

Energy and activity in gospel activity

Part 1

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[00:00:01] Romans chapter 10 and verse 1. Brethren, my heart's desire and pray to God for Israel is that they might be saved. Secondly, in the book of Corinthians, 1st Corinthians and chapter 9. 1st Corinthians chapter 9 and part of verse 16. Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

Could we turn once again to our hymn books and sing this time number 384. 384. God in mercy [00:01:01] sent his son to a world by sin undone. Jesus Christ was crucified. It was for sinners. Jesus died. We're going to use verse 2 as the chorus. 384. God in mercy sent his son to a world by sin undone. Jesus Christ was crucified. It was for sinners. Jesus died. O the glory of the Lord. [00:02:12] For God who walks the way, and is on earth what shall all, while he is the Lamb of God. O the glory of the grave, shining in the sinner's face. Let his name the song of life. God is life, and God is God.

[00:03:07] I have long been impressed with the orderliness and consistency of Scripture. One of the consistent features which rings out loud and clear so often is that which is highlighted among other places in Isaiah 37. Take root downward, bear fruit upward. Now I should like to think that by the time we've come to Thursday evening, with the ministry we've had so far, we can say that our [00:04:03] roots have been taken very well care of indeed. It would be wrong, and there isn't the time, to go over again any of the ground previously covered. But assuming, and we must assume at this stage, that we have absorbed, accepted, and assimilated the teachings so far, we are now in a position where we can move forward and bear fruit upward. I know that already we have considered in the morning readings, and partly on Tuesday and again last night, the fruit, spiritual fruit, God-ward, Christian character, Christ-like features, reproduced in the Christian life.

[00:05:05] But I think we are now at the stage where having considered that which is inward and God-ward, we can now move on to consider that which is outward and man-ward. As I understand it, my job is to provoke you to love and to good works, particularly in relation to the Gospel activity, urgency and energy in Gospel activity. The foundation has been laid, and as we move on, we can consider something of the detail and the challenge in the Gospel which will enable us [00:06:01] outwardly and man-ward to bear fruit upward. Normally, I prefer to communicate by straightforward exposition of the Word of God. But exceptionally, I think that tonight my job may well be to make some homely suggestions, some practical suggestions, which might form at least part of our response as a result of the ministry we have already heard. I am not asking that you adopt all the suggestions that I make. I'm not asking that you necessarily agree with me in the conclusions that I have come to. I have no apostolic authority for what I hope to say, but I would very much like [00:07:02] to take the apostles' words upon my lips and say this, consider what I say and the Lord give the understanding in all

things. What I do ask is this, that you weigh everything that is said in the presence of the Lord so that you may determine as before him what you should be doing in his surface in the Gospel until he come. To put it another way, slightly differently, how does the Lord wish you to interpret his words to you, occupy till I come? Only the Lord can tell you that.

[00:08:04] Now, in order to make my points, I'd like to talk about five things related to the Gospel. I'd like to dwell just for a few moments on the motive in the Gospel. I'd then like to move on to the content of the Gospel. A moment or two on the field of activity, I'd like to consider with you the resources that are available to us, and then I'd like to make one or two practical suggestions as to local activities and their implementation. The motive is simply stated, it is Christ.

[00:09:01] Writing to the Philippians, Paul could say, he couldn't say it of anyone else, but he said it of himself. He said, for to me, to live, is Christ. Christ, the motive for his existence, the only motive for the life of the Christian. What is true of life is also true of service. If Christ personally is the only true motive for life, it is also true to say that Christ is the only true motive for the Christian in his service. Now, while that is clear as to a fundamental motive for the Christian in the Gospel, I think that leads on to other considerations of which I [00:10:05] should like to refer to three. I would suggest that there are three fundamental objectives in the Gospel for us to consider. First of all, the Lord Jesus, and the words are recorded for us in the fourth chapter of John, the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and the Father seeketh such to worship him. The true worshipers are spiritual worshipers, and perhaps the highest aspect of our Gospel activity is this, that God [00:11:04] graciously allows us to be involved in that activity whereby worshipers are secured for the Father. What a happy occupation this is, one primary objective in the preaching of the Gospel. A second one that I see in Scripture is this, the glory and the honor of Christ are enhanced and highlighted in the preaching of the Gospel. Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. In teaching the Gospel to the Romans, Paul could say, the Gospel of God concerning his son. And the second objective in the preaching of the Gospel is that the glory of the person and the [00:12:06] work of Christ is highlighted. A third objective in the preaching of the Gospel, like the other two, sufficient in itself, an order that the sinner might be rescued from the horror of hell, turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that he might receive the forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified. I well remember a devoted servant of the Lord, much used in the preaching of the Gospel as well as the ministry of the Word, [00:13:06] speaking from a full heart with deep emotion in a meeting like this, shaking his head and saying, brethren, I have a son in hell. He needed no other motive in the preaching of the Gospel than rescuing sinners from such a destiny, sufficient in itself that sinners might be saved. So, considering the primary motive in the Gospel as being Christ, bearing in mind this threefold objective, the securing of worshippers for the Father, highlighting the glory of the person and the work of Christ, and the rescuing of sinners from the penalty of their sins, and the power of [00:14:08] sin, let us move on briefly to consider something of the content of the Gospel. Several times this week, my heart has fluttered just a little, when inevitably, in the consideration of the other topics and in considering the last discourses in our Bible readings, inevitably, many things have been referred to, concepts, thoughts, verses of Scripture, which must be mentioned tonight. We should not be surprised if the Holy Spirit of God sees to it that we are gathered together to confer for a whole week in things that pertain to life and godliness, that he should hammer home [00:15:06] and again and again the things that we need to bear in mind. And if, as to motive, it is Christ, so in the preaching of the Gospel, the content of the message is Christ. There are many aspects in the Gospel, the righteousness of God, the reality of sin, the waywardness of the human heart, the love of God, the worthiness of the Saviour, his willingness to die that we might live, his death upon the cross, his glorious resurrection, the certainty of judgment, [00:16:09] and

the soonness of his return in the urgency that this brings to the note of the Gospel, but fundamentally, the content of the Gospel is Christ. But there's something else that must be said. If the content of the Gospel is Christ, the content of the Gospel also involves me, and if I may say so, it involves you. I must ask myself the question, do I commend the Gospel?

Do people that know me and my life think more well or less well of Christ because of their [00:17:09] knowledge of me? And perhaps each of us needs to ask ourselves the same question. Do I commend the Gospel? This is part of the content of the Gospel. But one of my practical suggestions before I move on is this. If I am to know anything about the content of the Gospel, I need to know the word, and I will only know the word if I read it regularly. And in particular, if I intend to speak to anyone, large company or an individual, about anything from the Scriptures, I need to know well and pray hard as to the words themselves and their bearing before I seek to pass them on to [00:18:10] others. The motive in the Gospel, the content of the Gospel, the field of activity. Now, I'm not really concerned tonight as to your favorite phrase, catchment area, field of activity, parish. I am concerned that we should take heed to the Lord's words and go out, go out. If we read the end of these synoptic Gospels, we will read in those closing exhortations to the disciples that in Matthew 28, the Lord directs them to go to all nations. In Mark 16, they are directed to go into [00:19:03] all the world. And again in Luke, they are directed to go unto all nations. In John 21, the truth is illustrated by the fact that the disciples are encouraged to launch out away from the shore, and at his bidding, in accord with his directions, they are led to appreciate the abundance and the fruitfulness of working in accordance with his word. In each of the Gospels then, we get directions to go out. In explaining one of the parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13, the Lord Jesus said to his own, the field is the world. The field is the world. So while it is highly desirable that we are able to encourage people to come into our Gospel meetings, highly desirable, it's absolutely [00:20:05] essential that we go out, directed by the Lord, under his control, in a due sense of stewardship, going out with the Gospel concerning his Son. Now I'd like to move on. I'd like to leave for a little while details as to suggestions what we might do when we go out, and I'd like to consider just for a little while the resources at our disposal. We are right when we conclude that the task is immense, and we are right to ask ourselves the question, what resources are placed at our disposal in order that this tremendous task might be taken up? I'd like to make brief mention of nine. The Holy Spirit, the Word of God, prayer, workers, energy, literature, [00:21:14] halls and meeting rooms, time and money. Now these are topics well worth praying over, and going over in the Lord's presence, there'll only be time for a brief mention of each. First of all, the Holy Spirit of God. One thing weighs more heavily with me than any other. When the Lord Jesus was here, everything that he did was carried out, executed in the energy and power of the Holy Spirit of [00:22:06] God. Every crisis, every major topic that is considered in the Gospels and in the epistles related to the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh, all his service in his holy manhood, everything done in the energy and power of the Spirit of God. Can we imagine that there is anything that we could do in the light of that, other than in the energy and in the power of that self-same Spirit? We need to remind ourselves continually that in ourselves we are no more worthy, no more capable of achieving anything for God, not at all capable of having fruit in any way, [00:23:07] unless in the power and in the energy of the Holy Spirit. The second resource that I referred to is the Word of God. The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor even of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Word of God is the agent whereby new birth is achieved. Real Christians are those who are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. And Peter goes on to say, and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you. The [00:24:08] Holy Spirit of God, the Word of God, through the Word God speaks to man, and basically it presents to the soul. The third topic I'd like to take up under this

matter of resources is prayer. Now, you may consider that prayer is not so much one of the resources, but the way in which, as before the Lord, we avail ourselves of the other resources. Be that as it may. I'll leave that to your own exercise. But if it's true, and it is true, that through the Word of God, God speaks to man, it is equally true that in prayer we speak to God. I would grant you that [00:25:03] very often while we are waiting upon the Lord in prayer, he uses such occasions to speak to us, but fundamentally in prayer we speak to God. I'd like to make three little recommendations about prayer. The first one is this. Let us pray for evangelists, full-time, fully committed, fully supported, spiritually and materially, evangelists. I don't think that remains at saying, Lord, raise up evangelists. I think we need to consider the implications of some of the prayers that we make. When we pray for evangelists, as we must, I think this involves other things. First [00:26:08] of all, that they will come to light, that they will be raised up. Secondly, that they will have fruit in their labors. Thirdly, that we will support them. No good praying for evangelists if we have no intention of supporting them. We need to pray that evangelists raised up will be supported spiritually and materially. We also need to pray that they and we will strive together in the gospel in order that there might be fruit for both God and man. So my first point [00:27:03] on prayer is that we should pray for evangelists. My second point about prayer is this. Be specific.

Pray for people by name. Single someone out. Have them laid upon your heart. Pray for them by name in the Lord's presence regularly, consistently, urgently. How long is it since you last prayed for someone by name? Pray by name. Perhaps it's understanding that I feel this point rather [00:28:01] strongly. Because when we pray for someone by name, the Lord answers our prayers in relation to the person that we are thinking about. Whether it's matters or whether it's persons, let us be specific. But for the moment, I'd like to consider this matter of praying specifically for individuals by name. I perhaps just have a moment to digress on this point.

At the beginning of the Second World War, I was one of a special brood. I was a little evacuee. I was uprooted from my home, taken a hundred miles away with the rest of the school, [00:29:02] and for a few years, the Lord was graciously pleased to billet me with a godly Christian family. They took me to the gospel meeting. They encouraged me to go to Sunday school. Then after a few years, I went home with the school. In due course, I trusted the Lord.

For a few years after that, I'd often crossed my mind that the people with whom I'd been billeted in Whitehaven, in Cumberland then, would be interested to know. And this was far too precious a message for me to write about. I determined to go and see them, and ultimately I did. And when [00:30:02] I went to see them, it was eight years almost to the day since I'd last seen them. And after the normal conversation, I knew they'd be interested, and this was why I'd gone. I said, I'm a Christian. I've trusted the Lord. Their answer shattered me. They said, since we last saw you eight years ago, every morning, every night since then, we've prayed for you by name. Let us pray for people by name. Specifically, and the Lord in his own good time will answer the prayers. Perhaps that's one of the reasons why one of my favorite gospel hymns is this. I have a Savior. He's pleading in glory. A dear, loving Savior, though earth friends be few. And now he is watching in tenderness o'er [00:31:07] me. And oh, that my Savior were your Savior too. I think that's the attitude that we should take, but I think the last verse is even better. When Jesus has found you, tell others the story that my loving Savior is your Savior too. Then pray, then pray, then pray that my Savior will lead you to glory. Your prayer will be answered. It was answered for you. Let us be specific in our prayers. Let us single out individuals. Let us consistently, regularly, determinately, urgently seek the Lord's [00:32:04] blessing on that individual, and the Lord will answer our prayers. Pray for evangelists. Let us be specific. My third recommendation on prayer is equally simple. Go to the local prayer meeting.

Unless you're physically restrained, go to your local prayer meeting. I'm not asking whether you've had a hard day. I wouldn't ask you to consider how you're feeling. I wouldn't ask you what problems or opposition you've had during the day. If Monday night's prayer meeting night, go to the prayer meeting and pray in due scriptural order. Brothers, go to the prayer meeting and pray audibly with your [00:33:11] heads uncovered. Sisters, go to the local prayer meeting and pray inaudibly with your heads suitably covered. There is a regrettable, increasing tendency for many Christians to ignore and flout the clear statements of Scripture on basic matters. We cannot hope for blessing in the gospel or in any other activity if we contravene the clear statements of Scripture. Oh, I think it's basic to gospel activity that we pray. Pray for evangelists. Pray specifically, and go to the [00:34:06] local prayer meeting where prayer is wont to be made. I think I said that the fourth topic I'd like to suggest is that of workers. Now, if we are talking about gospel activities, who are the workers? Basically, it's you and me. We are the workers. We should pray for full-time, fully committed, fully supported evangelists. But until they arise, and when they do in parallel with their activities, let us fill out that challenging exhortation of the Scripture, do the work of an evangelist. Now, I would suggest that we take this particular exhortation as an encouragement rather [00:35:06] than an excuse. It would be possible for me to say, well, of course, I'm not an evangelist. I just do the work of an evangelist. I just struggle on, and if it's not very effective, well, don't blame me. I'm not really an evangelist. I would think if I take that attitude, I am wrong. If I am convinced, as before the Lord, that I have no special gift as an evangelist, this should make me work more hard and not less hard at it. Let none of us feel that we should make this excuse that because we have no special gift in this respect that this lets us out do the work of an evangelist. But again, as we consider what work we should be doing and how we should be doing it, I think we need to [00:36:03] think again about what we are asking for, the sort of personal qualities that we would like to see in full-time evangelists. I think we must be completely honest in our prayers. If I ask the Lord to raise up evangelists, what am I asking for? What sort of qualities would I expect to come to light in a true scriptural evangelist in the proper sense of the term? May I suggest four things. I think I would be looking out for someone who lived in prayerful dependence upon the Lord. I think I would be looking for someone who had a burning zeal that souls might be saved. I think I would be looking out for someone who was prepared to work hard, and I think I would [00:37:09] be looking for someone whose life commended the gospel that they carried. But if that is my prayer, I wonder if I understand what I am committing myself to. If I'm honestly asking the Lord to raise up evangelists like that, surely I need to ask myself the same questions as to whether in measure the same things are true of me as I seek to respond to that challenging exhortation due the work of an evangelist. In my local setting, in my small corner, how do I compare with those questions? Am I personally dependent upon the Lord? Have I a desire that souls will be saved? Am I [00:38:14] prepared to work hard in the gospel? And does my life commend the gospel that I preach? I think I need to probe my own heart even further like this. Is there any valid reason why I should not be prayerfully dependent upon the Lord? Is there any valid reason why I shouldn't be on fire that souls might be blessed? Is there any valid reason why I shouldn't work hard in the gospel? And is there any valid reason why my life should not commend the gospel? Now having asked myself the questions, [00:39:01] and in things like this we can only start with ourselves, but having asked myself the questions, I wonder if you would permit me to put the same questions to you. Is there any valid reason why you should not be prayerfully dependent upon the Lord? Is there any valid reason why you shouldn't have a fervent desire that souls should be saved? Is there any valid reason why you should not be prepared to work hard in the gospel? And is there any valid reason why your life should not correspond with the gospel that you preach? Do the work of an evangelist. A word on energy. In any sphere, in any activity, work, or labor, energy needs to be expended. And among the many other things that [00:40:09] might be said, I would suggest that in relation to the gospel sphere, we need to consider at least three forms of energy. Spiritual energy,

intellectual energy, and physical energy. Now please, don't fault me for a word. Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. As to spiritual energy, perhaps largely covered by what has been said about the importance and the paramount importance of the Spirit of God, it would be unseemly, surely, to attempt a technical definition as to what spiritual energy is. No doubt, the power and control of the Holy Spirit [00:41:08] is very much involved. It would be difficult to exclude a reference to the moral energy that is so evident in those servants of the Lord, who give every evidence in everything that they do and say, that the first effect of the application of the Word of God has been to their own soul and life, and everything that they do and say afterwards is empowered by it. Whatever else might be said, the exercise of spiritual energy is paramount, if we are to effect anything for God or for man. No fruit without spiritual energy. One thing is certain, only that which is done in the energy [00:42:01] and power of the Spirit of God will be effectual. And as we consider such verses as Romans 12, verses 1 and 2, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your intelligent service, and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God. This is the sort of thing we are talking about when we speak about spiritual energy, but I'd like to spend just a moment or two on this phrase, which may not be very well acceptable to some, intellectual energy. Now, if I'm to be misunderstood on anything I have to say tonight, it will be this. I am not saying that every Christian must [00:43:07] have a university education before he can be fruitful for God. I am certainly not saying that every Christian must have a high IQ before he can be happily engaged in serving his master in the gospel. What I am saying is that in many ways, and in many things, it will be absolutely essential that the Christian applies his mind, that he considers well, that he thinks hard, that he meditates, that he chews the cud, that he exercises the thinking faculty. That is what I mean when I say it will be necessary if we are going to work hard in the gospel, it will be necessary very often to exercise intellectual energy. The mind is referred to so often in scripture. I would have [00:44:11] liked to refer to many of the cases, but time doesn't permit. Be fully persuaded in your own mind. Set your mind on things above. We've been given this spirit of a sound mind. Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober. Stir up your minds, and so on. I think we had in one of our discussions, didn't we, that as we read the scriptures through the eye, it goes to the heart, to the mind, to the will, and affects the life and service. Let us be prepared to think hard, consider well, but let me give this word of warning. It is highly desirable that we use intellectual energy as we serve the [00:45:14] Lord. It is absolutely essential that we use spiritual energy. Intellectual energy without spiritual energy is extremely dangerous, and as we read such verses as the opening chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, it puts us right on that score. But it will also be necessary to use physical energy, and I wonder if sometimes this is where we fail. But it will also be necessary to use physical energy, and I wonder if sometimes this is where we fail. I think Christians should [00:46:07] reasonably fit. I don't mean we should be keep-fit fanatics, but I think we should avoid extremes as to food, as to drink, as to the kind and the amount of physical exercise that we take in order that we might be fit enough to do the legwork that a lot of gospel activity will entail. Because while I would have liked to have said it earlier, if we are honest in our prayers, we will not only pray specifically that an individual will be blessed. We will also knock on their door, and we will ensure that they have had a personal invitation from us, whether to come to the gospel, whether to come to our home, whether to deal with their problems in their own home. And that will often [00:47:06] take the exercise of physical energy. A word on literature. Again, I fluttered a little when I saw Brother Kerr sitting here last night. I say amen to everything that he said, but happily, he left me with a little more that I might add. We will use literature in the gospel. Let us use our own depot. I heard of a case this week where a very commendable gospel activity was conducted which required the use of 14,000 good gospel tracts. They were purchased elsewhere, other than our own depot. Our depot could have supplied them. Oh, it's good to use good gospel

tracts. I'm sure [00:48:03] if they're not in stock, Brother Kerr would be glad to supply them. Let us send our friends, our neighbors, our unconverted relatives, scriptural Christmas cards, get well cards, congratulations cards, and let us get them from the depot. Magazines. I asked the editor of Alive a few weeks ago, what is the circulation of Alive? He said, well, he wasn't quite sure, but he thought something in the order of seven and a half thousand copies per issue. Have you thought of this simple sum? In the UK, apart from other countries, in the UK, there are getting on [00:49:02] towards 200 meetings with which we are in happy, regular, full fellowship. If each of us, each of the meetings, or the brethren that represent the meetings, undertook us before the Lord to distribute 200 copies per issue, that would be 40,000 copies per issue in addition to the seven and a half thousand that are issued now, 240,000 issues per annum. If we commit ourselves, it wouldn't take much to distribute carefully and prayerfully 200 copies per meeting. I'll come to that again. But the last thing about the depot, I have something to say about stickers. In case you don't know, I know a secret about stickers. Children gobble them up.

[00:50:08] They put them on their handbags, school bags, rulers, Bibles. I visit a home regularly. They don't need wallpaper. On every doorpost, on every door, on every window, the message rings loud and clear. Jesus loves you. I am the door. God loves you. I am the light of the world. Oh, this is good gospel outreach. Anyone who goes to that home is in no doubt at all that the gospel means them. The message is loud and clear. I don't see any reason why we shouldn't distribute these by the [00:51:05] hundreds of thousands. One young lady I know runs up to me, flings her arm round me every time she sees me, and demands to know how many stickers I have for her today. And there are many like that. In every bus that has traveled, every car that goes around, that we see stickers. Why not gospel stickers? And again, get them from the depot. A word as to our halls. I think our halls should be the base of our gospel activity, although not the only place where the gospel activities occur. If it's dirty, clean it. Yes, you, clean it. I don't think our halls should be ornate. I think [00:52:07] they should be simple, but I very much think they should be clean. How many halls are there where at least some of us are ashamed to invite our neighbors, our unconverted relatives, our workmates, because we are just a little bit ashamed of the state of the hall when they get there. Is it right that we should tolerate in the halls conditions, physical conditions, hygiene conditions, that we wouldn't dream of tolerating in our own homes? Let us not set lower standards for the base of our gospel activities than we would set for our own halls. Now time, as always, is flying, and that's my next [00:53:05] subject. It may surprise some of us to realize that we all have the same amount of time, 168 hours per week. What differs is the way that we use it. Most of us have major commitments as to our time. Necessary work, necessary study, necessary household duties, necessary chores of one sort or another. But almost all of us have a residue where we have a measure of choice as to how we spend it. I regularly ask myself questions like this. If I say I haven't time for a particular [00:54:12] gospel activity, I'm not really saying that I haven't the time. What I am saying is this. This particular aspect of the Lord's work is not as important to me, not high enough in my scale of priorities as some of the things I do in the time that I spend by personal choice. Just think about it. Again, I pose the question to myself. You can ask yourself. Am I really saying that preaching the gospel, supporting the gospel, is not as important to me as watching television, mending my motorbike, [00:55:04] playing chess, reading cowboy stories, gossiping with my pals, or however else I might spend the time which I spend by personal choice. Let us all pray together. So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. As with time, so with money. We may have an income large or small. We may only at this stage have a very meager supply of pocket money. But sooner or later in the Lord's good time, we will have an income of one sort or another. We will have major commitments, whether it be mortgage, rent, rates, fuel, or any other thing. Again, there will most likely be a [00:56:04] residue where we have an element of choice as to how we dispose of it. I'm convinced of this. It's not

for me to tell you how to spend your money, but I am convinced of this. There is no need, there is no valid reason why any aspect of the Lord's work should suffer in the gospel or any other aspect of his service. There's no valid reason why any of it should suffer for lack of money. I think that if we are honest before the Lord and are convinced that a work should be done, you and I could support it between us. Time and money. Now time has gone by. I would again, [00:57:01] ever so briefly, like to mention a couple of local activities and their implementation.

This will be common to many of you with commercial or industrial experience. You may not be able to read it. It's the concept of the product life cycle. In marketing terms, if you look at the graph, this thick black line, when products are first marketed, the initial interest is small. It rises eventually to a peak and then fades away. That's all there's time to say on that. It often seems to me a major sober consideration for Christians is this. It's very difficult to know as before the Lord when a work is commencing, [00:58:11] when the Lord has opened a door. I think it's an even more sober consideration to realize as before the Lord when the Lord has shut a door. In other words, when an area has been worked out. I'd love to develop this, but time doesn't really permit. There are two problems as I see it. We have long established meetings which started slowly, went on well for several years, but it's been evident for several years now that it's many a long day since an unbeliever dared [00:59:06] to darken the doorstep of our gospel meeting. And it's a matter for sober consideration as to whether or not it's time to move our tent. The children of the world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. I don't know whether this will take it.

Men who want to market a product know full well from experience that sooner or later the work will peak and then die away. And long before that unhappy day dawns, they commence their plans. [01:00:05] So that by the time one work is fading out, another work is going ahead. I think it's sad that we often in the gospel wait till the work has almost completely petered out before we commence to think about where we should go, what we should do, and how we should set about it. Happily, there are meetings, of course, where a work has commenced and gone on happily for fifty years. But I think it's a sad commentary that so many of us are on the downward side of the curve, and if we aren't very careful, meetings will fizzle out altogether. On the other hand, [01:01:08] there are vast new estates in many part of both large cities and small villages where there's no evangelical witness at all. And I would suggest it's a matter for sober consideration as to whether we should commence work in such localities. I've been happy to notice in many places what I would call satellite Sunday schools, which are happily going on based upon a meeting and yet physically remote from it. And I would think perhaps this might point the way that the Lord is opening a door for further activities in a different place, and perhaps we need to consider whether in such almost pioneering conditions, this is where we should be working. I can only list. I jotted down several activities indoors and out of doors. I would love to have developed them, but I think [01:02:05] in a meeting like this, perhaps we need to stir up our pure minds by way of remembrance. Many of these things are taking place in one place or another, but I'm convinced that there are many activities to hand where we could involve ourselves very happily and fruitfully in the gospel activity. I certainly wouldn't recommend that we give up the gospel preachings, but it's rather odd, isn't it, that we invite people and say, we'll be delighted to receive you any time to our gospel meeting, provided you come on Sunday night at half past six. Locally, we did an exercise, we canvassed, and we were half hoping, I think, that we would need to put ourselves out and change the time of [01:03:06] our gospel meeting. Some people have done this. I think it's a salutary exercise to go around the doors and to say, sir, we'd love you to come to hear the gospel in our hall. Which time of the week, what day of the week is best for you? Locally, I think that we were just a little disappointed that after about three weeks canvassing, the consensus of thought by our potential clients was, well, 6.30 on a Sunday night is no better and no worse than any other

time. And this was from their point of view, not from ours. Well, let us consider whether in fact the day or the time needs to be changed in order to get them in. Women's meetings, where we usually get far more [01:04:01] unbelievers or naive Christians than we do at many of our gospel meetings. Sunday schools, children's meetings, squashes, craft groups, crusades in school holidays, special gospel activities, the list could be as long as our arm. Let us think about it. Let us pray about it, and let us do something about it. Out of doors, open-air meetings, of course. A vital link in the chain, I think, is the camps that we run here and there. I like to think of a natural or a spiritual progression from Sunday school to camp, to house party, to conference, to full assembly involvement. I think that there is a happy progression from one activity to the other in the gospel, both the preaching of the gospel and the teaching of the gospel. And certainly, I seem [01:05:02] to detect a difference in those Christians who came through that sort of progression than those who haven't. Aged persons' homes, hospitals, almost always there are such in our own catchment area. How often do we visit them? There's one that I know that we visit. It seems to me that the majority of them are either senile or totally deaf or both. But it also seems to me that even if they don't hear anything that's said, the fact that Christians are bothered, that they go along, that they leave them something to read, that they sing to them, that they pray with them, the fact of the visit makes all the difference. And I wouldn't dream of recommending to anyone that we should give it up. I must, if I may, make two general observations. Children's work, I think perhaps the most [01:06:07] immediately satisfying and the most immediately productive of any work that we do. Catching the whole life right at the start, train up a child in the way that it should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. But I know a man who thought he was past it as far as children's work is concerned. After 60 years work of happy involvement in Sunday schools and Bible class, he sadly laid down the reins and felt he was completely out of touch with young people. He had to go into hospital for a cataract operation. And while he was convalescent, at the bright young age of 84, sitting in a local park, he was on the seat feeling lonely, [01:07:06] a bit miserable because he thought his life's Christian service was over. When I saw him next, he was bubbling over, overjoyed. He said, I was sitting in the park this morning and I found that I was still able to do something for the Lord. He said, the old and the sick need the same Savior as those who are young. And he was delighted to find that when he thought his life work was over, that at the ripe old age of 84, he was as useful in the propagation of the seed of the Word of God as he had been when he was young. Visitation, and I must stop with this. Organize it. My scripture, let all things be done decently and in order. Draw a circle around your meeting room. Chop it [01:08:04] into sizable portions, reasonably proportioned areas. Go out two by two, as the Lord said, in pairs. After your cold canvassing, adopt, say, 20 families each, each pair. Adopt them.

Visit them regularly, at least once every two months. Drop off the copy of Alive. Talk about it. Ask them how they got on with the last copy. The broken homes soon come to light. The problems soon become evident. And after the first few times, we find, don't we, that they are looking anxiously for our next visit so that they can unburden themselves about their latest problem. And when you walk through the streets, and the children grab hold of your hand and walk along [01:09:01] with you, skipping merrily along, when the adults don't look upon you with suspicion but welcome you with a smile and bow your name, perhaps then we are visiting the locality where we want to serve the Lord in the gospel. But whatever the line, let us be simple and direct. We don't preach a social gospel. We don't preach a political gospel. We are engaged in presenting Christ to the soul. Let us labour. Let us work. Let us use our energy. The time is short. If there is a good work going on in our locality, keep going. If the work is flagging or not going on at all, let us get going. The time is short. He that shall come will come and will not tarry. Be instant, in season and out of season. Be strong and of good courage and do it. Be steadfast, [01:10:10] unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. Let us not be weary in well-doing for in

due season we shall reap if we faint not. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, our hearts are full. We love thee because thou hast first loved us. We desire that others too might be blessed. Help us to pray with the apostle for those in our locality that our heart's desire and prayer to thee is that they might be saved. [01:11:01] Lord Jesus, we ask this in thy precious name. Amen.