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Book Review: Anytime, Anywhere by William L. Turner

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Anytime, Anywhere by William L. Turner.
Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1997, 88 pgs.

Reviewed by Charles Arn

Most evangelism training programs can be helpful in raising church members' competency for communicating the Gospel. But they will not be particularly effective, well-received, or even well-attended if there is not the roots of a "Great Commission Conscience" in that church.

What is a "Great Commission Conscience"? It is the conviction that the primary mission for which Christ came to earth, and the primary purpose to which Christ's Church is commissioned, is ". . . to seek and to save those who are lost." (Lk. 19:10) A Great Commission Conscience affects the entire life of a local church and its members. It is reflected in the decisions of the church. It is observed in the budget of the church. It is used to measure the "success" of a church and its ministry. A Great Commission Conscience seeks those who are lost, and celebrates those who are found and folded into Christ's body.

Readers of *Anytime, Anywhere* will find in its pages a helpful resource for building the Great Commission Conscience in the mind and heart of a local church. The book is a collection of chapters, each examining a different gospel encounter between Jesus and an unbeliever. The chapters would be (and probably were) an excellent sermon series on witnessing principles for modern day Christians.

Below is a brief summary of the situations and relationships Christ encountered, along with the principles about faith-sharing which the author extracts:

1. With Our Family Reference: Jesus' home life as a child

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(Mk. 3:31–35).

Principles:

- Parents' greatest witnessing relationship is with their children.

2. At a Rest Stop Reference: Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:1–42).

Principles:

- Don't rule out "unlikely" places for spiritual encounters
- Intentionally put yourself in a context where you might encounter a person hungry for God
- Communicate in a way that is not pre-packaged
- Follow up new converts.

3. With Someone Who Has Made It Reference: Christ's encounter with Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1–10).

Principles:

- Stop and take time for others
- Let people choose their response
- Offer a relationship, not just a presentation.

4. With Someone Ready To Give Up Reference: Christ's encounter with Jairus and his daughter, and the woman who touched Jesus' robe.

Principles:

- Become part of the person's life
- Be sensitive to times of need
- God can use interruptions as witness opportunities.

5. With A Leader Who Lost His Way Reference: Christ's encounter with Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1–10).

Principles:

- Reframe the situation or problem
- Start with a relationship
- Be patient

6. With Some Wannabes Reference: Christ's encounter with three unnamed persons in Luke 9:57–62 who say they want to follow him.

Principles:

- Speak the truth
- Live the truth

7. With A Seeker Reference: Christ's encounter with Andrew (John 1:35–42).

Principles:

- Start with the person's own agenda and felt needs
 - Make yourself available
 - Be real and honest
8. With A Cynical Bureaucrat Reference: Pilate (Jn. 18:28–19:2)
- Principles:
- Be real
 - Be silent

Each chapter begins with a biblical source and focus on a Christ-encounter. The author then presents modern examples and applications; a good prescription for a relevant sermon. The message is clear in each chapter; we are called to be Christ's witnesses in appropriate ways, at various times, with different people. There is not a "canned" or memorized witnessing approach that will generate a positive response by all receivers. Each situation is different. Each interaction should be different.

One question this book generated in the reviewer's mind was: is there enough information in the various recountings of Jesus' interchanges with people to deduce generalizable principles for witnessing? The author admits as much in noting, "the New Testament is not a how-to manual, but it does have stories that can teach us a lot." (p. 19)

The book does not present a historical analysis, or a scriptural exegesis of Christ's personal witness strategy. It simply uses various encounters recorded in the Gospels as a jumping off point to present modern witnessing principles. But in that context, it does a commendable job. *Anytime, Anywhere* will be a useful resource for pastors looking for ideas on how to help members be better, more conscious, and more intentional witnesses in their world. The author correctly notes that, "clearly we are called to be witnesses to our faith. But most of us are not very intentional about it." This book will help raise the Great Commission Conscience in readers. And, if used as a sermon resource, it will do so in listeners, as well.

Reviewer

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