

Ministering House To House

~ Sidney Gingrich

In 1 Corinthians 3:9, we read, “We are laborers together with God.” We are commanded by God to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8).

But where are we called to be witnesses? One of the apostle Paul’s areas of ministry was “house to house” (Acts 20:19, 20). We should start at home, in the church and in the community on a person to person level from house to house. Then we can reach out to other geographic areas.

Another question might be also raised: “Who shall go?” Anyone who has compassion for souls going toward hell should go. The Prophet Jeremiah and the apostle Paul are good examples of men who had compassion for lost souls. One time as Christ looked out over Jerusalem, He wept, not for the coming destruction of the buildings, but for coming destruction of lost souls.

Should we pray for persecution so we can be scattered abroad with our message? Acts 8:1-4 tells about the time of great persecution at Jerusalem. As the people were scattered abroad, the evangelical mission of the church was enhanced. This suggests that the work is not only for the ministry; we all need to be involved.

What message do we have to tell? Our first important message is repentance toward God. We need to help people see that they have sinned against God. Acts 20:21, 24 would have us to “testify the grace of God” and of our faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to tell them how God delivered us from the depths of sin.

Our goal when we go to that house should be to help the individuals become part of the Church of Jesus Christ and also a part of our local fellowship.

In Luke 19, we have the account of Zacchaeus who went up in the sycamore tree so he could see Jesus. Jesus called, “Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.” Why at his house? Why not just by the roadside? There is an effect to be had in the living room or around the kitchen table that cannot be had elsewhere. One of the greatest blessings we can experience is to sit with a sinner, see where they are, and then help them come to the Lord. Once they are in the church, we should not forget them. We may need to visit them frequently to encourage and instruct them in their Christian life. Again in Mark 9, we have the account of Jesus going to Capernaum, entering a house and sitting down with disciples. In this home setting, he called for a small child to illustrate his concern.

There are a few things we keep in mind as we enter a sinner’s house. Remember, we are now in their home! Let us not force ourselves upon them, but respect them. If the television is on should we turn it off? Of course not. You may ask them if it could be turned off. Most often they will be respectful enough to do it themselves.

Do not get into an argument. by arguing they may not receive any help at all. Later, you might be able to boast to someone that you got them into a corner. but listen, we want them out of a corner,

not in one.

A man once remarked that I should never again bring the preacher along that was with me the last time I came. The preacher was an evangelist whom he felt was a little too blunt and talked too straight forward to the man, and he was offended. We should not talk to one person like we would a crowd of five hundred people.

Our visit should lead the person from the natural to the spiritual. The Samaritan woman in John 4 was asked to give Jesus a drink of water. Christ started with what she was familiar with and then went on to reveal the spiritual things to her. When Jesus was finished with the woman, she no doubt felt like the man who once stated, "I believe the Bible has the answers for everything."

When a person starts to open up and become receptive, we need to be careful not to spoil that reception. Carefully take the opportunity to use the Scriptures and show them where they lack in their lifestyle.

Do not be afraid when they ask questions and do not be embarrassed if you do not know the answers. Tell them that you do not know the answer but you will try to find the answer. Never try to manufacture answers. Faulty responses could lead them astray. Besides, they might know more than you think.

We never know what the outcome will be of one contact. When the Samaritan woman believed on Jesus, she told others and many more became believers. One contact can trigger a chain reaction of responses. There was a situation in my lifetime where through one contact, six people eventually became members of the Mennonite Church.

Now let us look at the house to house idea in just a little different light. Sometimes our house needs to have the open door. Are we ready to give someone a home for six months or a year? The individual may be blind, sick, or filthy, yet they are in need of a place to live. But we say, "This may be very inconvenient for us." Yes, it probably will be inconvenient, but if the person comes to know Christ, it will be worth it all.

Giving out literature is another worthwhile house to house ministry. If you meet someone while passing out tracts who wants to talk, take time to listen. After the initial contact, maintain the contact or inform the ministry of their interest. Above all, pray for them. Sometimes individuals are slow to respond to the Gospel. From one of my acquaintances it took 14 years for an individual who came in contact with Gospel literature to come into the church.

Not every contact is a success story. There was one individual we were unable to help, but today four of her children are in the Mennonite Church because various people cared and took time to minister to their needs.

House to house ministry contains many challenges. No doubt a minister would say it is a lot easier to preach to a large audience than to counsel individuals. Do not wait to go from house to house till you think you have all the answers or you will not go. If we do not have a compassion for lost souls,

let us pray for compassion. If the Lord does not have first place in our efforts, they will not amount to much.

Let us all strive to be laborers together with God!

~ Myerstown PA
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