

Nbr. 62 – September, 2024

Three Evangelism Suggestions for Your Church

Every One His Witness emphasizes individual witnessing. Here are three supplemental suggestions for congregations.

First: **Canvass**. Walk from door to door and take a religious survey. Find out who and where non-churched people are. End with a short Gospel statement. (Over the years, Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ has refined a routine for canvass. Enlist their help, or contact me.)

The most natural place to canvass would be the neighborhood around your church building. Other places are possible, too, so long as people can readily travel to the church from such places.

Contrary to some thinking, canvassing IS possible. While it cannot be done everywhere, in maybe a surprising number of places it can be done!

Needless to say, follow up with the prospects identified in a canvass. Do so right away.

Second: **Follow up on church visitors**. Speaking of follow-up, when non-churched people for some reason come to your church, rejoice! You don't have to go looking for these people. They have come to you. Do all you can to follow up.

Contact your visitors in more than just one way, or two. Place a phone call. Send a text message and/or e-mail. Mail a letter and/or postcard. And – a major point here – do everything you can to set up a face-to-face visit very soon.

In most cases, pastors can make it a priority (perhaps accompanied by a lay person or two) to visit all nonchurched visitors personally within a week of their attending a service. Whether visitors are nonchurched may be ascertained, if nothing else, by a telephone call on Sunday evening,

perhaps Monday. The same phone call might aim to schedule a visit later in the week. If volunteers make such phone calls, the pastor can provide them a list of times when he can be available to visit.

Some CID churches report difficulties in obtaining contact information about their visitors, which is of course necessary for follow up. If you are experiencing such difficulties, please let me know. I would like to explore some possibilities with you.

Third: **Engage in organized evangelism calling on Monday nights**. Schedule this on the pastor's weekly calendar as surely as services on Sundays. Invite laypeople to become involved too.

This can be a prime time for personal follow-ups on church visitors from Sunday, as already noted. But others can be visited also.

I know of one church that invites its entire membership to "nominate" people who might have particular needs for a visit: those who are ill, those who have recently had a baby, newcomers to the area, etc. Appointments are made in advance.

Even if lay church members find themselves on a Monday night team that does not include the pastor (because he is with another team), they can still converse with people, pray with or for them, gain some general knowledge of their situation to pass on to the pastor, and perhaps conclude with their own brief Gospel witness. Lay church members who, for example, are limited in their opportunities to witness at their places of work can do evangelistic work on Monday nights.

Beyond the Classroom Training Resumes in Fall

For churches with schools in your Circuit: encourage them to schedule a Saturday BTC training with Trip Rodgers. The earlier they do, the more preferable date they can get!



Worth Considering:

1 Kings 17 tells of a prophet and a widow. The Lord sent Elijah to this woman while He was bringing a drought on the whole region due to the flagrant idolatries of Israel's King Ahab. Elijah was lodging with the widow and her son. Miraculously, they never ran out of food. There was always a little flour and oil for them, just enough from day to day.

Then the widow's son died. He had been ill, and he got worse and worse until he breathed his last. Blurting out, she said to Elijah: "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!"

Maybe you have heard sermons that ask you to put yourself in the shoes of the widow woman. I know I have preached such sermons. For now, though, think of this from Elijah's side. If you had been he, would you have told her?

People in hours of grief come to pastors all the time saying things like she said. Lutheran schoolteachers hear similar things when a pupil in class dies, or one of that pupil's friends or family members dies. Really, all Christians hear this, sometimes from our own hearts: Why did God do such a thing?

Tragedies bring our sin to remembrance, like the death of the widow's son did. We may have thought we were OK, like she did, going right along with God. But now, inexplicably, there is . . . this!

If I had been Elijah, I'd have a strong urge to explain the inexplicable and try feebly to make defenses for God: "Well, your son had a good life while it lasted" or "We've all got to go sometime."

Terrible things do happen in this world for which we do not know the whys or wherefores. In

fact, as Martin Luther wrote, "God must . . . be left to himself in his own majesty, for in this regard we have nothing to do with him. . . . God hidden in his majesty neither deplores nor takes away death, but works life, death, and all in all." Let the world resist God as much as it wants. He is still in complete charge, and we remain totally answerable to him.

He does not answer to us. Notice that Elijah made no attempt to defend God. He knew that the only answer to God is God. For while we can have nothing to do with God in his own majesty, "we have something to do with him insofar as he is clothed and set forth in his Word, through which he offers himself to us" (AE 33:139-40).

Elijah called upon the Lord, then stretched himself out over the dead boy three times. And the Lord caused the boy's spirit to come back into him! For the first time, He brought a dead person back to life, thru His prophet. Elijah offered the widow no defenses for God; he simply gave her back her son.

"Well and good for them," we might say, "but we can't do anything like that."

Don't be so sure. We can do better.

Our Lord Jesus said, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." He is the Resurrection and the Life. He died, and He is alive forevermore. He holds the keys of death and hell.

The only answer to God is God. Christ was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification. In Him, God is for us. Not against us!

The Gospel message about Jesus gives life, right now, to the spiritually dead. This life will culminate in God raising us from our tombs. Don't give grieving neighbors feeble defenses for God. Give them Jesus. – Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org

