

EDITOR'S ETC.

BY DEAN MERRILL



Confessions of a Poor Salesman

I keep wishing I'd meet a Philippiian jailer.

No, not as an inmate! I'd just like to run into somebody like the warden in Acts 16 who blurted out to Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?"

Wouldn't it be nice to be walking along minding your own business and have someone come up to you and say, "I'm just dying to become a Christian. Can you tell me how?"

I've heard stories of that happening, especially overseas. But not very often in well-churched America. Most people know, or at least act like they know, what joining the family of God is all about, and think they've already settled the issue. They show no flicker of uncertainty.

Deep down inside, of course, they may be searching for God. They may be wondering why their life seems so pointless and how to make it count for something. They may even fear eternity. But they're awfully good at covering up.

Meanwhile, I've never enjoyed sales work. I had a paper route once, and I did a good job of fulfilling every new subscription the head office sent my way. I put the *Evening Telegraph* inside the screen door

every afternoon, sure as clockwork. But going out and hustling new subscribers wasn't my thing. I've never had a sales job since.

I've had a few friends over the years who sold for a living, however, and one thing I've found is this: They don't mind getting turned down. They settled long ago that not everyone is the perfect customer. Out of 10 or even 25 contacts, only one may wind up buying—and salespeople call that "a good day"! The 24 turndowns don't bother them in the least. They calmly accept the statistical fact that the majority of folks will not be, as the realtors put it, "ready, willing and able to buy."

Most of us Christians would do a lot better at evangelism if we didn't take rejection so personally. The fact that a co-worker, neighbor or relative brushes off our mention of Christ does not mean Christ is no good, nor even that we represented him poorly. It only means the person didn't sense a spiritual need . . . today, that is. Next week or next year may be a different story.

A vivid illustration of this occurred last March at Paradise Lake, *Christian Herald's* beautiful retreat center in the Pocono Mountains of

Pennsylvania. A youth group was walking in the woods and came upon two young deer that had fallen through the ice. They immediately began trying to pull the panicky animals out of the frigid water. Only one, however, could be hoisted up onto shore; the other drowned.

The kids dragged the deer into their cabin, where a nurse showed them how to massage the blood circulation back into its limbs. In time, the animal stood up, looked around, and headed out into the forest again.

"Our kids will never forget this," the leader told us later. "It became a parable for reaching out to their friends drowning in sin. We had no thought for our own safety on the ice; we just wanted to try to rescue this endangered creature. What a great feeling to be able to save even one."

Evangelism, when you stop to think about it, is really a rescue operation. Not everyone wants to be rescued. Some will fend us off violently. But others can be brought to life eternal, if we're willing to stretch out on the ice.

Dean Merrill

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