

Devotions for the Week of September 8, 2019
North East United Methodist Church
Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, September 8, 2019

Read 2 Kings 5:1-15.

This morning we talked about how Naaman's expectations, pride, and prejudice almost caused him to miss out on God's blessings and healing. Our church, each of us, are surrounded by individuals who, for some of the same reasons, like Naaman, are missing out on God's blessings and healing. They do not understand that God's grace is available to everyone, even them. They do not understand that God loves them so much and is seeking a relationship with them, a relationship that can turn their lives around, bringing them forgiveness, joy, and peace.

Each of you have been given several "Invite Cards." Hand these out in the coming week. Leave them with your tip at restaurants in town. Hand them out to neighbors. Better yet, call your neighbor and personally invite them to church. Volunteer to pick them up and bring them. Go out to lunch afterwards and get to know them.

If we can build relationships with those around us and reach out to our community in love, inviting them to join our church family on Sunday mornings, perhaps we can help some people finally see the love God is offering them, how important they are to God. Perhaps we can

help some people drop their expectations, pride and prejudice and open their hearts to what God has for them.

Who will you reach out to this week? Pray and ask God to lay names on your heart, to have you run across individuals that need an invitation to meet the God who loves them!

Monday, September 9, 2019

God has set a race before us and there is no second place. We either run for the gold, we believe, we live our lives with Christ in mind, or we do not. It is our choice. God wants us to get in the race, to give Him the baggage that many of us are trying to pull behind us (*guilt, fear, sin*), and to stay focused on Jesus Christ, the One who has finished the race and runs beside us.

I pray that you have entered the race, that you have asked Jesus Christ into your heart as your leader and forgiver and are ready to learn from Him what He has in store for you and for your life.

Now, it's time to talk about helping others get into the race, lose their baggage, and set their eyes on Jesus. It is time to talk about recruiting for the team, God's team.

Read Luke 15.

Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, writes:

Lost people matter. This phrase reflects the heart of God and the heartbeat of Willow Creek Community Church. It's why we work so hard to

build relationships with people who are far from God, put together high-impact services, and communicate the Gospel creatively and clearly. We have been seized by the vision that God wants to use our lives, our relationships, our words, and our collective efforts to impact the people around us for all of eternity. And as fully devoted followers of Christ, we are called upon to fulfill our redemptive potential. It's our job, according to Luke 15, to search high and low as we go wherever we need to go and do whatever we need to do to reach people throughout the spheres of influence.

People with names and faces. People we care about deeply. People in our families, our neighborhoods, our workplaces and our schools. And it takes each of us doing our part, with God's help, to reach those all around us. Can you be counted on? Are you in? Will you enroll in the great redemptive adventure? There's no greater endeavor. There's nothing that would better please the heart of God.

Ask God how you can help Him reach people for the kingdom. Allow God to lay on your heart names of those in your sphere of influence that you are being called to talk to and reach out to for God. Pray for strength and wisdom to make a difference in another's life by introducing them to Jesus Christ.

Tuesday, September 10, 2019

There are so many ways to talk to someone about Christ. The number of ways are equal to the number of different personalities that have experienced a relationship with Jesus. I want to share with you the first of three steps that you can conform to your own personality and setting.

First, **hang out together.**

One must work toward developing growing, authentic friendships with seekers (*a seeker is someone who has not yet personally received Jesus Christ as leader and forgiver regardless of whether or not they are in church*). It is important to identify areas of common interest and then spend time together doing those things. Deep friendships develop. Conversations ensue.

Read I Corinthians 9: 19-23. As Paul writes, we must work to find common ground with everyone so they might come to know Jesus Christ. It has been said that seekers don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Pray to God tonight for two or three people that are seeking, that have not yet personally received Jesus Christ, and pray that they will one day cross the line of faith. Ask God to help you find common ground and ways to show them how much you care. Begin to build those relationships and pray that God will bless them.

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

A second step toward reaching out to those who do not know Jesus Christ is to **look for open windows**.

Read Colossians 4: 2-4.

We must always be looking for opportunities to turn our conversations with those who do not know Jesus toward spiritual things. Sometimes we drop a clue; we might mention that our kids are in youth group or we are involved in a Bible study. We mention something about our church and suddenly the person opens the door, saying something like, *“I don’t know about all that church stuff...”* or *“I didn’t know you were a Christian...you believe all that stuff...”* or *“I have major issues with the church.”* These responses to a simple statement about what our family is involved in at church can start the conversation rolling. We must seize those opportunities, while at the same time being careful in knowing when to back off if our friend suddenly closes the window of opportunity.

When the opportunity arises, we must be honest and loving, sharing our story and what Jesus means to us and has done in our lives. We don’t need to be experts and if a question is asked that we don’t know, we can simply respond, *“I don’t know the answer to that question but I’ll ask my pastor and get back to you with it.”* It is ok to say *“I don’t know, but we can find that out together.”*

Pray tonight that God will help you to see the opportunities that arise in conversations where you can steer the conversation toward spiritual matters. Pray that

God will put you in situations to have conversations with the two or three individuals you are praying for. Pray that God will give you the words and the wisdom you need to share the love of God. Be intentional about reaching out to them and finding the opportunities God will provide.

Thursday, September 12, 2019

A third step toward reaching out to those who do not know Jesus Christ is to **make the invitation**.

Read Romans 10: 14-15 and John 4: 35.

Jesus spoke of an urgency in reaching those who do not believe, who do not know Him personally. *“How can they hear without someone preaching to them?”* Perhaps after several conversations, the opportunity will come to invite that person to church or to a small group Bible study, or another church event. Our churches must work very hard to invite and welcome our friends and neighbors, who are unchurched, who have not accepted Christ, or who have been turned off by church in the past.

Once you have invited your friends to church, do more than just invite. Pick them up on Sunday morning and bring them to church. Take them out to lunch afterward and have fellowship. Introduce them to others in the congregation with similar interests. And by all means, most importantly, follow-up later in the week. Ask them what they thought of the service, the message. Would they come back?

If not, don't give up. Wait until a special event at the church and invite them to that with you and your

family. If another church in the community would fit their need more, get them connected. Do whatever you can, to help them find a place they feel comfortable hearing about Jesus.

Again, pray for the two or three individuals you hope to see cross the line of faith someday. Pray that God will give you the opportunity to invite them to church.

Friday, September 13, 2019

A young woman who at the age of twenty-nine came to know Christ, writes:

I didn't used to think there was a God, but now I know there is because he has changed me! I'm learning to give up those relationship-destroying habits; God has begun to break that endless, hopeless cycle I've been in for so long. Sure I still struggle; I have a long way to go.

But there's no denying the contentment I feel. It's amazing. When I finally understood what Jesus did for me, I chose to believe and open my heart to him...It scares me to think I might never have learned about how much Jesus loves me had my friend Kim not invited me to church. It was a risk she took – and I'm eternally grateful.

Imagine your friend, your neighbor, your co-worker, even a stranger, sharing such a testimony and thanking

God that you were bold enough to reach out for them.

Pray for guidance, strength and opportunity to reach out to others. Pray for the two or three people you hope to see cross the line of faith one day and accept Jesus Christ as their leader and forgiver.

Saturday, September 14, 2019

Know that God has a purpose for your life and there are people God wants to reach through you.

Read Matthew 28: 19-20.

Spend time with God tonight in prayer.



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Thanks to God's Servant (See John 3:16) 03-07-2003

IT'S A SHAME THAT I COULDN'T REACH YOU WITH GOD'S MESSAGE ... PERHAPS THE DEACONS WILL HAVE BETTER LUCK

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Thanks to Mikel Rice (See Matthew 28:19) 01-30-2002

BOB? ... I NEVER KNEW YOU WERE A CHRISTIAN