

The Rector's Reflections

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Over the past several months, we've been discussing the evangelization of Postmoderns through holistic cell groups. This month we'll continue discussing the Upward value of God's Kingdom. Specifically, how the Christian's F.R.A.N. Network (friends, relatives, associates, neighbors) of pre-Christians cannot be taken too lightly as a means of doing evangelism. Dr. Robert Logan writes:

Network evangelism is the most effective kind of evangelism. This becomes clear when you see statistics dealing with why people come to our churches. Nearly *nine out of ten come as a direct result of relationships*. As fallible as Christians may be, people still can see God's supernatural love in their lives, and are drawn to Jesus as a result . . .

This network evangelism is alternately called friendship evangelism, incarnational evangelism, or *oikos* evangelism. *Oikos* is the Greek work translated "household," and is frequently throughout the New Testament:

Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his *household* believed. John 4:53, *emphasis added*

He (Peter) will bring you (Cornelius) a message through which you and all your *household* will be saved. Acts 11:14, *emphasis added*

When she (Lydia) and the members of her *household* were baptized, she invited us to her home. . . . Acts 16:15, *emphasis added*

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your *household*." Acts 16:29-31, *emphasis added*

Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire *household* believed in the Lord. . . . Acts 18:8, *emphasis added*

These verses demonstrate the fact, widely ignored by our twentieth-century evangelistic methods, that coming to Christ was intended to be a *household* or *network* event. People generally came to Jesus in the context of their group association. As Donald MacGavran has said, if God has indeed prepared the hearts of unchurched people in our community, it is likely he has also built the bridges by which we may reach those people (Robert E. Logan, *Beyond Church Growth*, 101-102).

Additionally, praying coupled with fasting for a cell group's list of pre-Christian F.R.A.N. Network, is an invaluable source of conversion

to Jesus Christ. In his work, *The Cell Church*, Larry Stockstill explains:

The major cell churches of the world have released millions of hours of focused spiritual warfare for the lost. Believers within a cell find their dreams for evangelism being fulfilled when they join rank in prayer and fasting for the lost. . . . The results of this kind of spiritual discipline throughout the world are compelling. For example, in Bogota, each cell member completes a liquids only fast for the first 3 days of each month and then a weekly 1-day fast (until the evening meal). As a group, cell members fast for 10 consecutive days once each year and also participate in an annual 40-day fast that lasts each day until the evening meal! This commitment to fasting and prayer is literally breaking down the demonic strongholds over Bogota, and geographical regions of that city have already been “conquered” spiritually! . . . In the same way, we have challenged every cell member at Bethany to evangelize first by prayer and fasting. One of our cell leaders recently testified that his cell had not multiplied in more than 18 months. Having tried all the methods of cell evangelism, the group was still unsuccessful. During the first 3 months of 1997, the group began to pray and fast.

The result: seven new believers were all born again in the cell meeting! Our studies of Bethany cells have consistently shown that groups that focus on prayer and fasting repeatedly win souls and multiply while those that don’t stagnate and often disappear (Larry Stockstill, *The Cell Church*, 57-59).

In summary, Herb Miller delineates the difference between thriving churches and non-growing congregations with these words: Person-to-person invitation. Miller writes:

70 to 90 percent of persons who join any church in America come through the influence of a friend, of a relative, or of an acquaintance. No amount of theological expression from the pulpit can overcome a lack of invitational expression from the pews (Herb Miller, *How to Build a Magnetic Church*, 72-73).

When the pre-Christian is brought to the cell group, this does not mean the cell can rest from praying for the pre-Christian. Next month we’ll resume discussing how cell members must continue to pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten the pre-Christian’s heart and mind with a receptivity to embrace Jesus Christ.

Faithfully in Jesus Christ,

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