

THE TECHNIQUE CATASTROPHE

*An explanation of the multitudes of false professions
in the Independent Baptist movement.*

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CONTENTS

Forward	7
Chapter One - The Barriers Between	15
Chapter Two - Unreasonable Goals	25
Chapter Three - Rewarding Results?	35
Chapter Four - The Illusive Sinner's Prayer	41
Chapter Five - Farming or Retail Sales?	47
Chapter Six - Sneak up on Them	55
Chapter Seven - Stay on the Subject?	59
Chapter Eight - The Numbers Racket	63
Chapter Nine - The Presence of Repentance	69
Chapter Ten - Are We Preaching Repentance?	75
Chapter Eleven - Dishonesty and Pressure	81
Chapter Twelve - Misinterpretation of Sower	89
Chapter Thirteen - "You Can Win People Anywhere!"	93
Chapter Fourteen - Go All the Way!	99
Chapter Fifteen - Don't Trust The Holy Ghost	103
Chapter Sixteen - Gashmu Saith It!	107
Chapter Seventeen - Believing in Vain	111

FORWARD

Through the pages of this book, I embark on a project that I have avoided for a number of years. Part of me says that it is because I have lacked the time for such an undertaking, while the rest of me admits to the fact that even as King Saul of old, “...**I feared the people...**” (1 Samuel 15:24), when associated with the contents of this book. Sometimes, striving for the acceptance of “the brethren” causes us to keep silent when something needs to be said.

It finally occurred to me that though there would be multitudes of brethren that would agree with some of the things that I am about to say, they won't say it themselves for fear of losing their place in “The Pecking Order”. Because I have no position in anyone's pecking order, I probably

stand to lose the least when commenting on such a “sacred cow” as Independent Baptists’ soul-winning practices.

I remember a discussion that I had with a pastor friend of mine several years ago about this very subject. My father lived in his area and when visiting him, his good brother would always have me preach in his church. Usually, when this pastor brother and I got together, the first thing that he wanted to talk about was the number of people that were led to Christ through our ministries. The first year he was elated to inform me that he led 800 people to Christ during that particular calendar year. When he asked me how many I had led to Christ at the church where I was pastoring, I rather sheepishly estimated that it was probably about 15 or 20, though we don’t keep records of those who we felt that we had won to the Lord.

After five consecutive years of this same scenario, I noticed that the attendance

of his church didn't seem to be changing much. Although he seemed to be stuck around the same number that was introduced to Christ that year, and my estimates for the church that I pastored was usually in the same ballpark, there was a drastic difference in our attendance! That five year period had produced approximately 4,000 souls through his soul-winning endeavors, while the same time frame yielded about 100 for me. Noticing the imbalance in his figures in relationship to his attendance increase, I asked him what his Sunday morning attendance average was five years ago, and what it was currently. His reply was 98 then and about 110 now. I informed him that my church attendance was about 50 then and over 300 now. Trying to keep a straight face, I then asked him if it didn't seem strange to him that while he was running circles around me in-so-far as "leading people to Christ", his church attendance only increased about 10%, while

mine more than quadrupled during the same time frame!

This story can only be surpassed with the account of a revival service that I had in my last pastorate. Carefully choosing what I was led to believe was a successful nationally-known evangelist, I scheduled a week's revival. During my 12 years as a pastor, this was undoubtedly the worst meetings that I ever had! He turned out to be one of those fellows who made a lot of noise but didn't say anything. The attendance each evening grew worse. By Thursday night he informed me that he overlooked the fact that he had double - booked for Friday night and couldn't finish out our meetings, but would leave his assistant to close out the last night. I declined and preached Friday night myself. I somehow got the feeling that if the crowd was up, and the offering would have also been up, there probably wouldn't have been a "double-booking" problem.

Shortly thereafter, I was reading the ac-

counts of meetings by evangelists in one of our Baptist periodicals, when I came across this brother's name. I was curious as to whether-or-not some of the other brethren were having better results with this evangelist than I experienced, so I began to read the report on his meetings. As I read along, I was surprised to see his account of heaven coming down, the altars being full, and 8 souls being saved at this particular meeting. Finishing the account only increased my surprise when I read that the meeting was at my church! That sounded a far cry from the altars being empty, the crowd decreasing each evening, no one getting saved, and heaven flying its flag half-mast by Thursday!

When numbers become so important to us that they outweigh the truth — it's time that we admit to a crisis! When we receive missionary reports similar to the one recently sent to the church where I am now attending, it's time we take stock of our

methodology. This missionary brother was rejoicing over the results that he had experienced in his first full year on the field, after taking this existing work. He boasted of 738 professions of faith with 25 following in believer's baptism. How could you even pen those words without asking yourself if there isn't something wrong with that picture? I seem to remember 3,000 saved at Pentecost — and 3,000 baptized!

My wife arrived home one afternoon many years ago, after spending her weekly appointed time with a ladies soul-winning group. Excited about the day's results, she informed me that she led 80 souls to Christ that day. I probably would have shared her excitement had she not gone into detail of the day's happenings. It seems as though they had her put on a snowman's suit to pass out candy in one of the local parks. Each time that she could get a small group of children together, she told them the story of Jesus and had them to repeat a prayer after her.

They were then declared saved and given the assurance of their salvation. For those of you who are wondering, after studying the Bible on these issues, my wife repented of the foolishness that she was taught, and exchanged man's teachings for Biblical principles on the subject of witnessing.

I hope that you have noted thus far that I have not cited any institutions, clubs, or organizations in the forward of this book, nor will I in the body of its content. It is not my intent to sling mud, grind axes, or expose anyone who is involved in this "technique catastrophe", but rather to arrive at a position of sanity and truth in regards to the witnessing of our faith. When teaching some of the content of this book in a church in Wisconsin, a dear layman summed up my concern when he said with tears in his eyes, "Don't people understand that we are messing with someone's forever?"

Perhaps as Hilkiah of old, it becomes our duty not only to clean out those things

from the house of God that displease Him, but also to find The Book of God and discover once again what His teachings are on some of these subjects! You will note throughout this book that our intent is to draw to your attention how much of our witnessing and soul-winning technique has no bearing nor teaching from His Book, but rather from man's tradition. God being my helper, my intent is to follow up on this book with one entitled, "Fruit In Your Basket." Because we have strayed so far from what the Bible teaches on this subject, I felt it necessary to begin this project with the "how not tos."

The burden of this book is not to produce an apologetic that proves that I am right and you are wrong, but rather for you to muse on the fact that if you are wrong, you are not only producing false professions — you could be indeed pushing people into hell! Remember, you are messing with someone's forever!

CHAPTER ONE

THE BARRIERS
BETWEEN

I think that all of us could start with the premise that there are three participants present in every witnessing endeavor. I'm sure that we will all agree with this in theory if not in practice! As a matter of fact, my contention has always been that though we all profess to believe this in theory, it has in reality not made it into our practice. Those three participants are of course the witness, The Holy Spirit, and the sinner. A successful witnessing encounter will attach a vehicle to each of these three participants. The vehicle of the witness is Truth, the vehicle of The Holy Spirit is Conviction, and the vehicle of the sinner is Repentance.

Truth	Conviction	Repentance
^	^	^
Witness	Holy Spirit	Sinner

The vehicle of truth that is used by the witness is, of course, the Bible! We see this vehicle in John 17:17, “**Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.**,” and also 2 Timothy 2:15, “**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**” This vehicle can further be substantiated through the parable of the sower in Mark 4:14, “**The sower soweth the word.**” When you and I approach a sinner with the subject of his or her never-dying soul, may we never substitute the truth of God with the traditions of men!

When we look at the second participant, The Holy Spirit, we of course acknowledge that the vehicle through which He works is that of conviction. His job description

is outlined in John 16:8, **“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:”** The outworking of that process is described by Jesus Himself in John 6:44, **“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”** This description of conviction is now and has always been assigned to The Holy Ghost.

The last party of our trio also has a responsibility. The vehicle attached to the sinner is that of repentance. Our Lord Himself addresses the issue in Luke 13 with two identical verses (3 and 5) that say, **“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”** It was obvious to the first century church that repentance was a necessary vehicle in the response of a sinner as evidenced in the Book of Acts. **“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Acts 20:21 “But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” Acts 26:20 “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:”. Acts 17:30

The evidence in the Bible for the need of repentance is so overwhelming, that I almost cringe to think that there are those who disagree with its necessity! Perhaps the divisiveness of this issue rests in a disagreement of definition. The best description that I have ever heard is that repentance is a change of heart that results in a change of direction. I have no trouble with this definition in light of the fact that many times when salvation is spoken of in the scriptures, there is also a reference to the heart. Couple that with the fact that 2 Corinthians 5:17 states, “**Therefore if any**

man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Sounds to me like a change of heart that results in a change of direction!

Now let me show you the barriers that have come between the participants and the vehicles. And as you might expect, these barriers have not been moved into place by God! Since He is “**...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**” (2 Peter 3:9), you can rest assure that it is not His heavenly construction equipment that moves barriers into place! These man-made barriers are illustrated below.

Truth	Conviction	Repentance
^	^	^
Technique	Psychology	Pressure
^	^	^
Witness	Holy Spirit	Sinner

You will note that unlike the last illustration, we now have something that has come between the participant and the vehicle. These barriers have been placed there in order to keep the participant from yoking up with the vehicle! When this man-made substitute process is placed into motion, you are now more likely to produce a false profession than a genuine salvation experience! And before you take issue with me over that statement, take a little survey in some of our Independent Baptist Churches, and compare the number of “professions of faith” with the number of converts in the pews! You’ll find it to be somewhat like that missionary who had 738 professions of faith and 25 baptisms this past year.

Although various practices of these barriers will appear in future chapters of this book, I will address them partially as I close this chapter, so that you will be on the lookout for them throughout the book.

Technique is very simply those teachings that have made their way into our soul-winning arena that have absolutely no basis in scripture. *As-a-matter-of-fact*, some of them are even contrary to biblical principle! Very simply put, soul-winning is not a technique, but rather the acting out of scriptural principle on the subject of sharing your faith.

Psychology on the other hand has become man's substitute for the convicting power of The Holy Spirit. Its design is to manipulate the mind by way of the participant known as the witness, instead of allowing the participant, The Holy Spirit, to work with the vehicle of conviction. Not only does it bypass the Holy Spirit, its use also bypasses the recipient's heart, thus imparting an intellectual knowledge, which alone will not produce repentance! Let's keep in mind that it is conviction that produces repentance, and conviction is assigned to The Holy Spirit alone!

The barrier of pressure has been placed between the sinner and repentance. And once again, it is used by the participant known as the witness. For a firsthand experience of this folly, you need only to examine the average Baptist evangelist's invitation! That is not to exclude the overzealous soul-winner nor the technique-plagued pastor. Let me note at this time that this author is not opposed to the use of a "challenge" in a soul-winning encounter, such as the use of James 4:14, "**Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is your life*? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.**" To warn someone of the brevity of life is not pressure, but rather heartfelt concern toward someone who has indicated that they will think about the matter of their soul later. There is a fine line between pressure and challenge, and one must be led by the Holy Spirit as to when that line has been crossed. Of course, when