How do you get people to follow the Lord's ways and turn from those things they do (or think) that lead them to the broad road that leads to destruction?

The Challenge:

John 2:18 ***(NASB)*** *[18] The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"*

John 4:48 ***(NASB)*** *[4] So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."*

Luke 16:29-31 ***(NASB)*** *[29] "But Abraham *said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' [30] "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' [3] "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"*

Matthew 12:38-41 ***(NASB)*** *[38] Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." [39] But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; [40] for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. [41] "The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."*

John 12:36-50 ***(NASB)****. [3] But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. [38] This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?" [39] For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, [40] "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM… [44] And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me."*

Even after all the miracles Jesus (as well as some of His Apostles) performed, both common people and Jehovah God-fearing religious leaders could not believe Him to be who He said He was…

Matthew 28:18-20 ***(NASB)*** ***[18] And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [1] "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."***

How then, can <u>we</u> draw others to Christ?

<u>I believe the following are perquisite…</u>

1. **They must first recognize the emptiness of their lives, that there is nothing they can do to satisfy their desires**
    a. There is no "safe harbor" that endures
    b. There is never enough money, enough power, enough toys, or enough anything that will ultimately satisfy him
    c. The pursuit of anything in this world is endless…there is never a perpetual plateau of happiness on which one can finally rest
2. **Next, they must be in search for a solution that will fill their emptiness**
    a. Ready to admit they have limited power to solve their problems
    b. Ready to explore options
    c. Ready to ask questions
    d. Ready to listen
    e. Willing to be transformed
3. **They must have a "watchman" for guidance, encouragement – a current believer(s) who will explain *(Acts 8:27; Eze 33:7-9)*:**
    a. Human life is fragile
        i. It has a beginning
        ii. It has an end
        iii. However, it's not *<u>really</u>* the end (to be explained later)
    b. That there is a singular sovereign God (only one God) who is known as *<u>Jehovah God</u>* who:
        i. Has always existed
        ii. Never changes
        iii. Is a *<u>spiritual</u>* being (John 4:24-26)
        iv. Is manifested to mankind in three personifications:
            1. God the Father
            2. God the Son (Jesus, the Christ)
            3. God the Holy Spirit
        v. Created everything from nothing (Col 1:13-16)
            1. Angels (other *<u>created</u>* spiritual beings)
            2. Heaven & earth
            3. All creatures (land, sea, air creatures)
            4. He is so powerful that "everything" was created in six literal 24-hour days
            5. He created man & woman
                a. With a body, a spirit, and a soul [Gen 2:7]
                b. With a conscience unlike other creatures

c. Our conscience is ruled by our spirit
    i. If our spirit is "good," then we live to be in harmony with God
    ii. If our spirit is "evil," then we live to be out of harmony with God

c. That there was an esteemed Cherub (a kind of angel), known as ***Lucifer*** who:
    i. Became prideful and sought to rise above God
    ii. As a result, he lost his esteemed position with God's Kingdom
    iii. Was given an earthly position as the "prince of this world" where:
        1. He has since reigned in rebellion against God and all of His creation
        2. By his first deception against mankind, he enticed Adam & Eve to disobey God, thus introducing "sin" into the affairs of humankind
        3. He and his demonic angels who supported his failed coup in Heaven continue to engage in a ***actual*** spiritual warfare to deny mankind from receiving God's provisional salvation as provided by Jesus who came to us in the flesh (as man, yet was fully God – see John 1:18) to die for our sins so we can inherit eternal life in God's Kingdom (see John 3:16).
    iv. Cleverly uses deceptive practices in his attempts to deny mankind the free gift of God's salvation by getting him to believe ***at least one*** of many things such as:
        1. There is no God
        2. There is no Heaven
        3. There is no Hell
        4. The world as we see it and everything in it ***evolved*** over long periods of time
        5. If people think God exists or might exist, they have plenty of time to figure that out
        6. If there is a so-called, Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) that means Christianity is a polytheistic religion like many others
        7. It is God who tries to keep mankind from enjoying his life to the "fullest"
        8. Jesus was merely a prophet
        9. Jesus was not God in the flesh (i.e., the "Son of God")
        10. Jesus was not crucified, or…
        11. Jesus did not die on the cross, if he was crucified
        12. Jesus was not resurrected from the dead
        13. There are more ways to Heaven than through Jesus (see John 14:1-6)

14. The Word of God (the Holy Bible) was written by men, filled with contradictions, errors, and therefore an unreliable historical record

> [42] *"And He ordered <u>us</u> to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.* *Acts 10:42*

d. That the Bible ***<u>really is</u>*** the inerrant Word of God…
   i. Inspired by the Holy Spirit
   ii. That both the Old & New Testaments are relevant today
   iii. That the Old & New Testaments complement each other so we can understand the character of God, His great love for all His creation (including us)
   iv. That these testaments contain a message of peace and comfort that can fill all that is empty in our lives on this earth
   v. That these testaments contain our assurance of an eternal life void of "death, mourning, crying, or pain" (*Rev 21:1-4*)

4. As watchmen *<u>we</u>* need to cultivate the field for the harvest…

a. Teach them about the origin of sin and the one who tempted Eve
b. That we are all sinners
c. Tell them about the ongoing spiritual warfare and the armor of God
d. Tell them about God's Unconditional Covenant with mankind
e. Help them study the Word of God
f. Tell them about the character of God as presented in the Old Testament
g. Tell them about God's enduring love, mercy, and grace
h. Guide them to believe that Jesus is the Son of God by faith alone
i. Tell them they must repent of their sins
j. Be dedicated to conforming to His likeness by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit
k. Be dedicated to being separated from the world
l. Be obedient to His calling so that others might see Him through us
m. Exercise the spiritual gifts, He has given us for bringing others to Him
n. Be living examples of walking in the "truth" (*John 3:21*)

5. **Tell them that…**
    a. Satan continues his assault on the sanctity, the very image of God – ***mankind***
    b. God created mankind in ***His image (selem)***, that is, though God Himself is invisible…He endowed man with attributes of His own self for spiritual fellowship with Him
        i. Concern for others (love)
        ii. Value of human life
        iii. Finding pleasure in all of His creation
        iv. Desire to live in harmony with others
        v. Desire to live in harmony with nature
    c. We can only find comfort in this world by the love, grace, and mercy of God
    d. Having a relationship with Jesus, the Son of God will overcome
        i. Feelings of hopelessness
        ii. Depression
        iii. Alcohol and/or Drug use
        iv. Any disappointments in this life
    e. Without this relationship, man is subject to moral decay
        i. Desire to live only for self-gratification
        ii. Sexual perversion
        iii. Lack of concern for the value of a human life
        iv. Infantile genocide (abortion)
        v. Murder
        vi. Dishonest business practices
        vii. Governmental corruption
        viii. Greed for accumulating material treasures
    f. That moral decay will lead to civil chaos
        i. Lack of respect for law and order
        ii. Assault on freedom of speech
        iii. Lawlessness
    g. That those who harden their hearts from God…
        i. Will suffer the ills of this world without hope
        ii. Will deny God's mercy
        iii. Will face eternity in Hell

How to they begin to believe these fundamentals? Does the Holy Spirit have to *first* open their hearts to receive the Word? Must we *first* reach out to the lost and prepare him to receive the Holy Spirit?

Who is the pursuer and whom does He pursue?

NOTE: From the beginning, it appears that God has been reaching out to mankind…trying to get his attention and fellowship. His wrath has only surfaced when man has failed to acknowledge His sovereignty and pursued his worldly desires. Yet, despite man's wanderings, God has continued to pursue him using whatever means possible, even to the point of subjection into his enemy's hand in order to restore him to Himself (see Prov 3:11-12; Heb 12:4-7) - the Lord disciplines those whom He loves.

1. **Does man first have to seek Him or does God first seek the man?**
    a. Can we learn from what He has done in the past?
        i. After mankind sinned in the Garden of Eden, He sought the righteous as a vehicle to bring others to Him
            1. Abraham
            2. Noah
        ii. He created a people (the Israelites) to glorify Him
            1. Through Isaac
            2. Through Jacob
        iii. He sought a leader, a friend of God (Moses) to deliver and administer the Law (the Ten Commandments)
        iv. He sought a leader (Joshua) to succeed Moses to lead His people to the Promised Land
        v. He provided 12 Judges to lead His people to victory over their opponents in the Promised land
        vi. He allowed His people to see the weaknesses of human "kings"
        vii. He appointed priests to provide spiritual guidance to the kings
        viii. He provided prophets to turn people away from their disobedience and unfaithfulness
        ix. He provisioned evil rulers and regimes to discipline His people in hopes of returning them to Himself
            1. Egypt
            2. Assyria
            3. Babylon
        x. He provisioned another regime (the Medes/Persians) to *release* His people from the Babylonian Captivity, return to their land, restore their Temple, and rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

xi. He provisioned other regimes to prepare a fertile framework for reaching the world with His Word
    1. Alexander the Great (the Greek language)
    2. The Romans (the highways throughout the world)
xii. He came down from Heaven in bodily form (Jesus) in order to:
    1. Save those who are lost
    2. Openly prove His deity
        a) Casting out demons
        b) Turning water into wine
        c) Healing the sick, the lame, the blind
        d) Raising the dead
xiii. Take our sins upon Himself so they will no longer deny us from being welcomed in His eternal presence
xiv. Like the 12 Apostles, He has trained us to carry out His Great Commission
xv. We must pursue the business of reaching the unsaved.

We each have at least one spiritual gift…let's use them!