



Kay Meyer in her favorite pose at a radio microphone.

Families are Transformed Through the Gospel of Christ

by Kay L. Meyer

How can meeting physical, emotional, and spiritual needs open doors to share the Gospel? How do we respond with love and point people to Jesus Christ when they struggle with relationships, parenting, marriage, communication, physical illness, addictions, and the myriad of other issues today's families face?

The family and the Church are two institutions established by God. Would you agree with me that these two institutions are under attack in today's world? Together we must take up the shield of faith and use the spiritual weapons God has given us. This includes the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Why is reaching people for Christ and making them His disciples so critical in today's world? Here are some statistics that help answer this question:

- **The United States is the third largest mission field in the world.** (The only other countries with more nonbelievers are India and China.)

- **The United States is going through an unprecedented change in religious practices.** Large numbers of American adults are disaffiliating themselves from Christianity and organized religions. 76.5% (159 million) of Americans identify themselves as Christian. This is a major shift from 86.2% in 1990. Identification with Christianity has suffered a loss of 9.7% in 11 years, about 0.9 % per year.

- **Nearly one in five Americans say they are atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular."** *

- **Five years ago adults who claimed "no religion" made up**

about 15% of the population. It is a seismic shift from 40 years ago, when about 7 percent of American adults said they had no religious affiliation. *

- **One-third of those ages 18-22 are religiously unaffiliated today.**

- **The most recent George Barna research said that the leading influences in American society is no longer the church,** but movies, television, the Internet, books, music, public policy and law, and the family. The Christian Church, his research shows, is no longer among the top influences these days — a far cry from the way things used to be.

The good in all the bad news is that the family is still a leading influencer. Working together, we can more effectively reach and equip individuals and their families for Christ.

It's a fact. The culture we live in is changing. But, as the Holy Spirit convinces people of our sincerity, we can be confident the Lord will open doors to share the Law (Romans 3:20) and Gospel (Romans 1:16; John 3:16). Although our culture continues to change, the Gospel of Christ remains the same. It is the Gospel that transforms lives in time for eternity!

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19). Witnessing begins as we GO into our homes and share God's love with our children and grandchildren. And as we GO, we trust that the Lord will open doors for us to share God's love with our families and others in our community. So what are we waiting for? Let's GO!

I was elected in 2012 to serve on the Int'l LLL Board of Directors, the gov-

* (source: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life)

erning body for Lutheran Hour Ministries. What an honor and privilege to serve the Lord! I was reconnected to LHM when I was invited to speak at a **Regional Outreach Conference (ROC)** in Branson, Mo., on “Sharing Christ with Hurting People.” I love LHM’s renewed focus on “equipping the saints to witness.”

LHM is equipping the saints in many and varied ways. People of all ages are being equipped to witness through **The Lutheran Hour** radio program, **LHM Regional Outreach Conferences**, and **MISSION U**. I encourage you to promote these outreach and equipping opportunities in your congregation and your community.

WHAT ARE WITNESSING BASICS?

Before we can effectively begin the process of meeting people’s needs with a goal of sharing Christ, we should understand basics about witnessing. These witnessing basics are shared in more detail in my book *Witnessing—A Lifestyle*.

Begin with prayer

Do you know someone who is not a Christian or who has fallen away from the Church? Then begin praying for the person. Continue to pray until God opens a door of opportunity for you. Remember God answers prayers. He desires that we pray for those who do not know Christ.

Betty called to talk with me following a radio program on “Improving Your Prayer Life.” She asked if I would pray for her and her husband. She explained that he had been unfaithful. She had recently learned of this and was struggling to find a way to forgive him. As we talked, I learned she and her husband had not attended church in years. This conversation gave me the opportunity to talk about the Lord and what He had done for her and her husband. We referred her to important resources and stayed in touch. And we prayed for Betty and her husband. It took time, but their marriage survived. They are now active in a congregation.

Listen attentively

The next step in the witnessing process is to listen attentively and find ways to build a positive, trusting relationship. Some people think this always takes weeks, months, or years, but I have had hundreds of witnessing opportunities in the community and as I travel. It doesn’t always take a long time. At times, God may bring someone into your life that you will minister to for months or even years.

Share your personal testimony and relate faith to life

What is a personal testimony? It’s when we testify — when we tell others how the Lord has walked with us through good times and bad. We can also call them “faith stories.”

My youngest son, Jeff, died of cancer when he was 32. The Lord walked with our family through this difficult time. I was overwhelmed as the main caregiver for Jeff who lived with us during his illness. My younger sister organized family and friends to bring a meal once a week to help. The meals were brought on the day I took Jeff to doctors’ appointments and radiation or chemo treatments. Jeff passed from this life to the next on June 22, 2010. As you can imagine this was a very difficult time for our daughter, my husband, and other extended family members. But, I can testify that God walked with us through the valleys. He was also with Jeff. We praise God that Jeff knew His Savior and is now with Him in heaven. “Jesus said, I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

It’s amazing how often God has placed me on an airplane or at a conference where the person sitting next to me is struggling with grief or a loved one’s illness.

So, talk to your family, friends, and those in the community about the Lord and how He has walked with you through various challenges of life. The more you do, the easier it will be.

Recently a friend in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod called me with the following idea. He said, “We must give our Lutheran members opportunities to share their faith with their loved ones. I thought it was such a good idea I want to share it with supporters of LHM and congregational leaders. Any congregation or group could do this.”

Allow members to tell their children/grandchildren what their faith means to them and how the Lord has been with them in good times and in bad times

Churches can coordinate this. Get a video camera, set it up in a church conference room. Have your members who are parents/grandparents come in and record what their faith means to them for their loved ones. Look into the camera. Then just speak about your faith and how God has walked with you through good times and bad times. Give a copy of it to your children and grandchildren. Call them testimonies of their faith or call them faith stories.

The presentation doesn’t need to be smooth or professional. Encourage members to speak from their heart.

Answer questions, show concern, be open and honest, and respond to needs

Answer questions people ask. Questions are often the way the Lord opens doors. Certainly we can ask unchurched people questions, too. But I really like it when someone asks me a question. Show concern and respond to their needs.

Here is one example: On the way home from the LLL convention in Canada last summer I sat next to a young man who asked me where I’d been. I told

him and added that I was elected to serve on the Board of Directors. He then asked, “Are you a pastor?” I laughed...and said, “No, I’m a lay person who loves the Lord.” As I listened and showed concern for him and his family, I learned they recently joined a Protestant church because his 9-year old daughter asked him why they never went to church. He went on to explain that he had never been a churchgoer and his wife was a fallen-away Roman Catholic. I encouraged him in his new faith journey.

He thought Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and his new Protestant church were different religions. I explained that they were all Christian denominations and part of the Body of Christ. As I explained this, I shared a brief Law/Gospel presentation. Following this, he asked me more questions about faith issues and God’s Word. It was a great visit that lasted for much of our trip. God opened this door of opportunity because of a question he asked.

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Former LCMS president Dr. Gerald Kieschnick spoke about family challenges and the impact of society during a radio interview by Kay Meyer in 2006.

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Use actions and words

I enjoyed interviewing Rev. Dr. Alvin Barry, a past president of the LCMS who is now with the Lord. His daring goal was to share Christ every day with someone. As I interviewed him, he told one story after another of times he has shared Christ with people he met in his daily life. It almost always started by meeting human needs and showing care and concern.

The following are two of the stories. Dr. Barry was flying across the country. A woman near him had gotten sick. She had two young children with her. No one wanted to help her. Finally Dr. Barry said, "Give me the children. I can take care of them. I'm a grandpa. I can do this." He then said, "I took off my tie and bounced the two children on my lap for the rest of the trip." As they got near their destination, the woman began to feel better. She turned to him and said, "Why did you help me? No one else would." He



Simply "talk about Jesus," Kay Meyer suggests.

responded, "I'm a Christian. Jesus is my Savior. He suffered for my sins and wants me to be His hands and feet in the world. You needed help, and I was here. So, I offered to help. Now that you are feeling better, maybe I could share more with you about Jesus. Would that be alright with you?"

Here's another story from Dr. Barry. "A woman sat next to me on another flight. She had on a nice white pants suit. Soon the stewardess brought us drinks. I thought this would be a great time to get acquainted with her. Then I accidentally spilled my coke all over her white outfit. I said, "Oh, I'm so sorry! I so wanted to tell you about my Savior and the forgiveness he offers us." She turned to look at him and responded boldly, "Buddy, you need His forgiveness more than I do." He shared with a little laugh, "You win some and you lose some...but you don't stop sharing the message with those you meet."

Don't go ahead of the Holy Spirit

Allow the Lord to open and close doors. Too often Christians who want to witness rush ahead of the Holy Spirit. Wait on the Lord. Be patient. Allow people to ask you a question by being open, honest, and kind.

Seven Points in Sharing the Message of Salvation with an Adult *

The following are points to share about God's love with those in the community:

1) Talk about God: God is just and righteous (Psalm 7:11, Dan. 9:14, Matt. 5:48). He is loving (John 3:16) and He must punish sin.

2) Talk about man: God created man in His image (Gen. 1:26). Man rebelled or sinned against God. Sin separates man from God (Rom. 5:19). And man cannot save himself (Eph. 2:8-9, Titus 3:5).

3) Talk about sin: There is no one righteous (Rom 3:10, 3:23, 3:20). We all sin daily. I often use myself as an example and suggest to those in the class that they be open enough to do this, too. So, I'll say, "I can break the first commandment while I'm sitting in church. Instead of listening to the pastor's sermon, I'm thinking about what I'm going to prepare for the family when they come over after church. I'm not putting God first."

Explain that the Ten Commandments are a mirror and a guide. Explain that God's Word says if we stumble in one place we are guilty of all (James 2:10). Explain that sin separates us from God (Is. 59:2 and Rom. 6:23a).

4) Talk about Jesus: Jesus is both true God and true man at the same time. He was perfect and without sin. He suffered and died in our place. His death brings us forgiveness and eternal life (Phil 2:6, John 1:1, 1:14, John 20:28).

5) Talk about repentance: God tells us to repent of our sins. He wants us to turn to Him and trust Him for our salvation (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).

6) Talk about faith: Eternal life is a gift, not a result of our good works. So, although we want to help others, our works do not gain us brownie points with God. He has given us faith as an unrestricted gift (Eph. 2:8,9). [Note: Our faith is not abstract. It is given to us in the proclamation of the Gospel and the distribution of the sacraments. The language of Jesus purchasing atonement on the cross and distributing our salvation is central to mission work and evangelism.]

7) Talk about the gift of eternal life: I love the story in Acts 16:24-36 — why don't you read it with your family some evening at the dinner table? Paul and Silas were in jail. Yet they were praying and singing hymns to God. The prisoners were listening. So, obviously, was the jailer. After the earthquake that opened the prison doors, he asked them, "What must I do to be saved?" They reply, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the Word of the Lord to him and all the others in his house.

Because Jesus suffered, died, and was resurrected, we can have forgiveness and eternal life. It's a gift! Remember to tell people they don't need to "do anything" to win salvation. Ask if they have questions. Ask if they would like to repent of their sins and put

Dedicated to Educating and Equipping

by Kay L. Meyer



I'm the founder and president of Family Shield Ministries and radio host of Family Shield. The ministry often begins

its relationship with individuals by addressing issues and challenges in daily lives. Then we strive to share the Law and Gospel as the Lord opens doors.

Family Shield Ministries' (FSM) mission is to: educate and equip people, through the power of the Gospel, to know Christ, grow in His Word, and strengthen individuals and their families. A Recognized Service Organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the ministries and services include the weekly Family Shield radio program heard on over 50 stations in 25 states, the counter-cult ministry, educational programs, sharing and promoting resources, and working in partnership with other like-minded Gospel-oriented organizations.

Family Shield Ministries' name is based on Eph. 6:16 "Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." ■

their faith in Christ. Pray with them or encourage them to pray privately to the Lord. Explain that when they repent and believe, the Holy Spirit is in their hearts through faith. He will teach them (John 16:13).

Join us in praying that the Lord will bless the work of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Lutheran Hour Ministries, and Family Shield Ministries as we "equip the saints to share their faith in their daily lives." ■

* From *Witnessing—A Lifestyle*, a book by Kay Meyer