

## **Ratchet up Relationships & Rid Yourself of Religiosity**

We exist to proclaim the person and work of Jesus Christ----**modeling** His character and conduct in our attitudes and actions and **telling** people who Jesus is and what He has done. God has placed each of us in locations and situations to bring Him glory. He wants us to radiate His light and His love into our individual spheres of influence. Satan, the deceiver, destroyer, and the god of this world does not want people to have a personal relationship with Jesus and learn of His great love. When we fail to share Him with unbelievers, we unintentionally join Satan in his plan. Let's model Jesus by spending so much time with unbelievers in building relationships and telling them of God's love that we thwart Satan's plan.

When we are indifferent, judgmental, neglect to reach out and remain silent about our faith, we fit the description of self-absorbed, ineffective Christians. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "*Your life as a Christian should make non-believers question their disbelief in God.*" Let's commit to not only study the scriptures, but also put them into practice by sharing the Good News in word and deed with our neighbors.

The scriptures tell us that Jesus was relational, not religious. He loved people, but had little time for those who placed religiosity above entering into a personal relationship with Him. They focused on rituals, traditions and the finer points of the Law but disregarded the spirit of it. As Jesus traveled from village to village, He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and shared the Good News that God loved them. He spoke truth telling them that He was God, the "I Am" (*John 8:58*). He said He and the Father were one (*John 10:30*). He told them that He was the way, the truth and the life (*John 14:6*) and eternal life was found only in Him (*Matthew 10:28*).

As Jesus looked out over His city, He wept bitterly (*Luke 19:41*). Why, because of the tragedy of spiritual indifference & their lost opportunity to experience peace with God and live in His love. God wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (*1 Timothy 2:3-4*). Let's give our neighbors the opportunity to experience His amazing love by sharing Jesus with them.

Jesus described the people of the towns He visited as "*sheep without a shepherd.*" Every day we encounter people that could also be described as

*"sheep without a shepherd."* Some need you to be present in their lives, not to fix them but to show them that you care: (a clerk at the gas station; a cashier in the grocery store; wait staff at a restaurant, an employee in the next cubicle at work, the lonely person in the nursing home, or the neighbor next door or across the street). Presence is so powerful. They also need to hear the Good News that God loves them, will meet them at their point of need, provide **light** to drive out the darkness and give them **joy** on their journey. Sharing the Good News always pushes back the darkness.

Many seem to think our culture is close to spinning out of control because people are fixated on self, have little concern for others and are far from God. Americans age 30 and under who have doubts about God are increasing at an alarming rate. Every day 700 people stop reading God's Word. Every month as many as 2,700 churches hold their last service, close their doors and erect "For Sale" signs. Barna Research revealed that 80% of evangelicals believe they have a personal responsibility to share their faith, but only 25% have done so in the last 6 months. **How about you?**

You say, "*I want to reach those in my sphere of influence, but I don't know where to begin.*"

Let me give you a **Simple 3 Step Plan:**

**Step 1 - Fulfill The Great Commitment** (*1Tim 2:1-4*)

**Faithfully pray** that God will bring people across your path for whom He would like you to pray. Then ask Him to open their hearts and guide you in building relationships with them.

**Step 2 - Fulfill The Great Commandment** (*Mark 12:28-31*)

**Lovingly care** for them through phone calls, emails, text messages, cookies, cards, lending a helping hand or a listening ear.

**Step 3 - Fulfill The Great Commission** (*Matt 28:19-20*)

**Humbly share** the Good News with them as the Holy Spirit opens the door for you to do so.

You say, "*Okay, I'll begin to **pray for them** to open their hearts to the truth of the Gospel, **care for them** through acts of kindness, but how do I transition from the social to the spiritual; from talking about a basketball game to talking about the game of life? There is an element of fear that holds me back.*"

Next month we will answer that question by introducing a way to share your faith with passion and without fear in a most effective and compelling way.

Will you join me in reaching out with the Good News of God's love to those in your spheres of influence (*Matthew 5:13-14*)? Let's focus on relationships, not on religiosity. God wants people to experience His love and come into a personal relationship with Him. Let's make ourselves available to be His ambassadors by **praying, caring** and **sharing**.

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