

Desert Rain

Sermon Ideas



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Sermon 1: Desert Rain

Purpose: to provide an overview to Desert Rain and a need for prayer and the Holy Spirit to energize our witness.

Philip and the Ethiopian Acts 8: 26-40

The Holy Spirit sent Philip to the Ethiopian in the desert.

He was searching for Jesus because he was trying to understand Isaiah 53.

Philip explained it to him and brought him to Jesus.

The Ethiopian was baptized.

God wants to use us in the same way he used Philip.

We must cultivate a relationship with the Holy Spirit like Philip had.

- a. Personal Bible Study
- b. Prayer
- c. Sharing our faith

The world is the desert and the church is preparing to storm the desert.

Review an Overview of Desert Rain and give a handout to each person.

People are searching for Truth and God has Appointments for you

"The Spirit told Philip, "Go to the desert... to that chariot." ... Philip ran up to the chariot... he met an Ethiopian eunuch... and told him the good news about Jesus... and Philip baptized him. Acts 8:29-38 "

"God is the great Master Worker, and by His providence He prepares the way for His work to be accomplished. He provides opportunities, opens up lines of influence, and channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and stand ready to cooperate with Him, they will see a great work accomplished."--6 T 24

We Must Search for Them

- "A Master Prospector is prospecting every time he writes a letter, every time he shakes a hand, every time he makes a phone call. With every personal encounter, he is asking himself the question, 'Does this person have any Needs that I may satisfy with the benefits of my program?'" Paul J. Meyer, President, Success Motivation Institute
- "Jesus saw in every soul one to whom must be given the call to His kingdom." DA 151
- "There are many who are sincerely seeking for light, who know not what they must do to be saved." CM 42
- "All over the world men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. Prayers and tears and inquiries go up from souls longing for light, for grace, for the Holy Spirit. Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in. AA 109
- Saving souls is an attitude....a way of life, we must be aware of people searching for Jesus and we will find them.

Find their Needs

"If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his friend . Therein is a drop of honey that catches his heart , which is the high road to his reason, and which, when once gained, you will find but little trouble in convincing his judgment of the justice of your cause, if indeed that cause be a just one."

Abraham Lincoln

"God's plan is first to get at the heart by... personal ministry in the homes of the people, he learns their needs , their sorrows, their trials; and, cooperating with the great Burden Bearer, he shares their afflictions, comforts their distresses, relieves their soul hunger, and wins their hearts to God." AA 527.

Meeting the Need

"The most important secret of salesmanship is to find out what the other fellow wants, then help him find the best way to get it." Clayton M. Hunsicker

Always think about:

"How can Jesus meet his/her **needs**?"

God's Blueprint for Success

"Go to your neighbors one by one, and come close to them till their hearts are warmed by your unselfish interest and love sympathize with them, pray for them, watch for opportunities to do them good.

... and as you can, gather a few together and open the Word of God to their darkened minds.

Keep watching, and make the most of the privileges that God gives you of laboring with him in his moral vineyard.

"Do not neglect speaking to your neighbors, and doing them all the kindness in your power, that you "by all means may save some."" RH 1888/03/13

In another message we will learn how to respond, when we encounter these "Divine Appointments.

Sermon 2: Great Things Happen when God's People Pray

Purpose: To encourage them to use the "Powerful Personal Devotions for Desert Rain" plan in their daily devotions.

Note: Be prepared to distribute copies of the "Powerful Personal Devotions for Desert Rain" plan in the bulletin for each person present. (See the handout with lesson 3, page **Error! Bookmark not defined..**)

- Review the plan with them during the sermon

Ideas for the Sermon:

1. Talk about the power of prayer
2. The importance of combining prayer with action
 - "Should we give our lives up to prayerful meditation, our lights would grow dim, for light is given to us that we may impart it to others, and the more we impart light, the brighter our own light will become.
 - "In order to increase our spiritual endowment, it is necessary to walk in the light. In view of the event of Christ's soon coming, we must vigilantly working to prepare our own souls, to keep our own lamps trimmed and burning....
 - "and to urge upon others the necessity of getting ready for the coming of the Bridegroom.
 - Watching and working must go together; faith and works must be united, or our characters will not be symmetrical and well-balanced, perfect in Christ Jesus." RH 6 Feb1894
3. We cannot even pray sincerely if we are not involved in reaching out to others.

"Only those who devote themselves to His service[spreading the Gospel], ...they alone can pray in sincerity, "Thy kingdom come." MB 108
4. Prayer and the Holy Spirit

When we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God.-- Ev 699
5. Roger Morneau's book is a good resource for stories about soulwinning.
6. The importance of setting aside a regular time for prayer
7. Prayer is a faith builder. When we look at what we have done in the past, we limit ourselves to that. We must learn through prayer to see what God wants to do through us. There is no limit to that. We can have hundreds of people out opening night. We can see hundreds of people baptized, if it is God's plan and we seek to discover His plan.

Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee." This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ. SC70

Sermon 3: Aim High

Success has been defined as "The progressive realization of a predetermined worthwhile goal."
More simply stated, Success is a goal directed action.

Three Ingredients for Success

1. **A Journey**-Notice that success is the progressive realization of a goal. That means that success is a journey, not a destination. No matter how much of a failure you may have been, you can be successful, now. The moment you set a worth while goal and begin moving in that direction, you are successful.
2. **Goal**- Many people have a lot of action but if it isn't goal directed they usually just go in circles and never seem to accomplish much.
"Success in any line demands a definite aim." Ed 264
"In all their work, let them have a definite aim." COL 344
In fact, *"An aimless life is a living death." 4T417*
3. **Action**- Many set noble goals, but if there is no action, nothing much seems to happen.
"The agency of the spirit of God does not remove from us the necessity of exercising our faculties and talents." CT 361

Joshua

When Joshua led Israel to a great victory over the Amorites, in Joshua 10:12 we read that *"Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel: Oh sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the valley of Aijalon. So the sun stood still and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies."* This miraculous visible token of God's presence was no doubt an inspiration to the Israelite army encouraging them on to a great victory.

And so many today are waiting for the sun to stand still, waiting for God to do something. But let's look a little closer at the story of Joshua and there we discover his secret to success.

"Joshua had received the promise that God would overthrow the enemies of Israel, yet he put forth as earnest effort as though success depended upon the armies of Israel alone. He did all that human energy could do, and then he cried in faith for divine aid. God does not generally work miracles to advance His truth...Our part is to develop mature wise plans. Ev 652

"The secret of success is the union of Divine Power with human effort... The man who commanded the Sun to stand still upon Gibeon... was the man who for hours lay prostrate upon the earth in prayer in the camp at Gilgal. The men of prayer are the men of power. PP 509

True success must involve both ingredients.

Five Action Steps For Christian Success

I. Set A Meaningful Goal

A Meaningful Goal must be a Worthwhile Goal-

In order for a goal to be worthwhile, it should be a goal that will not only benefit you, but one that will benefit others also. Keep the Christian principles of self denial and self sacrifice clearly before you.

Pray for guidance in making decisions about what your goals should be.

Ask for wisdom from God, James said to ask for it. James 1:5

Make Decisions- Do Something!

Many people say that they pray for God to tell them what to do. Or they are waiting for God to work some great work. While it is true that God does sometimes intervene in miraculous ways, he also gave us a brain to use and expects us to use it. It could be that while we are waiting for God to accomplish some great work, God is waiting for us to do something.

Test Your Decision-

Give God an opportunity to close the door. You can pray, "God I have decided to buy a van so I can take people to the meetings every night. If this is not the direction we should go, please close the door for us.

B. Specific Goal

"Success in any line demands a definite aim." Ed 264

Your goals should be specific and tangible, something that is measurable.

A goal to be a better husband next year is not specific nor tangible. It would be better to set a goal to do something nice every day. For example, to say something positive about your wife, everyday, to her!!!! Then at the end of each day, you can determine if you have made progress towards your goal.

A goal to help with the meetings coming up is not specific, it would be better to set a goal to bring two visitors to the meetings, to attend every night and to put \$2 in the offering every night.

C. Realistic and Attainable

In order for a goal to be a motivating goal, it must be realistic. It does not help for us to set an unattainable goal.

For example, a goal to bring 100 people to the meetings might not be realistic if you only brought 1 person to the meetings last year.

D. Challenging Goals

On the other hand, a goal should be somewhat risky. A goal for our church to baptize the same number of people that we baptized last year will not be motivating.

Dr. Hayakawa from Stanford University conducted a research project, where he set up a peg on the floor, and gave a group of executives some rubber rings to try to toss onto the peg. He let them stand as far away from or as close to the peg as they choose. The farther away they were from the peg, the more points they received. The ones who were least successful in their businesses were the ones who either stood so close that they couldn't miss, but scored few points, or the ones who were the high risk takers who were so far back they couldn't make any. Those who took a moderate risk, close enough to make some but far enough away to be challenging, were the ones who were most successful in business.

We must stretch for our goals. Set an attainable goal that will stretch us to the limits of our God given capabilities. This is the faith factor. When we stretch two things happen, we give God the opportunity to do something big and we grow in the process.

"Many whom God has qualified to do excellent work accomplish very little, because they attempt little. Thousands pass through life as if they had no definite object [specific goal] for which to live, no standard to reach. Such will obtain a reward proportionate to their works." COL 331

Pray that God will lead you to set the right goals for Him and rest in the confidence of an Omnipotent God who can do all things.

II. Anticipate any Obstacles or Roadblocks

- A. After you have defined your goal there arises an implied question: "if this is what I want, and what I believe God wants for me, then why do I not already have it? What are the circumstances, conditions, or reasons that you have not yet reached your goal?"
- B. These questions should be listed in your plan.
- C. CAUTION- Do not be negative here. It is wise to look for and plan for contingencies, but do not be negative. Obstacles are stepping stones to success. Over come the obstacle and you will be that much closer to success.

III. Short Range Action Steps

- A. Once you have isolated the reasons you do not already have your goal, the solutions come almost automatically. Each solution becomes an action step to achieve the goal or a short range goal that will lead you to the long range one.

- B. Success is a Journey

When you break your long range goal down into individual action steps you can have many successes along the way and since success breeds success, you can set into motion a very powerful force to enable God to work through His own ordained channels, to accomplish great things through you and you can help move God's work forward.

"Nothing is so successful as success, let this be secured by preserving effort and the work will move forward." 7T24

- C. Desert Rain Action Steps

1. If your goal is to see two people that you invited to the meetings, baptized, then you can count on the fact that roughly one half of those who are attending will be baptized. That means you should get four people to attend.
2. We have found that roughly one half of those who pre register, will actually show up. Therefore, you should set a goal to have eight people pre-register.
3. We have also discovered that you will need about ten people on your prayer list for each one who pre-registers. In order to have four people pre-register, you will need eighty people on your prayer list.
4. This means that your short range action steps would be, to develop a prayer list of 80 names. Find eight who are willing to pre-register and four to attend.

Another way to look at it, would be if your church wants to have 50 new members at the end of the meetings, you will need to set a church goal of 100 invited guests attending, two hundred people pre-registered and 2000 names on your church prayer list.

IV. Set A Target Date For Each Step

"Decide how long a time is required for a given task and then bend every effort toward accomplishing the work in a given time. The exercise of the will-power will make the hands move deftly." COL344

Deadlines and target dates are a motivating factor-

- Football games- more points scored in the last 2 min. than the rest of the game.

- April 15th at the post office

Break your goal down into attainable short range goals and then set a time limit for accomplishing each step.

V. Visualize Your Success In Achieving The Goal

- A. Here is where many plans fall short. Champions, good goal setters can see the results clearly and taste the rewards even before they come.
- B. God Calls things that are not as though they were. Rom 4:17
- C. We should learn to visualize our goals as though they were already accomplished. in order to do that, it is essential to believe that God led you in setting your goals and He will give you the victory. Visualize that victory. See yourself as the kind of person who makes things happen. Set your own personal goals to develop into an outstanding Christian worker for God.

"We must consider the aim and object of life, and ever keep worthy purposes in view. Every day the thoughts should be trained and kept to the point as the compass to the pole.

"The thoughts must be trained. Gird up the loins of the mind that it shall work in the right direction and after the order of will-formed plans: then every step is one in advance..."

"Everyone should have his aims and purposes, and then make every thought and action of that character to accomplish that which he purposes. The thoughts must be controlled. There must be a fixedness of purpose to carry out that which you shall undertake." MCP 656

"You should have an aim, a purpose in life. Where there is no purpose, there is a disposition to indolence; but where there is a sufficiently important object in view, all the powers of the mind will come into spontaneous activity...."

"In order to make life a success the thoughts must be steadily fixed upon the object of life. MCP442

Illustration: The blind skiers can ski down the most challenging slopes by simply following the sound of a beeper on the back of the guide in front of them. If they allowed their thoughts to drift away from the guide, they would be lost.

Conclusion Review The Action Steps To Success

1. Keep your goals before you.
2. Write them down.
3. Review them daily.
4. Make adjustments as necessary.
5. PRAY! PRAY! PRAY! for wisdom and power to make it happen.
6. Never concede the possibility of defeat. Act and Talk as though you have accomplished your goal..

Sermon 4: David and Goliath

Purpose: to focus on what God can do rather than limit our expectations to what we can do. Preparation for the Battle. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Sam 16:7 Most people spend hours each week maintaining their outward appearance; they should do even more to develop their inner character. What steps are you taking to improve your hearts attitude? Doing push ups and lifting weights would not have helped David in this battle. Physical fitness is important, but mental and spiritual fitness should also be a top priority.

Goliath appeared awesome in mans eyes, but in God's eyes he was no different from anyone else. Some times those whom we would like to win for God seem far out of reach. Not ready. However, no one is out of reach for God. We must learn to see people from God's eyes. (17:4-7)

We are at war for the souls of men and women. When we are saved, we become a new creation, the old is passed away. We die to sin. It is important to see people the way they can be, if they yield their lives to God.

Goliath did not realize that he was fighting against not only David but God. Sometimes we are opposed in our efforts to show God's love to the lost, but they do not realize they too are fighting against God. (17:9)

What a difference perspective can make. Most of the onlookers saw only a giant. David, however, saw a mortal man defying almighty God. He knew he would not be alone when he faced Goliath: God would fight with him. David looked at his situation from God's point of view. Viewing impossible situations from God's point of view helps us put giant problems in perspective, Once we see clearly, we can fight more effectively. (v26)

Illustration: The Circus Elephant

Have you ever noticed that the circus elephants have a chain around their leg that is fastened to a small peg in the ground. They could easily yank that peg out of the ground and escape, but they never even try. Why not? When they were baby elephants, the chain was fastened to pipe that was set in concrete. No matter how hard they tried, they could not pull the pipe from the ground. After a time, they quit trying. Then when the pipe is switched to a small peg, they never even try to escape. Even to the point that some elephants have been known to burn to death in a circus tent fire, because they did not try to escape. Some times we limit what God can do, by the successes or failures we have had in the past.

No matter how hopeless the challenge, God is able. He can reach the unreachable. Have you been limiting God's power as you build your prayer list? Are their any Goliaths that you would like to see God use you to reach? Why not put their names on your prayer list now?

Sermon 5: How to Respond when God Provides the Opportunity

"Go to your neighbors one by one, and come close to them till their hearts are warmed by your unselfish interest and love sympathize with them, pray for them, watch for opportunities to do them good.

... and as you can, gather a few together and open the Word of God to their darkened minds.

Keep watching, and make the most of the privileges that God gives you of laboring with him in his moral vineyard. "Do not neglect speaking to your neighbors, and doing them all the kindness in your power, that you "by all means may save some.'" RH 1888/03/13

1. Pray for discernment

Ask God to empower you to recognize the opportunities that he provides.

2. Listen for hints of discouragement, pain, or joy.

Perhaps at work, someone might say, "Wow, I sure will be glad when this week is over." Immediately ask yourself, "Why did he say that?" What is going on in his life?

3. Send prayer to God for the right words.

4. Check it out with a perception check

You might say something like this: "John, you just mentioned that you will be glad when this week is over, sounds to me like you had a tough week, am I right?"

Notice there are three parts to the above response:

- a. Identify what you sense may be a problem.
- b. Feedback to him what you sense may be a problem.
- c. Check it out with a question, "am I right?"

Notice that the first two steps are quite tentative. You cannot know that there is a problem, or what the problem is until he confirms it to you. This is an incredibly powerful way to respond to the opportunities that God opens for you. They happen all the time.

5. Share a testimony about that situation

Yes, I am really worried about my daughter. She seems to be getting into trouble at school.

I know what you mean. We have been going through the same kinds of things with ours too. In fact, for a while, things got so bad, I didn't know what would happen. If it wasn't for Jesus, and the constant assurance we get from Him I don't think I could have made it through those times. The most encouraging thing for me is to find the promises in the Bible that God gives to us. Have you ever tried that?

"No, I guess I never have learned much about the Bible."

6. Invite them to study the Bible, read a book or to the meetings

- I just got a great book about how God answers prayers. It was a great help for me and I know that it will help you too. Would you like to see it?
- We are having a series of meetings in our church that deal with lots of Bible topics that help us to deal with the problems we face every day. I am going to be attending, do you think you might like to go with me?

Be prepared to do some role play for this segment and let the people practice with each other. Just have them pair up, and one person can say something that will open a door of opportunity, then let the other respond.

Sermon 6: Andrew and Peter (John 1:29-42)

Goal: (1) A working relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit results in leading souls to Christ. (2) Show them how to invite people to the meetings.

- Jesus came to take away the sins of the world.
- John's mission was to reveal Jesus to the world. (v31)
- John's passion for revealing Jesus came from an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit. (verses 32-34)
- When we baptize with water, we too are revealing Jesus to the world. (v31)
- True happiness comes when people know Jesus. The greatest thing we can do for them is to introduce them to Jesus.
- They spent time with Jesus (vs. 38 & 39)
- The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). *And he brought him to Jesus.* John 1:41-42
Out of the time spent with Jesus, Andrew felt the desire to bring his brother to Christ.
- *"No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus; the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. If we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and are filled with the joy of His indwelling Spirit we shall not be able to hold our peace. If we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good we shall have something to tell. Like Philip when he found the Saviour, we shall invite others into His presence... There will be an earnest longing that those around us may 'behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'" SC78*

How to Invite People to the Meetings.

- Use the material provided in the manual under the section, "How to Make the Invitation." (page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)
- It would be good to role play the skit found on the same page, or something similar. It is important for them to see how easy it is to do.
- Pass out the handbills and challenge them to begin inviting the people on their lists.

Sermon 7: God uses Ordinary People to do Great Things

- Gideon was the least of the least of his family yet God used him to defeat the Midianites.
- David was the least of the least but he brought down Goliath.
- A small boy brought 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish to Jesus and He fed the multitude.
- Jesus blessed the food and then distributed it. Prayer is the key that enables God to accomplish great things from ordinary people.

You are God's Ambassador, 2 Cor 5:11-20

- God has appointments for you
- Every morning, ask God to lead you to tell some lost person that they matter and to encourage them to taste and see.

You may feel that you can't witness--don't despair;

"As the time comes for the message of the third angel to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified by the unction of His Spirit rather than the training of literary institutions." GC606

God Gives you the Power

Acts 1:8 *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses."*

- Jesus said you will receive power and become effective witnesses.

God Gives you the Words

- **Matthew 10:18-20** *"On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."*
- **Eph6:19** *Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,*
- **1Pe 4:11** *If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever..*

Our Part: We must be fit vessels for God to use us.

Pray for God to search your heart to see if there is anything He should change.

"When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Its holy influence will be felt by all with whom we come in contact. The spirit of Christ in the heart is like a spring in the desert, flowing to refresh all and making those who are ready to perish, eager to drink of the water of life." SCT77

The Challenge

- Rejoice every day that you are God's ambassador.
- Pray every day for God to multiply your efforts.
- Pray for God to give you the words to speak when you invite your friends to the meetings.

Sermon 8: Secret to Success- Human Effort Plus Divine Power

"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building." 1 Corinthians 3:9

We are God's building, His field. God, with His infinite wisdom and omnipotent power, is building His church. At the same time He has commissioned us to be fellow workers with Him, working side by side. He is our strength and our victory.

The Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God, misunderstood, can lead to a misconception of our role in evangelism. The whole question involves the issue of God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility. These two ideas seem to exist in an unbearable tension. A person can focus on one extreme of the Sovereignty of God and become cynical about anything that smacks of evangelism, or a person can focus on man's responsibility and become a panicky alarmist. We cannot resolve the tension, we must learn to live within it.

Jesus held the two together beautifully when he said, *"All things have been committed to me by my Father...no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."* In spite of the fact that no one knows the Father except those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him, Jesus still made the all inclusive appeal, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* Matt. 11:27,8 Jesus balanced the two doctrines of God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility in the same statement.

Ellen White is a bit more explicit in explaining her approach. When Joshua led Israel to a great victory over the Amorites, He *"said to the Lord in the presence of Israel: Oh sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon. So the sun stood still and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies."* Joshua 10:12

This miraculous visible token of God's presence was no doubt an inspiration to the Israelite army encouraging them on to a great victory. So many today are waiting for the sun to stand still, waiting for God to do something. Let's look a little closer at the story of Joshua and there we discover his secret to success.

"Joshua had received the promise that God would overthrow the enemies of Israel, yet he put forth as earnest effort as though success depended upon the armies of Israel alone. He did all that human energy could do, and then he cried in faith for divine aid." PP:509

"The secret of success is the union of Divine Power with human effort...The man who commanded the Sun to stand still upon Gibeon...was the man who for hours lay prostrate upon the earth in prayer in the camp at Gilgal. The men of prayer are the men of power. God does not generally work miracles to advance His truth...Our part is to develop mature wise plans." EV:652

This statement contains three essential ingredients for success; 1) prayer, 2) developing mature wise plans, and 3) action. First, we must be men and women of prayer. Joshua was not presumptuous when he asked for the sun to stand still. Through much prayer he knew God's will. Secondly we must act. Human effort must be combined with Divine Power. We cannot simply present the truth and then sit back and pray that God will miraculously intervene and win a soul. We have a part to play in the process. We must be totally reliant upon God, while acting as though He were totally reliant on us.

The Challenge

Plan now to invite everyone on your list. This is the last week before the meetings begin.

