



The Reflector

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“Go Therefore and Make Disciples of All the Nations”

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Jesus did not commission his apostles (and us by extension) merely to go baptize people of all the nations, but to "make disciples" of them. There is more to making disciples than just getting folks to let us baptize them. There is more to private and public evangelism than just getting people to agree to be baptized. Just because one "gets baptized" does not mean he has been converted or that he is a disciple. There are a good many gung ho brethren who seem to think that chalking up baptisms is the same as making a disciple. They may develop powerful persuasive techniques (of super-salesmen) to get people to agree to be baptized and cite the large number of people that they have baptized by their method - citing numbers almost too great to be true but enough to get folks to Uh and Ah-ing over the numbers. Churches, eager to grow numerically, often have them in to share their techniques with them so they can have more baptisms. I don't like to be a spoil sport, but I have been known to attend sessions where a speaker is giving such glowing numbers of baptisms using his "get em to the water" quickly technique and, when questions are called for, to ask: "How many did you all have in attendance before you baptized this huge number and how many do you have now?" The numbers are often staggering and not because today's number is so much greater than it was before all the baptisms.

Nothing that I have said should be taken as downplaying baptism. It is an essential part of the conversion and disciple making process. In fact, it is the point where past sins are forgiven (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Only *penitent* believers are to be baptized.

Thus, the disciple making process includes repentance of sins. This is a life changing process. One cannot just "come as you are, where you are and remain as you are" and be scripturally baptized. Repentance involves sorrow or mourning over one's sins and turning away from them and turning to God (cf. 2 Cor. 7:9-10; Acts 20:21). This involves turning away from (dissolving) all sinful relationships be they business, civic, domestic, or spiritual.

Analyze with me the wording of the Great Commission of Jesus in Matt. 28:19-20.

1. "Make disciples" the thing to be done.

2. The next two phrases are modifiers, they tell how to "make disciples"

1) baptizing them....

2) teaching them

So in making disciples one baptizes them into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. AND teaches them to observe all thing the Lord commands.

You may ask, "Does that mean that one has to know *everything* the Lord commands at the time he is baptized?" A good question! No, that is not what the text says. It says teach them *to observe* all things not to teach all things they are to observe. The disciple will in time learn many things he is to do that he does not know now. As he learns them, he will do them because, from the point of being made a disciple, he is committed to the proposition of obeying all of God's will. So, the disciple making process involves a commitment to obeying all of the Lord's commands. This means that converting one is much more than persuading one to be baptized.

I have said all of this to say this: Let's be zealous in evangelism, but let us make it our object to truly making disciples and not just getting folks baptized. One uncommitted to obeying the Lord in everything and sacrificing all he has for Him cannot be his disciple (Luke 14:25-33) no matter how many times he is baptized. Yet, while one can "get baptized" without becoming a disciple he cannot become a disciple without baptism. #

The Simple Gospel: Does God Really Have a Five Step Plan?

Steve Klein

Addicts are sometimes put on programs of rehabilitation involving "steps" to recovery. You may have seen advertised recently a three step program to cure tobacco addiction. There are also nine and twelve step plans for alcohol, drug and gambling addictions. In these programs, each step involves a specific action or behavior which typically is to be done before one advances to the next step. Step plans serve not only to help a person reach a desired goal, they are also an effective means of measuring progress towards that goal. Modern counselors and self-help specialists have discovered that step plans are very effective tools because they clarify for us what must be done to reach a goal and they help keep us focused on achieving it.

It has been said that pioneer preachers, in an effort to simplify the plan of salvation, condensed it down to a five step plan. Common people, addicted to sin, who heard restoration preaching could remember the five step plan simply by associating each step with a digit on one of their hands. They were told that they needed to Hear-Believe-Repent-Confess-and be Baptized (H-B-R-C-B) in order to be saved.

Some have suggested that the Bible does not actually contain these steps, and that insistence on following five steps amounts to binding where God has not bound and/or an oversimplification which leaves off other truths of equal or greater

importance. Others think that if these are truly the steps one must take to be saved, surely God would have specifically stated this in a single passage of scripture; since no single Bible passage appears to contain all five steps, they conclude that God has no five step plan.

At first glance these opinions may appear to have some merit. But notice the assumptions they contain. Is it true that "the Bible does not actually contain these steps"? If the Bible does contain a simple five step plan, how could it be "oversimplification" to teach and follow it? And, who has the right to tell God that if He's going to have a five step plan, He needs to say so "in a single passage of scripture"?

The reality is that there is not a single passage to which one can turn and find it concisely stated that one must H-B-R-C-B in order to be saved. But this should not be surprising. In fact, it would be somewhat surprising if all the steps could be found in one passage. Those with experience in handling the word of God recognize that the totality of truth on *any* subject is seldom if ever found in any one passage. The truths to be found within God's word are accurately discerned and applied only by careful, diligent study (2 Timothy 2:15). Often, various passages of scripture must be aligned and compared before God's truth on a given subject is understood. The prophet Isaiah explained that God's revelation to His people has been "...precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10). If God has a five step plan to cure sin addiction, we should expect it to be revealed in scripture "here a little, there a little." Using this "line upon line" approach, we can clearly see God's five step plan revealed.

Line One — The Steps are "Elementary Principles"

In the course of penning the book of Hebrews, the inspired writer indicated his intention to leave "the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ . . . not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal

judgment” (Hebrews 6:1). One thing we learn from this passage is that there are definitely “elementary principles” (NKJV) or “first principles” (ASV) which are the foundation of a relationship with Christ. “Elementary principles” are fundamentals which must be mastered before one can fully participate in any endeavor. For example, the English alphabet must be mastered before one can read and write in English. If I only learn a partial alphabet, say ABCDEKLMSTXYZ, I will never be able to properly read and write in English. In fact, I would not even be able to write my own name; Steve Klein would come out *Stee Ke!* Just as the elementary alphabet must be learned in order for one to have a working relationship with written English, the first principles of the doctrine of Christ must be mastered in order for one to have a relationship with Christ. Among the six first principles mentioned in Hebrews 6:1-2, you will notice that we find three of the five steps (repentance, faith and baptism). Two of the other principles mentioned (resurrection and judgment) would be included in what a person needs to hear in order to have faith. The remaining first principle mentioned, laying on of hands, was no doubt related to the use and impartation of spiritual gifts which confirmed revelations from God in New Testament times (Mark 16:18; Acts 8:18-19; 2 Timothy 1:6). The scripture foretold that these gifts would “cease” (1 Corinthians 13:8-10), and they have. So, in the modern age, when New Testament revelation has already been confirmed, laying on of hands no longer serves as a fundamental of the doctrine of Christ.

The point is that, even if no other passage in the Bible addressed the subject, we would know from Hebrews 6:1-2 that hearing, faith, repentance and baptism are fundamental necessities to a relationship with Christ. Plainly, these are at least some of the first steps one must take in order to walk with Christ.

Line 2 — The five steps toward the goal of salvation are connected.

As one reads through the New Testament, noting the verses which address what a person is to

do to reach the goal of salvation, it is obvious that each of the five steps is frequently mentioned. One also soon becomes aware of the fact that the various steps are frequently connected to one another. So that, instead of simply having “confession” mentioned as a step one must take to be saved, Paul tells us that “with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Time and again the New Testament mentions each of the five steps. Time and again, one of the various five steps is mentioned in connection with another one of the steps. Why? Why mention these things together if in fact they are not part of a single plan? It is obvious that the steps are mentioned in connection with one another because *they have a connection* with one another — each is an integral part of a plan man must follow to be saved from sin.

Line 3 — Accounts of Salvation in Acts.

The Book of Acts is filled with accounts of the steps men and women were directed to take in order to be saved from sin. If we are honest, we can see God’s five step plan being revealed in these accounts. Perhaps all the steps are not found in any one account, but often three or four steps are specifically mentioned, while the others may be implied. As we read through Acts with the idea in mind of looking for the things people were told to do to be saved, the cumulative effect is overwhelming. In Acts 2, Peter preached to a multitude of Jews and told them to “repent and let everyone of you be baptized for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Here the Jews were told to take two steps in order to be saved. Why didn’t Peter tell them to take any of the other steps? Well, he did. In Acts 2:22 he said, “Men of Israel *hear* these words...” In Acts 2:36 he told them to “know assuredly” (i.e. *believe*) that Jesus is Lord and Christ. In the very first conversion account found in Acts we have a record of people being told to hear, believe, repent and be baptized in order to receive forgiveness. These four steps, along with confession, are frequently repeated in the other conversion accounts in Acts. Here are a few examples:

The Samaritans in Acts 8 *heard* Philip

preaching (Acts 8:5-6), *believed* what he preached concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12) and “were *baptized*, both men and women” (Acts 8:12b).

Later in the same chapter, an Ethiopian *heard* Philip preach Jesus (Acts 8:35), *believed* in Jesus, *confessed* his belief, and was *baptized* in water (Acts 8:36-38).

The first convert from among the Gentiles, Cornelius, was told that he needed to *hear* Peter preach saving words (Acts 10:6; 11:14); he was told that if he *believed* the words he heard he would receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43), and he was *baptized* in water (Acts 10:47-48). Later, in Acts 11:18 we learn that these Gentiles had also *repented*.

Lydia *heard* and was *baptized* (Acts 16:14-15).

The Philippian jailor *heard*, was told to *believe*, and was *baptized* (Acts 16:30-33).

“The Corinthians, *hearing, believed, and were baptized*” (Acts 18:8).

Do you feel the weight of all these examples? Taken together, the conversions recorded in Acts do indeed form a compelling revelation of God’s five step plan for sinners seeking salvation.

When all three lines of God’s revelation which we have examined are considered together, the evidence is insurmountable. God does have a five step plan to for those who are addicted to sin! Each and every sin addict alive today who desires to find relief needs to follow God’s simple five step plan. You’ve got to do the steps! #

J. W. McGarvey on...

“Criticism and Witticism.

“Under this heading there is an editorial in the Christian-Evangelist reviewing the last lesson which I gave its senior editor. He says: ‘Professor McGarvey, so far as we know, never manifested the qualities of a humorist until he assumed the role of a Biblical critic.’

He does me too great honor in representing me as having assumed the role of a Biblical critic. I make no such pretension. I only aim to stand in between the critics, some of whom I have had

opportunity to study, and my brethren who have not enjoyed this opportunity, that I may give the latter the benefit of my readings, and guard them against being misled. If the editor had known me better, he would have known that, without being a humorist, I have always been somewhat given to humor ; perhaps too much so for a preacher. I have always been disposed to laugh at things which were ludicrous, and the only development in this respect of which I am conscious in connection with Biblical criticism, is this : I find myself now disposed to laugh at some things which once made me angry. When I first began to read these destructive critics, I was like Elihu while listening in silence to the sophistical arguments of Job and his friends—my wrath was kindled. I recollect particularly that when I read Robertson Smith’s ‘Old Testament in the Jewish Church,’ I was out of humor from beginning to end. But now that I see farther into the sophistries and follies of the critics, I laugh at some things which then kindled my wrath. I have experienced a change somewhat like that of the barnyard animals when, after the ass had come in clothed with the lion’s skin, and had frightened them all, they saw his long ears stick out, and all broke into a roar of laughter. I must be excused, then, if I laugh at some of the ridiculous positions of the critics and their apologists.

“I have observed, too, that some things are exposed in their nakedness as soon as you turn the laugh on them, and that a good laugh is sometimes more effective than any amount of argument. If a fellow should stand up and say that two and two make five, and you should undertake to argue with him, such a fellow will dispute all day, and have the last word in spite of you. But if you laugh, the company will probably laugh with you, and that’s an end of the matter. It is precisely so in regard to many of the positions and expositions of the destructive critics ; so I have laughed, and I will laugh, at their folly. If I were writing a book, I would try to straighten my face and put on my dignity; but as I am only writing for a weekly paper, I can afford to have a little fun.”

(From *Short Essays in Biblical Criticism* pp. 71-73) #