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## Give It Up Or Give It Away

Donald M. Vorp, in "Free Methodist"

"There are only two things you can do with the Christian faith," said John R. Mott. "Either give it up, or give it away!"

These are more than a man's words. They are God's law. Religion cannot be bottled up and stored for a rainy day. For God not only wants to do something for us—He wants to do something through us. So what is experienced in the soul must be expressed in the life. And if you won't express it, you won't experience it. If you don't do, you won't be. If you won't give it away, you will have to give it up.

Decision leads to declaration. Surrender leads to sharing. Or does it? If it does, it is leading some of us the long way. And in the process, casualties are heavy. For surrendered spiritual people are often smothered. They breathe the stale air of self-contentment. They eat the hard bread of selfishness, and live in the windowless dungeon of themselves. They have arrived, but at the wrong place. Acquired, but the wrong thing. Attained, but for the wrong purpose.

Christianity is a matter not only of creeds but deeds. The gospel inheres not only in words but work. The church was not founded to enact ritual but to accomplish results. And we were not saved from the world's reproach but for the world's redemption.

The drama between us and God has produced spiritual babies. We get Him, and then go back to childhood. He becomes our toys which we would not give to the needy, because then they would not be ours. Or the dessert we pushed away because we were full, while forgetting that many had no dinner. But religion is not our toys or dessert. And because it is not, we see its mystery—that we can give God to others while He yet remains ours; that we can share and not lose.

Christianity is more than principles to live by. It is more than promises to stand on. It is a Person who cares for persons. And because He cares, He shares. So we have life, but not without His love. We have strength, but not without His sacrifice. Through His life and in His death He lights up service. We cannot share until we care. Perhaps that is why we do not share. The mother out of wedlock is gossip. But she is not loved and befriended by many of us. The drunkard across the street senses our condemnation. But he cannot see or even feel our sorrow. The pleasure-seeking youth next door hears us as we consign him to hell. But he does not heed. Why should he? Why should anybody? We do not care for them. Condemning them is easier than caring. The cost to us is slightly lower. No sorrow for their sin; no tears for their trouble; no sacrifice for their soul. Just a few words from our authoritative voice; the matter is settled, and they are doomed. When with a pleading voice and a loving heart, they could have been won. When by winning them to ourselves we could have won them to God. And when, after giving ourselves to them, we could have

given God. But the door is friendship; the key is heartfelt concern.

Our churches have tried to care. It has brought us to a stop sign. And we are still sitting there. There is nowhere to go. Or if there is, we know not where. In the meantime, we assure ourselves that we do care. All our religious services are the evidence. We sponsor meetings to see people converted. We teach and preach to bring God to men.

But you cannot substitute public care for people where you ought to be personally sharing God with them. And the fact that you care must find expression in the act by which you share. It is not enough to recognize people's needs. We must meet their needs with deeds and share with them the remedy. It is one thing to pray for your friend's repentance. It is another to ask him to repent. It is good to pray that your family will come to God. But the answer will depend on your coming to them with God. And further, God's saving of the children and youth of your church hinges on your asking them to be saved.

Stop with prayer, and evangelism stops. Because you leave it with God. And here some of us have left it. Consequently, we neither evangelize nor are evangelistic. "Make me a soul-winner," has been our prayer. And it has not yet been answered, nor will it ever be. For God never makes us do anything. He will not make us be, but He will help us be. When we dare to do, God will dare to help us. Decide to witness, and God will use you. Decide to do it, and you can. For the decision makes it not His, but His and yours—His requirement and your responsibility.

The burden of sharing God with others is not the pastor's. Nor is it the task of less-shy church members. Rather, it is committed to and expected of every Christian. It is the command God gave to go to all and tell. It is the demand God makes that all are to go and tell.

The command to go to all holds no impossibility for the Christian. No mission field is as near or needy as your own church. No person so easy to talk with as your friends. No needs greater than those of your neighbors. No door so open as relatives. No opportunity so present as your family.

The demand for all to go cannot be annulled by any lack of talent. Whatever I lack is covered by talents I do not lack. And if they do not bridge the gap, God's presence and power does. For my source and resource is not in what I have but who I have. It is not in what I do but who I have. It is not in what I do but in what God does through me.

If the gospel speaks with conviction on anything, it so speaks here. That God is not to be selfishly hoarded and hid in your heart. He lives in you, that He might live in others through you. And God will be shared through you or He will not stay within you. Witness to God's presence and give it away.