

HOW TO DEAL WITH THOSE WHO HAVE LITTLE OR NO CONCERN ABOUT THEIR SOULS

By R. A. Torrey



R. A. Torrey (1856-1928) was a Congregational evangelist, teacher, author, born in Hoboken, New Jersey. He was educated in Yale University and Divinity School. After a period of skepticism he trusted in Jesus Christ as Saviour. Soon after he pastored in Ohio and then in Minnesota. In 1889 Dwight L. Moody called Torrey to Chicago to become the superintendant of the school which became known as the Moody Bible Institute. He also served as pastor of the Chicago Avenue Church, now the Moody Memorial Church, for twelve years. Between 1902-1906 Torrey and Charles Alexander conducted a very fruitful evangelistic outreach in Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, India, China, Japan, Britain, Germany, Canada, and the USA. From 1912-1924 Torrey was dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles during which he pastored the Church of the Open Door. His remaining years involved holding Bible conferences, teaching at the Moody Bible Institute, and other endeavours. (Adapted from "The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church, Elgin S. Moyer, Moody Press, 1982)

The following is from Torrey's larger work, "How To Work For Christ" (Chapter 6, pages 44-54):

The largest class of men and women are those who have little or no concern about their salvation. There are some who contend that there is no use dealing with such, but there is. It is our business when a man has no concern about his salvation to go to work to produce that concern. How shall we do it?

I. Show him that he is a great sinner before God.

There is no better verse for this purpose than Matt. 22:37, 38:

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

Before the one with whom you are dealing reads these verses, you can say to him, "Do you know that you are a great sinner before God?" Very likely he will reply, "I suppose I am a sinner, but I do not know that I am such a great sinner." "Do you know that you have committed the greatest sin that a man can possibly commit?" "No, I certainly have not." "What do you think is the greatest sin that a man can commit?" Probably he will answer, "Murder." "You are greatly mistaken. Let us see what God says about it" Then have him read the passage. When he has read it, ask him, "What is the first and great commandment?" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." "Which commandment is this?" "The first and great commandment." "If this is the first and great commandment, what is the first and great sin?" "Not to keep this commandment." "Have you kept it? Have you put God first in everything, first in your affections, first in your thoughts, first in your pleasures, first in your business, first in everything?" "No, I have not." "What commandment, then, have you broken?" "The first and great commandment."

Some time ago a young man came into our inquiry meeting. I asked him if he was a Christian, and he replied that he was not. I asked him if he would like to be, and he said that he would. I said, "Why, then, do you not become a Christian tonight?" He replied, "I have no special interest in the matter." I said, "Do you mean that you have no conviction of sin?" "Yes," he said, "I have no conviction of sin, and am not much concerned about the whole matter." I said, "I hold in my hand a book which God has given us for the purpose of producing conviction of sin; would you like to have me use it upon you?" Half laughing, he replied, "Yes." When he had taken a seat, I had him read Matt. 22:37, 38. When he had read the passage I said to him, "What is the first and great commandment?" He read it

from the Bible. I said, "If this is the first and great commandment, what is the first and great sin?" He replied, "Not to keep this commandment." I asked, "Have you kept it?" "I have not." "What have you done then?" Said he, "I have broken the first and greatest of God's commandments," and broken down with a sense of sin, then and there he went down before God and asked Him for mercy, and accepted Christ as his Saviour.

Another excellent passage to use to produce conviction of sin is Rom. 14:12:

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

The great object in using this passage is to bring the careless man face to face with God, and make him realize that he must give account to God. When he has read it, ask him, "Who has to give account?" "Every one of us." "Whom does that take in?" "Me." "Who then is to give account?" "I am." "To whom are you to give account?" "To God." "Of what are you to give account?" "Of myself." "Read it that way." "I shall give account of myself to God." "Now just let that thought sink into your heart. Say it over to yourself again and again, 'I am to give account of myself to God. I am to give account of myself to God.' Are you ready to do it?"

Amos 4:12 can be used in much the same way:

"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

Another very effective passage with many a careless man is Rom. 2:16:

"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

When the one with whom you are dealing has read the verse, say, "What is God going to do in some coming day?" "Judge the secrets of men." "Judge what?" "The secrets of men." "Who is it that is going to judge the secrets of men?" "It is God." "Are you ready to have the secret hidden things of your life judged by a holy God?"

II. Show him the awful consequences of sin.

A very effective passage for this purpose is Rom. 6:23:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

When he has read the passage, ask him, "What is the wages of sin?" "Death." Explain to him the meaning of death, literal death, spiritual death, eternal death. Now say, "This is the wages of sin; have you earned these wages?" "Are you willing to take them?" "No." "Well, there is one alternative; read the remainder of the verse." "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "Now you have your choice between the two, the wages that you have earned by sin, and the gift of God; which will you choose?"

Another very useful passage along this line is Is. 57:21:

"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Another verse declaring the fearful consequences of sin, is John 8:34:

"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."

Have the one with whom you are dealing read the passage, then ask him what every one who commits sin is. "The servant of sin." "What kind of a service is that?" Bring it out that it is very degrading. Ask the inquirer if he appreciates that this is true of him, that he is the servant of sin, and then ask him if he does not want to be set free from this awful bondage.

There is another passage that one can use in much the same way, Rom. 6:16:

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

III. Show him the awfulness of unbelief in Jesus Christ.

Very few out of Christ realize that unbelief in Jesus Christ is anything very bad. Of course they know it is not just right, but that it is something awful and appalling they do not dream for a moment. They should be shown that there is nothing more appalling than unbelief in Jesus Christ. A good passage for this purpose is John 3:18, 19:

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

When the passage has been read, say, "Now this verse tells us of some one who is condemned already; who is it?" "He that believeth not." "Believeth not on whom?" "On Jesus." "How many that believe not on Jesus are condemned already?" "Every one." "Why is every one that believeth not on Jesus condemned already?" "Because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." "Why is this such an awful thing in the sight of God?" "Because light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." "In whom did the light come into the world?" "In Jesus." "Jesus, then, is the incarnation of light, God's fullest revelation to man: to reject Jesus, then, is the deliberate rejection of what?" "Light." "The choice of what?" "Darkness." "In rejecting Jesus, what are you rejecting?" "Light." "And what are you choosing?" "Darkness rather than light." Ask all the questions that are necessary to impress this truth upon the mind of the unbeliever, that he is deliberately rejecting the light of God, and choosing darkness rather than light. Another very useful passage for the same purpose is Acts 2:36, 37:

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

When the passage is read, say, "Now here were certain men under deep conviction of sin, crying out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' What was the sin that they committed that produced such deep conviction?" "They had crucified Jesus." "What had God done with Jesus?" "He had made Him both Lord and Christ." "These men had rejected One whom God hath, made both Lord and Christ. Is that a serious sin?" "Yes." "And are you not guilty of that very sin today? You are rejecting Jesus, and this Jesus whom you are rejecting is the very one whom God hath made both Lord and Christ. Is it not an awful sin to deliberately reject one whom God hath thus exalted?"

Another good passage to use is John 16:8, 9:

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of

judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me."

When the passage has been read, ask the one with whom you are dealing, "Of what sin is it that the Holy Ghost, who knows the mind of God, especially convicts men?" "Of the sin of unbelief." "What, then, is the crowning sin in God's sight?" "Unbelief in Jesus Christ" "Why is unbelief in Jesus Christ the crowning sin in God's sight?" Then bring out that it is because it reveals most clearly the heart's deliberate choice of sin rather than righteousness, of darkness rather than light, of hatred to God rather than love to God.

In some cases it is well to use Heb. 10:28, 29:

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

When the passage has been read, ask the inquirer, "How serious an offense was it in God's sight to despise Moses' law?" "The one who did it died without mercy." "Is there any offense more serious in God's sight than despising the law of Moses?" "Yes, treading under foot the Son of God." "Does not every one who rejects Jesus Christ practically tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant wherewith He was sanctified an unholy thing?" "Yes, I suppose he does." "Are you not committing this very sin?"

IV. Show him the awful consequences of unbelief.

For this purpose begin by using Heb. 11:6, the first of the verse:

"But without faith it is impossible to please him."

"Now this verse tells you that there is one thing that God absolutely requires if we are to please Him: what is it?" "Faith." "And no matter what else we do, if we have not faith, what is impossible for us?" "To please Him."

Follow this up by John 8:24:

"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

"What does this verse tell us will happen to you if you do not believe in Jesus?" "I shall die in my sins." Then have the inquirer read verse 21,

"Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come."

That will show the result of once dying in his sins.

Further follow this up by II Thess. 1:7-9:

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

Say to the inquirer, "This verse tells us of a coming day in which Jesus is to take vengeance upon a certain class of people, and they are to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. Who is it that are to be thus punished?" "They that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Are you obeying the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ." "No." "If, then, Christ should come now what would be your destiny?" "I should be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power."

Then turn to Rev. 21:8. This verse needs no comment, it tells its own story:

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Rev. 20:15 may also be used:

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

V. Show him that all one has to do to be lost is simply to neglect the salvation that is offered in Christ.

A verse which will serve for this purpose is Heb. 2:3:

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."

When the verse has been read, ask, "What does this verse tell us is all that is necessary to be done in order to be lost?" "Simply neglect the great salvation." "That is the very thing that you are doing today; you are already lost God has provided salvation for you at great cost: all you need to do to be saved, is to accept the salvation, but you cannot be saved any other way; and all you need to do to be lost, is simply to neglect it. You do not need to plunge into desperate vices, you do not need to be an open and avowed infidel, you do not need to refuse even to accept salvation, if you simply neglect it, you will be lost forever. Will you not let the question of the text sink deep into your heart: 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.'"

Another passage to use for this purpose is Acts 3:22, 23:

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."

"This passage tells us about a Prophet that Moses said the Lord would raise up. Who was that Prophet?" "Jesus." "What does God tell us to do with that Prophet?" "Hear him 'in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.'" "What shall happen unto him who does not hearken unto the words of that Prophet?" "He shall be destroyed from among the people." "Are you hearkening unto the words of that Prophet?"

Still another passage to use is Acts 13:38-41:

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

"Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

"These verses tell us about Jesus. They tell us of something that is preached to us through Him. What is it?" "Forgiveness of sins." "They tell us what it is that a man has to do to obtain this forgiveness of sins; what is it?" "Believe on Him." "What blessing comes to all that believe?" "They are justified from all things." "On the other hand, what comes to us if we neglect to believe?" "We shall perish."

Still another passage to use for this purpose is John 3:36:

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

When the passage has been read, ask, "What does every one who believes on the Son get?" "Everlasting life." "But on the other hand, if one simply neglects to believe what will be the result?" "He shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him."

VI. Show him the wonderful love of God to him.

Oftentimes when every other method of dealing with the careless fails, a realization of the love of God breaks the heart, and leads to an acceptance of Christ. There is no better passage to show the love of God than John 3:16:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Generally it will need no comment. I was once dealing with one of the most careless and vile women I ever met. She moved in good society, but in her secret life was as vile as a woman of the street. She told me the story of her life in a most shameless and unblushing way, half-laughing as she did it. I made no further reply than to ask her to read John 3:16 to which I had opened my Bible. Before she had read the passage through, she burst into tears, her heart broken by the love of God to her.

Another excellent passage to use in the same way is Is. 53:5:

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

God used this passage one night to bring to tears and penitence one of the most stubborn and wayward young women with whom I ever dealt. I made almost no comment, simply read the passage to her. The Spirit of God seemed to hold up before her, her Saviour, wounded for her transgressions, and bruised for her iniquities. Her stubborn will gave way, and before many days she was rejoicing in Christ.

Two other passages which can be used in the same way are Gal. 3:13 and I Pet. 2:24:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:"

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

After showing the love of God through the use of such passages as these mentioned, it is oftentimes well to clinch this truth by using Rom. 2:4, 5:

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Before having the passage read, say, "We have been looking at the love of God to you; now let us see what God tells us is the purpose of that love, and what will be the result of our despising it." Then have the passage, Rom. 2:4, 5 read by the one with whom you are dealing. When he has read it, ask him what is the purpose of God's goodness. "To lead to repentance." "If it does not lead us to repentance, what does it show us about our hearts?" "That they are very hard and impenitent." "And if we refuse to let the goodness of God lead us to repentance, what will be the result?" "We treasure up wrath unto ourselves against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Of course it will not always be possible to get a person who has little or no concern about his salvation to talk with you long enough to go over all these passages, but not infrequently he will become so interested after the use of the first or second passage that he will be glad to go through. Oftentimes it is not at all necessary to use all these passages. Not infrequently I find that the first passage, Matt. 22:37, 38, does the desired work, but it is well to be thorough, and to use all the passages necessary.

Sometimes one will not talk with you for any length of time at all. In such a case, the best thing to do is to select a very pointed and searching passage and give it to him, repeating it again and again, and then as he goes, say to him something like this, "I am going to ask God to burn that passage into your heart"; and then do not forget to do what you said you were going to do. Good passages for this purpose are Rom. 6:23; Mark 16:16; John 3:36; Is. 57:21.

When the inquirer has been led by the use of any or all of these passages to realize his need of a Saviour, and really desires to be saved, of course he comes under the class treated in the preceding chapter (Ch. 5, "Those Who Realize Their Need"), and should be dealt with accordingly. It is not intended that the worker shall follow the precise method laid down here, which is given rather by way of suggestion, but the general plan here outlined has been honored of God to the salvation of very many. But let us be sure, whether we use this method or some other, to do thoroughgoing and lasting work.

Of course it is not supposed that the inquirer will always answer you exactly as stated above. If he does not, make use of the answers that he does give, or if necessary ask the same question another way until he does answer you correctly. The answers given to the questions are found in the text, but people have a great habit of not seeing what is plainly stated in a Scripture text. Oftentimes when they do not answer right, it is well to ask them to look at the verse again, and repeat the question, and keep asking questions until they do give the right answer. Perhaps the inquirer will try to switch you off on to some sidetrack. Do not permit him to do this, but hold right to the matter in hand.

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