

Friendship 101

Matthew 7:7-8

Math 101, English 101, Speech 101, History 101, etc.. You name it and it's out there. But what we are talking about? 101 is a term when referring to an introductory course of some subject or the basic knowledge of some subject.

Romans 1:19 *“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.”*

We all need to learn things that are important in life, things that bless people, because this is why God put us here: to love one another, to help one another, to build up one another.

John 13:34 *“A new command I give you: Love one another...”*

Gal. 5:13 *“Serve one another in love...”*

Gal. 6:2 *“Bear one another's burdens...”*

When people are serving others, life is no longer meaningless. Serving people gives meaning to life. Sounds just like Jesus who came to seek and to save the lost. His life was far from meaningless. He lived for people and so must we.

I want us to consider what I call Friendship 101: basic planning for our Friendship Evangelism Effort in days to come. There are three major points to getting this started in your life. Let's look at them.

1. WE MUST PRAY AND BELIEVE

A man was going out of church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door, shaking hands. He grabbed the man by the hand and said to him, "You need to join the Army of the Lord!" The man replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord." The Preacher questioned him, saying, "How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?" He whispered back, "I'm in the secret service."

Are you trustworthy? Are you dependable? Are you a faithful friend? Some people just can't be depended on. They can't be depended on to come to church, to get to work on time, to do a job, to be a friend, etc.

On March 1, 1998 I had back surgery. I expected Joyce to be there and I expected our daughters, Jennifer and Becky to be there. And they were there for my surgery and following. But I did not expect to see a golfing friend named Steve Patton. Steve knew I was going to have surgery, but I never asked him to come. However, he took off work and showed up anyway. When I got home after surgery, there was Steve. I would classify him as a faithful friend. The strange thing is, Steve treats me better than some saints and Steve is NOT a child of God!!!

Does God classify you as a faithful friend? To Him and others? 2 Tim. 2:13 ***"If we are faithless, He will remain faithful..."***

What's this verse talking about? If Christians are faithless at times, we must remember that God is always faithful! Even if we fail, He doesn't. Even when we are not faithful, **HE IS!** Even if we don't show up, **HE WILL!** Even if we don't pray, **HE IS STILL LISTENING!**

Matthew 7:7-8 ***"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."***

James 1:5-6 ***"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind."***

These two scriptures are clear: We can ask God and He will answer, but we must believe Him, we must trust Him!

We need a bigger faith. We need to believe in our God and trust Him to answer our prayers, especially when we are praying about something that will bring honor and glory to Him!

2. WE MUST FIND AND BRING

Brothers and sisters, what will it take to get people in the church? Stirring sermons? Not necessarily. Good preaching won't hurt, but it's not a "cure all or a sure thing." I think everything we do in the church should be done the best we can. I don't think we have to be obsessive, but we need to do a good job at whatever we do: preaching, teaching, singing, song service, greeting, etc. Doing a good job or the best job we can, will help to draw people to the church. Of course, if people don't know anything about the church then how do we draw folks in?

John 1:40-42 *“Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.”*

Andrew found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. We, too, must find people and bring them to church! It's really that simple. Where are we going to find these people? Look around. People are everywhere. Every person has contact with far more people than they realize. Just think - family members, friends you socialize with, fellow workers, neighbors, etc.

I don't think the hard part is finding the people. The hard part is having enough enthusiasm to ask people to come to church! Andrew said to Simon, *“We Have Found The Messiah!”* I think he was excited about his find and excited about sharing it with his brother.

Here is a great truth – if I'm sold on something – I'm inclined to share it with others. And to me, that's the hardest part of getting people to come to church. Ask yourself right now – “am I sold on what we are doing at the West Side church of Christ?” Answer that question honestly and then adjust your thinking and behavior if necessary. We are not going to grow the church by being keepers of the fish tank – we must go out and fish for souls.

Even if you are not sold on West Side – how can any Christian not be sold on Jesus?? If we believe with all our hearts that Jesus is the Savior and there is an eternal heaven to be gained, then we should be talking up West Side because we teach about Jesus here! We need to find people and bring them to church and to Jesus.

3. WE MUST BEFRIEND AND LISTEN

Proverbs 18:24 KJV *“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”*

How do we befriend people? One sure way NOT to befriend people is by being self-centered. People who are all wrapped up in themselves will not win friends and influence people. Dale Carnegie, *“You can make more friends in 2 months by becoming interested in people, than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.”*

Overcoming self to the point where we show interest in others is a hard thing to do. Self is a big hurdle to overcome. It takes much prayer, concentration and effort. If you don't work at anything, it won't happen. This holds true for overcoming selfishness as well.

Here is how **NOT** make friends. Don't smile. Don't listen. Don't act interested in people. Don't look at people. Think only of yourself.

A man told me many years ago that he had his own son-in-law in Boy Scouts when he was just a youngster. The boy was always causing trouble, didn't get along with the other boys and he couldn't seem to do much with the boy. Finally, he decided to talk to the boy's mother. While talking to her, he said, “Your son is hard to control and he acts like he is better than other boys.” The boy's Mom said, “He Is Better!” Another sure way of NOT making friends is acting like we are better than other people.

How do we befriend people? Be holy but don't overdo the acting part. Be yourself but not your bad self. Get out of yourself and into others. Listen. Speak kind words.

Prov. 12:25 *“An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.”*

Prov. 15:23 *“A man finds joy in giving an apt reply- and how good is a timely word!”*

People in our world are hungry. They are hungry for attention, affection and love. They are hungry for people to show genuine care for them and this is a must for us, if the church is to grow.

3 John 8 *“We ought therefore to show hospitality to all men so that we may work together for the truth.”* Being truly hospitable to others by befriending them is a key to church growth.

CONCLUSION

Rom. 10:1 *“My heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.”* What’s your desire in life? Don’t be too quick to answer that question.

Robert Woodruff was the President of Coca Cola, from 1923 to 1955, cast the following vision for Coca Cola. Right after World War II, he said, "In my lifetime I want everyone in the world to have tasted Coke."

If Woodruff could feel that strongly about something as unimportant as Coca Cola, how should we feel about everyone tasting the gospel during our lifetime? Brothers and sisters, it should be our ultimate desire in life for everyone to know and taste Christ. Please make that your desire, your goal in life as a follower of Christ.

Find people and befriend them. It may well begin a spiritual journey for that person that will lead them to eternal life with God in heaven.