

From Where I Sit . . .

"EVANGELISM BY FRIENDSHIP"

Effective evangelism is usually begun without a film, chart or even without an open Bible at first. It is a program that can be carried out in large or small churches without cumbersome programs, without large investments of church finances. It begins with the assumption that Christians will have friendships outside their church fellowship whom they can influence for the Lord.

Growth is a natural part of Christianity, and it is to be expected that Christians should want to see the church grow. "He that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). All reliable surveys on church growth indicate people are won, not through mass media, but through the influence of individuals---friends---acquaintances:

- 1.Walk-ins -- 2-3%
- 2.Programs -- 2-3%
- 3.Preacher -- 5-6%
- 4.Special Needs -- 1-2%
- 5.Visitation -- 1-2%
- 6.Sunday Schools -- 4-5%
- 7.Crusades, Revivals, Campaigns -- 1/2 of 1%
- 8.Friends and Relatives -- 75-90%

Friendship Evangelism is not a method of soul winning in competition with all other methods -- viz. films, mass media, door knocking, etc. It starts with the concept that "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." "The best evangelism takes place in a context of mutual TRUST and RESPECT. It takes place between friends." (Arthur McPhee).

No one method of evangelism should be used to the exclusion of all others, but if we learn to serve those in need---both Christian and non-Christian alike, we will have a better opportunity to win them through whatever method we finally use for specific teaching.

In a sentence, friendship evangelism is developing relationships with others that reflect our genuine concern with the ultimate desire to lead them to Jesus. It is "caring," and "sharing" with others with an over-riding agenda of saving their soul, not just building our social register. It uses man's legitimate social needs with sincere motives with a hope of bettering our friends condition. This is not a selfish--hidden agenda. It is the essence of brotherly love that we hope to save their soul.

Our Lord was a Master in the use of Friendship Evangelism. We should look to Him as an example. Through Zacchaeus, (Luke 19:1-10), we see that Jesus was seeking for "the seeking." Jesus saw potential in every person, even in a rich, worldly, tax collector. Jesus teaches us that no one is too successful or too unsuccessful to need the Gospel. In this story we see how Jesus used friendship in His evangelism.

Zacchaeus was trying to see Jesus, but the crowds of "religious" people were preventing him. We must be certain that we are not obscuring the view. Out of this beautiful story come the famous words of our Lord: "For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10). Jesus left the crowd and went home with Zaccheus. Why is it so hard for us today to single out one person and spend quality time with them? Do we go through life with blinders on and overlook unlikely people like this "Publican"? **OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY WEEKEND, OCTOBER 24-26, IS A PERFECT TIME TO PUT THIS PRINCIPLE INTO PRACTICE.** But we can't wait until October 23 to get started. Start your list and begin cultivating TODAY!!

..... Terry Broome

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