

Gideon Speaker Jim Sellers

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[0 : 00] You know, it's getting older, you also use a handrail a little more often than what you used to. Mister, do you have another one of these little Bibles?

That's what a young lady asked me about two months ago. We were at Logan's in Smyrna, they're on Sam Ridley. And our waitress came up and I asked her, I said, has anyone offered you anything free today?

And she said, no, sir. She said, there's some customers in here that is sort of agitated and they're not the best today. And I told her, I said, I'd like to give you a free gift.

And in the front of this little Bible, we have 34 different instances of world problems today. For instance, like bitter, critical, and so forth.

But I said, the most important thing, if I give this to you, will you tell me that you will read the last two pages before you go to sleep tonight? I said, this is God's plan of salvation.

[1 : 08] And she said, mister, I sure will. I gave it to her. Tony West and Jackie was there with us. And about five minutes, she came back and she said, mister, do you have another one of these little Bibles?

She said, my friend over there, she couldn't come over here, but she overheard our conversation. And she wanted to know if you had another one of these that she could have.

And she said, she said to tell you, she will also read the last two pages in the book, which is God's plan of salvation. How many people are listening today, do you think?

I would say not many. You know, God loved us so much that for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Now, we all know that. That's John 3.16 right there. But stop and look at the world today. Are we really listening to what God is telling us as a nation, as a world?

[2 : 15] This is going to be a little bit different Gideon presentation, probably than what you've heard. I'm going to give you like an annual report of what this ministry is doing. You know how many countries we're in.

You know how many Bibles we give out in a year. You also know how many languages, because you've had speakers that's told you these. This year, we have what we call the One Vision. It's a brand new program that we're introducing. It's where we're going back to our basic as a ministry. Back in 1899, when this ministry was first formed, our first eight years, we hadn't gave out a Bible.

We went into churches and witnessed. Pastors would contact us. We would come in and train their members how to go out and witness.

Do you realize every person in this congregation this morning, each of us have a testimony? Have we gave that testimony to anyone? There is so many people out here, but just looking, wanting to know that somebody cares, wanting to know that somebody has a problem like they do.

[3 : 32] Testimonies. That's what we're giving. We're going back to the basics. But what we do, the Gideons, as you well know, we're seed planters.

We're God's farmers. Isaiah 55 and 11 pretty well sums up what the Gideon ministry is all about. So shall my word that be goeth forth out of my mouth.

It shall accomplish that which I please. And it shall prosper in the thing where to I send it. That is the marching orders for the Gideons International all these years.

We give. We share God's word of this lost and dying world. And it's such an honor to do that. We plant the seed. You know, God alders and changes hearts is what he does.

All of us, as Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life that they shall never perish.

[4 : 40] Neither shall any man pluck them out of him out of my hand. That's from John 10, 27 and 28. Stop and think when we receive Jesus in that book of life, our name is not entered 10 or 15 times.

It's one time. One time is enough. God has cleansed us. He sent his son into this world to do that. I want to now take you into Chile, Northern Park. Visually, it's like this is a wide road going down through it. There was down to just a little trail. The Gideons out of the United States that down on that blitz and the locals were going up.

There was a school village up on the side of this mountain. They took it up and this big man came down this trail and said, thank God you have come. I have prayed for two years for you to come and give my boys and girls a copy of God's word.

He said, you've come. And the Gideons said, well, looks like your school is closed. He said, don't worry. He rang the bell and there was youngsters come running from several directions.

[5 : 55] He said, you don't understand how important this copy of God's word is. He said, my little boys and girls, we don't have books.

He said, the only book that my little boys and girls have that I can teach is the ones I have. But he says, I'm going to teach them to read and they're going to use their Bibles.

But he says, you know, the other thing that's wonderful about that. He says, they're going to take their Bibles home and practice reading. He said, most of her parents have not heard the saving grace about our Lord Jesus Christ either.

So he says, besides my little boys and girls knowing how to read and learning about Jesus, they're also going to share with their parents on the saving grace that they can have.

All from that one word. We share God's word in the traffic lanes of life. Now you all know that, that we go out to schools and so forth.

[7 : 02] Schools are getting extremely difficult to go into anymore. I'm going to use Kentucky as an instance. We're not allowed to give any Bibles out in the state of Kentucky.

Your atheist groups, the ACLU, what they've done now, instead of filing suit on a state, they have now filed suit on individual school systems.

The individual school systems do not have the funds to fight those lawsuits. As if they took on the whole state. So in the state of Kentucky, we're not allowed to go in and give any of the New Testaments out to the students.

A lot of you probably remember yours in the fourth or fifth grade. I still have mine. I received it in the fourth grade is when I got mine. There's also a New Testament that we were doing a distribution at the base there in Smyrna.

There was a staff sergeant. And he says, brothers, I am so glad you did. His was camo, army camo, like the uniform. It had a skid, like a skid mark here on it, front of it.

[8 : 19] That's how close that bullet came to hitting him when he was in Afghanistan. And I asked him, I said, would you like to trade that one for two or three new ones?

He said, no, sir. He said, I'll never give this one up. This one saved my life. Now, it wasn't a direct hit because the ammos and the weapons we have today, this would not stop.

The round we have today. But he said, that's how close it came to getting me in that. So, and there's so many different cases. I know another man personally that a New Testament saved his life in Vietnam.

He's a purple heart wearer. But he'll be a first to tell you that that little New Testament saved his life. So, how do we get around in schools today?

Excuse me. We have a life book that we call. And the first one was the book of John. We printed those, there's been approximately 38 million copies printed.

[9 : 26] And about the last 10 years that those were in existence. And that's where students can give to fellow students. We, you can't, we can't go into schools.

We can have it where students can give a word of God out. This past January, we've also, we brought a new version out. It's a book of Mark.

So, now we have two books. The life book. The book of John. The book of Mark. The first printing of Mark. Was for one million copies.

And I'm happy to say it lasted one week. And there was a million were all distributed out across the United States. From orders because people knew that they were coming.

We, as Gideons, we cannot order those. Your youth pastor or your pastor can order those. You can order virtually in any quantity up to a thousand.

[10:26] There are no charge to you and your church. But, stop and think. That's one way that students can give to students.

It's sort of like seeing you at the flagpole. What a day to take the life book. And students give to fellow students there during that period. And, you know, another one that's like, I'm going to take you to Ethiopia now.

Sarat Tesame. Maybe some of you have had a chance to hear Sarat speak. There in Ethiopia, it is getting so dangerous.

On Saturday morning, the Gideons have our 7 o'clock prayer meeting every Saturday. The sun never sets on the Gideon ministry around the world. We have different time zones.

They're all 7 o'clock. But, in Ethiopia and Sarat has drove this van several times. Their prayer meeting is inside of a van.

[11:29] It's too dangerous to be in a building or out someplace. You're, for a better term, atheist. I don't like to call them. But, your Muslim religion are taking northern Africa and that continent over.

You're taking Kenya and the north part of it. They don't kill just a Christian. They go in and round the entire family up and kill all of the family. It's how dangerous it's getting.

And, it makes you wonder where and what is happening in this world. Look at our own country right now.

This is one of the most difficult places to distribute God's word. And, we've got hotels right now. The Holiday Inn.

Bless her heart. I love Holiday Inns. But, they're starting to restrict. This is a corporate thing. That people are complaining that if the Bible's in there, we need to have every religion in the hotel room also.

[12:35] And, Marriott. Now, we don't have to worry about Marriott because the Bible and the Book of Mormon is going to be in there regardless. But, Marriott's already told us that.

But, LaQuentin, well, I won't mention any more names as far as motel and hotels go. But, it's getting more difficult to put them in the rooms. Do you take last year of the 82 million plus copies that we distributed, only 8% went into motels and hotel rooms.

80% of that number was placed in students' hands. College students down. Folks, we have got this change, this stinking thinking that is going on in this country right now.

And, get people to turn back to Jesus. That's the answer. What's the world got the debt we got to look for? Well, one, we have got a society that is so depressed right now.

Stop and think about it. So depressed. You realize what Jesus say. Casting all your care upon him for he careeth for you. That's in 1 Peter 5, 7. We got a bunch of that, don't we?

[13:45] We got a population that's addicted. There is so many addictions out here. If a son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

John 8, 36. Look at the drugs and everything else, the addictions going on. Look at the lives that are lost every day. Every 40 seconds, somebody commits suicide in this country right now.

Stop and think about that. Been a year's time. We lose a lot more people than we did in Vietnam. Excuse me. Anybody stressed?

Boy, this world is stressed to the hilt right now today. You know, better yet, a lot of people just wants to know somebody cares.

When we were all growing up, didn't we all know our neighbors? Didn't we converse and talk to our neighbors? And sort of one neighbor looked out for every other one. Today, we don't even know who our neighbors are.

[14:48] We don't even hardly speak. Lori and I lived at one house. We'd wave at the guy. You know, he's yet to raise his head up and wave back. I haven't gone over and knocked on his door personally yet and said, Hi, I'm Jim Sellers.

Who are you on that? But you know what I'm saying there. But, you know, people, they just want to respond.

When you present this or we present this, you don't know how people's going to respond. That's like Bill Faye. If some of you had a chance to read the book, How to Show Jesus Without Fear, Bill's the author.

I know him personally. A couple times I've met him. And Bill Say's another one that I like to call friend. But Bill Faye was on a plane coming from California back, and it was what you call, it was a night flight.

And a stewardess, he got talking to her and said, Would you like to have a free copy of God's Word? And she said yes. And before they landed, she prayed to receive Jesus as her Savior.

[16:04] Now, you can say, well, you know, Jim, that's good. What's the significance? What's the significance was she was on flight 93 that went down over Shanksville, Pennsylvania on 9-11.

None of us know when God is going to call us home. That young lady that was astir, she had no idea that that was her last full flight that she would be making.

Anything after that, she had a partial flight and went down then. You know, so what does the Gideons want to do?

One, we want to help you fill your church pews. We want to help you to win souls to the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We want to be encouragers. We are members of local churches. You realize without you and your pastor, there would be no Gideon ministry.

[17:08] Every one of us have to be recommended by our pastors to serve. We have, Lori and I have been very, very blessed. The way that the Lord has used us, we joined in 2006.

And with me and with Lori, we have served in various offices from a state level down. And I'm afraid to tell God no.

Look what he done. He saved me. I'll tell you a little bit more about that in just a little while. But folks, we pray for you.

Okay, I'll go back to that. What has God done? Well, for me, I want to share just a few moments with you. I was raised on a farm up in Indiana.

It wasn't the easiest growing up. My dad had a brain aneurysm when I was 14. I took care of 700 acres. My dad and his uncle could not see eye to eye.

[18:19] I was a whipping boy. Seemed like for both when dad got out of the hospital. My dad was never the same again. And I didn't know at that point in time at 14, my teenage years was over.

All I'd done was work. And I was a blunt of all the ridicule and the cousins. So when I went to college and went in service, I didn't need God.

That was the farthest thing from my mind. I'm ashamed to say that today. I drank too heavy. I got in manufacturing.

We manufactured materials handling equipment. That took me all over the United States and across Canada. We had established 2,200 dealers across both those countries.

They all liked to work during the day and they all liked to go out and party that night. I was in Dallas, Texas in August of 1978.

[19:24] And we had been out. It was a Clark dealership. That's who I was with. I can tell you who I was with that night, that group. We'd done a lot of partying that night.

You name it, and I've probably done it. I've done everything except drugs. I came in that night to the Holiday Inn motel room. Holiday Inn is still special to me.

And there was something over on the desk. It was laying open. I don't know what it was, but something said, Jim, go over and pick that up.

I did. I've got a bad habit. I started to back the book. If I like the way the book ends, I'll read it.

If I don't, I don't read the book. I read Revelation 22, verses 18 and 19, where it says, no one will add to this book, or no one will take away from this book.

[20:38] I thought, wow. If that isn't something, how can this be? You see, I was indoctrinated with the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon.

It's what I was raised in. My parents' mom took us to church. What little I did go to church. It was at a Latter-day Saint church. And I thought, wow.

This is something. I wish I could tell you that night. I sat and read this. I sobered up that quick. That night. I wish I could tell you the little demons went flying out of me and the bells went off and all of that.

It didn't. The one thing that I did think, I kept reading as I traveled across the United States. I found, I wanted to take that Bible with me.

See, I didn't own a Bible at that time. I wanted to steal it, but I couldn't do that. Then I found out these are in every holiday room that I visited. I thought, man, this is great.

[21 : 44] Instead of going out and doing my thing, I'll sit and read, which I did. During that time, I made a trip to Nauvoo, Illinois. I wanted to see for myself where Joseph Smith was buried.

He's still in the grave. But this man that I've been reading about, this man called Jesus, that lives within my heart. He's alive.

He had a grave. He had a tomb. He only used it for three days. It really wasn't even used. I accepted. June 17, 1987 is my Christian birthday.

It's when I accepted totally. I realized that I had been lied to by what I had been taught. But anyway, I just wanted to share that with you this morning.

I heard a name mentioned about Utah this morning. And I know what those folks are going through. It's dwelled in you. It's hard to let go.

[22 : 52] But when you study and know what God's word is saying, you have no problem of accepting his son. He paid it all, gave all the price for each and every one of us.

All we have got to do is accept and allow him to live within our hearts is the bottom line. Okay. Contribution wise, we do not want you to take anything away from a church as far as funds. This would be excess. A Bible like this, a full Bible. These cost \$5. We order them in huge quantities.

They go in hotel and motel rooms. They have an opportunity to reach 2,300 people over a six-year period. That's a life expectancy in a hotel room.

At that time, we take them out. We take the hardcover off. There is a softcover put on. Franklin Printing in Murfreesboro takes care of that for us. They're recovered in a softcover.

[24 : 00] They're trimmed, and they go to prisons. So just because we take them out of hotel rooms, they're a long ways from our life expectancy being over.

What we distribute most is the personal workers' testament. This is \$1.20. That will ship this little testament to any point in the world.

That's printing and shipping. Now, you see, everything that you give this morning, none of it goes to us as overhead.

We pay dues. That's what takes care of you, overhead and paying. We pay our own expenses wherever we go. We pay for our own travel expenses.

We pay for our own food. If you go overseas, guess what? You also pick up your own airline fees and everything associated with that trip. But we pay our own way.

[25 : 01] Everything that is given through churches all goes to purchase Bibles. So with that church congregation, church family, it has truly been an honor for Lori and I to be here with you this morning.

And if we can ever be of any service to you or if you need anything on behalf of the Gideons International, we're here to help you.

I am very proud of Lori. Lori is the Tennessee State Ladies Auxiliary State President. And so I'm very proud of that young lady. God bless each and every one of you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[27 : 11] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.