

What works today, to bring people to Christ?

Series: Personal Work and Personal Evangelism

Intro:

➤ → **series on personal work and personal evangelism** — something congregation very interested in doing more actively

! **lesson 1:** Be a good neighbor — paradigm, view, perspective, way of thinking

! live by the golden rule: have compassion for people, move to show mercy

! “good neighbor” personal work

! “good neighbor” evangelism

! **compliment congregation**

! “good neighbor” attitudes that exist

! **personal work that is occurring:** encouragement, meals to sick

! e.g., all the encouragement and help given me and my family

! **illus.:** received two card in the mail last week, as have before, both totally made my day

! **personal evangelism that each is doing:** talking to friends, neighbors, acquaintances

! **task: to improve**

! **commend for desire of each to improve** as personal workers and personal evangelists

! **fact: can’t put all our efforts** into personal work and personal evangelism, must strike a good balance, to do all that God has set forth for us to do as His creation

! **challenge: make the best of our time** (Eph. 5:16)

! **lesson 2:** Don’t worry, just do it!

! **sometimes we leave our first love**

! **solution:** we must repent

! **sometimes we are afraid of rejection, afraid we’re not perfect**

! **solution:** believe that the battle belongs to the Lord — its not about you, its about God

! **don’t worry, just do it** — God already equipped you, know you can do it

→ **lesson 3:**

! **Title:** What works today, to bring people to Christ?

! **Purpose:** to understand what we can do today, in our society, to bring people to Christ

! **Programing note:** after we establish what works (this lesson), we will begin talking “how” to do it

➤ #1 **God expects us to chose an expedient method (s) to reach the lost with His word:**

→ **Great Commission:**

! **Mk. 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20a**

! **when apostles taught the disciples “all things,” taught them to be evangelistic**

➤ → **Early Christians were evangelistic:**

! **Acts 8:1-4** Christians scattered, taught others

➤ → **Evangelism is a work of the church:**

! **1 Tim. 3:14-15** church is the pillar and ground of the truth

! **Eph. 3:10-11** church made know God’s wisdom in heavenly places, according to God’s eternal purpose — spread good news to rulers and authorities in heavenly places

! **Eph. 4:16** whole congregation works together to teach others - grow

! **2 Tim. 2:2** teachers train teachers

➤ → **Apostles, prophets, and teachers employed expedient methods to reach people:**

! places: synagogue, marketplace, public assemblies, church assemblies, houses, etc.

! methods: formal orations, preaching, teaching, example

- ! **1 Cor. 9:19-23** Paul's methods varied depending upon the culture in which he was preaching
- → **To carry out the Great Commission today, we must employ expedient methods to reach the lost with God's word.**
- ! **2 Th. 2:13-15** hold to apostolic traditions, evangelize the lost by whatever lawful means works best for our culture
- ! **Col. 4:5** walk in wisdom toward unbelievers, **making the most of our time**
- ! **Col. 4:6** speech seasoned with grace, seasoned with salt, **respond** to each person
- **What's this mean to you?**
- ! we must **learn** God's word
- ! **prayerfully determine** the **most expedient** ways to reach the lost in our society
- ! **work hard and prayerfully seek** to reach the lost with God's word

- #2 **Recent history of effective evangelism, USA: — effective expedients in recent history**
- **Some first century expedients of evangelism have not been effective in our culture (USA).**
- ! synagogue, marketplace, some public assemblies
- → **What has worked in the past? — gospel meeting, cottage meeting**
- ! **Gospel meeting: — Harold Comer**
- ! **From 1900 to 1950, the Lord's church in America had many rural congregations and few preachers. Members were not very busy each evening and many non-members would attend a meeting.**
- ! **People were more direct and more at ease with confrontation** in that age, so powerful, **direct preaching**, which was based on **clear Biblical proofs, was very effective.**
- ! **The period was closed by TV sets, more cars, and many more secular activities** in which to be involved.
- ! **This period of the Gospel Meeting was a special time when our method was uniquely qualified to fit the life style and daily activities of the majority** of our rural and small-town neighbors (Biblical Evangelism, Harold Comer, September, 1977).
- ! **today:** gospel meetings such as those in the early 20th century are not very effective in reaching the lost, but can be modified so that they are effective
- ! **Cottage meeting: — Harold Comer**
- ! **From 1955 to 1970 people were at home most nights with their TV sets on.**
- ! **Weak brethren were staying away from services to watch a favorite TV program. Yet, people were still curious about the Bible** and their religious knowledge.
- ! You could **knock on the doors of two contacts and end up with one Home Bible Study.**
- ! Some **cottage meetings (the 1950's term for home Bible studies)**
- ! **were with filmstrips;**
- ! **some studies with charts,**
- ! **and some with a question sheet at the kitchen table.**
- ! **Always, there was an open Bible.**
- ! **In the 60's a gospel preacher (I, Harold Comer) averaged three and up to six studies a week. It was a thrill to study one on one, even though it was different from a gospel meeting.**
- ! **Yet, more money and more activities pulled people out of the home.**
- ! **More mothers were working.**
- ! **More families started eating out.**
- ! **Now when you knock on doors, 2 out of 3 families are not at home.**
- ! **People are more urbanized.**
- ! **They don't respond as well to people at their door.**
- ! **Private home Bible Studies are much, much harder to arrange unless someone has**

already visited our service a few times (Biblical Evangelism, Harold Comer, September, 1977).

! **today:** cottage meeting such as those in the mid 20th century are not very effective in reaching the lost, but can be modified so that they are effective

! **Application:**

! **the methods employed in the early and mid 20th century are not very effective today, unless we modify them to work in our culture**

! **if we try to force the gospel down people's throat by employing methods that no longer work in our culture, we will be sitting here all alone, ineffective at evangelism, not fulfilling the Great Commission**

➤ → **What is working best, today? — visitor's meeting, Harold Comer**

! **From 1980 to today people have become more and more busy, urbanized, and empty as they fill their lives with more secular activities.**

! They have **spent so much time with TV** that they **don't want to talk about religion** or any difficult, controversial topic until they are confident of a controlled conversation.

! Yet, they **still have serious religious need**. It is **hard to penetrate their busy world and touch their spiritual needs**, though.

! When you **can't get them to come to most services of a gospel meeting** to preach to them, or they are **too busy for 10 cottage meetings, what can you do to teach them?**

! **Most adults** (as opposed to children of members) who are baptized today, do **fit one predominate pattern** in areas where the church is better known.

! **First, most converts are first impressed by the good life of a righteous member.**

! **Secondly, they accept an invitation to a service, then return a few times until they are ready to accept a Bible study.**

! They are **baptized after four to ten studies.**

! **1 Cor. 14:22-24** approved apostolic example (aem)

! **Third, least:** Converts in large urban areas also **come down three or four other routes** (**walkins, neighborhood Bible studies, Radio/TV call-in programs, and correspondence courses**) but **converts from these methods are only a small percentage of total adult converts at this time.**

! Of course we **occasionally convert someone from repeated attendance to a Gospel Meeting or to a home Bible Study** which they agree to before they ever attend a service but it doesn't happen much today.

! **Application:** we should reach people in any lawful way we can, but we must concentrate our efforts on what works today rather than what worked in past generations when people's lives were very different

➤ → **To effectively reach the lost with God's word, we must effectively build relationships, to bring our family, friends and neighbors to church. — overview chart, then review with comments**

! **Results of a survey by The Institute For American Church Growth, who asked over 10,000 people this question: "What was responsible for your coming to Christ and this church?"**

! **I had a special need - 2%**

! **we don't have to sin be like other religious groups that sin trying to fulfill needs the church is not authorized to attend to**

! **I just walked in - 3%**

! **can't just sit here and wait for people to come to us**

! **I like the minister - 6%**

! **preached doesn't have to be the best, more about the members**

! **I visited there - 1%**

! **can't wait on visitors, have to seek them and bring them**

! **I like the Bible classes - 5%**

- ! Bible classes are important in evangelism, but not as important as another thing
- ! I attended a gospel meeting - 0.5%
- ! very ineffective today in reaching the lost, but helpful in other ways
- ! I liked the programs - 3%
- ! we don't have to have special "programs" not authorized by God, to reach people
- ! A friend or relative invited me - 79%
- ! this is the most important thing — what is done outside the assembly
- ! build relationship outside the assembly, bring our family, friends, neighbors with us to church and small group Bible classes
- ! once they come to church or Bible class, our work is just beginning, as a church and individually

Conclusion:

- → What's this mean to you - us, as a church?
 - ! We have to be a congregation that is ready to receive visitors, follow up with them, lead them to Christ with God's word. — we are, but can improve, working on that now
 - ! As individuals, we have to build relationships, and bring people to church and Bible study, follow through, help teach them the gospel, and help them grow to maturity.
 - ! once they come to church or Bible class, our work is just beginning, as a church and individually
- → Next lessons:
 - ! What is necessary for us to do as a congregation, to be ready to receive visitors and lead them to Christ.
 - ! What are some things we can do to build relationships, and bring people to church and Bible class, leading them to Christ with the gospel, and help them grow to maturity.
- Inv.:

Audio sermon notes:

- ! ➤ denotes where to proceed to the next slide PowerPoint slide.
- ! All Scriptures are NASB, unless otherwise noted.
- ! Sermon recorded 11/27/2005, Church of Christ, South Livingston Ave. In Lutz, FL, Allan McNabb, BibleGuide.org.