

Preparing for the Gospel

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In trying to teach others about the kingdom, there is some preparation that we must undergo in order to be effective. Are we preparing for the gospel? Are we doing things that would increase the opportunities to share the gospel? The Institute for American Church Growth set out trying to answer the question: “What was responsible for your coming to Christ and this church?” Less than 5% of converts came upon the church themselves or attended a gospel meeting. 3% were attracted by the “programs” at a place and 5% enjoyed the Bible classes. A large 80%, however, stated simply, “A friend or relative invited me”. The best opportunities for evangelism comes through the working of individual Christians!

Three simple steps to increase our opportunities for sharing the good news with relatives, friends, neighbors, and others will help us in our preparing and working for the gospel. Firstly, simply do good. In Peter’s speech recorded in Acts 10, in verse 38 he mentions that “Christ went about doing good.” Christ’s primary task was to teach and preach the gospel! (Matthew 4:17,23) Doing good increased His opportunities to do so. Through His ministry recorded at the end of Matthew 4, we saw that great crowds were attracted to Him due to His work. That opened many opportunities for Jesus’ work. Doing good has a great result. There used to be a commercial that showed passing along a smile. If you smile at one person, and they another, and so on, then the world would be full of more smiles. It is a simple truth. Doing good is great for people. Matthew 5:16 — It encourages people to glorify God. This can lead others to ask, “Why do you act like this? Why do you do what you do?” It allows for a great conversation starter. In other words, let your light shine. As Paul writes to Titus, be zealous for good works. (Titus 2:14, 3:1,8) He tells him especially to those in need. (3:14) Do good for your family, friends, neighbors, classmates, co-workers, etc. It might open a door to bring them to Christ.

The second step is significant, utilize a prayer list. This is an effective tool that is a technique many use in all walks of life. (ex. To-do-list) Putting things in a list form gives them importance and keeps them at the forefront of your mind. It helps to focus your attention on those we hope to reach and to not neglect them. On your list, start with those are close to you like family and friends. Include also your neighbors, coworkers, relatives of fellow church members, regular visitors at services, and even casual acquaintances. Let’s suggest though to limit your list to around five to eight names, or else you may be unable to focus your efforts. This list is not set in stone. Names will come off for various reasons (drifting apart, answered the invitation,

rejected it many times, etc.). Give some priority to those who have little to no interaction with the church. Keep the list where you will see it every day. Good suggestions can be in your car, on a nightstand, on a bathroom mirror, in a wallet/purse. Make sure you keep it close.

Most importantly, pray for those on this list **daily**. 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 reminds us that God is who gives the increase when it comes to evangelism. We are His servants that God uses in His workings. (1 Corinthians 3:50 So though we may work and think it all depends on us, pray as though it all depends on God. Pray that God will work together with you to give opportunities to do good for those on this list. (Colossians 4:3) Also that He will give you wisdom to make the most of those opportunities. (Colossians 4:4-6) Pray that He will give you boldness to say what needs to be said. (Ephesians 6:20) And then pray that those on your list will have both the opportunity to hear the truth and honest hearts to be open and receptive to the truth. Do not neglect prayer in the work of the Gospel.

Thirdly and plainly, invite them to worship services. They will have an opportunity to see a congregation in action. This combines the demonstration of love as the individual who invited them with love shown by others to make a lasting impression. They will more like have an opportunity to be presented with the gospel. When inviting people to services, first spend time in prayer. Pray for the wisdom to invite them in the best manner and for boldness to offer the invitation. Note that people will more likely accept your invitation if they are among those who have little interaction with the church, or are dissatisfied with where they currently are, or you have been already hospitable to them in many ways. Be persistent in your asking. Perseverance is often rewarded. Someone also might be interested in a home bible study instead. I, and others, are glad to assist in a small bible study. Invite them to your home if they are interested in such!

It is also worth mentioning to be hospitable to visitors. By their presence, they are expressing some form of interest and possibly even a willingness to learn. Welcoming them warmly prepares their heart for the seed of the gospel. Be friendly and inviting to all visitors, whether incited by you, someone else, or simply a walk-in. Use the opportunity to make an impact. Write or call them after a visit to encourage and invite them back. —**CW**