

How To Do It

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There is no Santa Claus, no Easter Bunny, no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Eating vitamins and health foods will not guarantee you good health. There is no sure cure for cancer or arthritis. There is no way to get rid of fat easily. There is no sure way to make money in the stock market. If there were, don't you know everyone would have found out about it and everyone would be cashing in on it, getting everything they wanted, living as long as they wanted to? All people would be rich and healthy, and never have a problem.

But people will not believe these facts. They will not believe them, not because convincing evidence does not exist, but because they don't want to believe them. The child wants there to be a Santa Claus, so he believes the lie. People want to be in perennial good health, so they will continue to be victimized by the charlatans. People want to have well-proportioned bodies while remaining lazy and gluttonous. They would like to get money without working for it. So they will continue to believe there is a way to do it.

For the same reason, people simply will not believe that the Bible is not a How-To book. They will continue to be taken in and disappointed by the hundreds of preachers and writers who propose to take the Holy Scriptures and tell you how to get the job done. How to win souls, build a great church, have a spiritual church, get folks to really worship God, promote a revival, conduct an "evangelism program," promote missions, make your wife submissive and obedient, get your husband to be responsible and the head of the house, insure that your children will be good and obedient. They do everything the book tells them to do, and then it doesn't turn out the way the narrative did in the book and as the author assured them that it would, or the evangelist guaranteed them it would when he gave the altar call. They are then wont to blame God for His inconsistency in His promises, when it was not God, but a man who made the promise to them.

The fact of the matter is, the Bible is not a How-To book; it is a What-To book. God tells us what to do, what must be done, what is our responsibility according to His laws and principles. But He does not tell us how to get these jobs done. He tells us to believe Him, but He does not tell us how to get faith or to "turn your faith loose." Men tell you that. He tells us that we must be born again, but not even Nicodemus was told how to do that. Would-be "soul-winners" will tell you what God neglected to. Had there been a sure way to do these things, everyone would be doing it by now. The whole world would have been saved long ago. There would be no bad children, rebellious wives, spineless husbands, and we would have become so adept in mountain-moving faith, the invention of the bulldozer would have been unnecessary.

These guaranteed ways to get things done are presented in various fashions. Sometimes its producer comes along in enthusiastic, scintillating charm, oozing charisma, creating excitement just by his presence. He has found the secret, the key, the magic formula, the panacea that will get you the very thing your heart has been longing for. He throws out a few good sounding Biblical principles to impress you with his orthodoxy, then swamps you with sensational testimonies of how they worked in this or that situation. You quite easily identify with the situation, and are sure you have found the answer.

Sometimes this same approach is given to you in book form by someone who tells you how they tried it and how it literally transformed their marriage, home, church, job, etc.

Sometimes the approach is made by a super-spiritual, highly critical person exposing the ways, means, methods of the world, of man or of the flesh. His way, he asserts, is the only valid spiritual way, since it is the pattern found in the Scriptures. By such logic, any other way to take a city other than the way Joshua took Jericho would have to be of the flesh. But we find God changing the tactics on the very next city. The fact of the matter is, that any time anyone takes a system or a method and sets it up for The Way to get something done, he has made an idol. No matter how spiritual the activity might have been in the past, it has become a dead, stinking work of the flesh. God gives principles of righteous works, but never ridged patterns and molds. He has good reasons to do so, as we shall see.

All these books and sermons and seminars on How-To are not completely without redeeming value. At least they introduce some scriptural principles that most people do not know exist. And as people begin to align themselves with these scriptural and spiritual laws, they are moving closer to where God wants them to be, and at least are in a better position to receive or attain the end they desire. They certainly have no right to expect those things until they do what God tells them to do, regardless as to whether they get what they want.

We have no right to expect men to be converted unless we witness to them. We cannot expect a spiritual church if we are feeding it garbage and running a circus every Sunday morning. We have no right to expect revival if we do not pray, and repent and seek God's face. A husband who does not love and respect his wife and submit himself to God cannot expect her submission and obedience; and the wife cannot expect her husband to be a spiritual leader as long as she is sitting in the driver's seat. These do not guarantee results as far as the other person is concerned, but they do at least get you into right relationship with God.

This brings up the answer to the question that might now be asked. Why does God not tell us how to do these things and how to get them done? The idea that He should is based upon three wrong premises:

We can get things done if we only know how.

God needs, wants, and waits on us to do these things.

God is chiefly pleased by our success in getting things done.

Jesus tells us that He is the Vine and we are the branches. He produces fruit without effort on the part of the branches. The branch simply abides in the Vine and bears the fruit. He does not train the branch in the skill of producing fruit: He simply keeps it pruned and fed. The branch's sole responsibility is its relationship to the Vine.

God does not wait on us to get things done. His works have been finished from the foundation of the world (Hebrews 4:3). Our responsibility is to enter into that finished work . . . to cease, not from all activity, but from all effort to get anything done. All that will ever be done is already done.

God is not pleased with our getting something done, but with our obedience to Him. If He told us how to do everything, we would forget about Him and put all our confidence in the method, the way we do it. Is that not what this idolatrous generation has done? God is not teaching us how to be a good success. He is teaching us to trust, to obey, to know and to love Him. That is His supreme design and intention for us. His delight is not in what you can do, but in you yourself. Do what He tells you and learn to know Him.

- C. M.