

How to Lead a Deaf Person to Christ

By Don Cabbage, Ph.D

President, World Mission Society

The main goal of the Christian worker with the Deaf should be to lead deaf people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Because the deaf individual has a hard time understanding many of the words and principles in the Bible, he must be dealt with somewhat differently from a hearing person.

Visitation in General

When the worker visits people for his church, he must remember that he is a representative of Jesus Christ and the church. He, therefore, should act and dress as such. Appearance is very important in meeting people. When visiting, the worker's appearance should be neat and clean. The impression people have of him is the same initial impression they will have of the church and of Christianity. When he meets people, the worker should be friendly. If the first impression is a friendly one, the worker will accomplish more during his visit. The visit should create a friendly atmosphere. It is very important that people initially like the deaf worker. The first goal in visiting should be to make a friend. The second is to invite them to church. The third, and most important is invite them to be saved.

Terminology is Important

Winning a Deaf person to Christ is different from dealing with a hearing person. The main difference lies in the fact that deaf people do not understand much of the terminology commonly used in soul winning with hearing people. Often, deaf people do not understand the meaning of "Sin".

deaf folks will often have questions such as, “What is Sin? Why is sin? Where does sin come from?”

A deaf person may think that “Saved” means to save money, or to be saved from drowning. Terms such as; “Christ died for you. Receive Christ in your heart. Believe on Christ and Let Jesus Come into your heart.” are difficult for deaf people to understand.

Very often I meet deaf people who have no concept of Hell. There are two major reasons for these problems with Bible terminology. First, deaf people generally have a poor understanding of the English language. This poor English word ability comes from the nature of their language development. The second reason that deaf people have a hard time understanding Bible terminology is that they have negligible background in spiritual matters.

The places where deaf people can learn about God, Jesus and the Bible are very limited. They must be taught spiritual ideals through a special effort of someone who is interested in them. Most deaf people do not read well enough to understand the Bible or most books written about the Bible. Deaf people understand more easily things, which they can see, touch, or experience. Therefore, some of the intangible ideas in the Bible do not lend themselves easily to the Deaf mind.

Explaining the Gospel

After much trial and error I have developed an outline of terminology which is easily applied when talking with the deaf. Here is the outline and some Scriptures, which explain the terminology that I have chosen:

1. You have sin. Romans 3:23
2. God Punishes sin. Romans 5:9; John 3:36; John 5:29; Revelation 20:14

3. Jesus takes away sin. John 1:29; I John 3:5; Ephesians 1:7; I John 1:7.

These Scripture verses used with this outline are not necessarily the ones that I show deaf people. They simply give Bible references for the terminology, which I have chosen.

You Have Sin

Let's consider separately the three statements of this outline. The first is, "You have sin." In speaking with deaf people about the Bible, be as simple and direct as possible. Do not assume that deaf people understand the meaning or implication of your statements. Talking about sin, the Bible says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23).

It is important for deaf people to understand the meaning of sin. They need understand that they personally, have sinned. Since deaf people in many instances will not understand these things, the worker must explain what sin is and why people have sinned. He will perhaps need to go back to the Garden of Eden and explain how Adam first sinned.

For example: "Adam sinned by not obeying God. That is wrong. Because Adam sinned, we all have sinned. Sin is wrong. Sin means to not obey God. All people have sin. You have sin."

God Punishes Sin

Once a deaf person understands the meaning of sin, then explain the second point of the outline: "God punishes sin." Explain that because a person has sins, he must be punished. Point out that "God is holy. God is right. God must punish sin." Deaf people will not understand what "punish sin" implies. Here the worker must explain that to punish sin means to be sent to Hell for eternity.

For example: “It is right for God to punish sin. It is true we will die. It is true that we have sinned. It is true that we must go to Hell.” You may need to stop and explain Hell. “Hell is a place of fire. You must go to Hell and suffer in the fire forever.”

Jesus Takes Away Sin

The third point is “Jesus takes away sin.” It can be explained this way to the Deaf: “The bible says that you have sin. The Bible says that God must punish your sin. The Bible says that you must go to Hell. You need something to take away your sins. You need something to forgive your sins. Jesus died on the cross. Jesus died to take away your sins. You must pray. You must ask Jesus to take away your sins. Jesus will come into your heart and forgive your sins. Jesus died on the cross. Jesus died to take away your sins. You must pray. You must ask Jesus to take away your sins. Jesus will come into your heart and forgive your sins. Jesus died on the cross. Jesus died to take away your sins. You must pray. You must ask Jesus to take away your sins. Jesus will come into your heart and forgive your sins. Jesus died on the cross. Jesus died to take away your sins. You must pray. You must ask Jesus to take away your sins. Jesus will come in your heart and forgive your sins. You will be saved.”

It is difficult for deaf people to understand how Jesus can come into their hearts. It is hard for them to grasp the meaning of accepting Jesus into their hearts. It is not, however, hard for them to understand that Jesus will forgive their sins. It is not hard for them to understand that Jesus will take away their sins.

A Sample Explanation

When I explain to a deaf person how he can know that he will go to Heaven, my explanation is something like this:

“The bible says that you have sin. We all have sin. All people do wrong. All people have sin. You have sin. The Bible says that God must punish you sin. God is holy. God is right. God is good. God must punish your sin. You must die. You will go to Hell. Hell is place of fire. You will stay in the fire forever. You have sin.”

Having made those facts plain I then give the remedy to their situation:

“The Bible says that Jesus died on the cross. Why did Jesus die on the cross? He died to forgive your sin. You must pray. You must ask Jesus to come into your heart and take away your sin. You will be saved. ‘Saved’ means ‘Finished’. Jesus has finished forgiving your sin. You can go to Heaven. You can ask Jesus to forgive your sins.

Would you like to pray? Would you like to ask Jesus to come into your heart and forgive your sins? Let’s pray. You sign and copy me.”

Most deaf people do not have any idea of how to pray. Therefore, I will generally have them copy me. “Now let’s pray. You copy me. Pray. Father, I have sinned. I know it is wrong. I want Jesus to forgive my sins. I want to go to Heaven, not Hell. I want to be saved. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

This explanation may seem childishly simple. It is imperative, however, that the deaf worker be as simple as possible with deaf people. Some deaf people will need time to learn and understand how to be saved. They cannot be saved with one short explanation because they do not understand. Many deaf people can understand easily if the Gospel is explained clearly in terms with which they are familiar.

Using Bible Verses

In speaking with a deaf person, I may not show him verses in the Bible. It is good to use perhaps only one verse. If you ask a deaf person to read the bible verse or verses, he will not generally understand its meaning. Most of the time when a deaf person's attention is drawn from the hands, his train of thought is broken. When I drop my hands to show a Bible verse I have lost primary contact with the deaf person. If I do not show Bible verses and the deaf man asks me to show him what the Bible says, I will be happy to do so. I believe it is better to explain the Gospel to a deaf person in a way that he can understand than to show him many Bible verses, which he does not understand.

Remember

When explaining to a deaf person how to be saved, please remember that simplicity is of the utmost importance. Second, remember that if a deaf person does not understand, the conversation is of no avail. Be sensitive to the responses of the person who is listening. Be sure that he understands exactly what is meant. Third, choose words and terminology very carefully. Use English words in their simplest form and most common meaning. If a worker will pray much, learn the terminology that deaf folks readily understand and talk with as many deaf folks as possible, and as simply as possible, he will see many deaf people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

