

The Blessings of Participating in Congregational Outreach

~ Jesse Burkholder

Blessings are seen through spiritual eyes. A Christian's perspective is totally different from an unbeliever's. What a Christian views as a blessing, the unbeliever may view as a curse. In order to see the blessing of outreach, we must see it from the proper perspective. To help us understand this, we will consider the response of an unbeliever versus that of a Christian if he were called to visit a dying man who does not know Christ.

An unbeliever could feel little value in reaching out to someone who is about to pass on to the next life. It would be misery for an unbeliever to face the pain of a dying man. What good could he do? He is very empty himself. He has no peace about his own soul. He would be forced to think of the realities of death. No unbeliever likes to think about death. It gives him a feeling of guilt, which is very difficult to deal with. Also, the unbeliever has nothing to offer the dying man because he himself does not believe in Christ. He can only offer this world, and the world is the very things that the dying man is leaving behind. Any approach would be insufficient to comfort the dying man as he faces a great enemy, death. The unbeliever is at a loss to be of any help. Therefore it would be hard for an unbeliever to see this opportunity as a blessing.

The Christian, however, has experienced Christ in his life. He knows what it means to be forgiven, to get peace, to find satisfaction for his life, and to have the hope of eternal life. His life is full. He has something to offer. When someone is facing death, the Christian counts it a God-given opportunity to be there. It helps him to consider his own standing before God. The Christian is very concerned about his own relationship with God. Secondly, he may be able to bring another soul to Christ. He is keenly aware of what Christ has done for his life. From his understanding of the love Christ showed to him, he desires to see others experience peace and eternal life in the world to come. A Christian counts it a blessing to be called to the bedside of a dying man. Our perspective on what is a blessing comes from our true heart condition.

Life is filled with opportunities. We can easily miss our opportunities because we are so focused on self. When we are concerned about self, outreach work will be considered inconvenient or too much bother. To receive a blessing from reaching out, our focus must be on Christ. When our hearts are committed to Christ, we look for opportunities. Helping others is our passion. It is a desire in our heart proving the peace we feel within. Participating in outreach work is only an outward response to what Christ has done for us on the inside. The blessings of congregational outreach will be missed unless seen through spiritual eyes.

Now, more specifically, what are the blessings of participating in congregational outreach?

First of all is the spiritual growth that comes to our own lives. Many times we are challenged to a closer walk with God through others' lives. The questions we may be asked through outreach often put us to the test. We search the Scriptures to find answers. Through this we gain greater Bible knowledge. It helps us to be more confident in what we believe. This builds conviction, which will help us to be strong. The process can be challenging, but the outcome is a blessing. It will bring us to a closer relationship with

God. It is a real blessing to our lives when we can be strong growing Christians, Christians who are close to God.

Secondly, it will help us to feel worthwhile. To feel needed and useful has a way of helping us be confident. Not a confidence of pride, but rather a joy in realizing we have a calling. Imagine Christ coming to earth without a mission. There would have been no point to His coming. God had a mission for Christ to die for us. God has given us all a calling. We are here on this earth with a mission to serve Christ. There is a godly satisfaction that brings a positive attitude of joy when we can fill the place to which God has called us. Nothing in this world will give us such a feeling of contentment and peace.

Another blessing is the encouragement we receive from witnessing how God works in others' lives. There are many needs around us to which we can reach out. Weak hands need to be strengthened. Fainting souls need to be refreshed. Discouraged people need to be encouraged. Sinners need to be saved. It is a very blessed experience to witness people rising above the strongholds in their lives through the power of God.

An added blessing is learning to work together. Although working together can be trying at times, it can create deep friendships. You will gain many friends if you will learn to blend your abilities with others. They will look out for your well being. Through good times they will rejoice with you, and through difficult times they will weep with you. The moral support we receive from learning to work together is a real blessing to our lives.

The final and ultimate blessing we receive is heaven. We will not fully understand the blessing of our sacrifices here on this earth until we see the glories of heaven. Many times on this earth we tire of giving. We think we deserve more time for ourselves. In heaven we will discover we got much more than we deserved, and we have all eternity to enjoy it. The greatest blessing for our efforts will be in the life to come.

~ Jonestown, PA