

## The Evangelistic Community

In John 13:34,35 and John 17:21,23, Jesus stated that the unity and love Christians express to each other is compelling evidence of the truthfulness of Christianity. Since this evidence is more subjective than objective, it has to be *felt* and *seen*, rather than explained. The atmosphere produced by a group of Christians who love each other will often do a great deal to convince the non-Christian to respond to Christ especially initially.

A scriptural example of this is Andrew (John 1:40- 51; John 12:20-26). Andrew brought many to Christ by asking them to investigate Christ for themselves. See also 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 which contemplates the non-Christian entering the Christian meeting, and there realizing that "God is certainly among you."

Access to a dynamic group that is truly practicing Christian love is an important aid in the evangelistic task. There are several reasons this is true.

### Discussion

Have individual group members read each of the following 8 points aloud. When finished, open the floor to their reactions about what they just read.

- We may only get 5 or 10 minutes at work or school to try to explain the gospel, which is difficult-- though the results can be surprisingly effective. But such a small amount of time is often not as effective as a full-length, well-reasoned teaching given by a gifted communicator.
- There are varieties of gifts in the church, and one who is trying to share the gospel should look for opportunities to derive help from other gifted people. If we can bring our friends into contact with gifted communicators, they may find answers to their questions more easily.
- A person who has attended a series of Bible teachings while deciding whether to become a Christian is in an excellent position to become involved in fellowship without major changes in schedule.
- A person who is cynical, or very cognitively oriented, or who is afraid of being cornered by a small group of people, should be invited to a Seekers' meeting. There, there won't be a lot of Christian activities which might be offensive. There is also more anonymity at the large meeting, so there is less tendency to feel "on the spot."
- Church growth experts state that the attitude of the members is the single most important factor in determining a church's ability to grow. When members in a local church are enthusiastic about what God is doing through the church, guests sense this and are attracted.
- Attending a Seeker's meeting or an outreach-oriented home fellowship ministry allows a new person the time needed to make big decisions like whether to follow Christ. It is usually a mistake to try to move people from dim awareness of the gospel to a decision to receive Christ in one step. Rather, we are trying to help others to come to an informed, free-will decision to receive Christ. Such a sincere decision may take time and, from our side, patience. When the need for time is disregarded, people are usually either needlessly scared off, or they make insincere decisions based on the desire to please others. These decisions usually do not last. See Paul's application of this principle in Acts 17:1-4.
- The central message of Christianity (that salvation is a free gift and that one can have a personal relationship with Christ), has the ability to profoundly affect people on a spiritual level. The Holy

Spirit works in cooperation with this message to convict the hearer of its truthfulness and of their need for Christ. This is why Paul said that he was careful to stay focused on declaring this message ("I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:1-5). The effective evangelist trusts the power of this message and knows that it will impact the hearer, regardless of the hearer's initial, visible response.

- In the evangelistic community the Word of God is taught clearly and non-Christian guests can be expected to be influenced more as they listen to the truth.
- When we are communicating with a non-Christian friend, we need to not only speak, but also listen. Attending fellowship meetings is a good place to spend time trying to truly understand the view of the other person. The more leisurely setting after teachings is a good opportunity for this kind of conversation.

#### Recommended Reading Relevant to Evangelism

*The Universe Next Door*, James Sire

*Say It With Love*, Howard Hendricks

*Out of the Salt Shaker and Into the World*, Rebecca Pippert

*Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell

*To Tell the Truth*, Will Metzger

*Winning Ways*, Leroy Eims

*Lifestyle Evangelism*, Joseph Aldrich