

together_51903

October 13, 2006

Posted: 5/19/03

TOGETHER:

Changed lives change lives of others

Intentional evangelism is one of the 11 characteristics of a healthy church. Jesus sent his disciples into the lost world announcing the Good News of the kingdom of God. When you are lost and have no idea of the way home, the very best news in all the Earth is when someone calls out, "Follow me, and I will take you home."

CHARLES WADE Executive Director BGCT Executive Board
--

We all love John 3:16, with its declaration that God loves us so much he wants to spend eternity with us. Have you also noticed the spirit of John 3:17? "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." The whole life of Jesus bears out that spirit. He lifted up every person who came to him. He welcomed all who approached. His condemnation rested upon those who, in their self-righteousness, felt they needed no repentance and counted themselves better than others. They built walls instead of bridges.

As I call you to consider the importance of evangelism in your local

church, I have to also remind you of a specific warning from Jesus: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are” (Matthew 23:15). This frightening warning is not to discourage us from bearing witness and inviting people to become disciples of Christ. It reminds us that we must help people come to Christ and enroll in his school of discipleship, not become clones of us.

As a pastor, I encouraged my church to practice “invitation evangelism.” Everyone can invite people to come to a place where God's people are gathering. If they come where there is prayer for the lost, a climate of genuine interest in people, welcome for the stranger and the good news of Jesus Christ presented in a credible and compelling way, God's Spirit can draw them to faith and new life. In my experience, the greatest instruments for bringing people to Christ are the lives of faithful church members who use every opportunity to invite acquaintances, friends and family to come and go with them. And as Rick Warren has said, “Changed lives are a church's greatest advertisement.”

Some of our churches are finding wonderful help in sharing the gospel by using FAITH. This plan for personal witnessing emphasizes the importance of Sunday School classes as groups of people who pray for others, invite others, go visit others, seek to help them come to faith in Christ and incorporate them into the life of small groups, as well as the church. Some churches are finding success in a plan called G.R.O.W. Others see multitudes come to faith through special events, including revival meetings.

It's one thing, of course, to say we believe in evangelism. Calvin Miller once noted about Baptists, “Even those who never do it must pay some lip service just to keep their self-respect.” But I want to encourage all of us to be thoughtful, prayerful and intentional about evangelism. The BGCT Center for Strategic Evangelism, led by Rick Davis, wants to partner with

your church for intentional evangelism strategies and resources. Their resources can be easily found by calling toll free at (888) 269-3826.

We are loved.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.