- If this issue was cleared up, would you then see your way clear to accept Christ [etc.]? Is this the only thing holding you back?

"The sacred responsibility rests upon the minister to watch for souls as one that must give an account. He must interest himself in the souls for whom he labors, finding out all that perplexes and troubles them and hinders them from walking in the light of the truth." Review and Herald, August 30, 1892, par. 6.

"Many a laborer fails in his work because he does not come close to those who most need his help. With the Bible in hand, he should seek in a courteous manner to learn the objections which exist in the minds of those who are beginning to inquire, "What is truth?" Carefully and tenderly should he lead and educate them, as pupils in a school. Many have to unlearn theories which they have long believed to be truth. As they become convinced that they have been in error concerning Bible subjects, they are thrown into perplexity and doubt. They need the tenderest sympathy and the most judicious help; they should be carefully instructed, and should be prayed for and prayed with, watched and guarded with the kindest solicitude." Gospel Workers, p. 190

8. Meet objections with texts, not arguments. The power is in the Word!

- I can't leave my church. Revelation 18:4; John 10:14-16, 27; 12:42, 43; Matthew 7:21-27.
- This step will cost me too much. Luke 18:28-30; Matthew 16:24-27
- I will lose my job if I keep the Sabbath. Matthew 16:25, 26; 1 Timothy 4:8; Psalm 119:172.
- I can't make a living if I keep the Sabbath. Matthew 6:25, 26, 33; Psalm 37:3, 25; 34:10; Deuteronomy 30:19, 20; Job 23:10-12.
- My family is opposing me. Matthew 10:34-37 Luke 14:25-27; Luke 12:49-53.

- There is something I can't give up (alcohol, tobacco, jewelry, etc.). Matthew 6:24; 13:45, 46; Luke 14:33; Matthew 19:16-22.
- I am afraid. Isaiah 41:10 Psalm 119:57-60.
- Not now. Proverbs 27:1; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:13; Isaiah 55:6; Genesis 6:3; Acts 22:16.
- I am waiting for my spouse (or friend) so we can do it together. Ezekiel 14:20; 18:20; Romans 14:12.
- Some things are not clear yet. John 12:35; Psalm 119:105, 60; John 13:6-8.
- God is love. He will save me anyway. John 14:15; 8:31, 32; 1 John 5:2, 3.
- I don't believe I need to join a church. Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13; Ephesians 1:22, 23.
- I am too old to change my ways. Matthew 20:6, 7; Genesis 6:3.
- I will wait until the Spirit convinces me. Acts 5:32; John 16:13; Psalm 119:142.

Share Bible promises and stories to increase faith and encourage action.

- Have them read a promise relevant to their situation.
- Share a Bible story that builds faith (crossing of the Red Sea, Fiery Furnace, etc.)
- Tell personal experiences of how God has delivered you when you chose to obey Him at any cost.
- Challenge them to give God an opportunity to work miracles in their life.

Ask for a decision using action-oriented questions.

- Would you like to accept Jesus' offer of eternal life right now?
- Would you like to kneel together and tell God you are thankful that ... (He is coming soon; death is a peaceful sleep and He is the Life Giver; the Sabbath is on Saturday)?